

With this reference to play I do not mean to suggest, however, the frivolity of games, the sense of play as escape which marks our modern age. I mean, on the contrary, the insightful play of metaphor. A metaphor is a play upon words, and psychological life as a metaphorical reality is a play upon the world. It is a dramatic tale.

Eric Shepherd & J.P. Watson (eds) **Personal meanings** John Wiley & Sons 1982. pp. 202 £23.75

Robert D. Romanyshyn **Psychological life: From science to metaphor** Open University Press 1982. pp 209

Shirley Wade

SOME THOUGHTS ON TRANSFORMING CRISIS

In *Self and Society* for March 1983 John Rowan reviewed Peter Russell's "The Awakening Earth; Our next evolutionary leap". This is an important book I wanted to see drawn to people's attention, so I was glad to see the review. However, although I agree with much of John's detailed criticism, I feel that he does not bring out what was for me the main point of Peter Russell's argument. It is not JUST that elementary particles combined to form atoms, atoms combined to form molecules etc., but that these evolutionary leaps occurred when exponential growth moved towards the all important number ten to the power of ten, (10¹⁰). There are apparently no known forms of life with less than ten to the power of eight atoms, and at the other end of the evolutionary scale the self-reflective consciousness of human beings seems to have arrived when there were around ten to the power of ten nerve cells in the brain cortex.

The reason why Peter Russell anticipates that a new leap forward is about to occur is that population analysts predict that during the next century the number of human beings on earth will rise to ten to the power of ten and will probably then stabilise. Of course numbers are not enough, there also needs to be cohesive structure, interaction and specialisation: but human societies do seem to be developing these. Indeed very great changes have taken place in the last 200 years, with the shift from agriculture as a focus for human activity, to industry, and now to all forms of information processing, which have recently overtaken industry as the dominant form of employment

in the developed nations. If the rate of increase is sustained, the world's communications network could be as complex as the human brain by the year 2000. Peter Russell postulates the consequent emergence of something he calls the "Gaiafield", which will not be the property of individual human beings, but will occur at planetary level. A sort of global brain, which will enable the planet as such to become conscious. He cites various pieces of evidence that the planet Earth is already itself a living being maintaining homeostasis.

I do not find "The Awakening Earth" a "nice" book at all. Exciting, yes, but also very disturbing. It steps heavily on two of my favorite prejudices. The first of these is that the present world population growth is a bad thing which we should try to stop; but if Peter Russell is right, it is necessary for the next step in evolution, and I am reacting like the "committee of bacteria who wanted to stop photosynthesis"! The other prejudice is that spiritual evolution is largely a matter of individual personal effort of the "seek and ye shall find" variety. I find in myself a very unattractive resentment of the idea of a general move forward of the type envisaged - I have been working on myself for 20 years, why should others who have not made this effort benefit. I am well aware of the parable about the Kingdom of Heaven where the master employs workers in his vineyard for varying times and then pays them all the same, and thought I had accepted this concept and appreciated that at such a level I would be so much in unity with life that I should rejoice in the situation. However I had always thought of it as a long way into the future; not to be faced yet. It is the reduced time scale I find frightening. It doesn't give me time to prepare.

Moreover, does the consciousness of Gaia, if it comes, necessarily imply an advance for us as individual human beings? Peter Russell seems to think so, but I am not sure it necessarily follows. Do the cells of our bodies benefit from our advance to self-consciousness? If Gaia treats us with the indifference I show the cells and organs of my body, the future looks bleak. On the other hand I cannot forget this book, as part of me would like to, because it links in so well with much of my own belief system. For instance Peter Russell says:

"Many times in my conversations and readings I find the same ideas and insights cropping up in different minds around the planet. It seems that when the time is ripe an idea will sweep through the collective unconscious appearing simultaneously in many guises. In these situations it is impossible to credit any one person as the "originator": it is the cosmic creative intelligence, the pulse of evolution, which should be credited".

This description agrees with my own experience of receiving new ideas; which seem to come to me from nowhere when I am in a state which feels like heightened awareness tuning in to a different level. It comes spontaneously and is not apparently under my control. The whole concept of creative intelligence causing evolution from above accords well with the Kabbalistic system, particularly as set out by Warren Kenton in his book "A Kabbalistic Universe" which links Kabbala with the Book of Genesis. There is reference there to "every plant of the field before it was in the earth", which suggests a sort of spiritual template, an archetypal form which gradually descends to lower levels and manifests in the material world when conditions have reached the appropriate state. From this point of view natural selection and creation are complementary not antagonistic, since both play a part in the evolutionary process.

As far as the evolution of consciousness is concerned, I have believed for a long time that homo sapiens has a special responsibility for promoting and working at this. I therefore feel much in sympathy with Peter Russell when he says in relationship to raising consciousness:

"If the growth of interest continues to swell, so will the number of people employed in this area, and we may eventually reach a point, possibly sometime early next century, when the employment curve for "consciousness processing" will overtake that of information processing. The evolution of human consciousness will then have become the dominant area of human activity, and we will have shifted from the Information Age to the Consciousness Age".

As a therapist and group leader I naturally find this appealing! However much as I like the idea, I still do not see how Peter Russell links it with the evolving consciousness of Gaia, and for me this is the weakness of the book which I find frustrating. Perhaps it is a weakness in me that I feel somehow left out. I perceive how the evolving links between human beings could benefit Gaia, but what do we get in return? A high synergy society where each of us can feel safe to be individual sounds fine, but does not necessarily imply participating in the Earth's awakened consciousness. Maybe I am just greedy; I want too much; or my lack of love for the cells of my own body is projected onto Gaia and I fear the same lack of a caring relationship.

The theme of caring relationships is important to another topic, which John raised in the May issue where he reviewed "Frogs into Princes: Neuro linguistic programming" by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. Having been so churned up by "The Awakening Earth" which John

took so calmly, I was quite pleased to find that he had experienced painful and difficult conflict over the NLP book. I think the points John makes in the review are very important to humanistic psychology. When I attended a workshop on Ericksonian Approaches to Psychotherapy, I made myself ill on the third day precisely because of the sort of conflicts John mentions. The hand out included statements which appeared quite in accordance with humanistic psychology until they turned out to be used, not because they were believed in, but as techniques for reducing resistance to the therapist. Moreover much of the actual practice seemed to consist of various techniques such as the "double dissociative conscious unconscious double bind" to confuse the mind rather than to free it to make new choices. I agree with John that there seems in these methods to be no real interest in or love and caring for people, and I do not think they should be regarded as part of humanistic psychology.

As I said in my article in the "Potentials for Transformation" issue last November, I believe the purpose of life on earth is the evolution of consciousness, and I don't see how tricking people from one pattern of behaviour to another can contribute to this. Gerda Boyesen says in an article in "The Journal of Biodynamic Psychology" Winter 1982, that she regards what she is doing as ". . . Holy work; for Man and Woman are sacred beings . . .". This is how I see my work with people too, and I want to facilitate more awareness and greater freedom to choose between a number of possible responses to a given situation. I most definitely do not want to replace one habit pattern with another.

It depends, of course, on one's philosophical position. If I had a client who was a materialist, with no interest in personal or spiritual growth, then I might suggest that a practitioner of this type of technique be tried. But I personally would see it as an opportunity missed, a chance for greater awareness and understanding passed by. The gift of a "Transforming Crisis" thrown away.
