

What I like to do is treat words as a craftsman does his wood or stone or what-have-you, to hew, carve, mold, coil, polish, and plane them into patterns, sequences, sculptures, figures of sound expressing some lyrical impulse, some spiritual doubt or conviction, some dimly realized truth that I must try to reach and realize.

—DYLAN THOMAS

who guarded top government officials. On November 30, 1989, they were escorting a VIP when their car engine died under FDR Drive, near the Brooklyn Bridge. The VIP, called only "the third man," was also a witness. Hopkins received letters from this man and met him face to face. He insists that the third man, due to his world stature, could single-handedly establish the reality of abduction by disclosing his own knowledge.

Hopkins eventually concluded that Richard, Dan, and the third man were not just witnesses, but had been abducted along with Linda. For Dan, the strain of these unworldly events led to mental breakdown. The third man retreated to stoic silence. But Richard's path was the most unexpected, for he began to recall heartrending secrets from his own childhood that, for Hopkins, establish a profound new feature within abduction, which he labels the "Mickey and Baby Ann phenomenon." If Hopkins is right, Richard and Linda Cortile met as abductees while they were still children and formed emotional bonds that surfaced in an almost unbearable way after 1989. Hopkins says he now realizes the Richard/Linda bonding is one of several such cases he has seen, and he suspects it has happened many times.

Hopkins' refusal to identify the third man is understandable, yet aggravating. He says he must defend the third man's right to privacy. More pragmatically, he points out that the third man would deny everything if named, likely resulting in a fruitless stalemate. But I confess to feeling great impatience with his rationalizations. If the third man knows first hand that alien abduction is physically real, where does the rule of politeness end and some more compelling agenda begin? Would a world leader not agree that the stakes are larger than his own private comfort?

Hopkins knows his tale aches for undelivered resolution, but he's philosophical. "I will be gratified if productive, wide-ranging speculation is stimulated by my long account," he writes.

In the end, we must weigh his solemn assurances and decide for ourselves. "I can offer only two absolutes," Hopkins says, "my faith in the veracity of the witnesses . . . and the certainty that sooner or later, all of humankind will have to deal with the fact of an alien presence on our planet."

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"We are born not for the suffering that leads to madness, but the suffering that leads to joy."



A LITTLE BOOK ON LOVE

by Jacob Needleman
(Doubleday, 1996)

Reviewed by Charles T. Tart

A Little Book on Love is the finest book Jacob Needleman has written, and has advice and ideas desperately needed in our time. Needleman begins by asking questions that are, sadly, too relevant to all of us: "Who has not been humbled by

love, by its joys and sorrows? How many of us try again and again to lay hold of what love seems to promise, only to be thrown back in fear or confusion or pain? How many give up and sadly accept to live outside the drama of love?"

We know the ecstasy of romantic love, that surge of joy and power that takes us beyond our ordinary limitations and makes this mundane world sublime. But it so seldom lasts. The fairy tales for youth end with "And they lived happily ever after." Ah, if only it were so simple! Something vital is possible, something Needleman calls intermediate love, between the selfless love of saints which is too far away for most of us and the blind, need- and passion- driven state of intoxication that we ordinarily call love.

Human beings, we are told, carry within themselves a very great possibility and, corresponding to this possibility, a great obligation. We have the possibility of opening ourselves to a quality of life and consciousness that transcends anything we ordinarily experience as happiness or knowledge or meaning. When this quality of conscious life becomes active in us, we begin to understand for ourselves, down deep in our being, what human life is meant to serve. We discover that the capacity to love in a non-egoistic way also flows from this same consciousness.

The key to developing intermediate love is a disciplined, conscious valuing of other individuals as being, like yourself, on a quest for meaning. This is difficult, given the power of our egos, but possible, and Needleman discusses both the obstacles and practices that can lead us in that direction. "We are born for meaning," Needleman writes, "not pleasure, unless it is pleasure that is steeped in meaning. And we are born as well for suffering, not the suffering that leads to madness but the suffering that leads to joy: the struggle with ourselves and our illusions. We are born to overcome ourselves, and through that overcoming to find an inner condition of great harmony and being. We are born for that—we are not yet that. We are searchers: that is the essence of our present humanness. . . . And in love we have the possibility and the need to help each other search . . ."

A Little Book on Love is one of those rare works that Francis Bacon said needs to be chewed and digested, not gobbled

down. I will go back to it often for small, highly nourishing bites, for reminders about love. How can I more often remember to see the people I love in this life as spiritual beings, on their own journeys, and, seeing that, how I can be of help? This is the love that I know, in an as yet only partly conscious way, is genuinely fulfilling and leads beyond my ego.

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Between the Lines

"WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?"

Suki Miller's eyes shone as she described her surgeon father's way of giving information about his patients that invariably raised as many questions as it answered. "Mr Cantor has crossed over," he once told her. "But where?" she asked. "He's someplace else now," came the answer. Soon Mrs Nelson also had gone "someplace else." For young Suki, this curious location was strangely familiar. Where were the starving children of Europe? Someplace else. Where was the war? Someplace else. Where was her best friend, Madeline Keschen, who had moved in the third grade? *Someplace else.*

"It wasn't a vast stretch of the imagination to think the dead went there, too," Miller says. "I'm grateful I was never encouraged to close my eyes, turn away, hide from the questions of what happens to us after we die and where we go when we're no longer here." That she never stopped pursuing those questions, that she put them at the center of a remarkable intellectual and spiritual quest, is clear from her new book—one of the most profound yet on the subject of the "Great Beyond."

After Death: Mapping the Journey (Simon & Schuster, 1997) tells the story of former psychotherapist Miller's remarkable eight-year, worldwide, cross-cultural exploration of the posthumous journey of the soul. "My aim has been to gather attitudes and images, beliefs and possibili-