

## WILD MIND: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche

Bill Plotkin

New World Library, California, 2013

ISBN 978-1-60868-178-5

(Reviewed for *Permaculture Magazine*, Spring 2014)

Have you ever felt hijacked by such an intense emotion that you acted contrary to cherished principles? Maybe you possess an inner critic who pounces on your every creative expression? Or perhaps when you connect deeply with Nature, you experience an erotic frisson that feels too taboo to own?

Bill Plotkin's *Wild Mind* has helped me integrate these aspects of myself and various previously puzzling modes in which I might behave whilst alone or towards others. Understanding that "having a map can make all the difference in a culture that does not adequately support human flowering", the author has developed a map of psychological wholeness, which unfolds through the pages of this brilliant and accessible book.

Clear that the map isn't the terrain, this US-based ecopsychologist is an assured guide, a veteran explorer of the quick-sands of the mind. Drawing on the work of a wide range of visionaries and poets, his 'Nature-based Map of the Psyche' has been developed since the 1980s, and he acknowledges, "field-tested and refined" by many others.

Wanting to move beyond a focus on pathology towards a process of 'wholing', in which each person fully participates, Plotkin's vision is of what he calls 'the 3-D Ego'. Here the healthy Ego is "blessed with some degree of conscious communion and integration with Self, Soul and Spirit", instead of being hijacked by a sub-personality. With insightful compassion, he sees these 'subs' – which include my inner critic – as having been formed in childhood. Sadly, our society does little to encourage us to mature beyond an adolescent state, and so it appears that many people end up functioning almost entirely by way of their own particular coterie of 'subs'. Plotkin and other like-minds see this as in large part why wars begin and we face ecocide today.

Charting his imaginatively named facets of the mature Self – in the North, 'The Nurturing, Generative Adult', in the South, 'The Wild Indigenous One', in the East, the 'Innocent/Sage' and in the West, 'The Muse-Beloved' – the author takes his readers on a fabulous journey of self-discovery. Honest about himself, he includes an essential range of creative exercises to cultivate these four facets, and to liberate us from our immature aspects.

"A revolution in our understanding of what it means to be fully human", states a puff on the cover. Personally, I find this an indispensable self-awareness tool to aid what radical ecopsychologist, Andy Fisher, refers to as our 'counter-practices', which support our revolutionary co-creation of a life-sustaining society.

Helen Moore is an eco-poet based in Somerset. Her debut collection, *Hedge Fund, And Other Living Margins*, was published in 2012 by Shearsman Books.