

UP FROM EDEN: A transpersonal view of human evolution by Ken Wilber. Routledge & Kegan Paul 1983 (and Anchor Press/Doubleday 1981)

This is an enormous, a ground-breaking, an enthralling book. It is also a very hard book to describe. Luckily Wilber himself has helped us. In a recent article in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, he says this:

The final point was that if evolution had managed to move from subconsciousness to self-consciousness, there was no reason it couldn't continue from self-consciousness to superconsciousness. And those three general phases - prepersonal to personal to transpersonal - matched perfectly the works of Aurobindo, Berdyaev, Teilhard de Chardin and, most important, Georg Hegel. I returned to a deep and careful study of Hegel and came away more impressed by him than by any other Western philosopher. Anyway, I recently gathered together all these studies into a book, **Up from Eden**.

This book, then, is the anthropological story of how the prepersonal developed into the personal, and how the personal is now developing into the transpersonal. Wilber traces each form of consciousness from its beginning, through its development, to the point where its successor begins to take over. In order to simplify this task, he reduces the seventeen forms of consciousness mentioned in **The Atman Project** down to eight, as follows:

Nature (archaic-uroboric)
Body (magical-typhonic)
Early mind (mythic-membership)
Advanced mind (mental-egoic)
Psychic
Subtle
Causal
Ultimate

The first four of these are dealt with by Jean Gebser in his anthropological work - he calls them the archaic, the magical, the mythical and the mental/rational.

Nature The first form of consciousness "represents a primal, undifferentiated, dreamy autistic state in which man did not know himself as separate, and did not have self-conscious life." (Gowan 1975) In terms of growth stages it is the lowest state - the crudest, the least differentiated, the one endowed with least awareness. It covers a period beginning perhaps as early as three to six million years ago and stretching to around 200,000 years ago.

What Wilber says is that in this very early state all the later stages were potentially contained. They were present but unconscious.

Body The next form of consciousness to emerge was magical. With the emergence of a separate body, no longer immersed in nature, more defences came to be necessary. Instead of stability being taken for granted, it had to be won.

a hominid . . . at the phantasmic /primary process fantasy/ level would have great difficulty in distinguishing images, dreams and paleo-symbols from external reality. He would have no language /language begins at level 3/ and could not tell himself or others, 'This is an image, a dream, a fantasy; it does not correspond to external reality'. He would tend to confuse psychic with external reality, almost as a normal man does when he dreams. (Arieti 1967).

Responsibility is lodged in the external world and its objects, a sure sign of egolessness (Gebser 1972), but this is the egolessness of the prepersonal, not of the transpersonal. The laws of magic prevail, the logic of dreams.

The immense fear of death, of nature and of other people which is prevalent at this stage is dealt with by the shaman. Where there is magic there is no death: ritual is a technique for giving life. And the shaman takes charge of ritual magic. What Wilber says is that the shamans themselves were not restricted to this level, but had regular glimpses of the **Psychic** level, three levels higher. They could do this by a genuine self-surrender, in which they gave up their customary consciousness and sense of self, and allowed themselves to go into quite other mental realms. The shamanistic trance, which can be used at will rather than simply coming and going like the wind, is the crucial invention at this stage.

Wilber cautions against confusing the **Body** level, which is a prepersonal stage, with the **Psychic** level, which is a transpersonal stage. We can regress to the magical or progress to the psychic. And it is all

too easy to use magical thinking in a neurotic way - magic not transformed and integrated becomes magic disguised in disease, says Wilber.

Early mind The third form of consciousness to emerge was the mythic-membership mind. This came with the development of farming. With this, the whole conception of time changed. Instead of the relatively instant and opportunist gratifications of hunting, the farmer has to wait several months between planting and harvesting. And now we see the full development of language.

The fear of death taken on new forms, and it is only at this time that we start to find a regular use of ceremonial graves.

At this level we are, as it were, half-way between magic and logic.

This is the age of the greatest and most enduring classical mythologies and classical civilizations: of Egypt and Babylon and Sumer, of Aztec-Mayan Mexico, and Shang China, and Indus valley India, of Mycenaean Crete and earliest Greece.

The new membership world, the verbal world, was a world of symbols. Communication took on a life of its own.

And so did money. Money now appears as a new kind of power, coming out of the surpluses engendered as farming became more efficient. And money became a new symbol of immortality.

Now in making the transition from **Early Mind** to **Advanced Mind**, one symbol becomes more effective than any other. At the centre of the **Early Mind** stage is the Great Mother, a terrifying symbol of the all-embracing, all-devouring **numen**. But as this stage develops, the Great Mother is transformed into the Great Goddess, and this is altogether different:

The Great Mother demands blood; the Great Goddess demands consciousness. (The later symbols and ceremonies) address a Transcendent Divinity - Great God, Great Goddess - and not a biological, naturic, magic-mythic Great Mother.

However, instead of this process continuing and maturing and being taken forward into the next stage of development, something altogether different happened.

Advanced Mind As the next stage emerged - and now we are talking about a period somewhere around 1500 BC - the Great Goddess was

not transformed but destroyed. Instead of differentiating it further, a complete dissociation took place. Instead of a deepening, a repression. The great Heroes of the early part of this stage were Goddess - supplanters. And because of the confusion of the Great Mother with the Great Goddess which this process made so necessary, this alienation of the Hero from the Goddess also entailed the alienation of the self from the body.

In this dehumanized human nature man loses contact with his own body, more specifically with his senses, with sensuality and with the pleasure-principle. And this dehumanized human nature produces an inhuman consciousness, whose only currency is abstractions divorced from real life - the industrious, coolly rational, economic, prosaic mind. (Brown 1959)

This tragedy, which was avoided in the East for various reasons which Wilber deals with, means that the whole of this stage was - and still is, because we are still in it - deprived of the Great Goddess and all that she stands for. It has taken a great deal of work from Bachofen onwards, to recover the history and the meaning of the Goddess. And so Wilber looks to the future in a memorable quote which I want to give in full despite its length:

It is my strongest hope . . . that, as the male once rescued consciousness from the chthonic matriarchate, the female might today help to rescue consciousness - and her brother - from the patriarchate. And as the innate but initial masculine mode seemed appropriate for the former, the innate but initial feminine mode seems appropriate for the latter. We of today face a new dragon fight, and we need a new Hero Myth. The dragon we now must fight is simply the egoic structure itself, and the new "treasure hard to attain" is centauric and psychic awareness (or simply level 5 in general). And that attainment will take a new type of Hero, a Hero that, centuries from now, will be eulogized as I have done the solar ego. We need today to develop intuition and alert but passive awareness, as we yesterday needed so desperately to develop assertive logic and active mentality. The new Hero will be centauric (which means mind and body united and not dissociated), whole-bodied, mentally androgynous, psychic, intuitive **and** rational, male **and** female - and the lead in this new development most easily can come **from** the female, since our society is **already** masculine-adapted.

What is crucial in all this is Wilber's most consistent point - that we must always distinguish between what is prepersonal and what

is transpersonal. It is so easy to dismiss the transpersonal, as Freud does, or to dismiss the prepersonal, as Jung tends to do. The greatest tendency, in the mental/egoic stage which we have now reached, is to try to ignore anything spiritual on the grounds that it is just primitive superstition. Wilber points out that all sorts of evidence point to the fact that the stage beyond egoic science (but still including it) is that of the **Psychic**, followed by **Subtle** awareness, then **Causal** insight, then **Ultimate** identity. Scientific anthropologists manage to deny this, he says, by confusing **Body** with **Psychic** and **Early mind** with **Subtle** archetype, and thus whenever true psychic and subtle level features emerge, they naively claim regression to magic and myth. Their confusion is fuelled simply because the first true psychics did emerge in the magic period, and the first true saints did emerge in the mythic era, and thus, lumping these all together, they claim the anthropological record shows we have evolved past all that religious stuff, that superstitious nonsense.

The same criticism, however, applies to the romantic transcendentalists, but in a reverse way. They, too usually confuse average-mode consciousness and growing-tip consciousness, or average lower and truly advanced, but they use that confusion to claim that the past epochs were some sort of Golden Age which we have subsequently destroyed. They confuse magic and psychic, myth and subtle archetype, but in the opposite direction: they claim that the evolution past magic was a loss of psychic levels, and the evolution past the mythic Bronze Age was a loss of subtle-archetypal glory. They rail against the rise of mental-egoic science, and damn the present age with accusatory slander, failing as completely as their scientific antagonists to understand the subtleties involved.

The true hope for a return to spirit, Wilber says, lies in the world of tomorrow, rather than the world of yesterday. What we have to do is to create that tomorrow, by allowing evolution to continue, this time consciously. But part of that consciousness is not to confuse the levels below us with the levels above us. The problem is that, since both pre-egoic and trans-egoic are, in their own ways, "non-egoic", they **appear** similar, even identical, to the untutored eye. But to confuse them, says Wilber, is actually like confusing preschool and graduate school because both are non-elementary school. "Or again, it's like confusing amoebas, which are pre-reptilian, and humans, which are trans-reptilian, because both are non-reptilian".

My own feeling about this book is that it is a tremendous achievement. It is disappointing that he says so little about the Centaur stage,

which is so important to humanistic psychology, as is made clear in his book **The Atman Project**, and it is frustrating that he says so little about the later stages as compared with the earlier ones. But what he does give us is so important that I can forgive him for not giving us more. It is a measure of the success of this book that one's main criticism is that there is not more of it.

For anyone who is interested in the possible further evolution of humanity, this volume is absolutely indispensable. It is tough, well-argued, deeply thought out and to me utterly convincing.

John Rowan

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DREAMING THE DARK: Magic, sex and politics by Starhawk. Beacon Press 1982.

This is an extraordinary book. It is written by a feminist witch, author of **The spiral dance: A rebirth of the ancient religion of the Great Goddess**, which is also excellent. But this one is about the personal and the political, about self and society. What are the insights into society which come from a commitment to the worship of the Goddess and the Horned God?

One of the most important discoveries of recent years is the connection between self and society which is based in the unconscious. Joy Marcus, Hogie Wyckoff and others in the Radical Psychiatry group started talking about the Pig Parent - the evil that comes from an internalized critic who represents hierarchical structures and will not be placated. John Southgate and Rosemary Randall have called it the Patripsych, and have talked about some of the different forms it can take. Now Starhawk, taking her cue from Doris Lessing, calls it the self-hater.

The self-hater is the inner representation of power-over. We have internalized it, not just from our parents, but from every institution in society with which we have contact. It is the

structure in the psyche which perpetuates domination. It reminds us of our helplessness, our powerlessness. It blames the victim; it tells us we are bad when bad things happen to us, that we do not have the right to be, to feel, to do what we do. It is the inner gun that keeps us in an inner prison.

It is interesting that the same concept should come up quite independently in three such different traditions. It seems that as soon as we really try to relate the personal and the political, we have to come up with some such notion as this.

Another insight which seems to me very important is that Starhawk's vision of the Horned God offers a new image of masculinity. One of the difficult things about feminism for men is that it has often seemed to take away the old image of masculinity without offering a new one. But Starhawk is amazingly and refreshingly clear about these things:

*By **maleness**, I do not mean any of the qualities which have been arbitrarily assigned to men as if they didn't apply to women. I do not mean such things as aggression, assertion, activity, yang-ness, rationality and logos. I mean only the power of being at home - strong, potent and awake - in a male body . . . Alan Acacia, friend and my co-teacher in a class on Magic for Men, spoke of the need for images of Father Earth. At first I found the phrase jarring, almost offensive. It seemed the power of the father had raged on too long without being revived now, within the Goddess religion. But as I thought about it, as I allowed myself to experience the Earth-God, I realized that this image is indeed prevalent in the mythology of earth religion. Father Earth is the Green Man of the Craft, the God who is pictured crowned with leaves and twined with vines, the spirit of vegetation, growing things, the forest . . .*

As phallus, He says, "Experience this - pleasure. Know, in your own body, how it peaks and fades, and give way to it, not as the pleasure of performance, of mastery, but as the deeper pleasure of the enfolded body, the deep desire you can know again when you no longer deny the dark". The penis, when it is no longer the instrument of control, becomes the emblem of vulnerability, of feeling. As such, it is freeing to men - because the penis-as-weapon is a dead, wooden instrument that brings no true pleasure . . .

Men can develop the ability to merge, to let another being in as part of oneself, to flow around that being, to become ground as well as self . . .

Within dwells the Dark God, not as demon, abductor, overlord, but as comforter who consoles us with the promise of renewal.

Personally, I find this exciting and inspiring. There is a lot more of it in her earlier book. But here she is showing how men and women can cooperate in social change.

There is a lot in this book about the conduct of meetings - nitty-gritty details about how people can work together. A lot of the ideas are very close to what we in humanistic psychology have been saying for years, but there is something extra here - a spiritual unity which welcomes and depends on diversity - a very rare quality. And the idea of personal power (which Carl Rogers has written about so well) comes through very clearly:

As an example, in the early days of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant blockade, another woman and I felt a need for a general gathering in the evening, to sing, share announcements, and feel a sense of the camp as a whole. The blockade was clearly an open, anarchic structure; nevertheless, our first instinct was to seek out a trainer, someone who seemed to have a position of leadership to ask, "Who has the authority to call a meeting?" "You do", was the response. So we did - by simply walking around camp and calling out, "We're having a gathering". We could easily, however, have assumed a position of powerlessness, and spent the evening brumbling about how insensitive the leaders were because they didn't see that we needed a meeting of the whole camp.

This again is close to our own ideas about taking responsibility for our own actions and our own lives.

But in this book there is more than just individualized personal power. There is the sense of the earth, there is the sense of the whole, there is the sense of community with others:

As we see the Goddess mirrored in each other's eyes, we take that power in our hands as we take hands, as we touch. For the strength of that power is in the bond we make with each other. And our vision grows strong when we no longer dream alone.

The basic contention of this book is that the ancient religion of the Goddess offers a transforming power that could heal the spiritual and political split between individual and society. As such it fits in with books like Spretnak's and McAllister's, and forms part of a way of seeing things which deserves the utmost consideration from all of us.

Jean Starry

THE OBSERVING SELF: MYSTICISM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY by
Arthur J. Deikman. Beacon Press 1983

This is a messy book, wilfully ignoring the work of Ken Wilber, Rolf von Eckartsberg and others who have clarified this whole field recently, and therefore mixing up the real self and the higher self, mixing together various levels and types of mystical experience and so forth, in a conceptual hodge-podge which is thoroughly confusing. But there is one very interesting chapter in it, (Chapter 8) which is worth a look. Here is an extended quote from that chapter.

*A woman I had been seeing in once-a-week psychotherapy entered my office almost frantic with distress, proclaiming anxiously that she was about "to go to pieces". My usual approach would have been to listen, draw out some explanation of the precipitating circumstances, and bring into awareness the repressed emotions, wishes or ideas that presumably were the bases for her acute symptoms. This way of proceeding would most likely have been of some help. What actually happened was that I began to smile, feeling amused . . . Her situation seemed funny to me because I perceived her as being in no actual danger, but completely caught up in the contents of her mind, identifying with the commotion she was reporting, forgetting that **she** was observing it.*

Speaking metaphorically, it was as if the patient were standing on a hilltop overlooking the ocean and on seeing large waves crashing far out to sea had become fearful that she would drown, forgetting where she actually was.

The woman suddenly became aware of my facial expression, stopped, and indignantly demanded the reason for my "unfeeling" smile in answer to her desperation. Her question made me smile even more broadly, and I actually began to laugh. She stared at me in disbelief, and then a look of outrage took possession of her face. However, in the midst of her rising anger,

despite herself, she started to smile, too. "Damn you!" she exclaimed and began to laugh. We laughed together for a long while. . .

. . . The woman's therapeutic progress took a leap forward in succeeding sessions. I think a different kind of learning took place, involving taking distance from anxiety and observing it rather than identifying with it.

The whole of the main thrust of the book is about this - the importance of disidentification with problems. This is of course exactly what psychosynthesis also teaches in its doctrine of the transpersonal self, but Deikman hardly mentions this at all. It is also very close to what Eugene Gendlin is saying in his Focussing approach, where the utmost stress is laid on "clearing a space" from which problems can be looked at with equanimity. But Deikman doesn't mention Gendlin either.

So this seems to me a wilfully isolationist book, which is actually very misleading about mysticism; ignoring totally its religious significance, ignoring the importance of a mystical teacher for spiritual growth, ignoring the limitations of the observing self (except for some rather half-hearted references to enlightenment in Chapter 10) and generally reducing mysticism to what can be practised in the therapy room. The final section on "Selecting a mystical school" is actually a complete cop-out, avoiding all the issues and saying nothing at all.

This book makes me angry, because it could have been so good - Deikman obviously knows his therapy and has some very good things to say about the observing self - and because it lets itself down so often. Mysticism is much more than the earthbound and uninspiring mish-mash we get in this book.

James Crippledini

CARL ROGERS IN LONDON

On September 15th in London the ILEA together with the British Person Centred Approach Institute mounted a one-day conference on the theme "Freedom to Learn in the 80s". The three facilitators from the Centre for Studies of the Person in California were Chuck Devonshire, John Wood and Carl Rogers, the grand old man of the Human Potential Movement.

BOOK REVIEWS

LARGE CENTER available for groups - beautiful unspoilt surroundings - vegetarian cooking. Write: Arts & Growth Center, Canillas de Alabaida, (Malaga), Spain - Art program presented by the Center 1 July-9 Sept.

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