

[PDF] The Age of Immunology: Conceiving a Future in an Alienating World

# The Age of Immunology: Conceiving a Future in an Alienating World

*A. David Napier*

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**A. David Napier : The Age of Immunology: Conceiving a Future in an Alienating World** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Age of Immunology: Conceiving a Future in an Alienating World:

In this fascinating and inventive work, A. David Napier argues that the central assumption of immunology—that we survive through the recognition and elimination of non-self—has become a defining concept of the modern age. Tracing this immunological understanding of self and other through an incredibly diverse array of venues, from medical research to legal and military strategies and the electronic revolution, Napier shows how this defensive way of looking at the world not only destroys diversity but also eliminates the possibility of truly engaging difference, thereby impoverishing our culture and foreclosing tremendous opportunities for personal growth. To illustrate these destructive consequences, Napier likens the current craze for embracing diversity and the use of politically correct speech to a cultural potluck to which we each bring different dishes, but at which no one can eat unless they abide by the same rules. Similarly, loaning money to developing nations serves as a tool both to make the peoples in those nations more like us and to maintain them in the nonthreatening status of distant dependents. To break free of the resulting downward spiral of homogenization and self-focus, Napier suggests that we instead adopt a new defining concept based on embryology, in which development and self-growth take place through a process of incorporation and transformation. In this effort he suggests that we have much to learn from non-Western peoples, such as the Balinese, whose ritual practices require them to take on the considerable risk of injecting into their selves the potential dangers of otherness and in so doing ultimately strengthen themselves as well as their society. *The Age of Immunology*, with its combination of philosophy, history, and cultural inquiry, will be seen as a manifesto for a new age and a new way of thinking about the world and our place in it.

"The Age of Immunology is one of the most intellectually engaging works of anthropology that I have read in quite some time. It expands Napier's unique voice into an analysis of alternating complexity and simplicity on the science and discourse of immunology. It has a level of passion that makes it compelling reading." - George Marcus, Rice University

From the Inside Flap

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