

With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A Study of Channeling. Arthur Hastings. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: San Francisco, London, Montreal, *et al*, 1991) 227 pp. Illustrations and photographs. References. Index. Appendix.

By Stephan A. Schwartz

Sometimes it is important to go back and re-examine a book that has been overlooked. This is a review of such a book: *With the Tongues of Men and Angeles.* Arthur Hastings, its author, sets himself two tasks, and does very well at answering them: What is the nature of channeling? What is the significance of channeling for us? These are questions worth attention, not least because the phenomena of channeling has been around for thousands of years, and defies all attempts to explain it away. It is so compelling that even the exposure of occasional frauds has not slowed the public's interest. Perhaps this is because, as Hastings states, fully 15 per cent of the population -- in the U.S. today that would be approximately 41 million people -- report hearing voices and receiving guidance. I don't know where Hastings got that astounding -- at least to me -- figure, but it conjures an arresting reality.

Hastings approaches his subject with an open mind -- a surprisingly rare attitude, as anyone who takes the trouble to look at the literature of channeling quickly discovers. Whether it is called channeling, mediumship, automatic writing, guidance, prophecy, or anyone of several other names, as a rule it excites more passion than insight. Hastings also writes with a light touch which, for anyone doing research in this area, will be much appreciated. With the notable exception of Jon Klimo's recent and excellent *Channeling[i]*, much of the modern literature on this subject is famously insubstantial, and the more serious studies, dating mostly from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is so turgid and self-important, whether espousing or denigrating the subject, that reading it becomes an act of penance.

Hastings begins his exploration where it should begin, with a discussion of just what we mean by channeling, and he makes the important point that this is a big umbrella that covers many different beasts. He settles on this as his definition for what channeling is:

Channeling refers to a process in which a person transmits information or artistic expression that he or she receives mentally or physically and which appears to come from a personality source outside the conscious mind. The message is directed toward an audience and is purposeful.[ii]

This is a more subtle definition than it may appear at first reading. Was Edgar Cayce a channel? With a few exceptions he did not channel discarnates or dead people, claiming that his source was what he called the super conscious mind. [iii] That is hardly the same thing as Frederick Bligh Bond, who reconstructed Gastonbury Abbey following guidance he received in automatic writing sessions from sources who claimed to be the monks who once inhabited the ruined abbey.[iv] But both Cayce and Bond share one thing in common: they provided testable information, that could be independently verified. This is quite different from the Ramtha persona channeled by J.Z. Knight. Like Bond's monks this was presented as a discarnate source, but the Ramtha material is very short on testable information running, instead, to long philosophical discourses. The key words in Hastings's definition are 'outside the conscious mind'. In that sense, yes, Cayce was a channeler. Under this definition the same could be said of Rudolf Steiner, but what about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart[v], Brahms[vi], and Copeland[vii] all of whom reported hearing the music that they wrote down. That would take channeling into the waters of creativity and intuition, and Hastings admits as much. He decides to focus his book on channeling with a defined source. This helps the structure of his slender book, but I couldn't help wishing he had taken a broader rubric since, while critics may deride channeled 'masters' like Ramtha, they can hardly avoid the mastery of a Mozart sonata, or a Housman poem, and there is clearly some kind of connection here.

Having laid his groundwork, Hastings plunges into actual cases some, like Cayce, well-known to millions and others, such as Pearl Curran, a St Louis housewife who channeled the poetry, novels and plays of

Patience Worth is reputedly an Englishwoman of the 17th Century -- are now virtually unknown except to scholars like Stephen Braude, who has written extensively about this case. Phenomenon such as the Curran/Worth material, once widely popular and ranked equal to the work of Amy Lowell and Edgar Lee Masters, illustrate yet again the connection between creativity and channeling.

Even more provocative is the mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan, a largely self-educated East Indian whose work is one of the great mathematical accomplishments of the age, and who said some of his theorems came from Indian goddesses a fact mostly ignored in the biographical canon about this remarkable man.

Hastings goes on to cite a long list of other musicians and artists who channeled (albeit not the type of channeling that meets his definition) and once again, I found myself wishing Hastings had addressed the issue of creativity in the context of channeling to a greater degree. Although, given his definition, this 'open channeling' as he styles it was not the focus of his book.

Hastings does, however, make some very important points, both about channeling as he defines it, as well as open channeling. First, a study of this subject reveals the 'variety of skills demonstrated'; second, that the creation of this material is 'effortless', immediate and spontaneous; third, that the skills demonstrated are not only above what the channeler can attain in their normal waking state, but often rise to the level of real genius; fourth, that the material often has a profoundly spiritual, if usually non-denominational character proposing the inter-connectedness of all life; and, fifth, that channelers are not psychotic, abnormal, or dysfunctional -- or at least no more so than the general run of the population.

This case history information, which makes up the bulk of the book is fascinating, and most of it is little known. But more important than the case history material is the framework in which Hastings places it. He doesn't shy away from calling a fraud a fraud, and he gives the reader a clear path for evaluating what is going on. He also includes considerable material from the formal *psi* literature, which goes almost entirely unremarked in most books on channeling. My only complaint here is that I wish he had gone into greater detail on the relationship between Remote Viewing and channeling. Both, after all, are examples of anomalous cognition.

I particularly appreciated the section on the relationship between channeling and religious prophets. This is very touchy stuff that most scientists avoid altogether, and some religious find offensive -- If it is God talking to you, how dare you call it channeling. Yet, at their core most religions are channeled and, if only because of the slaughters and mass suicides that are such prominent features in the landscape of religious channeling, this subject deserves the closest attention. Hastings' observations make a real contribution.

Similarly, his section on various theories and models of channeling, provide what is probably as comprehensive and cogent a take on this aspect as will be found anywhere.

At the end of the day, Hastings achieves what many aspire to, and few attain in the field of the paranormal: a sensible well-grounded *but accessible* examination of a highly controversial subject.

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[i] Jon Klimo. *Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources*. (North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, California, 1998).

[ii] Hastings. p. 4.

[iii] Edgar Cayce Reading 254-67

[iv] Frederick Bligh Bond. *The Gates of Remembrance: The Story of the Psychological Experiment which Resulted in the Discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury*. 2nd and 4th eds. Rev. (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1918, 1921).

[v] Gail Delaney. "Creativity in Music". *Proceedings of the Association for the Anthropological Study of Consciousness*. Annual Meetings (1984).

[vi] A.M. Abell. *Talks with the Great Composers* (G.E. Schroeder-Verlag: Garmisch-Parten-Kirchen, 1964), pp. 19-21.

[vii] Delaney. *Loc Cit.*