



The Way of the West - Race against Time

Cy Grant, London

Cy Grant offers a cultural critique of the West, showing how the primacy of the rational mind ignores its own limitations and that the ultimate 'inconvenient truth is that the outer environment reflects the inner. There must be a change in the mindset. If we hope to bring about change we must first change within. This holds true for the individual as well as for society.' This connection is lost in a culture that privileges the outer and assumes its primacy over the inner, of matter over mind, of body over spirit. This theme runs through many articles in this issue.

*Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake.
But will you wake for pity's sake?*

(Christopher Fry: A sleep of prisoners)

A Wake-up Call

The fundamental message of my book, *Blackness & the Dreaming Soul*, is a plea for the West to wake; a plea for a reconstruction of the way in which we make our reality. The way of the West, it seems to me, is not the Way of Nature, but a self-seeking, consumer-orientated global cultural juggernaut that spells disaster for our beautiful planet Earth and for all life on it. The question I'm forced to ask is why, with all the evidence before us, we remain trapped in cultural hubris; why we cannot mobilise to avert the ecological holocaust that threatens our very survival. Why don't we make that shift in consciousness that would transform our degraded world? Why not avoid division and war against each other and against our very home, making that home a better place for all mankind?

We seem to be caught up in a race against time; caught in a dualism: instead of seeking balance in all things, competition and greed motivates and divides us. Whilst Racism has little to do with my brief, it has been the catalyst that has forced me to try to make sense of my worlds. I believe in the essential goodness and oneness of mankind, a belief that has been so little shared and explored that it seems almost impossible for us to see ourselves for what we truly are, as an integral part of the mystery of life, capable of viewing our home, our unique place in the Universe as sacred – the only Planet as far as we know, with a delicate and fragile life support system, floating in the incomprehensible magnitude of Space - a spherical garden of such beauty and wonder.

Despite our science, our burgeoning technologies, our welfare state, the accessibility of university education for all, our exploits into outer space and wonderful achievements in every field of endeavour, our very existence, it seems, is threatened. We have continual warfare with the collateral damage and human suffering that results; nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; star wars; satellite surveillance systems. Nuclear waste debris orbits the fragile atmosphere of our planet; we hear talk of global warming - carbon and radiation footprints, depletion of natural resources - deforestation, pollution of our seas, fuel shortages, genocide, drug abuse, rape, child abuse, sex slavery, racism, ...the list goes on and on....

And we still pride ourselves that our way of life is best. Carl Jung, a student of alchemy suggested 'that the generally accepted Western world view based on rationalism is not the only possible one and is not all embracing, but in many ways a prejudice and a bias that ought perhaps to be corrected.'

He believed that modern man had not truly looked into the great divide within, which separated him from wilderness and nature. In a world view based on this reality, we strive for more and more technological advances that will prolong our lives but do not ensure the same for our children and future generations. How selfish can we be? The old patterns repeat themselves. In Medicine we produce more drugs with disastrous side effects. We put our trust in gene therapy and genetic engineering; genetically modified food instead of organic; agricultural seed patents and now bio-fuel. We ban cigarettes but have longer drinking hours, more gaming

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houses, more things to distract us; to fill the void, more bargains, more sex, more fame and are rewarded by more crime; we talk of zero tolerance but do not address the issues responsible for the disillusionment that feeds it; so opt for more prisons, more policemen. We know about the carbon footprint yet build more terminals (how appropriate) leading to more air miles, more pollution, spiralling debts, an unstable economy, celluloid violence, toys, play stations and other excesses. 'More' is the daily mantra which we materialise and export - globalisation, colonisation of other cultures - monoculture and over-production to satisfy our every whim. In turn the newly colonised abandon their traditions and cater to our needs with their fakes, their quick fixes thus exacerbating the pollution and the degradation.

A Return to Native Value

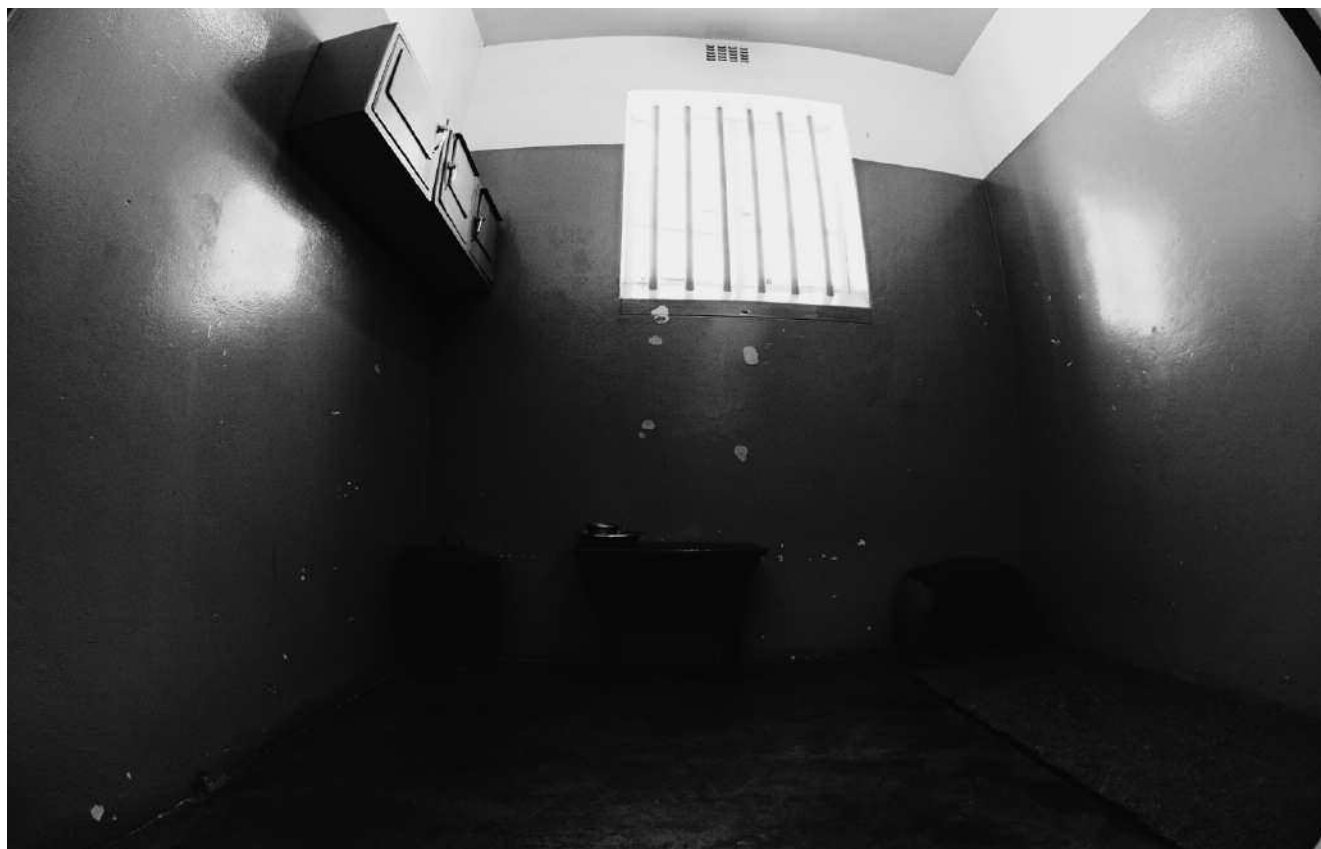
People of the African diaspora suffered tremendously from colonisation of the mind. They are still unable to disentangle themselves from the identity of 'collective victim', rooted in the memory of slavery, which falsely gives them a sense of solidarity - a position that engenders further rejection, one which I call the 'black trap'. This reality can only be transmuted by the knowledge of who these people really are, thus making themselves able to contribute positively to the healing of society. Indeed, their mere presence is already doing just that - making Europe confront its racism. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela have shown that they can influence and change entrenched attitudes. Mandela was once considered a terrorist. My particular hero has been Aime Cesaire, the great revolutionary politician, poet/philosopher from Martinique who recently died. His revolt against Europe is what worked on me in a subliminal yet positive way. It wasn't just a revolt against racism, colonialism and the excesses of European culture but a call for a return to our native human values, to recognise that Nature is alive and bounteous and that we should not

abuse her. If we do, we abuse ourselves our very Home. Black people still aspire to be accepted. They rightly revolt against injustice but still seek to integrate with the perpetrators of injustice and the gatekeepers of civilisation.

In the English speaking world black people are generally unaware of the contribution of Cesaire. Frantz Fanon, author of the *Wretched of the Earth* - the bible of the Black power movement in 60s America - acknowledges Cesaire as his mentor. This movement knew about 'Black is Beautiful', but alas only on a superficial level. Cesaire's plea was for a return to native values, to reconnect with Nature and a call for the emergence of a new man with new values. The Black press in Britain, I am told, did not even carry an obituary of the great man. That's how ignorant we are - unaware of our roots in Mother Africa, home of the Mitochondrial Eve; and Egypt where Pythagoras, the presiding genius of European culture studied for 21 years; unaware that Pythagoras' teachings were based on Egyptian (and so African) mathematical and religious pantheistic principles.

Despite the West's great 'civilisation' we live in fear fanned by those who seek control, or profit (without our consumer society our whole financial structure would collapse); fear of one another, the outsider, the terrorist. We defend our 'values' at all costs - all others must conform. Each fear is symptomatic of the underlying degraded state of the present age.

Blackness and the Dreaming Soul explores the causes of our current alienation from ourselves and the natural primordial world, unearthing the darkness of the human psyche. It is an attempt to understand how we've come to such an impasse. Out of concern for the direction we seem to be heading, it is written hopefully- to shed light on our mutual plight, on the dehumanised, self-destructing and violent world in which we find ourselves. It aims not to be bitter or recriminatory and is offered not just as criticism, for criticism only invites polarisation.



An Inconvenient Truth

Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* laments the global crisis facing mankind but does not propose a solution. It is true that we have the know-how to deal with the problem but somehow we do not use it. The inconvenient truth is that the outer environment reflects the inner. There must be a change in the mindset. If we hope to bring about change we must first change within. This holds true for the individual as well as for society. What may appear to be essentially a critique of the prevailing Western social, political, economic and globalised Industrial system is rather a plea for a fundamental change in the way we make our reality and so, in human consciousness. The Western system of secular consumerism perpetuates itself through its greed, its multinational corporations, its educational institutions and the media. I was brought up in this system, an Insider/Outsider, a black man caught up in a white culture, the great grandson of a slave, indoctrinated by an English education, a volunteer in the Royal Air Force in World War II, commissioned as an Officer, shot down and a prisoner of war in Nazi Germany for two years. On discharge, I qualified as a Barrister only then to become fully aware that I was indeed an outsider - no place for black lawyers in the 1950's. My only choice, it seemed at the time, was to become an actor on the stage of life and also a singer, not without some success. But it was a fickle success. Enoch Powell saw to that. As a cultural activist I set up the first Black arts centre in London in the 70's only to realise that this was creating even more separation. I was rescued by Aime Cesaire. I toured his epic redemptive poem *Cahier d'un Retour au pays natal* (Return to My Native Land) for two years in theatres around Britain. This led to me setting up Concord Multicultural arts Festivals in the 80's, to promote the cultural diversity of present day Britain - a plea for unity in diversity - a plea largely ignored at the time and still not understood today. In my search for identity, meaning and a sense of belonging, I still found myself marginalised all along the way. So I was forced to explore what was wrong with this culture in which I was brought up and bred.

Blackness & the Dreaming Soul began as an attempt to record my outer journey but as Fate would have it, it became my inner journey of self-discovery and healing. We inherit the systems of our forebears, our culture, so there is no blame here. My book is, I hope, an honest reappraisal of how we make our way in life and an appeal for healing of society and our fragmented and endangered world. We need to reverse the prevailing all-pervasive primacy of mind over Nature. Science and empiricism have been entrenched too long as the ruling principles - an existential reality, the creation of our minds and intellect, unaware of our deeper connection to the earth itself, to Mother Nature and to our true being, who and what we really are - the primordial wisdom of the mystery of Life. But first we have to make that descent into the darkness in order to transcend the dominance of the intellect.

The Primacy of Science

The primacy of mind assumes that Science will solve all our problems. A prominent scientist recently claimed on TV that as *Master of the Universe*, he hopes one day to discover that over-arching 'Theory of Everything' that will answer all our questions about the nature of reality and so

solve all our problems; this, whilst claiming that our destiny lies somewhere out there in Space! We are already out there in space! This misconception is typical of the delusion of yet another prominent scientist, that Science will confirm that selfishness is the norm of Nature (survival of the fittest) and that there is obviously no place for co-operation or symbiosis - no place for the existence of a higher intelligence, an absurd position for a University professor responsible for the education of future generations.

Science has replaced Wisdom. It has moved away from the beliefs of the founders of its own discipline - the philosopher/scientist, Aristotle, who saw Nature as one unified whole; Sir Isaac Newton, deeply religious and a practising alchemist. Today we demand empirical proof for everything but all we end up with is theories all of which can be disproved with the passage of time. Scientific theories follow each other in quick succession (see para 3 Holons & Holgrams BDS). Yet Science still operates within clearly defined parameters of the orthodoxy of the moment; in other words a purely scientific paradigm resists paradigm change. Science only investigates the physical, material nature of the Universe and so only gets answers in mathematical terms - how many molecules, or genes there are in cells, for instance. It cannot explain how information jumps the synapses in the brain, or how something can be both a wave and a particle at the same time even when it can observe it.

Science cannot explain how the information stored in a single cell of DNA is of a magnitude comparable with that stored in a tiny acorn that grows into a massive oak tree; or the extensive abilities in art and in mathematics of children with autism or Savant syndrome like Stephen Wiltshire, despite obvious neurological abnormalities that are found in the left hemisphere of their brains. We surely should be able to deduce that our survival as a species does not depend on rationalism, on our minds alone, or on ruthless competition and control of nature but in living in harmony with Nature and one another.

Some of the most important scientific discoveries have been made when the mind is no longer focused purely on solving the problem. Suddenly the solution *mysteriously* surfaces. This was the case with Newton and the falling apple; Einstein day dreaming in a tram as it approached another (relativity); James Watson riding a bicycle having viewed- and then appropriated- Rosalind Franklin's radio photographic work (the DNA double helix); and the dream of August Kekulé which led to the development of organic chemistry. Kekulé saw a snake dancing and biting its own

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tail, a vision which led to his discovery of the molecular structure of benzene. He interpreted his dream to mean that the structure was a closed carbon ring and fundamental to organic chemistry. (*Textbook of Organic Chemistry* 1861)

Scientific enquiry is the orthodoxy - the yardstick on which we base our reality, our sense of being, our future. This is the fundamental flaw. We do not know who or what we are, yet think that we can discover this by our minds alone, only a fraction of which we use in any case. Had the notion of the primacy of Nature prevailed we would not be in the mess we are today. We would fight with all our might to preserve our unique home, Mother Earth, which as we have seen depends on a very delicate atmospheric balance that supports all life; which provides us with everything we need for our survival. We defend our little homes, our countries or cultures, but miss the whole picture – our home is Mother Earth, Mother Nature.

Everything is Enfolded in Everything Else

The indigenous peoples of the Earth knew by intuition that everything is interconnected. But modern man has abandoned this inner knowledge in favour of empirical proof, something that the New Physics so clearly demonstrates as impossible. The observer influences what he observes: there can be no empirical proof! Yet we ignore the philosophical and existential implications of quantum reality. The theoretical physicist, David Bohm,¹ has provided us with a holographic model in which life and inanimate matter are not separate. For Max Planck one of the founders of Quantum Mechanics,² 'matter' implied a bundle of energy which is given form by an intelligent spirit. The Fractal Geometry of the French mathematician, Benoit Mandelbrot³ comes to the same conclusion – that every thing is enfolded in every thing else, similar to that of the French experimental physicist Alain Aspect,⁴ that there is an unbroken wholeness or interconnectedness in the Universe. Also there is the new worldview of the transpersonal psychologist, Stanislav Grof,⁵ that there are *no absolute boundaries between body/ego and the totality of existence*.

Despite the recent outstanding development in nano-technology, we are still stuck in outdated concepts. Our present explosion in technological knowledge clearly demonstrates that there was (and still is) so much *out there*

of which we were (and still are) unaware by our reliance only the power of the intellect. If we see that what is *out there* is also our innermost being, we will then know who we truly are and so re-connect to that wisdom beyond description; beyond the duality that divides and bedevils us.

Throughout the ages we have witnessed the indomitable spirit of man, that we have produced great music and great art and are capable of the noblest deeds, the greatest compassion, bravery and achievement, all attributes that stem, not from the intellect, the rational, but from a deeper source, our true natures - the wisdom of our bodies – our autonomous systems and our breath, the umbilical chord that connects us all, all races and all life on our planet to our Mother - Primordial Nature.

References

- 1 David Bohm, *Wholeness & the Implicate Order*
- 2 Max Planck – the originator of wave/particle duality based on the overtone series in music - that notes jump from whole number to whole number deduced that *particle energy in the atom changes not gradually but in jumps*.
- 3 Benoit Mandelbrot, *Fractal Geometry*
- 4 Alain Aspect's *non-locality*
- 5 Stanislav Grof: *Holotropic Breath*

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Photo Cy Grant courtesy Julian Andrews



This year sees the **150th anniversary** of the joint paper by **Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace** and delivered at the Linnean Society, which has recently been celebrated in a number of broadsheets. As a recognition of the importance of Wallace, we are organising a one-day book launch for a new volume to be published by Oxford University press in November. *Details are enclosed.*

