

is that humanistic psychology would further benefit by also turning West and especially to the Judeo-Christian traditions. The yoga that we are developing at our Institute of Human Spirituality is a Universal Yoga - a synthesis of East and West, that will lead eventually to a truly universal, and ultimately cosmic, identity.

Geraint ap Iorwerth

John Rowan reviews

The metaphors of consciousness by Ronald S. Valle & Rolf von Eckartsberg (eds). Plenum Press 1981.

This is such an exciting book, it could make your hair stand on end. It is pushing at the very limits of what we can know, and testing the boundaries of what we can experience.

Just look at some of the chapter headings: **Behaviourism, phenomenology and holism in psychology: A scientific analysis** by Karl Pribram; **The mind contained in the brain: A cybernetic belief system** by John Lilly; **Reflections on David Bohm's holomovement: A physicist's model of cosmos and consciousness** by Renée Weber; **Exo-psychology** by Timothy Leary; **Transpersonal realities or neurophysiological illusions? Towards an empirically testable dualism** by Charles Tart; **Approaches to psychotherapy: Freud, Jung and Tibetan Buddhism** by David Levin; **Energy of consciousness in the human personality** by Swami Rama; **Transformation of self and world in Johannes Tauler's mysticism** by Donald Moss; **The nature and expression of feminine consciousness through psychology and literature** by Valerie Valle & Elizabeth Kruger; **Speculative approaches to consciousness in science fiction** by David Ben Leavitt; and **Relativistic quantum psychology: A reconceptualization of what we thought we knew** by Ronald Valle. Altogether there are 25 chapters, and many of them are of very high quality: this is an achieved and very well edited book, not just a set of bright ideas.

There is so much useful material here. Eckartsberg has a huge chapter on models of consciousness, which is a mini-book in itself. In it he distinguishes between open-eyed transcendence - a height experience - and closed-eyes transcendence - a depth experience. The former means affirmation of self, the latter, loss of self. Both are important in the process of growth.

Renée Weber is very good on David Bohm, explaining his difficult ideas with great clarity and verve.

A good example (of holographic logic) is provided by **Om mani padme hum**, the most sacred **mantram** of Tibetan Buddhism. Sometimes translated as "the dew drop slips into the silent sea", a description of union between the part and the whole, this **mantram** can also be rendered reversely, as "**the shining sea slips into the dewdrop**" (Lama Govinda). Although it conflicts with our ordinary logic, this concept is compatible with holonomic models, as we have seen.

Her theme of the reversal of ideas, and Eckartsberg's insistence on the importance of depth as well as height, are both taken up in Marian's chapter on **Depth consciousness**, where he says:

Westernized approaches to oriental psychology run the risk of lending themselves to a kind of transcendent denial, the outcome of which is to seek liberation up at the peaks and not at the depths. What comes to matter is being high and quickly transcending our woundedness and our pathologies. For Hillman this is a cause for concern, as it is precisely through our illness and woundedness that we may seek doorways to the depths of soul.

Marian also quotes Mokusen Miyuki and James Hall as making similar points. The finding of the true self, they say, "cannot be identified with aiming at dissolution of the ego". It is not the ego which is transcended, but the ego-image. As we grow, we give up one image after another of what our ego means, of what it is like.

This theme is again taken up by David Levin, in his discussion of the process of giving up images and assumptions.

According to Buddhism, **all** conceptual constructions of the experiential process are **defence mechanisms**, to the extent that they solidify into patterns of response that obscure a clear perception of one's situation and block an appropriate, effective and spontaneous involvement. Health, radically understood, is simply a question of **staying** with the situated experiential process, just as it presents itself, and letting the spontaneous play of energies flow freely, not separated by conflict into subject and object, inner and outer, myself and others, nor myself (here) and the situation (there). The wholesome flow, or creative interplay, of the process is what principally matters.

In fact, Levin's whole account of Buddhist psychotherapy sounds awfully familiar to me. It sounds just like the humanistic psychotherapy which I try to practise!

One of the many nice simple ideas which work so well in this book is Valle's analogy of the wave and the particle. We have all learned by now that the physicists find that the elementary constituents of matter behave in some ways as if they were waves, and in others as if they were particles. It does not make sense, they say, to ask the question - "Yes, but what are they **really**?" Similarly, Valle says, in psychology we can treat people as objects pushed around by stimuli from outside and responses from inside - this is the particle aspect of human beings. But there is also the wave aspect, which he calls volition, and this is intentional. The particle aspect (third-person use) represents social determinism and control by environmental conditions; the wave aspect (first person use) represents inner decisions as to how much one will attend to a situation, and as to the degree of concentration one will evidence. Both are 100% true, and it is not a question of being partly one and partly the other.

Human behaviour can never be predicted with certainty because of its intrinsic "wave" nature. In fact, one can now see that the variance, the error that is evident in all experimental data, is the ignored volitional side of the human subject. Our "wave" side is the reason there is a "built-in" variability that can **never** be accounted for in the purely "particle" approach of an objective social science as psychology is presently conceived.

This seems to me a very helpful analogy, which gets us out of the trap of thinking that people are **either** social atoms at the mercy of social forces **or** individual essences independent of all social influence. They are both at once, and can switch from one to the other in an instant.

It is often noted how people in transpersonal psychology stop short of talking about the Deity. It is the strength of this book that it is willing to take this step. Particularly good is Moss's chapter on Johannes Tauler, a German mystic who lived from 1300 to 1361.

One frequently hears the idea that there is a pure, true and unadulterated mystical experience, which is unfortunately distorted and concealed due to the individual's religious framework . . . just the opposite is true. Mysticism is a child of orthodoxy.

This is startling enough, but Moss goes on to show that mysticism in fact relies a lot on thought and language. Mystics feel a great need to talk about the ineffable.

Speculation, expression and immediate mystical experience are essentially interdependent. The effort to move toward articulation and expression is intrinsic to the unfolding of mystical experience, even when the mode of articulation is opposed to reason and concept as in the Zen experience. Mysticism requires the vehicle of language to unfold, yet never exhausts itself in finished language.

Moss goes on to say how precisely mysticism works. He goes along very much with the Thai monk of a Buddhist monastery who said - "The truth comes from one's self. One's self is the big book". Moss says:

If the individual wishes the divine counsel of the spirit, he need only attend to his inner inclinations. If he wishes to participate in the eternally recurring birth of the divine son, begotten by the Godhead, he must submerge himself

in his inner ground. Finally, if he wishes a taste of the ultimate union with the anonymous Godhead, he again must submerge himself absolutely into his interior.

This seems to me, though Moss is talking about prayer, just the same inner gesture as is involved in meditation, and in the best therapy. And, as in humanistic therapy, the emphasis is on allowing the process to run itself, rather than on taking charge of it and controlling it. Here is a quote from Tauler himself:

Further, the human being should attend, absolutely inwardly, to whenever the spirit of God drives him toward rest or toward work, so that he may follow every impulse and act according to the direction of the holy spirit: now to rest, now to work, so that he may then take up his work full of good will and in peace.

This is exactly what I have been doing for some time now, and I can attest to the fact that it works. I found that it was an extension of the way I had already been working, and had firm connections with the approach of, say, Barry Stevens in **Don't push the river**. But it is an extension which means giving up the real self, the need for autonomy, the desire for meaning in one's life and the other marks of what Wilber (1980 calls the Centaur stage. And this transition, which Wilber calls passing through the transpersonal bands, is helped a great deal by the use of symbols. Moss again:

The entire sacramental and spiritual repertoire of the medieval church was drawn upon to serve as a kind of transitional object (Winnicott) to wean the individual from the profane world.

This idea, of transpersonal symbols as transitional objects, seems a valid insight to me. Just like a teddy bear or a piece of blanket, the symbol is necessary at first, and can be given up later. As Winnicott (1971) says: "It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the . . . whole cultural field". And so at a certain point, the mystic, having duly explored all that the symbols have to offer (which may take, and probably should take, many years), can go on beyond them. As Tauler says:

On this step three things will hinder you, and you must dispense with them: the body of our Lord, the word of God, and your chosen spiritual exercises. On this step every help for you signifies a hindrance.

All of the theological and symbolic forms which have so carefully been transported into the inner domain are now to be abandoned. Objectlessness, emptiness, nothingness and absolute receptivity are the goals at this stage, uncluttered by word, concept, sacrament or image.

Moss is very clear about this, and of course he is saying the same thing as Wilber says when he talks about giving up one self-image to go on to the next, and what Weber and Levin have been saying earlier in this same book.

This is in fact a remarkably unified book, in spite of the disparity in origins of the writers who contribute to it. It represents a great leap forward in thinking, and makes a lot of other books look very plodding and limited.

Looking at the psychological from the spiritual end, as this book does, puts everything into a fresh perspective. We can now see therapy not as the end of a process (closing off psychology) but as the beginning of one (opening up spirituality). It's an exciting trip, and many of the chapters in this book do justice to the idea; some do not. For anyone who liked **The aquarian conspiracy** or **Human inquiry** or **The atman project** or **The tao of physics** or **The dancing wu-li masters**, here's another treat.

But the prospective reader should be warned that this is difficult and advanced stuff, not for the timid or the faint-hearted. This is a pioneering book, and as such it needs the patience and sympathy of the reader to help it along. But it must be read by anyone who wants to know what lies at the end of the therapy road.

References

Ken Wilber (1980) **The atman project**. A Quest Book.
Donald Winnicott (1971) **Playing and reality**. Tavistock. (Also Penguin now.)