

**Urban Mystic: Discovering the
Transcendent through Everyday Life**

by Ken Mellor

Strategic Book Publishing, 2009, and
The Awakening Network, 2010
470 pages, US \$22.25, Australia \$29.95

Reviewed by Nancy Porter-Steele

This is an interesting autobiography by a long-time, highly effective contributor to transactional analysis theory and practice. As the title indicates, Ken Mellor intends the book to be helpful to people who seek spiritual development. Other aspects will be central to readers who are transactional analysts.

After the introductory sections, Mellor divides this work into four “births,” paralleling the physiological and emotional processes through which every human being passes. The deep significance of this becomes apparent in the final section, in which we learn of the protocol developed at the time of his physical birth and, in hindsight, recognize the influence of this protocol on the ways in which he has lived throughout his challenging life.

Mellor’s description of his work with Jacqui Schiff and Cathexis Institute—beginning with her friendly and open response to his first inquiries, continuing through his plunge into powerful experiential and theoretical learning and writing, then later to the experience of

interpersonal difficulty—provides a welcome perspective, a valuable additional dimension. For those, like me, who learned and benefited from many aspects of Jacqui’s work and were dismayed by the eventual outcome of her relationship to the ITAA regarding ethics charges, it is a reinforcement of the positive contributions that she made theoretically, practically, and personally. For those, also like me, directly involved on behalf of ITAA in the processes that culminated in her resignation (I was vice president at the time) and dismayed that the facts were forever shrouded because of our professional responsibility to confidentiality, even the few sentences in which Mellor describes his contacts with Jacqui regarding that situation are a significant help—even all these years later.

Much of the book describes Mellor’s experiences and work as spiritual student and then teacher. He writes of this with eloquence, clarity, and passion. His path has been partly within an India-based tradition called “Jiba dharma,” previously unknown to me. As I am a student of other spiritual traditions, mainly Tibetan and Shambhala Buddhism, I found this extremely different approach very interesting. I also liked learning how he and his wife, Elizabeth, have brought together the therapeutic and spiritual aspects of their work.

Throughout the book, Mellor provides vignettes of his work with clients. This work is interesting and informative from the transactional analysis perspective. Bringing this together with his intense dedication to creating—and living within—a spiritual community, with drama in the relationships with his spiritual teachers, and extreme experiences with life-and-death situations of several kinds makes for gripping reading.

I appreciate the openness and courage of self-revelation that Mellor has demonstrated throughout. He has skillfully woven together many elements of his unusual life and offers them in a very readable book.

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