

A response by Michael Daniels

Steve King criticises me for not solving human evil and for not presenting a transpersonal perspective. These criticisms raise important issues both about the nature of the transpersonal and about our attitude to evil. For Steve King, it seems, the transpersonal involves the transcendence of all dualistic distinctions in the achievement of unity consciousness. But this is only one particular view or aspect of the transpersonal and, in my opinion, a rather limited albeit influential one (essentially it is the position advocated by Advaita Vedanta and forcefully promoted by Wilber). From this perspective, evil is simply a relative, illusory reality. We should therefore not attempt to deal with evil directly, but should simply rise above it. This view, I maintain, is both mistaken and dangerous. Indeed the principal failing of such non-dualistic philosophies is that they cannot deal effectively with the problem of evil because they simply refuse to recognise it. For me the transpersonal is about recognising and experiencing our connection with a larger reality (other people, life in general, cosmos, the Divine). Such connection does not *eliminate* our individual and collective responsibility to promote the good (and counteract evil) but rather specifically *mandates* it. Where I agree with Steve King, however, is that we need to be very careful that in our zeal to fight evil we don't end up doing more harm than good - a point I made strongly in my article.

In an interesting contrast, Tony Morris seems to be criticising my perspective for not being dualistic enough! In my emphasis on human evil, Morris is worried that I am ignoring the reality of "Evil with a capital E". I am not sure exactly how Morris understands this Evil, although he does suggest that it has a "drive" and "power" which is in some sense "demonic" and "possessive". If he is referring to the theological belief in an absolute metaphysical principle of Evil (e.g., the Devil), then he is right to say that I reject this totally. For me, evil is an aspect of the human condition and human psychology (understood in the broadest terms). Evil has no other ontological reality. The examples of Evil that Morris cites are entirely human (although extreme) and in my view can be fully explained by the psychological principles

that I outlined in my article (e.g., shadow projections, evil ideologies masquerading as good, and failures of empathy and benevolence).

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