

# The Review of Books and

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## Soft version of Nietzschean superman

**UNFINISHED ANIMAL: The Aquarian Frontier and The Evolution of Consciousness**  
by Theodore Roszak  
Harper & Row, New York, 1975  
271 pp., \$10.

# Religion

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**W**e must abandon Darwin "evolution," "the theory (that) replaces the old God with an even more incredible deity — omnipotent chance." On this, the West Virginia bookburners, this book, and I agree. We must do so without falling into biblical fundamentalism. On that, Roszak and I agree. We must do so without succumbing to gnosticism. I agree, and he resoundingly disagrees: our troubadour for the counterculture is in this, even more than in his previous six books, anti-Jewish-anti-Christian-gnostic-occult — an oeuvre accomplished over as many years while enjoying the establishment advantages of a culture post in the California university system.

If my opening seems arch verging on sardonic, while expressing appreciation for the author's attack on scientism, it serves to suggest this reviewer's exasperation over the author's constellation of loyalties, betrayals, atavisms, and suggestive analogs. I like the way he makes me angry with his combination of ethical concern (so biblical!) and metaphysical cop-down into the underground philosophia perennis (so antibiblical!). His efforts to ground a global ethic in esoterica are as courageous, successful, and absurd as Maslow's efforts to ground the same in psychobiology and Skinner's in sociobiology. In his warfare for the spiritual against Flatland, he is my brother; in his weapons, my enemy, for the rebirth of the chthonic-occult would mean an even deeper cultural amnesia-hostility vis-a-vis my passion, which is the biblical vision, the Abraham-Jesus way of seeing and living in the world.

Rozzak's thesis? "We are the unfinished animal, charged with a task of self-perfection that troubles the mind with images of godhood." "We need a radically altered conception of ourselves, of our primary needs, of our place in nature, of our cosmic vocation. And here it is, ...a picture of ourselves, no longer as homo faber or homo economicus, but as humanity transcendent, seeker of meaning, creator of visions." Too long we've been captive to on-the-ground consumerism with its alienations and to the impersonal underground chaos of "the subconscious." Now, in increasing numbers and with swelling intensity we long for the personal, directive, "super-conscious" task of "the transcendent."

That task? In its eclecticism it sounds, variously, like Jesus, E.F. Schumacher (whose "Small Is Beautiful" Roszak did a crystalline "introduction" to), Nader, and even Frankl. Here is a man who cares deeply what happens to our endangered, unfinished species, and is crying out warnings like a biblical prophet—yet himself profoundly alienated against the source sanction of such prophecy; viz., the biblical God....

Or is he? Is he perhaps rather only identifying with the metaphysical bias, antibiblical and pro-occult, of the West Coast advantaged young he's trying to teach? Two considerations raise this question for me. First, put all his occult sources together, subject them to high pressure, and you'll get hardly one drop of the ethical substance that, I am convinced, is Roszak's primary motivation. His effort to use occult fuel in his moral engine cannot explain his own movement: it won't even light. Another "secret" esoteric is at work; far beyond his knowing, or at least confessing, he's burning the biblical fuel. Second, the actual structure as well as substance of his caring is biblical-humanist, and unaffected by gnostic considerations such as antisomatic dualism and disdain for the historical.

Lest I be thought to cast this book aside, I hasten to recommend it as anybody's trip

into some exciting exploration—even if only a thorough exploration into the current occult "consciousness" options on "the Aquarian frontier." By birth I'm an Aquarian, and I've been much into the human potential movement, including offering courses at Esalen Institute. I've never seen anything more beautiful than naked young families sitting lotus on the Big Sur beach at sunrise facing—East! East! There's my ambivalence. A deeply committed Western (Christian) theologian, with a strong East Tendency, and having taught East-West religions in America's most East-learning state university, Hawaii....and now teaching the

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