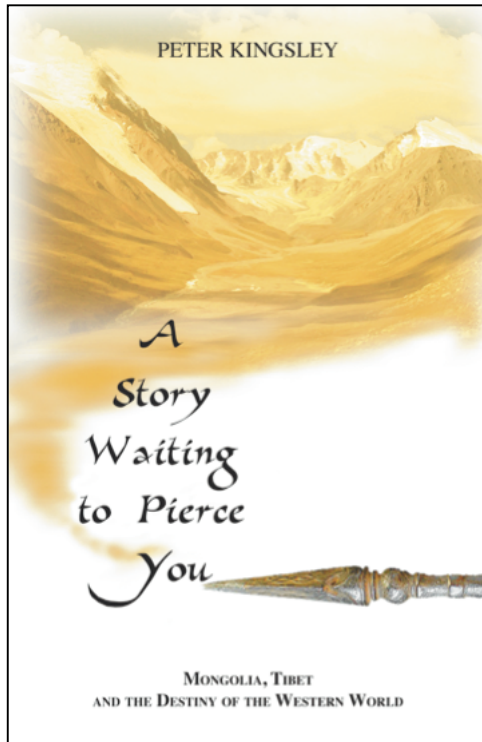


“Arrow to the Soul” by Edward Tick

A Review of Peter Kingsley’s *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*



PETER KINGSLEY’S WORK IS SO UNIQUE AND URGENT, demanding and liberating, that I find it difficult to conjure the best metaphors for who he is and what he gifts us.

I think of him as a renegade philosopher preaching in the marketplace rather than teaching in academia. I think of him as an alchemist, a poet of the soul, and an explorer of uncharted regions. Now, with his new book *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, he becomes a Buddhist archery master as well. And his humble

target is the death and rebirth of worlds.

Let us begin with Peter the explorer. Archaic maps of the world featured small landmasses of the known continents surrounded by vast and threatening stretches of water. Beyond the known, we were warned, “There be dragons.”

Peter Kingsley has been one of our most intrepid and fearless modern explorers of the unmapped terrain beyond the known. In all his books and work he has been exploring the landmasses of what we think we know, how we interpret reality, and the mental structures we evolved and institutionalized that have given our cultures and civilizations their ultimate—utilitarian yet disordered and violence-prone—shapes. Through electric

prose and acute scholarship Peter shows that these are indeed only artificial and inaccurate constructs rather than truthful visions of realities beyond us. He teaches that the truly dangerous dragons dwell not in those unknown stretches beyond us. Rather, they dwell in the strange twistings and turnings of our mind and heart; in the ignorance of soul that we practice and impose between us and the beauty, grandeur and magnificent order of the cosmos.

And, like the antique philosophers he studies and presents with such wisdom and erudition, he teaches that the grand vision *is* accessible to us.

Peter wants to bring us all home to our core spirituality before we destroy our civilizations and this amazingly alive planet that is our home. Like the arrows about which he writes, he slices through eons of time and culture to restore us to a primal vision of the Light, the Logos, the Oneness, the Divine Inspiration that is beyond and behind all things. When we journey with him to perceive again this original light of creation, Peter reminds us that “Cultures are created and destroyed in ecstasy—and for every moment in between there is nothing that keeps a world alive aside from the breath of ecstasies.” While this may seem a stretch to our usual rational study of philosophy and history, all Peter’s previous books as well as this new one demonstrate the cosmic and supra-rational vision in the heart of the cosmos which has been perceived by some of our greatest thinkers and creators of the past: among them Pythagoras, Empedocles, Parmenides from the Greek tradition, and also Genghis Khan, our Native Americans, and masters from the Eastern and Indigenous worlds most readers have never encountered before. Peter brings their long-buried or misinterpreted wisdom into a light so bright it is irresistible. “The simple truth is

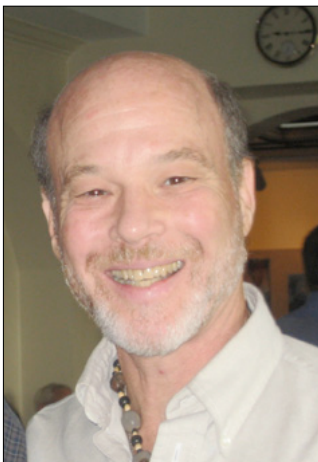
that every single civilization, including this western world, was brought into being from a sacred place to serve a sacred purpose.”

Do not think that Peter’s exploration is esoteric, or detached, and has little to do with the ways we live our small lives. On the contrary: Peter’s clear and piercing arguments and beautifully fletched yet straight-arrow prose lead us to see and think differently and to perceive that any one of us can achieve transcendent vision, enter into ecstatic communion, and become one of those who through all of time have been the planters and guardians of cultures and civilizations. Thus *Story* is a call to world service. “But always there are people who know how to gather the essence of life and hold it safely, protect it and nurture it until the next seeding. They are the ones who are entrusted to turn the pages of life, to open the book of a culture and close it. They are the ones who are given permission to sound the note that will bring a new world into being and then sing the song that will bring it nearer to its close. They are the watchers who know the real meaning of responsibility and compassion...”

There is a bold and difficult story in *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, ancient yet original in Peter’s telling, long buried yet accessible through the breakthrough philosophy Peter practices. The story is of the shamanic arrow, known in traditional cultures around the world, and how it has flown as a tool of spiritual power and transformation through Mongol, Buddhist, Greek, Native American and other cultures. We learn that shamans and other ecstasies may have known about, visited and inspired each other’s cultures long ago and far earlier than what we used to consider hard scientific evidence suggests. And in

Peter's irresistible telling, we learn that that shaman's arrow still flies—and can pierce any one of us.

Immediately after completing my first reading of *Story*, I felt compelled to reread *Zen in the Art of Archery* by Eugen Herrigel. I wanted to be reminded of the degree to which the arrow, as presented by Peter, is in essence a tool of shamanic power to be used for spiritual evolution. Herrigel's classic demonstrates how difficult it is to become a spiritual master; how our arts are in essence spiritual exercises; and how egoless, effortless and focused must be our every breath, every word and gesture if we are to hit our bull's eyes—whether we aim at personal liberation or cultural transformation. In *Story* Peter Kingsley proves himself to be a master spiritual archer fletching words and ideas to pierce the targets of our ignorance and denial and, like a Zen master, restore us to a clear and incontrovertible vision of the spiritual nature of reality and the origin of our cultures. Peter Kingsley is a master shamanic archer. The arrows he lets fly are his words. In style, diction, poetry, thought, emotion, and in the responsibilities to awaken and witness that it places on us, *A Story Waiting to Pierce You* indeed flies through mountains like the shamanic arrows it presents. And it indeed pierces.



About the reviewer: Edward Tick is the author of *War and the Soul*, *The Practice of Dream Healing*, and *The Golden Tortoise*. He is the Director of Soldier's Heart, a non-profit organization that works to prepare families and communities in supporting and healing veterans returning from current wars as well as those who fought in past wars.