



**(6) OTTO RANK'S "ARTIST-TYPE" AS  
ENVIRONMENTALIST AND MIDWIFE OF THE SOUL**

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**IN SEARCH OF FEARLESSNESS**

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(6) Otto Rank's "Artist-Type" as Environmentalist and Midwife of the Soul.

As the 1990's have come to be called the "decade of the environment", it is soul-moving for me to see the beginning of a transformation of consciousness. Even the major corporations are leading the way with recycled materials and board meetings focused on how they can present an environmentally sensitive image to the public. All of this activity has brought me to do a little reflection and soul-searching myself. The ideas in this short essay reflect some twenty years of my own evolution of thought about the relationship of mind and environment. My conclusion, unfinished though it may be, beckons the acknowledgement of a new "artist-type" of person to guide us to a total healing of mind-environment in the next decade.

Some twenty years ago, I fell deeply in love with nature. My first career was as a naturalist. Then I became more scientifically minded in my relationship with nature and became a wildlife technician, then an environmental biologist. Soon, I felt drawn to be an "educator" and quickly the "radical" part of my soul began to emerge. I realized that the destruction of the environment around me had a source in a place I had too long ignored. The destruction of landscapes of my childhood originated from destructive human mindscapes. I began to look within for answers to the environmental problems of the planet.

For the first time I became interested in mind and its power. This forced me to look at humans. Odd, that a nature lover like myself was so comfortable and lovingly delighted in studying nature but I had left one species out - Homo sapiens. Although I was fascinated with archeology and anthropology and the nature of pre-industrial humans, I realized I had a certain disgust, verging on hatred for industrial humanity. There grew an increasing conflict within my Soul that could be summarized as follows: How could I love nature so much and hate human beings? What did that hatred say about the relationship to myself?



Within a couple of years, I had entered a whole other dimension of reality which my scientific-rational mind could not easily understand. I read Carl Jung, William James, and every other author who knew about the human mindscape and the deeper structures which make up the human psyche. I wanted to know who we were as a species, how we think, why we think and act like we do. Ultimately, although I was not aware of it at the time, I wanted to know myself. As I look back on my own journey to know all of this, I sense I was motivated by two "forces" deeply embedded in me:

- (1) I was led by a soul force, or the very presence of Life/Creation/God to become;
- (2) I was led by hurt and pain which I had experienced as a child in my own family. My ego was on a Quest to understand why human beings are destructive to each other and their environment and, ultimately, why I was hurt by the ones I loved who were closest to me, i.e. my parents, brother, and sister.

As I reflect back on this Quest for knowing I realize I was motivated by what Otto Rank called the "will to heal". At the time I thought more than I felt. Knowledge was my focus and I was very underdeveloped in intimacy and human relations. Now I can see I was interested in one basic question, if I hated humanity and its destructiveness did I hate myself, my humanity, and destructiveness?

After ten years of healing work on myself, I realize the answer was yes. One day, after having just experienced a major life crisis, I asked myself a haunting question, "Who are your tribe? To whom do you belong?" My God, it hit me like a lightening bolt. All the people I have known, the western Judeo-Christian world, they were my tribe. My culture of origin was the people on the streets where I had lived. How could I have forsaken my own blood, my own people? A great pain and sadness fell over me for some time. I realized how I had judged humanity so harshly, how I had judged my own family so harshly, and myself as well. For many years as an "environmentalist" I had worked



to save nature with a passion but I had not developed any compassion for my own kind nor myself. Now, I have dedicated my life as an "artist-type" of environmentalist (as Otto Rank termed it) with compassion for the most destructive act of all, i.e. the destruction of oneself. The source of pollution is deep with the human psyche and this we cannot ignore. For without healing the human mindscape our efforts to clean up the environment will fall short of the magnitude of change required to create a humane and ecologically sound planetary system. **Now, I understand the source of all pollution is fear and the only way out is to enter the path of fearlessness.**

Until I cleaned up my own inner fear (which is the fear of being hurt) I would not be able to serve Creation or Life wholly/holy. For my anger and resentment for being hurt by my own tribe, my own family, and myself, could only continue to add polluting fear to my environmental efforts and educational efforts. My creations would be stained with the same blood of "fear" as that which had created environmental problems in the first place. This was a humbling thought. More and more, I see great fear in modern day environmentalists as they preach and work to save the world. But only love, not fear, can save the world. If environmentalism is motivated by fear (i.e. fear of pain and death) then it will be of no major consequence in the larger story of the healing of this Earth.

#### Otto Rank and the Human "Artist-Type"

The great creative genius, environmentalist, and designer, R. Buckminster Fuller said,

*Artists are now extraordinarily important to human society.  
Many who have been called artists are healthy human beings  
who have kept their innate endowment of capabilities intact.  
The greatest of all their faculties is the ability of the  
imagination....I feel it is the artists who have kept the integrity of*



*childhood alive until we reach the bridge between the arts and sciences....I would not be surprised if tomorrow's biggest news is that the artists who best appreciate and conserve our natal capabilities have ascended by acclaim to the premiership of this new era of man on Earth. (from Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity. 1971, p. 112-113.)*

*If we compare the neurotic with the productive (creative artist-type) type, it is evident that the former suffers from an excessive check on his impulse life.... (from Otto Rank, Art and Artist, 1943.)*

Otto Rank was a psychoanalyst of the Vienna school, who along with Adler, Jung, Horney, and others grew up under Freud's influence and then departed to advance psychology. According to Progoff (1973)\*, Rank was the most advanced thinker and literally brought psychology to its own death (and limitations) and seeded its rebirth in his Beyond Psychology. Otto Rank is poorly known and yet I believe he has much wisdom to bring to evolving humanity.

Ranks' work was focused on the artistic-creative personality. He, himself, was an artist. His grasp of human consciousness in a historical context was immense and profound, according to Progoff. Rank showed that psychology and psychoanalysis could not comprehend nor make sense of the creative-artistic person without always coming to the conclusion of some pathology. This, he said, was the limitation of the science of psychoanalysis not the artist-type of person. Rank "...conceived the depths of the psyche not medically and reductively, but creatively in terms of its emergent purposes", says Progoff (1973).

\*Progoff, I. (1973). The Death and Rebirth of Psychology: An Integrative Evaluation of Freud, Adler, Jung, and Rank and the Impact of their Insights on Modern Man. N.Y., N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.



Rank, like Jung, knew that the larger, creative Will of Soul/God/Self was the energy which drives all human behaviour. The "artist-type" of individual channels this Will most intensely and clearly.

The "artist-type" of Rank is very similar to what Marilyn Ferguson\* calls "the transformed self". She says, "In the transformative process we become the artists and scientists of our own lives. Enhanced awareness promotes in all of us the traits that abound in the creative person: whole-seeing, fresh childlike perceptions. Playfulness, a sense of flow. Risk-taking....the transformed self has new tools, gifts, sensibilities. Like an artist, it spies pattern; it finds meaning and its own, inescapable originality." (p.116)

This new human is "creation-centered", as Matthew Fox would say. In his two forceful books, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ and Compassion, he outlines the change required in our vision of ourselves and our connectedness to Creation. Basically, Rank's artist-type of human is a "human birther" and a midwife of the Soul. They are infused with the creative Holy Spirit, which Fox argues is the second coming of Christ on Earth, and it will not leave them alone until it is manifest outward in their lives and work. This is the work of the mystic and prophet within each of us. As Jesus said, "Heaven is within you."

In closing, I realize I have raised many questions which time and space here will not allow me to address. The key point is that we are all "artists" within, just because we are of Creation and Creation becoming itself through us and all other beings in Creation. This new identity, which Rank says is essential to planetary evolution and sustainability will come when we risk, in compassion, looking for the source of all our fears, the source of pollution and stagnation that the artist-type never is satisfied with. The artistic-creative process is essential to the path of fearlessness and health.

\*Ferguson, M. (1980). The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 80's.

The outcome of this short reflection is that the new artist-type environmentalist is one who comes not out of fear in thought and action to save the world but with a love and patience for our nascent and vulnerable species of humanity. This requires great forgiveness of ourself and others which can only come when we face our fear and pain and heal ourselves in compassion. The artist-type has much to teach us for it knows deeply:

*...creativity does (the making of connections) what compassion is (the realization of the interconnectedness of all things). That is how intimately united compassion and creativity are: You cannot have the former without the latter. (from Matthew Fox, 1979, A Sprituality Named Compassion and the Healing of the Global Village, Humpty Dumpty, and Us. Minneapolis, MN:Winston Press, p. 138--9)*

*Compassion is the chief law of human existence.*  
*- Fydor Dostoevsky -*

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