

## Correspondence

### Dominance/submission - or Partnership?

*From: April Ryedale Taylor, 20 Perry Orchard, Westrip, Stroud, Glos GL5 4QT.*

Cross-currents in recent issues of Network have prompted me to take a look at the possible relations between transcendence/immanence as distinctive modes of experiencing spiritual consciousness, and dominance/submission versus participatory partnership as inevitable/possible ways of modelling human behaviour. Here I will not attempt a philosophical analysis of the logic of these concepts, so much as a brief if ranging exploration of some hopefully relevant approaches to the immediate problems facing humanity at this juncture of our evolutionary history.

Someone working for World Goodwill\* has recently suggested that we now have six billion egotists in the world, with the task of learning to co-operate both with one another and the planet's needs. This could sound true enough, if most human beings were indeed self-actualised, in the sense of having achieved the unimpeded use of their full personal equipment of mind and body feelings. In practice, though, nearly half of these six billion are women still in thrall to oppressive regimes or unwitting social attitudes, born of the cultural androcracy that seems to have prevailed throughout the world for the past few thousand years - scarcely dented by Christianity and much exacerbated by Islam. Indeed Aristotle, a significant flower of the world preceding either, saw women as incapable of flowering, because they were 'only half-men'. Ignorant of this judgement when I studied Greek Philosophy in the sixties, I was of course aware Greek culture flourished because it topped a pyramid of slaves and women.

Topped today by western whites, that pyramid is on the verge of toppling, as population heavily declines amongst this cultured minority and increases vastly at its 'struggling base'. While this is a now out-dated Marxist term, it continues to remain the painful actuality for far too many of our six billion, for whom the very possibility of fully expressing their human potential has probably never crossed the threshold of their consciousness. Nor can it be said to be made more likely or more possible by the collective economic strategies of those who have this freedom.

A move from personal actualisation towards that which embraces more than the personal would thus seem vital if the six billion are to survive as flourishing humanity: that hybrid of animal form and transcendent essence many of us feel kin to. In the autumn of 1981, I had the good fortune to be present at a Conference in South East London, when John Rowan gave his first exciting workshop on Ken Wilber's *Atman Project*. (I chose this because I already knew him through his group work in the North). Fresh from four months in India at the Rajneesh Ashram, where I had refused to meditate on 'earth energies' as probably dangerously 'black', I at once embraced Wilber's thesis of human development to such effect that I was drawn three years later to join the esoteric School of Alice Bailey. She commends the use of occult meditation, along with the study of her and others' books, together with practice in the outer world as the route to its transformation. The emphasis was always to raise energy from the lower to the higher centres of the subtle body, assumed to embrace and penetrate the gross physical, via the hormonal system and along the line of the spinal column: solar plexus to heart, sacral (or gut) to throat, base to head - learning thus to live "above the diaphragm".

When Ken Wilber's big book, *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality* came out some years after his painfully honest *Grace and Grit*, I was deeply impressed by his transcendent recovery from personal loss, as manifest in his immense grasp of the way things develop in terms of human evolution. I thus worked to understand (and share with others) his account of how to negotiate what he calls a fulcrum - that is, a move to disengage the consciousness from a not previously identified 'position', and thus, by conscious differentiation, reintegrate awareness at a new and 'higher' level of perspective on what 'is'. It did not even occur to me to doubt that this must be the best if not only way to proceed - if one would grasp and express the light within; and I still think there is probably no clearer way of tabulating human development than Wilber's four axes and his three categories of it/I/we. I failed to perceive that I was still stuck with my own internalised androcratic concepts and a highly competitive personal nature.

What is now unfolding to me is that the feminist explosion (which I refused to participate in for far too long, because of a felt, but undifferentiated, sense of my own androgyny) has erupted so far - at least for white westerners - that a pained backlash is now evident among the very men who paternally helped it on its way. If, as I now believe, the gender issue is peaking, as we move into the third millennium, is this merely one vital issue among many? Or, is 'mankind's' division into two biological forms who have to co-operate to reproduce, the most basic of all cultural divisions on the planet, because it lies at the foundation of at least all mammalian species?

It is with this latter conviction that I have been reading the work of Riane Eisler\*, who, with her partner, David Lowe, questioned ten years ago the assumption I felt unable to dispute: that dominance/submission, as displayed in most primates, is the way things are and have to be. It is this unwitting assumption that I now seem to 'see' (and feel in myself) as prompting discomfort among actualised humans, as women's power to dominate comes up against men's previous encouragement of their self-assertion. Events the world over thus present as crucially out of balance: everywhere we praise democracy; nowhere can we endure its practical operation. "Not in my backyard" we cry, when plans for needed new houses threaten our green valleys; "never surrender the pound" we shout at the prospect of fuller co-operation with our European partners. We seem convinced (and it is not only in Britain that this holds) that the emergence of a group from being suppressed must mean their imminent supremacy over us - apparently because dominance/submission is the only model known to 'man' in his present state of consciousness.

Must this be true, as it has been through the history of nations? Or are there now institutions, such as this Network, where we could make cautious moves to bring to light our own gender fears - as, for example, David Wasdell has been doing for years in his Meridian Matrices in London, Glastonbury and elsewhere; and as John Heron (who is, I think, not yet a member of the Network) has been doing in Tuscany and New Zealand.

If I am right in believing that, through the course of human evolution, biological division into male and female has unwittingly become cultural division into active/passive (as in Yang/Yin) and that we are now internally on the threshold of a possible equality of male and female principles, then *ipso facto* we are on the verge of understanding and accepting the reality of this equality in our individual and group relations. In practice, we find we are no nearer accepting such equality than before the inception of 'political correctness'. Indeed we are riddled with our own dissident denial, and even as Anglo-Saxons, proud of our rebelliousness, (to which I add a Celtic rebel, being of both extractions!). Is not this all part of

our 'natural' androcracy, enshrined in a transcendent, hierarchical approach to the transpersonal, the spiritual ?

If we are going to do more than applaud the idea of a participatory universe, must we not find in ourselves the immanent divine and rejoice with those who have? Nature seems to me, now that I have plunged into the wisdom of earth energies, no less sacred and therefore no less spiritual than the ascribed transcendent. Indeed s/he has wells as deep as the mountains of the spirit may be high. There surely is no 'flatland' to be bored by, if we are willing to 'bore' our own wells, and be penetrated by the drills of those we need to learn to partner. This can be even harder than the attempt to reconcile within ourselves these two components of our human being: our driving power and our woundability. But will anything less lead us from the rigidity of dominance/submission to the fluidity of I-Thou partaking ?

\*An NGO working from the UNA building in Whitehall.

### **Thinking and feeling.**

*From: Lyn D Andrews, PO Box 1213 Wodonga, Victoria, Australia, 3689 amst@albury.net.au*

I would like to champion Paul Anderson's letter headed *A Scientific Preoccupation* in Network's April issue. Two things in particular impressed me. The first was to question the scientific approach to spirituality, and the second had to do with the difference between debating the nature of water as opposed to actually being one with the water.

Not that I'm anti the unification of science and spirituality: on the contrary my interest in it borders on an obsession. However equally important for me is the unification of my own thinking and feeling, which is, I believe, a personal translation of exactly the same thing. And since I also believe that the cosmological and psychological are intimately related, then surely if I get my thinking and feeling act together then so might the universe.

Once upon a time I was young and was expected to make a career choice. Even then I wondered how I was to do this considering I was so immaturely versatile, but having sensibly chosen to study science, my beloved dance and writing were left out in the cold, only to re-emerge again during a profound transitional experience in my more adventurous mid-thirties. Fortunately or unfortunately this phase has proved financially unproductive; even so the creative and self-expressive rewards are still all mine.

I am therefore of the opinion that the key to unifying science and spirituality, which I believe is essentially a transpersonal interpretation of finding the self, is to help educate the individual to unite or integrate his or her thinking and feeling.. head and heart... first. By doing this, the whole person is set free to engage with life without the tragic burden of regret and unrealised dreams. Inevitably good will and service follows.