

Free essay about fractal time by gregg braden book review

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The Mayan apocalyptic predictions of 2012 have long since passed, and civilization has essentially moved on from its portents of doom and gloom. However, with Gregg Braden's *Fractal Time: The Secret of 2012 and a New World Age*, elements of self-help spiritualism and pseudo-math are combined to create a work of New Age spiritualism that, while certainly illuminating to the converted, will not successfully convince those looking for philosophies to the universe that require greater rigor. Looking at the book through an air of skepticism, *Fractal Time* fails to convince, poorly using its own research and loosely connecting information together in order to create an apocalyptic scenario that is true only for those who believe in it already. Gregg Braden is well known as a New Age author, having famously written on various combinations of mathematics, spirituality, and patterns; books like *The God Code* and *The Divine Matrix* have established Braden's reputation as a thorough, prolific writer on the subject of New Age spiritualism and the idea of the nature of the world following patterns. In his book *Fractal Time*, he discusses the nature of fractals - the geometric shapes that hold repeated identical patterns - and how they illustrate the cyclical nature of time. He then links it to the (then) oncoming 2012 Mayan calendar, noting that they had a fractal understanding of time. In essence, Braden's theory is that the power of time creates patterns that will be found in his own mathematical time code calendar. Braden says of fractal time, "it's a pattern. And that pattern is part of a cycle. It's as predictable and reliable as any high tech forecasts from the computer models, but it comes even earlier than they do." (82). To that end, Braden's claims involve a belief that changes in the metaphysical nature of the universe can be predicted and

anticipated, and therefore understood.

In Chapter 1, "The Time Code Program: Finding Our Future in the Cycles of the Past," Braden establishes the universal nature of cycles. The primary idea behind *The Fractal Code* is the notion that the world contains many mysteries that have yet to be solved, and the key to solving these mysteries is through understanding of cycles and patterns. Biological processes including child birth, menstruating, the passing of the seasons, all of these fall through cycles that demonstrate the universe's predilection toward them: "From the tiny pulses of energy generated by an atom to the rise and fall of enormous magnetic fields within the sun from the constant rhythm of the ocean's tides to the thousands of miles traveled by a tiny hummingbird as it migrates to warmer climates every year, our world is a never-ending dance of nature's repeating cycles. They're part of everything." (24). Nature carries out a sense of lawful arrangement, and so it is easy to see the various parts that make up the whole and notice how they reflect the whole themselves.

Time, according to Braden, is another pattern which can be used to understand the universe and better position yourself in order to keep your guard up. This extends to everything from big things like major world disasters to minor things like stock tips; everything has a cycle that can be predicted and managed. Applying this to a self-help context, Braden notes that by recognizing these patterns, we can prevent bad things from happening to us by preparing for them through anticipating them in these patterns: "if we know when a cycle begins and the pattern that it follows, then we also know where and how it will end. Perhaps most important, if we

know the conditions that a cycle brings, then we also know what to expect each time it reappears" (29). Even from a market perspective, Braden says the markets go through clear, concrete and predictable cycles as well - economic prosperity can come through this investigation of patterns. He creates a link to September 11 by starting at that focal point and finding a pattern, linking it to Pearl Harbor, citing that as evidence of the natural patterns of the universe.

In Chapter 2, " Our Journey Through Time: The Doctrine of World Ages," Braden connects these basic ideas with the past civilizations and leaders that helped to cultivate this idea of cycles in civilization. By citing the fact that ancient civilizations predicted apocalyptic scenarios and dramatic world changes, Braden argues that this is evidence of the perpetual understanding of patterns in the universe. The Hopi, the Sumerians and the ancient Egyptians are shown as being part of this cycle. The Zodiac is also cited as an important barometer for circular living and existence, citing the number 12 as a magic number that can help unravel the mysteries of time. Time is divided into " world ages" that come and go according to very specific mathematical variables, including the Dendera Zodiac and corresponding events (many of them linked to Christianity).

The Dendera zodiac, the symbols etched onto the temple roof in Egypt, are cited as a time map that will unravel the code to the understanding of the universe through patterns. He then draws connection to the Vedics and yuga traditions in order to connect those ideas further with the idea of world ages and cycles. Braden speaks of these many correlations, begging the question to the reader of whether or not these are coincidences. Without definitively

saying so, Braden ends the chapter with many leading questions that merely hint at a conclusion.

In Chapter 3: "The End of Time: Our Date with 2012," Braden connects these ideas to the then-upcoming prophecy of 2012. "While it's obvious that the year 2012 is on the minds of a lot of people today, when we step back for a bigger historical perspective, we discover that these beliefs are actually part of a tradition that began a very long time ago" (57). The specific patterns that lead to the change in world ages is said to be established by these civilizations, including the Aztecs and Mayans: "Using everything from prophetic visions to the dates of precise astronomical alignments, our ancestors devised every method imaginable to alert us to a single fact: now is the time of the most extraordinary conditions and opportunities that accompany the rarest of events, the shift from one world age to the next" (58).

Braden then links these ancient prophecies to the comparatively-modern work of Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce, who talked about world age transitions in the form of apocalypses and the like. He claims that Nostradamus successfully predicted the swastika and Hitler (ignoring the swastika's prior status as a symbol of peace), as well as other scientific discoveries. This all leads up to the discussion of the Mayan civilization itself and the corresponding 2012 prophecy. The Mayan calendars are shown in great detail, with Braden hypothesizing that these calendars were able to predict the changing of a world age through understanding of the latent patterns that underlie the universe. Connections are made between the Mayan and Vedic world age accounts, using that as evidence for the

continuation of cycles in the universe.

In Chapter 4, "The Key to the Universe, Time and Nature's Most Beautiful Numbers," Braden establishes the presence and importance of physics and mathematics in mastering this understanding of the universe's cycles.

Programs such as TimeWave Zero are described as mathematical processing programs that offer complex computations about universal patterns and cycles, using the principle that the universe favors simplicity to explain the use of patterns. Like in other chapters, Braden uses personal anecdotes (his recollections of the seasons changing and the way it affected the ground around his home) as apparent evidence of these patterns - something that does not strictly hold up to scientific scrutiny. The principle of fractals and the golden ratio are used to predict repeating patterns in time cycles; Braden cites them as the primary ways in which people can organize and predict the cyclical nature of the universe.

Fractals are explained as repeating patterns which occur in nature, linking the patterns in broccoli to the spread of lightning bolts to prove it: "This fractal view of the universe implies that everything from a single atom to the entire cosmos is made of just a few natural patterns. While they may combine, repeat, and build themselves on larger scales, in their complexity they can still be reduced to a few simple forms" (83). The number phi is cited as another magic number that is coded into the nature of the universe, perhaps erroneously citing *The Da Vinci Code* as inspiration for this revelation. Phi creates the golden ratio, which "applies to time itself" (89). Braden theorizes that this mathematical understanding of time undercuts the poetic nature of time that philosophers like Sartre have, in which time is

“ something that exists only because we need it to exist in our experience” (91). This leads to the belief that time is shaped in a spiral, which is formed in a fractal, which is what facilitates the repetitive and cyclical nature of time.

In Chapter 5, “ History Repeats in Love and War: Fractal Warnings for the Future,” Braden further notes the presence of cycles through fractals and their ability to allow people to predict the future. Again, personal anecdotes are used to show Braden’s personal experience with the repeating cycles of disaster, opening the chapter with a story of his teacher talking about the Cuban Missile Crisis. While this may help to solidify the relationship between the author and the reader, it does little to illuminate the issue of fractals and cosmology, and almost seems like anecdotal evidence for something like this to be part of a greater picture. Details about the names and children of presidents being similar are used as fuel to illustrate the pattern in time of these events occurring.

It is in this chapter that the vast majority of Braden’s more far-fetched theories take hold. Braden uses the loose idea that ‘ everything is connected,’ with little more than anecdotal and circumstantial evidence, to link things as varied as the September 11th attacks and the economic collapse of 2008 (when these are either tangentially linked or connected through various socioeconomic factors unrelated to the ebb and flow of time). Braden discusses his own investigations, saying that he has discovered these connections, but giving readers little insight into the process themselves. Instances in which disaster did not strike (such as the 1979 economic collapse not following the 1999 and 2008 recessions) are

given vague and arbitrary reasons for not fitting in with the pattern; something else must have prevented it from happening, while the numbers still work.

In Chapter 6, "The End of Time Revisited: What Can We Expect?", the apocalyptic talk Braden has alluded to comes to the forefront. According to him, the Mayan prophecy of "2012 is a process rather than an event. And it's one that is already well under way" (169). In the meantime, however, Braden forces conclusions and makes grand assumptions that may not necessarily be true; there is no way to prove, for example, that "There can be little doubt in the minds of anyone in the world today that life on planet Earth simply isn't business as usual. It's clear that something is happening- and it's big" (134). Personal anecdotes and interviews are weaved into a loose memoir (just as with the rest of the book) in which people tell him nonspecific things about how "everything is about to change," which Braden interprets any way he sees fit (135). The Time Code Calculator is cited again and again as being used to predict 2012 and its various effects on the populace, from the reverse in polarity of the magnetic fields of the earth, to a sudden climate change, to other factors hinted at but not quite elaborated upon. The generalized, nonspecific nature of the book is its biggest failing, as it presumes the conclusion rather than proves it.

In Chapter 7, "Choice Point 2012: Armageddon or the Second Eden?", Braden turns this claim of a "consistent message from our ancestors" towards the reader, noting that people should use these principles to anticipate and adjust towards what might happen in the future (158).

According to Braden, "heart-based focus and living will have a direct effect

upon the way we experience 2012 and our time of change” (192). It is here that Braden offers a New Age, pop-philosophy answer that we should be nicer to each other, with such generalized platitudes as “ we’re a family, Earth is our home, and we’re much stronger when we solve the problems of a changing world together than when we try to do so as a fragmented civilization clutching at the last vestiges of an unsustainable way of life?” (159).

This is the true self-help segment of the book, as it is essentially a reminder that the universe is cyclical, patterns emerge, and you can benefit from them if you can see them coming. All of this is couched in the New Age tradition of spooky mysticism and complex, opaque mathematics that is nearly useless in a practical fashion to those reading it, but give off just enough of an air of authority that those who are already bought into these ideas can cite that as evidence. The unfortunate reality, however, is that the Mayan prophecy of 2012 did not come true, and since so much of this book is predicated upon preparing for it and life afterwards, its lessons become somewhat dated after the fact.

This final chapter does have some good principles behind it: the current trend towards conspicuous consumption of the Earth’s resources does leave us on the road to collapse, and economic inequality has led to many a substantial societal problem throughout the world. However, because of the obfuscation of these issues in so much mathematical and conspiratorial mumbo-jumbo, it is hard to take these claims seriously, which may serve to hurt the message. Instead of reasoning that human compassion comes from our desire to make the world a better place for ourselves and our children,

Braden continues to claim that hearts have “ magnetic fields” which “ respond to the quality of emotion that we create in our lives,” which are the kinds of claims that are so vague and nonsensical as to become almost meaningless (172).

Braden’s book contains three appendices, all of which attempt to provide sufficient evidence for the oncoming 2012 apocalypse and the fractal nature of time, but lack context or clarity to the point of obfuscation. In Appendix A, “ The Time Code Calculator,” in particular, Braden states that “ In this mode, we can identify a key event in our personal or collective future and look back into the past to find the last time the same conditions existed in the cycle” (183-184). This strategy purports to allow for readers to ‘ do the math’ and determine the past events that happened on a particular date in order to figure out what happens in the future. The methodology behind this calendar is only vaguely referred to without going into specifics, making it difficult to buy into these convoluted formulas that attempt to convince through sheer complexity. His example date, March 1984, causes Braden to link various events in the Cold War during that time with the fractal pattern of time, connecting them to both the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001. The problem with this reasoning, however, is that it does not expand beyond coincidence, Braden simply asserting that these events are connected through math. In reality, however, picking any period of time and using said formula would reveal at least one bad thing that would have happened in human history, which is correlation without causation.

In conclusion, while the central tenets of looking at time as cyclical and pattern-based are interesting and useful when considering the philosophy of

our lives, Gregg Braden's Fractal Time comes across as little more than a dated attempt to capitalize on the Mayan 2012 prophecy fervor that was contemporaneous with the book's release, combined with a loose autobiography to imply personal anecdotal evidence as truth. The use of complex mathematics and fractals to attempt to explain the universe is not adequately explained in enough detail to convince neophytes without the necessary mathematical background, at least when it comes to the Time Code Calendar. The New Age spirituality may be useful to those who are open to its ideas and general principles, but it is too unfortunately-framed in the doomsday apocalyptic portents of 2012 to make it apply to today, when the Mayan apocalypse has come and gone for more than a year without evident changes to the world or its magnetic fields.

Works Cited

Braden, Gregg. Fractal Time. Hay House, 2009. Print.