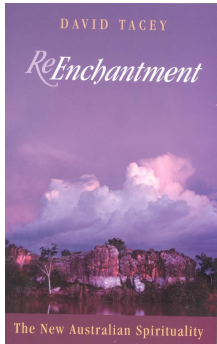


BOOK REVIEW

Tacey, David J. *ReEnchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*. Pymble: HarperCollins, 2000.



David Tacey is Associate Professor of English at La Trobe University and is the author of *Edge of the Sacred* (1995) in which he explored the idea of bush, forest and desert Australia as a sacred space, with the vast majority of non-Aboriginal Australians living out their busy city lifestyles round its edge. His latest book, *ReEnchantment*, is about his perception of a growing postsecular spiritual enlightenment.

Tacey starts with the familiar outline of the shared religious vision of pre-scientific societies and its gradual decline in western society in the wake of the rational Enlightenment, leading up to the recent plunge in regular church attendance. He does not, however, share expectations that we are evolving into a totally secular world. He interprets what he sees as signs of an imminent return to spirituality which, from his Jungian viewpoint, is a positive phenomenon, a 'transformative energy in self and society' and an antidote to the isolation of the individual.

For Tacey, the timeless and ongoing spiritual quest incorporates key issues such as the redefinition of our human identity, a new consciousness about Aboriginal reconciliation, a recognition of youth culture and its spiritual directions, a quest for environmental integrity, our responsibility to community and to each other. Ultimately, the quest is for a 'reenchantment' that will enable us to overcome our alienation, allowing us to build a more harmonious and integrated Australian society.

Tacey's approach to a spirituality of the earth, of responsibility for the environment, and of acknowledgement of the indigenous relationship to the land is unique, and is sensitive to the historical and cultural realities of black/white relationships in Australia. He explores the way in which, for so long, an Australian land-based spirituality seemed off limit to whites because of fears of appropriating Aboriginal beliefs. There seemed no acceptable framework for whites to develop a land-based spirituality or interconnectedness through the sacredness of the land. However, whites, like the Aborigines before them, are putting down roots into the Australian land. If people are open to the land it will transform them. Both black and white are 'aboriginalised', for they are fed from the same geo-spiritual source. The sacred is below – in the earth, in the rocks. The land itself is active and can break through to the human. Spirituality enters from below – from the feet rooted in the land.

The process is one of assimilation by the land from below, through the body rather than through the head. It reflects the Aboriginal approach to the sacredness of the land, but is a very different experience. It is an 'indigenising' process. It is colonialism in reverse – it is the land slowly conquering its inhabitants.

Tacey's argument is a fresh, literally 'down to earth' approach to an Australian land-based spirituality. It encourages not only an openness to the wisdom of the land but provides a way in which the sacred land is the prime instigator of the human's transformation.