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BOOK REVIEW

The African Unconscious: Roots of Ancient Mysticism and Modern Psychology

(2012; New York, NY: Cosimo)

by Edward Bruce Bynum

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For those interested in an Afrocentric approach to tracing the historical migration of dark skin people over human history, the intricate revealings in the indelible, *The African Unconscious: Roots of Ancient Mysticism and Modern Psychology*, is a cornerstone contribution. First published 15 years ago, this fascinating blend of anthropology, biology, physics, geography, and African history produces a monumental testimony about the origins of human life and its unfolding spiritual development via an African-centered perspective.

Uniform with other African-centered writing, Bynum points out the pre and postmodern writers who subjectively douse African thought and heritage with characteristics of inferiority and who subjectively attribute intellectual knowledge on the African continent to non-Black people. Offering archeological data, ancient manuscripts, and genetic evidence many misconceptions are exposed and unabashedly refuted by Bynum's theorizing. Furthering the objective to present factual information, Bynum denies alignment with radical claims that are, from his point of view, unsubstantiated and overtly irrational. Although no mention of contentious peer material is suggested for side by side analysis, the preponderance of both scientific and anecdotal evidence affirm the worthiness of this text to withstand critical assessment by scholars in multiple disciplines.

Tracing both the geographic establishment and cultivation of ancient societies, the opening chapter illuminates the dawn of religion in antiquity. Specifically, select African religions and major world religions with distinct African influences are

introduced as precursors to the in-depth spiritual dynamics discussed in later chapters. Ancient Egypt (Kemet) is presented throughout the text as a focal point for spiritual and philosophical cross-pollination, alongside an extensive repository of contributions by other Africoid, Moorish, and Melanesian peoples who are credited as evolutionary progenitors in far-reaching societies. In painstaking detail Bynum feverishly exposes how the genetic and social engagements within cultures such as these manifest as an African unconscious or core human consciousness, sonorously pronounced as the nucleus of humankind's spiritual nature.

Consecutive chapters reify the core argument that suggests that primordial mental matrices rooted in humanity's common African ancestry are the acting agents in perpetuating a uniform unconscious. By way of example, Bynum points out the ever present widespread awareness of non-local neurological phenomena, such as intuition, as confirmation of the longevity of ancient African consciousness that acknowledges the same genuine lived experiences as various belief systems today. Previously dismissed as primitive and inexplicable, the transpersonal tenets of the African unconscious are interrelated aspects of a communal worldview that today are honored as advanced spiritual technology in many circles. Throughout the remainder of the text the author names the elements of the African unconscious auspicious present in spiritual systems such as the "codified science of Kundalini", the spiritual rhythmic origins of al-Kemet (chemistry), and non-linear Osirian spiritual methodologies. Next he magnifies such attributes as the unacknowledged roots of western religions' doctrines

and psychoanalytic traditions. Prompted by the forced ambulation of African mysticism into the New World multiple incarnations were yielded, yet these surviving beliefs were, according to the author splintered by the uprise of racial alienation and acculturation. Delving into the subsequent offshoots of the original African unconscious, the author's exploration of contemporary westernized paradigms serves to discourage materialism and beckon for an intensely energetic biospiritual awakening. Essentially, the text is a manifesto that guides the reader through human beginnings originating in Africa to today's reality to affirm the need to reconnect to the ancient African principles that are innately human. Reconnection and awareness are the roots to survival and total human transformation.

In conclusion, this text calls for the reader to be open to a non-systematized cosmology. By its very nature it challenges all linear dogma and provides a definitive alternative to European scholarship. As with most historic overviews, new discoveries challenge previous assumptions and assertions. As is the goal of this text, Afrocentric transpersonal scholars continue to expand the field by providing cultural awareness, and supporting the shift away from a dominate narrative.

About the Reviewer

Angelina Graham, MA, is completing her doctorate at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, with a research emphasis on spiritual leadership lived by women of African ancestry. Early in her PhD studies, Angelina became the first Western region graduate student representative for the Association of Black Psychologists Student Circle Board of Directors (ABPsiSC). During her tenure on the ABPsiSC board she organized, *Ubuntu: Defining Transpersonal Psychology within Our Afrocentric Epistemology*, an unprecedented conference combining transpersonal and black psychospiritual expertise. Furthering her commitment to expanding her transpersonal education, Angelina's independent research on African Derived Religions and other non-Christian belief systems includes field study within the US and Cuba. Her research findings are frequently presented via invitation in forums with womanist, religious, and diversity concentrations. Recognized for her commitment to interdisciplinary advancement, she is currently a special topics guest editor and inaugural fellow for the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*.

About the Journal

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