

Writing SPIRAL

The story of SPIRAL began in the previous century. It came out of a long period of "considering," thinking about phenomena that I had witnessed but with my western view of reality could not accept. This considering began forty years earlier, after I met and got to know a small group of aborigines in Southeast Asia.

When I first met them I had a strange sense of recognition. There was something about them that immediately struck me as familiar. In my book (What It Is To Be Human, later called Original Wisdom, etc.) I wrote that I "fell in love" with them; that was not the right word. It took me many years to find a better description of how aboriginal people affect some modern humans. They were primitive certainly, poor, wearing almost no clothes, living far from "civilization," and yet there was something so endearing about them. It was as if something about them resonated in me, somewhere deep inside. In the years following I read what other people had written about aborigines in other parts of the world.

This is what Peter Mathiessen wrote in his book *The Tree Where Man Was Born*, © 1972, about a small group of pygmies (aborigines) he met in Central Africa:

"Shy, they await in a half-circle, much less tall than their bows. "Tsifiaqua!" they murmur, and our people say, "Tsifiaqua mtana," and then the hunters say, "Mt-aa-na!" for warm emphasis, smiling wholeheartedly. (Tsifiaqua is "afternoon" as in "good afternoon," and mtana is "nice" as in "nice day." and tsifiaqua m-taa-na, as the hunters say it, may mean, "Oh beautiful day!" I am smiling wholeheartedly too...; my smile seems to travel right around my head. The encounter in the sunny wood is much too simple, too beautiful to be real, yet it is more real than anything I have known in a long time. I feel a warm flood of relief, as if I had been away all my life and had come home again--I want to embrace them all."

The people I knew had the same effect on me. They made me feel what we, humans, used to be like when we were wild humans (wild in the sense of "natural"), before we thought ourselves better than the rest of creation and made what we call civilization.

Laurens van der Post, a South African writer who wrote extensively about another group of aboriginal people in southern Africa, whom he calls Bushman (they call themselves San), says that these little people "could not be tamed."

That is what civilization does, it tames us, it destroys the wild in us.

What kept haunting me, years after I left Southeast Asia, was that the aborigines I met "knew" things they could not possibly know. I took one of them, who had never seen the ocean, for an overnight visit to a beach. These "wild people" lived in what was then jungle far from and higher than the ocean. When we came back to the settlement he told the people there things about the world ocean that were almost scientific, but how could he possibly know all that? He had only stood on the beach, looking. He had not even stuck a toe in the water, yet he knew that ocean water is salty. He described the ocean floor with mountains and deep canyons, he mentioned the "rivers" (currents) in the ocean. How could he know?

During the two years that I knew them, I visited many of their settlements, but never planned. It depended on having free time, the use of a car, no other commitments. Of course they had no telephones. And yet, on every visit, to settlements I

had not visited before, I was met by someone sitting on the path, half an hour or so before coming to the settlement. They denied they were waiting for me, but they did not deny that they were there because they had dreamt that this was a day when a visitor would come.

Or, when I asked them a question that needed thought, there was always a silence (sometimes as much as five or more minutes), and then one person would answer. Always a short, concise sentence that went to the core of the question. I could not escape the notion that somehow they had exchanged thoughts among themselves and then decided who should speak for all of them: mind to mind communication? (I avoid using words like telepathy. That has come to mean trickery).

The riddle stayed with me for years, nagging me every time I thought of these people; almost daily. I read every writer I could find who made even a casual remark about meeting aboriginal people in other parts of the world. There were amazing similarities. All of the writers mentioned the joyfulness of aborigines, a *joie de vivre*, a sense of being fully and gratefully alive. Living close to, as a part of, nature all around. Many of the writers mentioned, often casually, what I call "knowing."

Anthropologists and other scientists who studied them, agreed that they were remnants of how we all were, ten or more thousand years ago. In the latter half of the 20th century Civilization had pushed them to the most inhospitable places on our planet: deserts, deep jungles and the arctic. Now, in the early years of the 21st century there are very few, if any, aboriginal groups left: either eradicated altogether with the many wild animal and plant species whose habitat we have so casually destroyed, or otherwise forcefully integrated in the larger country population, destroying their culture, as we have systematically destroyed almost all indigenous cultures in our haste to conquer (and so destroy) the planet.

Then one day I thought about the accounts of the women who spent half a life time and longer "being with" one of the ape species. (Why almost all women?) The more I learned about them the more it was clear that their patient "being with" was a way to learn to communicate. Body language certainly, sounds perhaps, but also something more: there must have been some kind of mind to mind contact.

There have been times in my life that I lived with a dog, sometimes more than one. Certainly, we learned to read each other's body language and tone of voice, but now and then there was more. I do not question that I communed with dogs. It is curious that I cannot communicate with cats very well, although I have no doubt that I communed the few times I have encountered a tiger in the wild. Now I know that I resent that house cats are domesticated, no longer wild. Domestic cats whine, they know how to play us. They know how to be half tamed and use us.

No, I cannot "prove" this. To me there is nothing wrong with anecdotal information. Statistics don't prove anything but frequency of behavior. I am not interested in behavior but in what lies behind behavior. We all know that animals can sense our intent. Perhaps intent is the beginning of communication.

Many years ago I came across a web site of Rupert Sheldrake, he of a doubtful reputation. He asked people to send him examples of "dogs that know when their masters were coming home." Dogs whose behavior showed that they somehow "knew" their masters were coming home before they had come to the door. He published a book by that name, discussing the many hundreds of emails and letters he received, with examples of dogs who knew even when their master first *thought* of leaving, sometimes long before they actually came home. Evidently not an uncommon behavior of dogs. I want to add, not unusual for people either.

How often do you know who is calling when you hear the phone ring? There are obviously many people who have had that experience more than once, perhaps most of the time. When we talk about it we giggle and make excuses. But that too is a kind of "knowing."

My little house is not visible from the road; I cannot see the gate that I keep closed (and locked because otherwise it swings open in the wind). Closed to keep dogs out, not people. Sometimes I "find myself" walking to open the gate for no obvious reason and when I get there just then someone is coming by for a visit. I have had several experiences of being ready to go out but turning around at the door, not knowing why. I sit down, with my hat and coat on. The phone rings, long distance: someone I do not know who has read my writing wants to talk with me. At first, many years ago, I made all kinds of excuses to myself. What a coincidence! Synchronicity—a term coined by C.G.Jung, meaning "the simultaneous occurrence of events that appear significantly related but have no discernible causal connection."

Strangely, once I accepted that these things were happening they happened more often. Once we let go our conditioning that tells us these things are "imagination," when we allow these imaginations, they occur more often than we knew.. That seems to indicate that many of us still have these qualities and talents, hidden under layers of conditioning. And that if we can break through the conditioning we can relearn to use these qualities and talents.

We have always known that animals can pick up our intention. Most animals can sense fear in us, for instance. Hunters, who are familiar with their environment and the animals in it, probably also sense the intent of animals. I am convinced that plants and trees also "know" intention. In all the places I have lived, I have always had abundant plant life, even when the house and garden were sad, neglected dumps when I moved in. An old Hawaiian man once came with my landlord, a month after I had moved in. As he got out of the car he sniffed and said with some surprise: "Hey, this place is alive—it did not look alive before. The plants must love you!". I responded, Yes, and I love the plants. It is not that I give them fertilizer, or plant flowers; I rarely do. After all these years, and all these different homes I have lived in, I accept that it is something between me and the plants and trees. We call it "a green thumb." That does not explain anything of course. I think it is a matter of communication of intent. Plants and trees can sense my intention, my interest in their well-being, my love for them just as they are. I try never to control them. Accept them for what they are.

Some people think these concepts are paranormal. What if they were normal, part of our humanness, before we became alienated from the earth, from Nature, and made ourselves civilized?

People who finish each other's sentences, or, our communication with very young children (babies). Obviously without words but equally obviously true communication. Mind to mind communication is not as paranormal as our culture tells us. And "knowing" things that we cannot possibly know? That too is probably not at all unusual if we were to allow ourselves to "know." Our society is so vehemently opposed to anything that is out of the center; we spend a lot of energy and time educating, training (conditioning) our children not just with facts we want them to know, but more important, a point of view we insist they share. We imprint our children with what this culture considers normal and allowed. What falls outside normal and therefore not allowed, is frowned upon, considered sick or criminal.

I learned from the aborigines that learning is important, teaching is conditioning. What we learn on our own "sticks." Facts and figures are not important except in context. All my life I have read voraciously. I began to pay attention to descriptions of these talents and qualities, as I call them. Not difficult to find hints, and in the writing about aboriginal people, there were frequent mentions of such unexplainable knowing. One example: Laurens van der Post, who was fascinated with the Bushman of the Kalahari Desert (then South Africa, now Botswana) describes this incident. The San hunt with poison arrows. The poison kills but does not taint the meat. A large animal takes some time to die. In one of van der Post's books he and his caravan (trucks with water and fuel for the vehicles, tents, food, a doctor, a mechanic, etc.) had found a small band of these "little People." One day they hunted and shot a giraffe. The giraffe of course runs away, the hunters follow his trail. Van de Post follows in one of his LandRovers. After several days the giraffe finally dies. The hunters cut up the meat preparing to carry all that meat back to where the women and children are, probably 50 miles away. It will take the hunters days to walk with such a load of meat. He offers to carry them and the meat, and remarks "the women will be surprised when we come back so soon!" Oh no, they assure him, they already know, "they are preparing the fires." As the car drives up, a few hours later: the women are not at all surprised, they knew exactly when the men would get back with the meat. The fires are lit.

It took me years to accept that, perhaps, probably, almost certainly, these qualities and talents are a basic human heritage. The difference between "wild people" and us, is our civilization. It is our civilization that prevents us from "knowing."

I am convinced that despite a few thousand years of civilization those qualities and talents are still within us.

How can I write a story about this? People are not going to believe me.

Maybe the only way to broach the subject would be to write about aliens, beings from outer space!

I have never doubted that, of course, there must be Life on other planets. It does not fit my understanding of the universe that we would be unique. Nothing is unique in the universe. Life on other planets must have different shapes, functions, but there must be some kind of common "spirit," for want of a better word. Something non-material that all Life everywhere shares.

And so, bit by bit, the writing of what came to be called SPIRAL began with what little I know of space and our earth, and humans. The beginning was fun to write. I could well imagine the world-wide reaction to "visitors from space" although now, more than ten years later, I think we would react with more violence. Today we seem to react to anything with the unbridled violence of our paranoia.

As all writers know, when you make up a situation, imagine people and circumstances, at a certain moment the story gets a life of its own. Gradually, SPIRAL took over the writing. It felt as if I were just writing what was dictated to me (in my head). There were many times when I worked with fierce concentration, and suddenly woke up (got out of the concentration), looked at what I had written... *did I write that?* Much of the writing felt like description of a "real" experience.

That made me think about fantasy and reality. Our civilization thinks that these two realms are totally different. I am no longer so sure. Much of what we think "real" is obviously illusion; and much of what I experienced may be imagination but it felt utterly "real." It was certainly real to me.

The dream in the book is a dream I had. I have no idea where the humans I communed with came from. My imagination? But the communing in my head felt painfully real, as you may guess after reading.

The title of the book came to me ready-made (toward the end of the writing). I am not sure what it has to do with the story, I don't know why it must be written in all caps. But that is the way it came to me. I tried to change the title several times, and each time it was as if I was given an electric shock, NO, the book is SPIRAL.

~ ~ ~

SPIRAL was written many years before I even began writing what now is Rain of Ashes. As we moved into this new century it became abundantly clear that our civilization is going to extremes of destruction and illusion; I think it is crashing. Something sinister is happening to people. And I realize that where ten years ago I had thought it would take visitors from outer space to help break through our conditioning, now I know that a great catastrophe would shake people loose from their conditioning just as well, and make it possible to rediscover ancient talents and qualities. I experienced extreme situations (the almost total breakdown of society) in WWII, which I survived after five years of German Occupation in the Netherlands. I was lucky to survive the war, more lucky to have had a childhood among non-western people, growing up with—almost in—an indigenous culture where the conditioning is lighter and very different. "Knowing" is not thought

strange or paranormal. Indigenous cultures then still knew and practiced what we call "unconditional love," which western civilization does not know. Unconditional love feels warm and welcoming and has nothing to do with passion or sexual attraction; it makes for cohesive societies where people cooperate rather than compete, and where big egos are laughed at. Perhaps childhood in an indigenous culture made it easier to accept that it is all right to know things that I cannot know and to talk with plants and animals and receive what they commune to me. I assure you it is a good way to be, even when it makes it difficult to live in a modern so-called civilized society that has become so uncivil.

Hawai'i 2006, 2009, 2011