

Kenneth Gray

Wo/man: Species, Individual and Therapy

In everyday circumstances, men and women are able physically to distinguish themselves from others, they can usually take responsibility for their own thoughts or ideas, but they have more difficulty with feelings. Many people are confused about the involvement they have invested in other people and cannot extricate themselves enough to choose how much they want to be involved.

I am here advancing a speculation that wo/man as a species has evolved its psychological abilities and that this species advancement is recapitulated in the personal psychological development of each individual, following a well-known biological theory, first propounded by Haeckel in the last century.

Wo/man as an individual

We may speculate that at some early stage in the development of the species wo/man was unable to distinguish between self and everything else, that is, between SELF and NOTSELF. S/he lacked a consciousness of self. In a similar way, the neonate may not initially distinguish between self, the mother and the rest of the world. Indeed, s/he may not separate mother from anyone or anything else. The first childhood period, the period of earliest object relations, is one in which perception of the reality of the self and of objects is poor, and in which unconscious fantasies are supreme.

Because the infant does not distinguish Self from Notsself, s/he does not have an appreciation that sensations are his/her experiences and that they are not located outside self in the world. (By sensation here, I refer to the subjective experience which follows perception of stimuli applied to the sensor organs). A central aspect of the infant's development is that of gradually learning that these sensations are located in self and not elsewhere and this is a part of the greater learning of the separation of self and notself.

Piaget (1929, 1954) has described how a growing human being constructs reality from the first few weeks of life to the twelfth year. In the sixth and seventh months s/he begins to distinguish objects from people - s/he learns that s/he can't get the milk bottle to come but s/he can exercise some kind of magic on the mother, when s/he cries for example.

A little later - 9 to 12 months - s/he begins to recognise clusters of sensations as associated with specific objects but s/he has not got as far as recognising that father-at-the-window is the same as father-in-the-chair. Father is an

indefinite number of fathers. S/he is now also learning to manipulate the environment through the physical body and the notion of mechanical causality replaces that of magical causality: a test for distinguishing between persons and things is that persons act mechanically on things to make events happen. Things are merely acted upon. But s/he still assumes his/her own powers to be paramount, whilst not exclusively efficacious.

By the fifth stage - one to one and half years - objects, space, time and causality acquire an objective permanence for the infant. S/he begins to observe sequences of events. S/he realises that where the ball is hidden depends on how it was hidden, not where s/he found it last time. (Fernandez-Marina, 1964). S/he begins to accept that the laws of the nature of reality are independent of his/her wishes and efforts. But s/he cannot yet construct 'what must have happened', when things are not as they initially appeared. S/he does not have logic - that is, law which structures events *a priori* and guarantees that something cannot vanish into nothing. The ball is now the ball whether it's on the floor or in father's hand and father is always the same father. S/he now also uses causality: *drops* things instead of throwing them down. S/he also notes the causality in other persons: s/he sees other persons use causality. S/he learns to satisfy needs by expressing them. S/he now also begins to see the world not as THOU but as an IT to be acted upon by the various THOUS. In the sixth and final stage of infancy, one and half years plus, s/he completes a construction of time-space, object-subject and cause and effect. When s/he loses the ball behind the fence, s/he can go round the fence, find it where it 'ought to be', and insist that it must be there if s/he cannot at first find it. Objects have acquired a final degree of identity and the child no longer has to actually be in the act of experiencing something through the sensations to regard it as real: reality is intellected, rather than sensed. (Fernandez-Marina, 1964).

Wo/man as species

Since the theme of this article is about the way individual psychological development in wo/man recapitulates in a broad sweep the psychological development of at least the *human* species, we now look at this latter matrix of change.

What happened in history?

Some general indications of our origin in the phylum chordata can be found by looking at our history in the Animal Kingdom; it is important to note:

1. *our early origins in fish, amphibia, reptiles.*
2. *the Ice Ages*
3. *the approximate origins of Homo sapiens
c. 90,000 years ago*

What happened in human history?

We know that human self consciousness resulted in the creation of cultural monuments in the Nile Valley between 7500 and 5500 BC. But thousands of years before the civilisation of Egypt there were cultures such as Sumeria, Mesopotamia, and Crete - cultures rather than civilisations because they did not transform themselves. The true cultures were destroyed by changes. The Egyptians could cope with the ever changing Nile; the Mesopotamians lost town and villages through flooding. Mesopotamian culture was always associated with fear and anxiety. (Their gods had to be placated and bribed.) What I want to argue is that Egyptian civilisation was comparable to human childhood. Events in Egypt - the rising and falling of the sun, the flooding and the drying of the Nile - these constituted repeatable events that stood out for the Egyptians. Certain kinds of image are recognised as stable.

The Egyptians did not distinguish self from the world or the separateness of parts of the world - they deified everything; they constructed reality from a vague sensorial awareness - not from distinguishable processes of thinking, feeling and sensing. They had little conception of the passage of time - each day was the same day, each year as its predecessor. Past and future, memory and apprehension were not yet distinct.

It has been suggested that objects only exist for the infant at Piaget's third stage if he is operating on them; maybe this is why the Egyptians spent so much effort manipulating their dead. To keep them real.

The infant believes events occur because he wishes them to occur. The Egyptians believed that the sun rose and set because they ritually performed the magic of praying it up and down. 'Primitive' people everywhere assume that nothing happens unless they make it happen through dance, gesture, imitative ritual. You'll remember the infant reaches a stage when objects are recognised but don't have permanent identities e.g. father in the window, father in the chair are different. In Egypt, the sun-god Re, the *only god* of the Egyptians is Re-Horus of the Horizon, but he is also Pharaoh, he is the crocodile-god, he is the ram-god, he is the falcon-god. He is everywhere he manifests himself and yet he is only one. Just like father.

Infants learn to use causality just as the Egyptians used the laws of motion and gravity to construct their pyramids.

But now I want to go back further. Before the Egyptians and their predecessor cultures.

Teilhard has said that wo/man was at first a crowd and Freud also suggested that wo/man was originally a horde animal, drifting around in hordes on the plains. Not ape and yet not quite human yet. Driven into the caves in small groups by the Ice Ages. In the telling of hunting stories in the caves, the teller, in acting out the past, was both hunter and hunted, man and his animal. Not distinguishing from the rest of the world. Not yet able quite to totally distinguish sensations as part of self, inside self in response to the world, not out in the world as well as in self.

So I want to assume that, at first, wo/man took sensations to him/herself and owned them for part of self.

Perhaps the practice of cavepainting helped with visual sensations at least.

The Egyptians developed this process and commenced in a small way to take responsibility for their *thoughts*, a process later developed by the Greek philosophers. The Greeks accepted thoughts as their own and not out in the world, and accepted the workings of causality fully. The Golden Age Greeks were the *juveniles* of our species. They had logical facility in thinking but their emotional maturity had not yet arrived.

In figure 1, I have constructed parallel time lines for some relevant ontogenetic and phylogenetic events.

Beginning at conception for the individual, we are at the origin of single celled life for *animalia*. By two months, the foetus will have physically recapitulated phyletic features of the embryos of fishes and later animals. Perls tells us of his memory of conception (or was it a race memory of the origin of life?) Stan Gooch (1972) suggested that the cerebellum is the seat of an alternative centre of consciousness involving what he calls knowledge II; the cerebellum developed in the early fishes. Could it be that our alternative possibilities of consciousness are older than Gooch's suggestion of the Homo Neanderthalensis gene pool? The essentially human foetal development which Lake (1978) typifies in Grof's perinatal matrices of "life in the womb", "no exit", and "moving out", correspond to the two million years between Australopithecus africanus and Homo sapiens; the latter million years saw three Ice Ages and their related interglacial periods. I suggest that the 'no exit' phenomenon might correspond to the predicament of pre-Neanderthal, Neanderthal and pre-sapiens caught in the ice, being cut off, no-where to go. "now you really get moving" corresponds to the final strides made by Homo sapiens to survive in the last Ice Age, to take positive steps away from the environs into the caves; at this time the foetus inserts into the opened cervix and the journey through the birth canal/cave begins.

At birth, we have the *alpha point* (Teilhard, 1965) of Homo sapiens, some 90,000 years ago.

We see in figure 1 the comparative development of the individual and the species. The individual develops through phases (for convenience labelled according to Freud as oral, anal, phallic, latent, genital) which correspond broadly to the Neolithic revolution of 10,000, the Urban revolution of 5500, the Dionysian culture of 3000, the philosophers of 2500 years ago: I would contend that we are now leaving the latency period and entering the genital stage and a search for self-realisation: this corresponds to the foundations laid by the early analysts and the continuation of their work by Reich and others. It is no mere chance that the growth movement is here now.

Looking at the ontogenetic development of man, I consider that wo/man was

able to take increasing responsibility for psychic events in this order:

1. sensations (up to age 1 +) from c. 100,000 to c.6000 years ago.
2. thoughts (up to age 12 +) from c. 100,000 to c. 2500 years ago.
3. feelings (up to age ?) from c. 100,000 years ago to now.

and that s/he is still grappling with the feelings (and the intuitions?)

Form and meaning in the future

We can presume that wo/man will change but we cannot predict the direction. No-one could have predicted how the human species would have evolved to date. "Even an intentional genetic design will depend on the evolution of a culture which is itself unpredictable" (Skinner, 1972).

We have prided ourselves on being 'rational'. We seek to make our choices, those which therapists try to assist others to clarify, rationally - to make choices with conscious thinking, conscious feeling. All this in the West. Yet we know that our particular form of consciousness is not the only kind. We are aware of things like intuition, hunches, and choices which we make irrationally. Could it be that the task for the individual of taking increasing personal responsibility for sensations, thoughts, feelings and maybe intuitions is the correlate of a focussing of the human species towards what Teilhard de Chardin (1965) calls the *omega point*. Perhaps this is the meaning of that remote event of death and the myths of re-birth: that we may end as a 'rational' species and face, not disintegration and death, but a breakthrough and a re-birth. Perhaps *Homo sapiens novus* will have an arational psychic process (not irrational, nor rational) an individual self rather than a defended ego, a transpersonal self which unites individuals in the species, a new consciousness which handles time/space, cause/effect and object/subject in a new way (Jung has already drawn our attention to the notion of synchronicity rather than causality) and more access to the unconscious, so that we can use more of the accumulated knowledge of the species. Perhaps, just as the ego is concerned with personal survival, so the Self is concerned with species survival.

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