their working years. One might think that people don't plan for old age simply because they don't like to think about it. Yet Posner finds this explanation unacceptable. Invoking rational-choice theory, he probes for the logic behind the fact that young people act like grasshoppers when they should be acting like ants.

What he comes up with is an ingenious theory of "multiple selves," in which the economist's rational self-interested individual is replaced by a *series* of rational self-interested individuals—overlapping with each other and capable, to some degree, of assuming responsibility for each other. In Posner's view, this theory explains why social security is not a form of "paternalism," based on the notion that "government knows best." Instead, it construes the young working "self" as a trustee, occupying a body that will later be occupied by the older retired "self." Since the interests of both "selves" must be respected, the law imposes a limited fiduciary obligation on the younger.

However ingenious, such a theory has too little explanatory power to justify its bizarre disassembling of the person. This is model building for its own sake, and it becomes even less satisfying as Posner tackles such vexing issues as age discrimination and euthanasia. Despite the occasional quotation from Aristotle or Mill, Posner's approach does little to illuminate the moral dilemmas involved. Indeed, superficial borrowings from philosophy only serve as reminders that, for examining some areas of life, the older disciplines are best.

—*Joseph Brinley*

History

GOD'S CHINESE SON: The Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan.
By Jonathan D. Spence.
Norton. 400 pp. $27.50

Spence's many admirers will be delighted with his newest work, a history of the Taiping Rebellion that, characteristically, reveals a whole new way of seeing a familiar story. Spence, a professor of history at Yale University, has always displayed a knack for lively detail. Minutiae and epic scope are brilliantly blended in this tragic portrait of Hong Xiuquan (1814–64), the religious visionary whose popular rebellion almost toppled the Qing dynasty in the mid-19th century.

The rich ground of China's greatest revolt has been worked before, but Spence brings both new material and a new approach. The material consists of two texts published in the 1860s by the Taipings themselves, recently rediscovered in the British Museum. The approach is to get inside the Taiping movement, not just analyzing the social, political, and economic causes but evoking its religious and psychological dimensions.

The immediacy of Spence's writing, including his bold use of the present tense, may seem a bit shocking at first. But it enlivens the story without sacrificing scholarly precision. The "you are there" quality adds vividness to the book's account of the lives of Western missionaries living in China, its sketch of Chinese religious traditions, and its recreation of the cosmological conflicts faced by Hong Xiuquan and his compatriots.

Spence concentrates on Hong, the man who believed himself to be "God's Chinese son." We follow him as he assiduously studies the Confucian classics for the all-important examinations. We learn how his repeated failures almost destroy him and how a fever dream carries him up to heaven to meet his father and elder brother. With time, that dream becomes a revelation: Hong believes that his father is the Christian God, and his elder brother Jesus. Convinced of his own divinity, and of his mission to save the world from "demon-devils," he builds the fierce, puritanical movement that will shake traditional China to its foundations.

Using Hong Xiuquan's life to explore the Taiping Rebellion, Spence draws implicit parallels to more recent events. The record of infighting and Hong's assumption of imperial prerogatives (including sexual ones, denied on religious grounds to his followers) are reminiscent of Mao Zedong. Spence's insights into Hong's theology also conjure up thoughts of David Koresh and Shoko Asahara. Yet it is a measure of Spence's accomplishment that his account of this frightening, fascinating crusade is fresher than last week's headlines.

—*Benjamin L. Self*

KEEPING TOGETHER IN TIME: Dance and Drill in Human History.
By William H. McNeill.
Harvard Univ. Press. 198 pp. $22

The emergence, development, and maintenance of human society has been significantly shaped by "keeping together in time," that is, by coordinating people's bodily movements in such activities as collective labor, social and ritual dancing, and military drill.

So proposes McNeill, professor emeritus of history at the University of Chicago. In this intriguing if highly speculative book, he argues that human community emerges "whenever an indefinite number of individuals start to move their muscles rhythmically, establish a regular beat, and continue doing so for long enough to arouse euphoric excitement shared by all participants." The effects of this "muscular bonding" have been far-ranging, from generating cooperation among prehistoric human beings to creating group cohesion among soldiers in battle.

Like a dancer doing a warm-up number before finding his feet, McNeill starts weak before gaining strength. Discussing evolution, he extrapolates an ambitious theory from skimpy fossil evidence and inconclusive behavioral studies of wild chimpanzees. It is entirely plausible that when bands of *Homo erectus* learned to "get together in time," they fostered emotional bonds that in turn facilitated the hunting and sharing of food. But this kind of deductive gyration is trickier to perform than the Flying Lindy. Even McNeill acknowledges that his caveman hypothesis "lacks learned support."

McNeill is on firmer ground when he notes that in primitive communities, rhythmic movements are used to make work more efficient and bearable, and to make dance a conduit for shared religious ecstasy.

The same was true in ancient times, McNeill argues. The early Hebrew prophets "danced and sang to induce divine frenzy"; Saul and David "danced before the Lord"; and the early Christians "understood that departed Christian souls joined the angels in a perpetual dance around the throne of God." Islam, too, has its ecstatic tradition of whirling dervishes, and it expects all believers to make the same prayer movements five times a day.

Building upon a personal reminiscence of drilling as a recruit in World War II, McNeill explores how the ties forged in close-order drill helped the armies of ancient times, whether Chinese or Greek, fight more effectively. Drill's role in actual fighting became less decisive as weaponry became more powerful. But even after the Industrial Revolution, it retained a vital role in bolstering solidarity—as was evident among the precision-drilled troops of Nazi Germany.

McNeill ends with the claim that "repugnance against Hitlerism" has led to a widespread and persistent "distrust" of muscular bonding in the West. But this claim is instantly undermined by the fact that a very different kind of muscular bonding—swing dancing—was extraordinarily popular during the war. Indeed, *Keeping Together in Time* would be a better book if it considered that, for the generation that defeated Hitler, the vigorous movements associated with swing provided a liberating counterpart to the Nazi goose step. As recalled by the Czech writer (and former swing musician) Josef Skvorecky: "Our sweet, wild music . . . was a sharp thorn in the sides of the power-hungry men."

—*Mark Gauvreau Judge*

INTIMACY AND TERROR: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s.
Edited by Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen.
New Press. 394 pp. $27.50

Can a totalitarian regime forcibly deprive human beings of their memory? Not without bizarre consequences. Or so it would appear from this impressive collection of personal diaries written in the Soviet Union during the harshest years of Joseph Stalin's rule.