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Think Independently: How to Think in This World but Not Think With It

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BOOK NOTICES

Think Independently: How to Think in This World but Not Think With It, by Chauncey C. Riddle (Provo, Utah: Rescate, 2009).

Chauncey C. Riddle, emeritus professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, has placed an attractive capstone on his professional life with a slim and readable volume that will be of great interest to any Latter-day Saint with a strong philosophical bent. Even those without such a bent will find the book understandable and thought-provoking.

Riddle received his MA and PhD from Columbia University, and adds to his education four decades of experience as a philosophy professor. Each thought in *Think Independently* is carefully crafted; readers will likely have the sense that behind every sentence is a lifetime of examining, weighing, and pondering—often in a wonderfully nonlinear way that is peculiar to the mind of the philosopher.

Chapter 1 argues that, historically speaking, all the sciences grew out of philosophy. Riddle notes that many scientific disciplines have recently worked to distance themselves from the auspices of philosophy by means of accepting only empirical evidence; however, he effectively argues that they have not escaped their various philosophical underpinnings.

For example, in chapter 3, his dialogue on evolution makes an insightful distinction between the *law of evolution* and the *theory of organic evolution*. The law of evolution is easily observable. Life-forms are always changing; evolution and change can be seen not only in the fossil record but in various life-forms that adapt and mutate and evolve before our eyes. The law of evolution, thoroughly observable and in some cases replicable, may be considered science.

The *theory of organic evolution* as propounded by Darwinists, however, takes a giant philosophical leap away from what is observable. Darwinism claims that life sprang up through random chemical processes, and that through natural selection life evolved without the need of a supernatural first cause or divine intervention. Such a theory, something like a secular version of Catholic *creatio ex nihilo*, is completely unobservable and must be taken on faith. “The problem comes in that some persons wish to attach the surety of the law of evolution to their favorite conjecture: the theory of organic evolution” (56).

However, this volume is much, much more than a call for scientists to humbly admit their underlying philosophical assumptions. The book is intended for a very broad audience, for, as Riddle recently said to me, “All people have a philosophy, even if they don’t know it.” The nine chapters within the book explore epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, art and aesthetics, and several different worldviews, all within the framework of revealed religion.

The mode of language Riddle employs moves seamlessly between that of rational philosophy and religious devotion. Such a linguistic mix might be arresting to both religious and scientific purists, but most Latter-day Saints, comfortable with the injunction to learn “by study and faith,” will find the intermingling refreshing.

In his approach, Riddle may strike some as too prescriptive, often using language that is quite authoritative and declarative, something akin to a dictionary definition. The trade-off is a book that can, in only 146 pages, satisfactorily cover nearly every major philosophical conundrum faced by the faithful, as well as nearly every powerful philosophical idea that emboldens

Latter-day Saints to keep the faith and “to become independent of the foibles and pitfalls of a fallen world” (146). For those with an abiding interest (or even a hint of interest) in philosophy within an LDS context, I highly recommend *Think Independently*.

—James Summerhays

A Search for Place: Eight Generations of Henrys and the Settlement of Utah's Uintah Basin, by LaMond Tullis (Spring City, Utah: Piñon Hills, 2010).

LaMond Tullis, emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University and author of *Mormons in Mexico* and *Lord and Peasant in Peru*, among other works, tries in his latest book to put his ancestors in their rightful place. He tells the story of the Henrys, from the Scotch-Irish John Henry who settled in Rhode Island in the late 1600s down to the generation of his mother's family, who settled in the Uintah Basin. Migrating from New England through New York to the Midwest and the Rocky Mountains, these westering Henrys are placed by Tullis into larger contexts, their stories woven into and symbolic of American life. The experiences of these “migratory risk takers” in the Uintah Basin of Utah clarify what it cost to settle in that stern and exacting locale (xv).

As the title indicates, these ancestors are also studies in the human need and hope to find a place of their own. Tullis broadly defines this “sense of place” as the merging of a person's internal and external landscapes, a situation where they feel right. The “place” framework is also enlightening in a story with so much movement. The term is loaded with enough meaning in the prologue to make the reader pause to consider how it is used when encountered, as it frequently is, in the text (xix–xxi).

As a descendant eager to elucidate his ancestors, Tullis writes as lively a history as the sources and his proficient pen allow; as more original sources become available with each new generation researched, the family subjects transform from silhouettes, whose circumstances are better preserved than they are themselves, to complex characters in more vivid settings.

The Henrys' story ably illustrates larger American themes. Tullis frequently broadens the scope to national events or fills in details on premodern aspects of American agriculturalists, from frontier medicine to hog slaughtering. The book succeeds on many levels, and due to the many layers of this work, it will be of use to those interested not only in the line of Henrys but in the early history of Uintah Basin settlement, in reliving earlier American semisubsistence lifestyles, and in considering questions of migration and belonging. What, after all, puts us in our place?

—David S. Carpenter