1. Nature (physical nature and lower life forms)
2. Body (highest bodily life forms, magical)
3. Early mind (verbal, mythical)
4. Advanced mind (rational, mental ego, self reflexive)
5. Psychic (shamanistic)
6. Subtle (saintly)
7. Causal (sagely)
8. Ultimate (absolute)

1. Pleroma
2. Uroboros
3. Typhon
4. Membership
5. Mental-Egoic
6. Centaur
7. Psychic Realm
8. Subtle Realm
9. Causal Realm

Ground Unconscious

Transpersonal Evolution

Joel MARRABLE
This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Murdoch University 2003.

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Signed:_____________________

Copyright License / Restriction

Doctorate Thesis

Permission to copy all or part of this thesis for study and research purposes is hereby:

Granted

1. Signed:____________________ Date 1/9/2003

   Author: Joseph Thomas Marrable.

2. Title of Thesis: TRANSPERSONAL LITERATURE
ABSTRACT

What do you get if you apply Ken Wilber’s theories of transpersonal psychological development within human consciousness to William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* or Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, or Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*? Can they provide a clear interpretative tool in order to uncover the intentional or unintentional aspects of consciousness development contained within them? Do these literary texts reveal a coherent quest for knowledge of human consciousness, the nature of good and evil, and the ineffable question of spirit? Is there a case for presenting a transpersonal perspective of literature in order to expound the theories of this psychological discipline? Can literary texts provide materials that are unique to that art form and can be explicated by knowledge of transpersonal psychology? Is there an evolutionary motion, which is not necessarily historically chronological but nonetheless displays a developmental map of human consciousness across literary works? In other words, can we see a hierarchical framework along the lines of consciousness development as proposed by Ken Wilber, that suggests a movement up the evolutionary ladder of consciousness from *Lord of the Flies* to *Hamlet* and beyond? Can we counter oppose *Lord of the Flies* and *Hamlet*, suggesting that the first is a fable of regression to transpersonal evil within a cultural community and the second sees Hamlet attempt to avoid this path in order to move toward the transcendence of ego and self, within the individual? If this is so then we should be able to plot both paths relative to the models
of development traced in Wilber’s theories and interpret the texts according to this framework. What is the relationship between transpersonal aspects of consciousness and literature? And what are the effects upon the cultural consciousness of human evolution that literature has had so much to inform? How do the literary works of individuals inform the cultural consciousness and transcend the age in which they are written? Equally we should be able to test the theories with the aid of some texts of literature – especially those works which are of, and about consciousness. What does this mean to the literary interpretation of these texts? How does it differ from other interpretations? What are the pitfalls and what disclaimers need to be put in place? Is the difference between the notion of a transpersonal evil and a transpersonal good simply a matter of individual moral choice?
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the preparation of this thesis, thanks go especially to my supervisor and friend, Professor John Frodsham, who has continued to provide insight, encouragement and wisdom not only for this thesis but also during my entire undergraduate degree and honours program. He shared a wealth of knowledge in literature, psychology and life which provided many valuable materials for this project and represents the very best in teaching.

My dear friend and colleague, Dr. Dave Morgan, who persuaded me to carry on my academic studies rather than hang out in bars, deserves my utmost gratitude. He has proved to be one of the clearest and most generous thinkers I have known, with an encyclopedic knowledge of literature – especially ‘pulp’ novels, film, and getting through difficult times. His editing and comment have been invaluable.

Thanks go to my family for their specific and general support in all sorts of ways during my research – Patricia, Tim, Clare, Steve and Rupert.

Thanks also go to Sarah Blacklock for early research assistance.
# CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT**  
1

**SYNOPSIS AND SURVEY OF THE FIELD**  
3  
A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON THE INTERNET AS A RESOURCE  
21

**INTRODUCTION**  
22  
THE PROBLEM OF EVIL  
26  
THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS  
30

**CHAPTER 1: FLOWER FROM AN A-BOMB**  
34  
ARROWS AND ROCKETS  
43  
THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING  
44  
THE FOURTH FORCE  
48  
TRANSCENDENCE  
54  
CONSCIOUSNESS  
55  
TRANSPERSONAL STRUCTURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS  
57  
THE PRE/TRANS FALLACY  
62  
CATEGORY ERROR, AUTHENTICITY AND LEGITIMACY  
64  
STRUCTURE AND STAGE  
67  
TRANSLATION AND TRANSFORMATION  
72

**CHAPTER 2: THE BEAST IN THE DARK**  
76  
FLIGHT FROM APOCALYPSE  
78  
VALID GROWTH AND GROTESQUE REGRESSION  
86  
THE VISIONARY  
89  
THE BEAST  
92  
UNBEARABLE BLOOD  
99  
MYTHIC MEMBERSHIP  
105  
THE BOY WHO WOULD BE KING  
114  
PERCIVAL WEMYS MADISON  
121  
A NEW HOPE  
123

**CHAPTER 3: PAINTING A BODHISATTVA**  
128  
FOLLOW THE DEMON  
129  
THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE CULTURE  
135  
THE QUEST FOR IVORY AND IMMORTALITY  
140  
THE SPIRITUAL MARINER  
144  
DIABOLIC DIVINITY  
154  
ILLUMINATION BY PROXY  
159  
A FOOTNOTE ON THE HORROR  
162
### CHAPTER 4: HAMLET PART I: FROM AMLETH TO ATMAN
- The Ghost as Spirit: 177
- Hamlet’s Antic Disposition: 183
- Hamlet and Soliloquy: 201
- Hamlet and Time: 203
- Oedipus and Hamlet: 210
- Hamlet as Centaur: 212

### CHAPTER 5: HAMLET PART II: WILBER IN A NUTSHELL!
- The Form of Hamlet’s Development through Meditation: 218
- Soliloquy One: 221
- Soliloquy Two and “What a Piece of Work is a Man”: 226
- Soliloquy Three: 229
- Soliloquy Four – “To be, or not to be”: 230
- The Play within the Play: 234
- Soliloquy Five: 240
- Reflections in a Graveyard: 242
- Hamlet’s Delay: 247
- The Final Stage: 252

### CHAPTER 6: TRANSPERSONAL LITERATURE
- Transpersonal Literary Interpretation: 265
- Character Analysis and the Transpersonal Life Cycle: 270
- Transpersonal Literature: 278

### CONCLUSION: 280

### BIBLIOGRAPHY: 286
SURVEY OF THE FIELD

Since its inception in the late sixties in America, transpersonal psychology has sustained a dedicated school of academics, theorists and practitioners and introduced a unique approach to psychology in general. Therefore it can be said to have enough pedigree and credence to clearly render many valuable, even essential insights into literary interpretation. Having studied comparative literature and transpersonal psychology, it became clear that a synthesis of these two schools would provide a fruitful ground on which to examine the concept of transpersonal developmental consciousness within the literary landscape. There has long been a tradition of psychological readings of literary texts and figures within them. Writers too, use psychological disorders, syndromes, neuroses, and psychoses to convey a notion of ‘realism’ to their characters and scenarios, and literary critics are often guided by psychological theories to aid their given analyses. Therefore transpersonal psychological interpretation must offer something in the way of criticism, analysis or commentary and eventually, therefore, some sort of evaluation.

The practice of using psychology as one of the determinants in the analysis of a text seems either lauded or maligned, depending on the point of view of the critic, the ‘fashionability’ of the particular theory, i.e., Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian, and the approach and politics of the reader. Yet it must not be understood that criticism of
literature marks a simple division, where psychologists support psychological and psychoanalytic appraisals of literature on the one hand, while on the other literary critics and theorists condemn such practices. The terrain is not so easily mapped and happily, as a result, there is scope for a web of theorists and commentators made up of both academics with a literary background and those with a foundation in psychology. Many, in fact, appear to have feet secure in both camps and there are also those who acknowledge no particular kinship with either.

As the thesis unfolds, we will find innumerable occasions of just how close some of the readings and interpretations are between literary critics and those of psychologists, oftentimes seemingly unaware of their mutual findings. Yet, rather than representing a problem for the idea of a transpersonal psychological reading of literature, it provides a convenient viewpoint, because of the integral and holistic approach of this discipline. One of the major tasks of this thesis is to bring a synthesis to these disparate, yet fraternal, claims and attempt to frame them under the umbrella of transpersonal literary interpretation. This is not to suggest that these schools of thought are necessarily at odds with one another. To the contrary, it could be simply, as the transpersonal psychologist, Ronald S. Valle believes is the case with the current climate of psychology, that “most thinkers and practitioners within one tradition are simply unfamiliar with the literature of the other,”

Certainly, my research indicates that there are very few sustained accounts of transpersonal psychological readings of literature to date.

It is true, that the current trend in the humanities is to move away from such efforts to comprehend texts by using the methodology of psychological approaches to literature, and this may indeed account for a dearth in such material. However, the barrenness of the environment was surprising. Later in the research, I found a similar astonishment expressed in William Kerrigan’s preface to *Hamlet’s Perfection* who informs us that he was “not prepared for the shocking decadence of *Hamlet* criticism from the 1980s.” Kerrigan claims that “self-canonizing” and “theory-driven criticism” might see the first generation of critics in two hundred years to refuse the challenge of Shakespeare.² His book, he tells us, is born of a sorrow that this generation of literary intellectuals have contributed so little to the elucidation of *Hamlet*. And yet we will see that although this is somewhat true, those few contemporary critics, who did tackle it, offered accounts of the play which seemed to contain many transpersonal undertones. However, while they may be familiar with transpersonal psychology this was also true of some earlier critics who predate that school. Nevertheless, none of the critics used the language, terms and structures of transpersonal psychology to explicate the text. This was also the case with the critics who tackled the other literary texts included in the thesis – William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. In realising that transpersonal psychology would provide a valuable tool for the interpretation of some of the psychological aspects within given works, I then had to determine the literary texts I would examine.

---

Once I began to study the psychological and literary theorists who inhabit these pages, it became remarkably clear that many of the writers who were not initially considered for their adherence to transpersonal models, showed surprising similarities in their conclusions both at the micro and macro level, particularly when considering *Hamlet*. Indeed, the more I read the more apparent it became that the fictitious Danish prince had done as much to inform psychology over the years as any single patient or therapist. As one psychoanalyst has observed: “more has been written of Hamlet than of any doctor who ever lived.”\(^3\) There are a number of psychoanalytic works which were of particular significance when tackling the *Hamlet* chapters, and chief among these was Kurt Robert Eissler’s *Discourse on Hamlet* and *HAMLET: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. Eissler’s work is well regarded in the field and continually referenced by other psychoanalysts who deal with *Hamlet*. His book offered not only an acute analysis of the play but also demonstrated a voice that, while keenly critical, was generous and magnanimous. Avi Erlich’s insightful *Hamlet’s Absent Father* and John Russell’s *Hamlet and Narcissus*, also provided a great number of psychoanalytic insights and supporting evidences for this thesis.

It was the sheer force and volume of the material which surrounded *Hamlet* that necessitated the eventual expansion of my investigation from one, into two chapters. One of the reasons was that it became apparent during the research process that *Hamlet* acted as a kind of historical barometer for the study of psychology. In fact the play appears in so many psychological texts either simply as a metaphor or in quotation, but more often than not as the example *par excellence*, quite ironically, of a conscious,

psychological being. This inevitably made the claims far more ambitious than at first imagined, i.e. that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* has been a primary forger of modern thought and I found that I was far from alone in this belief. It therefore became an imperative to see *Hamlet* as testing the authenticity of transpersonal psychology’s claims as well as to produce a transpersonal literary interpretation of the play. When it comes to the literary criticism that *Hamlet* has attracted there are no superlatives to cover the length and breadth of material stretching across the decades. It becomes obvious very quickly that the choice of material must be highly selective and as effective as possible, since there is such an enormous wealth of comment about the prince. I tried to maximise the representation therefore, between some of the best-known *Hamlet* scholars, such as Dover Wilson, Harold Goddard, Harold Bloom, L. C. Knights, et al., as well as to represent more recent views to add something of a contemporary view of the play that might best conform to the ideas contained in transpersonal psychology. For instance, Marvin Rosenberg’s compendium, *The Masks of Hamlet*, is a thorough investigation of the various renditions of Hamlet on stage and screen incorporating many sources of criticism and interpretations with some key concepts relevant to the thesis, especially the concept of Hamlet’s perceived transformation. It is worth noting that this is a relatively recent Hamlet study, published in 1992, and therefore reflects more clearly current readings of the play, which perhaps are of more interest to the topic of the thesis. Of particular importance was *Hamlet in Japan*, edited by Yoshiko Ueno, that contained some fascinating insights from Japanese and western scholars, including readings linked to the ‘Zen’ component in the play. And we will see that Zen has a particular bearing on the works of our major theorist, Ken Wilber.
I hope to show the background to the historical literary criticism of the play, with some of the points of consensus as well as introduce more recent and speculative analysis. In so doing, the attempt will be to present the broadest, most holistic approach that is practicable within the scope of the thesis.

The selective reading process involved the combing of theoretical texts for traces of the transpersonal while closely reading the literary texts in order to translate the imagery into some theoretically-based shape. In examining other theories, I sought to frame them either in the context of the transpersonal, or to dismiss them using the theories of transpersonal psychology. I was keen to include as many of the more salient interpretations in terms of the macro-arguments, because well-honed arguments of interpretation represent the very evolution and development of the study of literature itself. To find fault with any established interpretations would almost run counter to my argument, as the whole premise of transpersonal psychology is an integral and holistic approach and therefore is a whole that is part of a greater whole, *ad infinitum*.

While this allows for a great compass and expansive understanding of literary analysis it in no way means that *all* interpretations are good. Although there are many ways of looking at the text *Hamlet*, it is not a play about cooking – *Titus Andronicus* perhaps – but not *Hamlet*. Wilber tells us that “the statement “*Hamlet* is about the joys of war” is a false statement – it is a bad interpretation, it is wrong” because, he argues, it can be thoroughly rejected by a community of scholars who have read and interpreted the play. He insists that this process of rejection is no different from the scientific method of performing an injunction and having the empirical data ratified by “a
community of the adequate."⁴ It is therefore of great benefit when presenting an interpretation based on a broad-spectrum approach, to be able to justify claims from as many varying fields and disciplines as is possible and this is what I have tried to accomplish.

In the preface to *Up From Eden*, Wilber asks the reader: “Did you not write this book, and countless others like it, simply to remind you who you are?” And it was this provocative notion that all we read is already vaguely familiar to us, that drew my attention to the fact that transpersonal psychology may be a valuable tool for interpretation.

As a result, I concluded my honours thesis on Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* with a chapter based on a transpersonal reading of aspects in that icon of popular culture. Pirsig’s book, I should say, was itself instrumental in introducing me to certain ways of looking at the world. Wilber’s suggestion that what we experience, we have experienced before, encouraged me to ask: Is it then possible that this experience is actually informed by the books we read? In other words, is it possible that there is a way of examining a distillation of all that we read, even the whole history of books? Can we find some way of psychologically mapping the irregularities and anomalies, not just in interpersonal relationships, but also with the individual development of anyone’s perception of what their consciousness actually is made up of – including the books they find edifying? This may be too abstract a concept but it does seem that only transpersonal psychology would allow for such a speculation in the first place.

This is one of the reasons I chose transpersonal psychology as a subject of study and it is strengthened by the fact that the approach seems to fit so well with some of the experiences which critics have with their interaction with texts. And in many cases, the approach itself seems to have come before the psychology – it simply needed a school to formalise it. This may be because this is true of developmental psychology in general. For instance, you have to get to the stage of Jean Piaget’s ‘Formal Operational Thinking’ in order to understand that concept itself. For only at the stage of Formal Operational Thinking and beyond are we provided with the tools to think about thinking. This means that there needs to be an evolution of thought to enable us to think about thought itself. Or, there needs to be an evolution in consciousness in order for us to have the concept of an evolution of consciousness. As Wilber puts it in *Eye to Eye*:

“The very power of logic lies in its transcendence of sensory objects (as Piaget has demonstrated, formal operational thinking or rational logic operates *upon*, and thus transcends, concrete and sensorimotor experience).”

This idea must have some bearing on what we read and how we read it. When we read, we re-create the literary concept for ourselves, albeit within a given context. If we see a McDonald’s ‘drive-thru’ sign for instance and understand that phrase and are aware of the process involved, it cannot be interpreted in an infinite amount of ways. There are lateral ways of interpreting it. We could argue that there is an insidious content to the way that they are advertising out in the road. We could make a whole political thesis out of the phrase drive-thru. But essentially as we do that we will be moving away from the simple concept of ‘drive-thru’. We will have to expand the environment around the phrase in order to tackle the greater themes and the macrocosm

---

that surrounds them. But the sign itself is very hard to misinterpret. It doesn’t mean –
“Drive through without stopping.” The phrase means that there is the facility for you to
stay in your car and order your food. Drive-thru entails stopping in this context. It does
not have a myriad of alternative meanings, but it does have a myriad of contexts where
its meaning is mediated. And this is, of course true of all literature as well. This point
though is at odds with many of the literary theories that were so popular during my
undergraduate degree in a post-structuralist theoretical climate. While I understood
what these theorists were getting at, generally, I tended to think that they were saying a
lot to convey very little. Moreover, they seemed more interested in immersing
themselves in the nuts and bolts of language rather than literature, and it has long been
my opinion that the literature we choose to read is exactly what emancipates us from the
tyrranny of language. This thesis is therefore not overly concerned with many fields in
literary theory. There will be no deliberation on what constitutes the differences
between the new criticism, reader-response, existentialism, feminism, structuralism,
post-structuralism or post, post-post or proto-postmodernism, etc., but rather a reliance
on contemporary holistic, integral and transpersonal models. Ken Wilber, when
examining literary theory, talks of the “constitutive nature of interpretations,” and warns
that context “means ‘constraints,’ not chaos,” suggesting a degree of limitation to
literary analysis. He concludes that the examination of a work of art is “the evoking and
elucidating” of a highlighted context, looking at “the total web of evidence.”
6 The context of this thesis then, is that it seeks to interpret texts in specific ways relevant to a
particularly Wilberian psychological perspective, while relying on the web of evidence
already gathered by former literary scholars. We must also be aware of the

---

psychological and literary equivalents of Heisenberg’s ‘uncertainty principle’ as well as the rigours and confines of a formatted academic thesis.

Importantly, as my major theorist, Wilber’s lucid, stimulating, and often amusing style is immediately accessible to someone with a literary background. His works provide an enormous synthesis of psychological and philosophical theories, encompassing a vast array of ideas. And since he is concerned with the evolution of consciousness, Wilber is acutely aware of the processes involved in the communication of an essentially developmental argument. If his argument did not expand and incorporate, thereby sometimes superseding previously held beliefs, Wilber himself could hardly be developing in the way in which his conviction to transpersonal evolution dictates. In the words of Robert Romanyszyn and Brian Whalen, this serves for psychology in general: “the discipline of psychology changes as the world does. In this sense, we would say that the discipline of psychology must be rewritten in every age.”\(^7\) It therefore follows that psychological interpretation of literary texts is destined to follow suit.

Wilber is the largest figure in the world of transpersonal psychology. In fact it is his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, published in 1974, that is attributed with the wide scale interest in the transpersonal movement. This place was cemented with the publication of the sister volumes: *The Atman Project* and *Up from Eden*, published in 1977, where the author presented his most penetrating insights and cohesive philosophies into transpersonal developmental consciousness. Each volume attempts to map the spectrum of consciousness, one ontogenetically, and the other phylogenetically.

The Atman Project charts the progress, structures and stages of consciousness within the individual, from infant, through adolescence and onto individuated states of transcendence during meditation. Up from Eden charts the corresponding journey that the human species has made up the phylogenetic ladder from the dawn of time to the present day and tries to assess the way in which future generations will continue to make transitions towards higher levels of a collective, cultural consciousness. According to Wilber, both the individual consciousness and the culture in which it is shaped are driven by the rise toward a spiritual dimension, super/god-consciousness, or Atman. The Atman Project sees that this drive is forever being translated into humankind’s efforts to understand and transcend death while forever realising the futility of temporal bodily existence and an ever-present separate self-sense and accompanying death-terror. It is important for this thesis that the reader understand the way in which Wilber views the relationship between the individual and the cultural context that individuals find themselves in. That is the individual who transcends the culture will be the one that has insights which transcend that context and it is for this reason that ontogenetic evolution precedes phylogenetic advance, although there is obviously a complicated interplay of this relationship. In commenting on The Atman Project and Up from Eden in a later work, Wilber admits that there was some controversy about his ideas of evolution. However, he reports that while he has refined some of the categories, he still “stands strongly behind the main conclusions of those early books; indeed, subsequent research has made them even more, not less plausible.”

literary analysis. However, there are also inclusions of relevant material from some of Wilber’s other works as well, including Eye to Eye, The Eye of Spirit, A Brief History of Everything, The Marriage of Sense and Soul and the 800-page Sex, Ecology and Spirituality, the first in a planned trilogy entitled Kosmos.

Wilber draws heavily on earlier theorists clearly synthesising many ideas before providing his own unique contributions to the debates. Because he tackles so much material, traversing many fields, he relies on writings from across a wide range of disciplines and resources. For mythology, for example, he cites the works of Joseph Campbell, while for developmental psychology he relies on Jean Piaget a great deal to bolster his own views on the developmental psychology of children. Generally, he subsumes the psychologies of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung among others, in order that they fit his hierarchy of consciousness development, but when he does so it is always with clarity and fairness and always with a particular regard for referencing. It is due to this that he tends to arrive at conclusions which are made up of many perspectives and for this reason I will quote directly from Wilber, using his bias and phrasing, rather than the original source, whenever possible. This is in order that we can expedite matters for the concerns of this thesis without reiterating the work already done by Wilber. However a certain amount of shore work will need to be done in order to represent the crux of his ideas so that they may be understood in relation to the aims of this thesis. I have attempted to consolidate his broad range of ideas in chapter one and provide a brief overview of Wilber’s transpersonal psychological models.

Added to this are the contributions from the various schools of psychology that predate the transpersonal discipline and as Wilber is careful to point out, their findings still have much relevance, especially to the personal realms. Freud’s ideas for instance,
are still the main source that Wilber uses to establish arguments concerning the ego, id and superego as well as libidinal drives, the psycho-sexual realms, dreams and early psychotherapy. What Wilber does is use Freud’s works to underpin what he regards as the lower realms of the conscious and subconscious self within the framework of the transpersonal model, but he stresses that he is “no fan of Freud beyond the lower levels.”

Equally, Carl Jung’s theories play an important role with regard to the archetypes, symbolism and the archaic in general. Abraham Maslow, ostensibly the father of transpersonal psychology, also has an important bearing on the development of Wilber’s own theories. His texts, *Toward a Psychology of Being* and *The Further Reaches of Human Nature*, are of profound significance to humanistic psychology in particular, as well as psychology in its entirety and were of great support during the research in helping me to understand the routes of transpersonal psychology. This was also the case with Charles Tart’s *Transpersonal Psychologies*, although the essays therein do not represent anything like the coherence and latitude of Wilber’s own works.

In choosing the literary texts, I wanted works which were firstly, well known and readily accessible so that the reader could concentrate on the methodology applied to their interpretation and secondly, books which displayed subject matter relevant to the transpersonal literary field. William Golding’s haunting tale, *Lord of the Flies*, was triggered by the idea of devolution, or human regression and what Wilber would attribute to the pathologies of failed transcendence. An earlier stage of the thesis was a deliberation on the idea that presented the evolutionary genesis of a work. I remembered that there was a famous film of Golding’s book as well as a subsequent

---

documentary of the filmmaking process and a reunion of the actors entitled *Time Flies*. This seemed to draw a parallel with Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the film *Apocalypse Now* (a thinly disguised adaptation), and the documentary *Hearts of Darkness*, which chronicles Francis Ford Coppola’s creation. True, one book dealt with schoolboys, the other with colonists in Africa, but the thematic was extremely similar.

I was thrilled by this seemingly close development and the more I contemplated the themes of the two books, with their similar offspring, the more I decided they dealt with identical subject matter. Furthermore, of particular interest to a transpersonal study was the continuing investigation of the material, *as it evolved* by making films about the books and then documentaries about the films. This snowballing or more descriptively, Russian-doll effect was fascinating in light of the idea of transpersonal development. I wanted to show eventually, for instance, that the actor, Thomas Gaman, who played Simon in Peter Brook’s well-regarded adaptation, was actually a trans-persona of Simon, the character in the book. That is, that he had incorporated some of the traits of the person he portrayed in the cinematic interpretation of Golding’s book. But this proved to be a study that would move rapidly away from the literature and lean heavily towards the details of the psychology, making the aims of the thesis far too ambitious. Moreover, it seemed it would need the kind of commitment involved in the making of the television series *7Up*, which spans the lifetimes of its subjects as they have grown-up from seven onwards, and re-acquaints the viewer with the material every seven years.

I was however gratified, that my initial assumption about the transpersonal nature in acting a role spilling into real life, was confirmed by Thomas Gaman, about playing Simon. He kindly sent me an e-mail confirming that he did feel he had been profoundly
affected by his personal involvement with the film and had absorbed some of the nature of Golding’s character. Mr Gaman is currently a freelance forester in California, and anyone familiar with Simon’s affinity with nature will surely see the significance in that. In his own words:

I am proud of my role as Simon, and always have been. A third of a century has intervened, but I will never deny that the character is part of me, and that the experience went on to build other parts which you cannot so easily see … In *Lord of the Flies* I related really to nobody in particular, my role provided a connection between the boys and the natural world. In my real life perhaps, this had an impact on me – I went on to become a forester and today this is still my profession, and perhaps a link to my life as Simon.

All this could be ascribed to the skill of Peter Brook’s casting, but that fact alone would make him something of a visionary, not at all out of place with some of the areas of interest to studies in transpersonality. As Mr Gaman points out:

Peter Brook managed to see the essential raw material of personality in small boys, and to exaggerate these traits to unfold the story of *Lord of the Flies* on film in 90 minutes, speaking through our eyes with a script drawn verbatim from Golding's book.

Perhaps the idea of Peter Brook exaggerating existing raw persona in order to unfold Golding’s story was as near as I would get to a transpersonal reading from the film, so I decided to devote myself entirely to the literature.

*Lord of the Flies* was “an instant classic”\(^{10}\) and has been a perennial choice on school and university curricula around the world almost since it was first published in 1954. The fact that this fable is used time and again for the purposes of teaching in schools

---

prompts me to suggest that teachers choose it as a means for catharsis in classes. The psychology of this alone is fascinating. And a fable “normally illustrates a fundamental aspect of human behaviour which might otherwise be explained only in a work of great complexity.”\textsuperscript{11} This makes Golding’s story of manifold interest to exploration by the complex models of transpersonal psychology.

As the research continued, I was unsurprised to learn that \textit{Lord of the Flies} was in fact often compared with \textit{Heart of Darkness}. I was however amazed by Golding’s claim that he had never read Conrad’s story. But this in itself seems to lend some credence to the transpersonal idea of a perennial theme that shapes part of the evolution of the human species, a part of the collective unconscious, an example of synchronicity, at the very least of common interests. For these reasons there is a deliberate sense of a conflation when I consider the texts of Golding and Conrad. The reader will see that I conveniently see Ralph and Marlow as representative of each other in many ways, Ralph as the boy and Marlow, the adult man.

This was so that I could approach the topic of regression and how it affected both children and adults with a view to seeing how differently the outcomes were between the respective ages and also how the different authors dealt with their similar themes. The reason for all these threads and conglomeration of ideas is that my studies are anchored in comparative literature, so if at times there seems to be a coagulate of these two texts, it is by way of comparing them against the backdrop of Wilber’s theories and models.

My research also included exploration of transpersonal psychology on the internet and initially provided me with much-needed introductions, overviews and important

\textsuperscript{11} Niven. p.35.
texts, including the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. Yet as the research process continued, I was forced to conclude that as a research tool the web has some major pitfalls. As a simple example of the complexities, it is impossible to keep up with the numerous threads of discussion that appear on the official Ken Wilber web site alone. So while this is a limitation to the way in which the thesis will be mapped, I do not feel that this is necessarily a disadvantage. As with a generalised query to a search engine on the internet, you can have far too much material and information. I hope to be more specific about the examination in question and by outlining my literary favouritism from the beginning, I hope to be able to direct attention to the specifics of the thesis.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON THE INTERNET AS A RESOURCE

As a relatively new phenomenon in the area of communication, the internet, like all forms of information sources, must initially be regarded with a great deal of concern, particularly from a purely academic viewpoint. As I said, I have found it to be a useful addition to my sources and was very enthusiastic and optimistic about the amount of information that I would be able to glean, read and download from the net. There was the added bonus of being able to do this at almost any hour of the day or night and from the comfort and privacy of my own home. But gradually over a period of about two years, starting from the conclusion of my honours thesis, I realised that in fact, the resources themselves and the material obtained from them were open to a great deal of questioning. Some of these points are listed below.

Firstly, many of the articles were badly written with glaring spelling and grammatical errors, sloppy or no referencing, poorly defined quotes, wild claims and unsound
conclusions. There was a great deal of repetition of material and essays and articles that often abounded with passionate, subjective opinion not supported by any other material. This presented manifold problems in relation to editing, sourcing material, selective reading and accuracy. It raised the kind of question: “Can I entirely believe ‘Ben Wilker’ from Wisconsin that Einstein really said what is quoted?” And, if it is not well referenced then there follows the nightmare of finding corroborative evidence or the original source.

Secondly, the net tends to deliver too much information at once and in such a random way as to make research impenetrably difficult or else repetitive, if not impossible. Typing into a search engine anything to do with Shakespeare delivers something in the order of 6,000,000 hits – which do you check? which do you leave? The problem with too much information at once is that the time and energy spent sifting the material becomes exponential and there is a very serious problem of a mental overload where real frustration develops instead of creativity and learning. In addition to this referencing sites can be time consuming and difficult and download times can be tedious and there is the possibility of technical faults, forcing the user to start again.

Thirdly, the material which does seem pertinent and relevant in some way, seems to find its way into the thesis with remarkable rapidity, without careful consideration and perusal of ideas. Key terms and quotes can just be cut and pasted into the desired chapter without the material actually being analysed and inculcated.

Fourthly, the people who are interesting and seem to have something new to say, are either promoting a product or sale of a book anyway, so inevitably you end up at the library or bookstore.
Fifthly, and perhaps a point which is only now coming to light, is that many sites are simply not maintained and are therefore not kept up to date. The initial enthusiasm of private individuals who were willing to devote hundreds of hours designing their own websites, replying to requests and engaging new material is waning rapidly since most of them have a living to make. Therefore only paid employees and professionals are in a position to keep up with the increasing demands upon the sites. The result of this is that the internet, like everything else, is fuelled primarily by the corporate sector, who use it to advertise their goods or as a way to farm out the bureaucracy and paperwork to the consumer. The greatest example of this is online banking which is free, whereas over the counter transactions are charged. Eventually I decided I was in a position to take advice from Plato:

Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir, not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise. – *Phaedrus* (274D-275B)\(^\text{12}\)

In summary of my points, I decided to reference only material contained within authorised published texts in order to avoid the above-mentioned pitfalls. I would also like to note here, in the survey of the field, that American spellings have been kept when used in quotations.

INTRODUCTION

There is a temple in Japan at Kita Kamakura – Engakuji – where they teach the ancient art of Zen archery. On one of the walls, hangs the bow that German philosopher, Eugen Herrigel, donated to the temple where he learned to shoot the actual projectile as well as the metaphorical, and metaphysical, arrow of the Self. This is an experience he recounts with delight in his classic treatise *Zen in the Art of Archery*.¹ His instructor, Master Kenzo Awa, in spite of being diminutive and very old at the time, was able to hold the bow taut with ease while the younger, larger German struggled to draw at all.

In the Japanese summer of 1987, I stood in the beautiful gardens of the temple, bathed in sunshine, watching a master instruct a young acolyte in this most aesthetic of disciplines. The master hit the small target twice, one hundred yards away just low and left of the bullseye, grouping the shots within a few inches of each other. The student failed to reach the distance, his arrows skidding along the grey gravel path. Outwardly unmoved, he resumed his training with austerity in front of a gallery of gaijin (foreigner) tourists. What struck me as most distinct and clever was the way in which the bow is drawn. It is initially held high above the head with straight arms, then, as the arms are brought down slowly into position, the bow, as a secondary effect, is tensed into exactly the right shooting position.
This Oriental approach to the ancient weapon was so different to the method of drawing a bow that the longbowmen of Agincourt used. What was the actual effect of these different approaches to the same discipline? Was one method more or less effective than the other? Did they achieve the same ends? What forces were in play that meant that the master was always much better than the novice? Why was the student able to cope with his failure to hit his desired target with such dignity? How did the ‘desire’ to improve the skill harmonise with Buddha’s teaching that all desire is suffering? What had the process of learning archery to do with the evolution of the self?

Contemplation of these questions led inexorably to themes such as self-knowledge, self-transcendence, self-realisation, self-actualisation, development and growth, death of the ego, states of higher awareness and higher consciousness, meditation, contemplation, creativity, individual improvement and cultural evolution, spirituality, intentionality and intuitions of the concept of Divine. Indeed these are themes which have been of great importance to mankind in the continuing search for meaning and the interpretation of existence – what it is ‘to be’ in the world. In the words of the European psychiatrist and transpersonal psychologist, Victor Frankl, “Man’s search for meaning is a primary force in his life and not a “secondary rationalization” of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance that will satisfy his own will to

2 “If the equipment differs from that of the West, the technique, which verges on ritual, differs far more … calling on muscles less developed than those required by the Western draw.” Hoover, Thomas. Zen Culture, New York: Random House, 1977, p.65.
There is of course, no definitive answer. There is not even a place from where we can set off in our search – a launch pad where we all meet and agree on the point of departure, let alone the route we will take, or even the destination we are aiming to reach – except perhaps from within ourselves. And it may only be this common humanity that humans eventually have in common – generally known as ‘the human condition.’ Therefore the interplay between the consciousness of the individual human being and the collective cultural consciousness of humanity at large represented a fascinating topic to me as a student of literature. So we will see that this study is partially interested in the dynamic between ontogenetic and phylogenetic exchanges of consciousness and tries to identify whether or not this can be discerned in literary texts and criticisms.

For the religious historian, Mircea Eliade, the evolution of the consciousness of the human species is revealed throughout the ages in the forms of symbols, figures and myths that originate from primitive mankind and where religious experiences laid the cornerstone for the foundations of the Cosmos. And it is these “structures of sacred space” alone that for Eliade, among countless others, prevent human existence from a regressive slide into the bestial. Poignantly, Eliade defines the sacred in transpersonal ontogenetic and phylogenetic terms: “On the one hand, the sacred is supremely the other man – the transpersonal, the transcendent – and, on the other hand, the sacred is the exemplary in the sense that it establishes patterns to be followed.”

---

5 Ibid.,p.18.
It is in the history of literature that Eliade assures us these patterns of the transpersonal structures of sacred space can be found because: “the victory is that of the book over the oral tradition, of the document – especially of a written document – over a living experience.” And that this represents too, “the triumph of the literary work over religious belief”[author’s emphasis]. But Eliade is keen to point out that these literatures are the direct result of an individual’s concrete personal experience.\footnote{Ibid., p.16.}

Herein lies the core subject of the explorations of this thesis: What is the relationship between what Eliade refers to as transpersonal aspects of consciousness, and literature? And what are the effects upon the cultural consciousness of human evolution that literature has had so much to inform? How do the literary works of individuals inform the cultural consciousness and transcend the age in which they are written? Are Eliade’s implications really so cataclysmic that, put simply, if we stop believing in gods, we will end up eating one another?

Let us emphasise the context of this last question by quoting this from Eliade: “Cannibalism is not a “natural” depravity of primitive man (moreover, it is not found at the most archaic levels of culture), but a kind of cultural behaviour based upon a religious vision of life.”\footnote{Ibid., p.46.} If cannibalism is a culturally established religious tradition then it stands to reason that there may be an element of individual choice as to whether to follow that tradition or not. If an individual in such a society deems it to be morally reprehensible to kill another human being and devour them, then they must consciously transcend the cultural mindset.
William Golding’s brilliant fable *Lord of the Flies* addresses just this question and we examine the ramifications of his haunting tale in chapter two. In chapter three, we continue our analysis using Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in an attempt to establish a transpersonal interpretation of the events and characters of this famous novel. We question especially the voluntary aspects of Kurtz’s atavism and the nature of his cannibalistic ‘unspeakable rites.’ By the time the thesis approaches *Hamlet*, we are forced to confront the moral questions that plague the characters in the chosen works. In mind of this we will, in chapter one, derive a transpersonal explanation of the relationship between moral choices and stages, and the structures of consciousness as outlined by Wilber. These examinations bring us directly to one of the larger problems that confronts the central concerns of this thesis and transpersonal psychology, i.e., the problem of evil.

**THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**

We shall see during the course of this dissertation that the works of the authors chosen, inevitably lead us to speculations of good and evil and that for the most part these are concepts which are ill-defined, in the philosophical sense, within these works. This is very often the case with criticisms about the works as well. For this reason the following brief discussion will perhaps help to frame the complications involved in referring simply to notions of ‘evil.’

It was the German mathematician and philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) who coined the term ‘theodicy’ which is the study of the nature of evil. In essence the problem of evil is this: “The *existential* problem of whether and how a life laced with
suffering and punctuated by death can have any positive meaning”[author’s emphasis].\(^8\)

We will see that all the literary works chosen as a corpus for this thesis implicitly involve this fundamental proposition. It should be noted that traditionally within the study of theodicy, there is a distinction made between natural evil, for example, suffering as a result of an earthquake; and moral evil, such as Hitler’s exterminations. For us, the concern is entirely with this second province.

There are many varying views ranging from Leibniz’s own, stemming from Plato, that this is “the best of all possible worlds”\(^9\) in which sufferings are a “logically indispensable component,”\(^10\) to the idea that human beings are given free choice to do good or evil. This view is expounded, among others, by Alvin Plantinga, and makes the individual morally responsible for their actions – good or evil. The debate is extremely complex, but for the purposes of this thesis and transpersonal psychology at large, the emphasis certainly lies with the latter of the two stated views. In Ken Wilber’s words on the subject: “We know that men and women are not inherently or instinctually evil, but merely substitutively evil”\(^11\) and therefore “both good and evil can be transcended,”\(^12\) which naturally suggests that there is a conscious as well as a moral element. The most important point that Wilber makes as far as we are concerned, is that “If we cannot usher in real transcendence for an individual … If men and women were instinctually evil, then there would be no hope.”\(^13\)

\(^10\) Adams et al., p.5.
\(^13\) Ibid., p.357.
The hope therefore is that the consciousness of the individual can achieve a renunciation of evil through self-knowledge and awareness of the drives, needs and desires of the human world. For Wilber, evil is created out of repression of spiritual growth, and the resulting pathology leaves the self liable to viciousness “to itself and to others out of a sheer reactive panic to its own mortality and vulnerability.”

The thesis also responds to the call from the transpersonal psychologist, Abraham Maslow who suggested the development of a “transpersonal psychology of evil, one written out of compassion and love for human nature rather than out of disgust with it or out of hopelessness.” What must be studied, he implores, is a “fear of maturity and the godlikeness that comes with maturity, this fear of feeling virtuous, self-loving, love-worthy, respect-worthy.” I suggest that the part-answer to this call, comes from the authors I have chosen to analyse, and others like them, who explore these themes within their literature.

We will see that this is certainly of great relevance when we tackle the complexities of this question as it arises from the debates about Hamlet’s moral obligations as well as his ‘godlikeness.’ It is also of vast importance on Golding’s island where the boys are faced with the beast of their own evil innateness. And as we witness Mr Kurtz plunge into the ‘heart of darkness,’ while Marlow draws back a hesitating foot from the depravity of voluntary atavism, we will be confronted necessarily with these questions.

The problem of evil confronts any theistic belief that God is omniscient and omnipotent for this represents a contradiction to the very fact of evil. In refutation, the

---

14 Ibid.
so-called Free Will Defence is often suggested. Plantinga illustrates the pros and cons of this argument in great detail and we have not time to linger on them here, but it boils down to what is known as ‘Leibniz’s Lapse’ which holds that although God is omnipotent, the world is contingent once certain actions have been actualized.\footnote{Plantinga, Alvin. ‘God, Evil and the Metaphysics of Freedom’ in \textit{The Problem of Evil}, edited by Marilyn Adams and Robert Adams, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.} It is John Hick’s argument that the “individual’s possibility of existing in conscious fellowship with God” allowing the world to act as a sphere for ‘soul-making’ through suffering and costly personal and moral effort, seems to be more valuable than a world of virtuous human beings created \textit{ab initio}.\footnote{Hick, John. ‘Soul-Making and Suffering’ in \textit{The Problem of Evil}, ed Marilyn Adams and Robert Adams.Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 168-188.} And his views conform to the sentiments of this thesis most readily.

For we will see that Ken Wilber’s study of consciousness involves very much the ideas of a ‘conscious fellowship with God’ and ‘soul making’ and sees the evolution of consciousness as having two tiers. There is the consciousness from the internal, subjective, individual or ontogenetic point of view and the corresponding external, cultural or phylogenetic aspects of consciousness. This thesis will trace these two facets of the development of consciousness by examining literary works, to see if evidence can be found to support the themes and models which Wilber introduces in his works on transpersonal psychology. It will attempt to read the pathologies as instances of failed transcendence that leads to evil doing. The journey will weave in and out, for the interplay between how the culture affects the individual and vice versa is a complex and continuous dynamic exchange.
We will see how the decision to drop the atomic bomb produced a rising cultural awareness, and how as a result a fable, was written on post-apocalyptic desolation. William Golding’s timeless school favourite, *Lord of the Flies*, represents a classic comment on the consciousness of the nuclear age. In *Heart of Darkness*, we will question the perceived evil of the Imperial colonists as well as the particularly sordid gratifications of Mr Kurtz. We will conclude our investigations with an example of a culturally transcendent individual – Hamlet – and examine the moral implications of the revenge tragedy. Read from the Wilberian transpersonal perspective, we discover that Hamlet is a representation of the cultural exemplar of individual consciousness or the “prince of individualism.”

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter one deals with the history of transpersonal psychology, transpersonal theories and the theorist Ken Wilber. This will include a brief summary of transpersonal psychology’s inception and historical development and its connection with the perennial philosophy. There will also be a brief exposition on the relation and influence of Japanese Zen Buddhism to transpersonal psychology. The chapter will introduce the aspects of transpersonal psychology in as much detail as possible with a focus on Wilber’s particular models and tenets of psychology. We will then conclude with the ideas, concepts, frames and models which will be put in place when examining the literary texts that will be brought into play in the subsequent chapters.

---

Chapter two will introduce William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* in relation to Wilber’s *Up from Eden* focussing on the problem of evil in the context of transpersonal notions of the possibility for a regress in cultural consciousness. The chapter is designed to state that transpersonal evil is a devolutionary trend of mankind that stems partly from choice and partly from circumstance. *Lord of the Flies* will represent the cultural decline of transpersonal aspects of consciousness. It will offer the explanation that development still takes place – that there is indeed an unfolding of consciousness, but that it manifests itself in a kind of group psychosis in the boys – in this way choice, or the lack of it, plays a factor. The chapter will attempt to plot and identify the particular consciousness of each of the major characters and set them against the backdrop of transpersonal structures of consciousness. It will also examine the possible reasons for the breakdown of the group.

In chapter three we look at Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and explore the discussion of voluntary atavism, this time in the world of adults, and investigate the differences between the moral and psychological characters of Kurtz and Marlow. It will set the cultural force of Belgian Imperialism and the towering personality of Mr Kurtz as the cultural and individual arms of colonial consciousness. In contrast, Marlow will be presented as a maverick individual seeking a spiritual enlightenment, distinct from the societal bonds and expectations. The chapter also investigates how this can be seen in terms of transpersonal psychology’s structures of consciousness and stages of ‘moral’ self-growth.

---

Chapter four introduces Hamlet as the quintessential individualist who is trying to make sense of his world and understand his own consciousness while wrestling with the apparent iniquity of those around him. Having introduced the transcendent nature of the myth of Hamlet, we will argue that Hamlet is desirous to transcend his notion of self, but again and again is thwarted by circumstances and that his choices are sometimes malefactions that prevent his further transpersonal development (an example of hubris). This chapter will supply evidence that critics offer arguments that see Hamlet’s character as maturing and growing during the course of the play and will re-read this evidence and present it as a case for transpersonal elements within Shakespeare’s play. Critics who argue that Hamlet is suffering from arrested development represent the antithesis, while still providing some valuable insights.

In chapter five, we continue our study of *Hamlet* through an analysis of the soliloquies, but broaden the horizons to examine the role of Shakespeare’s influence on the literary consciousness of the world. We suggest that there is enough transpersonal evidence to answer sweeping questions about the effect of Hamlet’s character as the “forger of the modern consciousness” and why the play is continually reworked and re-appraised.

Chapter six discusses the efficacy of transpersonal models and their pitfalls. Dealing with what they can and cannot provide for literary interpretation within the framework of existing literary strategies. It will discuss such matters as the difference between moral and consciousness development. It will compare material presented in the previous chapters and display results in light of their findings. That is, we examine all
the literary texts together, rather than in isolation. For example, we can argue that while
Hamlet makes a genuinely moral and ethical attempt to fly from evil, the boys in *Lord
of the Flies* are examples of a world where this choice is not presented. For its theme is
a descent into cannibalism and savagery – from which there can be no emancipation.
This chapter will also suggest that the literary works provide a far more broad-reaching
and illustrative framework for transpersonal psychology than any of the theorists can. It
will suggest that the literature supports and gives rise to such notions of consciousness
transcendence and supplies a storehouse of material from which to examine
transpersonal claims. The hope is to put forward my initial belief that the creative act of
literature is a far more potent tool than any other form for communicating ideas. In the
hands of a truly great and transcendent artist it can reveal universal truths as to the
nature of human consciousness itself.

In the conclusion we will present final cases on each of our chapters and readdress
some of the material, refining it into a concentrated philosophy which can best represent
a leaping off point for the next stage of inquiry.

---

19 Kerrigan, William. p.150.
FLOWER FROM AN A-BOMB

In July 1969, Michael Collins, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong strapped themselves into Apollo 11 and launched themselves into space and the history books. This singular event undoubtedly marked one of the great evolutionary leaps of humankind, and its historical significance has still to be quantified, as NASA makes plans to push further into space and land people on Mars, despite two fatal shuttle disasters.

Concurrent with those first lunar steps, in the spring of that year, another launch took place that was also interested in the human species in evolutionary terms. The first *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* was published in America and its focus was not the external realm of space but the internal exploration of the self, of consciousness and of the potential for profound personal and cultural growth. And it may best be described as a western psychological approach to try to determine the same themes as are sought after in the Zen temples of Japan. From its origins as a combination of Taoism and Buddhism, Japanese Zen, Wilber says, “flowered magnificently.”¹ The reason for its much later genesis in western culture, I believe, can be attributed to one

devastating event in world history on August 6, 1945 – the dropping of the first atomic bomb.

The decision by the American high command to use its new weapon of mass destruction ended the horrendous war raging throughout the islands of the Pacific. After Japan’s capitulation, the American forces occupied the Japanese mainlands for nearly seven years and that presence subsequently affected the entire culture irrevocably. Yet, for most, what is not as obvious, is the way in which America was influenced by that occupation. This was due to a process of cultural back-filtration taking place partly as a result of members from the American occupational forces returning from Japan.²

Possibly the most subtle but powerful of ramifications was the influence of Zen on America. It was most obvious among the Beats and later the Hippies, but it pervaded in many other areas as well and still represents a hugely influential force on American culture. We can see traces of it in art and music and most pervasively in those vast cultural products of Hollywood in movies from *Star Wars* in 1977 to *Matrix* in 1999. It hardly matters if this trans-Pacific manifestation was quite removed or distinct from the idea of Zen in Japan. Once the breeze has blown in it renews the air in the room, what happens after that becomes part of the evolution of both Zen and the culture that it influences.

There are countless dozens of American authors who have discussed their allegiance to Zen – and they are among the most widely known, influential and internationally

---

² Philip Kapleau, one of America’s most renowned authority’s on Zen practice was a court reporter at the International War Crimes Tribunal, Richard DeMartino, another well-known Zen scholar was working as a researcher for the defence of Japanese prisoners and the psychiatrist Albert Stunkard was a medical officer at Sugamo prison. They all attended Sunday sessions at Dr Suzuki’s house in the grounds of Engakuji, along with the British poet, R.H. Blyth. Christmas Humphries also refers to the great expansion of western interest in Zen after the war in *Zen Comes West*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1960.
successful – Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, J. D. Salinger, Ken Kesey, Robert Pirsig, William Burroughs, Gary Synder, to name only a few. And for every author that overtly shows affinity with Zen there must be dozens who are influenced besides.

However, apart from its enormous influence on the literary products of the United States, Zen also had a massive bearing on the schools of philosophy, physical sciences, theology and the humanities in general. In the field of psychology it garnered a great deal of respect and the list of those influenced reads like a ‘Who’s Who.’ Notably: Alan Watts, Eric Fromm, Sheldon Kopp, Karl Menninger, Victor Frankl, Sidney Jourard, Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Albert Stunkard, James Fadiman, Anthony Sutich, Charles Tart, Ken Wilber, all of whom have subsequently had some bearing on the transpersonal school.

From this climate in literature, the arts and the disciplines of American psychology, we will see that transpersonal psychology, known as the ‘Fourth Force’ grew and began to look back at the foundations of Zen Buddhism itself. Illustrating a fittingly Zen-like paradox perhaps, when looking at Japanese Psychoanalysis, James Clark Moloney, makes the following interesting comments in Understanding the Japanese Mind. “It would be not unnatural for the casual thinker to expect that, since World War II, under the American Occupation, Japanese psychoanalysis might have undergone some changes.” But Moloney goes on to explain that the degree and kind of change “are bound to be somewhat superficial” because of the “immutability of the Japanese and their propensity for identification with the enemy.” The historian, Malcolm Kennedy, supports this in a larger context when he suggests that many of the changes wrought by

---

the Occupation “have been of but superficial significance, for fundamentally the Japanese and their national traits remained unaltered.”

Granted that this opinion, written in the sixties, could be challenged today, but it is still hard to dismiss entirely; could it be that during this period, that in fact, the influence was working in reverse? Certainly if we look at the aforementioned list of American psychoanalysts and psychologists who perpetually refer to Zen in their works it would appear so.

Zen evolved from the Sanskrit word ‘dhyana,’ meaning meditation. Bodhi-Dharma introduced it to China around 520 AD where it was pronounced ‘chan,’ and further evolved, often influenced by the ancient Taoist teaching of Lao Tzu. This form of Chinese Buddhism was adopted by the Japanese, where ‘dhyana/chan’ became transliterated as ‘zen.’ It was refined and developed into a variety of sects, and purports to have had the greatest success of practitioners achieving enlightenment since its ingress into Japan some 1500 years ago.

Because of its huge influence on transpersonal psychology and its ever-growing incorporation into mainstream western culture – becoming highly popular in all forms of western thought – we will have occasion to reference it in this thesis. Wilber is continually referring to Zen texts and I will adopt a similar position within the structure of this thesis when necessary, to support the claims made about transpersonal psychology.

---

5 Including the physical sciences, spearheaded by texts such as *The Tao of Physics*, by Fritjof Capra, London: Flamingo, 1992, and *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* by Gary Zukav, London: Rider, 1979.
This is also because of my experiences working in Japan as a journalist, builder and English tutor, with meditation, and my previous studies of the Japanese language and Zen. This study included an honours thesis dedicated to Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and all these factors will, I hope, afford me a little latitude for singling it out.

It should be noted, however, that transpersonal psychology does draw insight from many other eastern and, to a lesser degree, western, religious sources. Though in general, it seeks to find where ideas concur rather than where there is divided opinion, so one source should really suffice.

There is one voice which rings as loud as a temple bell when the study of Zen philosophy gets under way and that is born of the profound mind of Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, himself enlightened at twenty-five. Suzuki went on to teach and lecture in America during the fifties and sixties, contributing hugely to the cross-fertilization of the flower of the Japanese culture to the previous occupiers of Imperial Japan. As American Zen monk and writer Roshi Philip Kapleau describes:

> In 1950 Dr. Suzuki came to America to ignite the fuse that was later to touch off the ‘Zen boom’ … The ‘yen for Zen’ was then raging in New York, largely fueled by Suzuki’s writings … Almost single-handedly he ushered in the first, intellectual phase in the Zenning of America.⁶

Ken Wilber supports this view in *Up From Eden*: “As one cultural critic put it, ‘there are two types of people in the world: those who have read Zen scholar Suzuki, and those who haven’t.’”⁷

---

So we can see how Zen quickly became one of the prime movers in both the ‘beat’ and ‘hippie’ movements, which in turn drove the incredible cultural kaleidoscope of the fifties and sixties. Zen fuelled the passions of the rock lyricists and musicians who whipped up the American youth to ‘tune in, turn on and drop out.’ Psychologists, psychotherapists, philosophers and sociologists alike could not possibly ignore the profound influence that Zen Buddhism was having within their given fields and the population at large, especially the youth. Primary texts by Abraham Maslow, Sheldon Kopp and countless others abound with examples from Zen. Books such as Charles Reich’s *The Greening of America*, and Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, began to deal with the cultural consciousness of America in terms of spiritual transcendence. These were directly analogous to the experiences described by Zen Buddhists and, using the medium of literature, expounded the sentiments of the transpersonal psychologists.

Whether the culture bearers were right or not about America’s ‘enlightenment’ during the sixties and largely they were not, as Pirsig in particular was at pains to point out, is not the point here. What is pertinent is the overwhelming affect of this singular belief system on a whole generation within such a short period. Transpersonal psychologist, Claire Myers Owens, writing in the sixties about the influence of Zen in America, said: “By any name it is a powerful movement now proliferating across the

---


9 “The hippies had in mind something that they wanted, and were calling it ‘freedom,’ but in the final analysis ‘freedom’ is a purely negative goal. It just says something is bad. Hippies weren’t really offering any alternatives other than colorful short-term ones, and some of these were looking more and more like degeneracy. Degeneracy can be fun but it’s hard to keep up as a serious lifetime occupation.” Pirsig, Robert. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. London: Vintage, 1989, p.418.
United States. It is especially favored by disillusioned but idealistic college youth – and other peaceful dissidents.”

Zen developed and was refined over fifteen hundred years in Japan alone, but the magnitude of its explosion across the Pacific was matched only by the bomb that gave rise to its subsequent migration. Like a phoenix from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese Zen Buddhism spiritually spearheaded a new American consciousness that would eventually, and somewhat ironically, persuade a nation of college dropouts not to go to war.

Charles Reich puts this down to the increased awareness of the generation of Americans, influenced by Zen, who were being conscripted to go to Vietnam. He explains:

The great significance and irony of the Vietnam War is this: the Corporate State could engage in almost any activities, no matter how impoverishing to life, so long as it did not pierce the consciousness that accepted the whole scheme of things … But the war should not have been offered to our young people … it forced a major breach in consciousness … with extraordinary rapidity.11

What Reich is saying here is no small thing. He is claiming that the reaction of American youth to the conflict in Vietnam changed the cultural consciousness of America and we should also note that his definition of ‘consciousness’ is truly transpersonal. His description runs: “Consciousness, as we are using the term, is not a set of opinions, information of values, but a total configuration in any given individual, which makes up his whole perception of reality, his whole world-view.”12 And Reich is

12 Reich. p.20.
also aware of the relationship between the ontogenetic and the phylogenetic dynamic involved in the evolution of consciousness, as he explains:

Included within the idea of consciousness is a person’s background, education, politics, insight, values, emotions and philosophy, but consciousness is more than these or even the sum of them. It is the whole man; his ‘head’; his way of life. It is that by which he creates his own life and thus creates the society in which he lives.\textsuperscript{13}

Of course there were many other factors besides the influence of Zen involved in all of these individual facets of this period of American history. However, when one considers the sheer quantity, weight and reverence with which culture-bearers from so many different perspectives were using material related to Zen at that time, it becomes apparent that its influence was in no small measure. And this is equally true of today. Nearly every week a new self-help book appears with some claim of an association with Zen.

The reason for its universal popularity, I would suggest, is that Zen initially panders to the ego. It cajoles, enlists, and amuses the neophyte with stories which often appear to have some association with the possibility of winning a dialectic by some nefarious, yet pleasing sleight-of-tongue. It appeals because it appears to provide some of the answers in a kind of dismissive quick-fix, no nonsense language, especially when it is orchestrated to say what people want to hear. Yet while reading books on ‘Zen Soup for the Soul’ may open the door, it soon becomes clear that this rather elite form of Buddhism is traditionally immersed in the notion of discipline, hard work, self-sacrifice and harsh living conditions, as well as being linked to some deeply spiritual component.

\textsuperscript{13} Reich. p.21.
Nevertheless, as Wilber rightly suggests, there are two stages involved in the process of understanding Zen. The first stage is intellectual curiosity which he tells us is a type of “‘learner’s permit,’ which says, in effect ‘It’s O.K. to think about these things.’” The second stage is actual practice and Wilber surmises that currently this is not happening on a large scale. He claims that when it does take place we will see “profound changes in society,” but Wilber’s prognosis for this change is not for another century.¹⁴

For further testimony of the hardships involved in this actual practice, read Janwilhelm van de Wetering’s book *The Empty Mirror.*¹⁵ This courageous Dutchman tried in vain to achieve the elusive state of *satori* – a brief encounter with enlightenment – and suffered many severe physical and emotional traumas as a result. His book is a wonderful insight into life in a Kyoto monastery in the 1950’s; for van de Wetering was a forerunner to those influenced in America. There were also earlier British scholars who were interested in Zen, notably Christmas Humphreys and an English doctor of literature who was making a life of studying the cultural significance of Zen while teaching English to the then crown prince. R. H. Blyth succeeded in becoming one of the world’s foremost experts on *haiku.*¹⁶ I would like here to make mention of his 1942 book entitled *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* which in a general way, explores the same themes of the current thesis, in that it discusses literary interpretation through the lens of Zen.

What is more directly significant for us though is the influence of Zen Buddhism on Ken Wilber, who has testified to practicing ‘zazen’ (Zen meditation) for over 20 years

---

¹⁶ Seventeen syllable poems, usually by Zen masters on the subject of enlightenment, and heralded by the Beats.
and continually references its importance to transpersonal psychology’s foundations. Wilber constantly uses Zen texts and examples of Zen practices in order to elucidate his psychological theories and places the Zen masters at the forefront of his “growing tip of humanity,” the “exemplars” of a “higher order of consciousness” and representatives of the “highest stages of human development.”\footnote{Wilber. \textit{The Atman Project}. Wheaton, Il: Quest Books, p.3.}

ARROWS AND ROCKETS

To recap a little, in many ways I see a distinct correlation between the Apollo spacecraft and Eugen Herrigel’s arrow, in that both projectiles represent a very human quest for discovery; one being of an outward scientific exploration for humankind, the other an introspective inquiry for individual spiritual insight and self-knowledge. Transpersonal psychology’s claim is that it attempts to reconcile these two, usually opposing forces of human endeavour.

In his introduction to \textit{The Marriage of Sense and Soul}, Wilber explains the problem with the traditional viewpoints of science and religion as a “mutual disgust.” We find ourselves at a point whereby religious meanings tend to deny scientific frameworks which is “like sawing off the branch on which you are cheerily perched,” while modern science denies all spiritual experience “simply because there is no credible empirical evidence.”\footnote{Wilber, Ken. \textit{The Marriage of Sense and Soul}. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1998, p.4.} In this treatise, Wilber sets out to explain some of the fundamental problems that result from either side of the debate and offers a model for an integrated view of knowledge. He arrives at this largely by supporting Huston
Smith’s claim that “virtually all the great wisdom traditions subscribe to a belief in the Great Chain of Being.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{The Great Chain of Being and Wilber’s Transpersonal Life Cycle. Composite diagram from \textit{The Atman Project} and \textit{Up From Eden}.}
\end{figure}

Figure 1., shows the relationship between the perennial philosophy’s Great Chain of Being and Ken Wilber’s map of the transpersonal life cycle. Transpersonal psychology owes some of its foundational beliefs to the Great Chain of Being which springs from the perennial philosophy or \textit{philosophia perennis}, to which Wilber uses the adjunct \textit{psychologia perennis}. The resulting dialectic gives us the perennial

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.6.
philosophy/psychology and is of some historical significance to transpersonal psychology.

As with theodicy Gottfried Leibniz introduced the term perennial philosophy but is more readily associated with the much later British philosopher, Aldous Huxley, who published *The Perennial Philosophy* in the forties. It is essentially an ecumenical view of the world’s philosophies, psychologies, religions and mysticism. It therefore forms a corpus of knowledge and attempts to draw consistencies and correlations from the varying fields. There is a danger of course that this leads to reductionism and too convenient modelling of similarities. But on the positive side, there is also the strength of numbers. The quantifiable part of psychology can be addressed by finding correlations between vastly different cultures or “the nearly universal consensus about reality held by humanity for most of its time on earth.”

Transpersonal psychology, is the psychology of self, personal growth, of experiencing-in-the-world. An at once satisfying definition of the transpersonal is “the entire process of growth through the personality to spiritual states of being … an amalgam of transcendental and personal.” This will be the most convenient definition for the purposes of this thesis but for now we can expand our definition a little to include “[that which] transcends the personal, transindividual,” as well as the concept of

---

20 Huxley defined the perennial philosophy as “the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality, the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all Being.” *The Perennial Philosophy*. London: Triad Grafton, 1985, p.vii.


“ultimate human capacities and potentialities.”

Transpersonal psychology recognises, as does the perennial philosophy, three stages of consciousness – body, mind and spirit. These realms are further subdivided in a variety of ways depending on the discipline and the approach but initially it serves our purposes to think of these three realms as the core of the Great Chain, which reverberates in many of the world’s traditional wisdoms. As Wilber emphasises, “This three-level scheme reappears in the Hindu and Buddhist notion of the three great states of being: gross (matter and body), subtle (mind and soul, and causal (spirit).” He goes on to stress that the most important point “is to see that each senior level transcends but nevertheless incorporates the junior levels, adding elements to them and thereby having a different architecture” and that “therefore each level has traditionally had a specific branch of knowledge associated with it.”

In Figure 1., I have included these branches of knowledge in the form that satisfies transpersonal psychology’s correlation with The Great Chain of Being. Physics and biology, for example are situated in the pre-personal realms, for they are concerned with matter and biological life whereas psychology is concerned entirely with the human

---

23 Oxford English Dictionary. Other Definitions include: Transpersonal, a [f. TRANS – 4 + PERSONAL a.] That transcends the personal, transindividual; spec. designating a form of psychology or psychotherapy which seeks to combine elements from many esoteric and religious traditions with modern ideas and techniques. 1905-6 W. JAMES in R.B. Perry Thought and Char. W. James (1935) II. 445 That an idea represents an ‘object’ may mean that it represents something either: -1. Transpersonal- as when my object is also your object; [etc]. 1955 Bull. Atomic Sci. Apr. 109/1 Science provides the model of a free society of reasonable men co-ordinating themselves voluntarily in the light of a transpersonal standard. 1968 Jml. Humanisitic Psychol. VIII. 77 Transpersonal (or Fourth Force) Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities. 1972 Science 16 June 1203/2 Experiences of ecstasy, mystical union, ... and transpersonal knowledge ... are simply not treated adequately in conventional scientific approaches. 1980 R. HERINK Psychotherapy Handbook. 684 Transpersonal Psychotherapy can be said to have evolved ... as the inner or esoteric teachings of all the great spiritual traditions.

24 Wilber. The Marriage of Sense and Soul, p.9.
mind and is therefore in the personal realms, etc. This schema is supposed simply to be indicative and in no way represents rigid boundaries.

Note also the relationship between the pre and trans realms, where pre-verbal, pre-personal and magical are opposite to trans-verbal, transpersonal and mystical. The crucial point that Wilber is always making is that since pre-personal and transpersonal are both non-personal, to the untutored eye, they can appear the same and that as a result a twofold problem occurs. That is, either the elevation of prepersonal realms to transpersonal realms, or the reduction of transpersonal realms to personal realms.

For this thesis, it is important to note where the centaur is situated: at the end of the personal and the beginning of the transpersonal. The centaur is Wilber’s equivalent to the mature ego, the integrated existential self, Maslow’s self-actualized stage and so forth, and we see that it is an important stage, located as it is on the ‘cusp’ between the personal and the transpersonal realms.

For his later transpersonal models Wilber adopts Arthur Koestler’s notion of ‘hologarchy’ rather than the idea of a hierarchy. We can think of a hologarchy as a series of ‘onion rings’ with each whole outer layer embracing earlier levels and making up part of the whole structure, and any cross-section of the structure producing a hierarchy and this term is used in conjunction with Wilber’s transpersonal structures for consciousness.

The most important point when considering Wilber’s transpersonal psychology is that it takes as a starting point the adoption of the principle of developmental, hologarchical growth in human consciousness towards something conceived of as spiritual awareness, god-consciousness or superconsciousness. It views this superconsciousness as a total consciousness made up of the parts, or ‘holons.’
Ronald S. Valle explains transpersonal psychology as being underpinned by “an implicit assumption that seems a necessary characteristic of any truly transpersonal perspective: that a basic component of being human is the process of or movement toward self-transcendence as a radical change in one’s most basic sense of self.”

Valle tells us that “the forum for this transformation can take many forms, including art, being close to death, natural beauty, sex religion, a birth or any other potentially self-transforming human experience,” but Wilber specifically attributes it to more disciplined approaches, especially meditative practices. While this may be the case, Wilber does concede it is “when great art enters you and changes you, that spirit shines in this world.” This indeed supports Valle’s emphasis of transpersonal transformation taking place as a result of, or from engagement with art and is therefore of great relevance to this thesis at large. But let us leave that discussion for the time being and note that transpersonal psychology has, as a prerequisite belief, the potential for radical transformation in consciousness: “And it is this characteristic or belief that separates transpersonal psychology from any other school or specialty area in the field.”

THE FOURTH FORCE

Transpersonal psychology arose out of the need to include the psychologies of eastern mystic disciplines and germinated from various areas including the humanist tradition.

---

25 Valle et al., p.262.
26 Ibid.
28 Valle et al., p.262.
and existential-phenomenological approaches and attempts to incorporate understanding from psychological schools, psychoanalysis, and various philosophical disciplines.

It is distinct in that it embraces knowledge from religious and mystical experience as a fundamental and a fully acceptable body of knowledge from which to examine consciousness. We should note this remark made by Valle with regard to the existential-phenomenological and transpersonal schools of psychology: “Their minimal mutual awareness has not, however, been the result of a careful examination and decision process.”29 In other words, there may be much accord between findings across the differing approaches to the evolution and nature of consciousness but that, as transpersonal psychology is relatively new, there is no cross-referencing available.

Of enormous influence on transpersonal psychology, are the works of Abraham Maslow, who is credited with coining the term ‘transpersonal,’ and I think it fair to say that this influence extends to modern psychology in general. His instrumental contribution to the field is charted in most of his works and of particular importance are his famous ‘hierarchy of needs,’ and texts such as Toward a psychology of being and Further Reaches of Human Nature.

These works treat of what he defines as ‘peak experiences’ in healthy ‘self-actualized’ individuals and from this data he examines eupsychian experience. That is, Maslovian psychology in general, is interested in the development of healthy individuals rather than focusing on neuroses and pathologies. In Maslow’s words: “I criticize the classical Freudians for tending (in the extreme instance) to pathologize

---

29 Ibid., p.255.
everything and for not seeing clearly enough the healthward possibilities in the human being.”

In 1968 Maslow, Victor Frankl, Stanislav Grof and James Fadiman agreed that the ‘Fourth Force’ in psychology, would deal exclusively with their concept of the ‘transpersonal.’ It would explore the “expansion of self-identity beyond the boundaries of ego, name, and form” and would deal with the concept of “radical self-transformation.” This standpoint implicitly allows for “the possibility of an “optimal” physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health ... addressing the full range of human nature and our ultimate capabilities and potential.”

We cannot begin to discuss the great range of philosophical implications, complexities and problems associated with these attitudes and hypotheses in depth here. Instead, what we will try to show is that this relatively new breed of psychology opens the way for re-appraising literary texts from a fresh psychological outlook. Of interest to this thesis then, is firstly the emergence of such a concerted psychological quest for understanding in this area, as well as the particular works of Ken Wilber, who is credited with almost single-handedly launching the large-scale interest in the transpersonal movement.

Commenting on his work, Wilber claims that his ultimate goal has been concerned with salvaging the best parts of “all three of these important schools of thought – psychoanalytic, existential/humanistic, and transpersonal/mystic.” This is in order to

---

31 Valle et al., p.261.
“achieve a remarkably faithful account of what is actually occurring in development on
the whole.”\textsuperscript{32}

Indeed it is largely due to the success of this holistic endeavour that he is now the
voice of an important epoch in transpersonal psychology’s evolution. Even among
transpersonalists, few would dispute his credentials as a spokesman \textit{par excellence}. A
strong, methodical, even pertinacious approach to the discipline, coupled with prolific
reading and publishing make him a ‘larger than life’ figure on this psychology of the so-
called ‘New Age.’ And while the New Age has adopted much Wilberian philosophy,
he himself has distanced himself from that term, calling it a “strange mixture of a
handful of truly transpersonal souls and masses of prepersonal addicts.”\textsuperscript{33} The result is
that many champion both transpersonal endeavours and pre-egoic Narcissistic aims.
This kind of confusion will be examined shortly.

As we have already noted, one of the tenets of transpersonal psychology is the
implicit recognition of an oriental/occidental approach to knowledge. It can be seen that
transpersonal psychology is not an exclusive but rather an inclusive discipline. It draws
from many fields, not just in psychology but throughout the spectrum of knowledge and
it is for this reason that this thesis attempts to introduce a framework of transpersonal
interpretation for literary texts.

Now a discipline that tries to draw from all ideas from many other disciplines is
either going to end up being a non-specific jack-of-all-trades and a master of none, or an
extremely powerful conglomerate of ideas with a holistic viewpoint. During the course
of the thesis we will argue in favour of the latter model and show that in spite of its

\textsuperscript{32} Wilber, Ken. \textit{The Atman Project}, p.140.
\textsuperscript{33} Wilber, Ken. \textit{Up from Eden}, p.344.
eclectic origins, transpersonal psychology nevertheless is not simply an amalgam of ideas from all the other psychologies.

Wilber defines his integral paradigm as “an overall knowledge quest that would include not only the “hardware” of physical sciences but also the software of philosophy and psychology and the “transcendental ware” of mystic-spiritual religion.”34 We will demonstrate that it has something very definite to say about the way in which the development of consciousness is represented in human beings and something of the nature of the evolution of consciousness, both in its simple structures and in its more complex moral stages. These factors will become more than evident when we examine some well-known literary texts using transpersonal models and concepts to offer interpretations and descriptions.

As a student of comparative literature, I have always considered the body of literary works as over-arching the philosophies and psychologies of the world. That is, psychologies are both born of, and examined in, literature. The act of creative writing has long been a favourite study for psychology, just as the psychology of character, behaviour and experience makes up the material of the majority of all fiction.

It is this common ground that I hope will provide the foundation on which to contribute mutually to the study of literature and transpersonal psychology. Certainly, Wilber’s holistic and integral approach seems to provide a broad range of ideas from which to examine literary works with a fresh approach, encompassing interpretations from a multitude of disciplines.

What I suggest is that the fundamentals of transpersonal psychology can be found in all literary works at least as far back as Shakespeare. This view is supported in the following remarks by the psychologists, Sherif and Cantril, who state: “It has often been pointed out that novelists and playwrights seem to be better observers of ‘human nature’ than professional psychologists. And there is little doubt that in the vast storehouse of literature the psychologist would find nearly all of his observations anticipated.”

I should stress at this juncture that my bias is turned toward the literary perspective of transpersonal psychology. Therefore the arguments concerning the authenticity of certain psychological and philosophical stances adopted by the theorists, will not be entered into unless absolutely fundamental to the specifics of this thesis. So now, what are those specifics?

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine transpersonal psychology and its supposed potential for the evolution of consciousness within the human species. It will explore this development both from the point of view of the individual and the context of the culture that frames that individual, using literature as one of the governances and gauges of cultural consciousness.

The literature chosen performs the twofold task in this thesis. Firstly, it represents the consciousness of individuals within the context of the literary work. Secondly, it serves as a resource library for examining the cultural consciousness that shapes, and is shaped, by the literature of the past through to the present day.

In order to examine this assumption I have identified the fundamental tenets of Wilber’s transpersonal psychology and will attempt to use the models as a means of

---

interpreting some selected literary texts. So I would now like to introduce a few brief summaries of the main tools and models of transpersonal psychology and I will start with the notion of transcendence.

**TRANSCENDENCE**

In *The Atman Project*, Wilber warns us that “‘transcendence’ has often been thought of as something odd, strange, occult or even psychotic,” but insists that it is, in fact, simply another word for development. The child learning mental language is developing a pattern of consciousness that transcends the physical world, for example. And so it is with all forms of evolution, according to Wilber’s psychological models. At each stage of growth in consciousness, a higher-order, more complex and unified structure emerges, by differentiation, with a lower level and is mediated by various symbolic structures. The self then identifies with the higher level while dissociating, or dis-identifying, itself from the lower level and begins to transcend to the higher level.

Once transcendence has occurred the higher level can operate on the lower level and integrate the previous structure in the new consciousness. But if the lower levels are not integrated into the higher level, the self represses the lower levels or components of them and the result is a list of neuroses and pathologies. To transcend rational thought, for example, is not to lose rational thought, but to include it in a higher transrational thought system.

In summary then, for Wilber’s transpersonal psychology, transcendence yet integration of self-concepts, is the evolution of consciousness. And the stages in the development of consciousness can be mapped using western and eastern psychological profiles to achieve a spectrum of consciousness. Transpersonal psychology is specifically interested in all the different structures and stages of the growth in consciousness.

We can see that transcendence of a self-stage or self-concept equates to transpersona, because there is naturally a change in the personality and consciousness of an individual who has a new self-concept.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Of course the idea of a development in consciousness demands a definition of consciousness as a predicate. This is something that has always proved to be a problem for philosophy because of the vast amount of phenomena that can be said to account for consciousness and yet there seems no single common element that defines consciousness itself. Wilber claims that many researchers deal with the problem by giving a materialistic explanation of mind, psyche and consciousness but are inevitably haunted by the ‘ghost in the machine’ that cannot be accounted for in simply empirical terms. He explains that the “objectivist approach … cannot even account for its own experience and consciousness … hopes and fears.”

Interior, subjective experience, therefore forms the most important basis for an examination of consciousness. Consciousness is neither confined to the physiology of the brain nor is it synonymous with mind. Yet, it undoubtedly exists in human beings and not in rocks, plants or lower orders of animals. It can be said that consciousness is effected both by subjective experience and external stimulus and therefore is not entirely independent of the social and cultural context. Wilber’s integral definition accounts for exterior and interior components of consciousness, which we can access “in an immediate and direct and interior fashion.”

It is precisely these “immediately apprehended states and direct experiential realities” that the subjectivist schools of psychology are focussed upon, as well as all of the mystic traditions. Transpersonal psychology is where these two schools of thought are conjoined and integrated.

Wilber’s integral theory incorporates ideas of consciousness from both the interior, subjective and the exterior, objective points of view and tells us that “the secret of the universe is not just in the objective maps but in the subjective mapmaker.” So while consciousness seems difficult to define in itself, we are all aware that it exists. Wilber tells us that the “pioneering physicists were united in the belief that the universe simply does not make sense – and cannot successfully be explained – without the inclusion, in some profound way, of consciousness itself.” In fact, the philosopher, Jerome Shaffer, says that “any account of the world will have to give some place to it.” It therefore

---

39 Ibid., p.6.
40 Ibid., p.8.
41 Ibid., p.2.
holds true for the writing and study of literature and literary criticism, as well as science, psychology and philosophy.

Pertinently for this thesis, L. C. Knights finds this a necessary condition when tackling *Hamlet*: “In the very act of describing Hamlet’s world as it feels to him in his own immediate consciousness, I have to describe Hamlet, to define that consciousness.”

One of our chief *Hamlet* theorists, Kurt Robert Eissler terms the “psychological surface of that perennial psychological core” the “Hamlet complex.” This indeed, is precisely the attempt in chapters four and five of this thesis: describing Hamlet’s consciousness in terms of transpersonal structures of consciousness. The following section will examine briefly how those structures of consciousness are outlined by Wilber.

**TRANSPERSONAL STRUCTURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

We have seen in Figure 1., that the transpersonal evolution of consciousness moves from the prepersonal, through to the personal and on to the transpersonal and that there are various important stages of growth in the development. In all, Wilber accounts for seventeen tiers of consciousness in *The Atman Project*, but often, for the sake of convenience condenses them into nine or less.

---

The various sub-divisions of those nine are of importance in the details only and it will not hinder our inquiry unduly to stick with the condensed versions. In Wilber’s models each emergent level is not “a total negation of the previous level, nor does it come from the previous level, but rather is a transformation (and transcendence) of it.”

The nature of transformation and the form of development proceeds in the following pattern: the consciousness of the individual begins to intuit or becomes aware of, a higher-order of consciousness in the form of archetypes and symbols. These are either directly perceived or intuited. Following the identification of these higher states of consciousness, the self moves towards integration with the higher structure and begins a dis-identification and differentiation with the exclusivity of the former consciousness structure.

In successful cases the new consciousness has transcended the previous structure and can now operate upon and integrate with the former states of consciousness, which continue to exist and are able to be accessed. In pathological cases, separation anxiety from the present structure in consciousness causes fusion with the former state and the higher state infiltrates but is repressed in the unconscious. The self remains in fusion and accepts substitute gratifications instead of transcendence and these substitutes are what Wilber terms Atman projects: “One of the main themes of The Atman Project is that if development miscarries at any point, then instead of differentiation there is dissociation, instead of transcendence, repression.” And we will see that one on the main themes of this thesis is an examination of what goes wrong when these miscarriages of transcendence take place. In order for us to have a clearer picture of

---

46 Wilber, Ken. *Eye to Eye*, p.216.
how developmental consciousness is viewed by Wilber, so that we may apply some of
his conclusions to our literary texts, it will be necessary to become familiar with the
major structures of development. The following diagram shows the nine major levels of
consciousness in the process of transpersonal evolution.

1. Pleroma\textsuperscript{47} – This stage covers the prenatal consciousness and that of the neonate and
is characterised as prepersonal, having an undifferentiated, oceanic self-sense, a
timeless state (pretemporal not transtemporal).

2. Uroboros\textsuperscript{48} – The early infant mode of self where the first subject-object
differentiation takes place, there is early sensorimotor cognition, primordial fear, and
a physiological need in the form of hunger.

\textsuperscript{47} A term used by the Gnostics and Alchemists to describe the undifferentiated self.
\textsuperscript{48} The term used in mythology to describe a serpent eating its own tail – self-contained.
3. Typhon\textsuperscript{49} – The sense of self shifts to the individual organism and the early ego is developed – focussed exclusively on the body, undifferentiated from the mind. There is a simple sense of time, magical images, survival and safety needs, pre-operational thinking, emotional-sexual impulses.

4. Membership – The time of the middle ego, early verbal language, temporal desires, a need for belonging – therefore societal, differentiation of mind and body through language, concrete operational thinking, a separate self-sense with its primal fear of the ‘other.’

5. Mental-Ego – This stage marks identification with the ego and mental concepts, formal operational thinking, emotional, self-esteem needs – therefore cultural, various personae, linear time with extended past and future.

6. Centaur\textsuperscript{50} – Mature ego, existential individual, conceptual synthesis, ‘vision-image’ (imagination, intentionality and creativity), self-actualization, autonomous, spontaneous, transrational, self-regulatory – therefore trans-social and trans-cultural, time is grounded in the present.

7. Psychic – Not necessarily paranormal but these events more likely to occur, clairvoyant and clairaudience, extrasensory cognition, transpersonally sensitive, integrative logic, parapsychological, contemplative, trans-verbal (beyond language), transmental (beyond mind).

8. Subtle – Actual intuition, archetypal forms, audible illuminations, revelation, bliss, superconsciousness, compassion and love, transtemporal, eternal.

\textsuperscript{49} From the mythological image of a half human, half serpent.
\textsuperscript{50} The mythic beast, half human, half horse – a symbol of integration between body and mind.

These descriptions are my interpretations as condensed from Wilber’s own explanations of the stages of consciousness in *The Atman Project* and later works. Shaded areas in the diagram show the sphere of awareness and the shading in the bodies represents the level of ego, so that in the typhon it is relatively weak, in the mental-egoic period it is the totality of awareness, and in the centaur it is fully integrated. We can see that the centaur begins to intuit the higher realms as part of the self’s sphere of awareness. In the transpersonal realms, the self is aware of a consciousness outside the self – represented at the psychic level as a black disc. In the causal realm the self is transcendent and embraces all previous structures. Since the later stages of consciousness are transverbal, Wilber’s descriptions become highly abstract and sparse for he argues that there are no orthodox Western psychological models of the higher realms. There are only explanations from the eastern mystic traditions, nevertheless Wilber claims they “agree almost unanimously on the nature of … the higher levels of consciousness.”

We will now look at some of the permutations of viewing the development of consciousness in such a way, and examine some details concerning transpersonal psychology.

---

51 Wilber, Ken. *Eye to Eye*, p.91.
THE PRE/TRANS FALLACY

The pre/trans fallacy, I believe, along with many others, is Wilber’s most valuable contribution to transpersonal psychology and has broad reaching implications for transpersonal literary interpretation, as we will endeavour to show. Wilber explains: “The essence of the pre/trans fallacy is simple and straightforward: since pre-rational and trans-rational are both non-rational, then they appear similar or even identical to the untutored eye.” He goes on to warn that confusion between pre and trans states of consciousness create problems of interpretation. “If prepersonal is confused with transpersonal, if preverbal is confused with transverbal, if subconscious is confused with superconscious – then one of two things happen: the trans states are reduced to pre states (and thus explained away), or the pre states are elevated to trans glory (thus elevating nonsense to God).”

An example of the difference between pre and trans states of awareness could be represented by a monk who takes a vow of silence but has access to and understands verbal consciousness and is therefore transverbal, and an infant who has not yet developed speech and is preverbal. And we can see where, without investigating too deeply, these two non-verbal states could be equated and conflated, and yet it is obvious that there is a massive gulf between these two levels of consciousness.

Wilber highlights twin disasters arising from any such confusion as reductionism and elevationism and if we take his remarks in the context of literary criticism the implications are as broad-reaching as they are in the transpersonal psychological field.

---

52 Ibid., p.xix.
In the context of this thesis we will be seeing if within a given literary interpretation, criticism falls into the two-pronged trap of reductionism and elevationism and we will be asking how does that affect a given analysis of a text. Is it possible we can read too much into a text? Certainly there seems to be a case for not reading enough, when re-readings so often produce additional material. When considering this question regarding *Hamlet*, Eissler says “laying aside for the time the question of the correctness of any given interpretation, one can say that the danger in this connection is not of over-interpretation, but precisely the opposite.”53 If this is the case, then the very acknowledgment of the fallacies and the integral and holistic approach outlined by Wilber, as well as transpersonal psychology at large, may help literary interpretation directly or indirectly.

So, as we have indicated, during the course of the thesis we will try to highlight the points when criticism seems to be in danger of either reductionism or elevationism. The hope is that when considering transpersonal aspects within a given text, acknowledgment of the fallacies alone can greatly aid debate over the interpretation of a literary work.

53 In transpersonal overtones Eissler says: “What is perhaps more important, certain meanings become evident only during the course of history. New generations – more sophisticated, more sensitive, endowed with the ability to take in a wider range of questions – gain insights that carry them far beyond the horizons of earlier decades, not to speak of those of centuries past. It takes many generations before the full meaning of a great masterwork is even approximately acknowledged, inasmuch as each historical period seems to discover new meanings in it. Indeed, it maybe one of the characteristics of truly great art that it has inexhaustible depths, so that the process of valid interpretation can never find a natural end. The greatness of a work of art can be decided only in terms of the effect that repeated experiences of it provide,” p.254-255.
CATEGORY ERROR, AUTHENTICITY AND LEGITIMACY

Another possible confusion can result from what Wilber refers to as “category error.” This “occurs when one of the three realms is made to wholly substitute for another realm – or, we might say, when things (flesh) are confused with thoughts (mind) are confused with transcendental insights (contemplation).”54 Examples of this might be when scientific explanations are given for transcendental phenomenon or there is an attempt to find empirical data of evaluation or quality. Certain paradoxes arise in all forms of measurement, which has become familiar as Heisenberg’s ‘uncertainty principle’ and without recognition of this problem category error can often take place. The pertinency of this observation by Wilber may aid us when we examine our literary texts because certain contrivances by critics will sometimes conveniently evade this possibility.

We should also be aware of Wilber’s warning of a confusion that arises between authenticity and legitimacy. When we consider our quick appraisal of the influence of Zen in America at the beginning of this chapter, we are immediately provided with an example of the difference between authenticity and legitimacy and the resulting divergences of such confusion. Wilber is adamant that “authentic disciplines ought not to be confused with the plethora of “pop mystical” and “quasi-therapeutic” movements.” And significantly, he gives an example of the separation between Zen and the ‘beat Zen’ movement: “the laid-back, blissed-out Marin County high is exactly what these authentic disciplines are not.”55 And Wilber is not the first to recognise this.

55 Ibid., p.260-261.
As I wrote in my honours thesis, Alan Watts, in *Beat Zen, Square Zen and Zen*, makes a clear distinction between, ‘beat Zen’ and orthodox Zen and accuses the beat poets of “undisciplined whimsy.” His argument is that often in Western art, the philosophical concept of Zen is taken up but the arduous practical aspects of the monastic life are ignored or changed beyond recognition. Watts admits “there is something endearing about Kerouac as a writer” but suggests that he “confuses ‘anything goes’ at the existential level with ‘anything goes’ on the artistic and social levels.”

We can see that Watts is clearly aware of the confusion between authenticity and legitimacy as stressed by Wilber. In Japan, this notion of unauthentic Zen is known as ‘fox Zen’ because it is bewitching (a characteristic attributed to the fox) but insincere.

This distinction between authenticity and legitimacy will certainly be of interest when we examine the worship of the beast in *Lord of the Flies*, and Kurtz’s particular brand of cult leadership in *Heart of Darkness*. We may pre-empt a little by quoting Wilber who warns us: “even worse, this pop mysticism, all is one, beat Zen has been used by more than one religious cult to rationalize their monstrosities” and cites the Charles Manson case as an example.

Referring to the Manson murder trial, Colin Wilson contributes this valuable insight:

“The American public found the Manson case particularly frustrating because he

---

59 One of the most famous murder cases of the 1960s, the Manson ‘family’ was a cult of hippies that carried out a series of brutal, ritualised murders, including Sharon Tate, the wife of the film director, Roman Polanski. Interestingly, Manson himself did not participate in the murders but spurred on the homicidal Susan Atkins, among others.
seemed to be arguing according to some non-linear logic. Wilber would approve of such a diagnosis for it hints at the distinction between a prelogical attempt to grasp Zen rather than a translogical approach. And we must emphasise that, in essence Zen is neither simply logical nor anti-logical but transcends, yet includes logical cognition.

Wilson’s analysis of the Manson case also contains this observation: “they were not thinking logically, but emotionally, or rather ‘magically’ – hoping that their act would achieve a result in the face of natural laws.”

Again we have an example of another of Wilber’s transpersonal distinctions which appears in Figure 1., that between the ‘magical’ and the ‘mystical’ on opposite sides of the circle. These two forces of consciousness are often confused or equated. However, for Wilber, magical thinking is connected with the primary process, “allegiance to emotional-sexual realms,” a “world of images and symbols,” not concepts rules and formal operations and is therefore pre-rational. If it is not outgrown it “erupts today as neurotic symptoms and emotional obsessions,” whereas mystical cognition is not concerned with body-bound desires in the slightest and represents the transcendence of magical and subsequently logical thought [see Fig.1]. Joseph Campbell has a similar

---

60 These comments are also of some pertinence when we consider them in light of transpersonal psychology’s interest in the relation between the culture and the individual: “But in fairness to Manson, we have to admit that there was an element of justice in the counter-charges he brought against his judges. For the real mystery of the case is the psychological mystery. How could a sincere, fairly intelligent, well-meaning little man who gave out an aura of love turn into a dictator obsessed with murder? The answer is that a lifetime in jail, of being pushed around by authority, could destroy the potential of Saint Francis or Shakespeare. There must be psychological tests to enable us to recognize the potentialities of a Manson before his hatred of society becomes the permanent foundation of his consciousness. The sympathy shown for Manson by American youth was basically a recognition that good, creative human potential was here allowed to stagnate and turn rotten: for anyone under twenty; it is too easy for you to put yourself in his shoes. If Manson is guilty of criminal violence, society is guilty of criminal negligence. And unlike Manson, society is in the position of being able to learn from its mistakes.” Wilson, Colin. *Order of Assassins: The Psychology of Murder*. St Albans, Herts: Panther: 1975, p.40.

61 Ibid., p.80.


63 Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.89.
conception: “Another way of distorting a myth is to translate it into magic … The mystery spoken about in myths refers to the spirit … a personification and a mode of experiencing the dynamics of life.”

What happens when confusions of these sorts are manifested is apparent in Wilson’s final comments on Manson, which also contain transpersonal insight. He suggests that “in this state of confusion and emotional fatigue, Manson did what most people do in that situation – reverted to an earlier stage of his development.”

This regression to earlier stages of personal development is what happens when there is a failure to transcend to the next level in consciousness and we will see plenty of examples of this when we approach some of our literary texts. What Manson did effectively is confuse pre states (in Wilson’s own words: “magical, emotional, non-logical”) with trans states (mystical, transpersonal, translogical) and as a result of this category error, attempted to legitimise his brutal actions through an unauthentic reductionism of Zen, a point picked up by both Wilber and Wilson. And we can note here too, that Wilson is a proponent of Wilber’s psychology.

**STRUCTURE AND STAGE**

Another tenet of Wilber’s transpersonal models that will be of interest to the thesis is the confusion between structures of consciousness and stages of self/moral development. Let us briefly examine this complex relationship for it will be of

---


65 Wilson, p.212.
particular importance when we consider the issue of morality that will crop up during our examinations of the literary works. According to Wilber, one of the facts of human ontogeny is that “various structures, processes and functions [of consciousness] emerge in the course of development” 66 and that while some of these remain in existence, others pass. What he refers to as the ‘basic structures’ of consciousness are universal in all human individuals, regardless of the cultural backdrop such as physical consciousness, sensoriperceptual, emotional-sexual, magical, mythical, concrete operational thinking, formal operational thinking, and so on.

These basic structures make up Wilber’s spectrum of consciousness for the human species. He stresses that the basic structures are ‘cognitive maps’ or ‘world views,’ but, as models, they are essentially “devoid of self.” What he posits is that “in the course of development, a self-system emerges” which “climbs the rungs in the ladder” of the basic structures of consciousness. 67 The self-system is based on the whole topic of self-psychology and Wilber explains his definition of self at length. We will follow Wilber’s own concept of self and quote the following definitions in order to help identification: “the executor of psychological organization, integration and coordination … locus of identification … a selective identity … with a capacity to appropriate and organize the stream of consciousness … ‘I-ness.’” 68 My understanding of Wilber is that consciousness development is a process that takes place as a matter of course during the natural progression and development of the compound human individual, which in fact has nothing to do with the sense of self, per se.

67 Ibid., p.272-274.
68 Ibid., p.276.
For Wilber, ‘structures of consciousness’ and ‘stages of self’ do “not even usually follow the same developmental timetable. They emerge in the same order, but not necessarily at the same time.” And this alone has vast implications for the study of this thesis. For the simple fact is, that any idea of ‘self-development’ has a moral implication. This explains why someone like Charles Manson, for example, could have a relatively ‘high’ self-esteem and consciousness, but a ‘low’ morality. Any misunderstanding of the differences between the stages of self and the structures of consciousness may not account for the kinds of pathologies faced in society. Wilber raises this point saying that the way in which the self navigates the structures of consciousness “appears to be a large part of the story of self-development and self-pathology.”

Wilber addresses the difference between structures of consciousness and the morally based self stages in *Eye to Eye*. He tells us that an individual can be at the basic structure of Jean Piaget’s concrete operational thinking “but display a moral self-sense anywhere at or below it (but never above it).” He goes on to explain that “for just that reason, the actual times of emergence of the basic structures,” up to and including formal operational thinking, “are largely age-dependent and relatively fixed … but the emergence of the self-stages are relatively age-independent” [author’s emphasis].

Therefore, for Wilber, under normal developmental circumstances, consciousness development precedes the moral self-stages. But is it necessarily the case that as consciousness is raised, morals are likely to arise and continue to develop? For the

---

69 Ibid., p.287.
70 Ibid., p.277.
71 Ibid., p.288.
broader the understanding of life, through experiences other than those of self should, by rights, produce an empathetic consciousness and produce a sense of morality.

Therefore, the implication is that the transpersonal states are morally ‘higher.’ The basic structures of consciousness, proposed by Wilber, are nevertheless not mutually exclusive with the self-stages of Maslow (a point Wilber himself declares). In fact, I think they can be thought of as interdependent. But consciousness must grow in order to allow for a broader range of ideas. Formal operational thinking allows us to operate on previously held beliefs, which in turn tends to bring about questions of a moral nature.

For example, children who eat meat will invariably assume that because meat is part of their diet “everyone eats meat.” This would be an example of preoperational thinking where, according to Wilber “the child has no real capacity to take the view of the other, to cognitively change roles, to assume different perspectives.”72 By the time children reach the consciousness structure of concrete operational thinking they will take account of other perspectives to a degree, including multiplication, inclusiveness and so on. So our example might continue: “I eat meat because I like meat, others don’t eat it” but concrete operational thinking simply cannot “grasp higher and nonobvious relationships.”73

However with formal operational thinking, we can operate on thinking itself and therefore we can ask such questions as: “Does liking meat mean I should or have to eat meat?” which may lead to a moral pattern of thought, possibly: “Does my choice to eat meat harm animals?” The important factor is that these questions at the formal

---

72 Ibid., p. 270.
73 Ibid.
operational level are *never* raised before the conceptual grasp of this structure of consciousness. It follows then that we can state the following principle of transpersonal psychology: structures of consciousness precede self/moral growth.

What this all amounts to is the hypothesis that the stages of self-growth have a moral implication whereas the structures of consciousness do not. This is perhaps because consciousness and awareness grow regardless of personal pursuit as is the case with physical and mental growth which will under normal circumstances increase with age regardless of effort. Effort will of course increase the growth rate but nevertheless a child will take in information through the process of intentionality and as a result consciousness will increase in any case.

On the other hand, it is perhaps only a study of the self that will bring about a growth in conscientiousness – which equates to morality – and this is precisely why the mystic disciplines focus attention on the self and the relinquishing of the ego.

This is something highlighted by Wilson, again deliberating on Manson: “Our vitality fluctuates so much – between mystical ecstasy and complete mental breakdown – because of our fundamental error about the nature of consciousness. We think it is automatic like our breathing. It isn’t; it depends on effort, like swimming. If we stop making effort we sink.”

Wilson certainly seems to support Wilber’s models here and shows he is aware of category error, but he is also highlighting the difference between the ‘nature’ [structures] of consciousness and ‘our fluctuating vitality’ which I take as Wilson’s equivalent of self-stages.

---

74 Wilson, p.49.
The distinction between the self stages and the basic structures of consciousness have, as we said, complex moral implications and we will try to recognise the points in our literary texts where these variations in the aspects of consciousness may reflect wide-ranging opinion on given interpretations of a text.

In particular, I will be looking at this issue in *Heart of Darkness* with regard to what I believe is Marlow’s self-driven quest for a ‘higher state of awareness.’ In any case, the simple recognition of the complexities in viewing Wilber’s models for both the self stages and the basic structures of consciousness may have important elements for the transpersonal interpretation of literature.

**TRANSLATION AND TRANSFORMATION**

Whatever the stage at which the self is experiencing consciousness, it must make sense of that world-view and translate events according to the stimulus that it experiences. Correct translation of the psychological environment will inevitably enable the self to ground and maintain itself “by a series of more or less constant translations.” These are translations of both interior experience and outward stimuli.

The internal chatter of the mental-egoic stage, for example, is characterised by the sub-vocal use of the language that the self has inherited from the cultural environment. The very learning of that language was in itself a transformation in consciousness, and its use may be on self-reflexive patterns of thought. If the self should push the

---

boundaries of that level of awareness and then be open to or even search out,
consciousness beyond the present stage, we can say that transformation occurs. Just as
the pre-verbal child transforms with the introduction of language and then uses the
language to negotiate and navigate its present consciousness structure through signs, it
is also open to symbolic representation of realms of consciousness beyond the simply
verbal.

Importantly, if on a given level of consciousness, there is severe mistranslation then
transformation is distorted and elements are repressed. Fixation with a particular aspect
of one level of consciousness can hinder transformation upward or, if transformation
occurs, the fixation will be distorted and repressed. If, for example, aggression is
repressed then that part of consciousness will be embedded and repressed in the
unconscious of the higher structure of consciousness and transformed into a symbol.

This symbol can then surface on occasions and disrupt the later structure of
consciousness and lead to abnormal translation. The thumb-sucking infant is a strong
representation of the desire to cling to the comfort of the former environment and the
thumb, substituted for the teat/mother, can be seen as a substitute gratification or even a
mini Atman project. Yet change will come and transformation occurs. And if
transformation is to be successfully completed, it relies on the foundation of a correct
translation of the events in the current consciousness environment. Eventually thumb-
sucking gives way to higher desires and needs – transformation takes place and a new
translation begins.

This distinction between translation and transformation is thoroughly embedded in
this explanation that Wilson gives for Manson’s behaviour:
Manson was a self-actualizer whose progress was blocked on every level … And then in a single year … he suddenly developed at an explosive pace … And this kind of forced development can be more harmful than frustration. The best is slow and deliberate, allowing for the consolidation of the sense values and the creation of new self images. The other kind creates a personality problem … The result is ‘life failure’, a deep-seated psychological exhaustion.76

Wilson’s comments here follow precisely the lines of Wilber’s explanation for possible pathology resulting from a failure to correctly translate the environment and allow time for the self to adjust to a new structure of consciousness. He has also correctly highlighted the difference between Manson’s structure of consciousness and his failure to translate his ‘self images.’

I have used Wilson’s analysis of the Charles Manson case to illustrate how an understanding of transpersonal psychology’s view of consciousness can shed light on individual behavioural patterns and account for some of the severe psychoses experienced. In subsequent chapters, we will try to apply some of these same types of analysis to the literary texts.

In summary of these last excursions, let us state that the thesis will present a way of reading literature which will look for cases of:

1) Pre/trans fallacies
2) Category error
3) Confusion of authenticity and legitimacy
4) Confusion of structures and stages of consciousness
5) Translation versus transformation

76 Wilson, p.211-212.
It will also look at transpersonal development as a whole and particularly for cases where pathology results from a failure to transcend structures of consciousness and self-stages.
THE BEAST IN THE DARK

Such has been the history of substitute sacrifices, all willingly and bloodily dashed to hell as mankind, driven by its Atman project, began the attempted purchase of an immortal future at somebody else’s bloody expense.¹

Failing actual transcendence from level to level in Wilber’s transpersonal development means that substitutes for transcendence are created. These, he terms Atman projects, for they merely represent a simulacrum for Atman rather than a means to actually attain it. Pyramids, temples, wealth, fame, power and knowledge are according to Wilber “the world of objective substitute gratifications” and that world “is nothing other than the world of culture.”² In his groundbreaking treatise, Up From Eden, the author argues that “history is the saga of men and women working out their Atman projects on one another.”³

² Ibid., p.18.
³ Ibid., p.21.
In this chapter I want to examine a short powerful story by an English schoolmaster and former naval officer, depicting a group of schoolboys plane-wrecked on a small island with no adult supervision. William Golding’s 1954 fable, *Lord of the Flies*, evolves into a terrifying tale of stunted marshal law, chaos, fear, group psychosis and savagery. It suits our purposes perfectly because it is a microcosmic view of human devolution when the boys are faced with life containing no moral guidance, adult supervision and little spiritual awareness. In short, they have no distinct map of progressive consciousness, and the tale’s power comes from the fact that it seems all too inevitable and familiar as we read it. As one critic put it: “we quickly sense the inevitability of the children’s movement towards savagery.” That is, the events seem to unfold in a curiously predictable way, especially if we allow our minds a temporary regress to the laws of the playground – “a pen of misery” as Ray Bradbury referred to it in *The Playground*. We can believe it because we have experienced the cruelty of human children. It both “enlightens and horrifies by its nearness to, rather than its distance from reality.” As Paulette Michel-Michot says “the fact that Golding chooses children as protagonists makes it all the more striking and terrifying.”

---

5 Bradbury, Ray. *The Illustrated Man*. London: Granada, 1952, p.190. Bradbury’s story hinges on the spiteful nature of children in a playground and at one point the father exclaims “They’ll have him on a spit with an orange in his mouth,” p.192. The imagery of a piglet being cooked is provocative both symbolically and thematically when we compare it to *Lord of the Flies*.
The story begins with an end so to speak. English schoolboys aged between six and twelve years old emerge from the wreckage of a plane that has ditched on an unspecified, uninhabited island. We learn that they are evacuees from ‘civilization’ which has culminated in a nuclear apocalyptic demise. Their plane has been shot down in an air battle. The older boys, Ralph, Simon, Piggy and Jack are of very different characters and varying social backgrounds and the story follows their problems of leadership and social organisation. The plot unfolds in a way that sees the boys make an attempt at a microcosmic version of their previous civilization in England. They start with a democratic vote and discuss social responsibility and efforts to be rescued. But their success is short lived and they begin to regress into a form of savagery that subsequently destroys their brief attempts at creating a successful and peaceful society.

In Ken Wilber’s *Up From Eden* this potential regression in cultural consciousness is one of the elements that is inherent in the ascent of humans and accounts for much of the “calculated cold-blooded murder” of the past. That is, as well as “actual transcendence, transformation and self-sacrifice” there were also forces at play which were “the destroyer of consciousness … that pulled the self back into body, back into instinct, back into the bowels of darkness, and thereby prevented the further evolution” toward the “superconscious.”

---

8 The words ‘atom bomb’ are used. There are several inconsistencies which have been highlighted that make the total annihilation of civilization incompatible with events in the novel, but are of limited significance for this thesis.

Of course these comments are also true of today. It is in light of the varying potential of progress versus regression contained within this framework for the awakening of consciousness that I want to look at *Lord of the Flies*. Relevantly, it has been described as a “a frightening parody on man’s return (in a few weeks) to that state of darkness from which it took him thousands of years to emerge.”¹⁰

*Up From Eden* is concerned specifically with this emergence from the dark consciousness of the past and through the ages of humankind. By plotting a developmental hierarchy from primordial beginnings, through early civilizations, and on to the present mode of consciousness with speculations on the future, Wilber suggests that the current cultural consciousness has only reached a midpoint between prepersonal states and transpersonal realms. He claims that modern man is effectively still progressing toward his notion of a superconscious awareness and is at this time at the level of his mental-egoic realm.¹¹ For Wilber, the ego itself is a “desirable and necessary ‘halfway house’ between subconsciousness and superconsciousness.”¹² This model of the cultural ascent of consciousness, or the phylogenesis of consciousness development, is distinct but inextricably linked to individual transpersonal growth – the ontogenetic rise of consciousness, which Wilber covers in *The Atman Project*. While some of the issues in that text will arise here, we will examine Wilber’s main ideas of ontogenetic consciousness evolution more thoroughly later in the thesis.

---

¹¹ Wilber still strongly supports these views: “recent research, evidence and theory have, if anything, substantially increased the validity of Eden and its central conclusions.” See *The Eye of Spirit*, p.71.
Wilber’s premise is that, far from the notion of a ‘Fall’ from the Garden of Eden with ‘Original Sin,’ we are instead very slowly and perhaps not too surely, ascending from a primitive consciousness towards a spiritual form of gnosis in accord with the ‘Great Chain of Being.’ Significantly, one expression of *Lord of the Flies* has been: “man’s climb up the ladder of evolution may or may not be the same thing as the climb up the *chain of being*, but in either case the attempted rise can lead to a long, long, immemorably long fall”[emphasis added]. This is certainly a suitably phrased comment with which to frame the attempts of this chapter. Note also a similar comment by Kenneth Watson about Golding’s novel: “to take it as symbolizing the Fall may be a valid personal interpretation, but I do not find it a necessary one – though this is not of course to exclude interpretation in terms of religious *ethic*. But the ‘darkness of man’s heart’, deterioration into fear and cruelty, do not necessitate a reading based on ‘original sin.’” For this reason, we will attempt a reading that does indeed see a fall, but rather than a theological interpretation, we will offer an analysis based on Wilber’s *Up From Eden*. Also in line with the transpersonal view and the aspect of this thesis is the observation that the boys: “deteriorate not under any inner compulsion of original sin, but through a failure of imagination and therefore a neglect of thought, which leads them to ignore their own opportunities.” That is, they fail to translate their world correctly and as a result do not transform, fully integrating their personae and thereby fail to fulfil their consciousness potential.

13 The reader is reminded that the Great Chain of Being is derived from the perennial philosophy and that Wilber’s works draw heavily from this body of knowledge, including the transpersonal life cycle. See Fig.1., Chapter 1.
16 Ibid.
As we have already discussed, transpersonal growth depends as an indispensable condition on each level fully developing to a maximum of potential, first translating the world accurately in order for it to subsequently transcend healthily to the next stage of consciousness development. And, if for some reason there is a precocious move up a level before time, before all the relevant faculties for translating that next stage have matured, then there is the probability for psychosis to take place. Frighteningly, that psychosis can take place at a collective cultural level. As Wilber states: “when people become objects of the negative Atman project, those people become victims: exploited, oppressed, coerced, enslaved, butchered.”

For now, let us observe that Golding wrote his famous fable in the aftermath of the atomic annihilation of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was subsequent to his own involvement in the Second World War, “a time of great uncertainty in world affairs.” Despite his experiences fighting against the Germans however, what is of importance is his observation that he had “seen enough and thought enough to realize that every single one of us could be Nazis.” Golding was keen to demonstrate that, given the circumstances, human potential was open to a regression in consciousness at both the individual but more disastrously at the collective level and Lord of the Flies was a fable designed to explore what might happen in such a case.

The significance of this tale is perhaps in its raw simplicity and we can examine Golding’s nightmarish vision alongside a transpersonal exploration of what entails

---

18 Making it contemporaneous with the ‘zenning of America’ and the beginnings of transpersonal psychology.
19 Niven, p.8.
when consciousness begins a regressive trend toward the archaic and mythic modes of being. For Golding, one of the key reasons for this collapse lies in the fact that there are no adults present on the island, but he significantly includes the caveat that the society from which the boys have come has suffered catastrophically from the effects of a culturally regressive consciousness.  

In reference to this aspect, Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub make a highly Wilberian statement when they suggest that “we realize – with both hope and dismay – that mankind is still in something of a prepuberty stage.” James Stern compounds the relevance of this when he explains that “the novel’s primary implication is that what we have come to call civilization is, at best, no more than skin-deep.” Or in the words of Patrick Reilly, *Lord of the Flies* shows that “our much vaunted civilisation is little more than a sham in the first place.”

These observations of course suggest that there is a distinct analogue between the age of the boys and the ‘age’ of the consciousness of the society from which they find themselves. We can see this as an affirmation for Wilber’s observations on the state of current consciousness as only just burgeoning into the personal realms (his mental-egoic stages) and not yet moving toward transpersonal consciousness. He tells us: “we moderns are all, all, living in the world of the egoic structure; it frames our very countenances, as it were, and sets the limits of our perspectives.”

The relationship between the boys and the society from which they have come from are themes that respectively plot the ontogenetic and phylogenetic, or individual and

---

21 “The theme of the book is that human beings are removed from savagery only by the restraints of civilization, applied in the first place by grown-ups in authority over children.” Handley, Graham. *Brodie’s Notes: Lord of the Flies*. London: Pan, 1976, p.5

22 Oldsey and Weintraub, p.33.

23 Stern, p.38.

cultural, arms of consciousness and this relationship makes up the general theme of Wilber’s *Up From Eden*. We must remember that essential to Wilber’s argument is that ontogenesis precedes phylogensis; that significantly advanced individuals transcend the average mode of consciousness which follows later on. For this reason Wilber traces two parallel strands of evolution – “that of the *average level* of consciousness, and that of the *most advanced* level of consciousness.”

Golding’s belief of this as the order in which humankind evolves was one of the reasons *Lord of the Flies* was chosen for the literary text of this chapter. In the author’s own words: “*Lord of the Flies* was an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of the individual. Surely, in that case, a Golden Age must, can emerge only when the individual conquers his defects, and this could be described as progress.”

Golding suggests that only the individual can rise above the cultural consciousness in order to transcend its constraints and that as more and more individuals achieve this transcendence, this in turn would gradually produce what he conceives as progress within a given culture. This is the same basic theme as Wilber’s transpersonal view of the two strands involved in the evolution of consciousness. Patrick Reilly claims that *Lord of the Flies*, however, “traces three routes for mankind: Piggy’s commonsense, [Wilber’s average level] Jack’s irrationalism, and Simon’s mysticism [Wilber’s advanced level]. He states quite rightly that Piggy is terrified in Jack’s presence, but paradoxically dismisses Simon’s mystic way as “outrageous mumbo-jumbo” which Reilly believes “is the only sensible, practical solution” to the boys problem.

---

26 Ibid., p.13.
27 Biles, p.40.
28 Reilly, p.138-61.
I believe that the discrepancy between Wilber’s two strands and Reilly’s three routes is only because Wilber’s model sees Jack’s irrationalism not as a ‘route for mankind’ in itself, but rather as a deviation from the paths of one of the other two levels of consciousness; the rational (commonsense) and the transrational (mystic).

Of particular relevance to transpersonal psychology is that, for the older children in the group, the author chose to pitch their ages at a time when they have reached a certain stage of personal or egoic development. That age is at once open to the potential for both, a rapid maturation as is the case with Simon, and to a lesser extent, Ralph; and a precipitous regression, epitomised in Jack. While this is true of all stages of consciousness development according to Wilber, adolescence is more vulnerable to the breakdown of faculties of physique and reason as well as morality and spirituality, making Golding’s island a veritable powder keg. The boys are far more vulnerable than adults would be, simply because their personalities have not reached full maturation. These contrasting potentialities, of progression and regression, yet concurrent themes are what account for the extraordinary complexity of this story that on face value is a simple tale. C.B. Cox rightly points out that “the idea of placing boys alone on an island, and letting them work out archetypal patterns of human society, is a brilliant technical device.”

The tension between progression in some areas and regression in others provides the tale with a host of possible conflicts and outcomes that contribute largely to the atmosphere of suspense. The boys are, after all, naturally growing up and being hindered in their progress by their circumstance. But there is also the implication that

---

the problems do not start on the island, as Alistair Niven suggests: “Golding touched a
nerve-end … we all acknowledge our schooldays … when ‘civilisation’ implants itself
within us.”30 The narrative produces a complex situation for “Golding knows that the
distinction is not merely a simple one between good Christians and bad cannibals.”31
This is in contradistinction to R.M. Ballantyne’s The Coral Island, of which it is partly
a parody. It is crucial to note the following most salient point: “It seriously over-
simplifies the novel to see it merely as charting a regression in the boys. Golding is also
cconcerned with the hideous nature of their growing up.”32 Reilly also cautions against
simple explication, claiming “It is facile to present the book as some straight opposition
between civilisation and savagery.”33

Now compare Wilber’s description of Up From Eden: “The theme of this book is
that every transcendence (except, of course, the ultimate one) is two-sided: it represents
a new and higher potential, but also one that can be misused, often with horrendous
consequences.”34 And it is exactly these ‘horrendous consequences’ that are being
explored in terms of transpersonal development and potential crises in Lord of the Flies.
It is this very two-sidedness of potential growth versus possible regression which
creates most of the framework of tension in Lord of the Flies. The boys are getting
older and acquiring new skills and talents, while at the same time losing a sense of their
personal and cultural identities. They quickly run out of any guiding principles,
especially previously-monitored moral codes, and the situation now requires them to

30 Niven, Alistair, p.36
31 Michel-Michot, p.514.
32 Niven, p.37
33 Reilly, p.145.
34 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.103.
create a more primitive form of society; essentially based on a meritocracy whereby in this case – might becomes right.

As has been pointed out though, while “the boys understandably blame this collapse on the absence of adults … the text denies the reader so simple an explanation.” That is, the author is keen to demonstrate that the boy’s faith in the adults of modern society is entirely misplaced and we will return to this discussion at the end of our chapter. Kenneth Watson believes this factor contributes much to the overall oppression of the story when he decides: “Even more important than this restriction to the island is the entire absence of adults.” He describes the tale as having an “utterly claustrophobic effect,” and significantly states that this is “spiritual as much as physical.”

VALID GROWTH AND GROTESQUE REGRESSION

Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, Roger, Sam and Eric are adolescent, actually Ralph is portrayed at just over twelve-years-old. They can be seen in contrast to the ‘littluns’ who are around the age of six and thereby are certainly far more vulnerable still to the effects of outside forces. This means that they are rapidly exposed to the disintegration of their, as yet underdeveloped, cognitive processes. They lack the resilience, albeit tentative, of the older boys’ self-sense especially characterised in Ralph’s inner machinations. Their regression is more precipitous as we will see in the case of Percival Wemys Madison later on. Wilber, conveniently for us, yet explicitly, divides the overall transpersonal ego realm into “three major chronological stages: the early ego

35 Reilly, Patrick, p.138-61.
(ages 4-7), the middle ego (7-12), and the late ego (age 12).” 37 From this we should particularly note that twelve-years-old is a pivotal period in the development of the individual moving as it does from middle to late ego. 38 And while these stages are given for the individual, we must make here the significant point that each individual stage has its correlative stage in the phylogenetic ladder. That is, as consciousness developed through the anthropological record the cultural consciousness grew roughly in the same way as the individual. Or “each level of the compound human individual is exercised in a complex system of ideally unobstructed exchanges with the corresponding levels of the world process at large.” 39

Though the details of the process of humankind’s growing awareness are complex, the initial idea of ontogeny preceding phylogeny is relatively simple to grasp. As certain individuals transcend the “average mode of consciousness” they introduce progressive modes of understanding to the culture, which by and by becomes the basis for the average mode of consciousness and so forth. Wilber’s interpretation of consciousness development therefore biases the individual thus:

At all stages of past human history, certain highly advanced individuals managed to evolve considerably beyond their fellows and into aspects of higher realms themselves (the superconscious realms). These were the prophets, the saints, the sages, the shamans, the souls who, as the growing tip of human consciousness, discovered the higher levels of being through an expansion and precocious evolution of their own consciousness. And an account of history that leaves out

36 Watson, Kenneth, p.2-3.
38 This is also the period when Jean Piaget’s ‘formal operational thinking’ is developing.
39 Wilber, Up From Eden, p.273.
the influence of the growing tip of humanity – the edge of humanity’s greatness – is no history at all, but merely a chronicle of successive mediocrity.\(^{40}\)

William Golding sounds remarkably like Wilber at times and here, by way of comparison, are some remarks the author made in reference to the theme in *Lord of the Flies*:

> The only kind of real progress is the progress of the individual towards some kind of – I would describe it ethical – integration and his consequent effect upon the people who are near him. How far society can progress by this means I wouldn’t know. I think it could progress perhaps a long way, because the one thing about really good people – I suppose I am talking about saints – is the fact that their effect is incalculable.\(^{41}\)

But for Virginia Tiger, writing in 1974, Golding’s general theme is problematic due to the fact that his model for the evolution of the human species had been debunked. “Anthropologically the society is a mirror of the first, primitive societies of prehistoric man; its progress illustrates a biological maxim now fairly well discredited: that the development of the individual recapitulates in capsule time the development of the species.”\(^{42}\) In contrast to Tiger’s observations, Wilber addresses this very view in the opening of his book: “I wrote *Up From Eden* in 1977, when it was fashionable to believe that evolution touched all domains of the universe except the human”\(^{43}\)[author’s emphasis]. He suggests that the climate at the time was untenable because religious traditionalists “allowed that individual humans show development, but not a collective and cultural humanity” while the retro-Romantics saw human consciousness regressing.

---

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.13.

\(^{41}\) Biles, p.40.


\(^{43}\) Ibid., p.vii.
from a primal Eden paradise while the rest of the universe continued to evolve. This “hostility to cultural evolution was also shared by liberal social theorists” which while their reasons may have been understandable and noble, in trying to remove “pathological hierarchies” failed to “tease apart the valid from the grotesque” and therefore tended to deny or avoid the topic of evolution in consciousness. And while Tiger claims that Golding’s model has been largely discredited at the biological level, it is clear that, for Wilber, this would not necessarily correspond at the psychological level.\textsuperscript{44} His objections are based around the view that “to deny evolution in the human and cultural domain is to deny that learning occurs or can occur in collective human awareness.”\textsuperscript{45}

THE VISIONARY

It is clear that in \textit{Lord of the Flies}, Simon is representative of the saint or the “mystic who has the power of foreknowledge.”\textsuperscript{46} Golding also referred to him in a subsequent essay as “a Christ-figure … a visionary.”\textsuperscript{47} Simon truly displays a higher individual consciousness than the rest of the group, yet he is powerless to affect the cultural consciousness of the other children on the island.

\textsuperscript{44} Wilber explains this view of the evolution of human consciousness is also implicit in Habermas’s views on the structure of consciousness and stresses that while in older forms the dogma was rigid, new versions referring to cognitive development as bearing many homologues to the development of the species are widely held. See \textit{Sex, Ecology and Spirituality}. Boston: Shambhala, 1996, p.154-157.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, p.viii-xvi.
\textsuperscript{46} Handley, p.16
If he had been able to enlighten them about the ‘Beast’ so that they were able to understand it in the way that he did, there would have been an eminent chance of a successful community, survival and rescue. But Simon’s fate is that he is done to death in a frenzied, ritualistic killing that further accelerates the group’s psychosis and pitches them toward the dark horizon of the novel’s end.

Interestingly, Alastair Niven alludes to Simon’s “intuitive discovery that all the terrors on the island exist within the boys themselves.”\textsuperscript{48} It is indeed intuition that separates Simon from the other boys and Wilber explicitly describes intuition as a trait of higher orders of transpersonal growth. Intuition is a key concept to transpersonal psychology, for as Wilber points out: “In the realm of transcendelia, a datum may be a single spiritual \textit{intuition} … a particular gnostic insight … directly perceived or \textit{intuited} by the eye of contemplation”[emphasis added].

Contemplation is a key factor in opening the ‘inner eye’ and it is through Simon’s contemplation that certain discoveries are definitely revealed to him as he stares at the beast from his meditative hovel in the forest. He is able to reveal to Ralph his perception that Ralph will get home safely. It is also as a result of this advanced power of perception that Simon is the only one aware that the ‘beast’ is actually a manifestation of something inherent within the boys, including him. “Maybe it’s only us,” he suggests at an early meeting while clutching the conch, but he is made fun of and retreats from the assembly. Wilber claims that most intuition comes in the form of ‘vision-image’ and is therefore most often incommunicable. The psychologist, Claire Rosenfield, affording Simon this type of insight, also suggests it is transverbal when she

\textsuperscript{48} Niven, Alastair, p.49
says: “To him, as to the mystic, superior knowledge is given intuitively which he cannot communicate.”

During an audience with the Lord of the Flies the beast tells Simon: “I’m part of you? Close, close, close! I’m the reason why it’s no go?” But Simon mouths the words: “Pig’s head on a stick” when confronted with the blood-bespattered sow’s head showing “his recognition that nothing evil exists in nature other than what man invests with his own evil.” What is more is that he perceives clearly his own death at the hands of the other children. Through the beast he hears: “we shall do you. See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you. See?”

This is certainly a terrifying prophetic vision. And yet in spite of a clairvoyant warning of his imminent murder, Simon decides to run to the children in the darkness and tell them that they have nothing to fear from the beast as an external entity. However, the children are not willing or possibly unable to even engage in listening to the one voice that might save them from themselves, and so as both “redeemer and scapegoat, he becomes the victim of the group he seeks to enlighten.”

What is of great interest to transpersonal psychology is that the beast operates on the consciousness of each of the children at different levels that correspond to their varying stages of development. Let me establish the way in which fear of the unknown can prohibit transcendence and aid regressive tendencies. Firstly, let us note that Wilber,

---

50 Niven, p.49.
51 Golding. Lord of Flies, p.178.
52 “Piggy’s intelligence, valuable in spite of its shortcomings, is not recognized, neither is Simon’s vision, which could have redeemed them, nor Ralph’s good will and common sense, which should have enabled them to survive.” Talon, Henri. “Irony in ‘Lord of the Flies’,” in Essays in Criticism, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, July, 1968, p.296-309.
following the Upanishad, tells us that “wherever there is other, there is fear.” For transpersonal psychology, this is not a neurotic guilt but rather the existential dread of having a ‘separate self-sense’ which awakens the death imprint and can only be dealt with in one of two ways. Wilber tells us that we either repress death terror or transcend it in the transpersonal states of consciousness by transcending the self.

In *Lord of the Flies* the beast is ‘realised’ only in the fear of the children. This internally perceived death terror actually transmutes itself and manifests itself differently at the varying levels of consciousness. That is, although the level of fear and understanding of it changes, it is still the dread of self-death or ego-death. Essentially the ‘Beast’ represents fear alone, although the fear can clearly manifest itself in an object and it can be traced as figure and symbol of the beast’s development in *Lord of the Flies*. For as Virginia Tiger points out, “ultimately the meaning of the fable depends on the meaning of the beast – the creature which haunts the children’s imagination.”

THE BEAST

The ‘Beast’ first makes an appearance at a meeting on the beach when a boy of about six, says he has seen a ‘snake-thing’ which he subsequently refers to as a ‘beastie.’ The younger boys have made sense of the beast in what Wilber, following Piaget, would describe as the beginnings of ‘concrete operational’ and ‘conceptual’ thinking which is the appropriate level of psychological development for their ages, as we have observed, around age six. “Their thinking is dominated by immediate perceptions … It follows

---

that perceptions of an object are variable even in the same person from moment to moment and take a different form according to the surroundings in which the object is viewed.”56 This may explain why the concrete ‘snake-thing’ very quickly transmogrifies into a far more abstract ‘beastie.’ The older boys try to rationalise that there can not be a snake-thing or beastie. But Jack, who pertinently never entertains the notion of a beast at all, seizes an opportunity to promote his particular egoic drives declaring that if there were a beastie, “we’d hunt it and kill it.”57 And as Rosenfield points out this is a pivotal point in the unfolding drama: “Jack’s ascendancy over the group begins when the children’s fears distort the natural objects around them.”58 With one fell swoop Jack has been ‘hooked’ by the very concept of (not belief in) an unknown beast on the island and as a result the beast has transcended extraordinarily rapidly in consciousness from a snake to a ‘beastie’ to the ‘Beast.’ Notice how the concrete becomes abstract and finally indistinct, magical and mysterious.

This ‘Beast’ is representative of the potential ‘other’ as the knowledge of fear, distinct from the individual’s separate self-sense. Golding himself made the distinction between these two forms of the beast very clear when he said of Piggy that: “He dismisses the beast, he dismisses the beastie.”59

Golding deliberately makes the beast a different and more terrifying entity than a mere ‘snake-thing’ for the older boys, as their consciousness would be mature enough to handle the concrete conception of the reptile. They would not be afraid of a snake in

55 Tiger, p.244.
57 Golding. Lord of the Flies, p.48.
59 Biles, p.13.
the same way as the ‘littluns’ since their level of consciousness has transcended the ‘concrete operational’ stage and moved into ‘conceptual and formal’ modes of understanding, where indeed they can operate on the lower levels of consciousness.

In short, for the older children, a snake will not represent the death-terror. In fact, the older boys try to allay the littluns’ fears by making assurances to the younger boys. Wilber clarifies how a higher order of consciousness can operate on a lower form: “By the time of adolescence … the self starts to differentiate itself from the concrete thought process, it can to a certain degree transcend that process and therefore operate upon it.”[author’s emphasis] But while they can operate on the ‘beastie’ they are not able to operate on the ‘Beast’ that is a symbol of their own fear. Claire Rosenfield goes straight to the point when she explains that the fear and the beast are inseparable: “now there are no comforting mothers to dispel the terrors of the unknown. They externalize these fears into the figure of a ‘beast.’” Once the word “beast” is mentioned, the menace of the irrational becomes overt; name and thing become one.”

This second manifestation of the ‘Beast’ we can refer to as ‘Beast 2.’ It becomes a magical symbol of fear itself. This means that it doesn’t matter what triggers the fear, Beast 2 is represented by the whole concept of being frightened by the other, an external force. Beast 2 defeats an adolescent attempt at a rationalisation because it is a conceptualisation of an unknown fear. With the exception of Simon who is advanced enough to rationalise Beast 2 effectively, the older boys now have to live with this less rational concept of fear. In Lord of the Flies, Golding achieves this by instilling it not with a physical characteristic but by imbuing it with mystique and enigma.

---

60 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.41.
At the first mention of a snake-thing, Ralph somehow senses that the description of a snake has got out of hand. It has become a larger, deeper concern: “He felt himself facing something ungraspable … Something he had not known was there rose in him and compelled him to make the point, loudly and again. ‘But I tell you there isn’t a beast!’”62 Ralph, like Jack has incorporated a feeling of death terror into his new ‘island consciousness.’ But Ralph has enough respect for the possibility of a beast at least rational or not, whereas Jack fatefully refuses to acknowledge any such thing inwardly. Nevertheless, he is keen to capitalize on the others’ fears. He is sure he says, having hunted all over the island, that no beast exists and poignantly, Niven illustrates “as so often with Jack, he is half right. But he has no understanding that dreams can hurt, because they do psychological harm. He perceives things only in a sensuous way and has no regard for the inner life.”63 Jack dismisses the ‘beastie’ yet is subsumed by ‘Beast 2’ without once understanding it or even acknowledging it. In fact it has fused into his consciousness and because it is a part of him he cannot distinguish it from himself, which is indeed “half right.” But whereas Simon sees the ‘Beast’ as a part of his consciousness that requires transcendence, Jack assimilates with it.

The point is that, according to Wilber, at each stage of consciousness the separate self-sense “faces new forms of death seizure” and “this type of process is … repeated at every stage of development.”64 In other words, fear develops collaterally with the development of consciousness. It is clear, however, that the beast of fear must grow in stature at each stage in order to exercise the same level of fear on the higher awareness of the individual. As a result of this shift, David Spitz has correctly noted the

---

63 Niven, p.22.
transcendent nature of the beast. He argues that “the boys move not from one evil to
another evil, but from one aspect or level to another of the same evil; they go from the
Lord of the flies writ small to the Lord of the flies writ large.” And we can see how
this is the equivalent to translations on differing levels of consciousness.

We have seen that for the littluns, the beast is a relatively harmless notion of a
‘snake-thing’ or ‘beastie’ while for the older children it is the more magical beast of fear
the ‘other’ – our ‘Beast 2.’ But for Simon, and Simon only, the beast exists in another
form, and that is as a “state of being in themselves.” We should note that while Simon
is afraid of this beast, it is not fear itself but “the fundamental disease of man,”
according to Golding, a psychological reality inherent in us all, and for the sake of
neatly rounding off our discussion only we can call this ‘Beast 3.’ This ‘realization’ of
Simon’s, means that he has succeeded in transcending his fear far enough to act against
it on the behalf of the others. He alone climbs the mountain to discover the ‘beast from
the air’ is actually a dead pilot.

Now as Arnold Johnston rightly suggests “Two interrelated but discernibly distinct
threads are evident in Lord of the Flies. One is the actual narrative, detailing
meticulously the boys’ descent into savagery; the other is the gradually developed
symbol of the “Beast” that is first suggested by the wholly natural night fears of the
“littluns” and that eventually becomes the object of worship by the boys-turned-
savages. The Beast is an externalization of the inner darkness in the children’s (man’s)
nature, and its ascendancy is steady, inexorable, as is the path to savagery, increasing in

64 Wilber, The Atman Project, p.129.
65 Spitz, David. “Power and Authority: An interpretation of Golding’s ‘Lord of the Flies’,” in The
66 Handley, p.17.
intensity with each new regression on the part of the boys.” But when Golding offers us the third strand of transcendence, as embodied, albeit tentatively by Simon, Johnston suggests that this interpretation of human nature is too subtle for a small boy. He argues that Golding “is so intent on his moral message that he will not hesitate to make the youngsters dance to his tune.” Johnston claims it is Golding’s “concern for the fate of the artist-mystic” which forces his characters into a precocious understanding of the human condition. Johnston also finds some of Piggy’s matron-like attempts to assuage fears of ghosts “hard to swallow” from “a boy of about ten.” I confess that I do not find any of Golding’s characters unbelievable and would cite Peter Brooks’ casting in the film version of Lord of the Flies as evidence alone of the possible sensitivity and alertness of boys of that age. Nevertheless discussions of this nature point to the unassailable position that one of Golding’s concerns is with potentially advanced individual spiritual transcendence which is interpreted thus even by critics who find his message coming from ‘out of the mouths of babes’ a hard pill to swallow. But when Johnston refers to the “wholly natural night fears of the ‘littluns’” he reminds us of the inevitability of the children’s situation.

As Wilber asserts “every child goes through an extended period of nightmares – awakened from sleep screaming bloody murder, alive to the inherent terror of being a separate self, shaken by that primal mood of terror which always lurks beneath the surface of the separate self.” As we noted though, this terror is not dispelled by the

---

68 Ibid.
usual, “comforting mothers” as Rosenfield illustrates, and this does much to contribute to the story.

The key to understanding the way in which transpersonal development is taking place on the island is to see that while the beast moves from the ‘concrete’ concept of a snake to something symbolic of the boys’ fear in itself, it also in turn aids advances in consciousness. This is simply because it represents a problem that must be overcome – i.e. transcended. Now the older boys are able to transcend the ‘beastie’ and operate, in Wilber’s terms, upon it. When they are successful they alleviate the fear temporarily, but then the ‘littluns’ begin to understand the beast at the second level. Simon could definitely have alleviated the fear of the older boys, operating from the consciousness that has transcended ‘Beast 2.’ Of course he never gets the chance in the novel and in an amazing irony is killed by his ‘Beast 3’ (inherent human savagery brought about by the consciousness of fear). Simon’s fears are realised at the same time the other boys’ fears are. Simon appears on the beach as both the ‘beastie’ to the littluns and ‘Beast 2’ to the older boys. In Rosenfield’s words “He becomes not a substitute for beast but beast itself; representation becomes absolute identification.” Kenneth Watson picks up on this conflation of Simon and beast when he tells us that “Simon’s body becomes the beast – disguised.”

70 “when we understand the deep-rooted psychological fears we will be able to meet the animal fears, whereas to be concerned with the animal fears first will never help us to understand the psychological fears.” Krishnamurti, J. Freedom from the Known. London: Victor Gollancz, 1985, p.41.
72 Watson, p.5.
UNBEARABLE BLOOD

The effect transcendence of fear has on the children again is different, depending on primarily the age, and partially the character of the individual. Ralph, attempts to move into a more highly organised, rational and systematic way of thinking: “If you were a chief you had to think … thought was a valuable thing … Ralph was a specialist in thought now, and could recognize thought in another.” This is relayed in the narrative as a moment of epiphany after he observes: “If faces were different when lit from above or below – what was a face? What was anything?” This is declarative evidence of Ralph’s arrival at the stage in both Wilber’s and Piaget’s models of ‘formal operational thinking/cognition’ when, among other things, there is “internalized conversation in the form of deliberation and reflection.”

According to Piaget, at this stage children can look objectively and critically at themselves and the assumptions of the group, they become morally less extreme, test hypotheses and grasp conceptual and imaginary models. Wilber adds that this is the capacity to “not just think, but think about thinking” and “since you can operate upon or reflect upon your own thought processes … you can to some degree transcend them … entertain hypothetical possibilities” and become “highly introspective” [author’s emphasis]. We can see this clearly in Ralph a little later when the narrative explains: “By now, Ralph had no self-consciousness in public thinking but would treat the day’s decisions as though he were playing chess.”

---

74 Beard, p.97.
75 Wilber. *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality*, p.179.
So Ralph at this stage seems to be progressing roughly in accordance with the stages of Piaget’s developmental psychology, and let us at this point observe Wilber’s insistence that any model that does not include Piaget’s stages up to formal operational thinking is “an inadequate model.” We should note too, that Golding was a schoolmaster and that he: “creates the novel partly out of an understanding of juvenile psychology.”

Meanwhile, there is a different kind of development taking place on the island epitomized by Jack, who “represents more completely than anyone else in the novel the theme of ‘reversion to savagery.’” Jack’s regression really begins at the outset when Ralph wins the vote over him to become the chief. However, Jack does win the fateful concession of having power over his choir who become the ‘hunters’ and later also his Pretorian Guard. Nevertheless, from the start he makes his resentment known and “although he shows traces of a demagogue from the beginning, he must undergo a metamorphosis from a timidity-shielding arrogance to conscienceless cruelty. At first he is even less able to wound a pig than is Ralph.” In a later essay, recalling this scene when the boys’ initially fail to kill a piglet trapped in foliage, Golding referred twice to the ‘enormity’ of what the downward stroke of the knife will mean – the unbearable blood. Jack resolves that next time there will be no mercy and starts his transcendence of the fear of ‘Beast 2’ differently to Ralph. Rather than recognising this manifestation of the beast and attempt to respond rationally to the situation, as Ralph does, he begins his ascent to “heroism … a reflex against death and Thanatos – it

---

78 Niven, p.6.
79 Niven, p.48.
80 Oldsey and Weintraub, p.22.
embodies the urge to be immortal, deathless, blood-immune and everlastingly triumphant.”

While, in terms of transpersonal development this is an altogether necessary stage and “part of the child’s deepest yearnings,” it is doomed to fail. For if the self identifies with the ‘death terror’ of this stage too fully it remains “victimized by its own foundations.” This is because a very important detail of Wilber’s stages of development is the difference between ‘fusion, differentiation and dissociation.’ This “choice” is “offered at every stage of development and the consequences of the “decision” are “absolutely fateful.” Wilber explains that “fusion – or the failure to differentiate at all” is what happens when the self experiences excessive satisfaction at a given level.

This serves as a fairly accurate summary of what happens to Jack and is explicit in the “compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing him up,” which, interestingly he cannot convey to the others. Oldsey and Weintraub observe that as a result of this instinctive, primordial drive, “Jack’s Faustian reward is power through perception. He perceives almost intuitively the use of mask, dance, ritual, and propitiation to ward off – and yet encourage simultaneously – fear of the unknown”[emphasis added]. To say Faustian, however, fails to examine what is really happening. But these critics are right when they observe an increase in perception. They highlight the importance of the intuitive grasp of mask and ritual and Jack’s

---

83 Ibid., p.146.
84 Ibid., p.153.
86 Oldsey and Weintraub, p.23.
ambiguous dealings with fear of the unknown. And this ambiguity is significant as Wilber illustrates: “power simply went to the man with the most magic, the most ability to both ward off death and deal out death.”\(^87\) So we see Jack addressing a very basic need and urge in the form that was known in his phylogenetic past and for transpersonal psychology is still very much part of, and accessible to, his own psyche. As Henri Talon says, “\textit{in potentia}, he was a savage even at the beginning.”\(^88\)

This ability to deal death was a fundamental upward movement in the phylogenesis of developmental consciousness itself. As Wilber says for early hunter-gatherers this was “the day-to-day world of the all-necessary hunt, which was the central form of the new immortality project.”\(^89\) He goes on to explain that as a result of the anxiety about death, attention focussed on magic to ward off death as well as deliver it in death-dealing, very much in accord with Oldsey and Weintraub’s comments about Jack and how he deals with his fear. For Wilber this ‘immortality project’ represents a substitute gratification or an ‘Atman project.’ This is where the self-sense, instead of seeking Atman or god-consciousness, pretends and aspires to immortality, omnipotence and cosmocentricity. All the while though “the fearful background of death is there to be thought of.”\(^90\) To help alleviate the terror of death, external props, drives, materials wants and desires are imbued with infinite worth – these are all Atman projects since all the self really wants is self-infinity or Atman. Atman projects are substitute gratifications for actual transcendence over death terror. In Jack’s case his immortality project follows precisely the same path that Wilber calls the Atman projects of ancient

\(^87\) Wilber. \textit{Up From Eden}, p.69-70.
\(^88\) Talon, p.301.
\(^89\) Wilber. \textit{Up From Eden}, p.69.
\(^90\) Ibid., p.17-18.
peoples. And in this way, as Oldsey and Weintraub rightly point out, “Jack does not symbolize chaos, as sometimes claimed, but, rather, a stronger, more primitive order than Ralph provides.”\(^91\) The consciousness of that ‘primitive order’ is precisely the focus of the first part of *Up From Eden* and so we can see Jack representing a microcosmic view of the kind of challenges that people at the dawn of humankind had to face.

Here we can see two arms of development where Simon, Ralph and Piggy try to maintain an order representative of the society from which they have come, Jack prefers to regress to an earlier form of consciousness in order to deal with the immediacy of his death terror. This two-pronged evolutionary map is exactly how Wilber plots the development in human consciousness. One arm represents the ‘average mode of consciousness’ – now Jack and his hunters, while the other arm is ‘the growing tip of human awareness’ – exemplified in the tripartite by Simon.

But is it fair to plot Jack’s evolution at this stage against the phylogenetic backdrop? Niven seems to think there is a strong corollary and that this in turn will have a bearing on how widely the book is read: “The book will last, however, because Golding *transcends* his own society to probe into the fundamental verities upon which he believes history itself has evolved.”\(^{92}\)

If we place Jack within Wilber’s chronicle of consciousness in the phylogenetic ladder in *Up From Eden*, it is accurate to say that Jack has ‘devolved’ rather rapidly in consciousness from the ‘mental-egoic realm’ at the time when he arrived on the island. He is now showing signs of the ‘magical-typhonic’ consciousness realms. This is really

\(^91\) Oldsey and Weintraub, p.23.
\(^{92}\) Niven., p.8-9.
the lowest stage he can regress to in terms of Wilber’s model, for he has already
developed a strong ego, whereas Wilber asserts that before the typhon, in times of the
earliest hominids, “no ego center had as yet developed … the self is material …
predifferentiated, prepersonal.”\(^93\) Now let us introduce a provocative notion from the
psychoanalyst, Kurt Robert Eissler: “To my way of thinking, the first deliberate murder
was actually an incredible cultural advance. Human civilization, as we know it, is based
on the evolvement of ego boundaries … man was incapable of killing man at the dawn
of culture, not because of any lack of aggressivity or destructiveness, but because of a
deficit of ego structuralization.”\(^94\) In spite of this, there is no doubt that Jack’s sense of
responsibility has begun to lodge itself in the prepersonal external world more than in
any sense of the personal. We can see then, that once an egoic awareness has emerged,
it cannot be erased because it is the self-sense, it can only suffer neuroses and
breakdown, not erasure. Wilber categorically supports this position when he tells us:
“after the ego is formed, it is very, very difficult to transcend. The ego is so stable, so
‘permanent,’ so ‘strong’ that it not only escapes the subconscious, it also tends to deny
the superconscious,”\(^95\)[emphasis added]. We can perhaps see from this statement as
well, why Jack in particular is not open to the kind of intuitive insights that Simon is
because he is far more dependent on his self-esteem than anyone else on the island. As
we will see however, the ego’s ability to escape the subconscious is not pertinent in the
case of the younger boys since they have only just begun to develop their egos, which
are still relatively nascent.

\(^{93}\) Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.29 and 93.

\(^{94}\) Eissler, Kurt Robert. *Discourse on Hamlet and HAMLET: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. New York:

MYTHIC MEMBERSHIP

While I am suggesting that Jack has experienced a regression from a higher consciousness to a lower consciousness, he subsequently begins an immediate growth in consciousness from that lowest point which corresponds to Wilber’s models. This being the case, we should point out that if Jack has firstly moved ‘down’ Wilber’s phylogenetic ladder, so to speak, he should have passed through the higher ‘mythic-membership’ stage. Then regressed back to the times of the ‘typhonic’ hunter-gatherers. He then symbolically begins an ascent back up the phylogenetic ladder to become the leader of a membership society; a place he appears to be situated for the remainder of the story. Therefore we should be able to find evidence of this.

Although we should not be too concerned whether or not Golding’s vision follows the exact path that Wilber’s methodology does, given that they are working in different media, the claims made by this thesis make it at least necessary to show significant tropes of these developmental stages. Therefore, it is important that we can find something in Jack’s metamorphosis that parallels a passing through the consciousness of Wilber’s ‘mythic-membership’ stage on his way ‘down’ to a more primitive state of consciousness.

And yet before we do this, I would like to introduce a small disclaimer to facilitate the discussion, borrowed from Wilber himself: “I will lump the typhonic and membership structures together and simply refer to them collectively as the ‘typhonic realms.’” These two structures, the typhonic and the membership, are indeed quite different, but in comparison with the mental-egoic structure, they have much in common … both are still intermeshed with nature and instinct, both tend toward
impulsiveness, and so on\textsuperscript{96}[author’s emphasis]. So we can see that there is enough overlap in these modes of consciousness in order for Golding to have arrived at Jack’s character by default – a hybrid of mental-egoic/membership consciousness rapidly starting to significantly identify with the typhonic modes of cognition. Nonetheless, with this in mind it may be interesting to at least look at some of the less complex details of the differences between the typhonic and membership selves and see if we can acquire a further insight into the journey of Jack’s supposed diminishing awareness.

For Wilber the ‘mythic-membership’ represented a prodigious transformation: the most important in the history of the world as consciousness grew more quickly with the advent of farming cultures. At this stage in evolution it became necessary to be able to project into the future. Put simply, this is a consciousness that recognises the axiom that one can reap what is sown – therefore a concept of self in the future. This new consciousness of extended linear time included the “ability and necessity to delay and control impulsive animal gratifications, emotional-sexual impulses, and typhonic magic, in favor of temporal and mental goals.”\textsuperscript{97} And because this requires cooperation it resulted in a community consciousness. In \textit{Lord of the Flies} this consciousness we take to be represented symbolically by the fire.

Initially there is unanimous cooperation in building the fire on the mountaintop, in itself a kind of farming. Or, investment now for future reward in the form of rescue.\textsuperscript{98} This means that the individual must delay impulses and offset instinctive body-bound

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p.199.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p.94.
\textsuperscript{98} Michel-Michot, “The fire which must be kept burning is the symbol of their hope for rescue, of their attachment to civilization, for it will reveal their presence to the outside world. But it can be otherwise interpreted and this makes for the richness of Golding’s work. It is a distant end that will be reached only at the price of everyday effort; it is a duty that must be done for no immediate end: it can be culture and education.” p.510-20.
desires. But the constant rigours of fire building take their toll on the group and Jack in particular, who is being dragged into the consciousness of individual gratification rather than the collective whole in his overwhelming desire to hunt and kill. Jack is beginning to translate the world now from the centre point of his new consciousness. His understanding of time and language has been distinctly reduced as a result of this new translation of the world. After describing his feeling of being hunted while hunting, Ralph reminds him that the fire and getting rescued is more important and the narrative tells us: “Jack had to think for a moment before he could remember what rescue was.” We then hear Jack’s response “‘Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I’d like to catch a pig first.’”

Whatever the effects of Golding’s narrative intrusion are, it is clear that what is portrayed is a powerful attrition taking place in Jack. He is more concerned with satisfying his desire for the immediacy of the hunt than for the possibility of his longevity by being rescued. This is because he is losing his sense of ‘tensed’ time. The idea of a ‘Jack’ in the future is diminishing to him.

Tensed time was one of the distinctions of the new membership consciousness as it evolved from the typhonic hunter-gatherers to the farming communities. But this new temporal awareness meant that existential vulnerability became part of the new consciousness as well as an increase in mental faculty and functioning. The key feature of the new consciousness for Wilber was language, which manifested itself as a rather simple “mythical cognition … a mixture of magic and logic.”

---

100 Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.98.
But, as the name gives away, the rise of language triggered another important part of this era in consciousness development and that was the culture of membership, part of the social function, shared sentiments, realities and perceptions as the psychological support of the society. \textsuperscript{101} I think we can clearly see that of all the characters at the beginning of the story, it is Jack who conforms to this mode of consciousness most readily. He is a choir-leader and a prefect. He and his choir are all in uniform to begin with. As Golding explained: “he is part of society … As head of the cathedral choir, he has over him a choirmaster, a precentor, a dean, and, ultimately, a bishop. And a lot of adults.” \textsuperscript{102} What is more, he clearly tries to adhere to and utilise this unquestioning faith in a cultural hierarchy early on, where he represents part of the ruling class: “ ‘I ought to be chief,’ said Jack with simple arrogance, ‘because I’m chapter chorister and head boy.’” \textsuperscript{103}

This unflinching belief in societal order not only displays Jack’s affinity with the idea of membership but also suggests that position is linked very strongly to his sense of self, his ego. It is perhaps because of this highly tenuous faith that Jack is more vulnerable when his egoic drive to become chief is thwarted, in spite of his declaration: “I can sing C sharp.” \textsuperscript{104} And I totally agree with Reilly when he highlights that “the utter irrelevance of this is not meant to expose Jack’s folly but his menace.” \textsuperscript{105} The fact that he loses the vote and as a result experiences a significant blow to his large, yet fragile ego, is perhaps the force that sets the wheels in motion.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p.111.
\textsuperscript{102} Biles, p.46.
\textsuperscript{103} Golding. \textit{Lord of the Flies}, p.29.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p.29.
\textsuperscript{105} Reilly, p.138-61.
We may see his response to this rejection outlined here by Wilber: “Should the self, in the process of transforming from, say, the typhonic realm to the egoic, encounter severe repression of, for example, aggression, then the ascent of consciousness is halted in regard to that facet of self.”\(^{106}\) Kenneth Watson describes the situation neatly, when he explains Jack’s “mortification when not in the full limelight and his lust to hunt and kill, rationalized as providing meat, feed each other till he is swallowed by his own mad unreal world.”\(^{107}\)

Let us examine this in more detail by quoting Wilber again: “the anger impulse will be mis-translated with regard to any deep structure which subsequently refuses the impulse. Thus transformation upward is distorted because, at every stage past repression, the impulse is mistranslated. And this mistranslation means that the individual cannot represent these impulses to himself with appropriate signs, but only with symbols, and these symbols represent the hidden aspects of self which now remain lodged in the lower levels of his own being.”\(^{108}\) This mistranslation and subsequent distortion of sign and symbol is exactly what happens and is certainly the reason for Simon’s death. Watson endorses Wilber’s psychology when he says: “everything is transformed with the ingenuity of the paranoiac to fit his fantasy and Simon’s body becomes the beast – disguised.”\(^{109}\)

This is why the beast rises greatly as a result of one individual’s failure to translate the world properly at the appropriate level. And that individual is Jack. He is the one who pushes the idea of the beast most forcefully, propitiates it, makes a totem of the

---

107 Watson, p.4.
108 Wilber. *The Atman Project*, p.50
109 Watson, p.4.
sow’s head and generally whips the group into a frenzy, all the while denying to himself its existence or its influence.

He is destined to find substitute self gratification for the symbols of power and he eventually finds it as a hunter and in the currency of ‘pig meat.’ Meat becomes the economic power on the island and it is Jack who exclusively controls its gathering and distribution. Wilber explains that a full stomach is the simplest form of death denial: “a full stomach is immortality – there is the lowest, or one of the lowest, forms of the Atman project.” Wilber, Ken. *Up From Eden*, p.66. Reilly calls the success of the hunters and the provision of meat a “crucial victory for Jack” as it “becomes a key element in the establishment of his new society.” Reilly, p.138-161.

Reilly is right to term it a ‘new’ society as well, for although from this point onwards we can see how Jack’s society of hunters follows roughly the anthropological record, there are factors within the structure of the story that prevent this simple analogue. Reilly goes on to clarify his stance: “This is not, as is sometimes mistakenly said, a slide from society into savagery, but the replacement of one kind of society by another.” Reilly, p.138-161. And yet, while this is true to a degree, I also share Rosenfield’s opinion that while indeed “they form a new culture,” the general nature of development “reflects that of the genuine primitive society, evolving its gods and demons (its myths), its rituals and taboos (its social norms).” Rosenfield, p.93-101.

This is precisely because, in terms of transpersonal psychology, they cannot escape the ineffable, yet inevitable, drive of spirit within the phylogenesis of cultural

---

111 Reilly, p.138-161.
112 Ibid., p.138-161.
development. That is, a transpersonal model would insist that they are destined or even preordained to “work out archetypal patterns of human society.” And we saw earlier Reilly describe this artifice as Golding’s “brilliant technical device.” I was surprised to see how close Golding’s vision comes at times to the tenets of Wilber’s transpersonal psychology and the general proximity of these assumptions became more specific. I would therefore like to conclude the current chapter with a brief analysis of the transpersonal development and collateral regressive tendencies that take place in *Lord of the Flies*, by looking at some of the major characters.

We will begin with Piggy. He is perhaps the most well-loved character among readers, ironically, for Piggy is almost universally despised upon the island. He is, as James Stern rightly points out the figure who is familiar to us all, as “the Fat Boy.” But I believe, along with most other critics as far as I can tell, that Stern is wrong to cast him as “the hero of a triumphant literary effort.”

In fact, Golding’s characterisation of the spiritually deplete state of the world is represented in the island congregation by the purblind Piggy. In essence he is the one character who neither progresses nor regresses but stays the same. And as a result of this stasis, he is slain. He tries reason but actually is completely in a state of listless balance and represents the complacency of the consciousness that refuses to either transcend or regress. It is immobile and self-satisfied with its worldview.

The clumsy and appropriately bespectacled Piggy represents this blind faith in the ‘system,’ in logic, and rationale and a naïve faith in human common sense and decency. Piggy’s unflinching belief in the adult world is based not on knowledge but ignorance of it. Wilber says that in the mental-egoic realm the child has “mentally mimicked” the
parents to help form a mental self\textsuperscript{115} and this best describes Piggy’s inaccurate appraisal of the adult world: “They ain’t afraid of the dark. They’d meet and have tea and discuss. Then things ’ud be all right.”\textsuperscript{116} And Talon rightly points out that while many critics see Piggy as representing these ideals, in fact Piggy “lacks the experience that intelligence needs to operate successfully. His reasoning is often vitiated because his premises are wrong.”\textsuperscript{117} As a result, he fails both to see Simon’s superior awareness and equally the rock later pushed to obliterate him.

He even glosses over Simon’s murder in a cold display of ‘political disinformation.’ In short, Piggy neither transcends nor regresses but stays a perfect representation of the society that has foolishly obliterated itself. Piggy does not really display any intelligence at all.

Firstly, he foolishly lets Ralph in on the secret of his nickname. And this I take to be his need for a former comforting, identification of himself. Furthermore, it is not Piggy who suggests using his glasses to light the fire, perhaps the most intelligent decision made on the island. Neither does Piggy display practical intelligence – he cannot make the conch sound. In short, he is not even smart enough to see Roger with the rock hovering over his head. And he talks to Jack as if nothing has gone astray, as if Jack will eventually respond to commonsense. Reilly points out: “One of his limitations is a tendency to credit others with his own good sense.”\textsuperscript{118}

He is mistranslating the world around him and is therefore unable to transform in terms of transpersonal psychology. And Golding is clear to mark Piggy’s blindness

\textsuperscript{114} Stern, p.38.
\textsuperscript{115} Wilber. \textit{The Atman Project}, p.158.
\textsuperscript{116} Golding. \textit{Lord of the Flies}, p.117.
\textsuperscript{117} Talon, p.301.
from the beginning. His glasses are what have given him his faith in science – his poor natural vision is corrected through technology – but without them his vision is terrifyingly real, horrible and apparent. This is a symbol of contemporary society in a self-congratulatory status quo and this is a point where both Golding and Wilber see the state of the present cultural consciousness.

Significantly, it finds its position on Wilber’s ‘life cycle’ at the top of the circle, in the middle of the outward and inward arc, and poised precariously between the combatant forces of evolution and involution.

Involution is the opposite of evolution and Wilber’s premise that ontogeny precedes phylogeny, is only when things are working in the evolutionary way. What happens when devolution or involution takes place is obviously the reverse and Golding highlights this by describing the island as shaped like a boat which appears to the boys to be going backwards. In this case phylogeny ‘drags down’ ontogeny and that is what happens to the individual efforts of the boys who try to transcend.

Simon is the first to go. He does not regress at all, if anything he grows in awareness – yet he is simply annihilated. Ralph’s efforts see him struggling against the trend towards savagery but he gradually slips down in the face of the overpowering cultural pressures.

In order for either Ralph or Piggy to survive on the island they would have had to join the others’ regression. And they are all given this choice; Jack’s final offer of peace: “Listen all of you. Me and my hunters, we’re living along the beach by a flat

---

118 Reilly, p.142-145.
rock. We hunt and feast and have fun. If you want to join my tribe come and see us. Perhaps I’ll let you join. Perhaps not.”

**The Boy Who Would Be King**

The man who is born to be a dictator is not compelled. He wills it. He is not driven forward, but drives himself. There is nothing immodest about this. Is it immodest for a worker to drive himself toward heavy labour? Is it presumptuous of a man with the high forehead of a thinker to ponder through the nights till he gives the world an invention? The man who feels called upon to govern a people has no right to say, ‘If you want me or summon me, I will co-operate.’ No! It is his duty to step forward. – Adolf Hitler

We have seen the regress of Jack’s consciousness. From his first steps on the island, Jack’s journey has also thrust him back down the phylogenetic ladder from a mental-egoic period of consciousness, still strongly influenced by lower-order mythic-membership traits, to a point where he is literally wallowing in the faeces of pigs as a typhonic hunter-gatherer. But from there he has begun an ascent back up the ladder to the mythic-membership stage of development, a once again organised and systematic form of development that relies on a collective consciousness. But this time Jack does not have ‘a choirmaster, precentor, dean, a bishop and a lot of adults’ over him – he has

---

119 Ibid., p.174.
120 From *Mein Kampf*, cited in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. William L. Shirer, London: Pan Books, 1964, p.105. Hitler is undoubtedly following Nietzsche: “The strong men, the masters, regain the pure conscience of a beast of prey; monsters filled with joy, they can return from a fearful succession of murder, arson, rape and torture with the same joy in their hearts, the same contentment in their souls as if they had indulged in some student’s rag … When a man is capable of commanding, when he is by nature a ‘Master’, when he is violent in act and gesture, of what importance are treaties to him? … To judge morality properly, it must be replaced by two concepts borrowed from zoology: the taming of the beast and the breeding of a specific species.” Friedrich Nietzsche from *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and *Der Wille zur Macht*, cited in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. William L. Shirer, London: Pan Books, 1964, p.146.
taken charge of his own destiny with whatever limited capabilities and vulnerability he has. In other words, Jack has found himself individually at the head of the very kind of social hierarchy that he supports at the beginning of the book, albeit in a totally new form. The difference that this makes relates strongly to the ideas of kingship in *Up From Eden*.

Jack’s ascent from a typhon to a king can be seen as an allegory of what Wilber states as another advance in consciousness ‘divine kingship’ which “truly blossomed during the high-membership period in the hieratic city-states of Egypt and Mesopotamia.” This invention of kings was “a phenomenon of unequaled impact. Politically, it was probably the single greatest change in humankind’s consciousness … its repercussions were awesome – and its effects are still with us today.”121 Clearly Jack has performed a highly successful coup d’etat and usurped Ralph’s authority in a powerful display of political outmanoeuvring and quickly established himself as leader: “Power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape.”122

Wilber tells us that despite speculation on the origins of kingship, it is almost universally agreed that the first kings were gods or at least perceived as much and as such, each wanted to “achieve substitute immortality here on earth and thus be worshipped as a Divine God-King.”123

When Piggy and Ralph walk towards Jack’s camp along the sand they come across the tribe of boys and in the centre of the group atop a great log “Jack, painted and

---

121 Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.175.
122 Golding. *Lord of the Flies*. Ibid., p.185. I would not be surprised if this unusual metaphor of a primate representing authority perched whispering into Jack’s ear is supposed to point to the theme in general – a steady return toward the consciousness of distant ancestors.
garlanded, sat there like an idol. There were piles of meat on green leaves near him, and fruit and coco-nut shells full of drink.” The imagery here clearly shows Jack as resembling an idol and in a strong position with the other members of his tribe doing his bidding; something Ralph was never able to achieve.

This point is picked up by Paulette Michel-Michot when she suggests that “the ‘littluns’ stand for the mob the leaders work on: neglectful and idle when they are on Ralph’s side and are asked to contribute to the welfare of the community; frightened of the dark and a prey to superstitious fears, but disciplined and obedient when they become part of the hunter tribe and are under Jack’s drastic military and tyrannical leadership.” And from this point of view, as well as the provision of meat, we can see that in many ways Jack really is a more successful and useful chief than Ralph is. Initially, it is possible to casually surmise that Ralph is too insistent and stubborn about the fire. After all, perhaps he could have willingly relinquished leadership when it was obvious that Jack was winning the majority support, pitched in with the hunters more readily and in turn received meat and help with some of his ideas. But we are also clearly aware that Jack does not simply want to be a chief, he wants to have rules and he wants to punish transgressors.

The truth is that what he wants is absolute power – a kind of divine kingship. As a result Jack’s leadership is not for any sense of the greater good but actually it is simply so he can do what he wants. I think Patrick Reilly neatly summarises the situation in his appraisal of Jack’s devotion to hunting when he observes: “Self-denial is the infallible litmus-test. When Jack goes hunting, he is clearly doing something that is both

---

123 Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.177
demanding and dangerous – instinctual gratification is not necessarily immersion in sybaritic hedonism. The point is that Jack is doing what he wants, not what he ought … Work is irksome, and, in terms of this Kantian definition, Jack is a layabout, even if he chased pigs from dawn to dusk.”

If pig-hunting were the only pursuit that Jack was interested in things might not be so bad but we are also aware that purposes more dark are hidden just below the surface “through Jack’s ‘numberless and inexpressible frustrations’ [i.e. not growing up] one has an insight into the psychology of Hitler.”

In spite of all this, there is something of an irony to the fire symbol of civilization that seems to have escaped most critics as far as I can tell. That is, while Ralph is perceived of as the Promethean fire-bringer, it is actually Jack who suggests they can use Piggy’s spectacles in the first place. Having said this, I think it is fair to conceive of Ralph as the fire-starter, who most volubly advocates its upkeep. And while I believe it is right to see the fire as a civilizing factor I think that there is far more to it than just that.

In The Ascent of Man, Jacob Bronowski tells us that fire is the image of youth and blood and when Prometheus stole fire from the gods he made man a demigod. Bronowski recalls an evening with, notably, the perennial philosopher, Aldous Huxley, who holding his hands toward the fire declaimed: “This is what transforms. These are the legends that show it. Above all the legend of the Phoenix that is reborn in the fire, and lives over and over again in generation after generation.” These comments befit the end of Golding’s story when Ralph, surrounded by an inferno emerges onto the beach and we read the “superb coda [that] elevates Lord of the Flies above

---

125 Michel-Michot, p.510-520.
126 Reilly, p.142-145.
Virginia Tiger shows her enthusiasm for the way Golding re-acquaints us with his general theme. She goes on to explain that “The arrival of the officer at the end with its sudden shift from Ralph’s agonized eyes to the benign view of the adult throws the story back into grotesque miniature. The children are dwarfed to children again.” But it is the naval officer who appears naïve to us now, for he fails to either grasp the reality and the enormity of what has been happening, and is at the same time embroiled in a conflict which is simply the same but on a larger scale. What we are aware of is that “throughout the narrative’s first movement – and with appalling momentum – the children appear to have been adults dealing with adult problems.” This is surely the case and for this reason I believe that by the time of his rescue Ralph has gained a vast leap in awareness but is spiritually destitute. This bleakness is not lost on Kenneth Watson who holds that it is the “spiritual claustrophobia which makes the hunting of Ralph so terrifying, so that one experiences such a sudden shock of contrast when the mob of merciless and howling savages suddenly shoots down to child size.”

Now there are critics who establish guidelines which on the face of things seem to aid interpretation but upon closer inspection completely upset the balance of the fable and this is most obvious when they try to find a father figure in either Piggy or Ralph, as does Rosenfield. This seems to me a particularly obtuse thing to do and I believe sincerely that even cursory comments that allude to either of these two boys representing a father figure, distort Golding’s viewpoint significantly. Surely the whole

---

128 Tiger, p.244.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
point of his contrivance is to ensure that there is no possibility of the evacuees ever realising such a mentor.

Of course, those critics would argue that their comments see these children simply as corollaries for society as a whole and I totally agree. But it seems to me that it makes more sense to assume that Golding is implying that even our fathers are not father figures, since in Golding’s view we are experiencing the infantilism of society. Only Simon can possibly be seen in such a light. It is he who is tactile and compassionate, calm, reaches for fruit the littluns cannot get, helps build the shelters, retires to contemplate the fate of the others, and climbs the mountain to find the truth and allay the other boys’ fears. And while I readily concede that this is not the image that everyone has of their father, it is the only image that allows the phrase ‘father figure’ to have any sort of relevance in interpretation of this sort. Yet this too seems to be facile when we consider the evidence that Simon is more likely to represent a mystic or visionary. I have introduced the idea of Simon as a father figure simply to suggest that given the same brief attention he too can be dressed up to fit the picture. It is far more probable I think that the absence of the father figure, and equally the “comforting mother,” as we saw earlier, are supposed to be foregrounded.

The absence of a female presence on the island represents an interesting exploration of transpersonal aspects in itself, especially when we consider this account by Joseph Campbell: “The ritual for the girl with her first menstruation was normally just to sit in a hut and realize what was happening to her, that she was now a vehicle of a transpersonal power … but the transpersonal power of nature never overtakes a boy in

131 Watson, p.2-3.
the same way.” Traditionally, the correspondent of menstruation was an initiation rite for boys carried out by the older men in the society, and often quite brutally, usually in the form of painful circumcision.

And the result? In the words of Campbell “What has died is the infantile ego.” And, fittingly, he tells us the age when this initiation is carried out is twelve to fourteen years old. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the myriad possible interpretations of Golding’s book with reference to its absence of females. However I would like to suggest that the symbolic anal rape of the sow, when Roger thrusts a spear into the pig’s arse, maybe seen as a rite of passage and a protrusion into puberty without the all-important requisite initiation. The complexities arising from this could be seen to have an abundant effect on the consequent behaviour of the boys, contributing greatly to the wholesale breakdown on the island.

Golding’s crucial point is this: the absence of father and mother are in order to alert our attention to the peculiar predicament and the therefore particular disadvantages of the situation the boys, and by relation, our society are in. That it is full of uninitiated males is confirmed by Campbell: “It matters very much that the puberty rites are lost because without them men remain boys! In our society, instead of mature human beings, we have continuing adolescence – forty-year-old adolescents.”

---

133 Campbell, p.68.
134 [Roger]“possesses from the beginning all the sadistic attributes of the demagogues hangman underling. In his treatment of the sow he proves deserving of his appellation in English slang.” Oldsey and Weintraub, p.23-24.
135 Campbell, p.79. I am loath to note that for Campbell the exemplar of uninitiated dependency is the PhD. student and the lack of authority can be gauged by the number of footnotes! See p.69.
That *Lord of the Flies* is a testament to this principal, is corroborated by Reilly. He remarks: “What the boys fail to see is that children are but men of smaller growth, that the child is the father to the man, for they would not be on the island at all but for the fact that adults have quarrelled in an atomic war which may set the whole world ablaze.” Therefore we are perilously short of mentors, fathers, or otherwise, let alone sages, mystics and saints, and this is one of the most important things that Golding sees as symptomatic of the present culture. In this way, his laments are akin to those of Wilber who refers to “those few gifted souls.” And while they are in short supply, “the world’s great mystics and sages represent some of the very highest, if not the highest of all stages of human development – as far beyond normal and average humanity as humanity is beyond apes.”

PERCIVAL WEMYS MADISON

A thin wail out of the darkness chilled them and set them grabbing for each other. Then the wail rose, remote and unearthly, and turned to an inarticulate gibbering. Percival Wemys Madison, of the Vicarage, Harcourt St Anthony, lying in the long grass, was living through circumstances in which the incantation of his address was powerless to help him.

As one observer put it, and I fully agree: “Whatever the case, Percival Wemys Madison epitomizes the novel and underlines its theme, in his regression to the point of reduced

---

136 Reilly, p.158-159.
137 Wilber. *The Atman Project*, p.3.
138 Golding. *Lord of the Flies*, p.117. Remember too an earlier citation from Wilber: “every child goes through an extended period of nightmares – awakened from sleep screaming bloody murder, alive to the inherent terror of being a separate self, shaken by that primal mood of terror which always lurks beneath the surface of the separate self.”
Reduced existence, of course is simply another way of terming a cataclysmic retrogression of consciousness. Golding pursues the theme of regress to a point far beyond the bestialities of Jack and his tribe, embodying the entire destruction of the self in one small boy. When he arrives on the island Percival Wemys Madison, one of the six-year-old ‘littluns,’ finds solace in the incantation of his name and address: The Vicarage, Harcourt St Anthony. But he is devastatingly traumatised to a point of ‘reduced existence’ as we saw Oldsey and Weintraub observe. He battles with primal forces of ‘death terror’ during nightmares and cannot be comforted so that eventually he has “completely forgotten the talismanic address chanted throughout to console him in his ordeal.” And so we witness Percival regress to a time when “the verbal mind [can no longer] differentiate itself out of the previous bodyself.” The child has moved from a personal and verbal state of consciousness to a prepersonal and preverbal state.

This is precisely an interpretation that supports Wilber’s insistence that we recognize the pre/trans fallacy, for this is not the same state as silent contemplation of the mystic disciplines and monastic orders – which are transverbal. As Wilber points out there is an enormous breadth between the personal experience of the two: “The one is pre-, the other trans-, and the difference between them is simply the entire life cycle of consciousness.” The latter is a peaceful state and the former a terrifying and endless ordeal of fear. Preverbal consciousness is also preconceptual with “magical-distorted cognitions” that “point backwards to instincts” as distinct from transverbal states that

---

139 Oldsey and Weintraub, p.27-28.
140 Reilly, Patrick, p.138-61.
141 Wilber. *Up From Eden*, p.99
point “upwards to higher modes of being and awareness which transcend the gross-body orientation.”¹⁴³

Remember that with Jack, in Wilber’s membership realm, a comparatively stable, albeit fused, ego has developed, whereas with Percy Madison, the early ego has not established any kind of foundation and therefore is not yet the centre of the self.

Therefore, rather than being able to maintain a sense of egoic-self, let alone be open to growth and development he is flooded with “symbolic elaborations” bound to “achieve satisfaction through … bodily areas.”¹⁴⁴ This is the prepersonal realm with no guidance from a higher (adult) consciousness and Golding uses his character as “a sign at once of how perilously fragile the civilised life is and of how thoroughly abandoned it can become.”¹⁴⁵ By the time the naval officer arrives on the island and asks Percival his name, the boy has completely forgotten and can only stammer out “I’m, I’m - .”¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Golding does give us a faint glimmer of hope in the fable and that is in the rather subtle and slow spiritual progression of Ralph.

A NEW HOPE

To suggest, as some critics have, that Ralph is representative of God on the island is far too simple an interpretation, and this point has been picked up by Oldsey and Weintraub.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, there is much discussion in criticism of Lord of the Flies

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.59-63.
¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.60.
¹⁴⁵ Reilly, p.145-146.
¹⁴⁷ “those who have seen a religious allegory in the novel find it more in the fall of man from paradise, as the island Eden turns into a fiery hell, and the Satanic Jack into the fallen archangel. But Ralph makes only a temeous Adam; the sow is a sorry Eve; and Piggy, the sightless sage, has no comfortable place in Christian myth.”¹⁴⁷ Oldsey and Weintraub. Ibid., p.29.
that focuses on the Christian allegories present in the play. This may have been due to Golding referring to Simon as a ‘Christ-figure’ and from this Rosenfield declares that Ralph and Jack are obviously intended to recall God and the Devil. But I believe this sort of interpretation is an example of Wilber’s pre/trans elevationism. For the tale is not meant to be an analogue of Biblical allegories but rather an example of how human beings behave when there is little or no guidance. We may assume though that the boys have all been inculcated with the middle class values of the Christian English society from where they have come. Even Piggy, despite what some critics say about his grammar and working class appearances, is not as alien to the other boys as Simon is. Ralph is supposed to represent the everyman, or Wilber’s ‘average mode of consciousness’ and while he fails to recognise the importance of Simon on the island, weeping as he does for Piggy’s death, there is a subtle change taking place within his own consciousness.

We see that he does indeed begin to learn how to rationalise and operate on his thinking and gradually understand more and more of human nature. He admits his involvement in Simon’s murder more readily than Piggy and as a result “the whole story moves towards Simon’s view of reality. The growth of savagery forces Ralph to make strange speculations about the meaning of human identity,” according to C. B. Cox. When he is being hunted through the jungle, Ralph stumbles upon Simon’s hovel and hides. During the chase he is constantly commanding himself to think, but is unable to respond in any rational way. Just as he is discovered Ralph repeats Simon’s

149 Cox, C. B., p.112-117.
words to him, “you’ll get back” and breaks away from the thicket. “He forgot his wounds, his hunger and thirst, and became fear; hopeless fear on flying feet.”

Krishnamurti explains that observation of fear brings about transcendence of it: “The observer is fear and when that is realised there is no longer any dissipation of energy in the effort to get rid of fear, and the time-space interval between the observer and the observed disappears. When you see that you are a part of fear, not separate from it – that you are fear – then you cannot do anything about it; then fear comes totally to an end.”

In Ralph’s case the observer emerges at the point where the narrative reads: “someone’s legs were getting tired … and the desperate ululation was almost overhead.” Apart from the obvious similarities about the nature of fear, is the emergence of Ralph’s observer. This may in part be attributed to a speeded up process of development due to the conditions. In other words, he is growing up very quickly because of the extreme hardships. Paulette Michel Michot claims that “the book is not altogether pessimistic: though Ralph is on the point of defeat, he has learned much in the process of growing to maturity.”

Henri Talon refers to “Ralph’s spiritual development” and Oldsey and Weintraub claim that at the end he “has emerged from his age of innocence; he sheds tears of experience, after having proven himself a “man” of humanistic faith and action.”

In fact, Ralph has come a long way in maturity since his arrival on the island. So much so, that for Virginia Tiger his “piteous weeping at the end transcends the smug cynicism of the rescuer for Ralph knows the real nature of the

---

151 Krishnamurti, p.48.
153 Michel Michot, p.510-520.
154 Talon, Henri, p.296-309.
155 Oldsey and Wientraub, p.22.
‘pack of British boys.’ The implication from Golding is certainly that he has advanced to a point that the Naval officer cannot understand.

The relevance of this is clear in this observation by Oldsey and Wientraub when they argue that what “Ralph dimly fathoms, the naval-officer “rescuer” cannot possible understand – that the world … is not yet ready to receive its saints, neither its Simons nor even its Piggys and Ralphs.” This is precisely the argument that Wilber constantly puts forward in *Up From Eden*: “As long as men and women are slaves to their boundaries, they will be caught in battles … And the aim of the mystics is to deliver men and women from their battles by delivering them from their boundaries.”

On this note, Oldsey and Weintraub explain the transpersonal importance of Simon in the novel: “Whether he means it or not Golding provides a hopeful note, for even at mankind’s present stage of development Piggy and Ralph, the latter with shame, relapse only slightly toward the barbarism of their contemporaries (and that of the officer, who is engaged in a no less barbaric war “outside”); while Simon withstands the powerful regressive pressures completely.” Again this supports the theories of Wilber. While Ralph certainly does grow spiritually during the novel it is clear that he does not achieve the same level of transcendent consciousness as Simon. Arnold Johnston notes that “Ralph’s tragic experience has not finally brought him to the sort of self-knowledge that can save him as a man.”

---

157 Oldsey and Wientraub, p.31.
159 Oldsey and Wientraub, p.31.
160 Johnston, Arnold, p.132.
In order to find out what kind of self-knowledge Ralph would need to save him as an adult, we will need to change tack and examine this potential for transpersonal growth in our next chapter.
The beast of the jungle did the rest. I haven’t long to go … the only justice will be had by the beasts. – Colonel Kurtz, from the original script of *Apocalypse Now*.¹

The above quote is taken from John Milius’ original 1969 script for Francis Ford Coppola’s famous filmic extravaganza, *Apocalypse Now,*² which is widely recognised as a strong interpretation of the 1899 novella, *Heart of Darkness,* by Joseph Conrad. Pertinently for us, William Hagen mused that this part of the script sounded “like Conrad merged with *Lord of the Flies.*”³ In light of this observation, I hope that the reader will permit a small indulgence and imagine an alternative ending to Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* – one that befits Hagen’s notion of a merger. This is in order to try to achieve some form of continuity so as to facilitate discussion at the macro level. Let us assume that Ralph, has been rescued by the naval officer, but that Jack’s tribe has remained on the island. After many years, now an adult, Ralph decides to return to the island by boat in order to find Jack again.

² The film is set in the jungle of Vietnam during the American incursion there and stars Marlon Brando as Kurtz and Martin Sheen as Captain Willard (Marlow).
This is a consideration that I hope brings us near enough to the thematic of *Heart of Darkness* in order that we may try to continue our analysis of the potential for regressive consciousness – this time in the world of adults. In *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator, Marlow, is sent up the river Congo to establish contact with a very successful ivory trader, Kurtz. When he arrives he finds a monomaniacal man engaging in human sacrifices and manages to only just stop short of following a similar path. At the risk of oversimplification then, we now have the rough analogues: Ralph = Marlow; Jack = Kurtz; and the island = the Congo.

**FOLLOW THE DEMON**

The similarities between Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* have been discussed by many critics and readers over the years. However, Golding claimed never to have read Conrad’s story of imperialism running riot in the Belgian Congo at the turn of the last century, notwithstanding Ralph’s finally weeping for “the darkness of man’s heart.”⁴ Since this thesis is concerned with ideas that shape the collective, as well as individual consciousness, it would not be at all surprising to a transpersonal psychologist that Conrad and Golding hit upon their archetypical theme quite independently, reaching similar conclusions. Whether that is the case is one of the tasks of this chapter to explore.

The first point to recognise then, is that whereas Ralph wept for the darkness in man’s heart, Marlow actively sought to navigate his way to a place where this darkness was to be found: “It was the farthest point of my navigation and the culminating point

of my experience.”5 In support of my contrivance, Henri Talon has speculated on Ralph’s development saying of him “in the interval the little boy has matured and he knows ‘the darkness of man’s heart’ … has grown a soul. But here irony is not merely linked to the structure of the story; it has an existential significance.”6 If this is the case, then what Ralph has discovered on the island has implications for humanity at large, and indeed this was Golding’s whole point. F. R. Leavis is no less insistent that this is the major quality in Conrad, “a creative genius peculiarly alive … sensitive to the stresses of the changing spiritual climate as they begin to be registered by the most conscious.” Another quote of transpersonal literary interest is Leavis’ recognition of Conrad’s “intense consciousness of the dependence, not only of the distinctive humanities at all levels, but of sanity itself and our sense of a normal outer world, on an analogous creative collaboration.”7

Where Ralph and Marlow differ mostly is demonstrated in an observation by Virginia Tiger, who points out that Ralph was never quite able to look the beast in the eye in the way Simon was. She reminds us that when he runs into the sow’s head piked on a stick: “Ralph is confronted with just such a primal confrontation, face to face, eye to eye … unlike Simon, he turns away from acknowledging his own nature and makes a monster there.”8 Obversely, this ability to face his fears is what many critics feel is the core element of Conrad’s narrator. “He must follow his demon to the nether regions, to the heart of darkness … It is not too dark for Marlow, though, nor for others with totems

---

powerful enough to withstand its evil energies.” Apropos of which Marlow’s first sight of the Kurtz compound reveals human heads impaled on stakes reminiscent of the sow’s head in *Lord of the Flies*, one of the last things Ralph sees on the island. Curiously, on seeing this, Marlow reports that he is “not so shocked as you might think.” He explains calmly “after all, that was only a savage sight while I seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief.” It is almost as if Marlow has been confronted with this sight before. This echoes of a kinship with Ralph, because even he and Piggy, “under the threat of the sky, found themselves eager to take place in this demented but partly secure society.” But Marlow is older and has had the benefit of a relatively normal childhood, unlike Ralph. What seems to me relevant is that Marlow is confronted with virtually the same kind of darkness as Ralph is, and that can be seen as temptation to regress.

These affiliations I hope will afford me some leeway in my proposal to examine *Heart of Darkness* with the suggested device of Ralph returning as Marlow to face what he ran from. After all Marlow does inform his audience on the *Nellie* that:

No fear can stand up to hunger … and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze. Don’t you know the devilry of lingering starvation, its exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its sombre and brooding ferocity? Well I do. It takes a man all his inborn strength to fight hunger properly. It’s really easier to face bereavement, dishonour, and the perdition of one’s soul – than this kind of prolonged hunger.

---

10 Conrad, p.57-58.
12 He recalls gazing in shop windows and exploring maps with fond memories. Conrad, p.11-12.
13 Conrad, p.43.
These sentiments certainly could have come straight from Ralph, even immediately after his experiences on the island, making he and Marlow comrades at arms and having a similar understanding of the darkness. Perhaps of equal fascination is the observation by Michael Orange that in *Heart of Darkness* “the narrative is in part a fulfilment of childhood fantasy” and “that sense of childhood impulses accompanies the journey up and down the river.”14 These comments effectively enable Ralph to be present, albeit as a back-projection in the consciousness of Marlow. Finally, in defence of my artificial scheme, I ask the reader to consider this important point; that the lines of sight we are given in both *Lord of the Flies* and *Heart of Darkness* are largely, though not entirely, through the eyes of Ralph and Marlow respectively. This is particularly apparent in these remarks about Ralph: “after focusing on Ralph to present the action through the boy’s consciousness, the author focuses on infinity and universalizes his theme.” The critic goes on to say that, “Ralph, who has become the center of consciousness … learns to decipher, now that he is its victim, the darkness of the human heart.”15 And here, the transpersonal reading would assume that ‘decipher’ is the equivalent of transcendence.

Similarly, yet rather more dramatically, Garrett Stewart claims “The reader, through character – as Marlow, through rumored dooms, skeletons, finally dying men – comes within the safe proximity of his or her end, a death by imaginative proxy.”16 I would ask the reader to consider the idea of literature acting as death by imaginative proxy as yet another provocative statement for the concept of a transpersonal literature. But we leave that topic for a later discussion in chapter six.

---

16 Stewart, Garrett. ‘Lying as Dying in Heart of Darkness,’ in *Heart of Darkness*, p.360.
In the meantime, the importance of the way in which Marlow’s consciousness, as gradually exposed by Conrad, is summed up here, when Robert Haugh tells us the “development is conducted cumulatively by insensitive degrees.” That is “by carefully correlated new items, new intimations” and that “all this process is controlled through the consciousness of Marlow.”

The aim of this chapter then is to accept the significant similarities of the theme in each of the stories, as well as the important points of divergences, and consider them in light of transpersonal development. The importance of *Heart of Darkness* for the study of this thesis may be summarised by Frederick R. Karl’s comment that it is “the greatest short novel in English, one of the greatest in any language, and now a twentieth century cultural fact.”

We will be particularly interested to examine the question of the ‘darkness.’ By the end of Conrad’s tale Marlow, like Ralph, has faced the “darkness in man’s heart,” he has “wrestled with death” and yet, unlike Ralph, Marlow found it an “unexciting contest.” A powerful transformation has taken place since his explorations into that territory, as he tells us he understands better the stare that is “piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness.” Since better understanding can only be attributed to an increased awareness, in this way Marlow becomes at once a fascinating study for transpersonal psychology.

The penetrating stare, of course, belongs to Mr Kurtz, one of the most elusive yet powerful figures in literature, a man who has supposedly plumbed the depths of bestiality with “unspeakable rites” and concluded his summation of life with the famous

---

17 Haugh, p.241.
19 Conrad, p.69.
breathy exultation: “The horror! The horror!” Therefore it will also be the task of this chapter to speculate on what that horror might be and discuss Kurtz’s regress and Marlow’s character development with the aid of transpersonal psychology. In this way we will take up Stephen A. Reid’s suggestion that “the critical function need not stop where Conrad does … we must try to understand what those rites were. And, a proper understanding of them will throw significant light on Kurtz’s life and on Marlow’s reactions.”

Haugh agrees saying “The enigma in ‘Heart of Darkness’ is here; if we are to understand the story we must deal adequately with that “darkness” and its meaning.”

A ‘proper understanding’ for us will also unfold the inevitable presence of transpersonal development taking place in both Kurtz and Marlow and it is this which we hope will ‘throw significant light’ on the fundamental differences in these characters, as well as the meaning of Kurtz’s ‘unspeakable rites.’ Whereas Kurtz made “that last stride, he had stepped over the edge” into the abyss of darkness, Marlow tells us he had “been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot.” He goes on to speculate to the listeners of his tale, that this may have been the only thing that separated him from Kurtz: “And perhaps in this whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in we which step over the threshold of the invisible.”

As E. N. Dorall specifies: “for many critics, Heart of Darkness is about Marlow the saved, not Kurtz the damned; it is a story of how to survive the approaching horror.”

---

21 Haugh, p. 241.
22 Conrad, p.69.
23 Dorall, E. N. ‘Conrad and Coppola: Different Centres of Darkness’ in Heart of Darkness, p.309.
The focus of our explorations will then be the moral and psychological differences between Kurtz the damned and Marlow the saved. Our approach will differ from earlier studies mainly in that the primary lens through which we examine Conrad’s tale will once again be from Wilber’s transpersonal theory.

**THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE CULTURE**

I fully support Orange’s belief that “Conrad has taken for his topic the kind of epic quest for life’s significance,” and that “the means of telling the story fits perfectly a novel whose theme is, precisely, meaning itself.”24 That is, I feel that more than anything else Conrad is concerned with individual moral development and choices, as weighed against the national and cultural consciousness in operation at the time of the individual’s life. In other words, “for Conrad the world may be falling to pieces but the individual hero can remain intact, a moral force personified.”25 For this reason I believe he wanted to contrast the characters of Kurtz and Marlow and despite the arguments that *Heart of Darkness* contains racist tendencies,26 which it undoubtedly does, Conrad’s attempt was to expose the hypocrisy and the myth of ‘white superiority.’ Indeed that “white ‘civilisation’ is itself a thing of darkness” and that “no particular race has evolved away from violence and terror.”27 In reading this statement we cannot help but be reminded of the many critics who commented that *Lord of the Flies* symbolised the seemingly ‘prepubescent’ stage of the society from where the boys had come. And

---

24 Orange, p.59.
25 Dorall, p.308.
27 Orange, p.58.
may I once again remind the reader that this is precisely what Wilber holds of our present day society. So just as with Golding, we see the author of *Heart of Darkness* claiming that the only salvation is for the individual to transcend the culture. Marlow therefore, first and foremost represents a transcultural identity.

Not only that, but it appears that Conrad’s view was in essence the same as Wilber’s in that ontogeny precedes phylogeny. This is supported by Michael Levenson when he argues that “fully to appreciate the tale as a psychological fiction is to appreciate the way it must excavate a place for the mind … What is more it is an alternative to society.” Levenson is also keen to speculate that “Heart of Darkness invents for itself a genre of psychological narrative.” In other words, it has an original psychological conception within it and in this way makes it an ideal candidate for comparing individual and cultural consciousness for “it discovers a standpoint from which to contest grotesque political abuse.” And Levenson clarifies the importance of the mindset of the individual by saying that “politics and the psyche are not two levels; they are two antagonists; Heart of Darkness challenges the structure of institutions with the structure of the mind.”

We might explicate this comment in transpersonal terms by suggesting that the ‘structure of institutions’ is equal to the structure of the cultural consciousness at the time of colonialism and that the challenge by the structure of the individual mind, is equivalent to the moral self-stage of Marlow. We can therefore claim that this quote from Levenson observes the distinction between structures of consciousness and self-stages as outlined in chapter one. From this position Levenson’s essay provides us with much that concurs with the notions of transpersonal development taking place in both

---

Kurtz and Marlow and for this reason will provide us with valuable material for the current examination.

So now we have established that for whatever reason, many critics see *Heart of Darkness* as developing away from the social and political framework of the story and focussing on the plight of the individual. But what individuals must face, if they are to survive is, as Golding also observed, the ability to face the ‘beast’ in the darkness and subsequently the darkness in their own hearts. Only then can humankind hope for relief from the ‘human condition.’ And that is what happened when the focus of Conrad’s tale shifted because he “found himself far exceeding the boundaries of initial design … Indeed Conrad himself came to acknowledge a transformation in his story.”29 This is supported in a number of letters from Conrad to the publisher William Blackwood. At first Conrad says “the narrative is not gloomy,” which is not at all how he would have described it when it was finished. Then after a difficult period of self-defeatism he writes, “I wonder what you will think of the end of the story. I’ve been writing up to it and it loomed rather effective till I came to it actually.”30

For Levenson and others, the exploration into this heart of darkness became the real journey for both Conrad, and subsequently Marlow, at a particular point of revelation. “The crucial transformation occurs when Conrad wrenches Kurtz free from the prevailing *folly* and recognizes in him an independent problem of monstrous proportions”31[emphasis added]. With this quotation in mind let us look at some comments made by the psychotherapist, Sheldon B. Kopp who, examining the nature of this ‘independent problem,’ states:

---

29 Levenson, p.395.
30 Conrad, p.199-212.
31 Levenson, p.394.
It seems to me that the greater problem belongs to those who turn away, who will not look unblinkingly into the darkness of their own hearts. Inhuman catastrophes such as the Holocaust, the Nazi extermination of the Jews, come about not because of one man-beast, such as the unbelievable monstrosity of Adolph Hitler. Such horrors are possible not because of the evil of one man, but because of the folly of the many. Because so many men will not face the darkness of their own hearts, a few can wreak havoc on the rest of us [author’s emphasis].

This, for many literary critics, is the difference between Kurtz and Marlow and the key to a clearer understanding of *Heart of Darkness* and we should note that both Levenson and Kopp subscribe to a notion of transcendence of prevailing folly. As we observed, Kurtz has ‘looked unblinkingly’ into the darkness whereas Marlow has pulled back from the edge and as Mudrick suggests, he “dare go no further in discovering within himself the kinds of bestiality he vaguely understands to have been in Kurtz.”

Once again we can see that literary analyst and psychologist are on similar ground when Kopp informs us “if facing the individual evil in each of us can prevent further social horrors, that would be reward enough. But there is something of a purely personal importance to be gained by anyone who will not turn away from the darkness of his own heart.” Commenting on this point of divergence in the characters of Kurtz and Marlow, Maes-Jelinek’s findings also concur with Kopp’s views when he suggests that Marlow does not “himself achieve complete self-knowledge.”

I will demonstrate later that I disagree with this position. However, what makes these similarities between the two literary commentators and the psychotherapist all the more convincing, is that Kopp’s machinations of the problem of refusing to face our

---

32 Mudrick, p.54
33 Kopp, Sheldon B. *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* Toronto: Bantam, 1972, p.147.
hearts of darkness gather their inspiration directly from the very book we are commenting upon.

Kopp concludes his observations thus: “In Conrad’s tale, Marlow turns back short of realizing full awareness of his secret self. At the journey’s end, when it is too late to complete his personal pilgrimage, Marlow compares his own flinching failure of nerve with Kurtz’s willingness to go all the way.”

Once again we can see a case where psychology and literature share much common ground. Nevertheless, it appears that Sheldon Kopp sees Kurtz as having achieved more self-knowledge than Marlow, whereas it is my contention that the opposite holds true. Surely Marlow could not have taken the path Kurtz had and transcended to a morally higher consciousness because it would have involved his regression to involvement in ‘unspeakable rites.’

In this way I think Kopp is mistaken, for Marlow faces the darkness but shows awareness of the problem by exercising conscious restraint, while Kurtz literally loses control of this faculty. The important point is that self-actualization does not mean actualizing one’s capacity for evil, but in actualizing one’s ability to show restraint in the face of any regressive temptation. Wilber confirms this by saying: “The line between repression and surplus repression is, of course, an extremely fine one … the repression of one’s Buddha nature creates evil, and that evil must be repressed to create ‘social good.’”

---

35 Kopp., Ibid.
THE QUEST FOR IVORY AND IMMORTALITY

We have introduced the idea that the main theme of Conrad’s narrative is a journey of Marlow’s self-development set in contrast to that of Kurtz’s moral degeneration. Let us now outline the themes that are replete with transpersonal notions of development and transcendence, or their potential for retrogression.

To sum up the existing threads, Kurtz represents the individual whose entire consciousness is subsumed by the cultural consciousness, undoubtedly an individualist and free-thinker, he is the pinnacle achiever in the European quest for ivory. In many ways he is the Imperialist par excellence and in this regard he individually spearheads the culture that effectively follows him up the Congo. Even though he himself has turned his back on the trading company.

Indeed Levenson claims that if we look at Kurtz in the light of Max Weber’s social organization theories he becomes “the reductio of imperialism.” And we can see straight away the characteristics of Wilber’s pre/trans fallacy. In this case it is where the higher [however flawed] is reduced to the lower. For Levenson goes on to affirm that Kurtz “stands at the point where rational acquisition becomes irrational hoarding, where economic routine becomes primitive ritual, where a commodity becomes a fetish, and where indirect violence becomes overt barbarism.”37 In terms of Wilber’s model in *Up From Eden* the overwhelming success of Kurtz’s ivory hoardings represent “perfect symbols of death-denial, bartered tickets to immortality … symbolic forms of surplus-life. They express and represent expanded consciousness on the one hand, and ritual death denial and heroic cosmocentricity on the other.”38 And let us note that it is “in

---

37 Levenson, p.399.
38 Wilber, p.109.
this respect Conrad presents Kurtz as the suppressed truth of European immorality, a point well emphasised in the eagerness of the Company to exploit his sordid achievement.”\textsuperscript{39} Effectively Kurtz has achieved the pinnacle of the cultural consciousness and having individualised it leads the way upstream. This is what leads Dorall to speculate that Kurtz ends up “gradually engulfing the atrocities of the other agents in his own immense horror.”\textsuperscript{40}

So we have a classic literal example of ontogeny preceding phylogeny and the dynamic interchange of the process continues, as Wilber asserts: “the murderous impulses of the tyrant-king were not simply imposed on the world at large, for the world at large embraced them eagerly.”\textsuperscript{41} The world at large in this case is the European colonialism epitomised by the Company, plundering the African jungle thereby increasing the worth of the Belgian culture, economically and consciously. What Wilber tells us is at stake, “is the community’s immortality account, and the more you can rob others of immortality by killing them, the greater grows your own immortality account”[author’s emphasis].\textsuperscript{42} Here we can see an accurate appraisal of the way in which Marlow, and probably Conrad, judged the enlightenment project (Atman project) of the colonisers. Marlow makes a veiled comparison with the Romans who “grabbed at what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Levenson, p.399
\textsuperscript{40} Dorall, p.303
\textsuperscript{41} Wilber, p.297.
\textsuperscript{42} Wilber, p.298.
\textsuperscript{43} Conrad, p.10.
Interestingly, although Levenson denies he is providing a Weberian reading of *Heart of Darkness*, he seems to do so when he goes on to tell us that Conrad provides “Weberian rather than Freudian insight.” And that understanding Weber may “clarify Conrad’s arrangement of values.” He also claims that when studying *Heart of Darkness* “the analogy with Weber is extensive and heuristic.” With these latter comments I wholeheartedly agree and am not concerned with entering into a discussion about the difference between a ‘clarification’ and a ‘reading,’ or the linguistic details of ‘insights’ and ‘analogues.’ But I am interested in Levenson’s approach of framing comments about a novel through the analysis of a social theory simply because his method, as well as his findings, are wholly conversant with my own. I maintain that whether providing a clarification or a reading, Weber’s views are of academic interest and concede that I am specifically concerned with a Wilberian reading. Perhaps similarities of approach and the generalities contained in the findings are not particularly surprising when we consider that Wilber is a proponent of Weber.

Levenson’s analysis even hints at a translogical component in the consciousness of Kurtz when he tells us “Kurtz takes the logic of accumulation to its unthinkable extreme, he discloses another logic altogether.” And as a result, “in presenting European abuses at their grotesque limit, he furnishes a principle of opposing them.” That principle is embodied in Marlow and here again we can see that the reliance of paradoxical thinking presents an altogether striking similarity to transpersonal psychological notions. For this drive toward the ‘grotesque limit’ is precisely an Atman project writ large. LaBrasca calls *Heart of Darkness* “a tale whose darkness perpetually

---

44 “Here we may invoke Max Weber – not, of course, in order to provide a Weberian reading of *Heart of Darkness*, if such a thing is conceivable.” Levenson, p.396
45 Levenson, p.400.
illuminates the grim emptiness at the limit of personal and national ambition.” In this way, Kurtz represents a figure of transcendence in the sense that he has evolved and developed rapidly along the assigned ‘logical’ path of the colonists to a point well beyond their own percept and can therefore pierce through the former logicality of their politics.

This paradoxical notion of Conrad’s anti-hero is supported by Robert Haugh, who argues that Kurtz furnishes Marlow with his moral code. He suggests that Kurtz’s “remarkable energies, his stature, his amazing appeal to his fellow humans in his moments of darkest savagery, the very magnificence of his plunge into the pit of the universe, all these showed Marlow a moral universe, dark though it was.” Lillian Feder supports the viewpoint that through Kurtz’s failure “Marlow learns about his own capacity for evil and his capacity to resist it.”

Actually, for us this represents not so much resistance as transcendence. It is because of his morality that Marlow transcends the culture more thoroughly in that he does not prize the prominence of the company and its dominions and neither is he venal in his motives for being in the Congo. However, he is not unlike Kurtz in many ways, as is often pointed out, but Marlow’s quest is not for the currency of ivory so highly prized by the culture. Instead Marlow is seeking self-knowledge, for as Guerard maintains, “he remarks casually but crucially that he did not know himself before setting out, and that he likes work for the chance it provides to ‘find yourself … what no

46 Labrasca, p.290.
47 Haugh, p.242.
other man can ever know.”49 Guerard is correct in calling this remark crucial for in it we can see the degree of separation between Kurtz and Marlow.

By the end of Heart of Darkness, in contrast to Kurtz, Marlow has pulled back and merely peered over the abyss, rather than plunging to the depths and this is perhaps the only, yet significant difference between the two men. Marlow has recognised Kurtz’s path as regression, not spiritual progression – something Kurtz cannot see. So whereas Kurtz is pursuing the aims of the culture to the ‘grotesque limit’ in order to achieve a stature within that society, Marlow seeks to disengage himself from the Company and the ideology of Imperialism, and immerse himself in his work for greater self-knowledge.

THE SPIRITUAL MARINER

By the time he is narrating the story, it is quite clear that Marlow is a changed man and has undergone some kind of psychic metamorphosis. It is true that Marlow confesses a certain lack of self-knowledge before his journey, nevertheless I think it no small thing that Conrad highlights that he has already a lifetime of seafaring experience. In fact, Leavis sees Conrad’s “interest in the tradition of the Merchant Service as a constructive triumph of the human spirit.”50

Robert LaBrasca points out that Marlow is “the most worldly of men, possessed of a better wit, an ounce of humility – not much more – and a vivid, insistent rhetorical style … he speaks with the authority and clarity of someone who has glimpsed the facts”

49 Guerard, Albert. J. ‘The Journey Within’ in Heart of Darkness, p.244.
50 Ibid., p.32.
More than this though, Marlow’s experience most explicitly includes repeated contact with the Orient: “I had then, as you remember, just returned to London after a lot of Indian Ocean, Pacific, China Seas – a regular dose of the East – six years or so.”

This is more than just a cursory reference to his travel itinerary, for by the time Marlow is narrating his story he sits on the deck of the Nellie in the lotus position. In fact, as LaBrasca rightly insists, “Conrad paints him buddhalike, as if instilled with the wisdom of successive lives.”

If this critic’s observations are anything to go by we already have a strong incentive for examining Marlow’s character from the perspective of transpersonal psychology, as it is expressly concerned with an understanding of Buddhism and the “wisdom of successive lives.” Hena Maes-Jelinek suggests that the vision of Marlow meditating at the end of recounting his story “may convey the wisdom he has attained.” We can note here that for Wilber, “Meditation is evolution; it is transformation – there is nothing really special about it.”

Even before his experiences in the Congo, Marlow clearly is “a traveller in the ‘country of the mind,’” and already “has progressed in self-knowledge” and differentiated from the other characters by “his capacity for moral discrimination.” Of even greater relevance is Orange’s comment: “But the image also shows a religious leader from the East instructing the West.”

But by far our most empathetic critic is William Bysshe Stein, whose essay ‘The Lotus Posture and Heart of Darkness’ provides us with some remarkable transpersonal insights. Stein insists that what he calls the ‘buddha tableaux,’ must be seen in relation

---

52 Conrad, p.11
53 LaBrasca, p.289.
55 Maes-Jelinek, p.43-44.
56 Orange, p.10.
to the entire story and that any criticism failing to see their significance will fail to
interpret Marlow correctly and this would also be crucial to a transpersonal literary
analysis.\textsuperscript{57} The tableaux, Stein tells us, are Conrad’s four separate descriptions of
Marlow’s lotus posture: “the positioning of which cannot be ignored, the two at the
beginning, the one near the middle, and the other in the final paragraph of the work.”\textsuperscript{58}

The importance of the lotus posture in meditation is well documented in many texts
but essentially, it is to establish a physically stable state. This is so that conditions are
suited for “profound silence in the deepest recesses of the mind,” according to Philip
Kapleau. The posture is taken up in order that the meditator experiences the “optimum
preconditions for looking into the heart-mind and discovering the true nature of
existence.”\textsuperscript{59} In Zen it is referred to as \textit{zazen} and Wilber calls it the injunctive practice
and methodology of the masters and “a way of breaking conceptual translating in order
to open the way to subtle-level transformation.”\textsuperscript{60} It can be seen then, as the physical
precondition for any contemplation of spiritual experience. This is wholly in accord
with Stein’s own conclusions about Marlow, as he tells us: “The first tableau, for
instance, catches the hero in the physical position prerequisite to Yoga meditation,
contemplation, and absorption.” And he is in no doubt as to the significance of
Conrad’s insistence when he tells us that Marlow is “on the brink of spiritual fulfilment
that comes with self-recollection.”\textsuperscript{61}

It is important to realise from this remark that what Stein is conveying is that
Marlow’s recounting of his journey up the Congo is in itself a spiritual experience, and

\textsuperscript{57} Stein is supported in this view by Stewart C. Wilcox in ‘Conrad’s “Complicated Presentations” of


\textsuperscript{60} Wilber, Ken. \textit{Sex, Ecology and Spirituality}. Boston: Shambhala, 2000, p.537.

\textsuperscript{61} Stein, p.224.
we will see that it is not lost on the first narrator. Although Stein himself refers to this gentleman as “one of the four auditors who cannot possibly understand the significance of a subtle spiritual voyage,”62 Seymour Gross warns that it is a mistake to “lump all four together indiscriminately.” He contends that “Conrad subtly but emphatically differentiates” the first narrator and I entirely agree, when he suggests that by the end of the story, this person has experienced his own profound shift in consciousness. Gross asserts that for this gentleman “the transformation is complete: ‘the benign immensity of unstained light’ has become ‘the heart of an immense darkness.’ Now he, like Marlow, will be set apart from all those who do not know the truth.”63 In other words; those who are not translating the effect of colonialism in its reality.

This is surely of great import when we consider it in light of the arguments of this thesis at large. Gross suggests that the narration of Marlow’s tale has had an enlightening affect on the first narrator, albeit a rather bleak one. It is not beyond the bounds of probability to extrapolate that this is precisely what Conrad was hoping to achieve in the reading audiences of Heart of Darkness. Whether or not it is the case, F. R. Leavis includes Conrad among the major novelists who “not only change the possibilities of art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of that human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.”64 Cedric Watts also sees Heart of Darkness as an important novel of “psychological odyssey, meditated autobiography” and argues that it successfully anticipates “twentieth century preoccupations” provoking exegetic criticism.65 Let us continue this discussion by

62 Stein, p.224.
64 Leavis, p.10.
restating that for us, as for many critics, Marlow’s spiritual development is what really matters in *Heart of Darkness*.

Albert J. Guerard states: “Substantially and in its central emphasis “Heart of Darkness” concerns Marlow (projection to whatever great or small degree of a more irrecoverable Conrad) and his *toward and through certain facets or potentialities of self*”[emphasis added]. Although oddly phrased, his comment is of a twofold interest. Firstly, in that it allows for a projection of Conrad himself. Secondly, and far more strikingly, that “*toward and through certain facets and potentialities of self*” is, for this thesis, simply another way of stating the notions of further personae, in other words trans-personae.

It is clear that if you have certain potentialities of self as yet undiscovered, they therefore must be enfolded within the person as structures in consciousness. This unfolding is precisely what Wilber’s transpersonal models are concerned with as “higher and highest states of being lie enfolded as *undifferentiated potential*”[author’s emphasis] and according to Guerard it is also the central emphasis in *Heart of Darkness*.

Transpersonal literary analysis would claim Guerard as a critic whose viewpoint at least skirts on the curtilage of our own findings. For instance, he points out that “Marlow reiterates often enough that he is recounting a spiritual voyage of self-discovery” and returns to Europe “a changed and more knowing man.” After proposing that the Victorian could more literally believe in “the sudden reversions to the “beast” of naturalistic fiction” than later readers could, Guerard then admits that the “personal

---

66 Guerard, p.244
67 See *Heart of Darkness*, 1988, p.142-192.
69 Once again echoing *Lord of the Flies*. 
narrative is unmistakably authentic” and that “it explores something truer.” This, the critic takes to be a “night journey into the unconscious, and a confrontation of an entity within the self.” These comments and observations wholly support the notion of transpersonal literary criticism and the claims of this thesis at large; that literature itself explores the ‘potentialities of self’ and is therefore inherently charged with the transpersonal.

Wilber’s analysis of the Plotinian notion of potentialities of self is similar to Guerard’s description of Marlow’s night journey. He claims that “we have a lower unconscious that contains mainly images and fantasies” but that “the higher levels of being are for most people merely potentials waiting to be actualized in their own case and manifested in their own being”[author’s emphasis]. Guerard maintains that indeed Heart of Darkness “takes us into a deeper region of the mind” and of importance to this thesis is the comment that “the introspective plunge and powerful dream seem true.” If we accept Guerard’s analysis as being closely associated with many of the ideas contained in transpersonal psychology then it further compounds the argument to mention Maes-Jelinek’s comments about Guerard’s standpoint: “Conrad does not present two separate issues, a public one (colonialism) and a private one (knowledge of the self). The two are indissociable, and Marlow’s story clearly implies that the kind of world men make for themselves (and for others) largely results from the character of individual behaviour.” Once again we are reminded of Golding, as well as the ideas contained in the transpersonal axiom: ontogeny precedes phylogeny.

---

70 This is a position that implicitly acknowledges the idea of an evolution in the consciousness of readers.
71 Guerard, p.245
73 Guerard, p.247 and 245.
74 Maes-Jelinek, p.38.
Michael Levenson points out that while *Heart of Darkness* in fact began as a “distinctly social and political” composition that begins “with an expressed disregard for the fate of individuals,” Conrad altered his conception of the story. The author “willingly follows the movement from social to psychological experience” and as a result of this development *Heart of Darkness* is “a work which has become perhaps the leading example of modern psychological fiction.” Levenon’s claims are convincing when he proposes that Conrad had an ‘awakening,’ which is then transmuted into Marlow’s own realization about Kurtz.

He refers to the passage that runs: “As for me” says a waking Marlow, “I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time,” and suggests that “in light of Conrad’s own struggles with the story, it is tempting to suppose that the “I” has a double reference.” That is, “that the author, like his character, feels that he is seeing Kurtz for the first time, and that in the image of the ‘lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters,’ Conrad experienced a turn in his conception of the tale.” Levenson’s observations are once again reminiscent of the argument being put forward by this thesis, i.e. that literature itself is a testing ground for psychological conceptions such as the idea of transpersonal development, this time in reference to the author. For Levenson goes on to claim that when the idea of Kurtz’s moral degradation awoke in Conrad, it became an epiphany for the author that was embedded in the text either consciously or subconsciously. This, Levenson states, is implicit in Marlow’s own admission of a

---

75 Levenson, Michael, p.392 and at p.394 “At this point it even remains unclear whether Conrad had anticipated the celebrated motif of voluntary reversion to the primitive.”
76 Levenson, p.392.
77 Conrad, p.34.
78 Levenson, p.394.
sudden awakening. 79 Robert Haugh alludes to the complexities of these episodes of awakening by clarifying that “the agent for the epiphanies in ‘Heart of Darkness’ is Marlow,” who is very much more than a “limited viewpoint.” 80 Haugh explains that he is using epiphany in the Joycean sense of a “revelation of divinity,” and in this way brings us nearer to the notion of Wilber’s conception of a spirit arising in consciousness and driving a transpersonal change.

Whether these critics are right or not about these particular points, is not of central concern for us. The fact that they examine a text with such possibilities confirms our position that transpersonal psychology can be used as a tool for literary interpretation. It appears to me that this is precisely what the chosen critics for this chapter are doing without using the particular terminology of Wilber’s discipline. With all of them, I find accord in that the only thing separating Marlow from Kurtz is that the latter regresses, as a result of trying to outstrip the limits set by the culture.

Conrad’s slightly more humble narrator is saved because of a moralised self-sense distinct from the cultural overburden. And the fact is that Marlow is already a moralised man. The nearer he gets to Kurtz, the more danger there is that he will find himself following some of the more brutalising instincts of the human condition. Marlow reluctantly becomes fascinated by Kurtz during his steam up river and gradually distances himself from the other ‘pilgrims.’

He finds himself increasingly more inveigled by the idea of Kurtz as a moralising influence and pictures him as a man of integrity and insight; a vision largely made up of what he has heard from others in piecemeal form. Yet, when suddenly confronted with

79 “a break in the composition occurred … Only when Conrad resumes work on the story does Marlow come to waking consciousness and see Kurtz for the first time.” Haugh, p.394n.
80 Haugh, p.242.
the shrunken heads of dissenters impaled on poles, Marlow is forced to recognise the
degeneracy in Kurtz. As we observed earlier, he is not so shocked at this sight and has
a moment of realization that “they only showed that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the
gratification of his various lusts.”81 Marlow is in for another ‘moral shock’ a bit later
but for now I think he believes he has arrived at the end of his journey and sees quite
clearly, he is in fact, well beyond the capacities of Kurtz. We have an inkling of
Marlow’s transformation when he suggests that he has, without meeting the man,
already summed him up: “there was something wanting in him … whether he knew of
this deficiency himself I can’t say.”82

But what Conrad’s narrator can say is that he, Marlow, knew of the deficiency.
From the moment of seeing the skulls onwards, I would say Marlow shows inordinate
strength of character and begins immediately to transcend the situation. He begins by
shouting at Kurtz’s sycophantic Russian admirer: “I don’t want to know anything of the
ceremonies used when approaching Mr Kurtz.” He explains to the audience on the
Nellie that curiously he felt these details would be more “intolerable than those heads
drying on the stakes under Mr Kurtz’s windows.”83 Marlow is beginning to understand
that he can be tempted by the pure degenerate feelings of his own instinctual
gratifications but that he can also, through conscious effort and discipline, rise above
them and is already trying to limit himself in exposure to them. He withers the ‘man of
patches’ with the question “Well, and you?” in reference to the obvious savagery
surrounding the place, at which point the Russian breaks down and denies responsibility
for anything.

81 Conrad, p.57
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p.58.
Marlow then turns his attention to the Manager. After conceding that Mr Kurtz’s “unsound methods” were really “No method at all” he ridicules the Manager’s dependency on the brickmaker’s “readable report” and then praises Kurtz reverently, pleased “to have at least a choice of nightmares.” In these processes Marlow is showing his complete independency from the pilgrims and is at once “lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan,” and indeed turns toward him mentally for relief. I suggest that all this is really an instance of the completion of transcendence from any allegiance to the former culture and that Marlow is rapidly identifying with Kurtz. This is supported by Haugh when he suggests that Marlow “is a brother to Kurtz, identified with him in the climax of the story, impelled by the powerful attraction of the man – or demon – to something in himself, to search him out in the darkness.”

In this way, Kurtz represents a part of Marlow’s own psyche – a potential self. The moment of truth is realised when Marlow receives a ‘moral shock’ on realizing that Kurtz has left the boat and returned to witness more of those ‘unspeakable rites.’ Now Marlow recognises that he too must face exactly what he proscribed the Russian to speak of, and knows he will be tested more thoroughly than he imagined. Stephen Reid is in agreement when he proposes that “the ‘moral shock’ is the result of an awareness, not yet brought to articulation, that he will be in close proximity to the ‘unspeakable rites.’” In other words, Reid recognises a shift in Marlow’s awareness as a result of seeing the empty cabin. This will be a challenging time and yet one that is not beyond his scope. And it is in this part of the story that Conrad reveals the most transpersonal of components. Levenson puts it like this: “It is when Conrad thought past the former

84 Ibid., p.61-62.
85 Haugh, p.242.
86 Reid, p.52.
possibility (the degradation of a virtuous man – “the poor chap” – which reveals the
depravity of a social form) and when he recognized voluntary atavism as the nightmare
from which it was possible to awake, that Heart of Darkness took its longest step and
disclosed another region of experience.”87 That awakening is Marlow’s region of
experience rather than Kurtz’s. ‘Awakening’ is ‘enlightenment’ – ‘another region of
experience,’ – just another way of describing a transcendence in consciousness. But if
Marlow has the ability to show restraint, what exactly has happened to Kurtz? The
answer is that he has begun the futile and doomed attempt to reach godhood. Wilber
would summarise Kurtz’s position thus: “distortions ultimately driven by the Atman
project, driven by the attempt to make the self appear immortal and cosmocentric
through whatever level – can disrupt and distort any or all of the other levels of
exchanges, in oneself and in others.”88

DIABOLIC DIVINITY

Now whereas in Lord of the Flies, Jack wants to be a king, Kurtz seeks to be a god and
for this reason, Stephen Reid’s analysis is fundamental, for he sees Kurtz desiring
dominion over the world. We can see this distinction support our hierarchical structure
and bridge the transpersonal gap between Lord of the Flies and Heart of Darkness. For
in the transpersonal sense, Kurtz was attempting to ascend to the next level from Jack
into godhood – a complete and utter confirmation of an Atman project.

87 Levenson, p.400.
88 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.299.
Stephen Reid says just this when he asserts that the unspeakable rites “were established in the interest of perpetuating Kurtz’s position as a man-god … to circumvent the inevitability of the man-god’s aging and dying,”89 in other words, an immortality project. This is precisely in accord with the findings of Wilber when he explains that “every stage of evolution is not only moving toward God, it is also fighting God. And that strange mixture – which leads to compromises, compensations, substitutes and defenses – we call the Atman project.”90 And because Wilber assures us that there is only either Atman or its substitutes we can see that Kurtz’s particular divinity is a doomed Atman project. In Cedric Watts’ view, Heart of Darkness reveals that the hubris is “exposed by the eventual form of Kurtz’s divinity … but also by Conrad’s reminder that if the light-bringing task is ‘work for a God’, it is certainly beyond the capacities of the mass of men.”91 And here I take it that Watts is not referring to ‘most men,’ but the collective consciousness of society, for he hints that the task of enlightening the culture rests with the individual. Watts surmises that Conrad’s form of narration can be “used to suggest an alarming gulf in comprehension between those who hear of nightmare and the man who has undergone it.” Furthermore, Conrad has the ability to “make the final outer scene shed a retrospectively transforming light over the preceding narrative.”92 Watts is suggesting that there is a process of transformation taking place in the listeners to Marlow’s tale, in the way we saw Seymour Gross, observe earlier.

So we can see that Watts too, establishes criticism that favours a transpersonal reading of the book and this is especially apparent in the following comment. “Conrad

89 Reid, p.45.
90 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.104.
91 Watts, p.63-64.
92 Ibid.
raises questions about man’s evolution, about the relationship between the civilised and
the savage, about the relationship between the human realm and the natural
environment, and about the continuity between the present age and the remote past.”93
And indeed, this quote could easily have been applied to Wilber’s *Up From Eden.*

So the crucial distinction between Marlow and Kurtz is illuminated by the subtle
differences in the way they perceive and have sought self-discovery. Kurtz is dependent
entirely on the culture that drives him up the Congo and seeks the approval and
affirmation of that society. We can note here that in order to get Kurtz on the boat,
Marlow finally, having considered bludgeoning or throttling him to death, finally
appeals successfully to Kurtz’s ego. He reminds Kurtz: “Your success is assured in
Europe,” and we are once again reminded of the pitiful egoist who wants to be met at
railway stations by kings. Bertrand Russell is adamant that Kurtz is “a rather weak
idealist … driven mad by horror of the tropical forest and loneliness.”94 Kurtz falls into
Thomas Moser’s category of Conrad’s “vulnerable heroes [who] are all egoists …
directed toward self-aggrandizement,” and that for “Conrad the psychologist … egoism
is the motive force of most men’s actions.”95 Wilber explains that “the egoic Atman
project [can] exploit not just its own level but all the lower levels of being in an attempt
at substitute gratification, token transcendence, and symbolic immortality.”96

In contrast, Moser claims that Marlow represents Conrad’s “perceptive hero,” who
is, “complex and introspective, unlike the vulnerable hero, he meets his crisis
successfully.” Moser is clear about what enables this success and that is “the

---

93 Ibid.
and Schuster, 1956, p.87.
p.31.
achievement of self-knowledge.”97 Since one is egoistic and the other in possession of successful self-knowledge, we can conclude that, for Moser, this knowledge involves a certain ability to transcend the ego. While it is clear that Marlow too has an ego, his is more confined to a concept of his “own inborn strength,” whereas Kurtz has a relatively weak self-image that seeks approval from high-ranking members within the culture. This desire to be regarded as important at European societal level is in essence the same as the self-perceived stature that Kurtz has gained in the wilderness. In other words, he seeks the same level of power in Europe as he wielded in the jungle, which of course will be impossible for him to achieve.

Conversely, Marlow cannot be bought so cheaply by an esurient society that is characterised by “a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly.”98 For Marlow, Kurtz does not represent that image of the individual, but something removed from it and it is the fascination of this aspect of Kurtz, which compels him up river. He explains: “I was curious to see whether this man who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort would climb to the top after all and how he would set about his work when there.”99

What he finds, of course, is something quite different from the moral crusader he took him for and is consequently both appalled and drawn towards Kurtz. And that means that he is also drawn toward the heart of darkness. This may be so because for Wilber: “While we celebrate each step in the growth of consciousness, we may rightly lament the accompanying increases in the capacity for destructive and evil activities.”100 So Marlow’s illumination comes at a price: he must face the potential of his own

97 Moser, p.16.
98 Conrad, p.20.
100 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.189.
darkness. In the world of Kurtz the darkness is brutal, lustful, vengeful, and includes ritual and orgiastic human sacrifice. It will be of interest to us to observe the analysis that Wilber has made on these compelling dark forces in human nature.

Human sacrifice is the substitute attempt for transcendence of self, that is “Murder as self-preservation: offering up another person’s life as a magical attempt to perpetuate one’s own through substitute sacrifice.” Kurtz’s immortality project has found just this method of “attempts to make egos into gods, power soaked and blood immune.” The critic Jeremy Thale, is in no doubt that this is what has happened to the chief of the Inner Station. He tells us “the discovery of the self is the discovery of one’s freedom … For Kurtz it means the freedom to become his own diabolical god … the ultimate and complete assertion of himself to the exclusion of all else, the assertion that he is a god.”

This self-aggrandizement is precisely an Atman project which, Wilber assures us, is the history of humankind. So it is not surprising, to see a man like Kurtz leap to the top of the ladder and mete out his egoic failures on the people of the Congo. It follows that, since he has lost all faith in the cultural Atman project of Europe and subsequently failed as an “emissary of pity” with ideologies to “exert a power for good” “with the might of a deity” “in the nature of supernatural beings,” he has simply become a libertine. He must find another Atman project, this time an individual one, as an outlet for his particular egoistic drives. The renunciation of his altruistic motives is emblazoned at the end of his “moving appeal” with the words “Exterminate all the brutes!”

What has happened in the meantime?

101 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.166.
103 Conrad, p.51.
We can only surmise that his rapid rise to a mortal and earth-bound divinity has corrupted him and he “arranges the substitute sacrifice of actually killing somebody else, thus acting on, and appeasing, the terrifying confrontation with death.”\textsuperscript{104} If I can refer briefly back to chapter one and remind the reader of the confusion between authenticity and legitimacy, with Wilber’s suggestion that this can lead to the rationalization of monstrosities, then we can offer this as a transpersonal interpretation of events at the Inner Station. As in the Manson case, Kurtz has failed to correctly translate the world and thus failed to achieve a healthward transformation.

**ILLUMINATION BY PROXY**

As we earlier alluded to, Marlow transcends where Kurtz does not, even though he comes perilously close and even engages in descent into that darkness “it is equally clear that Marlow emerges from that descent ‘a changed and knowing man.’”\textsuperscript{105} Nevertheless, his proximity to Kurtz is fundamental to his enlightenment and his ongoing loyalty to the man acknowledges this. This commentary by Thale supports just such a reading: “Before Kurtz’s discovery of his existence can become Marlow’s illumination it has to be realized by both of them. The revelation proceeds through Kurtz to Marlow, and Marlow’s full illumination, his full realization of what it means to be, must wait upon a realization in Kurtz that brings out and confirms what Marlow has

\textsuperscript{104} Wilber. Ibid., *Up From Eden*, p.160.

already seen in him … Kurtz has accepted his freedom, but he has not evaluated what
being human means.”¹⁰⁶ Or, he has not translated his consciousness effectively.

The difference between the two men is that both have achieved a Maslovian self-
actualization, but whereas Kurtz has stopped his consciousness development in pursuit
of his own gratification,¹⁰⁷ Marlow has seen beyond ‘the horror’ and is continuing his
ascent into the transpersonal realms of consciousness. Stein’s view is similar: “But, of
course, the nature of his enlightenment is different from Kurtz’s, and at this point his
lotus posture defines itself.”¹⁰⁸

Robert Schultz suggests that while Marlow survived his brush with the darkness “he
is a maimed man as he narrates his experience.”¹⁰⁹ Yet I do not find that this is the case
and am completely inclined to agree with Stein that “In affect we have journeyed along
‘the way of the Bodhisattva.’ We have stood on the brink of time [the transtemporal]
with Kurtz and Marlow, and we have seen the latter transcend this pair of opposites.”¹¹⁰

Stein is right to see the nature of Kurtz’s enlightenment as distinct from that of
Marlow’s – if indeed it is enlightenment at all. Certainly we can see that by the end of
the account Marlow’s mental well-being in contrast to Kurtz. It may be helpful to note
these comments by Peter Brooks: “More than a masterful, summary, victorious
articulation, “The horror!” appears as minimal language, language on the verge of
reversion to savagery, on the verge of a fall from language.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Thale, p.178.
¹⁰⁷ The reader is reminded of Colin Wilson’s appraisal of Charles Manson as a “self-actualizer” with
limited moral potential, as discussed in chapter one.
¹⁰⁸ Stein, p.225.
¹⁰⁹ Schultz, Robert. “‘The Secret Agent’ : Conrad’s Perfect Detonator,” in The Midwest Quarterly,
¹¹⁰ Stein, p.226.
250.
For Wilber’s transpersonal psychology that signifies a descent into the preverbal and therefore prepersonal realms of being, however Levenson argues that we can see Kurtz’s final words “as ascent quite as readily as descent, language as it emerges from sensation, from wordless reflex to reflexive word.” This may again be attributed to confusion between the pre and trans states of consciousness. Brooks correctly sees it as representing a reversion to savagery and a fall from language, while Levenson elevates Kurtz’s desperate position to the transpersonal realms. This is almost certainly due to the confusion that arises if we do not recognise the difference between the structures of consciousness and the moral self-stages, for Levenson is also correct when he points out that Kurtz’s “moral sense becomes an immediate expression of individual sensibility, existing not beyond but beneath good and evil.”112 What has happened to Kurtz in terms of transpersonal models is that he has ascended rapidly up the structures of consciousness to a level of self-knowledge, but without the correct translation at each given level, he does not have the corresponding moral self-stages and therefore literally loses his self-sense.

Stein’s observations on Marlow’s transcendence can be further supported by R. H. Blyth’s comments: “Zen transcends morality; we become moral by becoming ego-less … Zen is entirely a-moral in theory though not in practice … there is no sin, no suffering, no morality for the Bodhisattva, and yet he spends his life saving others.”113 Perhaps this idea of the Bodhisattva alone accounts for Marlow’s mysterious lie to Kurtz’s ‘intended,’ a subject much analysed by criticism. Kenneth Bruffee is convinced that Marlow’s lie is “an act which is godlike” suggesting that Marlow has “discovered a

112 Levenson, p.404.
larger standard of truth” where the lie becomes honourable.\textsuperscript{114} This would be somewhat similar to the findings of transpersonal literary analysis that would see Marlow transcending his former principle of detesting liars, as a result of his experiences in the Congo, and acting to alleviate the suffering of others in the way of the Bodhisattva. Stein concludes his essay with the remarks “This interpretation, without the slightest exaggeration, emerges out of scrupulous focus on the structure of the story. A vision of spiritual reality is framed in the Buddha tableau.”\textsuperscript{115} This is thoroughly conversant with my own transpersonal interpretation and in summary, the transpersonal reading of the difference between Kurtz and Marlow maybe highlighted here by Maslow: “The Buddhists distinguish the Pratyekabuddha, who wins enlightenment only for himself, independently of others, from the Bodhisattva who, having attained enlightenment, yet feels that his own salvation is imperfect so long as others are unenlightened.”\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{A FOOTNOTE ON THE HORROR}

To speculate for a moment and lead us into our next exploration, if we could have heard more of Kurtz’s view of ‘the horror’ he perceived, I wonder if it could have been rendered in such a way as this:

\begin{verbatim}
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{115} Stein, p.226.

Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.117

These are words spoken by the ghost of Hamlet’s father to his son upon a visitation and we will examine the transpersonal nature of Shakespeare’s play in the next two chapters.

HAMLET PART I: FROM AMLETH TO ATMAN

Here is a character deeply present to our awareness [whose] tormented self-questioning and dispassionate insight give a presentiment of the modern mind. His personal drama was that he had to be a hero, but still try to avoid the role Destiny assigned him. His lucid intellect remained above the conflict of motives – in other words, his was and is a truly contemporary consciousness.¹

William Golding chose a post-nuclear landscape to examine the disastrous effects of regression in the consciousness of children. Joseph Conrad’s narrator Marlow, faced with a similar internal conflict sought refuge by turning away at the last minute from the edge of darkness. These fictions have provided us with familiar territory both mythically and literally – but factual accounts of what happened to people after such events are readily available to us.

Here is a lone example: Captain Claude ‘Buck’ Eatherly, was assigned to report on the condition of cloud cover over Hiroshima as the pilot of ‘Straight Flush,’ the reconnaissance aircraft that swept over the Japanese city on August 6, 1945. His crew’s report of fine weather conditions, allowed ‘Enola Gay’ to release ‘Little Boy’ that was

to seal the fate of thousands of Japanese civilians and subsequently haunt Eatherly for the rest of his life.

Science fiction writer, Brian Aldiss, suggests that this one man took on the burden of guilt for the entire American nation and for this reason, nominated him as an individual embodiment of the modern consciousness. This viewpoint was picked up by the drama critic, Joseph Dudley in his examination of Heiner Muller’s *Hamletmachine*, a play that reworks Shakespeare’s timeless protagonist as a ‘postmodern’ and ‘quasi-mythic figure in postindustrial society.’ This is also how Aldiss views Eatherly, as “legend … myth … a romantic portrait … a Hollywood figure” and even refers to “the demiurge of atomic warfare,” and a “man whose tragedy is the tragedy of a whole generation of Americans.” Eatherly became a petty hoodlum, drunk and gambler full of guilt and self-loathing, haunted by nightmares and flirted with suicide. Provocatively, Dudley suggests that Eatherly cut a tragic Hamlet figure after his catastrophic involvement in the war and as a result of his conscience he therefore embodied the cultural consciousness of the post nuclear world. And Dudley suggests that given what he argues is a postmodern climate of consciousness, it is not surprising that “the tragic figure of Hamlet himself should resurface, acting as a self-reflexive epistemological threshold.” That is, Hamlet represents a subjective voice of self-knowledge even to this day.

Added to this, Aldiss claims that Eatherly “was striving towards non-personality” but I feel it more than likely to account for a desire to find a transpersonal state. Bertrand

---

3 Ibid.
Russell indicates a greater transpersonal altruism in Eatherley than Aldiss grants when he tells us “the steps that he took to awaken men’s consciences to our present insanity were, perhaps, not always the wisest that he could have taken, but they were actuated by motives which deserve the admiration of all who are capable of feelings of humanity.”

If we consider the facts about Eatherley’s role in WWII alongside the texts already examined, then we can see that there is an underlying theme of apocalypse and the fact that Hamlet should resurface, as Dudley claims, may be due in part to the climate of uncertainty in England when the play was being scripted. Hiroshi Ozawa tells us “Eclipses were observed in England in 1598, once of the sun and twice of the moon, which stirred fresh popular speculation that the end of the world was close at hand.” Because of this, Ozawa claims, “the year 1600, approximately when Hamlet was put on the stage, was also marked as the beginning of a quick series of events completing the prophecies of the Apocalypse and preparing the world for the kingdom or the Last Judgement.” And the fact that the prince of Denmark should resurface time and again is the principal concern of this and the subsequent chapter.

In this section the focus will be on the transcendent nature of the figure of Hamlet: from his mythical/historical beginnings, to the representation of cultural consciousness for the nuclear age. The argument will be that the Hamlet character transcends because Hamlet the play deals as much with personal transcendence as it does with tragedy. And we will argue that this form of individual transcendence in the face of, and in spite of the cultural framework, operates in accordance with the models set down by Ken Wilber in The Atman Project and Up From Eden. This focus on Hamlet as a universal

---

figure of transcendence is also the view of Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, who maintain that Hamlet has come to us from very early mythic civilizations.

Hamlet “is” here Kullervo, there Brutus or Kai Khusrau, but always recognizably the same. Jamsyhd reappears as Yama among the Indo-Aryans, as Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor, in China, and under many other names. There was always the tacit understanding, for those who spoke the archaic language, who were involved in the archaic cosmos, that he is everywhere the same function.7

In fact they say that the trace and remnants of the Hamlet myth reach far back to one of the great deities of the Orient: “Avalokiteshvra, the very great Bodhisattva … this great and worshipped deity of Buddhist countries.”8 Therefore, the authors of Hamlet’s Mill suggest there is strong, if somewhat indirect link between eastern mysticism and Shakespeare’s most enigmatic protagonist. And we will see during the course of this study that the significance of this is not lost on scholars from Japan.

The possibility of eastern myths permeating into earlier western culture is also supported by Elaine Pagels, who reports that the Christian Gnostic Gospels may have been influenced by Buddhist teachings.9 This has very pertinent bearings on the claims of this thesis; i.e. that there are universal correlations to be found between the figure of Hamlet and the tenets of eastern psychologies and philosophies and that these can best be exposed by transpersonal literary interpretation.
Moreover, the route of Hamlet’s migration as proffered by de Santillana and von Dechend is indeed through the gnostic and shamanistic traditions of the Ural-Ataic populations, to the Norse traditions where Hamlet is transfigured into Kullervo in Finland, Amleth in Norway and Amlodhi in Iceland:

This places Hamlet within the circle not only of the Norse tradition, but of that prodigious treasury of archaic myth which is Celtic Ireland, from which many lines have been traced to the Near East. The universality of the Hamlet figure becomes more understandable.10

They go as far as to say that this universality means that he is “deeply present in our awareness” and is a “truly contemporary consciousness.” The idea that the Hamlet myth has a ‘universality’ will become a familiar theme in this argument and is supported by many of the major theorists from scientific, literary and psychological backgrounds. We will see an almost unbroken chain of accord on this principle phenomenon. The notion of a universal Hamlet, ranges from Freud’s reading the supposedly ubiquitous Oedipus Complex in Shakespeare’s play, to Kurt Robert Eissler’s claim that Hamlet is “‘discovered’ in people time and time again.”11 His observations are similar to those mentioned above by the authors of Hamlet’s Mill when he reveals:

One may be reminded of a God or semi-God who descends into the world in order to cleanse it … Elements of the Christ and Hercules myths appear here … Myth, fairy tale, chronicle, legend, ritual – are these perhaps the ingredients that are condensed and synthesized in all those great plays that, once they have been created,

10 De Santillana et al, p.130.
persist in haunting man’s imagination? … *Hamlet* strikes me as being far more than what one ordinarily means when one speaks of “great tragedy.”12

This is supported by the famous Shakespearean critic and *Hamlet* specialist, Harold Bloom whose opinion is that Hamlet is “staggeringly universal,”13 and T. J. B. Spencer’s suggestion of ‘universality’ that still has the capacity “at once to satisfy and disturb.”14

We will examine this phenomenon more closely in the next chapter. In the meantime let us state that the reason Hamlet has maintained his relevance throughout subsequent eras is because of this very universal and transcendent nature unique to this character which regardless of the historical time, engages the reader directly as part of current consciousness. As Wilber rightly states, this was the conclusion of Carl Jung: “that the essential forms and motifs of the world’s great mythologies – the “archaic forms” or “archetypes” – are collectively inherited in the psyche of us all.”15

More important for this chapter than the mythic content of the early figure of Hamlet, is Shakespeare’s contribution in reworking the entire myth and character to create his most familiar prince that has made a decisive contribution to the map of contemporary consciousness.16 In fact, so powerful a persona did he portray that the effect he has had on the modern consciousness is still reverberating strongly today and will continue to do so into the future. It is Shakespeare who made Hamlet ‘modern’ and introduced a new value of consciousness that is still relevant and in many ways surpasses the present

---

12 Eissler, p.166.
cultural awareness. William Kerrigan claims that Hamlet is the “forger of the modern consciousness”\textsuperscript{17}

I will enlarge on this point throughout the next two chapters when it will be suggested that these issues are best explored by a theory of transpersonal literature, for it not only allows for the possibility of a literary character to transcend the phylogenetic ladder, but actually prescribes it. That is, literary characters that transcend the ages must actually have both some bearing, and something to say about the cultural consciousness. Some characters seem more able to do this than others but none more, it appears, than the Danish prince. Bloom champions this claim to the point of hyperbole suggesting that Shakespeare’s most tragic hero only just falls short of being an object of worship. Bloom says, “It goes beyond subjective experience … where are you going to find a figure in literature who is a literary character who transcends the dimensions of a literary character except in \textit{Hamlet}?”\textsuperscript{18} This singularity is one of the many things that will be of interest to us along the way.

We have seen in chapter one that transcendence is merely another word or concept for development or evolutionary change. Therefore, ‘Hamlet’ as a notion, concept, character, myth, play, etc., must have the ability to evolve. This may be easier to deal with in terms of this analysis if, as with Eissler and many other critics, we accept Hamlet as “a potential structure within the human world … as “real” as any person we have ever known or learned about through oral or historical report.”\textsuperscript{19} If we except the idea that Hamlet does indeed appear within the ‘living’ consciousness of the times to be

\textsuperscript{18} “… it seems to me, you have a phenomenon, although it doesn’t involve worship, but it is a phenomenon which has gotten so large that you can hardly hope to get your mind around it. I repeat, nobody worships Hamlet.” Bloom, Harold. \textit{Salt}, p.27-28.
\textsuperscript{19} Eissler, p.52.
as ‘real’ as any human then it is probably for this reason alone that psychological theorising has often focussed its attention on the Danish Prince.

In fact, Eissler argues it is Hamlet’s “full-blooded psychic reality”\(^{20}\) that more than justifies the classic psychoanalytic approach. Avi Erlich too, adopts this position explaining: “All critics of Hamlet eventually try to explain whatever difficulties they may find in it by relating the play to some psychological framework, some model of the secret mind, be it healthy or pathological.”\(^{21}\)

That is precisely the case with this thesis. That is, Shakespeare’s Hamlet will be treated as if he is potentially a representative of a living person in order to apply Wilber’s transpersonal psychological framework. The goal is not just to ‘psychoanalyse’ the prince in the way that Freud, Jones, Eissler, Erlich and others have undertaken, but to show Wilber’s theories can extrapolate the play in ways they did not. For as Eissler suggests: “If, nevertheless, Hamlet has so far continued to defy any completely satisfactory unravelling of the mystery that he embodies, it is not because the playwright has made him reticent or reluctant to communicate with the world. He says everything he knows; it is our knowledge of the psyche that is still quite limited.”\(^{22}\) This position is firmly supported by Robert E. Wood who claims that “difficulties arise when we look for the psychological causes of Hamlet’s reaction to his situation, by which we mean the psychological models for the imitation of behavior or personality that we find in the play.”\(^{23}\)

\(^{20}\) Eissler, p.32.


\(^{22}\) Eissler, p.16.

For this reason transpersonal literary analysis can add some insights into the nature of Hamlet’s character and development as well as explore some of the reasons for the play’s continuing fascination. It is also hoped however, as a result, that there may be some vital interpretations of some of the events that unfold in the play which portray a different reading from those that have previously been set forth.

This chapter of the thesis will examine just that – the nature of Hamlet’s development in relation to certain aspects and events of the play. Now since Wilber rightly insists that all meaning is context-bound, let us first establish the context of the play in relation to the proposed interpretation. What will be of limited importance to this thesis, will be readings that are based on reading strictly within the historical framework of the play. Neither will it be overly concerned with any considerations of the play solely as a dramatic and performative piece. The discussions of these different approaches and interpretative styles are extremely interesting and discursive and all approaches will inevitable supply much weighty material. However, these various interpretations make up such a wealth and body of knowledge that the finer points will not need reiterating here. In summary though, let me confirm that the limits imposed by the historical ‘Elizabethan Hamlet’ approach are too restrictive for the topic of this thesis. While, I concede that elements of those particular approaches are fundamental to Hamlet scholarship, conclusions about other aspects of the play may not come to light.

24 “my individual thoughts only exist against a vast background of cultural practices and languages and meanings and contexts, without which I could form virtually no individual thoughts at all.” Wilber. Eye of Spirit. Boston: Shambhala, 1997, p.103.


26 Helen Gardner makes a significant acknowledgment in her ‘The Historical Approach to Hamlet’ when she confesses: “In trying to set Hamlet back into its own age, I seem to have found in it an image of my own time. The Elizabethan Hamlet assumes the look of the Hamlet of the twentieth century. That the answers we find are conditioned by our own circumstances does not destroy their value. Hamlet is not a problem to which a final solution exists. It is a work of art about which questions can always be asked. Each generation asks its own questions and finds its own answers.” in Hamlet Casebook Series, edited by John Jump. Nashville: Aurora Publishers Incorporated, 1970, p.149.
As Eissler points out, what we may lose “is the way in which Shakespeare actually did transcend the discursive, explicit knowledge of his contemporaries”\textsuperscript{27}[emphasis added].

In other words, it would be in direct opposition to what we are attempting to elucidate. He has a similar view with regard to readings that try to contain the context of the play to only the dramatic representations. Eissler argues that by the time he was writing \textit{Hamlet} Shakespeare had so completely managed to integrate the mechanics of stage effects that he was then able to take their possibilities for granted. Instead his focus of attention would have been “on values that far transcended the narrow framework of stage effects”\textsuperscript{[emphasis added]}. And it is for these reasons that Eissler describes such dramatic and historical approaches as “particular methodological nonsense” as they both suffer from the fallacy of reductionism.\textsuperscript{28} Eissler’s views of transcendent qualities and reductionism alone relate to problems encountered during interpretation and point toward the benefits of a transpersonal literary approach. After all, a recognition of the fallacy of the kind of reductionism pointed out by Eissler, is fundamental to Wilber’s philosophies on the confusion between the pre and the trans world views.

For similar reasons of reductionism I will not be overly concerned with classical Christian theological readings, even though spiritual components will surface. However, for a thesis attempting to see spiritual growth as a process of transcendent selves within a wider context of religious philosophical and, psychological perspectives (especially

\textsuperscript{27} Eissler, p.181.
\textsuperscript{28} Eissler, p.243 see also Robert E. Wood \textit{Some Necessary Questions Concerning the Play - A Stage-Centered Analysis of Shakespeare’s Hamlet} London: Associated University Presses, 1994. “If we evade his subjective view, as analysis often does, what we analyze is no longer the play we experience. Rather than estrange ourselves from this experience, we must stretch to the limits our capacity to link the moment-by-moment quality of theatre to the text. In large measure, this involves in tracing potential energies as well as actions.” p.66.
eastern), the western Christian bias\(^{29}\) sets too rigid a boundary. However, once again, I accept the pertinency of the Protestant Christian ethos overarching much of the Elizabethan era and the numerous Biblical references in Shakespeare’s works, both implicit and explicit. Nevertheless there is every reason to assume that Shakespeare could have differed from the church’s rendition of the spiritual aspects of Christianity and interpreted the Bible quite independently.\(^{30}\)

The focus must be on the development of self as viewed by Wilber’s transpersonal models and for this reason the attention will certainly favour the assumption of the psychoanalytic tradition from which \textit{Hamlet} has received much attention. This is largely due to its insistence on the importance of establishing Hamlet’s psychological character for interpretation rather than a particular adherence to the Oedipus-weighted Freud-Jones reading. For as a later psychoanalytic approach would point out:

Oedipal complexes are universal only in an abstract sense; they are as different as plays are different. And, of course, the ways the mind deals with unconscious pressures, including the Oedipus complex, are as various as people.\(^{31}\)

The author of these lines, Avi Erlich, goes on to assure us though that “Psychoanalysis is a flexible method of interpretation” yet there are unfortunately practitioners who have “applied it to \textit{Hamlet} as a rigid dogma.” This is another critic who warns us of criticism with a reductive technique. In contrast, Erlich claims his book \textit{Hamlet’s Absent Father} is another attempt to synthesise literary and psychological approaches to \textit{Hamlet} and in this way finds agreement with the goals of this thesis. Eissler insists interpretations of


\(^{30}\) “the metaphysician [Knight] measures Hamlet in terms of Christian ethics and may therefore misinterpret as negative those steps by which Hamlet succeeds in transcending the Christian ethic.” Eissler, p. 294.

the play must have a psychological component or else are too limited. It should be noted that this position – the primacy of Hamlet’s psychological character – is not exclusive to psychologists and psychoanalysts but finds support with a great number of the literary critics who deal with *Hamlet*.

Even critics who do not foreground character usually concede some examination as to the psychology of the prince is needed for a fair-minded approach to the play. Let us take these comments on the various ways of interpreting *Hamlet* as an indication of the complexities involved and, rather than dismiss any particular reference or perspective, attempt to incorporate them in our own thesis as a component of the transpersonal prerequisite: development includes and integrates previous structures.

I first want to tackle the idea of Hamlet’s transcendence. Until now we have been discussing the way in which Hamlet has moved from the archaic consciousness; onwards and into the consciousness of an individual in the Elizabethan psyche; (i.e. Shakespeare) and on to represent part of the modern consciousness – and we have used the word ‘transcend’ to explain this. What I now want to suggest is that the reason Hamlet transcends in this way is simply because the central theme of the play is concerned with the very concept of transcendence. It is this, I believe, that forms the entire nature and strength of the play; Hamlet’s desire to transcend within the play was also the central concern of Shakespeare himself. That is, the author’s desire was to project a concept of individual and spiritual transcendence over the cultural environment, and that this in turn allows for the play’s universality. Incidentally, the focus on transcendence is, I believe, also true of the most interesting, exciting and imaginative interpretations.
Michael Long supports this view by painting Elsinorean tradition, law, custom and torpor as a “cocoon” and “a society which commits the continuous crime of the enclosure and containment of psychic life,” while he sees Hamlet as a man of “self-knowledge,” “a mind in pain of self-formation” of “psychic strength.” For Long, Hamlet is a man desperately trying to release himself from the “Elsinorean nutshell” and “its encapsulating narrowness” and “ossified human group.”32 His deliberations, I believe, are an example of the most pertinent interpretations for this thesis. That is readings which are not concerned as much with the plot of the tragedy but are more often focused on the nature of Hamlet’s development throughout the play – his manifestly changing self; in other words – transpersonal aspects of the play. Our task then is to trace within the play the possibility of Hamlet’s consciousness transcending along the ontogenetic path as outlined in Wilber’s *The Atman Project*.

According to Wilber’s stipulation, in order for Hamlet’s consciousness to develop at any given point he must first experience an emergence of a higher-order of consciousness which he identifies with. He must then differentiate from earlier stages of the self, begin to dis-identify with, and finally transcend and integrate previous levels of his existence:

> At each major stage of development, there is: the emergence of a higher-order structure; the identification with that higher structure; the differentiation or disidentification with the lower structure; which amounts to a transcendence of the lower structure; such that the higher structure can both operate upon and integrate the lower structures.33

---

Let us now consider the idea of a development in Hamlet taking place through the five acts and various aspects and events of the play. We must look for interpretations that shows signs of agreement with Wilber’s developmental hierarchy and transpersonal structures of consciousness as well as compare this with readings from other analysts and theorists along the way.

THE GHOST AS SPIRIT

As we have observed the one axiom, assumption, faith or belief that Ken Wilber needs in order to proclaim the tenets of his form of transpersonal psychology, is that human beings are evolving, and that evolution is a drive toward ‘Spirit.’ This is seen as an unfolding of ‘ever-present Spirit,’ ascension towards Atman, Godhead, Buddhahood, god-consciousness etc. In the same way that Wilber needs a representation of spirit as a prerequisite to his model of transpersonal development, so too does Shakespeare need a representation of spirit in order for him to develop the character of Hamlet.

The ghost in *Hamlet* is many things to many people: from a characteristic *deus ex machina*; a transformation from the traditional Senecan jack-in-the-box-spook; a messenger for a Catholic God; a Protestant vision of a demon; the ‘realness’ of genuine religious belief; “Overwhelming in its realism! … a fresh and unexpected revelation of the spirit world.”

---

39 Wilson, J. Dover. Ibid.
It is also described as “quasi-divine figure,” a “figure of godlike power.” Erlich hints at a conflation of God and ghost, while Eissler argues that the ghost is: “an emissary from the nether world,” and “the symbol of the never-silent voice of the past, which lays its hands on every man who fights – although in vain – against invisible and unrecognized forces. Yet the Ghost is, at the same time, the representative of the future, in the sense of its being the never-silent demand upon man, with regard to what it is his duty to do and not to do.” I believe, along with many others, that Shakespeare’s ghost in *Hamlet* is not simply a product of Elizabethan drama. There is little doubt that to so many critics this ghost heralded a new dawn in the theatre as well as the consciousness of the audience and subsequently the readers of the play.

As Erlich rightly states: “We forget that demonology must finally mean something, that the presence of a ghost in any play, but especially in Shakespeare’s plays, demands a psychological explanation that goes beyond citation of theatrical and demonological conventions.” Yet some psychoanalytic views of the ghost as internalized parent or superego which feeds Hamlet’s Oedipal wishes, while of great relevance, is again in danger of a reductionism. In fact, some stage adaptations of the play have made the actor playing Hamlet perform the Ghost’s lines suggesting that it is some inner psychic realm of the prince which would support the position of these psychoanalysts as well as greatly favour our interpretation. But this is specious, for it means the original play is

---

40 Kerrigan, William, p.96.
42 “We tend to forget that in an imagined scene such as this, a God needs as much interpretation as a ghost.” Erlich, p.33
43 Eissler, p.190 and p.257.
45 Erlich, p.39.
cut severely in order to exclude Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo from seeing the apparition.

Nevertheless, I think far too often critics emphasize that these other witnesses see the Ghost, without highlighting the important point that they are not privy to what he tells Hamlet – the Ghost speaks only to him. Whatever the perspective, the most important point is that the ghost becomes “an additional dimension to the state of conflict in which Hamlet is introduced” because whatever the representation of the ghost actually is “both “spirit of health” and “goblin damn’d” remain psychological realities”\(^46\)[emphasis added].

It is this ambiguity and eclecticism, this ‘questionable shape’ as Hamlet refers to it, coupled with the all-pervading force of the Ghost in Hamlet which leads me to suggest that Wilber’s broadly based notion of spirit may appropriately serve as an effective model for a new interpretation of the ‘vision.’ Consequently, transpersonal psychology is poised in a unique position as it is prepared to examine psychological phenomena and religious beliefs in a more unified way. Wilber claims: “We are at an extremely auspicious moment in human evolution, because, for the first time in history, we have access to both Freud and Buddha. The profound discoveries of the modern West – found nowhere else – these discoveries can be integrated with the mystical or contemplative traditions, both East and West, for a more “full spectrum” approach.”\(^47\)

I suggest that because of the significance placed on the Ghost, fore-grounded in so many ways, the main force of the play revolves entirely around the distance between Hamlet and this so called ‘spirit.’

\(^{46}\) Wood, p.57

Therefore the numerous events during the plot unfold in a manner that is secondary to the most manifest of elements – Hamlet’s desire for transcendence toward that ‘psychological reality’ which he desperately needs to prove is a ‘spirit of health’ and which he views as a “high archetypal form of [his] own being.”

As Dover Wilson points out, as soon as Hamlet has encountered the Ghost what becomes apparent in a moment of “self-revelation” is a “tacit confession of personal inadequacy.” Wilson refers here to the couplet “The time is out of joint. O, cursèd spite, That ever I was born to set it right!”(ACT I, v, 188) and I think this does indeed mark a revelation that Hamlet realises the burden he inherits by assuming the mantle of hero. He knows that he must develop a self of greater consciousness in order to “set right” the faults of the cultural consciousness of Denmark.

Let us introduce the first of Wilber’s stages of transcendence – the emergence of the higher-order structure of consciousness – which at each stage is “mediated or assisted by various types of symbolic structures.” This can include, according to Wilber, a “concept, vision-image” or “high archetypal forms,” “deity forms, illuminative or audible.” With this in mind let us approach the battlements of Elsinore and see if we can establish something more about Old Hamlet’s ghost.

When Hamlet first sees the ghost, he comments that it has shaken his disposition with “thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls” and asks: “Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?”(ACT I, iv, 157). From this moment on it is clear that the ghost is ‘real’ to Hamlet’s

---

49 Wilson. p.83
51 “Finally he asks the questions he so often asks himself, and that other characters, bewildered by the world they find themselves in, ask in different ways: why?...wherefore?...” Rosenberg, Marvin. The Masks of Hamlet. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992, p.303.
consciousness and that he engages it in discourse about the nature of its existence. In
other words, his first and subsequent concern is mostly about the nature of the ghost.
For Eissler, this is almost the entire concern of the play and he comments that “the
primary function of the play was, after all, to find out whether or not the ghost was
right.”52 Therefore, Hamlet’s main concern is that the ghost eventually proves to be a
believable entity – an honest ghost, a real ghost, a believable mode of consciousness – a
fact which will later be sanctioned by the play within the play – *The Mousetrap*. I find
overwhelming support for this view from Soji Iwasaki who specifies that: “the
apparition has not only raised a personal problem of revenge but has also presented an
overwhelming question involving the whole created world and its history till doomsday
… after testing Claudius in the *Mousetrap*, he believes in the ghost, and the timeless,
supernatural world becomes real to him.”53

By the end of Act I, the ghost has indeed established itself as a symbol of a higher-
order structure. It is a vision-image that is illuminative – coming from the direction of
the star that had made its course “t’illume that part of heaven”(*ACT I, I, 37*). It is audible,
“You hear this fellow in the cellarage”(*ACT I, IV, 151*). And it is archetypal – as father,
king and warrior – “Armèd at point exactly, cap-a-pe”(*ACT I, II, 200*). Much more than
this though is the assurance that it has entered into Hamlet’s consciousness as a
“psychological reality” and a “vision-image.” Hamlet says the ghost’s “commandment
all alone shall live, Within the book and volume of my brain [*identification*], Unmixed
with baser matter.”[*dissociation and differentiation* with previous lower-order
structures] (*ACT I, V, 102*). This passage tells us the next stage of development has taken

52 Eissler, p.180
53 Iwasaki, Soji. ‘*Hamlet and Melancholy: An Iconographical Approach*’ in *Hamlet and Japan*. Edited by
place when Hamlet differentiates the new ‘spirit’ structure of consciousness from “trivial fond records,” and “all pressures past” (Act I, V, 99-100). We should note here that Hamlet makes deliberately conscious decisions to incorporate the ghost into his new consciousness, using body, “Hold, hold, my heart. And you, my sinews, grow not instant old, but bear me stiffly up;” and mind, “Yea, from the table of my memory I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records” (Act I, V, 93-98). This means he is making a conscious effort to transcend to the next level and he has to sacrifice the comforts of the previous structure of self in order to do so. John Russell claims that self, “the self to which he remains faithful is, rather, the one fashioned and authored by the transcendently ideal figure of power, the King, his father.” However, I think we will see that Hamlet does not remain at all faithful to this concept of his self.

In terms of a transpersonal development things could scarcely be clearer. Hamlet has decided to pitch all his eggs into the basket of the higher-order whether it is “spirit of health or goblin damned” (Act I, IV, 40). Once this emergence, identification and differentiation is complete, all that remains in order for the completion of transcendence to the higher level of consciousness to occur is the integration of lower level structures. At this point the higher-order structure of consciousness can then operate upon lower levels. I suggest that this is precisely the moment when Hamlet takes on his famous ‘antic disposition’ – a manifestly more alert and aware consciousness than those around him so that he may operate upon them. Wilber explains the form of development thus: “the deity-Archetype emerges, is introduced to consciousness, the self then identifies

54 Note the stark contrast to Claudius during the prayer scene: “Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel, Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!”
55 Russell, p.175.
HAMLET PART I: FROM AMLETH TO ATMAN

with and as that Deity, and operates from that identification.” To borrow from Dover Wilson, is this what happens in Hamlet?

HAMLET’S ANTIC DISPOSITION

The idea of adopting a ‘disposition’ itself draws us ever nearer to the concepts contained within transpersonal psychology. The effective difference between a change in disposition and *disassociation* from a former persona and *identification* with a newer one is marginal. I also read something of an intuitive, anticipatory nature in the word ‘antic.’ In Hamlet’s case we know it is consciously pursued as he tells Horatio it will be deliberately ‘put on.’

Again, this contrivance that Hamlet sets up is testimony to the fact that he is consciously distancing himself from his former disposition by identifying with his new found ‘antic disposition’ which has come to light by the very presence of the spirit. It is a subsequent structure of consciousness following the ‘audible illumination’ of the spirit as vision-image and it is therefore able to operate upon his former levels of consciousness which he then questions throughout the play via the soliloquies. That is, right up until Act V when the soliloquies are dropped. We will be examining the role of the soliloquies in Hamlet’s development a little later, as well as in the next chapter.

The antic disposition is an exciting prospect to Hamlet and he can hardly contain his enthusiasm of it when he elicits Horatio’s sworn secrecy. What is more important is that Hamlet believes himself to have fully integrated this higher-order structure of consciousness as he tells Horatio that he will use it “As I perchance hereafter will think

meet” (ACT I, V, 171), suggesting that he believes he will have a high level of command and control over it. It is pertinent perhaps that this observation follows hard on the heels of the famous: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (ACT I, V, 167-168). This broad-reaching cosmo-centric comment appears as a new transpersonal order in itself.

Pertinently, the line preceding this one refers to the spirit: “as a stranger,” and Hamlet asks Horatio to “give it welcome” hinting that the new ‘antic’ identity, strategy and philosophy are consanguineous with, and have as their origin, the prince’s mystical encounter. At this point the ghost is I believe, viewed more as ‘spirit of health’ than a ‘goblin damn’d,’ until this is questioned later: “The spirit I have seen, May be a devil” at the end of Act II. However it is clear that this questioning of the ‘moral ambiguities’ and nature of the spirit creates the resourcefulness of The Mousetrap that leads to a confirmation of the ghost as an ‘honest ghost.’

So now Hamlet is armed with a new structure in consciousness. Yet this sharp-tongued and acute awareness is deliberately disguised in the form of madness. The very fact Hamlet opts for a kind of madness directly after a mystical encounter is truly significant given Wilber’s views on schizophrenia and mysticism in The Atman Project. He emphasizes that schizophrenic episodes and mystic insight are often viewed similarly and that this has often led to a disastrous conflation of the two. Those championing mysticism have tended to equate schizophrenia as a “super-healthy” version of the self and have therefore fallen, according to Wilber, into the trap of elevationism. Equally, those who are inclined to scepticism, malign mysticism claiming it is merely a case of schizophrenic breakdown – which while it can and does occur as a

---

57 Erlich. Ibid., p.38
result of the mystic’s quest, is not the only possible outcome. For Wilber, this form of criticism is the trap of reductionism. We should note here that an enormous amount of Hamlet criticism hangs on these two notions alone – the elevation of Hamlet’s madness to mysticism or the reduction of his mysticism to some form of ‘arrested development’ or psychosis.

What is important to us is that Wilber asserts that a typical schizophrenic episode usually involves a precipitating event, which is frequently an extremely stressful situation or a relentless dilemma – Hamlet is exposed to both. This disruption of the state of consciousness “leaves the individual open and unprotected from both the lower and the higher levels of consciousness”[author’s emphasis].58 As a result of this open-mindedness, Wilber claims the individual is often “flooded with highly intense intuitions [“I see my father … In my mind’s eye, Horatio”(ACT I, ii, 184-186) and “O my prophetic soul!”(ACT I, v, 40)], which are “actual and valid spiritual insights.” Furthermore these insights tend to be “self-oriented, secretive: he understands them, but nobody else can” [“These are but wild and whirling words, my lord”(ACT I, v, 133)].59 Yet as Harry Levin observes, “Hamlet speaks blank verse in all sincerity and sanity. Thereafter, as he warns Horatio and Marcellus in ‘wild and whirling words’, he is to undergo a transformation.”60

What I am suggesting is this: that due to the traumatic visitation of his father in the form of spirit, Hamlet has certainly had a dramatic upward shift in consciousness. This view is supported by Eissler when he affirms, “His ominous “O! my prophetic soul!”

59 Wilber, p.176-177
may be interpreted … as a manifestation of his particular alertness.”

As a result of this, I believe Hamlet has completely differentiated with his former structure of consciousness and has in turn been exposed to the danger of a schizophrenic breakdown as well as been flooded with “actual and valid spiritual insights.” He has now decided to adopt a form of secret self disguised by the “antic disposition” cloaking this evolution in consciousness from the people around him. This “disguise for a magical power of perception,” is necessary so that he may firstly adjust and integrate this new awareness and secondly begin using it to his advantage. As Levin says: “This ‘crafty madness’ provides him with a means of expressing pent-up emotions.”

Since the ‘antic disposition’ is itself a structure in consciousness I would now like to examine what the nature of this structure is in light of transpersonal psychology so that we may learn a little more about it with regard to Wilber’s models for the structure of consciousness. It is important to reiterate here that the higher levels of consciousness integrate and include but transcend the former structures in consciousness. This would certainly account for the fact that Hamlet now appears to have gained an upper hand over those around him.

Indeed for Harold Bloom, “he can’t encounter anyone without getting them to open up as it were and fully expose themselves to him. He is like somebody come from another planet or rather he has come to another planet – he has come to an undiscovered country – and he so questions everyone as to pluck out their secrets from them without ever divulging his own.” And notice here that Bloom alludes to the secrecy that

---

61 Ibid., p.389. Marvin Rosenberg asserts that “prophetic soul” also conveys “the remnant of the mythic hero of the source,” p.421
62 Rosenberg, p.594
63 See also Dover Wilson, p.88
64 Levin, Harry, p.124.
65 Bloom, Harold, p.31.
Wilber pointed out in the ‘actual and valid spiritual insights’ gained during the schizophrenic breakdown. Many critics talk of Hamlet’s superior powers of perception and raised awareness as compared with the other characters in the play and most connect it with his zesty, antic language.

Michael Long dubs Hamlet “super perceptive” possessing the cunning of “superior consciousness.” Shoichiro Kawai refers to his “extraordinary power of perception” and Helen Gardner alludes to his “superior power of insight,” and countless critics agree with this notion of the prince’s higher consciousness.66

So here is ‘alien’ Hamlet, operating on those around him, exposing their secrets and weaknesses, but divulging nothing. Why is this something he is able to do simply because he has decided to adopt an antic disposition? The first and most obvious characteristic of the new identity is the way in which Hamlet uses language. Harry Levin claims that “Hamlet stands in need of a new persona, once the Ghost has excited his suspicions, not so much as to feel his way as to speak his mind with impunity”67 [author’s emphasis]. Levin observes the need for a transcending persona.

Hamlet is no longer sticking to the conventions of word choice, syntactical grammar, meaning and interpretation. He is, in fact, engaging in ambiguities. And another way of looking at an ambiguity is as paradox. Because of this, Hamlet’s use of language appears as illogical. This is strikingly manifest when we witness his interactions with the other characters in the play – especially Polonius. Yet it is this wily old man, who observes the most important point of Hamlet’s riddling: “Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t” (ACT II, II, 205).

67 Levin, Harry, p.123.
And the reason is precisely due to the transpersonal change that Hamlet has undergone. His replies are ‘mad’ but have ‘method’ and that is because they are not illogical but translogical – “transcending the logical, the rational or the mental in general.”\(^68\) They rely on and incorporate logical propositions but at the same time they transcend the confines of the language that would be acceptable to Polonius – a point remarked upon by Marvin Rosenberg in *The Masks of Hamlet*, when he sees Hamlet’s language as “transcending its apparent linguistic formalities.”\(^69\)

Yet the old politician intuits something beyond mere foolish babbling as he observes: “How pregnant sometimes his replies are!” (ACT II, ii, 208). This is indeed a case where Hamlet is playing the ‘fishmonger’ like a fish and gaining a tactical upper hand by avoiding the language conventions and relying on a different set of consciousness values.\(^70\)

Long claims Hamlet’s language is culturally transcendent in itself: “a language which moves faster and probes deeper than that of the social men, normatively attached to the Law and discipline upon whom it comments.” It is full of “fire and bravura … unshackled in mind released from the imprisoning nutshell … free from traditional fear.” For Long, and for this thesis, the importance of Hamlet’s language is the transcendent freedom it gives its speaker “all possessed of a crackling zest.” And Long


\(^70\) Eissler observes for instance: “Such wide-framed, seemingly nonsensical utterances [by Hamlet] permit a variety of interpretations, of course; but when a person talks like that, there can be no doubt that he is either mad or else wants others to believe that he is. For the speaker must be aware that he is forcing others to assume that he is deranged, and if he is not aware of that, then he certainly is mad … The art of creating a person who is feigning madness consists, of course, of having him speak in such a way as to make no sense to the other people on the stage, while making sense – dubious as it may – to the audience. When Ophelia and Lear are suffering from manifest madness, they both speak in a way that has meaning, and that sometimes even reveals a profundity previously lacking in their normal condition. Lear certainly becomes a more interesting character when he is shaken by madness … Hamlet’s madness, whether it is feigned or real, takes place, of course, on a level quite different from that of Ophelia’s or Lear’s.” p.346n.
advises that too many readers miss this aspect of Hamlet and paint an “image of a brooding, ineffectual genius which has attached itself too powerfully to the play.”

Polonius struggles to finally understand something of the nature in Hamlet’s language and hits upon the exact phrase to explain why he has felt duped and thwarted by the younger man: “A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of” (ACT II, II, 209).

These observations find a precise corollary with David Cooper’s findings as a clinical psychiatrist that: “One should note that normality is “far out” as an opposite end not only to madness but also to sanity. Sanity approaches madness but an all-important gap, a difference, always remains. This is the omega point (Z).”

While this may initially appear as a contradiction we can readily understand it if we map it thus:

![Diagram](image)

Fig.3. Schema of Cooper’s omega point (Z) showing that madness is closer to sanity than normalcy.

---

72 Cooper, David. Psychiatry and anti-psychiatry. New York: Ballantine, 1971. It should be noted that the discussion of the similarities and differences between mysticism and psychosis is extremely complex and continues to foster lively debate in the fields of psychiatry and psychology.
Wilber uses Cooper’s ideas in *The Atman Project* in order to illustrate that the reaching of the omega point represents evolution in transcendence of the ego, not mysticism’s regression in service of the ego. For Wilber, the omega point marks the beginnings of ‘paradoxical’ or ‘mandalic’ reason “which is what results when you try to think about the Tao or *Spirit*” [emphasis added]. It finds its greatest exemplar in Zen *koan*. Zen monk and scholar, Shohaku Ogata states: “Technically speaking, the koan given to the uninitiated are intended ‘to destroy the root of life,’ or to go beyond the limits of thought … Here logic turns into psychology, thought into conation and intuition. What could not be solved on the plane of empirical consciousness is now transferred to the deeper recesses of the mind.”

It is, I believe, no coincidence that during his interaction with Polonius, Hamlet chooses to reverse the relative ages between himself and the older man. He suggests that if Polonius could go back in time “like a crab” he could “grow old as I am” (*ACT II, II, 204*). This is, contrary to Polonius’ actual regression to a senile ‘second childhood’ in service of the old man’s ego – which Shakespeare is at pains to make clear in the previous scene is an inflated ego. Rosenberg refers to the elder statesman’s “preening vanity.” There is more than a suggestion that Hamlet feels himself to have reached a greater degree of maturity than “These tedious old fools!” with a “plentiful lack of wit” (*ACT II, II, 219&200*). Even if Long claims that some of this is because Hamlet sees himself in a certain éclat, the point is that in essence he feels sure of being able to

---

73 Wilber. *The Atman Project*, p.184
74 Wilber. *Eye to Eye*, p.173
76 See also *As You Like It* (*ACT I, VII, 139*) and Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly*.
77 Rosenberg, p.566.
outfox old Polonius and, as a result, he has become aware of a transpersonal shift in his own consciousness.

This shift has become apparent to those around him and, as the Ghost was to him, to the others in the play “Hamlet, by the same token, is a mystic riddle,” as Hiroshi Ozawa claims. In transpersonal terms these “mystic riddles” represent the evolution of stages of consciousness in a linear sequence. That is, the Ghost is Hamlet’s riddle, and Hamlet is a riddle to everyone else, and a transpersonal view would be that these riddles are higher structures of consciousness. Tetsuya Motohashi points out that “for the people surrounding Hamlet, it signifies a competition to find the correct interpretation of Hamlet’s ‘transformation,’” by which he means the antic disposition. This interestingly highlights that it is not only critics who are concerned with the nature of Hamlet’s transformation but that this is also the most significant factor for the other characters in the play.

As well as Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also find themselves outwitted by the prince when they come across him. In fact, I suggest that Wilber’s notion of ‘mandalic’ or ‘paradoxical’ thinking is absolutely exemplified in Hamlet’s exchange with the two friends at Act II, scene II. Let us try to examine Wilber’s description of paradoxical reason in *Eye to Eye* alongside, as well as a few comments from literary critics. At the beginning of the exchange Hamlet reveals that to him “Denmark’s a prison,” to which Rosencrantz responds “Then is the world one” *(ACT II, II, 243-244).* Hamlet counters with “A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o’th’worst” *(ACT II, II, 245-246).*

---

Paradoxical reason firstly exposes the problem of logical truisms such as the one made by Rosencrantz, as Wilber explains: “If you try to make a statement about reality as a whole, then your statement is part of that reality.” And let us include here this remarkable comment from Hidekatsu Nojima: “Surely Denmark’s a prison. More correctly, Denmark is a labyrinth of mirrors. The prisoner of a mirror does not mean Hamlet the hero of this play alone. The grand cosmic space of ‘analogia entis’, the world of the ‘Great Chain of Being’ where macrocosm and microcosm correspond to each other, has also turned.” R. H. Blyth suggests that when responding to a paradox: “a good way would be to attack the enemy with another paradox.”

Rosencrantz continues the debate: “We think not so, my lord” (ACT II, II, 247). Wilber warns: “you end up in either an infinite regress or in a blatant contradiction.” Hamlet’s reply to this contradiction is “Why, then ‘tis none to you. For there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison” (ACT II, II, 249-250). The Japanese critic, Shoichiro Kawai claims that “when Hamlet says that ‘there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so’, his argument is based upon this mechanism of perception,” referring to his ‘antic disposition’ as an “extraordinary power of perception.” Now Rosencrantz tries flattery: “Why, then your ambition makes it one. ‘Tis too narrow for your mind,” and Hamlet’s famous response “O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams”(ACT II, II, 251-255), neatly reflects what Wilber explains as paradoxical reason using dialectics to “demolish reason itself.”

---

80 Wilber. *Eye to Eye*, p.173-175.
Hamlet here illustrates the problem with the faculty of reason itself in the face of self-denial; that dreams can hurt and are part of the reality of consciousness and Guildenstern responds with the notion of a “shadow’s shadow.” To which the rebuttal is: “Then are our beggars bodies, and are monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars’ shadows. Shall we to th’court? For by my fay, I cannot reason (ACT II, ii, 263-264).” Wilber suggests that one of the uses of paradoxical reason “is to try to hint to other minds what God might be like,” or to “exhaust reason’s attempts to grasp spirit.”

Hamlet has decided he cannot reason, yet he is certainly trying to suggest that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have not grasped the subtleties of his translogical propositions. In fact, it is clear that his reasoning faculty is fine, but that reason itself is frustrating him because he cannot communicate to his friends what he intuits and feels. Blyth reports that Hamlet “speaks slightly of pure intellect.” Rosenberg concurs: “Hamlet has said thinking bitterly, as a dirty word – making the line of complaint against the rational process,” but adds a transpersonal dimension to this insight when he suggests Hamlet “sees with his inward eye.” This once again favours

---

84 “An argument between people who are on different levels of consciousness often goes nowhere; there is no common ground on which they can meet.” Says Charles A Reich in The Greening of America and he claims that his idea of ‘consciousness III’ is a revolution of former more rationally based American consciousness: “One last aspect of trying to escape imposed consciousness is concerned with so-called rational thought. Consciousness III is deeply suspicious of logic, rationality, analysis and of principles. Nothing so outrages the Consciousness II intellectual as this seeming rejection of reason itself. But Consciousness III has been exposed to some rather bad examples of reason, including the intellectual justifications of the Cold War and the Vietnam War … It believes that thought can be non-linear, spontaneous, disconnected. It thinks rational conversation has been overdone as a means of communication between people … Above all, it wants new dimensions.” Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p.21 and 216.
85 Blyth, p.167.
86 Rosenberg, p.410.
a transpersonal interpretation, for Wilber describes the inner eye of contemplation as “transrational, translogical and transmental.”

The description of beggars representing the bodies, while the ambitions of monarchs and heroes represent the beggars’ shadows evokes the complexity of transpersonal notions of transcendence. It is a system of thought compounded in Act IV when Hamlet suggests that “a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar” \((\text{ACT IV,III, 30})\) and reaches its superlative in the graveyard scene.

The final evidence which seems to suggest that Hamlet’s faculties have been enhanced by his use of paradoxical thinking, is when he tells Ophelia that the power of beauty can transform honesty to a bawd behaviour sooner than the other way around. He informs her: “This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof” \((\text{ACT III, I, 111})\). Hamlet sees that recent events have allowed him to realize that a former paradox has translated into a truism on the plane of his new level of consciousness. He has transcended his former mode of reasoning and is now able to operate on the former level, understanding it paradoxically.

This meeting with Ophelia, I believe represents a crucial turning point in the play, when Hamlet refuses to acknowledge Ophelia’s returned gifts and renounces his interest in her. In fact I suggest the words “No, not I. I never gave you aught” \((\text{ACT III, I, 96})\) represent one of the most valuable indications of the prince’s belief in his own transpersonal development – away from a former persona. Alluding to this part of the play, Marvin Rosenberg senses a great change: “Hamlet is at the painful pivot of a deliberate, nuclear life-change” and elaborates that “the actor-reader may feel how

---

\(^{87}\) Wilber. *Eye to Eye*, p.6.
much Shakespeare means to force a transformation that the organism may not want.” 88

This again conforms to transpersonal psychological analysis. Hamlet is portrayed a man who feels himself to have undergone such a dramatic change in personality as to no longer be able to relate in the same way to the people who were familiar with his former self. 89

The difficulty of this forced change is supported by the musings on the phylogenesis of original sin – “virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it” (ACT III, I, 118). 90 The irony here is bitter for as William Kerrigan points out, “between the two injunctions to go to a nunnery, Hamlet presents a fairly exhaustive revelation of his new selfhood. The strain of self-accusation is loud and clear … the new self repeats in negative the gestures of the old.” 91 Nevertheless, Hamlet is still conveying a belief in transcendence with the admonishment “wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them” (ACT III, I, 139).

This theme of distancing himself from former personae is repeated in exactly the same fashion after another subsequent and crucial development when Hamlet apologises to Laertes, and we will look at that exchange in the next chapter. In the meantime let us observe that Hamlet appears to give Ophelia parting advice as to her own self-transcendence when he mockingly advises her “get thee to a nunnery” (ACT III, I, 137). 92 Or as one commentator has it: “facing a whorish world without ideals, Hamlet tries to

88 Rosenberg, p.511.
89 “I am a different man” is one interpretation given in Rosenberg, p.505.
92 I am taking nunnery literally although it has been pointed out that Hamlet may mean a brothel. Even in this case the command simply needs an ironic delivery to convey the same message.
make a virgin.” The poignancy of this remark suggests Hamlet too, will practice celibacy from this point on.

Rather than the Freudian readings of an aversion to sex, transpersonal rendition would see this as a partly-conscious differentiation of sexual gratification for bodily urges and libidinal drives in favour of a morality-driven transcendence in order to reach the higher realms of consciousness more quickly. That is, rather than repression, it is a surrender. Wilber explains: “The self has to die to the desire to reunite the bodyego with the world in an exclusively sexual fashion … orgasm is but a substitute gratification. But in order for any of the higher unities to emerge it is mandatory that these lower unities … be surrendered in their exclusivity and transformed in their aims.” R. H. Blyth says that Zen’s resistance to sexual gratification is because of “its mastery over the human mind” and “the twoness of male and female.” Put simply, Hamlet views sex quite differently and suggests in this regard that he and Ophelia part company, for he is certainly vitriolic toward her. He now sees that her conceit and ego are mistranslating honesty in the young Ophelia and has a sudden realization of a formerly paradoxical truth. He has understood the translation on the given level because he has now transcended that level. Therefore he is able to operate on that lower mental-egoic level with the tools of the higher level – mandalic or paradoxical reason. Upon self-actualising the inherent problems for the ego to transcend the emotional-sexual realms, Hamlet begins to think in monastic terms “get thee to a nunnery” “no more breeders of sinners” etc. This Zen-like theme was picked up by the Japanese Noh rendition by Munakata, as Adrian Pinnington observes: “transcendence of romantic love

93 Kerrigan, p.102.
94 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.150.
through Buddhist insight, [is] something clearly relevant to his [Munakata’s] handling of Hamlet’s story.”96 From here on Hamlet exercises his devastating power over other people’s language.

The play’s use of paradox or ‘Hamletian ambiguity’ and ‘polyphony’97 is the subject of much discussion and also given as one of the most probable explanations as to why Hamlet warrants myriad possible interpretations about the nature of self in the world.98 Including the one attempted here: that is, highly conducive with Wilber’s description of paradoxical or mandalic reason – the reason that results when you try to think about ultimate cause or spirit.99 According to Marvin Rosenberg ‘Hamletian ambiguity’ includes “intuition, if not a full fledged vision.” This may best be interpreted by transpersonal psychology as the equivalent of Wilber’s notions of ‘vision-image,’ which he equates with Jung’s ‘high-phantasy,’ and calls it “the cognitive aspect of intentionality and creativity … bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being.”100

So what we are suggesting is that Hamlet’s antic disposition is exactly this: a conscious attempt to transcend his former self and environment that has pitched him into an ‘omega point,’ where madness is not the opposite of sanity but of normalcy. William Kerrigan asks “Is this madness? Is this supreme sanity?” and answers “Hamlet

---

97 Rosenberg, p.417.
98 “Particularly in Hamlet, Shakespeare has made supreme use of poetic ambiguity: under ideal circumstances several different psychological interpretations, some of which may be quite contradictory, may be given with regard to one and the same line. This multiplicity of possible interpretations is the direct consequence of the psychological principle of multiple function. Yet Shakespeare’s lines serve not only to convey something psychic in the narrower sense of the word, but also poetry, philosophical ideas, politics, historical material, topical views, and many more things.” Eissler, p.22
99 Wilber. Eye to Eye, p.173
100 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.57-64.
has risen above the distinction.”\textsuperscript{101} However it may be that Hamlet is not yet out of the danger zone and is caught in the plane between schizophrenic breakdown and emergence to a higher-order structure of consciousness. He is also striving to overcome his libidinal cravings for Ophelia, having seen her as a threat to his new perceptiveness.

Therefore, to the other characters in the play, as well as many critics, Hamlet appears irrational when in fact he has transcended the confines of the simply rational and has become transrational, representing a classic example of the distinction between Wilber’s pre and trans readings.

However, I believe Claudius, undoubtedly Hamlet’s most wise and dangerous adversary, understands more subtly what may be happening to the prince. This is apparent when he refers to: “Hamlet’s transformation – so call it, Sith n’or th’exterior nor the inward man, Resembles that it was”\textsuperscript{102} (ACT II, II, 6). Regarding the exterior Wilber asserts that shifts in consciousness can affect the body: “transfiguring it physiologically.”\textsuperscript{102}

I cannot think of more carefully chosen words if Claudius were recognising a transpersonal growth in the young prince not understood by the younger Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and which at this stage Claudius desires to play down in his own mind and in the minds of others. It may be for this reason, as Toyoko Shimizu observes that Claudius “uses the word ‘madness’ only to deny it, while invoking other terms such as ‘transformation’, ‘distemper’, ‘confusion’, or ‘lunacy’.”\textsuperscript{103} And later on the king openly observes that Hamlet’s transformation is “not like madness”\textsuperscript{103} (ACT III, I, 165), and is fast

\textsuperscript{101} Kerrigan., p.59.
\textsuperscript{102} Wilber, \textit{The Atman Project}, p.71.
becoming a real threat to him.\textsuperscript{104} When he then applies the rule “Madness in great ones must not unwatched go”\textit{(ACT III, I, 190)}, it is the use of the words ‘great ones’ that carries the line and Claudius here is conveying a great deal of respect and fear of Hamlet’s new self.\textsuperscript{105}

This image does not easily correlate with some critics’ descriptions of Hamlet as “too delicate a vase” (Goethe), “melancholic” (Bradley) or “too sensitive or thoughtful” (Coleridge). It is much more likely that Claudius is recognizing a rapid maturation in the prince’s consciousness that will have a disastrous affect upon him.\textsuperscript{106} Long suggests though, that Claudius is oafish and incapable of “seeing a superior perceptiveness” in Hamlet.\textsuperscript{107} While I disagree in the case of the king, it is certainly true of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and it costs them their lives. After the success of \textit{The Mousetrap}, he tells his friends “I lack advancement”\textit{(ACT III, II, 347)}, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern take him literally, thinking he is referring to his heirship of the throne.\textsuperscript{108} Could he, rather, be referring to the fact that he lacks a further transpersonal advancement? As Eissler notes: “Even then, he seems to be pretending madness – which would not, of course rule out the psychological truth of this statement.”\textsuperscript{109} In other words, is he suggesting that until this point he hasn’t been able to psychologically keep up with the injustices he perceives? Does he in fact, intuit that this is exactly what he has been lacking –

\textsuperscript{104} Marvin Rosenberg claims that “this argues acute perception.” p.547.
\textsuperscript{105} Rosenberg agrees “[Claudius] must be a worthy mighty opposite for Hamlet. Anything less undermines the central pillar, Hamlet, and so the play.” p.47.
\textsuperscript{106} Eissler remarks: “Claudius’ change during the play is less visible, [than Hamlet’s] yet there are indications that, as the play progresses, he moves further and further away from being, as he was at the start, in full control of his feelings of guilt,” Ibid., p.199. Nevertheless it is clear that the king’s place in the play is a position of great social, political and psychological strength.
\textsuperscript{107} Long, p.138
\textsuperscript{108} Dover Wilson feels this to be the central theme of the play and while it is a strong thesis I agree with Eissler that: “ One may still take issue with his [Dover Wilson’s] specific proposition that the usurpation [of the throne] is “one of the main factors.” p.50
\textsuperscript{109} Eissler, p.156n.
psychological advancement? Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are warned by Hamlet not to try to play upon him as a pipe, yet they knowingly take part in the king’s subterfuge. But Hamlet’s superior consciousness hoists the engineers with their own petard: “I will delve one yard below their mines/And blow them to the moon” (Act III, iv, 209).

The fact that they have effectively become the victims of two strongly developed personalities is recognised by Hamlet in his conclusion about their deaths when he tells Horatio “’Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes, Between the pass and fell incensed points, Of mighty opposites” (Act V, ii, 60). This reference to the might of his nemesis is again a sign that the prince’s mind projects a great alertness, for he knows that “the very stratagem that catches the conscience of the king reveals to the king the conscience of Hamlet.” We are witnessing a battle in consciousness of transpersonal proportions.

Once Hamlet has established the ‘antic disposition’ and seen that it has produced the desired cloaking device giving him the psychological edge, I think his own focus then begins to partially focus on the very nature of a potentially higher self. And this gradually builds until it is at the centre of his thoughts. He is no longer interested in sexual, material or philosophical gratification. Initially his thirst for revenge is equally weighted with his desire to develop his sense of self into a consciousness that can bear the ills which are manifesting themselves to his mind, but as the play progresses the balance between these two themes in the play shifts dramatically. Eventually I believe, along with Newel, that Hamlet’s insight “suggests a possibility of growth, along with a prospect of mastery over the revenger’s passion – the revenger’s madness – that has

---

110 Rosenberg: “Giving such signals of pretended madness, Hamlet can still be so anguished that he is in fact on the edge of unreason, but his consciousness is clearly at work.” p.389.
held him prisoner.” This is one of the most crucial aspects of the discussion on Hamlet. For him to develop a truly transpersonal consciousness the task of revenge must either be solely for the Ghost, with no personal motives, or he must transcend the desire for revenge as Newel suggests he may.

In support of this, William Kerrigan suggests there may be a “major line in future criticism by stressing Hamlet’s resistance to the role of revenge.” Transpersonal criticism of Hamlet would certainly favour this approach.

HAMLET AND SOLILOQUY

The view of this thesis, that Hamlet is finally concerned with the nature of self-transcendence more than anything else, is also held by Newel who suggests: “Shakespeare makes the mind itself and what happened to it a major focus of the tragedy.” The soliloquies, Newel claims, demarcate the bounds of human consciousness: “The strongest impression the soliloquies in Hamlet make collectively is that of an intense dramatization of the human mind as the innermost realm of consciousness, where the reality of the private self is distinguished from the public self, and where the reasoning faculty, looking before and after, finds and parses the terms of

---

112 Ibid., p.161.
113 Kerrigan, p.5.
A play that defines consciousness is surely of consequence to transpersonal psychology.

The ‘reality’ of Hamlet’s private self, conspicuously distinguished from the public self, is ingeniously woven into the play by means of the soliloquies. It is this aspect of Hamlet, according to Newel, that “gives a sense of encountering the character’s truest self and of tracing his most essential consciousness at different stages”[emphasis added]. Newel is here indicating his conviction of a growing awareness in the prince. What is also significant is that the soliloquies supply a further supposedly subjective framework from which to observe the prince, making our task of assessing the ontogenetic evolution of Hamlet a little easier than it may have otherwise been. In other words, the soliloquy is in its very nature a psychological entity within the play. It is this aspect of Hamlet which is of most importance when we consider the play in terms of transpersonal psychology because the discipline explores the nature of transcendent personae.

Newel suggests that by reading the soliloquies alone they will reveal a five-part development in the consciousness of the prince and in this way he comes closest among critics to the idea of a transpersonal development in Hamlet. “This view of Hamlet’s tragedy finds his complex intelligence of central significance in Shakespeare’s conception of the character and helps account for Hamlet’s strong concern’s with man’s

---

115 Eissler on soliloquy: “The stage action comes to a complete standstill, while the speaker presents a train of thought that is very meaningful in the light of the play as a whole, yet makes no immediate contribution to the plot action at that moment. It is an imaginative device, designed to create atmosphere—to add, if possible, a new dimension of meaning to the play, and much more; yet for all that, it is to be taken out of the events that surround it.” p.213.
116 Newel, p.19.
“godlike reason” and the thought it produces.” Because of these remarks and others that also bear a remarkable resemblance to the theories of transpersonal psychology, we will return to Professor Newel’s observations in the next chapter.

In the meantime, we find support for the argument from most critics mentioned in this chapter and many other sources that see transcendence as at least a major component of the play. Robert E. Wood suggests three stages of the play when consciousness development takes place.

This choice of three realms working through the play is of great interest in light of the three realms of transpersonal consciousness development – body, mind, and spirit. Wood is especially concerned with the temporal aspects of the play and tells us: “The play constructs a Hamlet whose “restricted present” early in the play constitutes a kind of living death … and whose “full present” in Act V constitutes a return to life even when his death is imminent.” This certainly finds a correlation with transpersonal psychology’s notions of an ego-death resulting in advancement in consciousness. Essentially, the whole tenet of the trans-personal is to remove the centre of consciousness away from the ‘I’ or ego and toward a concept of spiritual development not based on sensory gratification, much in the same sense the eastern mystic traditions do. The fact that Wood is concerned chiefly with the temporal aspects of the play is again indicative of a transpersonal nature within Hamlet, since a shift in the concept of linear time to a feeling of trans-temporality is a fundamental principle in transpersonal awareness.

117 Newel, p.145.
HAMLET AND TIME

Wood discusses the temporal aspects of the play at length. He mentions Harley Granville-Barker’s suggestion that there are three distinct movements to the play which are best understood not just as “a compression of the action but as a significant duration during which Hamlet’s attitude toward time can be seen to have changed.”

Wood explains that time elapses as a result of action on stage before Hamlet reappears: “In each of the three phases he is retrospective, but only in the final phase can his retrospection embrace more than the immediate past, and only in this last phase is his view of present and future undistorted by his retrospection.”

This is a very significant observation when we consider it generally in light of transpersonal psychology and more specifically in the light of the ‘centauric’ realm as proposed by Wilber. The mature centaur experiences the immediate vivid present as the dominant mode of time but the individual also has complete access to the entire conventional world of extended temporal realities. “The centaur is not confined to the present (like the child bodyego) he is simply grounded in it; and he is not ignorant of historical time, he is just no longer bound to it (like the ego).”

The interesting point here is that similar observations have been made with regard to the aspect of time in Hamlet and Wilber’s description of centauric time. Wood clearly states that the three stages in the play are best understood not just as “a compression of the action but as a significant duration during which Hamlet’s attitude toward time can be seen to have changed.” The significance of this change in temporal perspective

---

118 Wood, p.59.
119 Wood, p.51.
120 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.64.
121 Wood, p.51.
points up a change in Hamlet throughout the play. For Wood, it virtually means that Hamlet’s trans-personae are really the matters of concern. I agree with Granville-Barker and Woods when they suggest Hamlet’s view of time changes. And in fact Hamlet states it himself early on feeling that: “The time is out of joint,” although at this point he is unsure of what this means. He gradually changes the way in which he views time. Iwasaki states that Hamlet “suggests the co-existence of time and the timeless, with which the play is deeply concerned … after testing Claudius in The Mousetrap, he believes in the ghost, and the timeless, supernatural world becomes real to him.” He goes on to suggest that Hamlet’s consciousness is now “beyond the borders of the temporal world,” and that later in Act V, Hamlet “transcends the temporal” and has “conquered the world of temporality.”  

This supports my own view that Hamlet can best be viewed from the time of his ‘spiritual’ encounter, as moving toward the consciousness of Wilber’s centaur which he reaches during the closet scene with his mother. That is, up until Act V, when I believe Hamlet makes another advancement in consciousness and transcends the centaur, albeit, very briefly.

Wilber’s studies provide us with a comparative model of what the psychology of the centaur looks like. The centaur roughly equates to the ‘self-actualised’ stage in Maslovian psychology and the existential mode of self in Gestalt and existential-phenomenological psychotherapy. Interestingly, while it is important to note that these varying psychological approaches produce different names, equivalence in many of the

---

122 Iwasaki, Soji, p.38-45.
observations is due to the fact that these further reaches in consciousness are not observable, but subjective, personal, experiential phenomena.123

Prerequisite to Wilber’s centaur is a consciousness that has transcended parental incest and parental role-modelling, as well as accepted the death of ‘Mother Parent’ and ‘Father Parent.’ If disidentification and differentiation do not take place, the self is open to parental castration: “the individual remains in a state of stunted conformity with parental commands. The self remains in parental fusion. The self goes through life never daring to entertain an original idea and never daring to “strike out” on his or her own.”124 For some critics, mostly psychoanalytic, this is exactly where the Hamlet mystery begins and ends, and it is characterised by his adherence to the ghost-father’s ‘dread command’ and inability to slay Claudius when he finally has his chance in the prayer scene. This view is one taken by the school of Hamlet critics who see Hamlet’s problem as one of ‘arrested development.’125

For the transpersonal literary critic however, this can surely not be the case. That Hamlet, the most powerfully ‘real’ and ‘transcendent’ of fictitious characters ends up being nothing more, than a retarded child. The literary critic Harold Goddard is adamant that the Freudian studies are hopelessly inadequate and expresses his thoughts on the matter in entirely transpersonal tones: “Here is the greatest character in all literature – or so at least many have called him … But to Freudian analysis all that is apparently nothing. And when it has done its probing work what is revealed? Not a

123 See Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology-Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience. Ed. Ronald S. Valle and Steen Halling. Plenum Press: New York, 1989. “Both of these approaches [existential-phenomenological and transpersonal] have a desire to explore all aspects of human experience, each having its own vision and evolving plan that guide its exploration of human phenomena ... Their minimal mutual awareness has not, however, been the result of a careful examination and decision process. Rather, most thinkers and practitioners within one tradition are simply unfamiliar with the literature of the other.” p.255.

124 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.164.
genius who made an effort to transcend the morality of his time with thoughts beyond
the reaches of his soul, but a mind reduced to its most infantile impulses.”

Goddard’s characterization of Hamlet as a genius, attempting to morally transcend
his time to the reaches of his soul is by no means the only one of its kind in the tradition
of Hamlet criticism. However, it is so clearly of a transpersonal nature it remains one of
the greatest testimonies to the aims of this study. Goddard is expressing a massive gulf
that often arises between literary criticism and psychological schools of thought, the
synthesis of which, as we stated earlier, is one of the aims of this thesis. In fact, what
the ‘arrested development’ angle portrays is again a cataclysmic confusion between the
pre and the trans states of consciousness, reducing higher levels to lower ones.

Fascinatingly for us, Goddard’s attack on the Freud-Jones readings of Hamlet is
exactly in league with Wilberian analysis because he is specifying that it constitutes a
massive category error. Goddard has found it necessary to use much the same language
as Wilber in order to tackle this problem. As a result we have in effect a transpersonal
literary analysis from Goddard. Perhaps precisely because the psychological models
used to interpret Hamlet thus far have been totally inadequate to deal with him,
transpersonal literary theory may be able to express the facts in a different way and
present a schema that satisfies our respect for Shakespeare’s most enigmatic
protagonist. For a start, the transpersonal criteria for development would immediately

125 Wood says: “regardless of the age a psychological approach chooses for Hamlet, the tendency is to see
his problem as arrested development.” p.53.
127 “Difficulties arise when we look for the psychological causes of Hamlet’s reaction to his situation, by
which we mean the psychological models for the imitation of behavior or personality that we find in the
play … regardless of the age a psychological approach chooses for Hamlet, the tendency is to see his
problem as arrested development.” Wood, p.53-54.
place the emphasis of arrested development and infantilism on nearly all the other characters in the play.

It is the materially-minded, egoistic Claudius, who along with Gertrude is portrayed as seeking merely power and sexual gratification, Polonius who appears to suffer from a simplistic logic and babbles like an attention-seeking child, while bolstering his own ego or “preening vanity” with references to his own wisdom and successes. Ophelia pouts and lies, disobeys and finally fails to reach a stage of maturity allowing her to cope with her tragic situation and becomes truly psychotic (in contradistinction to Hamlet). This is because, as Toyoko Shimizu tells us that as opposed to Ophelia, “Hamlet retains his inner self all the time.” In Ophelia’s case “reality has been rent asunder, and the ego is swamped by the archaic.” An example in Wilberian psychology where lower structures of consciousness can “rebelliously disrupt and overwhelm the higher ones.”

Eissler’s reading of the difference between Hamlet and Ophelia is enlightened for he tells us that “while Hamlet is struggling to obtain internal sovereignty, in order to be able to renounce the state of obedience and thus to make his reason for destruction not the demand of another but his own, Ophelia, who has never – explicitly at least – aspired to sovereignty, has unwittingly caused destruction, or so she believes, by her very act of submitting to the powers that be.” In terms of Wilber’s own theories this is significant, because what Eissler is suggesting is that Hamlet survives ‘real’ psychosis.

---

128 Claudius at prayer realises this: “I am still possessed of those effects for which I did the murder, My crown, mine own ambition, and my Queen.”(Act III, iii, 52).
129 Rosenberg, p.566.
130 Is Ophelia really so innocent? – she does not protest too much (at all?) about her father’s plot to spy on her meeting with Hamlet and in the mad scenes she sings vulgar songs.
131 Shimizu, Toyoko. ‘Hamlet’s ‘Method in Madness’ in Search of Private and Public Justice, in Hamlet and Japan, p.64.
132 Eissler, p.137.
as a result of his fight to gain ‘internal sovereignty’ while Ophelia is subsumed by the cultural overburden. Rosenberg asks: “Does she choose madness? Is this her way out? … Did Shakespeare mean Ophelia to be eager for the ecstasy of madness and then the grave?” These questions are answered by Wilber’s insistence that the “choice” between fusion or dissociation and differentiation, within the structures of consciousness, are “offered at every stage of development and the consequences of the “decision” are “absolutely fateful.”

To continue with our appraisal of the lack of development in the other characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are portrayed as men with no real individual discernment and sell their friendship for the king’s countenance, who “keeps them, like an ape an apple, in the corner of his jaw” (Act IV, ii, 18). Laertes responds to his woes with almost no deliberation and has much less autonomy of thought and dignity than Hamlet. On this last note, a very significant observation of Laertes is made by Long when he argues: “The unimpressive figure he cuts as an alternative to Hamlet, sweeping to his revenge with heroic relish and no hesitations, should be noted well by those who think that Hamlet’s ‘failure’ lies in his indecision.” It is Claudius, Gertrude, Ophelia, Osric, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Polonius and Laertes then who are the people one feels will never develop away from the falsities of courtly life, and performing out their lives for the approval of others.

In terms of Maslovian transpersonal psychology, Hamlet is a misunderstood adult – he is developing way ahead of the characters around him – delving one yard below their

---

133 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.29.
134 Eissler, p.137.
135 Rosenberg, p.761.
136 Wilber. The Atman Project, p.153. This was also quoted regarding Jack, in chapter two.
137 Eissler says they “are interchangeable, utterly devoid of any individuality.” p. 426.
mines and blowing them to the moon. He is representative of an individual who finds himself surrounded not by his fellows, but by a society from which he feels alienated, much in the same way Maslow suggests is commonly felt by self-actualised people.\textsuperscript{139}

To return to the discussion of Hamlet’s possible inclusion in the centauric realm of transpersonal psychology, we need to ascertain if Hamlet does indeed transcend ‘parental fusion,’ or whether the case for ‘arrested development’ stands.

Underpinning the whole argument of the latter camp is Freud’s famous reading of an Oedipal Complex in the Danish prince. In order for a transpersonal study to make its mark, this stance need not necessarily be overturned, but re-written and subsumed so that we can see it rather as just one of the transpersonal stages of development.

**OEDIPUS AND HAMLET**

Freud’s highly original, if subsequently controversial reading of *Hamlet*, highlighted some questions about the play that need to be addressed in any psychological inquiry. Chief among these is the question of Hamlet’s delay, which Freud attributed to his own famous theory of the Oedipal Complex. Briefly stated, this is the view that reckons Hamlet cannot kill Claudius because he cannot realise his repressed Oedipal desire to kill his father/step-father along with his incestuous desire for his mother. Hamlet cannot kill Claudius because it would confirm to the conscious what lies repressed in the unconscious – an incestuous desire for his mother. For Freud, and subsequently

\textsuperscript{138} Long, p.141.
\textsuperscript{139} “there are so few of them … they are often treated badly by their fellows. So this too must be studied, this fear of human goodness and greatness … this fear of maturity and the godlikeness that comes with maturity, this fear of feeling virtuous, self-loving, loveworthy, respect-worthy. Especially must we learn
Ernest Jones, this interpretation accounts both for Hamlet’s aversion to sex and his hesitancy to kill Claudius (thereby effectively gaining access to his mother).

As far as it goes it carries as much weight and has been admired as much as any of the conclusions made about the play. Problems arise when we examine other aspects of the play which tend to negate this viewpoint. For instance, if Claudius can represent a surrogate father-figure, so too can Polonius, as the father of his lover and as an older authoritarian figure full of admonishments.

This is something Avi Erlich has pointed out and concluded: “attributing an Oedipal complex to Hamlet is thus no explanation for delay, because an Oedipus complex may make one act with abnormal celerity,”\textsuperscript{140} as is the case when the prince thrusts the dagger through the arras.

The greatest limitation with many of the Oedipal readings of the play though, is that they are unable to make any comments about the moral, political, historical framework and have even less to say about the higher stages of consciousness development and completely circumvent theological or spiritual perspectives.

Wilber suggests that Freud’s Oedipus complex, while central to any theory of the human compound nature is nevertheless “pivotal only in the transition of body to mind” and that it therefore “has nothing to do with the actual nature of the higher spheres.”\textsuperscript{141} And if the Oedipus complex is universal and as central to human development at the lower stages of body and mind, then making it the central concern of Hamlet means we reduce the possibility of higher transcendence to simple body-mind drives and urges, as Goddard claims the Freudian readings do.

\textsuperscript{140} Erlich, p.22.
However when it comes to examining the higher realms of consciousness, Wilber advises “there are no orthodox Western psychological models of the higher realms.”\textsuperscript{142} So it is only through transpersonal psychology, which relies extremely heavily upon the wisdom of eastern religious doctrines that we may be able to offer some further insights into the nature of Hamlet’s psychological development.

For Eissler, this approach is fundamental to an understanding of the play: “It is neglect of insight into the essential nature of Shakespeare’s play as the development of a personality that has made literary critics over and over again to place all of Hamlet’s peculiarities over one single denominator”[author’s emphasis].\textsuperscript{143}

HAMLET AS CENTAUR

We have suggested in the previous section that Freud was right to point out an Oedipus complex involved in the play’s framework but that mistakes will be made if analysis concludes that this is the central theme of the play, depriving Hamlet of any post-Oedipal development in consciousness.

We earlier stated that in fact, while those Oedipal drives and wishes were indeed part of Hamlet’s make up, according to psychoanalysis, they are universal in all of us. This universality provides an important handhold for further investigation. For Freudian analysis relies on this universality of the Oedipus complex in much the same way that transpersonal psychology relies on the universal truth about the transcendent nature of consciousness and stages of development in human evolution. So for this thesis, while Hamlet is indeed involved in the ‘Oedipal struggle’ we suggest that this struggle

\textsuperscript{141} Wilber. \textit{Up From Eden}, p.251n.
\textsuperscript{142} Wilber. \textit{The Atman Project}, p.165.
represents but one of the stages of consciousness development taking place within the play and a lesser one at that. We have illustrated how Hamlet’s encounter with spirit can be seen in terms of Wilber’s model at the point where the self is poised midway between some higher-order transcendence and unity with spirit, and the characteristic signs of a schizophrenic breakdown.

To recap: as the self is flooded with archaic regressive images, ‘mythic thinking’ and ‘magical references’ it is also at that point filled with intuitions of higher levels of transcendence over the self and into a framework of consciousness that transcends the egoic consciousness thereby intuiting ‘actual and spiritual insights.’ We gave Hamlet’s ‘antic disposition’ as the possible thread of the schizophrenic breakdown while claiming that he is also operating equally on the level of transcendent paradoxical reasoning. The point is that he seems poised between schizophrenic collapse and a transpersonal shift in consciousness to a greater perceptiveness and awareness of self. We also suggested that Hamlet’s notion of time had become at this stage ‘transtemporal.’

Now in terms of the transpersonal stages this points to a developmental stage in the prince which is akin to Wilber’s centauric/existential self, a point when “higher energies begin to rush into the organism, even transfiguring it psychologically.” It is, according to Wilber the ‘transconceptual’ mode of self that is also the “home of Bergson’s “intuition” and Husserl’s “pure seeing.””144 It is characterised by heightened sensory awareness and intentionality, an ability to live fully in the present, in fact “the whole abstract ghostly world of linear time – now that it has served its purpose – collapses into the intensity of the present”[emphasis added]. The centaur surveys the linear sequence

143 Eissler, p.208.
144 Wilber. The Atman Project. p. 70.
of events from beyond the temporal sequence and also displays a “toleration for ambiguity.” 145 We can recall our earlier observations regarding ‘Hamletian ambiguity’ which we equated with Wilber’s ‘vision-image’ – the perceptual stage of cognition given for the centaur. Vision-image is characterised as a “high-phantasy” process which points upwards toward “higher modes of being and awareness.” 146

As well as all this, Wilber reports that the mature centaur relies on spontaneous will and expression. This is totally unlike the uncontrolled spontaneity or immediate discharge of the infant but transcendence of egoic control, what Wilber refers to as ‘transinhibition.’ 147 I certainly believe that there is a case here that throws a new light on Polonius’ slaying. Hamlet actually does not act as rashly as some critics make out. For a start the line “How now? A rat? Dead for a ducat, dead!” (ACT III, IV, 24), followed by the deliberate and accurate thrust reveals a significant delay as well as a complete knowledge and a will driving the action rather than a flailing, whirling reaction. Also, when Gertrude refers to a “rash and bloody deed,” Hamlet effectively corrects her when he repeats only “A bloody deed” omitting any agreement with rashness.

Nearly all critics agree that Hamlet is unrepentant toward Polonius: “Take thy fortune. Thou findest to be too busy is some danger” (ACT III, IV, 33), and the contemptuous “I’ll lug the guts into the neighbour room” (ACT III, IV, 213), easily summarise this view of Hamlet’s lack of pity. But there are also indications of regret and remorse: “For this same lord, I do repent … I will bestow him and answer well, The

145 Ibid., p.68.
146 Ibid., p. 63.
147 He also refers to ‘transsocial,’ transconsensus,’ transconventional,’ transmembership,’ and ‘transadjustment’ all of which I think can be seen to relate to Hamlet’s character in some way.
death I gave him” (Act III, IV, 173-177). This scene, along with Hamlet’s previous chilling and calculating speech about being patient to kill the king when he can be sure of his damnation, raise important questions as to his moral development but are certainly no indications of a regression in consciousness. The question of Hamlet’s morality is a topic we will consider in the next chapter.

For now let us conclude our observations about the closet scene when Hamlet finally challenges Gertrude about her infidelity. Hamlet is not the only one undergoing a transformation in this scene, for we witness Gertrude’s revelation of her soul with “black and grainèd spots” (Act III, IV, 91) and a tacit avowal to follow Hamlet’s advice.

There are a number of factors that I believe have consequential bearing on Hamlet’s growth. In the lengthy exchange with the Queen he overcomes any potential Oedipal drives, wins his mother’s support and witnesses his father ‘steal away’ allowing him freedom from this admonishing spirit. This, I believe, marks the point in the play when Hamlet has developed beyond the potentially disastrous schizophrenic breakdown and achieved full transcendence to the realm of the mature centaur. In the words of Rosenberg: “Eruptions of his elemental Dionysian (Oedipal?) violence will terrorize his mother and bring about the death of his opposites.”

Harry Levin has hit upon an example of the confusion between a pre-oedipal reading of the closet scene and a post-Oedipal reading, saying: “When he takes off his antic disposition, in the closet scene, it is difficult for him to convince Gertrude that he is sane.” And right here Levin makes a transpersonal interpretation by highlighting the observable similarity, but the subjective difference between “the plight of the man who

---

148 Rosenberg, p.433.
is generally misunderstood and the pose of the man who deliberately invites misunderstanding.”

This is another fine example of the pre/trans fallacy stated in no uncertain terms by a literary critic and Levin shows that he, like Wilber, is aware of the implications, warning that both positions could easily be reduced. Once Hamlet has stated his case to his mother, it should be clear to all critics that he has exploded the idea of remaining in the Oedipal struggle.

And I think it fair to point out that it is primarily in post-Freudian productions of Hamlet, that often the closet has been substituted with a bedroom, and actors have, perhaps at times, been willing to ‘tear a passion to tatters, to very rags’ in order to overtly state the Freudian case. Nevertheless the fact of the matter remains that the dramatic content of the scene does support an Oedipal reading. But as John Russell stresses that while the “Shakespearean project, though recognizing sexuality as a destabilizing factor, does not focus on it to the exclusion of all other conditions and causes.”

What is fascinating is that Russell claims that contemporary psychoanalysis finds more accord with Shakespeare than it does with Freud. And in his book Hamlet and Narcissus, he is adamant that Hamlet is in the post-Oedipal stages of development and in truly Hegelian, as well as transpersonal overtones says:

The pre-Oedipal dyad and the post-Oedipal triangle do not obviate one another, but quite the contrary, presuppose and necessitate one another … The latter does not

---

149 Levin, p.130.
151 Wilber on orthodox psychoanalysis: “This whole enterprise is starting to fall apart, of its own weight, because of the ridiculous number of things psychoanalysis is forced to attribute to the infant’s first four months of life in order to account for everything that subsequently emerges.” Eye to Eye, p.114.
eradicate the former. It annuls and negates it, but simultaneously preserves and affirms it, raising it to a higher and more complex level of operation.

This is a precise analogue of the process of development in the transpersonal life cycle.
HAMLET PART II: WILBER IN A NUTSHELL!

Here for the first time – and never since to that same extent repeated – the full spectrum of man’s nature in conflict was given recognition in the literary universe, not as it appears from a religious or philosophical point of view, but as it is. It was only after Shakespeare that man acquired the freedom to venture into the recesses of the mind, only after him that modern psychology became possible. Indeed, I believe that, with regard to some essentials, Freud may well have learned more from Shakespeare than he did from his patients.¹

The previous chapter introduced the idea that Hamlet was a play as much about transcendence as anything else and studied it from the ontogenetic perspective, exploring notions of profound personal growth during the play, instances of transcending personae, and intuitions of higher realms of consciousness.² We discussed how these changes are evidenced largely, though not exclusively, through the soliloquies. This is clearly because the soliloquy offers the nearest dramatic

² Marvin Rosenberg suggests: “We may even discern, from the beginning, a hint of the grand sense Hamlet will develop of a regal and almost fatalistic, if not divine, function.” Rosenberg, Marvin. The Masks of Hamlet. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992, p.173.
representation to contemplative, self-reflexive or meditative thought. It is this meditative aspect of Hamlet’s character that brings about his transformation and raises his consciousness to a level whereby he feels no longer impelled to avenge the ghost of his father.

THE FORM OF HAMLET’S DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MEDITATION

I think this propensity for meditation is one of the most striking things about Hamlet’s character. While I can see all kinds of objections from Western practitioners of Eastern meditative disciplines to any comparison between Hamlet’s meditations and their own, I can only state that I feel the more magnanimous masters would tacitly approve of such a proposition. Many Japanese scholars, for instance, are quite reconciled to this fact. Hiroshi Ozawa is categorical: “Hamlet is a man of meditation.” Soji Iwasaki confirms this viewpoint by referring to the prince’s transformation resulting from his “daily meditation on death.” In fact he refers to “the ideal life he has attained, the unified life of meditation and action, of learning and martial bravery, the word and the sword.”


4 “His monologue will be enlivened by much internal dialogue: the divided self in action. As well as attacking himself, he will ask himself insulting questions – and have to return insulting answers … this is a process of growth: we sense Hamlet integrating into himself his ongoing experience.” Rosenberg, p.441.


Western critics too, make much of this quality in the Dane. L. C. Knights highlights the positive nature of Hamlet’s musings: “meditation on death is no mere brooding but an energetic and transforming assimilation of the basic facts of the human condition”[emphasis added]. Coleridge too, made much of the prince’s “ratio
cinative meditativeness” as well as attributing Shakespeare with similar traits.7

Let us not forget either that Hamlet himself is well aware of the qualitative difference between “wings as swift As Meditation”(ACT I, IV, 29-30), and “Of thinking too precisely on th’event”(ACT IV, IV, 43). The most convenient and apposite appraisal for us though must be this one from Peter Alexander: “Shakespeare has united the meditative wisdom of later ages in Hamlet himself”[author’s emphasis].8

Now if we frame this with Wilber’s explanation of meditation, I think we can begin to tighten our argument. “Meditation is, if anything, a sustained instrumental path of transcendence … Meditation is evolution; it is transformation.”9 Meditation does not necessarily grant us deeper insight into works of literature but it can afford another viewpoint that is also psychological in nature. The real point is that those interested in the effects of meditative practice may be more interested and qualified in the kind of interpretations made, but it doesn’t mean that the conclusions will be inaccessible to those who are not the slightest bit interested in meditation. Transpersonal literature offers a solid footing from which we can examine literature from this point of view, not to try to justify the practice of meditation. Another way of putting it is to say that we are looking at the way people who meditate (in varying forms) interpret literature.

---

As I stated earlier, I think Newel’s analysis of the soliloquies charting the progressive developmental stages in Hamlet’s consciousness is of great significance in light of the efforts of this thesis. Newel suggests it is particularly through the prince’s soliloquies that we are able to glimpse at the character transformation which takes place in Hamlet. If we here include Wilber’s observation that “every aspect of ego states can be discovered as ‘internal dialogue’,”\textsuperscript{10} we may see the complete relevance of this argument. Eissler, as well as Newell, attributes great importance to the dramatic tension created by the soliloquies suggesting they represent a train of thought which is at once very meaningful and at the same time creating a new dimension of meaning.\textsuperscript{11} Kenneth Muir says it is difficult to know if Hamlet’s speeches are “expressions of his real feelings or of his persona.”\textsuperscript{12} For transpersonal literature, the answer is both, as the personae indicate Hamlet’s growth through the developmental hierarchy. I believe that the soliloquies themselves serve as markers for various stages of transpersonal development and I will now briefly frame the forms of development within the structures of the soliloquies as I see them.\textsuperscript{13}

Let us recap briefly to remember Professor Newel’s insistence on the role of the soliloquies in \textit{Hamlet} and how his views relate so specifically to the objective of the current analysis of the play. For Newel then, the soliloquies are “where the reasoning

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.38.
\textsuperscript{11} “The stage action comes to a complete standstill, while the speaker presents a train of thought that is very meaningful in the light of the play as a whole, yet makes no immediate contribution to the plot action at that moment. It is an imaginative device, designed to create atmosphere – to add, if possible, a new dimension of meaning to the play, and much more; yet for all that, it is to be taken out of the events that surround it.” Eissler, p.213.
\textsuperscript{13} “We do, after all, have to proceed on the assumption that what we learn from Hamlet’s soliloquies is the true nature of his conscious feelings. This is the one certain and indisputable point in the play’s fabric, which otherwise is quite loose. If this one certainty is disputed or eliminated, then the whole tragedy collapses, for with it the only certain foothold the spectator has lost.” Eissler, p.260.
faculty, looking before and after, finds and parses the terms of consciousness.”¹⁴ I can think of no better epithet to the following discussion.

**SOLILOQUY ONE**

Takashi Sasayama argues that the audience is “quite unexpectedly given a glimpse of the inside of the hero’s consciousness,” in soliloquy one.¹⁵ This speech introduces us to Hamlet’s already recondite persona for the first time and we see that he is immersed in the consciousness of the body. We hear the words “too sullied flesh” (ACT I, ii, 129) and hear of his first considerations of suicide. We hear of “Things rank and gross in nature” (ACT I, ii, 136) and memories of his parents fondness for each other. We witness his thoughts about his mother’s infidelity: “Frailty thy name is woman” (ACT I, ii, 146), as well as find his loathing for the “wicked speed” and “dexterity” with which she has hastened to “incestuous sheets” (ACT I, ii, 156).

But equally the murmuring of a transformation within the speech is present, and there are hints at a transpersonal progression. We hear him say, “Let me not think on’t,” (ACT I, ii, 146), perhaps alluding to a conscious effort to transcend a rationalising approach to the problem and to free his mind from the torment of thinking about it. We also hear him make a comparison between “beast” and “reason” (ACT I, ii, 150).

¹⁴ Newell, p.18.
This soliloquy is firmly based in the language of the body, of bodily functions, sexual appetites and natural processes. It conveys a desire to escape, through transcendence, from body-bound senses and emotions, as well as rational thought: “O that this too too sullied flesh would melt / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew” (ACT I, 1, 129).

William Kerrigan believes this to be the case: “Hamlet wants to kill his tainted flesh, resolving it to dew, but also to destroy his intolerable thoughts.”16 We should note that Kerrigan’s book is specifically concerned with “Hamlet’s attempt to perfect himself.”17 This may explain Hiroshi Ozawa’s observations that “Hamlet is replete with anatomical imagery” and “is the drama of a revenger trapped by the aporia of one who feels repulsion for the body, while his bodily presence is yet of vital importance to his purpose. At a deep level such dramatic aspects may be connected with the spiritual condition.”18

Dover Wilson, in a famous case of textual editing, insisted most convincingly on the word “sullied” replacing the previous alternatives of “sallied” and “solid” in the first line of this soliloquy. For Wilson the change was of great importance as it affected the macro readings of the play as a whole – a condition for criticism he insisted upon. Wilson, quite rightly I think, sees Hamlet as disgusted with the idea of soiled flesh. While the discussion is of great interest and most scholarly I believe this is a great example of where transpersonal criticism can give added value. For the important word in the first line to us is “flesh.” Whether the flesh is sullied (soiled), sallied (attacked) or solid, what is of most significance is that, whatever state the flesh is in, whether it is

17 Ibid., p.xiv.
18 Ozawa, p.94.
contemptuous or simply irresolute, Hamlet wants it to “resolve” itself. In other words, he expresses a desire to transcend the realms of what Wilber would refer to as a simple body consciousness which is interestingly a stage where “responsibility is lodged in the external world.”\(^\text{19}\) Hamlet then uses grand themes of differentiation to quickly illustrate the difference between those who transcend to higher realms of consciousness and those who choose to absorb themselves with bodily desires and sense gratifications.

He makes distinctive comparisons, illustrating plainly the opposite ends of the spectrum of consciousness. First, he compares his father and step-father – “Hyperion to a satyr” then the change wrought in his mother “Like Niobe” to “a beast that wants discourse of reason”**(ACT II, II, 140-153)** and finally himself, unfavourably, to Hercules. It is notable too, that the comparisons are all the most significant people in Hamlet’s life – his father, his mother and himself. Finally, the importance of Hercules cannot be overlooked as he obviously represents an ego ideal for Hamlet; a demigod that the prince will feel he must aspire to.

Hamlet’s very first and most important personal introduction in the form of soliloquy to the audience/reader could hardly convey a more transpersonal message. There is an inkling that he is already casting his mind forward to a future Hamlet persona who would be able to respond to the world in a far more unified and transpersonal way. In other words, he would not be taking the actions of others personally and responding emotionally. Eissler assures us that “over nearly every line of this soliloquy hovers the fact that Hamlet’s belief in the trustworthiness of human emotions has been shaken.”\(^\text{20}\)


\(^{20}\) Eissler, p.94.
I believe the very reason Hercules is referenced later in the graveyard scene, is in order that we may witness his consequent relegation in the eyes of the prince following his own maturation. He says: “Let Hercules himself do what he may, the cat will mew and dog will have his day,” (ACT V, I, 288) and despite the cryptic message it is clear that Hamlet sees Hercules in a completely different light than he does in the first soliloquy.

This, I believe, is because the prince has achieved a higher consciousness that is more akin to or even surpassed the consciousness of the hero. Once again Eissler is in perfect tune: “It seems to me, furthermore, that the reference to Hercules is slightly mocking, and that this is all the more noteworthy in the light of the fact that Hercules was traditionally used as the symbol of ‘superman.’ This too would convey subliminally the idea of Hamlet’s growth and of his independence from an ego ideal.”

That independence of course is transcendence. For Wilber “heroism is the drive to be God-like, cosmocentric, immortal” and in this way represents another doomed Atman project but is nonetheless “central to the whole notion of development itself.”

While Hamlet’s speech mainly concerns a simple desire to transcend the body, flirting briefly with suicide, it is tinged with a few subtle clues about his future. “Let me not think on’t” for instance, suggests that if he chooses not to think about things too precisely he can transcend this train of thought, even though he recognises the great gulf between himself and Hercules.

---

21 Eissler, p.419n.
22 Wilber. The Atman Project. Ibid., p.141-142.
The theme of the latter part of the soliloquy equates most readily with Wilber’s Typhonic or ‘Body-Mind’ stage of “temporal desires,” “extended and specific likes and dislikes,” “autonomy versus doubt and shame,” “visceral ethics,” even an “extended period of nightmares – awakened from sleep screaming bloody murder.” In Hamlet’s case, this turns out to be the misgivings of his ‘prophetic soul.’ It is the stage where language transcends the simple present and “through language … one can delay bodily desires and activities.”23 Hamlet’s “But break my heart for I must hold my tongue” (ACT I, II, 158) neatly parallels this.

The corollaries between Wilber’s comments and Hamlet’s speech here are significant and, while this stage is more readily associated with the emergence of language in the child, it should be remembered that each stage has access to all previous stages. Furthermore, in times of extreme crisis – perhaps the death of a loved father and hasty, incestuous marriage of a mother – part of the psyche can regress temporarily to that level or “the lower structures can rebelliously disrupt and overwhelm the higher ones.”24

The ‘arrested development’ critics tend to see this stage operating throughout the play’s duration but as we have stated, they rely on continually reducing any possible growth in Hamlet’s consciousness, rather than accept quantum leaps of upward transformation from this stage onwards.25

---

23 Ibid., p.30-33.
24 Ibid., p.29.
25 “It has been pointed out that Hamlet is replete with anatomical imagery, and that is the drama of a revenger trapped by the aporia of one who feels repulsion for the body, while his bodily presence is yet of vital importance to his purpose. At a deep level such dramatic aspects may be connected with the spiritual condition.” Ozawa, p.94.
Eissler believes that following these machinations, Hamlet’s “actions will henceforth be in conformity with societal requirements, in spite of his possessing a rich and highly structured internal cosmos of his own, in which criticism and independence of judgement prevail.”\(^{26}\) That is, the process of his consciousness development is already under way and this process has been specifically pointed out to the audience.\(^{27}\) And it is, I believe, transpersonal psychology that can shed the best light on Hamlet’s “highly structured internal cosmos.”

**SOLILLOQUY TWO AND “WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS A MAN”**

Soliloquy two takes place after the ghost has appeared and, according to Sasayama, “naturally leads to establishing in our mind a mental set which inclines us to share the inner consciousness of the hero.”\(^{28}\) We discussed it at some length in the last chapter in terms of Wilber’s account of disidentification. It represents a desire to wipe away the memories of the ‘trivial’ and the ‘fond,’ very much in line with Wilber’s notion of the self seeking a healthward ‘differentiation’ rather than a ‘fusion’ or ‘dissociation.’ This is a ‘choice’ that is “offered at every stage of development.”\(^{29}\) In light of this transpersonal notion, a fascinating observation is made by Rosenberg when he argues that “the usual reassuring structures [Wilber’s stages] of his “self” are disintegrating and failing him … Hamlet can be felt to be struggling to “refashion” himself … he is

\(^{26}\) Eissler, p.100.

\(^{27}\) In support of continuing development, Rosenberg at this point refers to “Hamlet’s first transformation, unpredictable now, will depend on his observable love for Ophelia”[author’s emphasis] Ibid., p.176.

\(^{28}\) Sasayama, p.123

becoming.”30 From the perspective of Wilber’s models, Rosenberg is correct in seeing that it is Hamlet’s self-stages that are disintegrating, but not his structure of consciousness which is in fact making a quantum leap, as Rosenberg intuits, when he suggests Hamlet is ‘refashioning’ himself; equivalent of Wilber’s ‘self seeking healthward differentiation.’

We saw that, following his meeting with the ghost, Hamlet incorporates the higher-order structure of consciousness based on his identification with the archetypes of the ‘spiritual realm.’ He has transcended the ‘soliloquy one consciousness’ of holding his tongue and instead, adopted a whole new mode of language in his antic disposition. At which point, I claimed, he has reached some kind of omega point between schizophrenia and mystic insight.

We should note here that the Zen scholar and psychiatrist, Albert Stunkard, when first confronted with the notion of satori remarked: “it sounds like schizophrenia,” but was so impressed by the idea that he decided “even if it is schizophrenia, I’ll buy it.”31 Could this meeting with the Spirit convey some Shakespearean version of satori for Hamlet? Soji Iwasaki proffers this explanation: “the apparition has not only raised a personal problem of revenge but has also presented an overwhelming question involving the whole created world and its history till doomsday. And in contrast to the apocalyptic vision, we have in the play hints of a prelapsarian paradise.”32 Despite the word ‘prelapsarian’ falling foul of Wilber’s pre/trans fallacy, Iwasaki’s comments heavily support a transpersonal reading of this soliloquy.

30 Rosenberg, p.394.
32 Iwasaki, p.38
Strictly speaking, the next speech I want to look at is not a soliloquy, but is of such a transpersonal nature in displaying the overall concerns of Hamlet, that it warrants inclusion here. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are present when Hamlet confesses “that this goodly frame the earth seems … a sterile promontory” (ACT II, ii, 298). The physical world is subjugated to a world without pleasure or delight and the speech hints at a frustration within the frame of the rational world. He posits a psychological dilemma by asking: “What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?” (ACT II, ii, 303)  

This rhetorical question at least allows us to observe that Hamlet contemplates the meaning of existence in a profoundly introspective way. There also appears to be intimation within the phrase that suggests an evolution from the notion of man as body and mind, to man as a godlike entity. Reason and apprehension (which we can read as intuition) are given at opposite ends of the spectrum of man’s abilities and this parallels a transpersonal evolutionary trend.

---

33 As with much of Shakespeare, varying the punctuation can change aspects of the speech, e.g. “in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god.” Rosenberg suggests: “Each exalts man’s physical, mental and spiritual capacities; the essential difference is between question and statement, between the angel as symbolizing action or apprehension.” p. 415. The in-text version is taken from T. J. B. Spencer’s edition of the New Penguin Shakespeare.
SOLiloquy Three

Here we see Hamlet after witnessing the player’s speech on Pyrrhus, totally convinced as to the duplicitous nature of emotion. Importantly, he cannot do what the player can do – “force his soul to his own conceit,” (ACT II, IV, 550) which perhaps in this phrasing represents an Elizabethan notion of the ego. He is already beginning to mistrust the emotions and, as he later tells Horatio, he recognises that the man who is not passion’s slave is greatly advanced. In this speech, I believe Hamlet is in the throes of transcending the mental-egoic realm as defined by Wilber. He first admits that he cannot give in to his emotions and passions like the player. He also rails against himself as “a rogue and peasant slave … a dull and muddy-mettled rascal … pigeon-livered” (ACT II, II, 547). This process leads to a recognition of the shortcomings of responding to the world from the exclusivity of egoic consciousness. It defines a point where the ego, in attacking itself, becomes aware of its inadequacy. Hamlet questions if his current consciousness represents cowardice and concludes in his case, that it does. But this questioning leads him to see that even in his self-effacement he is simply relying on language to ‘unpack his heart with words.’ I think this indicates a growing distrust with the nature of language itself and Hamlet is beginning to look to other levels of consciousness revealed in the commanding “About, my brains” (ACT II, II, 86). Rosenberg assures us that “this is one of the play’s most crucial moments of transformation. Shakespeare has Hamlet poised on a razor’s edge of possibility, of sanity … Hamlet is directing his brain to go about, to go to work … to make sense of all

34 “Hamlet, his mind dominating his emotions but still not whipped up to destructive fury, has to try artificially to force his soul to his conceit.” Rosenberg, p.448.
that is storming within it.”35 And certainly it is at this point that he has the truly creative idea for *The Mousetrap*. Let us not forget that Hamlet is well aware of the way in which a play can target certain individuals, while falling on deaf ears to the general audience. His comments before beginning the recitation of the Pyrrhus speech convey just this message, for he tells the player:

Twas caviary to the general. But it was – as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine – an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. (ACT II, II, 435)

**SOLILOQUY FOUR – “TO BE, OR NOT TO BE”**

Hamlet has no lines between soliloquies three and four and I feel that the ‘To be, or not to be’ speech is a continuation, or extension of this inquiry into the nature of being. It leaps a great step and helps to determine Hamlet’s growing sense of awareness and his own acts of consciousness. The speech carries myriad interpretation, as Hamlet seems to be contemplating an entire range of complex thoughts. Fittingly, Wilber uses the phrase “the existential battle of being vs. nullity” to describe the journey of transpersonal growth.

---

35 Rosenberg, p.150. Rosenberg also suggests: “For all any seeming illogic of his behavior, he comes to the speech as the product and culmination of what he has been becoming throughout the act. How he grows to that point, as we see, is various and sometimes puzzling; but the sense of growth of an individual toward an objective must always be there.” p.455.
This in itself is perhaps the most revealing transpersonal trait: that the soliloquy can have such broad-ranging application within the realm of the mind’s eye. “Why is it so much remembered, so much admired?” asks Rosenberg, “Because it deals with the core of existence? Because it imagines the blessed release from life in a quiet sleep, a return to the serenity of the womb?” Here obviously, Rosenberg raises the continually highlighted error of the pre/trans fallacy, for he goes on to refer to “Hamlet’s nirvanic vision of sleep.”

Is Hamlet’s idea of a peaceful, dreamless sleep (in the first instance) simply to be taken as a metaphor for regression to the womb? Surely someone apparently intellectual and sensitive, who has already seen a symbol of spirit manifest itself, is more likely to see an ascendant path to a more Nirvanic threshold of consciousness where he can rise above the troubles. Importantly he refers to a “consummation” where “heartaches” and “natural shocks” (Act III, i, 62) come to an end, not a place where they have still yet to be faced, as is the case with the unborn child. In the meantime, Hamlet recognises the constraints of the ‘mortal coil’ and again, this can be seen as a desire to transcend his current consciousness. Rosenberg hints at this when he tells us: “Coil has been glossed noise, turmoil; the body itself; an encircling rope, a snake shedding its skin – for a new skin underneath.” This may well be seen as the final transcendence of Hamlet’s ‘typhonic self’ in Wilber’s structures of consciousness, i.e., “the transition from the serpent stage of the uroboros to the truly human stage of the mental-ego.”

Rosenberg also asks: “Does the sleep image tap into another momentous enterprise: an archaic fantasy of regressing to sense suspension, to the privacy and protection of the womb, free from pressure, invulnerable.” Rosenberg, p.474.
37 Rosenberg, p.478.
38 Rosenberg, p.480.
Whatever the results of the manifold inquiries that could be asked of this most famous of speeches, it is certainly a soliloquy that seems to be focussed on conscience. And I take it, along with many critics, that in this speech the form of the word means both ‘conscience’ and ‘consciousness.’ Perhaps the best example is Robert E. Wood’s analysis that states “The complexities of the word are significant.” And he further adds “Hamlet, the most conscious character in literature, antedates the entry of the term “conscious” into the English language.”\(^{40}\) One comment worthy of note is Rosenberg’s claim that this soliloquy “can be recited free of context; it fits any time”\(^{41}\) making it a truly inspiring sermon at this time in Hamlet’s life and one that I believe rings a great change in Hamlet’s rising consciousness development. During the soliloquy we hear “Conscience makes cowards of us all” and a reference to the “pale cast of thought”\(^{(A C T \text{ III, i, 83-85})}\). This gives us the impression that we are dealing with consciousness, that the mind is weak, cowardly, unresolved, fickle and inadequate in the face of the afterlife.

Again we can see how this points to a transpersonal taint, because it acknowledges that reason is not enough to deal with all the things that Hamlet intuits. He recognises that in this regard, thought is useless, and this in turn affects the way in which we actually live our lives.

He sees that “enterprises of great pitch and moment, with this regard” – in other words regarding or taking time to study and look at our enterprises and potentialities –

\(^{40}\) In a discussion about the use of the word “conscience” by Elizabethan’s to convey both the moral idea of conscience and consciousness as well Wood says that conscience can also be used in the sense of a ‘fear of conjectured possibilities.” Woods, p.59-61; Rosenberg, p.484; also Nojima, Hidekatsu who refers to “the ‘conscience’(consciousness) of Hamlet” see ‘The Mirror of Hamlet’ in Hamlet and Japan, p.28.

\(^{41}\) Rosenberg, p.474.
will in fact reveal that the “native hue of resolutions” are “sicklied o’er” and they will “lose the name of action” (ACT III, I, 85-88). It is true that this can be interpreted as cowardice, both in Hamlet’s inability to commit suicide and also to avenge his father and kill the king. But the words also have a broader stroke for life and humanity in general. These broader strokes refer to the inadequacy of the rationale to cope with the fear of death. We fear the idea and the very words of death. Hamlet recites the concept of fear and trepidation to himself and this in turn produces a subsequent fearlessness – during the pirate scene, the graveyard scene and during his duel with Laertes. This soliloquy, which dwells on the very concept of fear as fear, contributes most greatly to Hamlet’s transformation into the realms of self-actualisation.

This may represent the move from self-realisation to self-actualisation. This point of transcendence, I believe, is a very important transformation and the one that applies most specifically in Hamlet’s case. I see self-realisation as an advanced stage in self-consciousness that importunes the self to get over that very self-consciousness. Once this is achieved, then the self can become actualised, that is, live without the self-consciousness and therefore the desire to transcend this stage. Self-actualisation is centauric and as it is the beginning of the transegoic stages, it has exhausted the study of self and concentrated on the structures that surround the self.

These include such structures as the cultural environment, society, temporality, rationality, pre-conditioned responses to social and intellectual stimuli, etc. Because the self now takes time to deliberate more on its surroundings than before its actualisation,

42 “critics point out that Hamlet does not speak of suicide specifically; or if does consider it, he is not talking about himself, but engaging in a philosophical discussion of the difficulties of life, and why men
but without an interest in how those surroundings affect the self, it is partly transpersonal – this contributes to Hamlet’s growing indifference to revenge. But let us not forget that there can often be immediate and psychotic regress to the lower levels and this is possibly what befalls Hamlet when he is faced with all the events of the duel. Although I am more inclined to agree with Nojima Hidekatsu, who claims Hamlet’s “revenge was merely an accidental event.”43

THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY

Now the reason that the middle part of the play is so complex and replete with themes on death, the pain of life, love, conscience and a multitude of other psychological problems is that these themes are the most poignant in the very personal realm of the mental-ego. This is the realm where, as Wilber continually explains, most of the work towards transcendence takes place. The ego, having risen as an individual fighting force against ‘things rank and gross in nature,’ an entity that can partially transcend the realms of the body, culture and simple time, is not going to give up to the emergence of a higher transpersonal structure easily. To support these claims let me here simply repeat an earlier citation: “after the ego is formed, it is very, very difficult to transcend. The ego is so stable, so “permanent,” so “strong” that it not only escapes the subconscious, it also tends to deny the superconscious.”44 The ego is a sophisticated part of the self, but it is not the Self in entirety and therefore at later stages in

might consider taking leave of it...Hamlet may be exploring the essence of being...may simply be fascinated by the processes of thought.” Rosenberg, p.470.
43 Nojima, p.30.
44 Wilber. Up From Eden, p.206
transpersonal development becomes subsumed under a larger constellation of self-concepts. This is the core goal of most of the mystic traditions; the desire to transcend the ego, in order to fully embrace the fact of mortality. In the words of the sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi: “Kill the one who grieves. Who will remain then to suffer? The ego must die. That is the only way.”45

Let us look at what Hamlet’s ego has to face during the course of a few brief scenes in the play:

1. Having recently lost his father, he must decide whether or not to accept the veracity of the supernatural apparition and if not, accept that he is having serious delusional hallucinations.

2. If accepted he must face the knowledge of the spirit’s possible damnation or the possibility of it being a ‘goblin damned’ – the ‘devil in a pleasing shape,’ as well as a confirmation of an afterlife.

3. He must recognise the immaturity and deceitfulness of his intended love, Ophelia.

4. He must carry the burden of his father’s murder and the indignity of his father’s weakness (as Erlich supports) and the consequent loss of his heirdom.

5. He must also accept that his uncle is a dangerous murderer.

6. He recognises that the focus of his mother is earthly desire.

7. He learns that his former friends are venal liars.

8. He himself cannot act accordingly or fittingly. Neither can his faculties of reason even make sense of any one of these singular situations, let alone the entire set of circumstances.

Besides the above list of woes, Hamlet’s ego will have to deal with further trials during the play.

1. He must reconcile the fact that he has murdered Polonius, the father of his former lover. In so doing he has become the very thing he despises – a father-killer.

2. He is confronted by the news that his sometime friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have been involved in a plot for his execution and as a result he must come to terms with having their executions on his conscience (or consciousness; and while he dismisses any moral concern for their departure, he is nonetheless at least aware of their fate).

3. He learns that Ophelia has become insane due to his treatment of her and the murder of her father and that as a result of her ‘real’ madness she has drowned herself.

For Hamlet to cope with these lists of calamities it is necessary that he transcend. Whether or not he is successful or not in his transcendence remains for us to explore.

The success of *The Mousetrap* points up another transcendence since Hamlet now knows that even more importantly than the ghost, his own prophetic soul has proved to be right. Now he can believe in himself. Shakespeare would undoubtedly have supported the idea of authorial intent and affective reading because when Hamlet writes *The Mousetrap* he intends to catch the conscience of the king. Indeed the idea that a play’s performance can so mimic reality causes Claudius to rise up and seek light. This is due to the fact that we assume he is guilty of killing Hamlet’s father, precisely because he has acted according to Hamlet’s intent within his short variation of a play. But for Shakespeare, the idea of intent is obvious. There is no discussion during the play or doubt from Hamlet as to the efficacy that his alterations to the *Murder of Gonzalez* will have on the intended reader (i.e. the king).
Just before the performance of the play the king asks: “How fares our cousin Hamlet?” To which the prince responds: “Excellent I’faith; of the chameleon’s dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed” (ACT III, II, 103). T. J. B Spencer’s note in the New Penguin edition suggests that it was alleged that chameleons lived on air alone and that ‘air’ and ‘promise-crammed’ is a double pun on ‘heir’ and Hamlet’s succession to the throne.

While I think this reading is fair, it does not fully cover the possibilities. The chameleon metaphor can also apply to this animal’s ability to change colour to suit its environment. And in this way I think Hamlet can be seen to be alluding to a notion of himself being like a chameleon in his antic disguise. In other words he has adapted to his environment – i.e. actualised himself.

He also suggests, with a warning to the king, of coming potentialities both for himself and for his prey. The vision is then of a creature preying, not on air but on the potential of the air crammed with promise, i.e., a passing insect, or a king about to be ‘operated’ upon by a higher transpersonal level.

Rosenberg’s observation that Hamlet “is indeed a chameleon, shifting persona to fit the situation,” supports such a transpersonal reading. In the process of The Mousetrap we see Hamlet operating on the king’s emotional intelligence – a state of consciousness that he has himself recently transcended by observing the First Player recite the Hecuba speech.

It is interesting that there is an issue of morality here as well. The lines: “The play’s the thing wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King,” (ACT II, II, 603) implies:

---

46 Rosenberg, p.612.
a) That the king has a moral conscience (problematic for the prince, bearing in mind Claudius’s almost total disregard for human life, but realised to the audience during the prayer scene).
b) That it can be caught.
c) That Hamlet believes it can be caught.
d) That it can be caught through the medium of a play that first mimes, then re-enacts the supposed murder of Old Hamlet.
e) That this process will cause the king to stir, not just internally, but visibly to the onlookers.

This part of the play again reflects on the difference between structures of consciousness and the moral self-stages, as we see that during the prayer scene, Claudius is unable to reconcile this “twofold force” within him. As a man “to double business bound,” he has complete consciousness of the gravity of his offence but a “limed soul” because his “thoughts remain below” (ACT III, III, 68&97) and he cannot repent (or transcend this state of being). In one way, Hamlet has already achieved a remarkable victory, for as Rosenberg observes: “Hamlet’s determination … seems to manifest his intense concern with the morality of the plan. Many observers have believed in his resistance to evil … He is aiming within … at Claudius’ conscience … the conscience then, as now, was an individual’s intuitive knowledge … What Hamlet will catch in Claudius is an awareness of corruption in his soul.”

Before Hamlet confronts his mother, in a short speech, he reveals that he is in full possession of his wits and has achieved a working synthesis of his new consciousness: “Let me be cruel, not unnatural. I will speak daggers to her, but use none. My tongue
and soul in this be hypocrites” (Act III, ii, 402-404). Here we witness a premeditation of
the ensuing action, again testifying to Hamlet’s belief that he can consciously operate
on the members of the Danish court. As well as that we see him distinguish between his
intent verbal-mind, and his soul – specifically two distinct stages of transpersonal
growth in Wilber’s life cycle [see Fig 1]. Rosenberg also hints at transcendence when
he suggests: “Hamlet has also had a kind of perspective on himself, has wryly seen
himself an image of a revenger cliché; he has distanced himself even more.”48 He is
beginning to distance himself from the act of revenge.

In fact, before he arrives at the closet, he stumbling upon the praying king and we
witness Claudius at prayer, unable to transcend the reality of his heinous crime.
According to Robert Wood, Hamlet’s “crippling capacity to hypothesize peaks in the
scene where Hamlet spares Claudius at prayer.” He attributes this to a “refusal to kill
that would normally be attributed to “conscience” in the modern sense is here depicted
as a product of consciousness.”49

Recognising the distinction between structures of consciousness and moral self-
stages, Wood is suggesting that it is not ‘conscience’ but consciousness that makes
cowards of us all. Knowledge of what the deed of murder does to consciousness,
cripples Hamlet’s ability to see it through, rather than any adherence to a religious or
moral doctrine. Avi Erlich’s contributions help us clarify the point between conscious

47 Ibid., p.453.
48 Ibid., p.621.
49 Wood, Robert E. Some Necessary Questions of the Play A Stage-Centered Analysis of Shakespeare’s
action and moral deliberation. He suggests “we who intuitively feel that Hamlet does not consciously mean his malice, that he is rather a victim of his unconscious strategies, forgive him … we can explain both our horror and our forgiveness by recognizing [Eleanor] Prosser’s helpful statement of the moral situation as only half the case.”

Effectively, both these critics recognise the distinctions between the structures and stages outlined.

SOLiloQUY FIVE

By soliloquy five, Hamlet has witnessed Fortinbras’ army prepare for a battle against the Polacks on a “patch of ground” (ACT IV, IV, 18) so small “whereon the numbers cannot try the cause” (ACT IV, IV, 63). He immediately sees the egoistic and futile Atman project of an “ambition puffed,” an “invisible event,” indeed the willing sacrifice of life “for a fantasy and trick of fame” (ACT IV, IV, 49-61). This Rosenberg claims is “a pivotal soliloquy, a crucial turning point in Hamlet’s character.”

Newell interestingly observes that Hamlet “continues his self-critical expression of impatience by condemning his supposed inaction as equivalent to the routine of mere animal existence. As he does so often in ways that invariably give him impressive moral and intellectual stature, he casts his thoughts in generalized, universal sounding terms.”

These may be equated with transpersonal terms, for Newell goes on to point out the significance of Hamlet’s counterpoint between “bestial oblivion” and “godlike

51 Rosenberg, p.747.
reason,” (ACT IV, IV, 38-40). He suggests that the prince “dissociates himself from what is bestial while on the other hand he denigrates the exercise of thought. Yet all the while he believes he is engaged dispassionately in the use of godlike reason, looking before and after.” Newell concludes that Hamlet is thinking paradoxically and that “in evoking the lofty quality of ‘godlike reason,’ which is congruent with the even loftier intuitive capacity of the human mind,” Hamlet is “on the verge of a profound personal growth,” indicated by his alteration when he returns from England.

What Hamlet is faced with is the need to transcend reason which is contrasted by the bestial oblivion. He is looking back over the previous structures in his consciousness and coming slowly to the realisation that in fact there must be (at least) a third choice – i.e. to evolve from his current form of dichotomous thinking. He is addressed with a paradox, an intellectual impasse, precisely because his reason cannot negate his passion for revenge. He wrestles with his conscience, for he sees Fortinbras’ great battle as decidedly pointless – for an ‘eggshell’ – yet he sees a small quarrel as significant when honour’s at stake. And this in turn leads him to ‘profound personal growth’ forming a self-sense. The final line in the speech alludes to his desire to either carry on with the revenge or to see his thoughts on the matter rendered worthless.

Yet even though this speech can be interpreted as a decision to avenge his father, I feel that it is more likely a case of Shakespearean apophasis. This is a literary device that, according to Eissler “was used quite successfully in the speech by Antony following Caesar’s death.” He goes on to suggest that the form and content of the
soliloquy “make it clear that the statement is actually being negated … the speaker insinuates the very thing that he denies he is saying.”

REFLECTIONS IN A GRAVEYARD

Having thwarted the plot by Claudius to have him executed, that fate having “Fallen on th’inventors’ heads” (ACT V, II, 379), and escaped with the pirates, when we next encounter Hamlet it is upon his return from England. Here we learn from the gravedigger that the prince is unquestionably aged thirty and I see no reason to debate this, even though a great many critics feel it necessary to do so because they cannot reconcile his behaviour with his years.

I have outlined my objections to those critics who tend to relegate Hamlet’s character to a kind of morbid, sentimental and melancholic adolescent and aligned myself with analysts who insist on a certain degree of maturity in the prince. I think it is of some weight that Hamlet has been a high achiever in the material world and impressed those around him for some time as “a glass of fashion” with “The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword.” It also seems essential to mark Ophelia’s description of the prince as “observed of all observers” (ACT III, I, 152-155). This description alone, with a transpersonal correspondent in the ‘Pure Ego, Witness or I-I’, cannot account for the sort of snivelling pre-oedipal teenager that some critics would have him.

---

54 Eissler, p.118.
I think it far more likely that he falls into the psychology of a post-oedipal philosopher who is done with the material world, of which he has had a lot of time to reflect upon being of a privileged and educated background.

Robert Wood is indicative of some of the confusions that arise if we do not take the gravedigger at his word. He claims that “Hamlet ignores gradations of age: significant characters are either of Hamlet’s generation or of his mother’s. For the difference between twenty and thirty to be significant in assessing Hamlet, the play would have to focus on some experience that ought to occur in this decade.”\(^56\) It does occur and it is the focus if, as we have stated, analysis of the play concentrates on transpersonal development. It is exactly the transcendence to a mature ego as distinct from the stasis in the personal development of the characters around him. In chapter one we explained that for Wilber “the actual times of the emergence of the basic structures [of consciousness] are largely age-dependent and relatively fixed, but the emergence of the self-stages [including moral development] are relatively age-independent.”\(^57\)

Wilber’s own suggestion for the earliest age for the emergence of the centaur’s consciousness with vision-logic is, interestingly enough, around the age of thirty. That means that Hamlet’s age is conversant with the development of Wilber’s centauric structure of consciousness. What remains then is the question of his self-stage or moral development.

Wilber, tells us “the separate self is basically a lie, a vital lie, about the possibilities of heroism.” It is “also a reflex against death … the drive to be God-like, cosmocentric, immortal.”\(^58\) And in the graveyard scene Hamlet has fully transcended any such belief

\(^{56}\) Wood, p.55.


\(^{58}\) Wilber, *The Atman Project*, p.141.
in the hero’s immortality as he imagines the dust of Alexander stopping a bunghole. Eissler claims that in this observation: “The trans-human is thus converted into the sub-human and the perceptive world, for all its seeming beauty and harmony, into an agglomeration of horrors”[emphasis added].\textsuperscript{59} Hamlet is able to encompass the whole transpersonal life cycle as Wilber sees it in a single metaphor and Eissler argues, Hamlet has at this moment “reached incomparable heights.”\textsuperscript{60}

For a great many critics, the graveyard scene introduces us to a transformed Hamlet, one who has at least matured greatly, if not developed a fully integrated personality who has transcended the revenger’s passion, and that can only be judged a moral development. Eissler informs us that “gains in terms of the growth of his personality have become integrated”\textsuperscript{61} and Sasayama is precise as to the nature of the transformation. He suggests that “Hamlet as he is now reflected in our inner eye is free from his former edged aggressiveness and nihilistic clownery; through his spiritual awakening to limitations of the human condition he appears to have attained the serenity of mind with which he can look upon death as the common lot of humanity.”\textsuperscript{62}

Eissler takes the position that Hamlet may now be free to act or not act as the occasion determines saying that by the time of the graveyard scene, “Hamlet is free both of his fear of death and of his fear of incest [i.e. post-Oedipal]. He has reached a stage that lies beyond the question of action or inaction.”\textsuperscript{63} Soji Iwasaki attributes great importance to the time Hamlet is absent: “This transformation of Hamlet happened while he was off-stage … Hamlet experienced God while at sea … and we ought to bear
these iconographic contexts (such as the symbolic relevance of the sea) in mind as we view Hamlet’s spiritual transformation in the play.\textsuperscript{64}

In order to give a fuller rendition of the transpersonal elements within the play it is necessary for me to support the claim that the main theme in \textit{Hamlet} – that of transcendence – deals with both the structures of consciousness and also the morally inclined stages of the self. So far I have only mapped the points in the play, which mark transformation in Hamlet regarding his state of consciousness and I have not tackled the problem of his moral development. The reason for this is that these two strands of development while linked are operating with relative independence of one another. And Wilber tells us that while existing in mutual exclusivity, the self-stages are ‘phase-specific’ and act on the substrate of the structures of consciousness.\textsuperscript{65} Therefore the structure of consciousness must first shift up a level before the appropriately corresponding moral development can, if indeed it does, take place at all.

As we reported in chapter one, a child needs to understand complex relationships and be able to see things from more than one perspective before it can even attempt to answer even the simplest notions of right and wrong. First there must be a conscious understanding of what is at stake. This is part of the natural process of evolution as Wilber rightly points out: “In order to see the moons of Jupiter, you need a telescope. In order to understand \textit{Hamlet}, you need to learn to read.”\textsuperscript{66} And yet he insists that “it has long been acknowledged that cognitive structures are necessary but not sufficient for moral and self-development.”\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} Iwasaki, p.44.
\textsuperscript{65} Wilber. \textit{Eye to Eye}, p.278-279.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p.xiii.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p.288.
What this effectively means for Hamlet criticism and for this thesis in particular, is that the question of Hamlet’s consciousness development and his moral responsibility are entirely different exposes. As we outlined in chapter one, transpersonal psychology is unique in that it implicitly recognises the distinction between these structures of consciousness and the development of self-stages, a distinction which may not previously have even been fully explored by psychologists and critics. This, I believe, accounts for the moral dilemmas experienced by numerous interpreters who, on the one hand admire the prince’s sensitivity, and on the other cannot reconcile his cruelty and hatred. An example is Samuel Johnson’s exasperation at Hamlet’s treatment of Ophelia as “so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty.” But this conflict does not arise if we understand the difference between the structure and self-stages in transpersonal development. Wilber is insistent on this and says it is a distinction that has been largely overlooked by orthodox psychology and where further research is required. Having pointed this out, it is true that Hamlet’s seeming indifference to the death’s of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, appears to highlight a moral problem. Yet as Rosenberg points out: “If he is partly blaming the killing on events, and on Polonius, rather than himself, he is also moving toward a temporary acceptance of whatever divinity controls experience.”

Nevertheless his revulsion in killing the king at prayer, indeed his delay in avenging his father, may be attributed to his acknowledgment of a moral dilemma. On this point Kenneth Muir suggests that “Hamlet has an instinctive revulsion from killing a

69 Wilber. Eye to Eye, p.288.
70 Rosenberg, p.667.
defenceless man at the foot of an altar.” 71 Hamlet opens his speech here with “Now might I do it pat” (ACT III, iii, 73) and the word ‘might’ has suggested to many critics a recognition that Hamlet already knows he lacks the resolve and that “his damning words are only a cover for deeper impulses. Are a subtle reflection of gentler character. A disguise. A seeming.” 72 We can take Hamlet’s inaction here reflecting another example of apophasis. Has he ever really intended to kill the king, or is it simply that he likes to fantasise about the act?

**HAMLET’S DELAY**

On Hamlet’s delay much has been stated. It is what John Russell calls the “crux of contention,” 73 and has perhaps accounted for the most puzzling questions about the play for centuries and has continued to astonish or baffle critics, as well as provide them with some of the deepest insights into the play. A classic example of this is Freud’s Oedipal reading. Here, delay is accounted for by the unconscious admonishment of killing the surrogate father because it would leave Hamlet free to consciously carry out incest with his mother. There have been countless essays on the moral obligation of Hamlet to avenge his father’s death. Some critics claim that Elizabethans tacitly supported vengeance as a Divine right, especially in the Royal house, while others are adamant that this would conflict severely with the religious attitudes of the day.

Whatever the case, however, I think I can state with impunity that for most critics Hamlet’s delay is seen as *a problem* – that is, it is something which weakens his

---

71 Muir, p.40.

72 Rosenberg, p.635.
character – very few see it as a strength. But I would like to suggest that from an eastern mystical, and therefore transpersonal, standpoint his delay can be viewed as auspicious. And Harold Goddard, whom we heralded in the last chapter as having an empathising voice with transpersonal literature, adopts this position when he correctly states: “Hamlet’s delay shows his soul is still alive.” 74 This positive view of the prince’s delay finds a particularly precise commensuration with comments on self-actualized people by Abraham Maslow, who tells us that the cognition of such individuals is “passive contemplation, appreciation, and non-interfering, i.e., “let-be.”” 75 This is certainly reminiscent of Hamlet’s mood in the speech beginning with “Not a whit. We defy augury” (ACT V, II, 213). Adrian James Pinnington, refers to the “‘zen’ significance,” of this speech and Soji Iwasaki claims that the prince “transcends the temporal” and that “from the standpoint of spirituality … the choice between ‘to be’ and ‘no to be’ has been transcended. The Hamlet who was fearfully aware of that world beyond from which no traveller has ever returned has now been transformed.” 76 Both of these comments are firmly based in the transpersonal spectrum of understanding.

In Maslovian terms it is voiced: “What will be will be. The world is as it is. It is determined. I can do nothing about it.” 77 Maslow goes on to explain that this state of consciousness “is not even human in the ordinary sense either; it is godlike, compassionate, non-active, non-interfering, non-doing … incompatible with action.” 78 And again, it could be argued that this is precisely why Hamlet, who intuits man’s

76 Iwasaki, p.45
77 Maslow, p.119.
78 Ibid., p.116-117.
godlike reason, is unable to carry out the task of revenge, making him a candidate for Maslow’s state of self-actualization.

When we read further what Maslow stipulates as other characteristics we learn that the self-actualized individual has “a certain selfishness and self-protectiveness, a certain promise of necessary violence, even of ferocity,”79 our suspicions should be confirmed. Indeed this may account for his ability to act with extreme severity in the closet scene and at the end of the play. In other words, self-actualization can account for both a delay and an ability to act quickly and violently under certain circumstances. I would like further to remind the reader that Maslow is the patriarch of transpersonal psychology and that his concept of self-actualization is the equivalent of Wilber’s notion of a centaur, which I earlier claimed was a stage that Hamlet had reached during the course of the play.

What of course this means for the transpersonal critic is that Hamlet’s delay ceases to be a ‘problem’ as such but an altogether necessary component of his moving toward and reaching the stage of centaur. This may also explain why John Russell quite rightly adduces that Hamlet critics have fallen roughly into two camps regarding the delay: “For the irrationalists, Hamlet achieves an ideal heroism by accepting the destruction of his immature ideals. For the rationalists, Hamlet achieves an ideal heroism by submitting to the ultimate Ideal.” But Russell falls foul of a reductionist approach when he claims: “the approach that sees Hamlet heroically transcending his disillusion and pledging himself to mature action in the world of limits and constraints comes up against the inevitable obstacle: in act V Hamlet is not heroically active but unheroically

79 Ibid., p.117.
passive.” It goes without saying perhaps, that Wilber would insist on yet a third camp and that is a holistic, integral and transrationalist critical approach, seeing the delay as part of Hamlet’s transpersonal journey to a point where he can transcend the revenger’s passion. This is a view that would not equate passivity with a lack of heroism, because Hamlet has developed to a consciousness beyond the realm of the hero. As we have stated, he no longer sees his relationship to Hercules in the same way. In the words of Shochiro Kawai, “It is his imagination that makes him perceive the transformation of mortals … In the last Act, he realizes that there is little point in being a hero like Hercules.” And this is entirely in line with Newel’s claim that Hamlet’s insight “suggests a possibility of growth, along with a prospect of mastery over the revenger’s passion.” Newell is in no doubt that this has very much to do with a spiritual growth, rather than anything as simple as a Stoic acceptance of the facts. He suggests that “such growth would seem to be an implication of the almost mystical confidence in what his intuition has enabled him to begin to comprehend about ‘a divinity that shapes our ends.’” Eissler tells us “By shedding one illusion after another, by integrating the task that has been imposed upon him, Hamlet makes it possible for his individuality to grow; he attains a degree of independence far transcending what his father had originally demanded of him.” Perhaps the most provocative statement from Eissler though, is when he tells us that Hamlet’s “developmental change – that is maturation” is a process he calls “appersonation.”

This term is used to explain the integrated ego and is so close to Wilber’s ideas of the centaur in transpersonal development that it demands a mention here. Eissler’s views

---

80 Russell, p.213.  
81 Kawai, Shotchiro ‘Hamlet’s Imagination’ in Hamlet and Japan, p.83  
82 Newel, p.161.
on the play as a whole extend to similar conclusions made by a transpersonal approach. He remarks that “Hamlet’s striving toward full appersonation is, indeed, a striving toward an ego state that must be evaluated as being of a higher order than one in which external demands are integrated in the form of authoritative command.” For Eissler the process of development proceeds thus: “while it carries within it the seed of neurotic conflict, in Hamlet, as the final deed shows, it has led to fully integrated and appersonated male adulthood.”

These findings are in partial accord with both my own reading of Hamlet and Wilber’s explanation of transpersonal development. Wilber argues that transpersonal critical interpretations of works of art allow that “higher states and visions are sometimes intermixed with personal pathologies and neuroses, but the states themselves are not pathological in their essence; quite the contrary, researchers consistently refer to them as extraordinary states of well-being.” In this way, I think we can see that Wilber would agree that Hamlet has indeed undergone profound transpersonal growth despite the neuroses that he is often associated with. This similarity reinforces my initially held belief that there are strong transpersonal components in Hamlet, and yet unfortunately Eissler fails to define in detail or chart the structures of ‘appersonation.’

**THE FINAL STAGE**

When Hamlet is challenged to a duel with Laertes there is a calm about his acceptance, even though Horatio seems perturbed. This seems to point at a keen discretion and
intuition on the part of the prince’s great ally, for indeed the fight has been rigged so that Hamlet will die by Laertes envenomed sword. By stark contrast, Hamlet appears to be at great peace and his countenance and words portray a mature quietude. Many critics believe this to be a conformation of the great transformation that has taken place in the prince.

Hamlet’s apology to Laertes is for Newell an important indication of his spiritual growth. He claims: “Conveniently making an excuse of the ‘madness’ based on the ‘antic disposition’ he had put on, but that he now privately recognises as an episode of real ‘madness,’ Hamlet dissociates himself from the person who wronged Laertes.” Newell clarifies this by suggesting that Hamlet “seems aware that the antic disposition has been an overlay on the real ‘sore distraction’ caused by his efforts to subsume himself under a revenger’s persona.” This analysis of the speech recognising dissociation from former selves and subsuming persona carries a strong transpersonal component in itself but Newell explicitly links it to a spiritual growth as well. He claims: “What is of great interest is that, on the ‘private’ level of this public speech, Hamlet links the revenge passion with madness in characterizing the impulse that caused him to thrust his sword into the arras. It is a very poignant apology because, below the public rhetorical surface, there is a moving subtextual elaboration of Hamlet’s private awareness of his victimization by the revenge passion.”

Rosenberg says that “Hamlet speaks his own name six times in the apology, as if he is distanced from the Jekyll and Hyde character he is describing,” and we can see this as clearly demarcating another transformation in the prince.

---

86 Newell, p.160-161.
87 Rosenberg, p.879.
Appraising the apology to Laertes, Eissler suggests that such a deep insight into human nature has “not yet been generally accepted even by the present culture and must still wait for later generations in order to be generally acknowledged.”

He goes on to say that this is especially true of “the spiritually cowardly, who are reluctant to enter an ideology that is new to them and about the consequences of which they are fearful.” Transpersonal literary interpretation is specifically concerned with the consequences of the ideological spiritual aspect of human nature.

Returning to Eissler’s suggestion that interpretations solely based on historical accuracy are “methodological nonsense” because he believes this is reductive, let us try a more expansive approach. Eissler’s argument is that Shakespeare was more than capable of transcending both the Elizabethan cultural framework and the mechanics of purely stage representation. For Eissler then, Shakespeare was able to imbue his characters with ‘real’ human qualities and emotions which can then be psychoanalysed as if they were living people. When it comes to a transpersonal psychological approach to interpreting literature, the case is not altogether different. For Shakespeare’s ideas to transcend the boundaries of the Elizabethan theatre and influence the culture outside and beyond the temporal curtilage of a given era we need only to look at the history of interest in his works and their continuing adaptations and interpretations. Given the longevity and depth of his influence on the literary world it would be folly to pretend that his works have played no hand in shaping at least a segment of the modern cultural consciousness. And I believe that it is Hamlet in particular that has had most bearing in this regard. How can it be that a figure from an early seventeenth century play could have illuminated so much interest in the study of consciousness? Part of the answer is

88 Eissler, p.142.
that *Hamlet* provides for one of the most remarkably consistent questions in the evolution of the species: what it means ‘to be.’ Therefore, it stands to reason that any exploration into the psychology of being will confront the kind of issues raised in Shakespeare’s play.

I believe that *Hamlet* and transpersonal psychology have mutuality, for the former can test the principles of the latter just as the reverse is the case. It is precisely because of the play’s stature in both the literary and psychological history of criticism that it has been chosen for this thesis. Eissler reports a recollection by one of Yeats’ contemporaries who heard the poet say “‘The moment Hamlet let pass the chance to stab his uncle, the modern psychological novel was born.’” Eissler goes on to conclude “This is a very remarkable comment; it needs only to be enlarged to include modern psychology as well.” If *Hamlet* did indeed give birth to the modern psychological novel, as Yeats claimed, as well as to modern psychological thought, as Eissler and others believe, then this has important implications for a concept of transpersonal literature. Is it possible that *Hamlet* has helped shape the tenets of transpersonal psychology? I believe this to be true and have found quotes and allusions to *Hamlet* in many of Wilber’s works and those of other transpersonal psychologists.

The psychiatrist, Eissler, says “In order to understand more fully the process of creating a universe, one has to think in terms of such theories as have been evolved by writers like Wilde and others. They have asserted that art is *superior to* life, that it

---

89 Ibid., p.227.
90 Ibid., p.4.
creates life, their theory is that life follows art and not the other way round. Such theories sound mystical, yet it is not impossible that they may be true.91

In reference to this point I maintain that *Hamlet* is continually chosen as a benchmark for new areas in psychological theorizing as well as continuing to be of a great significance to world literature and literary studies. As Harold Bloom asserts:

In reading about literature, I increasingly came to see that it was pre-Shakespearean and then post-Shakespearean. In fact, there was no getting away from Shakespeare. All the roads lead to him and all the roads lead away from him, and it is always going to be like that. And I think this transcends English and American literature, I think it is true of Western literature in general and perhaps in the end it will turn out to be true of world literature.

It is fair to state that the enormous amount of secondary material written about the prince has compounded the profundity of the play. That is, because of the massive amount of widely cultural and historical interest, *Hamlet* has been invested with a human phylogeny of its own, and the prince is, to quote W.F. Bynum and Michael Neve “a person – who has in essence been alive these three and a half centuries and more.”92 Transcendence indeed.

This is the historicity of Hamlet, the “constitutive nature of interpretations” that will each “confer a new meaning”93 but as a new layer, not as a renunciation of previous readings. And, if this is the case, then *Hamlet* and criticism of it, constitutes a corpus of interpretation of a single literary work that spans at least three hundred and fifty years of the phylogenetic ladder. In his remarkable analysis of the play, Eissler suggests that

91 Ibid., Ibid., p.15.
Shakespeare’s most celebrated work can actually and directly drive anthropogenesis: “Thus, one is inclined to muse, it is only the ontogenetic marvel of the genius that actually fulfils the phylogenetic miracle of anthropogenesis.” As we have previously observed, this is also Wilber’s view of evolution. If this is the case then, it is all too tempting for a transpersonal literary perspective to try to fathom what that genius was really writing about, since Eissler’s musings lead us inexorably to the conclusion that Shakespeare must represent one of Wilber’s high exemplars in the evolution of consciousness.

It is apparent from the material in the previous chapter on Hamlet that the idea of the play transcending in various ways is extremely widespread. Hamlet has ‘transcended the dimensions of a literary character’ (Bloom); Shakespeare ‘transcends the discursive explicit knowledge of his contemporaries’ and has ‘far transcended the narrow framework of stage effects’ (Eissler); Hamlet’s language has been described as ‘transcending linguistic formalities’ (Rosenberg); he is ‘a genius attempting to transcend the morality of his time’ (Goddard) and Paul Kane refers to the “transcultural aesthetic” in Hamlet.

The only way to reconcile these critics is to see that they are all hinting in some way or another to transpersonal states of consciousness. The recognition that these states embody themselves in the reality of the cultural bi-products, as we saw Mircea Eliade claim earlier in the thesis, will do much to aid interpretation.

I find monumental support for the arguments of this chapter in this quote from Rosenberg:

---

94 Eissler, p.3.
“Such questions, put unobtrusively by the play, finally focus on Hamlet’s progress through it: i.e., does his \textit{antic} become a growth process, fasten on him, does Hamlet dodge more readily into his created parts, will we know – will he know – when he is role-playing and when he is truly Hamlet? Is there a difference? Who will he become because of what he has been? A certain communion of trust finally is involved, and this is part of Shakespeare’s magic. We never resolve in the play the problem of identity versus role-playing; and yet we-audience feel we \textit{know} when we are in the presence of Hamlet and when of his various personae. We follow his ultimate self through the shifts and disguises, he adopts as we follow our own selves through our own role-playing … in all the changes and growth.”\textsuperscript{96}

In light of these comments, I would finally like to posit a provocative idea. Is it possible that in creating dramatis personae from the single consciousness of one individual we actually get something of a map of the spectrum of consciousness of that writer? Are we viewing the different transpersonal aspects and levels of Shakespeare’s own consciousness, albeit broken up and tampered with? Is Laertes an archetypal example of a hot-headed male youth? Are Ophelia and Gertrude made up from Shakespeare’s own Jungian Anima? Are Polonius’ platitudes a reflection in parody of the poet’s own earlier work? And is Hamlet, as Freud among others deduced, a shadow of Shakespeare and a symbol of his own transformation during the writing and re-writing of the play? In sum, could these characters reflect the various personae of Shakespeare’s own consciousness?\textsuperscript{97} Rosenberg intuits a very conscious effort from Shakespeare to make the audience aware of such ambiguities:

Since the process on the Mousetrap stage so intimately parallels the preparation that must have gone into the play \textit{Hamlet}, and the Mousetrap performance matches it even more closely, we are tempted to perspectify it metatheatrically: here is Actor A,

\textsuperscript{96} Rosenberg, p.436.

\textsuperscript{97} Rosenberg, p.436.
acting a role before us, getting Actor B to act roles before his stage audience, so we as A’s audience must become aware of how ingeniously Shakespeare is playing Chinese boxes.98

Admittedly these are purely speculations, yet I am tempted to suggest that while Hamlet did not quite reach the subtle realms in Wilber’s hierarchy, there is a hint that perhaps Shakespeare did, and that this insight gave him access, literally, to the spectrum of consciousness. Certainly R. H. Blyth seems to think that: “Shakespeare is so fluid that he takes the shape of the human vessel he is poured into, and yet remains himself all the time.”99 And Rosenberg is no less assured that “In Hamlet … the spectrum in the human being from near angel to near beast is fully explored”[author’s emphasis].100 Is what we witness in the play in fact Shakespeare’s ‘Consciousness as Such’? Wilber’s description of this runs: “As infinite, all-pervading and all-embracing Consciousness, it is both One and Many, Only and All, Source and Suchness, Cause and Condition, such that all things are only a gesture of this One, and all forms a play upon it.”101

Perhaps our last word from the distinguished psychoanalyst Eissler hints at just this: “by the time he came to writing Hamlet, … nothing could come from his pen that would not be great theater. He therefore aimed at something quite different – namely, the creation of life.”102 And when we learn that the playwright often included himself in the dramatis personae, playing the Ghost, our suspicions should be aroused. For perhaps

---

97 “I wonder if that demolition of the boundary between Hamlet and Shakespeare couldn’t be extrapolated in a certain way to say that a play or even a poem exists not as a reflection of experience but as an experience in itself.” Paul Kane, in Salt, p.34.
98 Rosenberg, p.554.
100 Rosenberg, p.178. Similarly Wilber adopts the quote from Plotinus that “Mankind is poised midway between the gods and the beasts” to describe the current consciousness of our era. Up From Eden. Wheaton, Il: Quest Books, 1996, p.xix.
102 Eissler, p.320.
this is the only Shakespearean character that can be termed, somewhat audaciously, a 
dramatis trans-persona!
TRANSPERSONAL LITERATURE

‘Superliterature’ – literature being the tragedy or comedy of private lives, while superliterature was about the possible end of the world. Beyond personal history.¹

The above quote is taken from Saul Bellow’s short story *A Theft* and the description of superliterature seems to embrace the ideas that this thesis contains. For literature that is ‘beyond personal history’ and ‘suprapersonal’ neatly parallels the concept of a transpersonal literature. Besides that, the literary texts chosen for examination have all had something to do with apocalyptic scenarios or the ‘possible end of the world.’ We saw that *Lord of the Flies* presented a post-nuclear apocalyptic vision, and how in *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz had scribbled “Exterminate all the brutes!” at the end of his ‘pamphlet’ of ‘noble words.’ This was extrapolated in the title of Coppola’s film to mean *Apocalypse Now*.

The film charts the devastating effects of warfare on both the individual and the cultural environment. E. N. Dorall, commenting on Conrad’s tale, claims that “What the novelist warned against and in some measure provided for has arrived. We are in the great Last Day of the Apocalypse.”

When we considered *Hamlet* we saw how the play was written at a time of uncertainty in England, when apocalyptic themes were abundant and that the prince seemed to also represent the individual modern consciousness in the post-nuclear age. At the same time “the Ghost embodies and objectifies an apocalyptic ethos peculiar to the last years of the sixteenth century.” Marvin Rosenberg affirms that “the Ghost’s “appearance” is apocalyptic, compressing many anxieties pervasive in the play. It is at once a reminder of time’s passing, an image of the looming of the past over the present, and a presentiment of the future; a symbol of the realm of death and its impingement on the living.”

This theme of apocalypse is provocative in light of the reasons given in the first chapter for the rise of transpersonal psychology – the atomic bomb. The bomb raised the consciousness and awareness of the generation that witnessed its detonation and for once the human species was able to envisage its own, permanent destruction by its own hands.

---


Before this time the apocalyptic nightmare was largely left to the realm of the gods or to nature, for never before had humankind the potential for worldwide annihilation. Nevertheless, the idea of apocalypse has haunted the human species from its inception and has been a perennial theme in the literatures of the world. I believe that transpersonal literature will very often contain the concept of apocalypse within it because it encompasses the death of self as well as the species at large.

The concept of apocalypse is humanity living with death on a day to day basis collectively. It is therefore the equivalent of the individual mystic approach to individual transcendence of the fear of death – universal to all the esoteric eastern mystic disciplines, which relies on living with the concept of death everyday. We quoted Garrett Stewart commenting that *Heart of Darkness* produced the death of the reader by “imaginative proxy,” and this is precisely the kind of text that will be important to transpersonal literary analysis.

Whether this literature represents the imaginative death of the self or apocalypse for the species, the result will be a study of the human condition, its evolution or termination. William Golding claims: “There are people who have this genuine attachment to … not the human condition so much as the human being … It has some basic connection with the value of the human being. I think this is the most important literary thing.”\(^5\) And the author of *Lord of the Flies* goes on to suggest “the only kind of real progress is the progress of the individual towards some kind of – I would describe it *ethical* – integration and his consequent effect upon the people who are near him. How far society can progress by this means I wouldn’t know. I think it could progress

perhaps a long way, because the one thing about really good people – I suppose I am talking about saints – is the fact that their effect is incalculable.”

For this reason the thesis attempted a steady progression towards literary individualism. In Lord of the Flies it is the society that crushes the individual. Simon, Ralph and Piggy are eventually starved of their individualism as the aggressive society of hunters takes over the island. In Heart of Darkness the case is not altogether different, but since Marlow is more enlightened than Ralph, he is quite able to transcend the societal and political demands, but is just, only just able to control his impulse to follow Kurtz into the ‘heart of darkness.’ When the individual loses faith in the society and culture that surrounds them, the choice is either to accept the fate of the outsider or to try to affect change. Marlow is ostracised and having survived a perilously close psychotic breakdown resorts to the fate of the wandering mystic storyteller, on the margins of society. By the time we examined Hamlet, we were looking at ‘the observed of all observers,’ a man who, because of his very individual strength and disaffiliation with the surrounding society, is able to affect change and bring about a significant evolution in the consciousness of those that surround him. It takes him time and it costs him his life, but eventually, Hamlet succeeds in rewriting the fate of Denmark. In turn, Shakespeare’s portrayal of ‘madness’ Eissler argues, “was a spark that set the Western world ablaze.”

These dynamic exchanges between the individual and the culture are the ontogenetic and phylogenetic arms of consciousness that represent the area of study for Wilber’s transpersonal psychology. Wilber claims that consciousness is the drive toward spirit

---

6 Biles, p.40.
unfolding itself in the manifest world and this inevitably leads to questions of what the ultimate meaning of life is, for both the individual and the species. Apocalypse represents the actual physical death of the species – the collective and cultural death of us all, and it is easy to imagine. What seems a harder question to resolve is the infinite continuation of the species with no endgame and no ultimate ground.

In this way, I see apocalypse as the final Atman project and in opposition to the transpersonal notion of humanity’s increasing consciousness to a state of manifest spirit. In short, apocalypse seems more likely and more reasonable than eternal manifest bliss in the world. Therefore literature abounds with these two opposing forces – eternal death and eternal life – Eros and Thanatos.

The one axiom, assumption, faith or belief that Ken Wilber needs in order to proclaim the tenets of transpersonal psychology, as we have seen, is that human evolution is a drive toward Atman, or an unfolding of ever-present Spirit, ascension towards godhead, buddhahood, etc. This drive is pervasive at both the phylogenetic (cultural, collective) level and at the ontogenetic (individual, personal level). Without this precondition the whole edifice of his philosophy crumbles, because Wilber asserts that the cosmos has a meaning and a direction; that we are already part of the journey, whether we believe it or not.

For Wilber the evolution of consciousness is taking place with or without the individual’s consent or even acknowledgment of such a concept. The drive toward Atman is affecting the transcendence of the entire phylogenetic ladder and that drive, is motivated by a few individuals who, willingly or not, set the pace ahead of the mainstream cultural environment. They are the mystics, sages, saints and holy men who practice peaceful meditation and contemplation. For me, the net is slung a little
wider to include the poets, philosophers, writers and artists who have attempted to examine the realm of human consciousness and its evolution. Joseph Campbell asserts that in today’s society “spiritual realizations” are only to be found in the writings of “the really great poets and great novelists,” but unfortunately fails to mention any examples of what may fall into this category.

Herein lies a difficulty peculiar to all literary interpretation: evaluation. Transpersonal literary interpretation may well centre on aspects of texts that refer to transpersonal growth in consciousness, however, this may do nothing to illuminate the success of a given work in terms of its artistic merit. So what benefit might arise from examining works through a transpersonal lens?

**TRANSPERSONAL LITERARY INTERPRETATION**

When examining a work of art, Wilber insists upon a “fusion of horizons” where the interpreter hermeneutically enters, “as far as possible, the contexts determining the art.” This process involves trying to locate the art in as many contexts as possible, including the ‘primal holon.’ This is the “original intent of the maker, which may involve numerous levels of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious, reaching from the individual self to the transpersonal and spiritual dimensions (the spectrum of consciousness).”

But how can we ever hope to capture the intent of the author simply by the representation of the artwork? Wilber examines this problem in a brace of chapters in

---

The Eye of Spirit and submits: “No doubt that attempting to ‘reconstruct’ and ‘recover’ this original intent is a very delicate, difficult, and in some ways endless task. And it might even be that this attempt is, in the last analysis, more of an ideal than a pragmatic possibility. But this is no warrant to simply dismiss this original intent as if it did not exist at all, which is what every subsequent theory of art and its interpretation has done.” What Wilber prefers is that we include the “idealized attempt to recover as much of the original, primal holon [authorial intent] as is pragmatically possible: this will always be part of an integral theory of interpretation.”

After all most of us, he suggests, when reading Plato’s Republic “want to know, as best we can, what Plato originally meant. Most of us do not want to know what the Republic means to my grandmother.”

There then is the simple explanation for the idealized attempts of this thesis. It is impossible for a theory of transpersonal literary interpretation to ignore the primal act of creativity of the artwork, as this is precisely where all subsequent theorizing finds its source and energy. While it may be a contingent interpretation, as we have seen, a vast number of critics do indeed agree upon some of the consonances. And despite the difficulties of finding the primal holon, many still nevertheless find themselves running smack into the discussion. Time and again critics try to reconcile their findings during their analysis of Hamlet with a final speculation on the author’s intent. For example, Freud, who initially saw Hamlet simply as Shakespeare himself at one remove. As we have said, Freud’s reading is, for transpersonal analysis, too limiting and reductionist in that it tends to drag all meaning and interpretation back under the umbrella of Oedipal

---

10 Ibid., p.115.
longings. But that is not to say that components of his ideas are not enmeshed in the spectrum of interpretation that would form an integral transpersonal view of the play.

That Shakespeare imbued his prince with many of his own characteristics, conscious or unconscious, is not far-fetched in the least. The transpersonal reading sees the Oedipal complex as an integral and early part of Hamlet’s development but allows for a greater scope of possibilities. As we have seen transpersonal theory sees Hamlet moving from pre-Oedipal to post-Oedipal consciousness, in fact, at least a partial if not complete, resolution of his Oedipal conflict. John Russell: “Freud’s concept for the Oedipus complex can only be adequately understood when positioned in a framework of evolutionary biology.”\footnote{Russell, John. *Hamlet and Narcissus*. London: Delaware Press, 1995, p.183.} Therefore, for Russell, it is important but subordinate to the theories of anthropogenesis, which is exactly as Wilber has it.

The importance of understanding secondary criticisms is that Wilber says this concerns the “public artwork materialized,” in its form and content, the history of response and reception and the wider contexts of economic, political, linguistic and cultural contexts, “without which specific meanings could not be generated.” Most importantly perhaps, is that ultimately “understanding a work of art is simultaneously a process of self-understanding.”\footnote{Wilber. *The Eye of Spirit*, p.133.} For this reason Wilber asserts that until recently “art was associated with profound spiritual transformation.”\footnote{Ibid., p.135.}

This fact alone contributes to what Wilber feels is the fault with modern literary theory, because what happened to that transformation in the hands of the baby boomer generation was that it became narcissistic and parasitic. He tells us “the critic needed
desperately to get out of the back seat and into the driver’s seat.”\textsuperscript{14} Thus some theorists made desperate claims, as in the case of Catherine Belsey: “No longer parasitic on an already given literary text, criticism constructs its object, produces the work.”\textsuperscript{15} Wilber goes on to suggest that this sort of criticism is both “news to most artists” and “the embarrassing dilemma for this brand of postmodernism,” which erases the artwork so that theories have “nothing to actually respond to.”\textsuperscript{16} And this certainly appears to be the environment in the continually decreasing study of literature today. When it comes to the current climate in literary criticism, Wilber does not pull his punches:

- There is probably no crazier – meaning insane – field than “lit crit,” overrun as it is with political agendas parading as interpretive methods, congested as it is with constructed deconstruction, postimperial imperialism, anti-female feminists, universal anti-universalists, and other assorted self-contradictions. Art and literary theory might seem a rather narrow, esoteric, and specialized field, but I consider it the absolute litmus test for any integral theory.\textsuperscript{17}

For Wilber, the aforementioned approaches can only ever represent partial truths but that an integral approach will attempt a coherent system incorporating the greatest number of truths from the greatest number of fields. In order to do this, Wilber looks for what he calls ‘orienting generalizations’ and arranges them into networks of interlocking conclusions. This, Jack Crittenden says, “veers sharply from a method of mere eclecticism” so that Wilber criticizes not the truths of these fields, but their partiality.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.129.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.130.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p.xviii.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.x.
Transpersonal literary interpretation then, offers a tool by which the examination of consciousness can be set against the background of transpersonal psychology in an effort to determine subjectively whether the text examined can offer some form of “self-understanding” or even “spiritual transformation.” And in order to gain the greatest integral vision, must look for ‘orienting generalizations’ and attempt to interlock the conclusions.

That is why when we looked at Hamlet, for example, it was important to accept the psychoanalytic, historical, dramatic, theological and literary readings as partial truths within the context of the greater ‘industry’ surrounding Shakespeare’s play. The traditional psychoanalytic approach, for example, rejects any spiritual component as a genuine area of consciousness, even as a partial truth, reducing it as it does, to neuroses in the prince. And this narrowing of the field of inquiry applies greatly to other approaches to the play. By contrast, transpersonal interpretation accepts the psychoanalytic reading of these neuroses as partial truths.

However, even the psychoanalytic tradition has had to become more integrative in its approach, as we saw John Russell admit that modern psychology had more in common with Shakespeare than with Freud. As each discipline expands its approach to include more areas of research, it will necessarily have to become more integrative, find more ‘orienting generalizations,’ and organise them into “networks of interlocking conclusions.”19 This will inevitably lead more fields to adopting a Wilberian philosophy of integral theory.

19 Ibid., p. ix.
For transpersonal literature it will mean finding and analysing texts that appear to contain transpersonal approaches to consciousness and moral self-stage progression within characters. It will also mean searching for critical interpretations that look for ontogenetic and phylogenetic advances in consciousness within given literary works.

**Character Analysis and the Transpersonal Life Cycle**

For all three texts examined I was able to access material from critics which quickly established a constituent argument for the examination of the basic three realms and transpersonal components within each of the works and much of it boiled down to the use of common themes, phrases and words. Critics who seemed to align themselves to the idea of development or regression taking place within the chosen works were favoured for research. Of particular interest were the correlations between literary criticism and psychoanalytic and psychological interpretations. If we arrange these words into three columns that represent the ‘prepersonal, personal and transpersonal’ levels in the spectrum of consciousness, we can begin to discern where characters from the texts are generally situated in the transpersonal life cycle. The list is compiled from various words used to describe the different realms and stages of development by psychologists, literary artists and critics that are most analogous to Wilber’s descriptions of the three realms. There is particular attention paid to the descriptions of characters in the critical analyses of the texts examined. But there are additional words that are included to expand on the vocabulary in order to embrace further possibilities. Therefore the list is by no means exhaustive but representational, by no means comprehensive or finite, but symbolic. From this we can compile a simple chart that
represents areas of interest for research of transcendent consciousness within literary texts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PREPERSONAL</strong></th>
<th>→</th>
<th><strong>PERSONAL</strong></th>
<th>→</th>
<th><strong>TRANSPERSONAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>premental</td>
<td>mental</td>
<td>transmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preverbal/prelinguistic</td>
<td>verbal/ psycho-/ linguistic</td>
<td>transverbal/translinguistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretemporal</td>
<td>temporal</td>
<td>atemporal/transtemporal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preintellectual</td>
<td>intellectual</td>
<td>philosophical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visible</td>
<td>imaginable</td>
<td>visionary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mundane</td>
<td>worldly</td>
<td>suprapersonal/cosmic/universal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summary/preliminary</td>
<td>liminal/ordinary</td>
<td>extraordinary/plenary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material</td>
<td>sexual</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical</td>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>metaphysical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biosensory</td>
<td>sensory</td>
<td>extra/supersensory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-rational/prerational</td>
<td>rational</td>
<td>transrational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>mind</td>
<td>spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visible</td>
<td>palpable</td>
<td>mystical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye of flesh</td>
<td>eye of reason</td>
<td>inner eye/third eye/eye of spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instinct</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>intuition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descendent</td>
<td>ascendent</td>
<td>transcendent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre/sub-conscious</td>
<td>(self) conscious superconscious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id</td>
<td>ego, superego transegoic/egolessness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need</td>
<td>desire love/Being-love (Maslow)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>societal/cultural</td>
<td>individual multi/transcultural/global/universal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-manifest</td>
<td>manifest unmanifest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precognition</td>
<td>cognosis gnosis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the above table in conjunction with our interpretation of the chosen literary texts we can see how certain patterns develop. If we take *Lord of the Flies* to begin with, we can see that comments regarding Simon are situated in column three the transpersonal column for we have seen him described as ‘mystical’ (Reilly, Rosenfield), ‘visionary’ (Golding), ‘intuitive’ (Niven) and so forth. These descriptions find themselves alongside the definitions for the transpersonal realms by the psychologists and therefore we would examine Simon and comments about him from the point of view of the transpersonal realms. Jack, we saw equated with the ‘irrational’ (Reilly),
reversion’ (Niven) ‘savage’ (Talon), ‘primitive’ and ‘Freudian id personified’ (Oldsey and Weintraub). We saw him possessing a weak ego, identifying with society, instinct and desire and for this reason we see regress from the personal in column two to the prepersonal in column one. The transpersonal literary critic would then examine Jack’s character from the way in which these realms are configured within the transpersonal psychological framework, in place of, for instance, a Freudian rendition.

Similarly, in the case of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, we saw that, while his consciousness seemed to increase dramatically, even being described as self-actualized, the necessary correct transpersonal translation of each level shift in consciousness was not present and resulted in regression. We saw him described as ‘bestial’ (Mudrick), ‘the *reductio* of Imperialism’ ‘irrational’ ‘primitive,’ (Levenson), ‘a weak idealist’ (Russell), ‘egoistic’ (Moser). This in turn saw the collateral demise of any moral stages and therefore the complete destruction of his self-sense.

Marlow by contrast was viewed by some critics as ‘spiritual,’ ‘a Bodhisattva,’ ‘enlightened’ (Stein); ‘worldly’ and ‘buddhalike’ (LaBrasca); possessed of ‘self-knowledge’ (Maes-Jelinek, Moser); ‘fully illuminated and realized’ [self-actualized] (Thale), with ‘revelations of divinity’ (Haugh), etc., and this places him within the transpersonal column.

In order for Hamlet to accept the ghost as a representation of his father; in order for him to ‘believe’ in the ghost, act upon its advice, or fear the ghost as he does; even to doubt the ghost, he must to some extent have access to the third realm. In our list it would be represented by the terms *spiritual, metaphysical, supersensory* in column

---

three/cell two. Remember we witnessed Michael Long refer to Hamlet’s ‘super perception’ and ‘superior consciousness.’ Equally Shoichiro Kawai referred to his “extraordinary power of perception” and Helen Gardner alluded to his “superior power of insight.”

Observations on the prince are also contained in the next cell down with the words spirit, mystical, eye of spirit, ‘inward eye’ (Rosenberg). We also saw him described as acknowledging the ‘transhuman’ (Eissler) and that the play was ‘transcultural’ (Kane) and transcendent (Bloom, Eissler). Equally, Hamlet must transcend the pain of loss of his ‘romantic love’ (Blyth, Munakata), he must transcend the egocentric, the personal and the self-consciousness of office and status, and we can see this represented in the transfer from column two to three in cell five and so on.

Furthermore in order for Hamlet to come to terms with his inability to rationalise his situation using the familiar reason of his former self, he must become transrational, translinguistic (Long, Rosenberg, Iwasaki) – and this alone best explains, in transpersonal terms, Hamlet’s ‘antic disposition.’ But Hamlet, represents the longest journey through the personal realms of all our character studies and for this reason makes the play a fascinating journey of transcendence.

It is imperative that the last column be viewed as including the elements of the first two columns. That is, it differentiates but incorporates the other values. I would like to add that, in my opinion, it is also true that once the last column, i.e., the transpersonal realm is accessed, there is more easily a lateral slippage from cell to cell within that column. That is, once the transrational is accepted, it becomes easier for the self to accept the elements of the other cells. But the process does not have to be mutual in all

21 See chapter four.
cases, for while transrationality allows for a spiritual interpretation of phenomena it does not necessarily have to accept it, whereas traditional empirically grounded rationality expressly precludes it. However, in contrast, some elements of this process must mutually agree; the self-awareness of transtemporality will consequently be immediately sensitive to the transrationality of this concept. In fact, what I outline here as lateral slippage from trans-cell to trans-cell in the diagram is the equivalent of what Wilber refers to as translations on each level of the structures of consciousness, as we discussed in chapter one. But this notion of translation on the levels also incorporates the possibility of a psychological translation, whereas what I am proposing here is simply the logical necessity for this to occur. And notice that I am attempting to support the idea of translogic using a logical process, which is incorporated into a translogical system. If we take all the elements of the analysis of the characters from the three literary texts and plot their transpersonal development against the transpersonal life cycle we can view it in the following way:

Fig. 4. Transpersonal development of characters in the examined literary texts set against Wilber’s Transpersonal Life Cycle.
This diagram is the result of a seed of an idea that I hope has germinated to some extent at least during the preceding chapters. That is, a proposal that names analysis along these lines as transpersonal literary criticism. I have to some extent attempted to illustrate what I consider to be authoritative texts displaying more than just hints of transpersonal elements. However, I feel the truth is far more broad-reaching in fact; that all texts will contain tropes of a transpersonal nature because the very act of writing literature is in itself a transpersonal endeavour. In creating a work, the artist transcends his personal history and produces characters, events and meanings in an entirely new realm of consciousness, one that is not necessarily ‘personal’ or ‘factual’ but contains the consciousness of these very real realms.

The best maps of the evolution of consciousness are not contained within the convenient boundaries of theories and philosophies, political documentation and representations in the corporate media. They are contained within the more abstract forms of art and literature that represent the diversity of the cultural texture and consciousness of a particular time, as well as any individual transcendence of the cultural context. Samuel Hynes writes: “If there is only the consciousness of ourselves, then the only possible matter of fiction is consciousness, and the sensations that consciousness records. And this is precisely Conrad’s understanding of his art.”

Authors are not necessarily writing what is culturally acceptable and that means that their viewpoint is representative of a consciousness that speaks outside the cultural framework as well as from within it. Eissler makes the following case: “Indeed, the artist is always ahead of the psychologist, and a genius who is a playwright may be able

---

to perceive and represent depths of the mind which even sharpened clinical observation has not yet penetrated. That is to say, literary creations may bring to the surface phenomena of the human world that are so deeply submerged in actual life and therefore overlaid by so many layers that they cannot be extrapolated from data actually observed. Such creations make the arcane observable.”

Great works will transcend their era, their culture and even the individuality of their creator. Most of the works that will achieve transcendence will fall into the category of Bellow’s above description of superliterature – literature that concerns itself with consciousness, life and the species itself rather than specific events and histories – this I maintain is better understood as transpersonal literature. Great creations within literature can even transcend the language that produced them as is the case with *Hamlet*, in the same way that Jesus Christ, Buddha, and countless other historical figures, have continued to live in the consciousness of subsequent generations through the initial medium of literature. Where I see transpersonal literary criticism playing a role, is in providing a framework of discussion whereby texts can be examined with consideration to the spiritual aspects of the work, without necessarily prescribing to the western theological perspective. We saw that countless critics did indeed tackle criticism in just such a way, even in the case of *Hamlet*, although we relied heavily on Japanese critics to provide these insights.

But with an increasing awareness in the West of occidental spiritual philosophies it may be that in order to understand artists such as Golding, Conrad and Shakespeare in broader spiritual terms, transpersonal psychological interpretation can provide a necessary methodological foothold. For it has been shown time again that criticism sees

23 Eissler, p.470.
these artists as transcending the religious, philosophical and psychological stranglehold of their culture. Bloom is so right when he claims: “You can’t subsume Shakespeare under academic anthropological categories, any more than you can subsume him under Foucault. It just does not work. He won’t be contained.”

In the preceding chapters literary criticism from many different perspectives provided an incredible storehouse of intelligent and articulate theories which, although using a different parlance, uncovered many of the features anticipated by the theories of the psychologists. Maslow in *Toward a Psychology of Being* says: “In theory at least we may also search any life history for episodes of self-actualization, especially those of artists, intellectuals and other especially creative people, of profoundly religious people, and of people experiencing great insights in psychotherapy, or in other important growth experiences.”

There appeared to be much agreement between the critics who were chosen and at times they revealed incredibly similar insights into the psychologies contained in the texts as were unearthed by Wilber’s psychological models. Again I think this points up the fact that there are implicit structures of consciousness contained as potentials in the literary texts that can be uncovered by sympathetic reading and the advantage that transpersonal literary criticism has, is that the structures of consciousness and self-stages are conveniently laid-out.

---

24 Harold Bloom talking to Paul Kane in *Salt, Volume 12: Working Conditions*. Salt Publishing: Western Australia, 2000, p.45

We have seen how in *Lord of the Flies* Ralph can be envisioned symbolically as a Promethean demigod and that Jack appears to some critics as a demiurge. When considering *Heart of Darkness* we have heard arguments that conceive of Marlow as a meditating buddha and Kurtz portrayed as seeking godhood through omniscience and dominion over the world. We saw Hamlet’s pursuit of godlike reason and his attempts to transcend the mundane and the material.

For us this does indeed paint a picture that Wilber, following Plotinus, tells us places mankind on an evolutionary ascent ‘poised halfway between the beasts and the gods’ and in this way transpersonal psychology seems an altogether appropriate tool for literary interpretation. But this speaks just of character analysis and the interpretation of the texts and yet it is clear that there is another, ineffable transpersonal component. And that is the implication of the transpersonal aspect of authorship, writing and reading literature. We have heard critics like Golding, sound remarkably close in their affinities to the beliefs and theories held in Wilber’s writings. We have seen how many believe that Conrad, just like his narrator, Marlow, went through a process of transformation from ‘sailor to writer.’ More importantly we have but merely scratched at the implications of Shakespeare’s works transcending their time and providing one of the most dominant and constant heuristic forces in the cultural consciousness.

And for us this represents the realm of literary experience and re-evaluates the discipline, making it important both for the edification of the culture, but also as a distinct chronicler of individual and cultural rising consciousness. Therefore, it is impossible and reductionist to try to subsume literary studies in the too-readily heralded
terminology expounded by the smokescreen known as ‘cultural studies.’ To summarise, Wilber insists that the ‘web of life’ is constructed of holons which are wholes that are in turn parts of a bigger whole. He himself, having been an extremely prolific writer in the fields of psychology, sociology, cultural theory and philosophy, has finally arrived at fiction in order to communicate his ideas in a book entitled _Boomeritis_. Further, we have discovered how transpersonal psychology borrows so heavily from literary tradition in all its diverse and wonderful formats. So it might be argued that the whole of transpersonal psychology’s ideas and models will inevitably lead to the conclusion that all such wisdom is contained within the vast storehouse of individual and cultural consciousness that is both contained and given spirit in transpersonal literature.
CONCLUSION

In the introduction I suggested that we would try to identify evidence of the dynamic exchange between the ontogenetic and phylogenetic characteristics in the evolution of human consciousness and see if it could be picked up in literary texts and the critical body of works that surround them. In order to do this I examined three well-known literary works as well as the body of criticism and analysis that they subsequently encouraged.

In *Lord of the Flies* we saw how Golding and critics perceived the island to be a microcosm of the world at large – or at least the western half of it. We saw how the author, who studied archaeology, played out his theme on the one hand in accordance with how he saw the dawn of man and the birth of primitive tribes. While on the other hand, his characters drew attention to the conflicts of personality and individuality, responsibility and morality and we mapped their personae and the events in the tale in accordance with Wilber’s views on both individual and collective consciousness development. In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* we took the examination of the moral issue into the realm of adults presented with environmental hardships akin to those on Golding’s island. We pursued the idea of individual effort and restraint when faced with the potential gratification of all lusts, desires and satisfaction and saw the gradual decadence of the cultural ideology. In this case we witnessed the interplay between the façade of the ‘polite civilisation’ of the colonialists and the savage, willing and
psychotic plunge into the bestial limits of an individual who exemplified that society at one time. This one man – Kurtz – was seen in conjunction with the narrator, Marlow, who while similar in many ways to the manager of the Inner Station, was able to exercise restraint through self-knowledge brought about by hard work. These are the very principles of life in Japanese Zen temples and this is why Marlow was seen by some critics to represent a mystic teacher from the east or even a bodhisattva. This restraint and self knowledge was one of the key elements that we gave as a prerequisite for the transcendence of evil deeds in the world in our introduction when we looked at the problem of evil. We saw that from a transpersonal perspective, growth in consciousness involves self-stages concerned with making choices consciously and subconsciously which affect the outcome of both the individual and the cultural environment. And Marlow is usually, regarded by critics as having made the right choice to avoid the conscious praxis of the ‘heart of darkness.’ Yet intimate knowledge of that darkness in the self appears to many as an indispensable component of transcending to a better understanding within individual consciousness and because of his proximity to Kurtz, Marlow paradoxically was able to rapidly gain inner wisdom. That, in turn made him a profound teacher in raising the consciousness aboard the Nellie as to what the colonists were really achieving in the Congo. It may only be the one narrator who is affected by Marlow’s vision; and it may only be a subtle and narrow transformation, yet the narrator begins to see the ‘heart of darkness’ in terms of the River Thames and London. In this way, there is more than a hint that Conrad believed an individual’s transference of powerful imagery could actually raise cultural consciousness. We know from Conrad’s notes on his life and works that this is indeed a process he believed in. He writes: ‘My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the
power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is above all, to make you see.”¹ Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* provides us with a speculation on what it means for human beings to regress to savagery both in terms of the individual and the culture, while claiming to be civilizing a continent and raising awareness. *Hamlet* provides for myriad interpretations, yet what is most significant perhaps is the fact that interpretation is continuing and that for many critics, the development of Hamlet’s character, from a lower order consciousness to some form of mature integrated self, is what represents the heart of the play.

The thrust of the main argument then is that transpersonal psychology comes the closest to explaining the changes which take effect in various states of developmental consciousness both ontogenetically and phylogenetically. These transpersonal states can be observed in writings of literature and that viewing these texts with the overview of transpersonal psychology will offer new and varied interpretations. But perhaps more significantly, that literature informs transpersonal psychology and is an historical storehouse of data and experience as well as an ongoing process of development. I hope to have shown that there is such a body of works that can be regarded as representative of transpersonal literature and to suggest that there are many other works that could be seen as transpersonal literature. In conclusion while it is important to recognise the shortfall of a theory that assumes a spiritual evolution taking place in the human species there may be benefit in recognising such a strength of this conviction. There is always the opportunity to suggest a need for ongoing research and the continuing debate and to call for the incorporation of as many texts as possible into the insights of the transpersonal literary field.

We have concluded that the original ‘primal holons’ of literary works provide the source material, the framework and the substance of all subsequent analysis. These works represent an evolutionary map of human consciousness and development both en masse and in some cases as individual works – exactly in the way Wilber suggests that there is both a personal and a cultural evolution of consciousness.

The body of literature in existence represents the material of the cultural consciousness historical and contemporary and individual works treat of the personal or ontogenetic realms of consciousness. Our investigation has sought to supplement the work of Ken Wilber by adding literary works that have appeared to play significant roles in the continuing developing consciousness of the human species. These appear to be texts which seem to interpenetrate with the consciousness of individuals and cultures in a timeless fashion. The texts were chosen for what appeared to be their appropriateness to the discussion, but it is believed that any major body of work could provide a rich source of material for the discussion of transpersonal literature. The key is the way in which the network of ideas is compared and mapped out according to the models represented in Wilber’s works.

We have come full circle – from those darkest of clouds with their ominous black rain – a silver lining: the seeds of Zen drifted into the consciousness of a small but select group of individuals who, through their inspirational storytelling and artistic sensitivity awoke the consciousness of the great Western superpower.

Meanwhile across the Atlantic a former British naval officer sat down to retell an old tale. William Golding looked into the core of consciousness of humankind in order to explore the reasons that gave rise to those apocalyptic weapons.
Subsequently in America, transpersonal psychology appeared and tackled the same tenets of Zen and using its models we discovered that those universal truths that form the Great Chain of Being abound in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, itself a play with apocalyptic overtones. And it is not at all surprising that we therefore find “Hamlet, whether in ‘hakama’ or in jeans, is alive and well in Japan today,” communicating those universal themes of individual transcendence from within a developing cultural consciousness – the only one to have experienced a nuclear attack. Kauko Matsuoka suggests: “This may well account for the current popularity of Hamlet in Japan … A Hamlet who speaks contemporary Japanese is a mirror which can well reflect the troubles of our own world.”

Therefore, where there is apocalypse there springs, albeit tentatively, a hope. Where the cultural consciousness fails, the individual can transcend and give birth to a new understanding. Even in a climate of nihilism and death we can find the smallest seed of enlightenment within the human psyche that can penetrate a seemingly insurmountable task – the evolution of individual consciousness. If Wilber is correct then this will inevitably lead to a greater awareness within the human species. And it is only through the subtlety of meditation, vision-image, intuition, creativity and symbolism that these advances can take place. One of the areas of human knowledge that endeavours to do this is the literary landscape. Consequently, interpretative methods must be available to study the potential for human consciousness development and this is what transpersonal literary analysis should focus upon.

---

Open-mindedness, above all, seems to be the requirement. To paraphrase Krishnamurti – if we leave the window open the breeze may blow in and replenish the air in the room. If we leave the window closed and our minds do not embrace the possibility of a great evolution in our consciousness, then at best we will become atrophied, at worst we will regress into savagery and the descent will be precipitous.

---


-------------


Kopp, Sheldon B. *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* New York: Bantam, 1981.


Long before the US high command decided to unleash the apocalyptic ordnance that would rain down on Baghdad during the invasion of Iraq, the affects of such First World weaponry on an impoverished nation were already given a psychological profile. The attacks were designed to ‘Shock and Awe’ the Iraqi commanders into submission and the general population into a frenzy of rebellion against Saddam Hussein’s ruling Ba’athist regime.

‘Shock and Awe’ became the journalistic buzz-phrase of the western media in the lead up to and during the initial phases of the US military’s incursion into one of the tripartite countries in President George W. Bush’s ‘Axis of Evil’ (Iraq, Iran, North Korea).

The phrase ‘Shock and Awe’ was coined by US military theorist Harlan K. Ullman who developed his argument about the psychological advantages of a deadly, precise and overwhelming attack from the hitherto most effective methods of warfare: Nazi ‘Blitzkrieg’ (Lightning War) and the atomic bombs that annihilated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

However, it is my contention that history will prove the American military’s psychological guesswork to be wrong in the case of involvement in Iraq. Even if military historians have traditionally accorded success of this tactic with regard to Hitler’s 6-8 day (depending on sources) rout of Poland or the surrender of Japan, the
Iraqis were not compelled into seizing democracy, making the psychological supposition of ‘shock and awe’ only specious.

The terrifying truth of real psychological warfare is that it only really becomes apparent when the expensive pyrotechnics are over and people are confronted face to face with the psychological ‘other’ or ‘beast’ of their enemy. Despite spending trillions of dollars on weaponry research and billions of dollars per week ‘on the ground’ the US occupation forces were faced with humanity’s most terrifying adversary. They were fighting an invisible, unspecific enemy with multi-objectives, obeying a completely different moral code who continued both to inflict heavy casualties on US forces and ‘shock and awe’ the sensibilities of western home audiences with mutilations of civilian contractors.

The irony is that, despite the unwitting confidence in ‘smart’ and ‘precise’ weapons to win the hearts and minds of a beleaguered anti-US/Saddam populace, the psychologically-charged phrase ‘Shock and Awe’ will historically more likely sum up most of the world’s reaction to the photographs of the abuses in Baghdad’s Abu Ghraib prison and the immolation and decapitation of western civilian contractors.

For ‘shock and awe’ were precisely *les mots juste* for any headline during subsequent media analysis of the images of US prison guards inflicting humiliation, pain and suffering on Iraqi detainees. The Bush administration, and chiefly, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, were quick to suggest that this was a case of a few ‘rotten apples’ in the US military ‘barrel’ and yet there seems to be much doubt that there were no tacit nods from higher up. We now know that civilian contractors dressed as American military personnel were involved in some of the ‘interrogation techniques.’
Putting that aside for the time being and taking the ‘rotten apple’ claim on its face value still does not seem to excuse the collective responsibility right up the entire chain of command. The reason is that so much was already known about the degeneration of moral and ethical standards under such circumstances after Professor Philip Zimbardo’s now infamous ‘Stanford Experiment.’

In 1971 Zimbardo placed the following advertisement in a local Stanford newspaper:

Male college students needed for psychological study of prison life. $15 per day for 1-2 weeks beginning August 14. For further information and applications come to Room 243, Jordan Hall, Stanford U.

Meanwhile, corridors in the university were being boarded up either end as the psychology department was quickly transformed into a prison, complete with security cameras (used to monitor behaviour for research purposes), solitary confinement and prison guard uniforms.

Twenty-four students from the US and Canada enrolled in the program and with an arbitrary flip of a coin were divided into ‘guards’ and ‘prisoners.’ The experiment began immediately with the ‘inmates’ first spending a night in a real police cell and driven to the university ‘prison’ where they were stripped, deloused, and given a smock with no underwear, and forced to wear hairnets. The ‘guards’ upped the ante by wearing reflective sunglasses to enhance dehumanisation an idea they had borrowed from the classic Paul Newman film *Cool Hand Luke.*

Within 24 hours there was a rebellion from the ‘prisoners’ which resulted in the ‘guards’ improvising the use of university fire extinguishers to punish the rioters by blasting them with jets of cold CO₂ and adopting techniques of isolation, naked humiliation and sleep deprivation to keep order. Within 36 hours many inmates were
feeling rage and some were suffering from fairly acute identity disorders. After visits from parents and a local Catholic priest, the experiment was terminated after just five days, as Zimbardo admitted that in order to keep the simulation ‘real’, the researchers had by necessity lost their objective approach and become uncompassionate prison warders. What had been learnt?

It was clear that given the upper hand in numbers, equipment and a stronger sense of individualism and identity, the ‘guards’ always came out on top. It was also clear that in order to keep the desired control the severity of the punishment increased. Furthermore, in a relatively short time, all ‘inmates’ suffered from trauma, ranging from mild to acute – one ‘prisoner’ was having trouble remembering his name, referring to himself by his prison number! An actual prisoner interviewed during the Stanford research confessed that as a result of abuse in prison he had indeed been reformed as a robber, but now he desired to kill every guard he had had contact with during his imprisonment! Welcome to Iraq 2004.

Professor Zimbardo talking on Australian radio in May 2004 likened his research and the Abu Ghraib abuses to events in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. The book which both predates and pre-empts the Stanford Prison Experiment takes its conclusions to a far greater rational extension and still has as much relevance in the world today as ever. The point is surely that if US military chiefs are willing to apply phenomenological psychological data to predict convoluted patterns of behaviour of ‘enemies’ under deadly bombardment (that effectively says “they will be ‘shocked and awed’ into compliance and submission and follow a democratically-driven rebellion”) it is also beholden of them to understand the comparatively simple, albeit allegorical, lessons of the Stanford Experiment and *Lord of the Flies* – i.e. power corrupts, absolute
power corrupts absolutely. It is important as a psychological necessity to apply this maxim equally to US military personnel right through the chain of command, as well as to ‘firebrand clerics’ like Moqtada al-Sudr. Without the necessary checks, education and understanding in place, according to the official line from the Pentagon, the guards at Abu Ghraib were in a position to act out their personal penchants for degradation and abuse. Professor Zimbardo is clear that under these conditions “there is a descent into hell” and that both the reservists implicated and the superiors all the way up the chain of command should be held responsible.

In my thesis I constantly referred to the dynamic interplay between the individual and the collective or cultural consciousness and was often drawn toward comparison between the micro and macrocosm. In light of this, is it possible that the disproportionate power the guards had over the prisoners both in the Stanford Experiment and at Abu Ghraib prison is precisely what is haunting US foreign policy makers? The Bush administration (and ‘coalition of the willing’ cohorts - Blair and Howard), against the subsequently correct ‘Better Advice’ of the international community, forced the search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) not because they had irrefutable evidence (obviously Colin Powell’s address to the National Assembly of the UN contained many ‘evidences’ now fallacious) but because they had the power.

In the final chapter of my thesis entitled Transpersonal Literature, I revealed that Ken Wilber had written a novel entitled *Boomeritis* and I suggested that he might, through the medium of literature, expound his theories of transpersonal psychology. At the time of writing my dissertation, however, I had yet to see or read a copy of the novel. I have
since been afforded the opportunity to add a few brief comments regarding some points
of interest which have emerged since completing the main body of the thesis.

Firstly, in *Boomeritis* I was gratified to learn that Wilber himself has arrived at *Lord
of the Flies* as exemplifying one of the stages of consciousness development – the Red
meme in Spiral Dynamics – where there is:

First emergence of a self distinct from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric,
heroic. Mythic spirits, archetypes, dragons and *beasts*. Archetypal gods and
goddesses, powerful beings, forces to be reckoned with, both good and bad. Feudal
lords protect underlings in exchange for obedience and labor. The basis of *feudal
empires* – power and glory. The world is a jungle full of threats and predators.
Conquers, outfoxes, and dominates; enjoys self to the fullest without regret or
remorse; be here now. Where seen: The ‘terrible twos,’ rebellious youth, frontier
mentalities, feudal kingdoms, epic heroes, James Bond villains, soldiers of fortune,
wild rock stars, Attila the Hun, *Lord of the Flies*, mythic involvement.

I would now be tempted to add ‘simple concepts of right and wrong; us and them
mentality; all or nothing thinking; for us or against us; “he tried to kill my daddy”; Abu
Ghraib abuses; fundamentalist religious bigotry and Old Testament vengeance;
Christian ‘Crusades’ and Islamic ‘martyrdom’; suicide bombers and unconscionable
belief in ‘smart weapons’ and ‘precise’ warfare.

Secondly, as I predicted, *Boomeritis* is indeed a novel expounding Wilber’s critical
theory and not at all in a disguised fashion. The narrator, one ‘Ken Wilber’ attends
“Integral Center” and hears an array of characters give lectures that follow the general
theories of Wilber’s psychological models in his more conventional publications. In
essence, it is just an alternative vehicle for deliberating some of the familiar topics that
were under discussion during the thesis and as such can be regarded more readily as a
‘tongue-in-cheek’ postmodernist approach to literature rather than a departure into an entirely different genre or discipline.

*Boomeritis* deals with consciousness as development in terms of what Wilber now refers to as Spiral Dynamics, following the work of Don Beck and Christopher Cowan. According to one of the lecturers in *Boomeritis* it “sees human development as proceeding through eight general stages.” The ‘spiral’ can simply be imagined as a corkscrew with the various stages of development mapped along the spiral. In the thesis our analogy for the way in which consciousness unfolds was as a series of ‘onion rings’ or Russian dolls. The ‘spiral’ metaphor introduces the concepts of ‘memes’ – “a basic stage of development that can be expressed in any activity.”

---

**Figure showing ‘Spiral Dynamics’ adapted from descriptions and diagrams in *Boomeritis.*

Turquoise - 8. Whole View
synergize & macromanage

Yellow - 7. Flex Flow
integrate & align system

Green - 6. Human Bond
explore inner self, equalize

Orange - 5. Strive Drive
analyze & strategize to prosper

Blue - 4. Truth Force
find purpose, bring order, insure future

Red - 3. Power Gods
express impulsively, break free, be strong

Purple - 2. Kin Spirits
seek harmony & safety in a mysterious world

Beige - 1. Survival Sense
sharpen instincts & innate senses
This ‘expression in activity’ in *Boomeritis* is largely the socio-political perspective. It is not my intention to analyse the ongoing contributions Wilber and other transpersonalists are making to the field. However, Wilber’s shift from ‘purely objective’ psychological studies of consciousness into ‘literature’ that makes reference to two of the literary texts (there are several references to *Hamlet*) which I chose as a focus for my thesis on transpersonal literature, did I feel justify this brief appendix. *Boomeritis* is ‘a novel’ which allows Wilber the freedom to convey specific social, political and cultural differences through characters with a personalised and prejudiced agenda in a way that might ‘shock and awe’ the more politically-correct sensitivities of the academic world. In this way the book becomes a fascinating insight into how highly-charged some of the arguments can potentially become when conclusions based on the psychology of transpersonal developmental consciousness are actually discussed in the ‘market place.’ I believe that *Boomeritis* represents a written testament to Ken Wilber’s faith in the potential of Transpersonal Literature.

Lastly, rather than focus on Wilber’s politicisation of transpersonal conscientiousness, I thought it only fair to reveal something that struck me personally as an extraordinary shift of what now seems acceptability within the cultural consciousness.

Before the US invasion of Iraq, I played an extraordinarily macabre game, on a Sony Playstation II. ‘Conflict: Desert Storm II – Back to Baghdad,’ is a game of simulated warfare, produced after the first Gulf War, yet prior to the second US invasion of Iraq and is available from most western video rental stores. The game is a vicarious rendition of what many US politicians and military chiefs felt after the 1991 war – that US forces should have gone all the way to Baghdad. In fact the cover of the game tells
us that “four men return to take care of some unfinished business.” In this way the
game effectively predicted the real turn of events.

During the game (in which you can only opt to be part of a US or British led-force) the ‘player’ is awarded more points for the more “Iraqis” (referred to during the game and presumably only military Iraqis at that) they kill. In one mission, players are prompted to fire at an oil drum and witness the subsequent incineration (to ashes) of a screaming ‘Iraqi’.

It is true that games and films have often conveyed battle scenes from previous military engagements but what was haunting here was that this biased, violent and ‘realistic’ game could be played not only concurrent to actual events but prior to them. I wonder if Sony will release a game that allows players to fire upon American forces now in Iraq and kill armed American civilian security contractors (i.e mercenaries).

Joseph Marrable,

Perth, Western Australia, June 2004.