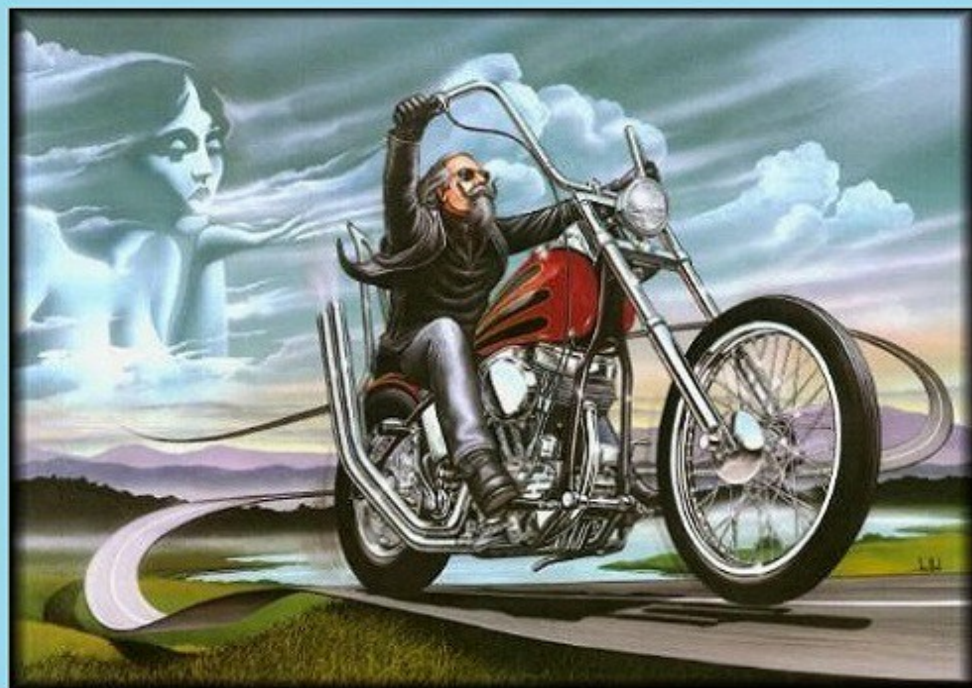


DAWN OF THE LIFE



John O'Loughlin

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DIALOGUES AND ESSAYS

By

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CDM Philosophy

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PREFACE

This project is a combination of two other works, viz. *The Transcendental Future* (1980), and *The Way of Evolution* (1981), and therefore dates from 1980–81, a time when I had just turned away from Spenglerian historicism towards a more optimistic outlook on life or, at any rate, the prospect of evolutionary progress based around an orientation towards the omega-point of things, which I have identified with transcendentalism and, ultimately, with the concept of ‘the Centre’

However, these writings are less ambitious and certainly much less evolved than many of those which were to follow, including the more complex dialogues dating from 1982 in the *Importance of Technology to the Transcendental Future*. Unlike the overall dialogue bias of that project, however, this volume is evenly balanced between dialogues and essays, with a bias, if anything, towards the latter, and in that respect it bears some resemblance to *In the Shadow of Spengler* (1978–9), although the addition of an aphoristic appendix is really quite new.

It is in most respects, however, a more positive and brighter text, with little if any of the urban disillusionment with man-made sterility characteristic of the earlier work, since love is not here the be-all-and-end-all of things it evidently was in the aforementioned

title.

John O'Loughlin, London 2007 (Revised 2022)

INTRODUCTION: *THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE*

Is there an ultimate purpose to human evolution, and, if so, what? This is a question which serious writers have been asking themselves for some considerable time now and providing a variety of answers to, according to their individual bents. For some, the answers have been flatly negative. For others, by contrast, highly positive.

There are those who believe that evolution is a haphazard affair without any ultimate purpose, and others who are convinced that it signifies an important trend in the direction of greater spirituality. There are those who believe that evolution is drawing to a close, and others who are convinced that it still has a long way to go. No matter how diverse the opinions or answers may happen to be, the question remains one to which writers generally apply themselves either negatively or positively, pessimistically or optimistically. It induces a 'yes' or a 'no' response, rather than incertitude.

In this essayistic introduction, and most of the ensuing literary material, I propose to take a 'yes' stance and investigate one or two of the possibilities which human evolution may undergo during the course of the next few centuries. I am going to assume that there is an ultimate purpose to evolution which takes the form of a spiritual transformation of mankind into the Divine, but I'm not going to pretend that such a transformation will come about merely in the course of a few decades. If

there is a progressive advancement from matter to spirit,
it is not one that proceeds quickly but, rather, in
accordance with the overall pattern of higher evolution
from ape to man and then on to whatever lies beyond
him.

Yes, I am going to contend that we began in very
unspiritual circumstances, progressed, via our ape-like
ancestors, to beings capable of religious experience, and
are still progressing, slowly but surely, from the cultural
state in which we have intermittently existed for the past
6–7,000 years towards a higher state of predominant
spirituality, after which the material aspect of our being
may disappear altogether as we merge into the omega
absolute of pure spirit, following transcendence. If that
sounds like Vedanta, then so be it! But I am not going
to pretend that the ultimate purpose of evolution will be
achieved before some considerable period of time has
elapsed – enough time, in fact, to enable us to transcend
our current identity. For at present we are still men, not
godlike entities, and so we shall remain until such time
as the next great spiritual revolution and/or evolutionary
leap comes about.

We are men, and therefore victims of and participants in
history. History largely hinges, we learn from Spengler,
a prominent philosopher of history, upon cultures rising
and falling, upon a succession of cultural developments
– some great, the majority small. It appertains to that
compromise between the sensual and the spiritual which
is man. Before the compromise, there is no history.

Likewise there can be no history after it. Ape and Superman (to use a Nietzschean term) are each devoid of history and, consequently, of culture. Only man makes history, which will be the greater the more finely balanced the compromise between the sensual and the spiritual. Therefore history must continue, in one form or another, until man is extinguished in the Superman.

But what of cultural history, the history pertinent to great cultures, which Spengler considered the only true one? Does what he saw as the decline of the West, the last great culture to have appeared in the world, signify man's approaching end, or is there likely to be another such culture in the near future?

Of great cultures there have been, according to the aforementioned philosopher, seven or eight, and of this relatively small number the Christian, or Western, was in his opinion the greatest, having had the most far-reaching effects on the world and achieved cultural wonders unprecedented in the entire history of man. It was the last of a succession of great cultures and the most extensive of them all. No previous culture had developed art or music or literature or sculpture or architecture to such a high and complex level, and it is difficult to imagine any subsequent culture surpassing it.

If we try to imagine a hypothetical future culture producing great art, we are immediately confronted by the immense difficulty of trying to imagine paintings or music or literature of a superior order to the greatest works of each genre currently in existence. We would

have to reconcile ourselves, under duress of this hypothesis, to the implausible possibility of artists producing works superior in essence to Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Van Eyck, Breugel, Dürer, Poussin, Rubens, Rembrandt, Titian, Tintoretto, Tiepolo, *et al.* Composers producing works superior in essence to Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, *et al.* Writers producing works superior in essence to Chaucer, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Swift, Goethe, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Balzac, Flaubert, *et al.* Needless to say, we are unlikely to succeed in doing that! And so, its being supposed that the arts have attained to their egocentric zenith in the last great culture known to man, we must assume that the cultural process, properly so-considered, has come to an end, never to be supplanted by another such development in the near or distant future.

For what would another culture require in order to establish itself on a proper footing with cultural development generally? It would require nature, above all regular contact with the best possible type of nature – a type peculiar to temperate rather than tropical zones. A great culture is unlikely to arise in climates which are either too hot or too cold, too fierce or too sultry. It requires proper nourishment, and this can only be obtained in certain regions of the world. Rule out those regions, such as Western Europe and North America, where the representatives of the last great culture still exist, or those regions, including China and India, where

an earlier cultural people developed and declined, and what is left? Very little, indeed! Hardly anywhere which is not either already in the hands of the last cultural people or, alternatively, in the hands of an earlier cultural people who have since abandoned or are in the process of outgrowing their culture. Apart from this, one finds regions which are not in the best of geographical positions to foster a great culture. There is something inferior about the climate and the consequent state of nature there. One cannot imagine the world's greatest art ever arising from such places.

But if the proximity of temperate nature is a necessity, indeed a precondition, of higher cultural development, then its abundance is no less so. Thus arises our next objection to the likelihood of subsequent cultural development. For wherever man lives in large numbers, these days, nature is on the defensive, is being ruthlessly exploited and destroyed by him. The larger the cities become, the less does nature come to play a part in the lives of their citizens, with a consequence that cultural activities decline. And because the world is becoming increasingly urbanized and mechanized, there would seem to be little chance of another culture arising. The incentive for it is just not there. Consequently we need not be surprised if the age of separate cultures is at an end.

But what of the world's future, now that we are outgrowing our traditional provincialism and growing into a cosmopolitanism based on the technological

advance-ments and inventions of the West? Is man drawing to *his* end?

There are two ways of looking at this question, and in both cases I would be inclined to grant man the benefit of the doubt and to accord him a survival beyond the cultural phase. In the first case, I would imagine him capable of surviving the catastrophe of a nuclear accident and/or war, even if millions of his kind don't. But in the second case, I would imagine him incapable of transforming himself into the more-than-human over the next few decades. Consequently, the end of man would seem to lie too far into the future for us to have either serious qualms about or any great hopes for his self-overcoming. In the meantime, however, it isn't impossible that he will survive his own self-destructive tendencies and extend his knowledge of space to a point which may well bring him into contact, whether on a friendly or a hostile basis initially, with other beings (aliens) in the Galaxy.

Conceived in material or scientific terms, evolution should embrace an expanding knowledge of the Universe, and thus confine man to the roles of victim of and participator in the struggles for survival which will probably take place there. Conceived, on the other hand, in spiritual or religious terms, evolution should signify a growing knowledge of spiritual potentialities, and thus involve man in an inner journey towards his Final End through a condition which completely transcends the mundane. If, however, man is first

destined to come to grips with the Galaxy, then it's difficult to imagine his transformation from the human plane to the superhuman one taking place before he has done so. As such, one is inclined to push this hypothetical transformation quite a long way into the future!

But why assume that man will be transformed anyway? What is there to prevent us from considering his present form the final one? Well, let us briefly take a look at the history of his development. He began – did he not? – where the ape-like ancestor came to an end. The ape-like ancestor may have developed from something earlier or lower, but, so far as we're concerned, it suffices us to consider it the forerunner of man – the animal beginnings. Thus from the unspiritual, predominantly sensual life of the ape surrounded by nature-in-the-raw, man emerged as a compromise between matter and spirit because he could to some extent master nature, and thereby surround himself with civilization. He built villages, then towns, and finally cities, and the more he advanced, the less animal he became and the closer he drew to the superhuman, which stems from large cities. In the pre-cultural stage he is smothered by nature and thus remains, to a significant extent, its victim. In the cultural stage, however, he exists on equal terms with nature, thanks to his growing ability to create a world of his own in opposition to it. Villages and towns are a pleasant reminder of man's power and province. They prevent him from feeling the might of nature breathing down his

neck and driving fear into his soul. But if nature-in-moderation is the motto of cultural man, then the motto of post-cultural man is effectively victory-over-nature, and the larger his towns and cities become, the more evident does this victory appear. Now it is man who plays the bully, as he continues to extend his power at nature's expense. The compromise is gone and, with its departure, man finds himself one stage closer to the Superman, to the spiritual transformation which will put an end to his humanity.

Thus from the pre-human ape-like creature there emerged man, and from him there should emerge the post-human godlike being who will signify the termination of his evolution. From predominant sensuality one proceeds to a sensual/spiritual balance, and from that to a spiritual predominance. From the subhuman to the superhuman via the human. In the first, or subhuman, stage there is only the fight for survival carried-out in the crudest terms. In the second, or human, stage the fight for survival is no longer as crude as before but, though still existing in various degrees, is accompanied by evidence of man's growing spirituality – in short, by culture, which proceeds from its humble beginnings in the predominant sensuality of the pre-cultural to the balanced greatness of the culture proper, before declining, with the post-cultural, into the predominantly spiritual. However, in the third or superhuman stage there is neither a fight for survival nor culture but continuous self-realization. For the temporal world has largely been overcome in the interests of the

eternal one, and man, the doer of deeds, has ceased to exist.

What, exactly, his successor will look like it is of course difficult, if not impossible, for us to imagine at this juncture. But we needn't be particularly surprised if 'he' should transpire to being as different from man as man was from his ape-like predecessor. If the pre-cultural lasted many hundreds of years, then there is no reason for us to suppose that the post-cultural, which began in the nineteenth century, won't do so either. For we are still, to all appearances, a long way from becoming the superhuman beings that evolution would seem to be working towards! A few of us may be slightly closer to that transformation or be more spiritually advanced than the majority, but most human beings can hardly be regarded as incipient or even potential Supermen! Alas, the faces and mentalities of the local road sweepers, dustmen, butchers, grocers, window cleaners, etc., are not guaranteed to inspire one with any great confidence that humanity is about to be transformed into something