

like, 'Once upon a time there was a king and his minister ...' and the story would unfold. The story would have a moral. At the end of the story the Buddha would say, 'And the people in this story are not unknown to us,' and he would identify the characters with people present whose situations were parallel. The Buddha was a good narrator with a sense of drama.

Now 'karma' and 'drama' are closely related words, both of which basically mean 'action'. The Buddha could see the drama of a situation. When he talks about overcoming self, he has in mind freeing us from the melodramas that we get caught up in and liberating us from becoming typecast. The aim is to do with clarifying and freeing ourselves from our karma. After death no person is reborn, but only the karma continues. If we read 'karma' as 'drama' we can throw an interesting light

on Buddhist teaching, one which is particularly useful to me personally as a psychodramatist. What we bequeath to the world is not an immortal soul, but rather the dramas to which we have contributed during our lives.

To try to look at our drama not just as our personal property or individual fate, but as something that was running before we took a part in it and which may continue to run after we have departed, could be an interesting way of getting a new perspective on our lives. It also opens the possibility that the dramas we identify with may not be so intrinsically 'me' as we thought. Getting a sense of drama as karma can free us up. Getting a sense of the impact our dramas may have on others may simultaneously give us a sense of the importance of directing our energy toward constructive ends.

Three Rebirths

John Rowan

According to the theory of Ken Wilber we are all on a path of psychospiritual development. Along this path there are certain stations where we have to change our notion of our selves. For example, the body ego of our early lives has to give way to a highly imaginative self which is very creative and has little sense of what is impossible. This is experienced as a wrench and a loss, as well as progress. Then we have to move on from there to a 'membership' self, which identifies itself with the family, the group, the tribe. This too is felt as a loss as well as a gain. With

adolescence, we move on once more into a more personal sense of having an ego, which again means leaving one state of consciousness in order to go on to another one.

So far we are on common ground. But Wilber says that this process can continue, if we will let it, and that we can move on from the mental ego to yet another version of the self, which humanistic psychology calls the 'real' self or the 'true' self. This very often feels like a crisis, only resolved by a period of therapy. We may have peak experiences at this stage which suggest we

are somehow in the presence of the divine. If we let the process continue we come into the realm of the 'subtle' self, where we use symbols and images to contact the divine: ritual and ceremony can help here, but there are real dangers of confusion with earlier states.

Supposing that we make it thus far, we may push onwards and enter the realm of the 'causal' self. Here we have to renounce all symbols and images, and settle for the One. Here we are in the deep water of mysticism, of spirituality. And Wilber says that there is even another stage beyond this, called the 'nondual', where we have to

give up even our ideas about the One.

Of all these stages the one which seems to receive least attention and understanding, at least from those who call themselves transpersonalists, is the subtle. So in the workshop I put on at the 1998 AHP conference this was the one which received most time and most emphasis. I used a guided fantasy, taken from the book by Jay Earley (a follower of Jean Houston) with my own improvements, to enable people to explore this realm in their own way. The results were interesting and rewarding, and I felt it was something I would do again.

My Conference

A view of the 1998 conference from an AHP newcomer

Mary Horrocks

The imagery I have of the experience is of flowing; individual streams, all finding their unique course to the sea, constantly merging, running alongside, receding, reforming and finally parting. The ease of flow was, I feel, largely due to the ethos and skills of the organisers and facilitators who, within a professionalism of service, provided a refreshing freedom from burdens of over-organisation, over-protection, implied expectations or hidden agendas. There was an overall respect for differences, and trust in each individual's responsibility for their own processes; this enabled some of us to taste new experiences in workshops even if the underlying beliefs were not our own. Sadly, I experi-

enced the main lecturer as out of tune with this ethos of self-other awareness, sensitivity and respect for different beliefs which was so much a theme of the rest of the conference, and I was not alone in this.

But that lovely flow — unstructured, natural, easy, in, out, around, large, small, constantly changing shape, in movement. Like dancing, a scratch band and instant theatre. Stimulating, interesting, challenging, fun, poignant, affirming, new kinships, all set in comfortable accommodation amongst lovely surroundings with good food, swimming and sauna. 'I could have stayed for a week,' said a friend, 'and how nice, despite the theme, to have no big deal made out of endings!'