

"Human, All Too Human"
and BEYOND
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In archaic times, before there were big cities and self-perpetuating religious organizations. When one attempts to interpret the meaning of states of consciousness to some extent transcending the high normal level in any particular society, at any particular time, the greatest source of confusion and misunderstanding is the failure to properly define the relation of such states to the fundamental character and basic assumptions (or paradigms) of the culture. Moreover, such relatively transcendent states of consciousness (as well as feeling-responses and modes of interpersonal behavior) can belong to one of two basically different categories, even if, superficially and intellectually, these states may appear similar. Succinctly and symbolically stated, such states may be interpreted as the "flowering" of the culture in and through extraordinary persons — or as the earliest manifestation of "seeds" whose development was synchronous with the slow dying of the annual plant (the culture), and whose destiny it is to leave the plant which bore them. A seed is formed in a particular plant, but is not essentially connected with the character of that particular plant; its allegiance is only to the species as a whole. If we symbolically equate a particular human culture with a particular plant, the "seed person" formed within and by the culture fulfills his or her destiny (or function) most characteristically only when he or she "leaves," or becomes spiritually separate from the culture. The latter, having then evolved **past** its flowering period of collective fulfillment, is therefore already disintegrating or becoming increasingly sclerotic. The seed person's allegiance is not to his or her culture but to the human species as a whole. Because humanity's essential archetypal character and destiny is to be an agent for transformation on the planet earth, the seed person can be considered a "mutant." He or she becomes (or at least may become) the visionary formulator, and spiritually or mentally the "ancestor," of a **new** type of culture. This symbolism certainly should not be taken literally as it omits several factors. Nevertheless, it may convey several points of essential significance. It illustrates a basic distinction which Western, Euro-American culture (some would say "civilization") fails to recognize or accept, and which Asian religious philosophies, for valid reasons, approach rather ambiguously, especially when dealing with Westerners or their own westernized students. The distinction is between **mystics**, who are truly the flowering of the basic religious spirit of a culture, and those seed persons who are **true occultists**, or at least visionary and Promethean minds. As philosophers, creative artists, and statesmen, the essential destiny of these seed persons is to radically transform **both** the sociocultural assumptions of at least a section of mankind and certain aspects of generic human nature. The western mind has difficulty considering and, even more, understanding this distinction because the term "occultism" has been dreadfully debased. True occultism has essentially nothing to do with what have come to be known as "occult powers" and strictly "psychic" experiences, even though such powers and experiences may have a very effective reality in some cases. A true Occultist is an individual seeking to effectuate the very difficult and extremely dangerous **transition** between two levels of reality: the human level— as we know it today in its dependence upon what we perceive as "physical" matter and biological systems of organization of material entities— and a superhuman, superindividual, and "planetary" level not only of consciousness but also of activity (and of will and feeling) at which matter, too, takes on a transcendent yet still "physical" character.(1)

Mysticism and Empiricism

Since 1400 A.D., and especially since the days of Francis Bacon, and soon after him Newton and Descartes, western civilization — which I prefer to characterize as Euro-American culture — has been based on the belief that reality can be approached only through the empirical and quantitative (and later on, statistical) methods of science. During the preceding five centuries, the religious approach to reality, pursued and dominated by the Catholic church, had relatively indisputably dominated the collective mentality of Europe. This approach was inspired or dynamized by what I might call, in an objective sense, the Christ mythos. It was given a definite form by a number of basic symbols and more or less

dogmatic assumptions. Most Europeans (whether priests, monks, or laymen) were bound mentally and emotionally by these dogmas and forms, and the church and its inquisitors saw to it that they remained so.

Mainly after this first phase of the European culture reached its full development under a process of cultural cross-fertilization involving the Arabs and particularly the Sufis (during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the Crusaders were returning to Europe), a number of mystics flourished who were able to use the dogmas and myths of official Christianity as foundations for the development — often after years of intense, and often dreary, search and practices — of what are usually known as "mystical experiences." These usually temporary, but in some instances often repeated, experiences were interpreted by the mystics themselves as the attainment of a "unitive state" of consciousness. The attainment of such a state was said to require a more or less total detachment of the consciousness from biological drives and personal attachments, and to involve a seemingly total identification with the supreme symbol of the mystic's religion, Christ (or in some cases Christ's mother) — or even a spiritual absorption into an ineffable and altogether transcendent and immutable "Reality," subsuming all religious symbols and divine personages.

The mystical path and mystical experiences have been described extensively, as much as they can be. Descriptions often rely upon the use of strictly negative terms to convey the experiences' utter transcendence from all that (to use the terminology of old India) has "name and form." However, what usually is not stressed, or even made clear, is that the mystics of **all countries** (in the strict and precise sense of the term "mystic") always **emerge from** and are **sustained** in their strivings by **both** their respective religions and all that is fundamental in their cultures. A St. Theresa of Avila would not have been possible without the Catholic church and the racial-cultural background of Spain; nor a Ramalaishna without his early absorption in the very concrete form of the particular type of Hinduism surrounding and conditioning his youth.

Nevertheless, the apologist for the mystical way is correct in saying that in spite of the differences in various mystics' cultural and religious backgrounds, what mystics experience during their subliminal and ecstatic state of consciousness is remarkably similar. It may be similar, however, mainly insofar as intellectual words and concepts can relate the experience. Thus, the similarity may characterize the nature of the human mind **as interpreter of what is beyond its normal state** as much as the nature of the experience itself. Moreover, the written or recorded interpretations we possess refer to experiences which human beings have had **in relatively recent times** that is, during the last three millennia, and at most since 3102 B.C., the traditional start of Kali Yuga and the incarnation of Sri Krishna. What are five thousand years in the probably millions human beings have been on earth?

Granted, however, that the "end" of the mystical way is similar whatever the culture and religion (and in general the collective and personal conditioning) from which the mystic started, this end could not have been attained without the original conditioning, the symbols, and the psychological (and even more psychic) support of **a** religion and culture. Even if the priesthood, and entrenched interests of the official religion and culture, often made the mystic's path arduous, they did so simply because it seemed to challenge the rigorously set ecclesiastic or even political structures of the society.

Mystics need their culture and religion as psychic support, even if this support is used to rise beyond the culture's and religion's limits, to proclaim a reality beyond the sociocultural and religious symbols and forms. The great Catholic mystics of Europe prayed in the more or less traditional manner, and implicitly believed in the indisputable validity, power, and efficacy of the Christ mythos, the church, and its sacraments. This is true of all mystics who have ecstatic experiences of "unity" and/or identification with the divine by following a path which begins at the level of their ancestral, traditional religion. Because they represent the "flowering" of a religion and culture, great mystics are very different from the "leaves"

representing their more ordinary co-religionists. But these leaves (or in the case of trees, branches) must develop **before** a mystic arises; without them the mystic would not be possible.

Another type of unusual human being also plays a significant and primary role in the evolution of societies and their cultures and religions— the seed persons mentioned earlier. I shall deal with them again presently, but first we should consider what has been happening in the Euro-American culture after it began to divorce itself from subservience to the forms of institutionalized Christianity.

Christianity having been split into conflicting ideologies, Christendom became increasingly dominated by empiricism — that is, by a scientific methodology which made the perceptions of the human senses and the interpretations of a strictly rationalistic intellect (using a specific, but by no means the only possible, kind of logic) **the sole valid means** for the acquisition of knowledge. This type of knowledge also has special, indeed revolutionary, characteristics: it has to be so obtained and formulated as to be available to **anyone** who wants it for **whatever purpose** their sole discretion defines. No previous kinds of knowledge had such characteristics; never before was access to or the acquisition of knowledge considered independent of the knower's degree of understanding, personal evolution, and capacity to use knowledge constructively.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, great European minds were concerned with the development of basic tools for the scientific method. The European empirical approach also took a sociopolitical form which, at least in principle, repudiated old sociocultural categories, and developed instead the concept of the social atom— the citizen of a society theoretically based on equality and individual rights. This sociopolitical philosophy inevitably implies the possibility of relatively unchecked acquisitiveness and separative existence, powered by ambition and greed (nicely called the "profit motive"). During the nineteenth century, Euro-American culture responded to the development of an increasingly materialistic and separative outlook with nationalistic separativeness, an emotional, Romantic individualism, and a struggle for power between nations and classes matching the struggle for life which Darwin had seen paramount in the biosphere.

An Empirical Psychology

As the twentieth century began, the main field of a developing mass consciousness— a composite of pseudo-individualistic and increasingly disassociated human responses— became the field of psychology. But by psychology I do not mean **only** the Freudian, Jungian, and Maslovian types of personal psychology dealing with the problems and confusion of human beings subjected to increasingly chaotic and disintegrating social, ethical, religious, and cultural values and forms.

I am also referring here to the kind of international psychology having developed throughout the century which has made the international scene resemble a family struggle between masculine America and feminine Russia—with other industrial nations as collateral relatives, and the new nations of the Third World as children. This international war of nerves uses an ideological conflict — individualistic capitalism versus collectivistic socialism — communism — as a decoy, for it is essentially a power struggle between opposite but complementary types of emotional-mental responses to the results of the technological revolution. Technology, in turn, is the result of the empirical and quantitative approach of the scientific mind when this mind is focused **either** upon strictly materialistic values (comfort, progress, satisfaction of the drive for power) or upon almost exclusively personal concerns (for example, the Human Potential Movement whose roots can be found in the New Thought teachings and affirmations of the era between the two world wars).

Modern psychology since Freud is the result of applying the empirical approach of science to particular persons considered as basically separate psychic entities. These individualized psychic atoms emerged from the undifferentiated generic and collective mass of the human species and of various cultures; and the basic psychological problem of our century deals

with the character of the relationship between these individual and collective factors. This relationship has become a cold war. The "peace proposal" offered by the psychologist Jung seeks to have the individual field of consciousness (the "I" realization) absorb and illumine the collective depths of the psyche (human nature and the great archetypes of a potentially all-inclusive, worldwide culture).

While Jung and Maslow seem to have opened up the field of consciousness to transcendent values and realizations, and while "transpersonal" psychology seeks to deal with the very limits of human consciousness and with what this consciousness may infer from inner experiences, taking uncertain and subjective forms in the light that floods the room of consciousness when the windows of the personality have been opened, Jung and Maslow firmly exhorted students and practitioners of transpersonal psychology: **Whatever you do, do not give up an empirical approach.** At least in his public stance and teachings, Jung never deviated from his belief that, having "assimilated" the contents of the collective unconscious and the deeper meaning of the culture's and religion's great symbols, a healthy person had to remain both psychically rooted and socially active in his or her culture and religion. Jung never seems to have believed, or at least taught, that a radical uprooting, not only from one's culture but **from the level at which cultures operate**, is the goal of spiritual development. He apparently refused to accept the possibility of the existence, within the total field of the planet earth, of beings as superior to human persons — in an evolutionary sense or in other ways — as, let us say, the human species is to a vegetable species.

Yet, in all times and in all cultures and religions, at least a small number of individuals (and in some cases whole cultures) have believed in the existence of such beings and in the possibility of mere human beings reaching such a condition. On the basis of inner experiences believed to be incontrovertible, even if not susceptible to empirical proofs, these individuals have reoriented their entire beings toward the taking of radically transformative steps that eventually would actualize the possibility of this superindividual, ultimate superhuman state of **being** — that is, of consciousness **and** activity. These individuals are true occultists. Symbolically speaking, they aim beyond the flowering of their cultures, at the evolutionary transformation which can occur only within mutating seeds. As seed persons they become separate in consciousness and inner being from the plant (culture) out of which they developed. Even while they are being slowly developed as seeds within the "fruit," they are, as Jesus stated, **in** this world but not **of** it — and this not only in consciousness, but also in terms of the quality of their activity and the character of their motivation. Nevertheless, what might be called the "other world" should not be considered a heavenly realm totally removed from and incomprehensible to human consciousness; it pervades this world of existence. The two realms constantly interact and are interrelated, one might say illustratively, as air pervades all substances of water and earth.

The Occult Path

Today the basic difference between the person who has typically mystical experiences and the true occultist is especially difficult to understand because depth psychologists, especially Jung, have attempted to reduce everything dealing with metaphysics to the level of psychology. Jung's commentary on **The Secret of the Golden Flower** is particularly definite in stating his utter lack of interest in, and, even his contempt for, Asian metaphysics:

My admiration for the great Eastern philosophers is as great and indubitable as my attitude toward their metaphysics is irreverent. I suspect them of being symbolical psychologists to whom no greater wrong could be done than to be taken literally. If it were really metaphysics that they mean, it would be useless to try to understand them.(2)

He objects to the criticism that his approach is merely a form of "psychologism," which he considers "as childish as metaphysics," and stresses that "it is reasonable to accord to the psyche the same validity as is given the empirical world, and to admit that the former has

just as much 'reality' as the latter." Yet, when he refers to the process clearly defined in the Chinese text as the gradual formation of a "diamond body," the indestructible breath-body which develops in the Golden Flower (which I refer to symbolically as "the seed"), Jung pompously asserts, "This body is a symbol for a remarkable fact," and proceeds to relate it to the experience of the Apostle Paul, which from an occultist's point of view is altogether different.

Space here does not permit me to quote the ambiguous discussion which follows or to discuss further Jung's convenient pushing into the "collective unconscious" of everything that would disturb his subservience to the scientific and empirical assumptions of the European culture to which he was so deeply and conservatively attached. I mention Jung's attitude solely because it has become the prototype for an emerging "new age" psychology of consciousness and foundation for the widespread, intense concern with strictly personal problems of happiness, growth, and self-actualization that has spread throughout the Euro-American culture. Especially in the 1960s and 70s, it has aimed at an "expansion of consciousness," initiated through drugs; yet the term "drug" also can refer to repetitive psychic practices. Some types of meditation may produce a real addiction to a condition of relaxed psycho-biological well-being.

When a Chinese occultist spoke of the Diamond Body, or when a Vajrayana Buddhist refers to the three "bodies" of the Buddha, there is no reason to believe they considered **these structured fields of activity and consciousness** as mere "symbols" conveniently related to certain stages of psychological unfoldment only in terms of consciousness. For the occultist, these "bodies" are **states of being**. They may be called bodies only to the extent that they refer to the ability to function effectively and consciously (in a different type of consciousness!) at different levels of existence. Even the Nirmanakaya state of Gautama, while he acted as a man among men, may well have differed in quality of vibrations from that at which the strictly physical bodies of ordinary human beings operate. There are, in Sanscrit, various words to define several stages of development of the inner "vehicles" surrounding and pervading a human being's natural physical body (for example: upadhi, kosha, sharira). Yet one should speak of a "body" only when, at a particular level, density, vibratory speed, and quality of substance, an effectively organized system of functional activities is built to be the activity-aspect of a corresponding level of conscious being. Building such a system of organization, the related aspects of consciousness (or superhuman faculties), and an effective will polarized by adequate higher-level purpose (to some extent replacing lower-level feelings and impulses) is a long, arduous, dangerous, and utterly demanding process. It is what occultists mean by "the Path." What develops on the Path is not merely consciousness **but a quality of being**. According to an individual's karma and the conditions of the society and its culture, this quality of being exteriorizes itself in varying degrees as a different and always more or less abnormal behavior (which inevitably is difficult for most people to understand), based on different feeling-responses to all types of relationships.

Certain cultures and collective forms of social organization have existed which undoubtedly were devised especially to **shelter and sustain** human beings born with a special readiness to enter upon the Path. The Tibetan culture, at least since the introduction of Buddhism, seems to have been such a sheltering envelopes collective "fruit" wherein many "seeds" could develop. The **tulku** state, if truly genuine, stresses the attainment of a level of evolution at which the **center** of the being exists and matures at a superphysical level, even though, superficially, and in terms of cultural-religious activity, the incarnate tulku operates in and through a relatively normal and natural human vehicle (or body). The tulku is said to be a direct emanation of one of the celestial Buddhas, for instance, the Buddha of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara. This emanation "incarnates" in (or animates) a succession of human beings (even, in some instances, several at the same time).

Such human beings should not be called mystics, even though some of their experiences may be similar to or identical with those of Christian, Sufi, or Hindu mystics. The nature of

experiences occurring even in the highest forms of Tibetan Buddhism is ambiguous because the Buddhist **sangha** (the religious community) is symbolically the "fruit" rather than a collection of "seeds." Tibetan Buddhism is a religion; Tibetan society is (or rather was) a culture. The outer form of this theocratic society constituted an institutionalized **collective** system, defined by a very special geographical region and the possibilities it offered. On the other hand, the "highest" sangha is a planetary Communion which I have referred to as the **Pleroma** of humanity. It exists beyond all cultures. One could symbolize it as a planetary "granary" to which the "seeds" of all cultures find their way — but not as essentially separate units. For the Pleroma is a spiritual Communion in which what had been independent individuals **interpenetrate** in unanimity of purpose sustained by a common will. The Pleroma, the Many-as-One, is a soul-being that not only reflects but is the full, concrete, planetary actualization of what, "in the beginning" of this earth system (the divine Word or Logos), was an all-inclusive **potentiality** of being.

What we call mankind is but the long, gradual, arduous, often tragic, and always dangerous transition between the level of "life" — as we know it in the earth's biosphere, where it operates as a quasi-instinctual and compulsive type of homogeneity — and that of the Pleroma. The highest possibility of consciousness — together with the most effective capacity for action and the purest cosmic or divine will — operate in this Pleroma state. Subconsciously, if not consciously, humanity aspires to such a state because it is humanity's function on this planet to be the transition between two levels of being: the vegetable and Pleroma states. Man is an animal into which the seed of divinity has been "sown" or to use another metaphor, onto which the capacity to become divine was "grafted." This one capacity belonged to superior minds (or mental beings) who, having "grafted" an "emanation" of their power onto protohuman beings, have remained involved in the result — that is, in our "human, all too human" efforts to reach the Pleroma state by following the arduous path of discipleship or transformation.(3)

Today's "new age" persons have difficulty understanding this process because Indian and Sufi philosopher-mystics have emphasized a subjective approach stressing the practice of what has become popularized as meditation and the achievement of strictly **subjective** states, as samadhi or satori are usually understood. The true occultist also must have subjective experiences of "unitive" states, but he or she seeks to develop a **higher physical** as well as a **higher mental consciousness**. On his or her way to the fully developed Pleroma state, the disciple on the Path serves as a link between the animal-human and the Pleroma state, and this **through** what he or she has developed of a "higher mind" (which elsewhere I have called the "mind of wholeness").(4) To be such an agent is what **transpersonal Living** really means: individualized personhood is placed unconditionally at the service of the Pleroma. What has been called the "inner Ruler" (or the "Master within") is, in this sense, the powerful and effectual focalization of the Pleroma within (yet from above or beyond) the person.

The Pleroma is a state of total being, not only of consciousness. A Pleroma being has "his" center of being at a level beyond what our senses perceive as physical matter. At this level there is no gender, no biological imperatives, and no subservience to the patterns, symbols, and paradigms of a **particular** culture. While the **essential** level of Pleroma activity is the "world of forces," a Pleroma being seems able to act, at least temporarily and for a definite planetary purpose involving humanity as a whole, **through** what seems to be the form and substance of a physical body.

Unfortunately, the analytical mind, which the western world has developed so intently and almost exclusively, is normally able to think of anything human only in terms of separateness and individual being. Yet recently, a few progressive minds have been trying to imagine a world of interpenetrating wholes. But while it is easy to say philosophically that everything is in everything else, it is much harder to translate this concept effectively into personal-emotional and egocentric terms.

The state of interpenetration should also refer to the interpenetration of the future and the

present — with humanity's dreary past (karma) acting as a negative factor (inertia). The Pleroma future interpenetrates the human present-yet each particular, rigidly separative culture, having molded individual minds and personalities, acts against this interpenetration; for, alas!, most human beings cling to their "own" culture. **Potentially**, the Pleroma is now. It is the archetypal Word, the Logos that was in the beginning yet remains changeless; yet it is this archetypal potential of being in **the process** of self-actualization in terms of human consciousness **and** human activity. Mankind **is** this process. The Pleroma **is**, yet is also in the making. Because it is in the making, it calls to all of us to participate in this making.

1. The term "Planetary" refers to the concept according to which the earth is not only a globe of physical matter, but also a biological, mental, and spiritual system of activity and consciousness.
2. Wilhelm, Richard trans., **The Secret of the Golden Flower**, commentary by C. G. Jung ([Harcourt Brace,] New York, 1931), pp. 128ff.
3. See my books **Beyond Individualism: The Psychology of Transformation** (Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1979), **Beyond Personhood** (Rudhyar Institute for Transpersonal Activity, 1982), and **Rhythm of Wholeness** (Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1983).
4. See my book **Rhythm of Wholeness** (Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1983).