

**Arnold Keyserling**

## **THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT IN EUROPE**

If one speaks of the human potential movement and its place in Europe, one must also consider the European culture and how it differs from India, China and from Islam. Because of its roots in Greek culture, Europe has always believed in spiritual evolution as the basis for existence. It is only for 300 years, since the beginning of the bourgeois period that we have had a more or less stable political system and it is only 50 years since we have been in a really ideological age, the age of socialism and capitalism which have in reality nothing to do with the fundamental spirit of Europe. Now we are in the process of going back to the idea that the individual is the starting point of social life. So I want to talk to you about two traditions: on one side the different stages of religion and on the other idealism, particularly in the period between Kant and Nietzsche; I am going to show how the discoveries of the seven philosophers of this period have strongly influenced the birth of the movement of human potential.

What is religion? Religion since 300 B.C. has been the church. The end of religion is to rediscover mankind's lost links with nature. Animals are directed by their instincts; human being from the moment that they have two parameters, that is to say their socio-cultural tradition and their genetic heritage, are placed between an intellectual and rational life and a life which has lost its links with nature; in the myths of paradise man has eaten of the apple of the Tree of Knowledge and he has forgotten to eat the apple of the Tree of Life. That is what we are in process of doing now; in a purposeful way to rediscover these links with nature, these links which animals have instinctively.

What is a purpose? A purpose is a need, and if the need is not satisfied I am miserable. If I do not succeed in satisfying it in one way, I will try to realize it in another. Purpose is the ability to identify with one's objectives; but where do these objectives come from? If the objectives come from human beings themselves, then that is their motivation. If someone writes a book in order to become famous, that is a motivation. Human beings must absorb purposes like the inspiration of breath; this is the opening towards inspiration, the

opening towards the source of the universe; this is the foundation of the old religion as well as Indian yoga and the latin religion.

But in this religion there are four stages; the first of these stages is the oracular as was found with the Greeks, the Celts and the Romans - that is to say man searches to understand the divine will or the will of evolution through happenings which are normally dangerous. The second stage is what people in anthropology call cultural heroes. That is those people who have traced out their own road, the prophetic religions, someone who is an incarnation of God or who has come to the earth, who is a hero and this hero has found the road to paradise, the road to liberation and his life and his words together form a prophetic religion, a combination one must follow in order to reach what has been promised.

In the first of religions that one might call oracular or magic there was freedom since as Heraclitis said, the Delphic Oracle does not force you; it makes comments about the situation and it is up to you to take the decisions. Don Juan said: at every moment of life nature is speaking to us and if we are open and listen to nature, we understand what is the next step we must take; the Chinese in the I Ching had a method which was for them the law of nature - through which they could better understand the oracle. But fundamentally there is no difference between the Greek oracle and the Chinese oracle since each of them is a form of religion, not of superstition; religion is based on the fact that we are capable of being in contact with transcendence. In all the ancient civilizations the human being who is not capable of doing that is simply someone who has not reached maturity. Now among those within the prophetic religions there are people who try to help themselves, not only in copying and following their master, but in understanding the structure of the spirit, and thereby attaining the state of freedom. That is what one calls the mystic religion. The religion of mysticism is from the point of view of evolution higher than the prophetic religion. It exists in all writings, in all books. In Moslem mysticism the same texts which for a semite are simple laws are taken as metaphors of personal evolution: and even though the prophetic religions are exclusive and aggressive, mysticism - whether moslem, jewish, christian, hindu, taoist, all share exactly the same concepts.

This is the world of which Laing has spoken when he spoke of recession in place of regression. The Indians call this the road of the multiplicity of interior unity. It is to find in oneself the awareness which is outside the time, which is at one and the same moment now and eternity. If mystical religion becomes political, it can be very danger-

ous because not everybody is gifted for mysticism: this would be forcing human beings to take a road which does not suit them. Moreover in mysticism there is the great danger of transference. Those who take the mystic way are seeking interior illumination, beyond motivations. Thus if one follows someone on the mystical path, some transference may happen and one becomes once more a dependent child, someone who allows themselves to be led by someone else.

The fourth religion is the gnostic religion. This happened in Greece during the hellenic age. When the Greeks said to themselves "now that we know the ideas which allow us to understand reality, why don't we search for the same ideas in order to reach towards transcendence?" It was Plato who formulated the idea of ecstasy and if you study the Alexandrian gnostic period, you will imagine that you are in the present day. All these different groups, all the different therapies, all the different links that one finds today, they were already there in Alexandria. But at that moment there was a tragic development in Europe. In 522 A.D. a religious council condemned Origene and gnosticism and personal evolution. Since then christian catholics no longer have the right to develop their own personal evolution.

That whole tradition became clandestine, esoteric; and everyone who did not submit to orthodoxy either protestant or catholic, that is to say to the prophetic religion, was persecuted and sometimes burnt. The great change came with Kant and with Goethe and with Descartes. Descartes discovered that the act of understanding did not need a system. Understanding is simply the ability clearly to visualise a problem either geometrically or analytically. This understanding leaves the spirit free for a new understanding; that is we have capacity of understanding if we are capable of always making the distinction between that which we know and that which which we do not know: and it is the search of what we do not know that is the basis for human spontaneity and without that we cannot progress. Thus was founded a base for the philosophy of knowledge and epistemology. But that was not enough because what could that mean for the ordinary lives of ordinary human beings?

Kant is known above all as an epistemologist and not for his objectives. But the great objective of Kant was the liberation of human beings so that they could truly be autonomous creatures. Heteronomy implies that human beings depend one on the other; for Kant it is the fault of human beings themselves that they have lost their liberty and it is up to them to find it again; but this is a particular kind of liberty. There is the liberty that we all know, that is to say political liberty, that we are not forced to do things that we don't wish to do. But

the second of the liberties, is not to have one's actions determined by one's knowledge. If you read the dictionary definition of will, it is described as fulfilled wishes. For a Chinese or for an Indian or for a Greek philosopher this is the opposite of will, - they say that the wishes that you had in the past belong to the past. At the same time free will in the theological sense is the freedom to do the will of God, that is to say to be open to the future. In all the prophetic religions there is this idea that human beings must follow the law to the letter and when the spirit of science became important, the laws of God were replaced by the laws of nature.

In the catholic religion and also in protestant and calvinist and lutheran religions there are theological explanations regarding the proof of the existence of God. Thus faith is transformed into belief. Unfortunately, in German the term 'glauben' means both of these. In French and in English you have the difference between the two. So, Kant demonstrated that the three ideas of God, that is firstly the union of everything as love, secondly the idea of the works, and thirdly the idea of the 'I' or the ego are not facts but theories. If someone is conditioned, they have conditioned themselves. Thus these theories flow from the will, the will not only to believe that God exists, but to act as though God existed; to live not only for one's own little world, but for the larger world; and thirdly to believe in the self, that one is responsible for own's own life and for one's environment. Thus Kant says that in ethics there is only the categorical imperative to treat the other as an end and not only as a means; means are functional; but as an end this means accepting the other and accepting love, that is to say good-will for others as the basis of existence.

Let us rephrase the three postulates of Kant in the language of humanistic and transpersonal psychology; it's exactly the same thing. The basic premise that we accept is that the individual develops her or himself and the negative attitude regarding human life is to stagnate in any given social group. We must serve the earth; we are not masters of the earth but we form an integral part of nature; if we are not open to *inspiration*, our emotional life as well as our spiritual life is lost.

But these two freedoms are not enough. It was Goethe who said: 'there are other liberties'. In the history of western philosophy, jewish philosophy has played an enormous role. It has always intervened at decisive moments; thus Freud was a jew, Spinoza was a jew too and one of the greatest philosophers in the history of humanity. It was Spinoza who said: 'there are no bad characters, there are no negative passions; one must accept one's emotional and passionate

being because only from the moment that I accept myself totally can I reach "*amor intellectualis*".' *Amor intellectualis* with Spinoza was a spiritual state when I am in union with God (and if I say God or evolution, it is the same thing, *deus sine natura*.) But Goethe has added to that: the belief that everyone has within him or her a potential, the potential to be everything. This was the grand aristotelian error which says that the end of existence is to function professionally, to be a professor or an artist. In fact every human being is everything. At the end of his life Goethe said to Eckerman 'I have not used a third of the potential which I had and therefore the universe must offer me other worlds of action.' Every human being is a potential genius, but how can they realize it? For that society has to change; Laborit said that the human being is a product of research into the self; it is s/he who is the centre and not the economy, the social revolution, the transformation of the conditions of life.

How to adapt this new philosophy to society? This was the work of the dialectic and speculative philosophers - Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer; the interior world while Kierkegaard, Feuerbach and Nietzsche considered.

Fichte said that the "I" does not exist as it existed as a fact (accepted) through the whole of European history. This "I" is today called a sickness, an illusion of the self and the Aristotelian ideal. People must have a certain image of themselves; they have to take themselves very seriously, they must be beings of standing. In fact, human beings are all in a state of becoming; they are at one and the same moment finite and infinite; infinite with regard to their possibilities. So when someone decides to create something, for example to write a book, they move then from the infinite into the finite; once the book is written the individual realizes that he/she has utilized only a small part of themselves. In order to writethis book, there had been parts of the individual which have not been used, thus once more they return into their full potential, into their freedom. But to achieve this way of being, one must transform bourgeois society; it must become socialist; (it must take work as the starting point of life). With work we can transform the world: the worker is the only real person; it is they who will transform the world and who can master time; and so long as each individual has not become a worker and does not consider the value and importance of being a worker, there is no true civilisation - that is to say the civilisation of friends living in freedom.

Fichte like Goethe was a freemason. Schelling, the second of these philosophers added this idea - that it is not only we ourselves who

are dialectic; nature also is dialectic; we must understand that the entire imagination of collective humanity is the same thing as the richness of evolution in nature. It is the role of humankind to accomplish nature in culture, this idea which was taken up later by Bergson and by Teilhard de Chardin.

Hegel explained that nature is part of our experience, the individual's work another part. Hegel pointed out that we do not live alone; we live in history. We must consider history also as a dialectic evolution. Each of us in order to fully realize him/herself must find a world in which they belong, that is to say their **work**, that which they may do in order to transform the world. Thus the aim to philosophy is to reach the systematic clarity of understanding about what one does and one's ability, that is to find that point in the history of humanity where one is really useful.

The fourth philosopher was Schopenhauer who claimed that the only thing which really existed in mankind is the duality of the interior mental representation of the world and the will. The interior representation, or mental scheme, is the structure of thought without which one becomes sick and unable to act. But the will is not the personal will which does not exist, but is that human will in which one is open to the divine will.

All these idealistic philosophers diverged from Kant and from Goethe, in also considering the remainder of the tradition of early philosophy, but Schopenhauer has also read the texts of Upanished and Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist philosophy and he says that everyone can reach the Brahman Nirvans - the negative and positive aspects of divinity, but only if they are capable of reaching beyond desire. Schopenhauer has become the basis of almost all the artistic philosophy of the **fin de siècle**.

But do we always live as really **human** beings - emotionally aware and open to the world? Kirkegaard claimed that it was not the case. For bourgeois society the human being is only of value when he/she succeeds, but from the point of view of the universe a human being is valuable when they do not succeed, even if **they fail completely**. Since death is our final end, it is only in despair that we really exist - **verzweiflung** in German means to be two - the one who observes and the one who acts. The basis of existence is to observe oneself and to be unhappy with oneself. There are moments of true existence: when one begins to act because one is caught in a situation without hope of solution. It is this moment of crisis that one must seek to find the peak experience. This is the source of all Kirkegaard's human-

istic psychology. Maslow only repeated his words. Anguish is not negative; anguish is the foundation of the true freedom of the spirit. Human beings must not meet each other from positions of strength. There are no élites; there are no people who are better than others, all of us are poor individuals who happily from time to time experience moments of true existence. When we are in this true existence everything is good, and when we come out of it, we are in a state of depression and, as Heidegger will say later, we do not know why. It was nothing. **Es war nichts**. But this **nichts**, this nothing is the basis of the something, of **that**. Human beings, instead of seeking for perfection in social life, must seek it in moments of weakness, must meet the other in weakness, not in strength. The protestant church of Kirkegaard's time in Denmark was considered as a guardian of health, almost as a department of social security - that is the opposite of religion. "Christ has not demanded from man he should become a professor, he has demanded of man to become a witness", and the witness who knows that they are suffering, that all the world is suffering and that this suffering is not sad because the moment one knows that the suffering is shared by everybody the suffering is transformed into pity, and I think that I cannot escape from my distress but, as soon as I find another in greater distress, I **can** escape. In other words the true community is to help the other to realize their fullness, to find themselves. Human beings must experience the difference between the moments where they really exist and the moments where they do not exist.

Feuerbach, the sixth philosopher, was considered in his time the enemy of religion. Feuerbach has said: we have transferred the idea of creativity to God and by doing so we have condemned ourselves to a non-creative existence; I must destroy this false image; I must realize that man himself is the creator, I must not seek for pleasure according to Bentham - that is to say the greatest good the greatest number - but I should seek for the joy of creativity, and that is a personal and internal decision. Those who know that everyone is a creator do not consider themselves masters of others; this is the basis of communism. It was not Marx who invented the word communist; it was Feuerbach and Marx took this straight from Feuerbach. He wrote in his youth that Feuerbach - "which means in German a river of fire" - was the purgatory of his time and that no-one could reach the full realisation of themselves if they could not enter this purgatory as well as the last purgatory.

The seventh and last of the idealists was Nietzsche. The German and Swiss bourgeoisie had considered the Greek philosophers as super-bourgeois and super-professors that is to say people for whom the

sense of judgement was precisely the sense of equity, of the average, the sense of mediocrity, the idea that everyone must be honest. Nietzsche showed that the spirit of the Greeks was based on the duality of Dionysos and Apollo - that no-one can understand the spiritual road without accepting that we are all schizophrenic if we become spiritual. But there are those who are in the asylum because they were not intelligent enough to hide their schizophrenia and there are those who are not in the asylum because they were. What is this schizophrenia? If we take the Comanches in North America, we know that at the age of twelve the boys must leave the tribe in order to seek what one calls in ethnology their medicine, but it is not a medicine, it is his vocation. Often the true schizophrenics are those people who have found their vocation but, because it is not acceptable in the social conditions of their time, there is a split between their interior world and the exterior world. Mankind must realize that their intestines, their animal structure, is both the basis of their emotions and of their spirituality, and that this spirituality is never found in precepts but in the inspiration of the moment. The great danger of the Greeks was always madness and the Delphic oracle had to give counsel to those people who had become mad because they had broken the laws of the city, as for example Heraclitus when he had killed king Pyramus because he ran faster than him. He was in a state of madness and he went to consult the Delphic oracle to ask how he should escape from this madness and the oracle told him that he must undertake twelve tasks for the king of Tyre.

So the whole of Greek history tells us that each of us can find our own fulfilment in ourselves if only we have confidence. It is once again the omen and the agreement of Don Juan, but it is much more than that. It is a vocation - in German **ein Auftrag**. And it is not God who gives the **Auftrag**, the vocations, it is we who choose them. And if we do not choose our roles for humanity, then we cannot pursue a life full of meaning, because for human beings the meaning of life, the continuity of life, the Bergsonian **duration**, is exactly the same thing as the adaptation of the animal to his own ego-system. Mankind will perish if they cannot adapt to the meaning of life.

We have three brains. We have the animal brain; we have the reptilian brain; and we have the brain with which we can adapt and tame the animal brain. This one is called the limbic system and with it one can avoid pain and repeat pleasure. It is the basis with which one can tame the animal. But in reality it is the animal. Everything which gives pleasure is that which is right for the species and the same is true for mankind. Everything which is pleasurable must be basically true to the species.



But man has a verbal memory and it is this structure that becomes good and evil. Thus we must understand the superman of Nietzsche not with the idea of the nazis and others that there is a superior race, but on the contrary that each individual can reach beyond duality and arrive at the sense of unity, that is to say the nirvikalpasamadhi of the yogis, or simply "reception" in Laing's words; the interior unity where the individual creates the meaning of life from moment to moment.

We come back to Goethe in asking what life is possible for us, what growth and development? Look at the hours of work in Austria; we have a 45 hour week. What do people do from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening? Certainly they undertake moonlighting in order to get a lot more money, since they are not capable of really using the time to develop. For everything we do, for each behaviour pattern, I can give you a parallel in any one tradition or another. We are about to regain all that gave to humanity the sense of joie de vivre and there is a great danger in that for the movement of human potential - that is the alternative society. The alternative society talks in terms of "us" and "you". Us the good, you the rest. There is a risk of their becoming an elite. The leaders, they reminded me very much of the people who were brought up in the grand French schools, an elite, very moralistic, very well dressed with their famous large cravats.

We are now really in a time of crisis and why? Because people who are neurotic - that is to say who live by a false image of the world - have a tendency to destroy themselves, and unfortunately often the tendency to destroy everyone else too. If someone tells you that in two years there will be a world wide catastrophe, certainly many people will believe it, because they are programmed like that. There is no other reason for catastrophes. But there is no reason to have catastrophes at all if we will only take our life more seriously. I am neither a therapist nor a psychologist, but I find that the psychological approach, the esoteric approach, the development of the self, is the only way today in which we can create a new humanity. We do not have to fight against the establishment; on the contrary we must work together to help all people of good will. One of my most beautiful experiences was at a conference in Dartington with teachers of the middle school on new themes for education. Most of these teachers knew quite well that an examination certificate is no longer a guarantee for a safe life and they were wondering how they could give people the faculty of intuition which is what is really needed today.

We are now living out the second part of the mutation of mankind. A mutation is always defined by two aspects. Firstly a new kind

of individual appears which for the human race means people gifted with language.

The second mutation for the animals is that those who do not adapt to a mutation - which for human beings is creativity or imagination - will all die. And who survives? Is it those people who believe everything will be destroyed but continue nevertheless to work? It seems to me that some 40% of scientists and technologists today are dealing with armaments.

On the other hand we do have the possibility of working for the world of the future, a world that we have already clearly defined. This will be a stable world, a world without classes, a world where human beings concern themselves with research into their interior experience. We are all engaged in a magnificent adventure, a re-discovery of spirituality much greater and deeper than that of Renaissance - which was after all a small aristocratic movement. But today the movement is not from the most cultivated people, it is from people who are distressed, and those who realize that distress is not theirs alone, but that everybody is distressed. They are people who realize that without sensitivity and awareness life is quite desolate: that the human relations that we have today are not true human relations and that there are simple techniques that we can use to persuade us that we do not have to behave always as though we were completely well and confident. This means that we are capable of reconstructing a world for whom the sign would be an open angle and not a closed circle. These are people who can spread to the world their message that when they are aware of their human bodies, when they are aware of their emotions, they will reach a feeling of well-being quite different from satisfaction - a well-being which in addition is the real basis of our being.

We all know that this is a critical time. But it is important to realize that this transformation is not just a local American event - to do with the evolution of behaviourism and the development of humanistic and transpersonal psychology and philosophy. What the Americans have found is no less than the age old wisdom of mankind. We are in process of becoming once again real human beings, and real human beings are much more like children than serious adults. A Swiss philosopher has written a magnificent article about this. He spoke of the 'Murder of the Infants of Bethlehem' and he said that this murder happens every day. For a child a chair can be anything; a chair can be a train, it can be a church, a man, anything. Then the child goes to school and the teacher tells him that a chair is just a chair and cuffs him and that's how children are "civilized". Perls calls that the glossus, that is the confining of the mind, a personal consciousness

replaced by an alienated consciousness. And this is the homo sapiens who is considered normal today. But anxious and afraid human beings are not "normal" human beings. Real human beings are happy creatures who play at life "for the hell of it" as Don Juan said, who play without being too serious about it but who play seriously enough like children who know that they are playing.

Why do they play? Because, come what may, they are going to die. And since death exists nothing can be all that serious. What is serious is that we may live moments of intensity, and experience these two aspects of normality - emotions as the basis of relations between human beings and the faculty of breaking through states of unawareness, to a feeling of intense joy. And that is what I have already experienced during the few days that we have been together during this conference and I thank you for this experience.

### BUTTERFLIES

Caught, for a sunlit moment,  
In the net of community,  
We struggle for freedom  
With a glory of spread wings.

Some, vulnerable in tree tops,  
Targets for madness,  
Flutter and fall,  
Or are gathered to safety  
To dare again and again.

Most, in the shadows,  
Rain-drenched,  
Limp under leaves,  
Powerless and wing-clipped,  
Seek hiding-places.

Many, knowing others  
By the familiar tints  
Or cries of pain,  
Find love, joy, peace,  
Long-suffering -  
And the moment becomes  
Eternal.

**M. B. Alford**