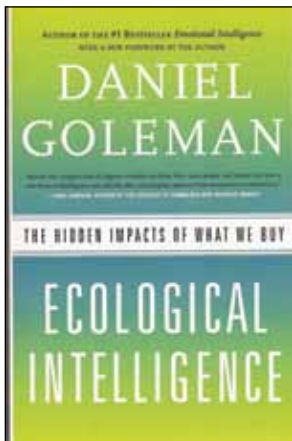


Book Reviews ~ January to April 2011

The book reviews below are for the books selected for our monthly book discussion groups at Crazy Wisdom. The reviews were written by the Crazy Wisdom staff people who will be hosting the individual book conversations. Our book discussion groups are the second Fridays of each month, at 7 pm. They're free, and open to anyone.



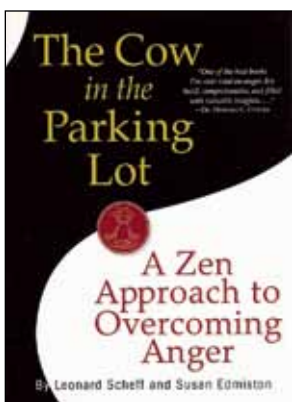
Friday, January 14th

Ecological Intelligence: The Hidden Impacts of What We Buy by Daniel Goleman

The title of Daniel Goleman's compelling new book is a little misleading. When I first picked up *Ecological Intelligence: The Hidden Impacts of What We Buy*, I thought I would become further informed of the negative environmental impacts of the products buy to make better purchasing choices. Goleman does address this topic, but in a broad sense designed to show the reader that even the most eco-minded actions carry unintentional consequences that negatively impact the environment, our health, and society. Of course, this is a disheartening point, but it is made to support a paradigm shift that is occurring in the world of manufacturing: radical transparency.

Radical transparency will make the environmental, health and social impacts of every step of the making of a product transparent, giving buyers the power to choose products that most fit their values. And this, according to Goleman, will be the motivating factor for businesses to make more environmentally and socially responsible products. A hopeful snapshot of the potential power of our choices, but the question remains: will these changes be enough?

--Rachel Pastiva, Bookstore Manager at Crazy Wisdom



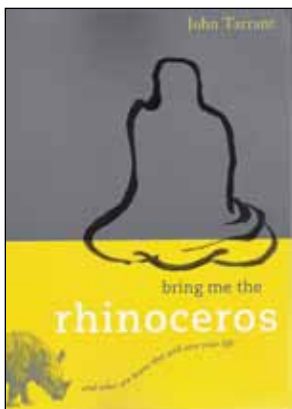
Friday, February 11th

The Cow in the Parking Lot --- A Zen Approach to Overcoming Anger by Leonard Scheff and Susan Edmiston.

This is an intelligent and mostly interesting book on the Buddhist view of anger. The authors have synthesized the writings of Robert Thurman, Pema Chodron, Jack Kornfield, John Tarrant, Thich Nhat Hanh and others, and written what is, in most respects, a Buddhist/American self-help book. It has chapters on *Pride, Honor and Other Buttons -- Our Sore Spots; Unshakeable Calm -- Dealing with the Anger of Others; To Be or Not to Be Angry -- You Have a Choice; and What Happens When We Give Up Anger*. Many of you already know this stuff, but putting it into practice is another story. Living with anger, in ourselves and others, always provides food for thought and material for personal growth, so this book will be an excellent conversation-starter at the Crazy Wisdom Book Discussion Group on February 11th.

I like the book's exercises, which are interspersed throughout. They give the book an immediacy that makes it worthwhile. We live in a world of our own illusions and projections and wayward thoughts. This book nicely reminds the reader of the daily need to be awake, and how one might make small strides in that direction. If you're interested in the topic, it's really fine to come to the book discussion even if you haven't read the book!

-- Bill Zirinsky, co-owner of Crazy Wisdom



Friday, March 11th

Bring Me the Rhinoceros and Other Zen Koans that Will Save Your Life by John Tarrant

John Tarrant, Roshi, a psychologist and director of the Pacific Zen Institute, says right away, "Usually taken as some sort of riddle or odd question, a koan actually has its origins in sayings or records of conversations between people interested in the secret of life."

People would come to teachers and "instead of giving kind advice, or step-by-step instructions, the teachers responded to the students as if they were capable of coming to a complete understanding in that moment."

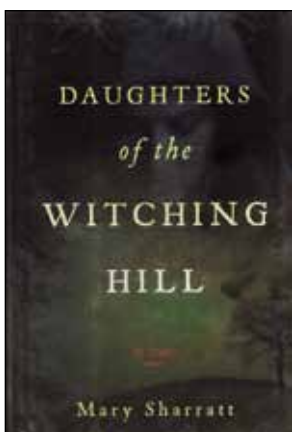
For instance, the rhinoceros koan of the book's title: A traveler had given the governor a fan made of rhinoceros horn, and under the Zen rule that expensive, useless objects flow to those who don't care about them, the governor gave the fan to Yanguan (a teacher).

Everyone forgot about it, until one summer day, Yanguan asked, "Bring me the rhinoceros fan." The assistant said, "The fan is broken." "In that case," replied Yanguan, "Bring me the rhinoceros." The assistant was struck dumb.

Tarrant writes, "When Yanguan asked for the rhinoceros, it was a world-stopping question for the assistant. The glue that connected one thought to another, and that pair of thoughts to another pair, and so on - the glue that made his reality - had failed."

The book chooses fifteen koans that vary widely and are presented with care. John Tarrant sprinkles in opinions and stories from his own life, entertaining and provocative. He begins the introduction, "This book offers an unusual path to happiness ...by subverting unhappiness." It worked for me. I suggest you read at least the introduction and first chapter, about 20 pages.

-- Jonathan Ellis, Honorary Crazy Wisdom Sage



Friday, April 8th

Daughters of the Witching Hill by Mary Sharratt

In August of 1612 in Lancaster England, twelve Pendle Forest individuals (ten women and two men) were arrested for the crimes of witchcraft and murder. One woman was found guilty of witchcraft, but not murder, and received a sentence of imprisonment. Of the remaining, ten were found guilty of witchcraft and murder and executed by hanging. But what of the twelfth? Elizabeth Southern, alias Demdike, blind and in her eighties, died in prison before being brought to trial. Nevertheless, she was considered to be a witch on the basis of evidence already given, evidence and testimony presented by her grandchildren. The *Daughters of the Witching Hill* is Elizabeth's story.

Mary Sharratt is an amazing storyteller whose retelling of the story of the Pendle Witches and their lives will stir emotions and deep inner feelings for the fate of these women and their families. The story is told in the first person by Elizabeth Southern, known as Demdike, a blesser and charmer in Pendle Forest. I was deeply moved by Elizabeth's account of life in 1600s England.

Although I knew this period in time to be dark, I felt heartsick reading their accounts of famine, strife, class separation and constant religious changes enforced by the monarchy which made for more misery in their lives. Life seemed sorrowful, lacking the smallest joys. But these women of Pendle Forest would not be held in darkness, they fought with amazing will, strength and conviction to keep themselves and their families together, fed and safe in dangerous times. These women were true heroines.

I consider this book to be a "must read".

-- Carol Karr, Senior Manager, Crazy Wisdom