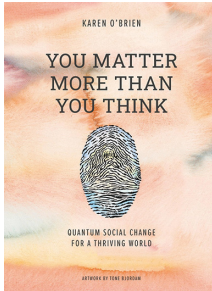




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BOOK TITLE:
You matter more than you think:
Quantum social change for
a thriving world



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ISBN:

9788269181951 (hardcover, 179 pp)

PUBLISHER:

cCHANGE Press, Oslo; NOK349.00

PUBLISHED:

2021

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HOW TO CITE:

Vogel C. Making sense in a complex, messy world: Relationships, agency, fractals, paradigms and YOU. *S Afr J Sci.* 2024;120(9/10), Art. #19155. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/19155>

ARTICLE INCLUDES:

- Peer review
- Supplementary material

PUBLISHED:

26 September 2024

Making sense in a complex, messy world: Relationships, agency, fractals, paradigms and YOU

How do we live in a world buffeted by change in political, social, environmental and personal contexts? How do we continue to thrive and not lose hope in the dystopian times surrounding us? In her beautifully crafted book, supported with various artistic illustrations by Tone Bjordam, leading global change scholar and professor at the University of Oslo, Karen O'Brien, takes the reader on a journey of self-actualisation and self-reflexivity and collective agency in how to better navigate and live in a world of complex risks and challenges.

In this book *You Matter More than You Think*, O'Brien helps us to see where and how we as citizens and co-habitants on our soul journeys can co-operate and can make a difference in this world.

O'Brien uses quantum social change as a way to look deeper into what it means to be a human being and fellow sojourner on the planet. The book is a useful companion to Alexander Wendt's book *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology*.¹

Through the thought-provoking chapters, the reader is not only carefully helped to connect with themselves, but is also challenged to see how important it is to build a collective, agentic perspective to understand their role in the global challenges facing humanity. The focus on the importance of mattering; the role of beliefs and why these matter as we try and engage in the world; ways of thinking – paradigms; relationality and the role of relationships; the role of metaphors; entanglements and connections; consciousness; agency; and fractals are examined, ending with a special section on 'YOU'.

In the first chapter of the book, O'Brien argues that we can all do better than merely coping and or adapting to crisis upon crisis. Rather, she argues that:

To do better requires thinking differently, acting differently, and being different. (p.2)

The questions raised are not, as she argues, as much about *whether* we can make change happen in transformative ways, but *how*? By inviting the reader to consider various dimensions and ways in which we can approach the challenges besetting the globe and humanity, she argues that collective change is made up of individual change. We are all, in some way, entangled through meaning, values and language and our sense of ourselves, and how we see ourselves and our relations with nature and society are underpinned by the nuances that quantum social sciences can offer. Using a quantum social sciences lens, we are not only separate but are also connected through relationships and communications – all critical for transformative social change.

Chapter 1 of the book provides a useful background to where and how we are all currently living – in a time of various crises that require actions (e.g. 'bending the curves' for greenhouse gas emissions in climate change and related contexts). The need to probe deeper and wider into why and how 'we' and 'you' matter in this complex world is clearly unpacked and supported with beautifully drawn illustrations of complex earth system 'science' components. The interactions of how worldviews of classical underpinnings and understandings of development can be different to, and have implications for *how* we act in the face of change are critiqued. Understandings of 'well-being' and the implications for how one engages in the scope and actions that can be undertaken for transformative change are also examined:

Again, this is not to deny the significance of the Enlightenment worldview, but it is essential to recognise its limitations and negative consequences for many people and much of the planet. (p.14)

By exploring examples and explanations from quantum theory in Chapter 2, some of the paradigms and the ways we think are illustrated. These are explored together with deeper meanings of social change and the role that quantum computing and other advances in quantum physics and their links to social change can play.

In Chapters 3–9, some of the ways of thinking and how they can shape our actions for change in this complex world are unpacked in more detail – namely, beliefs, relationships, metaphors, entanglement consciousness and agency. The chapter on agency, for example, explores the "fragmented dualisms of our classical world; agency in a quantum world acknowledges that [I/we] are [whole/parts]" and focuses attention on the 'quality' of our agency as we show up in the world aiming for inputs and influencing change:

When these values are at the heart of individual agency, collective agency, and political agency, it is possible to generate new, fractal-like patterns that replicate across scales, in every moment. (p.99)

...human and social fractals embed values that replicate at all scales. (p.98)

Finally, in the last chapter of the book, we are brought back to the main set of reflections on why YOU matter in the issues that have surfaced and been explored in the book:

Quantum social change is not just about choosing a different paradigm. It is about being a different paradigm. (p.122)

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The book is made richer by the wonderful artistic contributions and the Epilogue which contains a list of questions that were raised in a series of preparatory engagements and webinars that were held as the book was written. A draft of the book manuscript was made available between June 2020 and March 2021 and was downloaded by over 800 people and inputs and questions were gathered from several other people. Thus even though COVID-19 presented a time of separateness for many, this collaborative approach has made the book even more engaging. The concluding sections for each chapter also contain reflections that prompt the reader to do a little more thinking on some key issues.

The value of the book is not only in that it highlights key questions and raises sometimes very complex quantum perspectives, but it also argues that we need to be thinking about *how* I/we can enable progressive

change in our changing world. The book has an extensive resource of scholarly and popular references and materials and thus the book also serves as a solid reference book.

The only criticism, which is minor, is that it would have been good to have more examples informed from various perspectives (e.g. the Global South, the Global North) of what such 'being' and 'doing' can mean in contexts often fraught with competing and contested contexts, politics, cultural dimensions and notions of YOU.

Reference

1. Wendt A. Quantum mind and social science: Unifying physical and social ontology. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316005163>