

The Illusion of Separation

Exploring the Cause of our Current Crises

GILES HUTCHINS



THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATION: EXPLORING THE CAUSE OF OUR CURRENT CRISIS BY GILES HUTCHINS

Reviewed by Simon Robinson

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In Giles Hutchins' new book, *The Illusion of Separation*, we are taken on a deep walk back in time through the history of human thought and consciousness, to find the roots of a worldview that has instilled in us an artificial reality which imprisons us in our minds. Then with equal clarity and vision we are shown a pathway for the future.

Hutchins' aim is to lead us into a mindful and participatory level of awareness, opening up both our receptiveness to nature and empathy to others. At the heart of *The Illusion of Separation* is the thesis that rather than the Western paradigm being the grand solution to all our problems - economic, social and ecological - its very nature is actually fuelling the multiple crises we find ourselves in. The way in which we frame our experiences leads us to construct "logical boundaries to help our understanding, and yet in the process we close ourselves off from truly making sense. We create an illusion of separation that then deludes and imprisons us."

The book's narrative is divided into three clear parts - firstly, a look at the way in which we are currently living within the illusion, secondly, the thinning of the veil, in which new ways of relating to, and understanding reality are explored, and finally in part three, a vision of a new way of embracing life, in which we complete the journey of self-realisation, breaking the illusion and repairing "our estranged relation with ourselves, each other and Nature".

The 'illusion of separation' can therefore be understood as a fall from grace, resulting in what Steve Taylor calls the 'Ego Explosion'. In understanding the fall, we are shown the path back into what Hutchins describes as 'participatory consciousness', an ecological consciousness in which "we perceive the aliveness of the interrelating way of Nature, which in turn allows for a sense of reverence for all of life."

For me, the great insight from the concluding chapters is the way in which the solution to the illusion of separation lies in the way in which we attend to reality. Hutchins draws on the profound insights of many before him like Owen Barfield, who had the ambition of setting us free from our current ways of knowing the world, the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and also Goethe's 'active seeing', a receptive and phenomenological way of perceiving the aliveness of Nature, leading to a more direct experience of love. This book also fully embraces indigenous knowledge and Eastern spirituality.

The Illusion of Separation is a richly evocative journey which teaches us how we can rediscover our humanity, and become inspirational leaders and authentic co-creators.

BOOKS WORTH READING

There are quite a few classic books worth reading apart from the newly published one reviewed here. One brilliant book every Georgist should read is *The Great Transformation* by Karl Polanyi, first published in 1944. He traces the rise of the market economy and how this has gradually destroyed natural human communities and local economies. Of particular interest is Chapter 6 "The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Land, Labour, and Money". His insights here strongly support those of Henry George, yet describing the conversion of land, labour, and money into 'commodities' shows how the rise of the market changed all exchange relationships into exploitation.

Another book really worth reading is *The Origins of Political Order* by Francis Fukuyama, first published in 2011. This book traces the development of our modern political institutions from tribal societies to the emergence of modern China, India and European nations up to the French revolution. He argues that we are in peril of losing peace and stability through our modern political indifference to how societies come into being. He explodes a number of myths that have long distorted political discussion. For example, that societies arose through the gradual association of solitary individuals. He argues, contrary to Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Marx, that communities always preceded the rise of the individual. He also argues that religion is a natural feature of society, and that there has never been a society without religion. Religion, he argues, has always offered a way of a society transcending its own limits and seeing itself in the wider context of mankind as a whole, and that this facilitates peaceful contact between different societies.

In the coming issues your two Land&Liberty editors will continue to suggest books, old and new, worthy of your time and attention.