

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Libertarian stirs spirituality into the political stew

By **PAUL WHITFIELD**  
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Small-press books are the wild cards of the publishing world. Because they do not aim to ride last year's trend, the pleasures are often spontaneous and personal.

"Healing Our World: The Other Piece of the Puzzle" is that sort of book.

The author Mary Ruwart, who holds a doctorate in biophysics, combines libertarianism — she calls it the "marketplace ecosystem" — with Western and Eastern spirituality. This fresh interpretation already is creating a stir in libertarian circles. Presidential candidate Andre Marrou, for example, sometimes holds the book aloft at campaign appearances, urging others to read it. (He may be the only presidential candidate who reads something other than

polls.)

Few books generate that pass-it-on excitement. Robert Pirsig's "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" and Anthony de Mello's "One Minute Wisdom" are two that did for many.

"Healing Our World: The Other Piece of the Puzzle" is like those books in this way: It throws the reader off balance. Appreciation calls for letting go of something.

I read the first few chapters of "Healing Our World" quickly. I wasn't sure if the book "worked." I slowed my reading. Understanding emerged.

The slower pace is necessary. Ruwart is questioning what custom teaches us to accept.

Her basic argument is this: The world is a mess because we choose aggression-based means to achieve our goals. Yet, she writes, "the re-

sult we get is very different depending on the means we use to get there."

You cannot *push* open a door marked PULL, unless you push so hard you destroy the door, which is often what we do with our anti-drug wars, our poverty programs, our military adventures.

Ruwart suggests we take "the easy way out" -- the unstructured change of the marketplace ecosystem.

Is this wishful thinking — fine in theory, frightful in practice? Conventional wisdom says the free market can't be trusted with risky forces such as nuclear power; government must protect us.

Ruwart challenges the conventional wisdom:

"In 1957, a study by the Atomic Energy Commission predicted that a major accident at a nuclear

power plant could cause up to \$7 billion in property damage and several thousand deaths. The marketplace ecosystem protected the consumer from such events naturally: no company would insure the nuclear installations, so power companies were hesitant to proceed. To encourage nuclear power, Congress passed laws to limit the liability of the power plants ... If the damage were more extensive, the victims would just have to suffer."

This book is full of such surprises.

Ruwart examines health care, the rain forests, prisons, unemployment and other social problems. She identifies the hidden "aggression" factor in our societal arrangements, and shows how it betrays the intention.

### HEALING OUR WORLD: The Other Piece of the Puzzle

MARY J. RUWART, Ph.D.  
SunStar Press, 308 pp., \$14.95

Many things that Ruwart sees as implicitly violent — she likens taxation to slavery, just say no to the master and see what happens — may seem "normal" and "necessary."

She challenges the reader to see these things outside of custom, in spiritual clarity.

"I suspect humans require a sense of connectedness and community with the rest of their kind to reach the heights of happiness for which they were intended. When we use aggression, we destroy that connectedness and com-

munity. ... we forfeit the happiness we are ultimately trying to achieve by controlling others," she writes.

Ruwart believes that the world can change. "We don't need to choose between the ideal and the practical." To her, they are one.

Apart from the main text, the margin offers quotes from Jesus, Lao-tsu, Krishnamurti and others.

You may have some difficulty finding this trade paperback. The publicist says it is available through B. Dalton Booksellers. You also can order direct from SunStar Press, Box 342, Kalamazoo, Mich. 49005 (add 10 percent for postage, 4 percent sales tax if you live in Michigan).

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