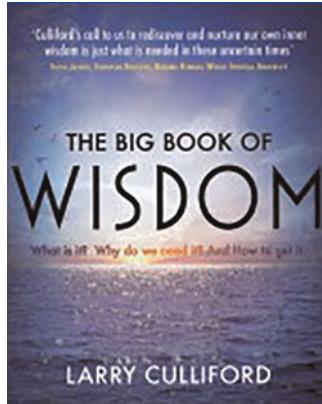


Book review

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyebode



The Big Book of Wisdom: What Is It? Why Do We Need It? And How to Get It

By Larry Culliford
Hero Press. 2020. £9.99 (pb), 166 pp.
ISBN 9781789551211

The title of this book is a playful one. This is not a big book in terms of size or number of pages, but its scope is big. Its primary aim is to 'promote extensive, fruitful discussion on the subject of wisdom, human suffering, spirituality and the path to maturity'.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, entitled 'Explanation: things you may want to know', begins with an overview of what wisdom is and why it is so necessary to cultivate it in the world at this time. The author defines wisdom as the

'knowledge of how to be and behave for the best of all concerned in any given situation'. He goes on to explain how many of the current troubles in the world have their origin in a lack of wisdom. He continues with further chapters on the range of spiritual experiences, ideas about psychospiritual maturation, psychological response to threat and loss, brain laterality and the important distinction between the everyday ego and the spiritual self.

Part two is entitled 'Commentary: things you may want to think about'. It draws on the ideas presented in Part one and how they might relate to the varied fields of politics, leadership, religion, education, economics, and art and creativity. Of particular relevance to RCPsych members is the chapter on 'Health, mental health and social care'. The author reminds us that the caregiver's first priority is, paradoxically, to care properly for oneself.

Part three is entitled 'Seeking wisdom: things you may want to do'. There is a thoughtful section on the importance of grief work in which the author states that the 'grief process flows naturally in the direction of healing and growth'. Drawing on well-established ideas he goes on to offer suggestions as to how one might cultivate wisdom.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book. It is written in a highly accessible style and addresses weighty issues with a welcome light touch. During these uncertain times it offers a genuine tonic and encourages us all to reflect on the 'bigger picture'.

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doi:10.1192/bjp.2020.240