



## Martha Beck's *Leap of Perception* Foreword

When it comes to books about spiritual and personal development, I am a very hard person to please. I grew up in a religious community bursting with good intentions, pearls of wisdom, and a great deal of what I later came to see as utter nonsense. Then I got three social science degrees from Harvard, where I learned to question absolutely every claim made by every author I read. Harvard also exposed me to a sort of dogmatic materialism, a cultural denigration of anything that could not be measured in purely physical terms, which struck me as woefully shortsighted in a post-Newtonian scientific era. Physicists had proven that matter and energy are in fact different manifestations of the same phenomenon, and I doubted even the doubters.

I left academia to become a self-help author, unintentionally motivating many other writers in that genre to send me their work. Nowadays, I receive several new manuscripts, galleys, and hardcover volumes each week that I stack in a pile I call “Books for Which I Did Not Ask.” Some of them are terrific, but many more are just well-meaning regurgitations of a sort of verbal pabulum. My process for them has three steps: (1) read a few chapters; (2) roll eyes; (3) donate book to a home for the bewildered. I know I should respect people who worry about cleansing their auras as much as I do about tooth decay, who consult psychic gynecologists when their chakras feel muddy, or who spend whole chapters attributing their writer’s block to the fact that Mercury is retrograde (Mercury, as far as I can tell, is virtually always in retrograde). But I don’t.

My point is that between battle-hardened skepticism and jaded overexposure, I am an extremely tough critic of books written by people like Penney Peirce. I am skeptical to the point of outright hostility.

However.

The thing about Penney’s advice is that it works. Instead of making vague positive statements, she gives specific counsel with pragmatic steps that readers can use to create specific outcomes. True, both the instructions and the outcomes have to do with the reader’s subjective experience, and most aren’t physically measurable. Do I have more calm and peace when I follow her advice? Yes. Do I experience the world as if all humans, including me, are going through a transformation that requires a leap of perception? Yes. Do Penney’s instructions make me more intuitive? By using them, can I more accurately “see” situations that are far away, either geographically or in the future? Do these perceptions test well when I check the details in the physical world? Yes, yes, and yes.

I might not believe a word Penney writes—except that pretty much everything she describes is happening to me, too. We’ve never met, but our experiences seem to be marching in perfect synchrony. The day before she asked me to write this foreword, I told my literary agent that the only book I’d want to write would be something called *The Leap*, and I was pretty sure I wasn’t the one who had to write it. Well, you’re holding that book in your hands right now, and that probably means you’re marching to the same exciting, joyful, delighted tune that so enralls Penney and me.

Most writers who take on this issue describe it in terms that reveal a rather shallow and cursory experience of energetic transformation. Reading their books is like trying to use a guidebook to a city—say, Manhattan—that the author has seen in movies but never visited. They're describing something real and fascinating, but their information is skewed by preconceptions that have never bumped up against real-time experience. *Leap of Perception* is like a guidebook written by a native New Yorker. Penney has walked and driven and taken the metaphorical subway through this territory. She knows how to hail a cab, where to find great restaurants, which landmarks are worth seeing. When you follow her guidance, you actually get to the places she describes. And the place she describes—the world on the other side of the “leap of perception”—is a magical, wonderful place. You're probably going there already, on purpose or accidentally, by choice or by happenstance. This book will make the trip much easier, much more joyful. I recommend that you consult it often, as I intend to.

I'll finish by quoting Penney's own words: “Whatever or whoever has real presence is authentic, trustworthy, convincing, vital, magnetic, universal in some way, and naturally attention-getting and attention-giving.” I doubt she knew as she wrote this that it was a verbal self-portrait, but it perfectly describes this book and its author. I'm so grateful that Penney has offered this to the world—so that I can feel someone holding my hand as I make my own leap of perception. Her other hand is also extended to you. Grab it, hang on, and leap.

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**November 2012**