

## ratitor's corner

september 22, 1997

september equinox, 4:55pm, PST

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celebrating completion of ratical's 2nd revolution around SOL

with a transcript of a talk given by Laurens van der Post in 1961 on

## The Psychological Origins of Racial Prejudice

Today is the september equinox, when, the sun, as seen anywhere on earth, rises at precisely the due east point from wherever one is (except at either pole) and sets exactly in the west. Today day and night are of equal length.

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i am extremely grateful for the blessings life has bestowed in making it possible to continue to nurture and grow this rat haus. Though there continues to be a backlog of e-mail which i *will* get to, receiving all the letters that have come in is one more instance of the fact that when one follows one's heart, and is true to one's innermost yearnings, life responds in kind and opens the thresholds required to sustain one's journey and spirit. For all that has been possible to manifest in the past 730 days spinning around the only "nuclear furnace" we'll ever need, i am exceeding grateful for the opportunity to communicate with all who have sent words and to further develop this publication library for our single vast human family and *all* our relations, now and that will follow us here.

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Since the late winter of 1996 i have been caught up in reading all the books i can find of Sir Laurens van der Post. This started by reading the two volumes comprising one story, *A Story like the Wind* and *A Far Off Place*. By the end, due to the richness and depth of the tale, i felt so much had been missed i immediately turned around and re-read both books again. Although categorized as "fiction" this story is *EXCEEDINGLY RELEVANT* to life and our human world of the present day. Since then i have experienced a great deal of inner expansiveness engendered by reading 8 more of van der Post's other works. (In his 90-year life he wrote many books. Although most are unfortunately out of print, i've so far been able to find copies of 19 of them.)

To celebrate the 2nd anniverse' of ratical's existence i'd like to step through some excerpts of Laurens van der Post's perceptions centering on the transcript of the talk from 1961 as well as passages from some of his other books.

One of the themes driving ratical's development is the fifth definition of the Hopi noun, **koyaanisqatsi**, *a state of life that calls for another way of living*. The essence of this reality is also a fundamental aspect of life itself: life *is* change. It is only through change that we continue to live and grow. But we are raised to think that things stay the same, both within as well as without us. We are implicitly taught to cling to things, inwardly and outwardly, in an adolescent attempt by our rational selves to deny the fact of change in our lives on every level at every moment.

One of the major sources of difficulty we get into in life is when we feel we've somehow become "stuck" inwardly and don't see how we can change our own course or our all-too-mechanical patterns of behavior. In the fall of 1990, i had a very expansive conversation with my dear friend Renna hinging on two related questions: "How much does one ever want to truly change?" and "How much *can* one actually change?" The former considers the

influence one's inner drive and curiosity can manifest in transformation of self while the latter wades into the infinitely more ambiguous nature of the very fabric of life itself. At its center, life is a mystery we cannot grasp or explain through any rational means. But the fact that life is, at its root, a mystery, is undeniable.

The problems we face today, that appear to be piling up more frenetically all the time, are rooted in an apparent paralysis of belief that we cannot change "things" sufficiently in what feels to be an ever-decreasing amount of "time left" before some combination of these cauldrons reach critical mass and produce any one or number of the litany of potential cataclysms that are the stamp of this unique time we are alive in. Perhaps the underlying dilemma is that we do not see what, at its source, must change. We fail to see or acknowledge how our attempts to live life consciously on a rational level, while denying the validity of our intuitive and instinctual awareness, is a primary cause of the conflict and sense of meaninglessness we initially feel within that then flows outwardly to manifest in the world we create each day. Keep in mind our non-rational awareness and intelligence has manifested in consciousness *far longer* than our recently acquired rationality with the dawn of the Age of Reason a few hundred years ago.

In my twenties i was very caught up in the idea of saving the world. It was an important element in my own curiosity about some of what appeared to me to be the more significant events of the day, including the rise and growth of the National Security State in America, and the unprecedented lethal influence by those fronting for nuclear industrial interests in the western world. But even earlier during adolescence, i had a sense inwardly of something more fundamental despite the fact it did not seem to originate from any rational awareness: i felt then (and continue to feel so now) that my own experience of inner conflict and confusion -- that was originating inside with its source being my own interpretation of how i was experiencing life -- was itself something that then flowed outside me and that *this* was the actual source and cause of the discord and conflict in the world "out there".

i am currently traveling through van der Post's 1951 book, *Venture to the Interior*. He articulates this same sense of the inner becoming the outer when he describes his understanding of his own part in the death of a man named Vance who had been swept over the falls of a raging stream during a storm on the mountain Mlanje in Africa in what was then Nyasaland and today is called Malawi:

From the moment Vance was killed I had blamed myself bitterly, though not for the actual accident. I think it is clear that there is a point at which all outside responsibility for an individual ends and the final event concerns him and his fate alone. Vance was twenty-eight, a soldier mentioned in dispatches in Burma, and an expert on the mountain. I do not believe that we were doing anything irresponsible in letting him attempt to cross the stream. From the moment he entered the water the game was between him and the mountain he loved.

It was rather in our being there at all, that I felt my share of the responsibility lay. Firstly, if I had not come out to Africa, Vance at that moment would in all probability not have been on the mountain. Secondly, if I had refused to let our party take the short cut from the lumber camp, we should not have been in the gorge either. Then again I had had all the time an uneasy feeling about this trip. I had left England in a mood of resentment and had always been in a divided state about Africa. Supposing my own conflict about it had been resolved, could I have ever got entangled in a set of circumstances so disastrous as those on Mlanje?

My instinct was to say no; that a split in ourselves produces a split in the pattern of our lives, creates this terrible gash down the middle, this deep, dark Mlanje gorge, through which disaster runs and the devil drives. Accident and disaster without feed on accident and disaster

within. The design of our outward life, from its minutest detail up to the atom which we put in our latest bomb, reflects and confirms our deepest and most private purposes.

I will give only one example. The world to my mind has never been fuller of finer thinking that it is to-day. I never pick up a paper, magazine or book, be they in Japanese, French, Javanese, Russian, English or Twi, and fail to be struck by the fine thoughts, the idealistic feelings, the noble sentiments they express. Yet, though all the contributing writers appear to be merchants of man's finest feelings, has there ever been an age that, considering its lights, has done worse things than this one, with its class hatreds, race hatreds, colour prejudices, world wars and concentration camps? Has there been another age that, knowing so clearly the right things to do, has so consistently done the wrong ones?

I doubt it; and because I doubt it, I feel it is important as never before to get our private contribution to the split clear in our minds and, as far as possible, to close the gap in ourselves in every detail of our lives.

There was another curious point on the mountain. I had been afraid, and it had been for [Vance's wife] Val Vance that I feared and for her that I had taken precautions. But all my vigilance had been needed by ourselves; it was at our side, not hers, that disaster was creeping up. That too seemed typical of our age and its inheritors. Was it not the private equivalent of our public passion for effecting in others the cure we so badly needed ourselves? Industrial England had once had a passion for converting the Africans of Nyasaland to Christian ways, which passion had increased in almost mathematical proportion to the un-Christian state of slavery in its own factories. [pp.172-174]

A fundamental law of life seems to be the fact that the only person we can change is ourselves. But in contravention to this our age is bursting with people who, while on some level are aware of the gravity of our time and the increasing fragility of the future of life on Earth, are predominantly focused on attempting to change others while neglecting to even rudimentarily know themselves to any significant degree. I am daily more and more struck by the sense that the only way I can actually change the world is to change my own self. However, even though I felt this to a certain degree in all the way back in adolescence, in almost every instance, that did not necessarily translate into my truly coming to grips with a host of inner conflicts I felt beset by. Yet it was and continues to be something as true and real as the air I breathe: resolve and clear up my own inner turmoil and the outer forms this discordant energy manifests as will follow suit.

Beyond the fact that to live is to change, we exist in culture that from infancy teaches us to seek answers outside rather than inside our selves. Coupled with this, in the actual foundation of what "the self" is presented as being, we are raised to believe that who we are is an identity that is a fixed rather than a fluid presence, a static rather than a dynamic entity. In this manner the essential nature of life as change is rejected, denied, and ignored.

An outcome of such a societal ethos is that at practically every turn the effort is made to deny the reality of change by holding up an appallingly vacuous set of values based upon an ideal of an ongoing accumulation of material things as if the securing of enough of these is the only requirement for successfully achieving "the pursuit of happiness". The practice of clinging to and identifying one's concept of one's self with external, physical things is a band-aid attempt to postpone coming to grips with understanding that the only security in life -- either physical or psychological -- is the fact that there is no security. When all is said and done, we are answerable to no one else but ourselves and the life that spawned us, for the way in which we live out our lives. But it seems we more and more live in an unnatural state of being and time where dealing with and seeing ourselves as we truly are, is something always put off for "later".

The primary result (though indeed not the only one) of this "postponement of living life" is the sense of a lack of meaning in our own lives. van der Post repeatedly emphasizes a root cause of such loss-of-meaning throughout his books. The following, from *A Far Off Place*, is representative:

. . . the terrible invasion of meaninglessness and a feeling of not belonging invading the awareness of man, that was the unique sickness of our day . . . was the result of the so-called civilised man, parting company with the natural and instinctive man in himself. [pp.301-302]

Despite the ever-increasing present-day loss of connection with and relationship to our timeless instinctual as well as intuitive intelligence, and the dearth of underlying meaning we feel in our lives, there does not appear to be anything that is necessarily permanent about this incoherent state of affairs. Despite it is unvalued and ignored, we are born with the wealth of instinct and intuition our ancestors possessed and applied throughout their lives. Our ability to change and re-establish significant relatedness with this aspect of our inheritance of psyche and spirit, is all ways open and available to us.

The next passage, from *The Hunter and the Whale* (1967), is a story based upon van der Post's experience during his adolescence of seasons on board a Norwegian whaling boat based out of Port Natal in Durban in the 1920s. It touches directly upon a fundamental fact of our age, which is the breach in our consciousness with our psychic inheritance and continuity with our past humanity and the very nature of what it means to be human:

I had not said more to Ruud because I had a hunch that the less I told the rest of the crew about my exchanges with 'Mlangeni the easier it would be for him to confide in me. Also how explain to a man like Nils Ruud what had just passed between the two of us? How to make a regular church-goer like Nils understand that 'Mlangeni, ostensibly one of the benighted [Zulu] heathen, was more aware of the world of the spirit and its claims than most of us? To 'Mlangeni everything from a grain of sand to the fire underneath his boiler, from the movement of an ant to the lowing of cattle at night, even the sneeze of a boy, were all significant manifestations of meaning. What would Nils Ruud have said had I told him that 'Mlangeni was such a dedicated, accepting servant of the spirit that we, by comparison, became brutal materialists rejecting it?

Besides it was even more complicated than that. For one thing there was the fact that 'Mlangeni was black. I am not suggesting that the crew of the *Kurt Hansen* suffered from the kind of highly organized colour prejudice from which so many of my countrymen suffered. They were remarkably free of it and happily shared their quarters, ate at the same mess table with 'Mlangeni and shook hands with him as they did with one another. Yet his blackness did make a difference to them. Had he been white he would not, I am certain, have excited the constant curiosity that he did. Yet I had already learnt that there are many Europeans who are curious about primitive peoples not in order to understand them better, but just to laugh them out of the way. There had become something frightening to me about the European laughter over Africans and African practices. It was significant how, once the crew knew I spoke 'Mlangeni's language, they could never see the two of us in conversation without being drawn to us, like iron filings towards a magnet, to demand what we were discussing.

I suppose black is the natural colour of what is strange and secret in the human spirit. It is the uniform of the unknown. Somehow 'Mlangeni through his blackness and his nearness to nature, was a personification of those aspects of the *Kurt Hansen*'s blond crew which were hidden, or estranged from them; a living mirror wherein they saw the dark face of all that was rejected and out of reach in them themselves.

Unfortunately therefore since the process of acquiring self-knowledge is by no means painless or without humiliation their natural curiosity had an undertow of suspicion and apprehension. It seems an *a priori* condition of our so-called success in civilizing ourselves that what is to be rejected must in itself be proved to be something discreditable. Consequently the crew were both attracted and repulsed by 'Mlangeni. Not, I stress, because of anything in his

character but because unknowingly they associated him with their own. [pp.88-89]

Here we touch directly upon an underlying thread articulated in *The Psychological Origins of Racial Prejudice*. In the above, the connection is made between European man's rejected, non-rational, instinctive self, and the projection of this rejected inner dimension outwardly onto people who literally wear "the uniform of the unknown" in the very color of their skin. Seen in this way, there is a deep poignancy implicit in the fact that color prejudice is the result of projecting what is rejected in one's own self externally onto other people. At its root, expression of such prejudice is a disavowal of one's own ability by right of birth to respond to life directly without the distortions caused by the blinding and inhibiting nature of self-deception.

Despite the fact that color prejudice is so rampant and ubiquitous in the world today, it was not always the case. One of the many significant points van der Post makes in the first portion of his talk is that color prejudice did not begin to manifest in Europe until *after* the time of the Reformation:

Let's consider what happened to European man after the Reformation. Perhaps the clue lies there. European man just before the Reformation, broke out, or re-awoke rather, into that most creative, that most dazzling, magnetic, marvellous phenomenon we call the Renaissance. He had never never been more impressive or more creative. And it was because at that moment, through the rediscovery of the ancient writings, the ancient culture of Greece, that he managed to join a Christian to a Pagan end in his nature. And that produced this incredible flowering we call the Renaissance.

Then the Reformation came. The Reformation came for many reasons. But it came because men started to re-examine their lives, to analyse life, and society, and religion, rationally. Men suddenly went cerebral; they started looking at things from *above*. And this wasn't an immediate process. This was a gradual process. Like all these things they take time but it increased over the centuries and it became more and more so.

The excerpts here are not a sufficient substitute for appreciating the full depth of what is articulated throughout the whole of the transcript of the talk and the ensuing discussion between van der Post and the audience, and you are strongly encouraged to read all of it as well. What is included here is an attempt to present a distillation of *some* of the primary elements of that presentation in conjunction with other complementing threads and the fundamental role change must play in life if there is to be a further development "into greater and more significant forms of being" as van der Post writes near the end of this oratorical.

It is pointed out that with the advent of Protestantism in Europe a sacrifice was made in the degree to which man had, up to that point, lived life symbolically, including emphasis upon and inclusion of myth and the practice of ritual and ceremony in every aspect of daily existence. But when something inside is sacrificed, van der Post shares his understanding of how it will someday return to demand a sacrifice of that which sacrificed it.

As the world, Europe, became more rational, more objective, more calculating, more scientific, this gulf between the rational and the instinctive person widened. It perhaps reached one of its great heights at the time of the French Revolution. And you remember at one supreme moment in the Revolution, in Paris, God was un-throned, and the Goddess of Reason was installed in his place. To me it's very significant that almost immediately when that happened, there emerged in the mind of a man, Jean Jacques Rousseau, the image of the noble savage; of the noble dark man.

Now I've stressed this very much, because I think the way European civilization has

developed, which has been a one-sided way, and which has been the sacrifice of something. I think and I believe it is a law of the human spirit that we are not just a child of pure reason, we are not just a child of pure light. We are also, we have within us, that which is rejected, which is a child of darkness. This child of darkness we can either make a friend of it or we can make an enemy of it. If we make an enemy of it, there is another law of nature, that one day it will return knife-in-hand and demand a sacrifice of that which sacrificed it.

Also, it's another law that if we don't recognize this dark, rejected person we have *inside* ourselves, that we are bound to hate him when we meet him in real life. It's extraordinarily interesting how this post- French Revolution period, the artist who is always the first to feel -- the one who is the sort of antennae of society -- how this figure haunted his imagination. There's a wonderful painting by the great Romantic painter Delacroix of the devil over Paris. And the devil is a black man, the most beautifully drawn, and the most impressive figure as if saying, 'This which you have sacrificed in the name of reason is hovering over you.' . . .

This fact, which cannot be over-emphasized, is that as is the case with all the apparently irreconcilable opposites of life manifesting within and without the human spirit, we are not only a child of pure reason and pure light, but, we *also* contain within our selves that which is rejected and is a child of darkness. How could it be otherwise -- that we contain within ourselves all the other opposites of life, and not this one? And, following from this, the importance of van der Post's insight is paramount: 'we can either make a friend of this child of darkness, or we can make an enemy of it.'

Here we arrive at the issue of choice and free will. Once we reach physical maturity, every moment we alone choose how we live inwardly. We are utterly accountable and response able to none other than our own selves and to life itself, in exactly how we choose to interpret what we perceive in precisely the way we choose to interpret it. To me this is what maturity, in the best sense of that word, means and signifies. A fundamental source of the incoherence in our lives is the degree to which we collude in a "co-dependent" manner with our selves in the practice of self-deception. This inner duplicity is then reflected outwardly which we see expressed collectively in the culture as a whole. By placing such a disproportionate emphasis upon rational awareness, at the expense of our non-rational being, we find ourselves cut off from our full self and divided inwardly to a degree never before lived out by human kind. The dis-integration we see "out there" is only a reflection of what is manifesting inside. Its source comes from within each of us.

If we are estranged from and are not straight with our whole self -- the dark as well as the light -- we will behave in exactly the same manner with everyone and everything else we encounter in life. van der Post points out how European man, when he pushed into Africa, lived out his own inner self-estrangement from his non-rational being by the self-deception of projecting his unacknowledged dark and rejected side onto those he encountered there who had not yet made this sort of sacrifice in their own psychic life and being.

Then, this European man started invading Africa. He pushed into it, deeper into it, and wherever he went, he shot. He shot out the game, and he shot out the Bushman, pushed away the Hottentot, and very soon clashed with the black. There are a lot of people who say that the prejudice today which he has against those people is purely a guilt-complex. I don't think it's that at all. I think what happened was that this dark rejected person inside himself, which he wouldn't recognize, he saw and identified with the black man outside.

You remember I said to you the thing that we sacrifice in ourselves comes back one day knife-in-hand and demands to sacrifice what sacrificed it. I think this fear that he had of this dark rejected, this dark dishonored aspect of himself coming back knife-in-hand one day, he projected onto the black people around him. Also, in a secret way, he was extremely attracted by the natural

life. And he felt that if he gave way to that, everything that he stood for, all this rational approach to life, would vanish.

After all what would happen if he sat all day in the sun, occasionally, and didn't go about his business of shooting, or harrowing, or marketing, or doing something? He was already living an unnatural kind of time, just as we are today. He was living against a natural sense of time. He was living a kind of abstract time. He was using time for his own purposes. A natural man would never do that. A natural man is seasonal, and he goes with the sun and with the moon. This man didn't at all.

And he felt *all* these lovely naturally instinctive things which he had rejected, and therefore, because he rejected them hated in himself, he likewise hated among the people he saw outside. The interesting thing is that in my country, as man has become more and more rational, as he has become more unnatural, as he has become more divorced from his instinctive self, the *stronger* color prejudice has become.

This understanding of van der Post's, seeing its reality unambiguously in his native South Africa, is fundamentally related to western culture's disconnection from its own aboriginal past and the richly symbolic life our ancestors also participated in; just as we see in the remnants of aboriginal cultures still trying to "hold on" around the world today.

During the discussion that followed someone asked about what van der Post had previously touched upon regarding his sense that Europe, before the Renaissance, "was entirely a Catholic world. The fact which is very significant today is, that the countries in which this color prejudice is *least* present is in the Roman Catholic countries. Countries, which if I may say so, still tend to lead a symbolic life."

Exploring this point further, the question was posed, "do you think that this means that the Roman Catholic is not as afraid of his darker side?" To which van der Post responded,

I can tell you what I *think* it is. I won't say it's particularly true of Italy. Because Italy, is I think, still, a most striking *example* of a Roman Catholic country in almost the pre-Reformation way (if you know what I mean). I think it is because they live a truly symbolic life. If you *do* live a symbolic life, I think you do not tend to get your symbols mixed up with other human beings so much. But one of the things that has happened to rational man is, that he has thrown out the symbols. He thinks it's superstition, it's idolatry, and he gets into very serious trouble in that way. Because if you won't have your symbol by fair means you're going to get it by foul. If you won't let it in at the front door it comes in at the back door. This is the trouble with color prejudice: people don't see the people of color for what they are *in themselves*. They see them as a symbol of what they have rejected in themselves. That I am certain in myself is where the trouble starts.

One of the questions we all would do well to explore anew is, *What symbols contain significance and meaning for me in my life?* and *In what ways do i live symbolically?* The question came up regarding what symbols rational man employs. Someone likened numbers to symbols. van der Post disagreed with this in the way he himself was using the word and what it signifies, and then attempted to clarify what he meant by the term.

A symbol is something which comes from up inside you. A number is a convention, it's a visual convention in order to convey a certain type of meaning. But I wouldn't call it a symbol. You see this is one of the things that we're up against in the modern world. I think meaning comes to us in symbols and images. And the symbols and images are always far more than we can say or we can do with them. But if we get cut off from them, our lives are completely without meaning. But we, you see, in the modern age, have fallen into the delusion of people whom the gods wish to destroy. We not only, we don't feel that the symbol comes up instinctively, but we think we've actually invented it.

So there is before us this important area of enquiry to explore regarding the relationship between our sense of the loss of meaning in our lives and our culture, and getting cut off from symbols as well as mixing up our symbols with other human beings. One result of this impoverishment of our inner experience of meaning in and connection with life, is prejudice of all kinds, including color prejudice.

One of the primary definitions of prejudice is, "A judgement or opinion held in disregard of facts that contradict it", and "A judgement or opinion formed before the facts are known." With the latter, in what we are exploring here, "consciously recognized and acknowledged" would be a more accurate substitution for the word "known". Such projection, as any form of prejudice is, is a hallmark of an immature spirit hungering for something more whole and complete. That *is* the essence of what we are seeking in life: an experience of the wholeness we knew in the womb and at the beginning after our physical birth, as well perhaps, through whatever source we "came from" before manifesting in the fetus.

Some of the terms employed here were first expressed in this way by Carl Gustav Jung. van der Post met Jung after WWII and they became close friends for the remainder of Jung's life. One of the many areas they shared a common appreciation of was their love of Africa and the aboriginal people still living there, in the early part of this century. In his 1975 biography, *Jung and the Story of Our Time*, van der Post describes the significance of Jung's choice of the word "shadow", "because it is an image of what happens when the human being stands between himself and his own light."

He had in this journey into his own unconscious self discovered another archetypal pattern of the utmost significance in this regard. He called it the "shadow" -- a pattern that had at its disposal all the energies of what man had consciously despised, rejected, or ignored in himself. One sees immediately how aptly the term was chosen, because it is an image of what happens when the human being stands between himself and his own light. Whether this shadow should be properly regarded as archetypal in itself, or whether it is another shadow of archetypes themselves, is almost academic. The dark, rejected forces massing in the shadow of the unconscious, as it were, knife in hand, demanding revenge for all that man and his cultures have consciously sacrificed of them in the specialised conscious tasks he has set himself, are real and active enough to keep us too busy for academics and scholasticisms. They show how all our history is a progression on two levels: a conscious and unconscious, a manifest and latent level. Here is another overwhelming example of how he helped my own tentative groping in this direction and how he helped to banish the sense of isolation spoken of in the beginning.

The manifest level provides all the plausible rational justifications and excuses for the wars, revolutions, and disasters inflicted on men in their collective and private lives, but in reality it is on this other latent level where, unrecognised, the real instigators and conspirators against too narrow and rigid a conscious rule above are to be found. There, proud, angry, and undefeated, they move men and women on the manifest level about as puppets in predetermined patterns of their own revengeful seeking, or like a magnet conditioning a field of iron filings on a table above.

That is why all men tend to become what they oppose, why the New Testament exhorted us not to resist evil because what follows logically is that ultimately the dark, dishonoured self triumphs and emerges on the scorched level of the manifest to form another tyranny as narrow, producing another swing of the opposites of which Heraclitus spoke. The answer, as Jung saw it, was to abolish tyranny, to enthrone, as it were, two opposites side by side in the service of the master pattern, not opposing or resisting evil but transforming and redeeming it. These two opposites in the negations of our time could be turned into tragic enemies. But truly seen psychologically and again defined best perhaps in the non-emotive terms of physics, they were like the negative and positive inductions of energy observed in the dynamics of electricity; the two parallel and opposite streams without which the flash of lightning, for me always the symbol of awareness made imperative, was impossible.



Containing these two opposites, putting the light of the superior functions at the service of the dark, bearing all the tensions induced thereby, the individual could grow into a resolution of the two into a greater realisation of himself. One says greater because the self realised thereby is more than the sum of the opposites, because in the process of their resolution the capacity of the individual to join in the universal and continuing act of creation wherein his own life participates enables him to add something which was not there before.

So this role of the shadow in the life of the individual, the life of civilisation, and the reality of religion, not surprisingly, was one of Jung's closest concerns. He demonstrated in a way that cannot be denied how this mechanism of the shadow was at the back of the phenomenon of the persecution of the Jews in history, how Christians for centuries blamed their own rejection of the real meaning of Christ on the Jews who had crucified him, ignoring how they were re-crucifying him daily in their own lives. It is an elemental part of the mythological dominants of history, as I called them to myself in the beginning, and gave me a clearer, deeper, and more precise understanding of their working. The mechanism of the shadow, for instance, was the explanation of Hitler and his own persecution of the Jews, and also of all racial, colour, and personal prejudice. Before I knew Jung I had written the essay mentioned in the beginning [later to be published in 1955 as a book called *The Dark Eye in Africa* -- rator] on how some such explanation could apply even to colour prejudice in my native South Africa. [pp.217-218]

Among other things, what van der Post is describing here is that each one of us participates in the ongoing creation of the world we are part of. We create our world anew and are not simply automatons living mechanically by some pre-ordained pattern. In a 1978 interview with Suzanne Wagner, this portion of which appears in the 1985 film, *Matter of Heart*, van der Post describes how "Calvin fought very desperately to have the Book of Revelation removed from the Bible because he called it a dark and dangerously obscure book. But it really is very meaningful because it's the one book which suggests that the revelation of God doesn't end with the coming of Christ. There is more to come; that religion is a process of continuing revelation and experiencing of revelation."

Running through all that has been expressed here is the understanding that by denying the fact of what is, and what actually originates, within our own selves, we create the true source of discord and conflict. We must then believe this incoherence comes from "out there" for as long as we are caught in the trap of choosing to ignore and not *see* the actual workings of our own inner "reality generator".

Given that we contain both light and dark, it is our challenge, put to us by life itself, to discover and recognize our own unconscious dark selves which contain all that we have shied away from in life. To discover, befriend, find out how to accept, and re-integrate this split-off part of our self holds the greatest potential for healing the rifts growing ever wider in the world. In *Matter of Heart* van der Post recalls that "Jung often said to me, the human being who starts by withdrawing his *own* shadow from his neighbor, is doing work of immense, immediate, political and social importance."

This ratorial began with the observation that life is change. To renew our energies on behalf of all that follows us here, to provide for the furtherance of life, we must change our practice of ignoring, rejecting, and denying our non-rational conscious awareness. At the close of the talk van der Post says "one of the greatest things that we can do in our age today, is to find out what this rejected side of ourselves is. What is this thing that we've pushed into the dark of ourselves?"

For me, exploring van der Post's perspectives on life and the world of our time has provided

a similar infusion of meaning in the same way it sounds as if he experienced from reading Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, etc). In his 1982 book, *Yet Being Someone Other*, he describes something of the influence Conrad had on his younger self.

Conrad possessed for my own immature self then, more than any writer of a time dangerously deprived of instinct and intuition, what an inspired French observer of primitive man called a capacity for *participation mystique* in the world around him. I had a hunch that, whether artists knew it or not, and however civilised and far removed from the primitive they thought themselves to be, they had deep down just such a first being within themselves; held in trust, impartially, without censor of judgement and prejudice, as a source of aboriginal wonder which enabled them to share in the secret of being in its most unfamiliar, improbable and even abhorrent forms. This dark gift of participation in all things and manifestations of life around them produced the act of transformative wonder for the light of an understanding which would find nothing on this rounded and turning earth ordinary or mean, and so made of their craft the instrument of the increase of awareness which I suspected was the abiding function of all art. It was something of this kind that Shakespeare was always unerringly after, as, for instance, in a passage over which William and I, because of the fundamental difference in our natures, had been at odds that afternoon.

It referred to that sombre moment in *Lear* when the doomed King at last finds rough comfort like a rock in the sea of deception and the unreality of a world of worldly and self-seeking men, with the conclusion addressed to his soul, his daughter: "We shall take upon ourselves the mystery of things and be God's spies". Conrad, for me, had been such a spy in many a world beyond the established range of the arrogant and narrowly focused European awareness of his own day. He had been such a one even in the heart of darkness of my own native Africa, and forced a whole new world of unknown earth, being and human considerations upon our slanted and inadequate reckoning. [p.163]

In a similar way, van der Post has exposed me to what feels to be a whole new world of unknown-to-my-conscious-self earth, being and human considerations that up to this point in my adult life, i have not been aware in any overt way. Earlier in *Yet Being Someone Other* there is a remarkable recounting of perception and acknowledgement of an event that goes far beyond what rational awareness is capable of understanding. This comes at the end of a 6-page segment describing van der Post's own sense in 1926 of what was "one of the first straws in what Harold Macmillan was to call many years later, 'the wind of change', not only in Africa but in the European Empire everywhere in the world." He has just finished articulating a host of events in process at that time that were lethal to empire, even though they were not seen to be so at that point. From the effect of "the victory of Japan in the early years of the century in their war against Russia . . . [which] shattered forever the European hubris of a power and right over the lives of non-western peoples all over the world, which they held to be as absolute and lasting as it was self-evident", he goes on to point out how even in Japan men at that moment "were already busily conceiving a dream of the greatest Empire ever."

Even my own sensei had just planted the seed of greater awareness of these huge imponderables of life and time in me, through that simple Taoist proverb I have cited: 'At noon midnight is born'. Perhaps that is as good an epigram as can be coined for the essentials of all I felt in the atmosphere of time around me in 1926: it was a high-noon in which the midnight of today was being born. [p.140]

But at the end of all this articulation of European and Oriental aspirations of empire and nationalistic upheavals, van der Post describes his own sense of instinctive urging to seek out a new Zulu prophet to hear directly from him, among other incomprehensible-by-rational-thinking things, how "[M]any more stars were about to fall

out of their courses" meaning many more nations of men were about to fall out of the lawful progression of the universe.

All these things came unbidden, as did the foam and spray of the Indian Ocean that we were sailing, to whet my imagination. And at times, most unbidden and prominent of these crowding premonitions of change, there rose the beautiful face and words of the prophet, newly arisen among the Zulu people whom I had sought out just before our departure following my instinct despite the cynical disapproval bordering on an outright veto from my Cockney news editor. But I knew in my blood how profoundly Africa was an Old Testament country almost more in need of prophets than medical officers. Therefore I was aware how significant an event this could be. And how strange, therefore, that my last piece became one of the few things I ever wrote not to be published because it was, I quote from both News and Chief Sub-Editor: "All my eye, Betsy Martin and mumbo-jumbo." The face of the prophet I will always remember. It was transfigured and of compelling beauty. My final image of the prophet is of him telling how at midnight as a boy, a Zulu Samuel, he heard a voice that could not be denied, calling and telling him to go to the top of the Sacred Hill of Inanda and look up. He did so. He looked up, in another August night, to see with blinding lucidity five great stars fall out of procession and proceed, against the natural order, to move from west to east. He rushed back to his bee-hive hut full of fear at so unnatural a sight. Five days later he was told that on the morning after the midnight vision, five great nations, five great stars of humanity, had fallen out of the lawful progression of the universe and gone to war: Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France and Great Britain. The First World War had begun. Many more stars were about to fall out of their courses, he warned me, and that, he stressed, was how and why he had been called on to prophesy and warn, for that was all a prophet could do. But warn to what effect? It was not for prophet or man to say in an age, he declared tragically, when no-one spoke any more of Umkulunkulu, the great first spirit. His praise-names were forgotten, and men now spoke only of things useful to them. How could I, a child of the same Africa, myself have failed then to conclude that no year for centuries had been of so meaningful a transition as this year of our absent Lord, 1926?

It would have been even more startling had I known what I was to discover only after the last World War, which was in itself such a gruesome confirmation of the objective aspect of my subjective feelings of change. But then, in the very Kenya which Mombasa served as port, Carl Gustav Jung had just terminated his sojourn among the Elgoni of Mount Elgon and returned to Europe satisfied that he now possessed all the objective evidence that he needed to confirm his hypothesis of a 'collective unconscious' in man. This, in time, seemed to me at least as great a breakthrough for the human spirit as Einstein's 'Theory of Relativity' and those illustrious others who penetrated the secret of the atom and discovered a mysterious universe expanding in reverse. I mention these three re-directions of human seeking not because they were the only ones but because they are all, for me, part of one another. They are aspects of a potential of mind and spirit out of which will come, however much and tragically societies were about to crumble, the energies for a renewal of life and its movement, a recharging of the arrested post-renaissance spirit into greater and more significant forms of being. [pp.141-142]

The illumination of perception afforded those who nurture their instinctive and intuitive intelligence is something we who are imprisoned by our mistrust of the same cannot see or apprehend. But in every moment we create the future by the patterns of behavior we choose to continue and those we choose to change.

**L:** I think the feeling of the fundamentalist religion who has a symbol, let's say the cross or the symbol of Jesus Christ the Savior, etc. -- so that they have the symbol but somehow it doesn't filter down into the fact that they can take the cup of communion from a black brother, for instance. So is this the dichotomy you're speaking to?

**LvdP:** It covers a vast, vast range of images and symbols and things. If you go to a country where people still live a symbolic life you will find that they have, for instance, far more ritual than we have in the world. Primitive society, natural society is *extraordinarily* full of ritual and I wish that we had some of that ritual.

I'll give you some examples. If people have been out in the north frontier of Kenya, the Africans there -- if they had a war with another tribe and the men come back. They're not allowed to come back straight to the tribe. They're kept apart and they're made to go through purifying ritual so that the spirit of killing is taken out of them first. None of us went through a ritual like that after the last war.

Young people grow up, a young boy becomes adolescent. He's helped through this extremely painful period. I, as strange as it may seem, was adolescent once too, and I don't want to be again. But they have a ritual. The whole of society rallies round and they have initiation ceremonies and so on to help them over. That's the kind of thing I mean. For a young girl it is exactly the same. They have ritual to help them through.

If somebody gets possessed by a spirit, they are not rushed off to a lunatic asylum. The whole tribe rallies round, and they dance with this person, and I've seen them do it, you see them rubbing against this person to push the true spirit in and push the other one out. And by heaven I've seen them dance the possession out of them.

These symbols, these images have *immense* energies if one is in touch with them, and they come through. Also they give you a sense of meaning and a sense of purpose. But there you'll find *everyday*, you will find a little ritual or something of the kind which is performed or used to be performed. It's only when one has seen that that one realizes how poor *our* life has become in that respect.