



THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

A DATE THAT WILL LIVE
IN A SLIDING CHAIN OF SIGNIFIERS

Ken Wilber

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In this footnote to the book *Boomeritis*, written in 2002, Ken discusses the many sorts of reactions people had to the tragedy of 9/11 while presenting a theoretical framework within which a genuinely Integral approach to politics and governance might emerge.

INTRODUCTION

‘The Deconstruction of the World Trade Center—A Date That Will Live in a Sliding Chain of Signifiers’ is an excerpt, from the novel *Boomeritis*, dealing with the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The novel itself will be released this coming April. It was not my intention to post any of it until that time; recent events convinced me otherwise.

There is a monumental problem with doing so, alas. This excerpt comes at the end of the book, and thus much of it will make little sense unless you have read the entire book first; indeed, several wrong conclusions will be drawn from reading this piece alone.

Still, I have decided to post it for the following reasons.

One, I was flooded with questions about the attack—what did I think, what did it mean, what’s an appropriate response, both individually and collectively? It is certainly fitting that something be said, but any response that would do justice to the situation would have to be lengthy and nuanced—the section in the novel that does so is over 80 pages. I decided that there was no reason for me to rewrite that 80 pages.

Two, although this is an excerpt from the novel, it’s not really. Let me explain. The novel itself is pretty much like any novel—around 350 pages of fiction. Without giving anything away, the novel is about a young man, age 20, who is getting a degree in Artificial Intelligence from MIT. He

becomes preoccupied with the thought—quite common in AI circles—that within approximately 30 years, machines will reach human-level intelligence. He therefore firmly believes that within his lifetime, he will be able to completely download his consciousness into silicon cybercity and kiss the messy world of carbon flesh goodbye.

In the course of his studies, he decides that, if he really wants to understand what the evolution of consciousness in the coming Silicon world will look like, he should study the evolution and development of consciousness in the world of Carbon—that is, in humans—and maybe pick up a few hints. This leads him eventually to a place called Integral Center in Cambridge (yes, obviously modeled after Integral Institute—but with several postmodern twists that constitute part of the inside joke of the book itself: and I definitely cannot tell you what those are!).

As his understanding of the development of human consciousness deepens, he becomes enthralled with the idea that Silicon consciousness itself would start to grow and evolve, and that it might in fact evolve up the entire spectrum of consciousness... maybe even to Spirit itself. And thus he becomes obsessed, absolutely obsessed, with the thought: who would first discover God on a widespread scale, Carbon or Silicon?

Needless to say, I can't tell you too much more without spoiling the whole story. But I can add one more thing: the novel itself is meant to be a criticism of boomeritis, or pluralism infected with narcissism. And therefore—this was the major requirement when writing it—the novel itself must exemplify everything that it criticizes, thus making it a self-conscious parody of exactly what it is criticizing—which is precisely what boomeritis itself does. Thus, the book is billed as “the great postmodern novel” (which is what several critics have already called it) because it eats its own tail in good postmodern fashion.

The detailed criticism of boomeritis that the novel generates can only be understood, of course, by reading it. All I can say is that it is a sustained,

serious, critical examination of boomeritis as it has infected postmodernism, almost all of the pluralistic movements, New Age spirituality, new paradigm claims, transpersonal psychology, transit astrology, even UFO abductions—all as they impact a young 20-year-old whose parents have a very bad case of it.

The problem is that, reading the following excerpt alone, without reading the 350 pages of carefully presented evidence, will make it look like the characters are simply spouting emotional tirades at Boomers or the green meme—which is categorically not the case. Still, the handful of critics mentioned in this excerpt will therefore do what the handful of those criticized in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* did: they read the endnote in SES that criticized their work without first reading the book, and they got so worked up that they could never really read the book with an open mind after that; all subsequent discussion with these critics therefore never reached the status of authentic dialogue but remained on the level of first-tier blame and accusations. The same will happen with this excerpt, and I truly regret that.

Speaking of endnotes, I forgot to say why this excerpt isn't really a part of the novel. It's part of the endnotes to the novel.

Endnotes to a novel? That can't be a good thing, right? Watch sales plummet with that bright idea.

Actually, there are no endnote numbers in the novel, or anything to suggest that the novel itself has endnotes. Except for one small footnote early in the book, which says, "In the course of the year, I took voluminous notes, academic and otherwise, on the strange proceedings that began to define my life. These notes and references can be found in their entirety at <http://wilber.shambhala.com>."

If you then go to that link, you will find some 150 pages of endnotes. Then about 150 pages of sidebar endnotes. Then the 80-page WTC piece

posted below. So it's a 350-page novel with around 380 pages of endnotes. Good grief. As one of my friends said, "How positively Wilber of you." I'm pretty sure it wasn't a great compliment.

Anyway, the endnotes continue with the fictional characters in the novel. But clearly, in endnotes, these characters are not developed at all. These really are supposed to be just that—academic endnotes—and not anything resembling a literary novel (which hopefully the novel itself does). When I first circulated this excerpt for feedback, numerous people—who had read the excerpt but not the book—responded with something like, "Loved the content, but you are no novelist. The characters are all flat, and they all sound like you. Get a ghost writer, really."

Well, in my defense, I now must give a little bit of the book away. Remember that I said that the novel itself, in order to succeed in criticizing boomeritis, had to exemplify everything it criticized? At one point in the novel, an IC professor is outlining the seven major features of postmodernism—which really means, the seven features of postmodernism shot through with boomeritis, as almost all of pluralistic postmodernism is. So those seven features are exactly the seven items that the book itself must display. The professor puts it like this:

"For starters, since postmodernism is basically a mood of criticism, the novel itself, to be truly postmodern, would have to criticize postmodernism. But in order to do that, the novel would have to exemplify everything that it criticized. That would be the real trick, to write a novel that embodied everything it attacked.

"For example, since postmodernism is endlessly, often sickeningly self-reflexive, make sure a main character is named after you, and by all means make the novel about you in every way that you can, while constantly criticizing the pathetic narcissism of it all. Yes?"

So the 20-year-old main character's name is Ken Wilber. I can't give the other 6 items of the "perfect postmodern novel" without spoiling everything, but I can give a bit of number 5. The professor—her name is Lesa Powell, you'll meet her in the excerpt—is explaining that since postmodernism is in love with flatland—no depth, only surfaces—then the characters in the perfect postmodern novel would... well, here's how Lesa puts it, and how Kim and Ken (Wilber)—two students attending the lecture—respond:

"Five, this especially means that all the characters would have be flat and two-dimensional. Not one-dimensional, but not three-dimensional either. This is perfectly in keeping with the postmodern credo that there are no depths, only surfaces, and thus, for your characters, the words 'flat' and 'two-dimensional' must apply. Flatland characters for the perfect flatland novel, yes?"

"God, Kim, that's exactly how I feel—flat and two-dimensional."

"Me too, Ken, me too. It's as if my life—my entire life—is trapped inside the postmodern novel that Powell is describing. It's as if my life isn't my own—as if I'm not even the author of my own actions, my own feelings, my own desires. It's as if the whole notion of authorship itself is evaporating. I am being written by some self-reflexive postmodern twit, and this is my life. Jesus, where's the Prozac?"

And so, in the novel itself, although the characters often come to life, they never really quite reach the quality of great literature, although they are great fun, I hope. The critics will naturally say, "Yes, but could he have written great literature, instead of the great postmodern novel, assuming he even did that?" And the answer is, We will never know, will we? All I can tell you is that the two-dimensional depth of the characters is as intentional as I could make it.

But here's why I am mentioning all that. As the endnotes begin—the notes posted on Shambhala.com and not found in the novel itself—Kim turns to Ken and says,

“I was wondering. If a postmodern novel had endnotes, and....”

“Why on earth would a novel have endnotes?,” I interrupted.

“I don't know. Confused author, can't shut up, has to weigh in on everything. Let me finish. If a postmodern novel had endnotes, and in the novel the characters were two-dimensional, doesn't that mean that in the endnotes they would only be one-dimensional?”

“I guess so, I dunno. All I know is that I feel like I'm evaporating, sort of wasting away, going pale and anemic, and... Kim...? Kim?....”

Well, you get the point. Part of the novel is a self-reflexive parody, a postmodern put-down of postmodernism (or rather, postmodernism infected with boomeritis, which almost all of it is). I think this is why, judging from the feedback so far, most people found this to be a very funny book. Which is what I tried to do, make it a great grand fun read.

But it's also very serious in the points it makes, and that is also obvious in the book. This can certainly be seen in the WTC excerpt which follows. Although, again, please remember that this is not indicative the writing style of the novel itself, nor of any of the narrative devices (some of them fairly original, I believe) that make the book a different reading experience.

Also, nothing in this excerpt—or some of the other endnote sections that I will be posting over the next few weeks—gives any indication of what actually happens in the novel—none of the real plot, twists, etc. So although you will probably not be able to get all the points in this endnote without first reading the novel, reading the endnote now will not ruin the

novel in any major fashion (although the one-dimensional dialogue may drive you nuts).

For those who want to get the most out of this endnote, a few technical items need to be understood first. If you haven't, I recommend that you at least read chapter 1 of *A Theory of Everything*. Preferably the whole book, but at least chapter 1.

What the following excerpt does is basically outline the full spectrum of consciousness—some 12 major bands or colors in that Great Rainbow—and then suggests the typical responses to the terrorist attack that each level, band, or wave would have.

If this is what most interests you, there is a long middle section on integral politics that can be skipped. Part I gives the first-tier and second-tier responses; Part II outlines an integral politics; Part III gives the third-tier responses. Many people are interested only in Parts I and III, and that's fine. I've added section headings to help locate these parts.

I feel a bit awkward releasing these one-dimensional notes when none of the novel itself has seen the light of day. Therefore, with Shambhala's blessing, I am first posting the Prologue to the novel (see the following). It's very short and displays none of the literary devices that hopefully make the novel a postmodern joy ride, but it does give a flavor of the style, which perhaps might act as a counter-balance to the lead of the endnotes (which will be posted in the next week or so).

In any event, I do hope this is the beginning of a reading experience that will open you to new vistas in your own ongoing journey to your own deepest treasures.

Ken Wilber
October 17, 2001

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

A DATE THAT WILL LIVE IN A SLIDING CHAIN OF SIGNIFIERS

Two weeks after the awakening in Club Passim, terrorists associated with Usama bin Laden hijacked four American commercial airliners and suicidally crashed them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing thousands of civilians and shocking the world. Because of modern, global communication capacities and the alarming severity of the act, never in history had an event triggered a collective worldwide consciousness of such magnitude. From Manhattan to Mozambique, from Indonesia to Istanbul, from Lisbon to Lebanon, from Kenya to Kiev, some 4 billion people were united, if not in their actual opinions of the act, then in their absolute shock. “Unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable!” stammered a rattled Yassar Arafat, speaking for the world.

In mysterious ways I could not explain, I was instantly in the presence of my teachers at Integral Center, as they were having dinner several days after the event. Mark, Charles, Lesa, Carla, Derek, Margaret, and dearest Joan.

I had just turned twenty-one; the repercussions of the strange events in Club Passim were still echoing through a shattered soul that could not even remember its own name, the dates and destinies of everyday reality escaped my awareness altogether, as time and space lost their density and tended to evaporate if I wasn't paying careful attention. And yet here inexplicably I was, with people who had watched over my death and miraculously brought me back to a life that was beyond both life and death. This twentysomething owed those fiftysomethings more than can ever be conveyed; meaningful words slip out of my grasp and float into the cosmic void, home of a darkness that was to be a revelation calling.

PART I: A SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES

“A few moments of silence, if we could,” Charles Morin said. The air was still with a fullness not of this world.

“The question has naturally come up: should Integral Center make some sort of statement in the wake of this horrid tragedy?” Morin finally queried after several minutes of infinite quiet. “I have to say I’m of two minds on this. On the one hand, the response seems simple: this is wickedness on display. On the other hand, as you all know, it is much, much more complex than that. So while a statement seems mandatory, I’m very hesitant to do so.”

“I have been surprised,” Margaret Carlton said, “at the extent to which the world—more-or-less literally the entire world—has responded to this tragedy. I must say, it is so very, very touching. First, of course, your prayers go to those killed, and your heart weeps for their families and friends. Oh! the sadness, the inexpressible sadness.” Transparent, fragile, porcelain Margaret Carlton looked, at that moment, like one of those beautiful Blessed Mary figurines, or maybe one of Kwan Yin. Lesa gazed at her with a tenderness that words—my words anyway—can’t convey.

“But I do tend to agree with Charles,” she continued. “The actual situation is so utterly complex that a short statement would be superfluous. Most statements that I have seen”—Carlton’s resoluteness replaced a certain softness—“are, shall we say, of a one-meme sentiment. Hard to know how to go with this without offending everybody.”

“Yes, part of the difficulty is this,” Derek Van Cleef spoke up, and you could already feel his intense edge searing into the situation. Van Cleef was like a court jester on PCP: he always saw the shadow, but always expressed it through his own anger. “The people in this country who are getting so emotional about the event are not really worked up over the loss of human life, or even American life. After all, 50,000 Americans are

killed each year in automobile accidents, and I don't see any of these people standing on street corners with placards saying 'Stop the Carnage!' Or even worse: the same number of people—50,000 of them, mostly children—die each day around the world from starvation, and where are the weepy protesters? It's not human life they are worried about; no, they are reacting because their particular set of values was attacked and deeply threatened, and their response depends on the value set they are most attached to: red sees one thing, blue sees another, orange another, green another still. But when those planes tore into the side of the WTC, they were really tearing into these different sets of beliefs and values: the terrorists threatened not just human life, but the value-meme that you most identify with."

"Well, Derek, that's putting it very coldly—and who would have thought that of you?" quipped Jefferson. Everybody laughed, more or less affectionately, at Van Cleef's natural lack of, well, warmth; I was about to say 'blood.'

"But, yes, in the main, I would agree with that," Jefferson continued. "So why don't you elaborate a bit? Why don't you give us a quick rundown of how each level of consciousness, or each meme, would generally respond to the terrorist attack?"

Red: Rage and Revenge

Van Cleef put down his fork and spoke deliberately. "Okay, right now I'm just going to summarize the different types of responses to the attack—I am NOT talking about the various causes of the attack, how blame should be decided and apportioned, and so on. Without implying that any of these responses are right or wrong, the point is that each meme, stage, or wave of consciousness reacts very differently to being attacked in such a fashion.

“Start with red, the easiest to understand. Here’s a mock dialogue—” Van Cleef began chuckling.

Reporter: Mr. Red, I was wondering what you thought of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon?

Red: Outa the way, Shorty, I’m about to suck some lunch. Gimme eat.

Reporter: It needn’t take long.

Red: Huh, gurgle.

Reporter: The attack. On the World Trade Center.

Red: Kill ’em, I say.

Reporter: Kill ’em? Care to elaborate on that, sir?

Red: Yup. Kill ’em a lot.

Reporter: Kill them a lot? Right, right. Tell me, why do you suppose they did it? The terrorists?

Red: Huh, what?

Reporter: Why you think they did it?

Red: Friggin jerkoffs, commie scum bastards. Kill ’em real hard. Mess with us, we’ll rip their friggin towel heads right off, put ’em on stakes, that’s what we’ll do. Now gimme eat.

Reporter: Actually, sir, they’re religious fanatics, not communists. Surely you knew that?

Red (grabs reporter by the collar, lifts him off the ground): What was that? Maybe I should put yer head in a vice grip and squoze yer eyeballs right outa their sockets. Whaddya say about that, Mr. Smarty-ass reporter?

Reporter: Commie scum bastards, kill 'em real hard, that's what I say!

Everybody was smiling with Van Cleef. "I am, of course, exaggerating. The fact is, healthy red is the engine of so much change. It is the obstacle buster par excellence; it refuses boundaries, smashes obstacles. It's just that if red is a fantastic servant, it's a horrible master. It's one thing to have red in your service, another thing to have only red as your center of gravity. It's also another thing to have red as a hidden underbelly—as does boomeritis, for example—driving your automobile without your knowing it, deconstructing every conventional boundary in sight, hijacking your philosophy to support its egocentric ways.

"But the basic red response is indeed rage and revenge. The terrorist attack is viewed, consciously or unconsciously, as an attack—NOT on humanity, not on civilization, not on my country or on God, but an attack on ME—and I will respond by smashing your skull in. More or less." Van Cleef kept chuckling, this time in what appeared a genuinely good-natured way.

Blue (Amber): Good Versus Evil

"As we move to blue, a more cognitively complex structure begins to give considered reasons for its actions; but, unable to access the nuances of multiple perspectives, settles into authoritarian and dogmatic absolutes: I have good on my side, and therefore the attack is a case of evil, pure and simple. Generally speaking, this wave maintains that we Americans are good, decent, freedom-loving, God-fearing, fairness-loving people, and the terrorists are fundamentally satanic, demonic, subhuman, evil. We are right, they are wrong, and that is that. This is a straightforward case of good versus evil. Therefore, you are for us or you are against us in this crusade to rid the world of darkness. We must bond together under the one true way to see this—united we stand, divided we fall—joined by our belief that America is the greatest country on earth and we are God's children, and we will therefore hunt down those responsible and kill them,

er, I mean bring them to justice.” Van Cleef looked up and gently smiled, “Thus endeth the scripture reading for the day.” He winked, but in a still-kindly sort of way. “Well, you know what I mean. Common blue-meme responses include those of William Bennett, Billy Graham, most exoteric religious leaders, here and abroad, and many conservatives and Republicans. The Pope held an unprecedented papal audience, telling Americans that ‘evil will not have the last word.’ God, you see, is on our side, not theirs.”

Hazelton looked mildly irritated—she always did around Van Cleef—and spoke up. “Everything you say is true, Derek, but I must tell you, dear souls, how surprised I was to find a good deal of blue resonating in me.” Joan smiled gently. “I just got all choked up watching Americans love Americans. Then I really got choked up reading the condolences from around the world. One week ago, America was sole Bad Guy in the entire world: we were either McCulture ruining local values everywhere, or we were the Great Satan, or we were insipid Global Capitalism crushing freedom everywhere—we were supposed to be racists, imperialists, domineering swine.” She began laughing. “I’m not saying there isn’t some truth in those charges, but only that, from now on, it will be impossible to think that America is simply, merely, solely The Bad Guy. Yassar Arafat, for heaven’s sake, donated his own blood to show ‘solidarity with America.’ European commissioner Romano Prodi declared, ‘In the darkest hours of European history, America stood close with us. Today, we stand by America.’”

Tears abruptly came to Joan’s eyes. She smiled, brushed them away. “See what I mean? But it just goes on and on. France, no screaming friend of ours, put French pilots into Mirage jets, ready to support us; the French Prime Minister said, ‘In light of what happened, we feel like an orphan’—that is, even France feels like an orphan without America. Russia turned over its intelligence network to help. Britain had a day of mourning, with people singing the American anthem; white lilies were tied to the fence

around the American embassy in Grosvenor Square. Did you know that the Queen—the Queen, for heaven’s sake—Ms. Warmth—actually, for the first time in history, sang the national anthem of another country in public, and she even got teary-eyed! In Kiev people laid flowers outside our embassy; one message read, ‘No terrorism in the name of all Kiev.’ Flags flew at half-mast in countries all around the world. A Canadian editorial written several years ago was brought out, dusted off, and widely circulated: ‘This Canadian thinks it is time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least appreciated people on all the earth. I can name 5000 times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble? Our American neighbors have faced it alone, and I’m one Canadian who is damned tired of hearing them get kicked around. Stand proud, America!’” She looked up, still teary-eyed. “I mean, doesn’t that get to you?”

“Of course, dear, of course,” Lesa said. Heads nodded in sympathy. I looked at Van Cleef, whose expression, on the other hand, seemed to say, “Oh, suck it up, you wimp,” but that was probably just my imagination.

“Look,” Van Cleef finally said, “the whole point is that, if you’re lucky enough to have some sort of second—not to mention third—tier awareness, you can and should resonate with all these value chords, blue included. The question is, do you exclusively identify with a single first-tier meme and its response, or do you span the spectrum? And Joan, I know you. You’re turquoise to the bone. Hell, Lesa thinks you’re coral, or maybe some color we haven’t even invented yet.”

“Well, this bone is a bit blue right now!” she laughed.

“So, Derek, why don’t you continue with your memetic rundown.”

“Right, right. Well, blue—the dear blue in the red-white-and-blue, is ethnocentric bonding, and no, there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s

wonderful, as long as it is only one chord in a full-spectrum symphony, yes?

Orange: An Attack on Civilization

“So let’s look briefly at orange, or what we might call the Ayn Rand response: this wave of consciousness views the assault, not as an attack on a particular people, nation, or deity—those are all ethnocentric—but rather as a worldcentric attack on freedom, liberty, and justice. Not to mention an attack on free-market capitalism, the one positive force in the world today! Orange would be quick to point out that the terrorists did not attack a church or even Congress: they chose the Wall Street area and the World Trade Center. In other words, this would be viewed by orange, not merely as an attack on America, but as an attack on civilization itself, irrespective of particular countries or deities.

“Notice that the orange response, due to yet another increase in cognitive complexity and sophistication, has already gone from ethnocentric (or mythic-membership) to worldcentric (or universal formal), in the sense that it does not appeal to a particular people, nation, race, group, or culture. It is instead postconventional in this sense: the attack is viewed as an attack on values that people everywhere could embrace, regardless of religion, race, sex, or creed. Not everybody can be an American; but everybody can make money, be a capitalist, yearn for that type of freedom, value that type of liberty—and therefore this was an attack, not on America, but on civilization. Again, I’m not saying that any of this is right or wrong; I’m simply describing some common ways that the different waves of consciousness view this terrorist attack.

“David Kelley, executive director of the Objectivist Center, gives a classic and very literate orange-meme response. ‘With rare unity, Americans have grasped that this was an assault on their values, and it was. But the values are not uniquely American, or even uniquely Western. They are the values

of civilized life anywhere. 'This was an assault on civilization as such.' But by 'civilized values,' Kelley basically means orange-meme values, since he gives the following as examples: individualism; individual liberty and freedom; capitalism as a system of trade, production, innovation, and progress; secularism; reason; free market; world commerce. Those, of course, are not red values, not blue values, not green values, not turquoise values, and so on: they are orange values. And so an attack on the WTC was an attack on those values, which Kelley then identifies with civilization per se. He thus ends with the fervent call: 'We are not dealing with civilized people. We must declare war on the terrorists and use whatever force it takes to render them incapable of posing any further threat. We urge President Bush and Congress to undertake a similar campaign against every nest of terrorists who have declared themselves, by the death and destruction they have wrought, to be enemies of mankind. In doing so, we will be acting in our own self-defense, with the moral authority of those who have been attacked. But we should also understand and declare to the world that we are acting to preserve a world order on which civilized values depend, and civilized people everywhere must join in this cause.'"

"You know what I love most about God?" Margaret Carlton abruptly interrupted Derek's narrative, then looked at everybody with a dreamy smile that suggested she was... elsewhere.

"What, dear?" Lesa replied.

"Spirit manifests itself in this extraordinary spectrum of consciousness, yes? This amazing spiral of development, spanning every conceivable range and color and band and wavelength, reaching all the way from dust to Deity, from dirt to Divinity. And every single color has its place, doesn't it? Every meme, every wave, every swirl and whirl and twist and twirl—they all have something important to say, don't they? Don't they?"

Everybody nodded, apparently not sure where this was going, but touched by Carlton's frail grace and gratitude. "That's all. I just wanted to say

that. I know that blue and orange and green and all of them can get really sick and really twisted and really stupid, but in their healthy forms they are all parts of this beautiful, beautiful, beautiful spectrum of consciousness, aren't they? Aren't they?"

"You're beautiful, dear," Lesa said, squeezing her hand.

"Right, right, real swell, Margaret," Van Cleef cut and clipped. "So, anybody else want to weigh in on the wonders of God? No? Okay." Then he actually smiled a genuine 'I'm-just-kidding' smile.

Carla Fuentes looked at him. "Derek, you are the sweetest man in the world, under all that... well, under all that you."

"Very funny, Carla, very funny. Watch me laugh. Ha, ha. Okay, moving on, moving on.... Where was I? Red, blue, orange, oh yes....

Green: A Transvaluation of Values

"Green's response is the most difficult to catalog, because it is by far the most conflicted. On the one hand, the majority of green-meme attitudes around the world, at this time, are infected with the mean green meme and boomeritis, and this severely complicates the matter, because it makes it hard to spot healthy green and the wonderful types of kindness that it always brings to the situation. Much of green—and certainly the MGM (mean green meme) in its postmodern guise—wants to blame America for virtually all of the Third World's problems, and often all the world's problems, period.

"Moreover, for the last several decades, the various Third World groups, factions, insurrectionists, and even terrorists have actually adopted the postmodernist lingo coming out of American universities in order to justify their actions. Green pluralism maintains, in its extreme—and most common—forms, that culturally there is no good or bad, no better or

worse: there are no universal standards by which we may judge one culture to be better or worse than another. In fact, we cannot say anything about an Other that the Other would not say about itself. Period. To attempt to speak of the Other in terms other than those of the Other is to commit a horrible crime known as a ‘metanarrative.’ Rather, all cultural values are essentially equal—this is called ‘an irreducible plurality of ultimates’—and a pure egalitarianism is the only possible response in the face of the Other.

“Until the Other bombs the bloody fuck out of your country in the most heinous way imaginable.” Van Cleef looked at everybody present, an entrenched grimness etching his face. “This generally threw green into an internal paroxysm and wrenching value spasm. Surely, it seemed to green, that brutal attack was, well, pretty bad, except that there isn’t supposed to be any bad. And now all of a sudden, Western culture is viciously assaulted by something that looks suspiciously BAD. But there is only supposed to be ‘a plurality of authentic ultimates,’ with none of them inherently superior (except all the ones that are non-Western, since they are superior in every way—except that postmodern pluralism and multiculturalism arises only in Western culture—oops; so maybe I can say that postmodern pluralism is really just reestablishing the primal harmony present in all premodern tribes—except a premodern tribe just deconstructed the World Trade Center and that can’t be good, can it?—except that I got my tenure by writing 2 books and 15 articles on the Crime of the Enlightenment and its hegemonic, patriarchal, capitalistic, colonialistic, imperialistic imposition on the paradisaical, nondissociated, freedom-loving peoples of the premodern world, so I can’t very well publicly change my mind, can I?—except that...).

“Well, you get the point. I’m being flippant here, and I shouldn’t be, because this was a truly agonizing interior tension for many greens. Nietzsche used to speak of a ‘transvaluation of values,’ where that which was once thought to be bad is seen to be good, and that which appeared good now appears bad. Well, when those airplanes slammed into the

WTC, many green memes suffered a wrenching transvaluation of values: Western civilization was seen as something approaching a victim, and the nonwestern values, and even the tribal mentality—which was supposed to harbor everything that is good, from the noble savage to the Other of repressive civilization—was suddenly seen as something goddam close to bad. This is called Excedrin headache number 7.”

Smiling, Jefferson added, “Yes, in general I think you are right. And you’re definitely right about the academic justifications for terrorist acts—er, I mean, for ‘rhizomatic resistance to the power structures of repressive civilization’: for the last three decades, insurrectionism and ‘deconstructive terrorism’ around the world have adopted the postmodern lingo coming out of American universities in order to justify their actions. It used to be that insurrectionists mouthed the Marxist lingo, or the anti-capitalist lingo, or sometimes they used a contorted religious lingo—and they still use all of those on occasion. But the most eloquent—the Michel de Certeaus and Edward Saids and Slavoj Zizeks of this world—now rely heavily on the language of postmodern poststructuralism, the language of pluralistic relativism—the language, that is, of boomeritis.

“This is very like the Berkeley student protests of the sixties that Carla talks about in her lectures, where a set of truly postconventional ideals were hijacked by bands of preconventional, egocentric terrorists in order to aggressively deconstruct anything conventional. It’s the pre/post fallacy on a worldwide scale—and yes, it is boomeritis to the core.”

Jefferson looked around the table. “Here is the sad truth of our time: Boomeritis has become the language of terrorism.” He paused, shook his head. “Add that language to the language of religious fanaticism, and you have an explosive mixture unequalled in all of history.

“This has always been particularly painful to me as an African-American. We all know the genesis of postmodern pluralism—it’s many strengths, it’s many weaknesses. But when the green meme, pluralistic relativism,

postmodern poststructuralism—call them what you will—moved into academia and began to dominate the humanities, it was just a matter of time before these ‘tenured radicals’ would—sometimes innocently and inadvertently, sometimes openly and intentionally—be forging the language that would be used to justify terrorist ‘insurrection’ and ‘rhizomatic power resistance’ and ‘deconstructive destabilization’ everywhere. When that academic justification for those acts—a justification stemming from the green meme (and boomeritis) in America—was added to the actual red-meme terrorists acting in the world, the result was an atmosphere in which the West’s cultural elite could not decisively condemn any sort of deconstructive insurrections, an ideological opening not lost on the insurrectionists and terrorists themselves, who have always equated so-called ‘sensitivity’ with weakness. All they needed in their own minds to set off the powder keg was an equally deluded reason to attack and deconstruct, which was supplied by a twisted blue meme: religious fanaticism in this case.

“There’s a psychosocial structural linkage here as well,” Jefferson continued. Kim said Jefferson’s IQ is 160; it always felt like that was the speed of his intellect racing down the highway. I always got dizzy watching his ebony skin housing that brain going down the road at that unnerving speed. I wish Kim were here to explain it to me.

“Psychologically, boomeritis is the green meme infected with a reactivation of red narcissism. Thus, green’s inherently subjectivistic tendencies—Graves sometimes referred to green as ‘relativistic, pluralistic, subjectivistic,’ simply because its warrants for truth are basically subjective, relative, multiple: in other words, postmodern—anyway, green’s subjectivistic tendencies become a magnet, a home, a harbor for a reactivation of red, egocentric, narcissistic impulses. Pluralism becomes a supermagnet for narcissism—and that combination of highly evolved green mixed with rather low red is the explosive mixture known as

boomeritis, because in my own psyche, green ideals become the mouthpiece for red terrorism.

“Under these circumstances, green ideals of contextualism, constructivism, and pluralism—which at their best insist that all perspectives be treated fairly and impartially, without unduly marginalizing any—quickly degenerate into rancid, even pathological pluralism: all views are to be treated fairly, not because they all deserve a fair hearing, but because no view is better than another, period. Narcissism and its eternal demand that ‘Nobody tells me what to do!’ thus finds a happy home in the postmodern pluralistic flatland. Because no views are better or worse than any others, my narcissistic inclinations can run free and wild, here in the safe haven provided by pathological pluralism. In my own psyche, green is hijacked by terrorist red. In my own psyche, postconventional ideals become the lingo of preconventional impulses. In my own psyche, the World Trade Center of my higher drives is deconstructed by my own lowest and barbaric inclinations.

“This is boomeritis postmodernism—a secret love affair between green and red—and it has been played out on the world historical stage in a specific way: postmodern green academics, reactivating and harboring inflamed, premodern red impulses in their in own psyches, fell in love with premodern cultures everywhere: in the past—the great Paradises of Eden horribly contaminated by patriarchal Western oppression—and in the present—in all the Others of the Enlightenment struggling to be free from the repressive blanket of civilization. Much of the seminar series we just finished was devoted to an extensive examination of just this topic. And I am certainly not saying that the Enlightenment was without its own severe problems. I am saying that green academics were predisposed to eulogize red cultures in the most exaggerated and unrealistic of fashions, simply because they were fixated to, and mesmerized with, the unintegrated red impulses in their own being. The vaunted narcissism of the Boomers

returned in the most distressing of ways, leaving a trail of green/red boomeritis roadkill all over the halls of academia.

“And that is why, quite simply, boomeritis became the language of deconstruction, of tearing down, of terrorism everywhere. It could not provide a convincing distinction between tearing down that was progressive, and tearing down that was merely regressive—and in that sad and listless indecision lay one of the many roads to September 11.”

The table was very quiet for several minutes. “Yes, unfortunately, unfortunately,” Carla Fuentes softly noted.

“From that particular angle, you are quite right: boomeritis was deeply complicit in the deconstruction of the World Trade Center.” Fuentes looked at each of us, one by one. Her wrenching words were delivered in a somber, non-angry, almost tender voice.

“Didn’t even Foucault call Derrida a terrorist? When the net result of your academic musing comes down to: there are no universal standards by which any culture may be judged inferior to another; the West under sway of the Enlightenment is merely a hegemonic imperial imposition of universal absolutist standards on the innocent world; therefore anything Western is bad, anything non-Western is good; therefore deconstructing the West and the Enlightenment is the noble thing to do—well, when your thought is shot through with pre/post fallacies of such magnitude, when it thus provides an intellectual atmosphere in which deconstructive terrorism anywhere is implicitly applauded; when a famous postmodern pluralist screams, ‘If you are nonwhite, get as far away from any Western culture as possible!’—I wonder if Afghanistan is far enough away for this gentleman?—well, of course that entire academic atmosphere is deeply complicit in such terrorist acts. The extreme postmodernists are not the actual cause of any of this crime, but they are complicit, they are deeply complicit.” Carla Fuentes shook her head.

Van Cleef's spiky edge cut into the air; he looked more than usually furious. "The list of those complicit is endless—that is, the list of boomeritis scholars with philosophical blood on their hands is truly endless: starting with Heidegger—and shall we note his now infamous, unrepentant complicity with the Nazis?—and his philosophical comrades, early Foucault, most of Derrida, late Wittgenstein, the spin-offs and wannabes—Michel de Certeau, Richard Rorty, Edward Said, Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Slavoj Zizek, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, the French gallery and their tepid, less talented mouthpieces in America—Stanley Fish, Susan Sontag, Stanley Aronowitz, all the way to the alternative movements, from JTP's 'New Birth in Freedom' to Revisioning TP Psych to boomeritis spirituality and the MGM in all its glory, to anti-ranking hypocrisies filling the air with the stench self-congratulatory smugness, to the latest avant-garde wannabe philosophers all mouthing cardboard pluralistic slogans." Van Cleef spat the words out in a breathless torrent; his colleagues, though not disagreeing, all looked uncomfortable, especially Joan.

"I am more than glad to repeat," he said, "that in most of those cases there are very important truths galore—we often use many of them here at IC—and in most of those cases the intentions were so warm, so genuine, so nobly intended. But we all know what road to where is paved with good intentions. In the karmic book-keeping of the Kosmos, the rain of responsibility will thoroughly dampen those academic heads."

"Put warmly and gently, as usual," smiled Fuentes. "But I generally agree. Everybody else?" Heads around the table nodded.

"The real problem, as I see it, is that their sentiments, dressed as philosophy, have gotten out into the world in a major fashion, as even they proudly announce. The essential point here is that boomeritis has gutted the intellectuals' capacity to formulate a coherent condemnation of any such attack, apart from the lame retort that nobody has the right to physically attack somebody else—apparently their response is that blowing

the fuck out of somebody is not being kind and sensitive.” Fuentes laughed in her wickedly warm fashion. “But apart from that, as for why the Other should not retaliate in the face of the repressive barbarism that is the Western-Enlightenment culture: well now, boomeritis and the MGM are strangely silent, no? The only thing that short-circuited their philosophical silence was the massively over-the-top brutality of this particular act.”

Morin jumped in. “Yes, I think Carla’s right. If any band of terrorists had chosen a smaller target, hit only military or governmental officials, and followed up with a statement about the freedom and equality of all cultures being trammled by the heartless Capitalist Machine, the majority of green memes in this country would quickly agree—or, at the least, would refuse, absolutely refuse, to judge those terrorists as being WRONG. But the utter severity and savagery of the World Trade Center attack shoved these ideas down their throats in a way that is almost impossible to disguise and excuse with pluralistic platitudes.” Morin shook his head.

“It’s definitely an issue shot through with deep confusion,” mused Jefferson. “Very similar to when the Unabomber maimed and killed dozens of innocent people in the name of ecology versus civilization—another completely false dichotomy—and Kirkpatrick Sale—under the same pre/post fallacy and the same boomeritis—was immediately online defending the Unabomber’s philosophy, while insisting, rather unconvincingly, that this did not mean he advocated the same action.”

Margaret Carlton, frail frame held up by conviction, noted, “Yes, yes, yes, but for at least a decade, responsible scholars have been pointing out that extreme pluralism really just allows, even encourages, a glorification of virtually any culture Other than Western—blue Others, red Others, purple Others, beige Others. This boomeritis attitude has certainly revitalized the old noble-savage impulse—Boomers put Romanticism on steroids!” she laughed sweetly.

“As only one of numerous examples... I have it here somewhere....” Van Cleef shuffled through his brief case. Okay, Keith Windschuttle: ‘Cultural relativism began as an intellectual critique of Western thought but has now become an influential justification for one of the contemporary era’s most potent political forces. This is the revival of tribalism in thinking and politics. The demand by representatives of tribal cultures to have the sole governance of their affairs is probably the biggest single cause of bloodshed in the world today. It has produced the charnel house politics of Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Central Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. Postmodernism and cultural relativism are complicit in this—both in their insistence on the integrity of all tribal cultures, no matter what practices or values they perpetuate, and in their denunciation of all’ Western civilization. ‘Rather than an advance in political conceptualization, however, the politics of relativism should be recognized as simply a mirror image of the racist ideologies that accompanied and justified Western imperialism in the colonial era.’ Quite right: they are both ethnocentric to the core—they both extol ethnocentric pluralism instead of universal pluralism—or pathological pluralism instead of genealogical pluralism—all inflamed by a boomeritis eager to rule.”

Van Cleef took a deep breath and turned up the volume. “A glorification of the preconventional tribal mentality: green’s favorite romantic passion, the purple and red tribes. The Taliban is a tribal herd in northern Afghanistan, living close the land, with tribal elders and a tribal council, wonderfully free of Enlightenment values and totally free of the horrid Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm: noble savages, each and all, red waves flourishing freely in the wind.

“Well,” he roared, “a red wave slammed smack into the World Trade Center, and green got to actually see the real contours of that which it has been eulogizing ever since the original Romantics. Noble savages deconstructed civilization: pretty sight, isn’t it?” and he crashed his fist down on the table, making a disturbingly sharp “whack!”

“Okay, Derek, okay. That’s a bit over the top,” Morin said.

“No, it isn’t.” Van Cleef’s intensity singed the atmosphere. “If we are going to ‘make no distinction between the terrorists and those who harbor them,’ then philosophically we can make no such distinctions either.”

“He’s got a point,” Jefferson concurred. “But it’s a point we already made. There is no question but that these scholars are complicit in supporting a philosophical atmosphere that was hesitant to judge any Others negatively and equally hesitant to say anything positive about Western culture. Let them answer to their own actions, let them be responsible for their own words. Nothing we can do will change this.”

Healthy Green: Now More Than Ever

“All right, we are way off the subject!” Lesa Powell intervened. “We are supposed to be discussing the reactions to the attack, not the causes of the attack or who is blame for it.”

“Right, right; sorry, we got a bit of testosterone poisoning.” Jefferson laughed.

“Yup,” Van Cleef nodded. “Look, I am not blaming the extreme postmodernists for this attack, only pointing out the difficulties that it threw into their value system. I am saying that their responses to the attack—and the general green-meme response itself—suffered a transvaluation of values, because the cultural Other—which was supposed to be GOOD—now appeared really totally friggin BAD, and the Western culture of the Enlightenment—which was supposed to be BAD—now appeared a VICTIM. And by the language of boomeritis, all victims are noble, innocent, and good. Suddenly, the West itself had secured the coveted status of victim, and this wrenched the MGM value system so badly that their responses are still dazed, confused, rambling, almost incoherent.

“Well, they generally end up with something like, ‘Yes, the terrorists did a bad thing. But we should not retaliate; instead we should use this occasion to reflect on how we are all terrorists when we are unkind to others; we should use this as a time of healing, and caring, and feeling into our pain. We should reflect on the common brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind, and practice love with each other daily. Turn off the TV every now and then and tell each other how much you care. Send healing light and love to all the victims everywhere, not just here, but around the world.”

“Healthy green is a decent and noble response,” Joan added. “I hope you’re not making fun of that attitude, Derek. Boomeritis, remember, is pathological green, not healthy green. I hope I can find a great deal of healthy green in myself, because now if ever is when we need it.”

“Very true,” Jefferson concurred. “Very true. Healthy green is the last of the first-tier memes because it acts to sensitize the entire Spiral, infecting it with compassion, you might say, and thus preparing the leap into second tier. I’m with Joan; now if ever is when green is needed.”

Jefferson rubbed his eyes. “Still, the one thing that worries me is that when green slips into its more, shall we say, platitudinous side—“

“Like a duck-billed platitude?” Fuentes grinned.

“Oh, I see, humor. No, Carla, the hyper-sensitive, over-the-top caring side, a response that is already circulating Martin Luther King’s statement: ‘The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.’

“But, you see,” Jefferson continued, “that statement is wrong on almost every count. As a black man raised outside of Harlem, I don’t have to tell

you that the Reverend King was my salvation as a boy. Well, him and Charlie Parker, but that's another story. Anyway, in this case, I believe his heart was clouding his head. Real violence is almost always ended by stronger violence in saner hands. When you meet a Hitler in this world, the correct, noble, ethical, spiritual response is: get a gun and blow his brains out. We ended Auschwitz, not with love, caring dialogue, sensitivity training, and sweet thoughts, but with superior fire power, period. So it is with real violence in the real world—much of it stems from red, and red can only be forcefully contained until it develops its own internal blue constraints. Civilization, for the most part, does not produce barbarism, but curbs it.

“Green’s basic problem is that the injunction to not have violence in your heart is confused with not using violence in the real world—at which point green begins to contribute to the problem, not the solution. This is yet another variation on the sad fact that green—and without doubt the MGM and boomeritis—have been complicit in the rise of insurrectionist violence around the world. Of course we should not harbor hate in our hearts; and of course, when you meet Nazis—to borrow Van Cleef’s line—you should kill them real hard.” A laugh emerged through the deep concern in Jefferson’s face.

“If green wants a spiritual sanction for this, then try reading the Bhagavad Gita. The warrior Arjuna is about to go into battle; concerned with killing, he invokes the Lord Krishna to help him decide what to do. Krishna, who is so post-green it’s wild, tells him two things: you must do your duty in the real world, and therefore, you must fight and possibly kill, because that is the way of the world at this time; but when doing your duty, keep your mind in Spirit, not as a way to justify the killing, but as a way to rise above it. ‘Remember me, and fight,’ is what Krishna tells Arjuna. He does not tell him to avoid fighting (typical green), NOR does he tell him to fight in the name of the Lord (typical blue). He tells him to

fight and remember the Lord, for there alone is your salvation in the real world of unavoidable karma.

“Of course, there are a few situations—a very few situations—in which nonviolence will work: namely, in any culture that has Western Enlightenment values (such as America or Britain—the only two cultures where nonviolence has actually worked as a strategy). In any other culture, possessed of pre-orange, premodern, pre-Enlightenment values, if you lie down in the front of the approaching troops, why thank you! Much easier to stomp your ass and it saves us a ton of bullets. Try nonviolence with the Nazis, the KKK, the Sargons and Ramses and Pol Pots of this world, and see where it gets you. Dead, of course, is where it gets you. And in letting a greater evil thereby flourish, your death doesn’t even buy you good karma, but the karma of the coward: listen instead to Krishna and do your duty, which takes much more courage than fleeing your duty in a green-meme self-congratulatory stance.

“You see, with pre-orange memes, violence (or the threat of violence) is almost the only way you can end violence. At orange, physical war shifts to economic war, and the battle field switches to the board room—same war, different means. But only at green do people stop wanting to fight, and only at yellow do they begin to use violence to strategically end violence. But the pre-orange memes only use violence, and that’s the problem. Turning the other cheek is exactly what you don’t want to do with pre-orange memes. Again, in your heart, no violence; in the world, do your duty.”

“True, Mark, true,” Joan interjected, “but I want to add again: the healthy green stance is an imperative part of any second-tier response. Transcend and include!”

“Agreed. We want to include green. But also transcend it. So don’t confuse having no violence in your heart with having no violence in the real world, if required. Your duty may or may not include violence, but let

us not forget that there are indeed occasions where violence ends violence—or, I should say, reflecting the messiness and microscopically incremental nature of Eros: there are occasions where violence replaces a grosser violence with a subtler violence, a lesser devil on the way to a vaguely greater good.

“The Zen-inspired code of the Samurai warrior is still as good a guide as any: the best fight is not to fight; the real sword is no sword—but if you think that means a Samurai warrior never used his sword, you are tad naive, I fear.”

Yellow (Teal): To Balance the Whole

“Let’s move on to yellow’s response to the terrorist attacks—the response of the first truly second-tier wave,” Morin suggested. “Derek?”

“Well,” Van Cleef responded, “we really can’t talk about yellow’s response without talking about what a truly integral approach to terrorism would be. Lesa, that’s your specialty....”

“Let’s see,” Powell replied, “summarizing yellow and turquoise responses is a tall order, because whether they articulate their responses in the theoretical terms that we use, their responses are indeed integral: they tend to see the big picture (at least as big as today’s world makes possible), and they respond, in some sense, to the Whole as it fluidly unfolds and evolves. What we try to do at IC is articulate that unfolding Whole, and that takes a few minutes!” She laughed.

“Okay, you’ve got two minutes,” grinned Morin.

“Swell.” Lesa smiled, rolled her eyes. “Okay, start by looking at the possible causes of this terrorism, because a second-tier response is not divorced from an intuitive grasp of the dynamically patterned and

fluctuating Whole—which means that your response and your grasp of the causes are all of a piece. So let's start there.

“We all know that, just as when anybody tries to do historiography [for an overview of integral historiography, see Sidebar A: ‘Who Ate Captain Cook?—Integral Historiography in a Postmodern Age’], we realize that there simply is no ONE CORRECT WAY to see things, apart from various sensorimotor facts. But even those facts—such as, in this case: on September 11, 2001, two airplanes hijacked by non-Americans crashed into the World Trade Center in Manhattan, completely destroying the structure and killing over 5,000 people; while another hijacked airplane smashed into the Pentagon, killings several hundred—those basic facts are uncontested, but those facts cannot be understood, as opposed to described, without an extensive system of background cultural values (because all holons have a LL quadrant). So far, this sounds like a typical postmodern pluralist account, except that we move beyond pluralistic relativism—which denies that any of these cultural interpretations are intrinsically superior to the others—by advocating genealogical pluralism, or developmental unfolding, which suggests that, based on extensive research, some of these values are higher, better, and more inclusive than others: worldcentric is better than ethnocentric which is better than egocentric. Each may be appropriate in certain circumstances, but there is no question as to the hierarchical ranking of increasing capacity for consciousness, care, and compassion.

[For an overview of developmental or genealogical pluralism contrasted with relativistic pluralism—as the way out of pathological pluralism in general—see Sidebar A.]

“But my point: Each of the value memes, or general waves of development, has something important to tell us about how we can and should interpret the question of causes and blame in this particular event. Even if each higher, more inclusive meme has a more adequate view of the situation and is therefore more accurate (without ever being totally

accurate: there is no such thing), nonetheless each meme tells us something about how others—and the Other—might see the world in terms of whom to blame. This is the general second-tier response: intuitively feeling what all of the various responses have to tell us about the whole of reality and all human beings in it. But the second-tier response also understands that the weight that should be given to each of these responses and interpretations is better adjudicated by turquoise, since that is the highest average expectable wave of consciousness that has taken on significant form in all four quadrants to date; and, I hasten to add, for turquoise to be genuinely adequate, it must be informed by third-tier insight (at least as a state, if not a stage)."

"Lesá, could you expand on that at all? It's too dense," Hazelton said.

"I'll try, in a minute, Joan. But let me first begin to run up the spectrum on actual causes of the terrorist act, suggested by an all-meme analysis. First and foremost, the lion's share of the blame lies with the terrorists, pure and simple. They are not even representing red values, but pathological red values, or extremist red values. Even 'healthy' terrorists, if I can put it that way, immediately condemned their acts. Yassar Arafat: 'Unbelievable! Unbelievable! Unbelievable!' That part is a no-brainer. Whether you want to say that it was an attack on good by evil, or an attack on civilization by barbarism, or an attack on human bonding by really insensitive people, it doesn't matter. On the top of the list of whom to blame, by a wide margin, are the terrorists themselves—their leaders, their cohorts, their accomplices." Lesá looked up and smiled, "They are like way totally bad," and everybody laughed—an IC inside joke.

"What would motivate such acts? Remember, virtually all memes, red to turquoise, agree that these acts were, by whatever name, sick (no matter what mitigating circumstances may have been present, which we will discuss later). So we are justified in asking, what kind of sickness or malformation, exactly? What are its actual contours? An 'all-quadrants, all-levels, all-lines' analysis (an integral psychograph) would have to be

done—and I don't have nearly enough information to do that adequately—but some simple aspects suggest themselves: in the LR quadrant, there was, and is, severe economic distress (which may or may not be fairly ascribed to globalization and western corporate capitalism: that is a separate issue to be decided on its own merits—more about this later); in the LL quadrant, there seems to be something of a cultural rigidification in the face of modernity; this appears to be a pathological blue, or mythic-membership distorted into defining one's myth almost solely by the destruction of an Other: the Other in this case being the West (again, whether the West shares guilt is a separate issue; the fact right now is: phenomenologically, this seems to be the essential LL in these terrorists); in the UR, dopamine up, serotonin down (or whatnot); in the UL, a red-meme pathology fed by a distorted blue superego-formation; more specifically: cognitive line at orange; ego line at red, with pathological dissociation and a fulcrum-3/subphase-b malformation; super-ego in the tripartite ego is harsh, internalized, deformed blue-meme ideology. ”

Lesa paused. “Well, did I give enough metanarratives to drive the average MGM totally nuts?” Everybody smiled, nodded. “Oh, let me add: it was a tactically brilliant attack, absolutely brilliant, executed with fierce courage. But we're focusing on the sick side right now....

“In short, it seems reasonable to assume that the terrorists were pathological red inflamed by distorted blue ideology—an explosive combination, to be sure. No healthy value system in any culture that we are aware of condones these acts. However, the question then arises, to what extent can these pathologies in the four quadrants be ascribed to others, such as global western capitalism? Here the situation, as you can imagine, gets a bit trickier.”

PART II: INTEGRAL POLITICS

Lesa looked up, thought for a moment, and said, “I have a set of notes I am using to prepare a talk on integral politics. It bears directly on this topic. Should I just read from the notes, and maybe you all could help out?”

“Why does integral politics relate to the issue of the various responses to the terrorist attack?” Morin asked.

“Because so much of the discussion about the attack—what it means, why it happened, and most of all, who is actually to blame for it—is sunk in political terms and political affiliations, virtually of all which are considerably less-than-integral. Both the conservative and the liberal responses are fractured, fragmented, alienated and alienating. But this can only be clearly seen in contrast to a more integral political framework. Make sense?”

“Sure, sure” replied Morin. “Read the lecture and we’ll give some feedback. Once you do that, we need come back to the responses to the terrorist attack that might be expected from the higher, transpersonal, spiritual waves of consciousness, yes?”

Why Do Humans Suffer? The Liberal and Conservative Answers

“Okay, this is a rough draft, so bear with me. In the talk I am using the tragedy of the WTC to illustrate a few points. I then say,”—Lesa began reading—“To make matters worse, we really do not have an integral political theory that can be used to more adequately analyze this situation from a second-tier perspective. All we have right now, to put it bluntly, are conservative Realpolitik posturings—of the sort, ‘You terrorists say that you are upset because America has so much wealth and power and crushes

everybody else. Well, we have the wealth and the power because we earned it; if you want some wealth, go earn it yourself, and otherwise fuck off. Try to take or destroy our wealth and we'll bomb you back into the stone age.” Lesa laughed. “Sort of a silly threat, in that they are already at the stone age. But this conservative blue-meme interpretation fails to take into account any sort of AQAL [‘all-quadrant, all-level’] analysis that might disclose distributive power and distributive economic structures that genealogically came into existence under the influence of factors that even the blue meme itself would consider UNFAIR; and thus the claim that ‘We earned our wealth’ is not altogether true, in that these unfair infrastructures are in fact earning part of your wealth for you. This option is rarely considered by conservative analysts. They are....” She looked up, grinned, and said: “They’re born on third base and spend their entire lives thinking they hit a triple.

“Alas, the liberal interpretation is just as badly skewed, this time in the opposite direction. We all know the very general difference between the typical conservative and liberal approaches—it’s not that one is past-oriented and the other future-oriented, one is reactionary and one progressive, one aristocratic and one egalitarian—although all of those play a part. But the fundamental difference was first spelled out by one of our IC members in *Up from Eden*. What is the real difference between liberal and conservative? Well, if you ask the simple question—Why do human beings suffer?—you will get two different, basic answers. The conservatives will say, You suffer because of yourself; the liberals will say, You suffer because of someone else.

“For example, why are some people poor? The conservative will say: ‘Because they are lazy, they don’t work hard enough, they have an entitlement mindset, they are indolent: I worked hard for my money, let them work for theirs!’ The liberal will say: ‘You are poor because you are oppressed, you have not been given a fair chance, you are downtrodden,

you are a victim—it is not your fault, it is society's.' The conservative generally places blame within; the liberal, without.

“Thus, gun control—conservative: raise children who have family values and will not use guns irresponsibly; liberal: take away all the guns. Economic wellbeing—conservative: instill values of personal industry and free-market capitalism, and those deserving will prosper; liberal: redistribute the wealth. Abortion—liberal: abortion on demand; conservative: practice responsible sex and abstinence and you won’t need abortions in the first place. Homeless—liberal: make housing available to those who are disenfranchised; conservative: teach the values of self-responsibility and industry and you will have far fewer indigent. World hunger—liberal: feed the hungry; conservative: teach them to feed themselves.

“In each case, the conservative mostly recommends interior changes, the liberal, exterior changes. Likewise, when it comes to social change, the conservative recommends interior development (character education, family values, industriousness, self-responsibility); the liberal recommends exterior development (material improvement, economic redistribution, universal health care, welfare statism). Of course, there are exceptions. But more often than not, that is a genuinely basic difference in socio-political orientation between conservatives and liberals.

“We do have a bit of a terminology problem, however, in that ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ have been used in many different ways. So let me point out that there are two different issues here: one is the actual scale of causality for human ills: is it interior or exterior? And two, we are dealing with the names of political orientations (liberal, conservative, socialist, libertarian, etc.), each of which is a mixture of the interior-exterior scale that we are talking about plus several other important scales, such as the average level or levels of development that the political party mostly supports (e.g., blue, orange, green, etc.); the emphasis put on individual versus collective values; the nature of political change advocated (gradual, revolutionary,

traditionalist), and so on. An integral or AQAL politics takes all of those scales into account in order to fashion a more comprehensive view of human political possibilities—and a more comprehensive, balanced, effective form of political inquiry and action. Several of our colleagues are already working on this (see Gregory Wilpert, ‘Integral Politics: A Spiritual Third Way, Tikkun, 16, 4, Jul/Aug 2001; see also A Theory of Everything and its endnotes; and the works of Drexel Sprecher, Thomas Jordan, Don Beck, Maureen Silos, Jack Crittenden, Sean Hargens, Paul van Schaik, Mike McDermott, Lawrence Chickering, Mark Gerzon, Tyler Norris, Kees Breed, Ray Harris, Mark Palmer, Karin Swan, Michael Ostrolenk, and other IC members).

“So let me say that in this discussion we are focusing particularly on the interior-exterior scale, and you can then apply this understanding to the various political parties, here or abroad, and see where they fall on that scale (and how they might move to a more integral or balanced view). As it turns out, in America, the traditional conservative and liberal parties happen to align themselves almost perfectly along that one scale: the conservatives believe almost entirely in the interior causation of human woes, and the liberals believe almost entirely in the exterior causation of human suffering. As you all know, this simply means that the conservative emphasizes the importance of the Left-Hand quadrants, while liberals emphasize the Right-Hand quadrants. (Don’t let ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ confuse you here—the political Left emphasizes the Right-Hand quadrants, the political Right, the LH quadrants). In order to make the world a better place, the conservative mostly wants to tinker with the interior (Left-Hand) quadrants, the liberal wants to engineer the exterior (Right-Hand) quadrants.

“Accordingly, when you ask a conservative what could possibly cause the terrorists themselves to engage in such desperate acts, the conservative will not hesitate to ascribe virtually all blame to the terrorists themselves: they are evil, they are subhuman, they lack any sort of values, they lack

character, they lack the true God, they lack something or other, and it's their fault, period. It's an interior problem. And the typical liberal will go to the other extreme and blame the exteriors: of course the terrorists are responsible for these acts, but something horrible in their environment made them do it. And in this case, that something horrible is a four-letter word: the West.

“Both of those views have a degree of truth to them (simply because all occasions have both Left- and Right-Hand quadrants!). The conservative position correctly recognizes the necessity for interior development if any sort of genuine values, culture, and consciousness are to take root. In other words, they are correctly emphasizing the importance and necessity of development in the Left-Hand quadrants. Of course, most conservatives only recognize Left-Hand waves and values up to blue-orange; therefore, by ‘instilling values’ they often mean ethnocentric values: nationalism, family values, militarism, patriotism, patriarchalism, good ole Biblical injunctions and command morality—hence their strong emphasis on interior ‘character’ over exterior ‘capacity’ in a President. But the general truth in all of that is the definite need for interior development, because without it, purple and red rule: fenced barbarity is the most a culture can hope for. The downside, of course, is that there are values higher than blue-orange, which the conservatives usually deny and fight, on those occasions they can see them.

“So the conservatives are correct in that Left-Hand development is absolutely necessary for any sort of civilization; wrong in that blue values are the highest values in the Kosmos.

“But that sort of traditional, conservative political theory—grounded in mythic-membership and the blue meme—was the dominant view of governance for most of humanity’s civilized history, East and West, from the axial period up to the Enlightenment in the West, where a radically new type of political philosophy was born: liberalism. Liberalism was many things at once: a move from ethnocentric tunnel-vision to

worldcentric perspectives; from aristocracy to democracy; from slavery to equality; from society informed by myth to one informed by science; from a role-identity to an ego-identity; from duty and honor to dignity and recognition; from ethnocentric values to universal values (especially freedom, equality, solidarity).

“In short, it was a move from blue to orange, from ethnocentric to worldcentric, from conventional to postconventional. It was the birth of liberalism in the modern Enlightenment.

“But, of course, it was many other things as well, not all of them healthy. And few of the values I mentioned above arrived in a fully healthy form. Remember the dialectic of progress—the mixed blessing—of modernity: the good news was that the Big Three (of I, we, and it; or art, morals, and science) were finally differentiated and allowed to pursue their own truths in their own ways, which resulted in a spectacular freedom and progress in each; the downside was that the Big Three did not just differentiate, they eventually dissociated, and this allowed an aggressive and imperialistic science to colonize the other values spheres, catastrophically reducing art and morals—the Beautiful and the Good—to unnecessary intrusions on the path of instrumental rationality. Put bluntly, the interior dimensions of I and We—the Left-Hand quadrants—were all reduced to epiphenomena of the Right-Hand world of sensorimotor Its and exteriors: scientific materialism was born.

“And liberalism was born with it. Liberalism grew up in the same flatland atmosphere, the atmosphere that recognized only exteriors—which is precisely why, to this day, most liberals can only comfortably think about what needs to be fixed in the exteriors in order to make society a better place. To think about fixing interiors would imply that some interiors are inferior to others, and liberals usually recoil at the implication—thus inadvertently paralyzing any effective interior development and focusing almost exclusively on exterior engineering of social systems.

“But there is also a positive reason for the liberal reluctance to discuss interior development, and it needs to be carefully honored, namely: the separation of church and state. The previous political philosophy (which eventually morphed into conservatism), stemming from the mythic-membership wave (red-blue), was essentially a church-state fusion philosophy: the Pharaoh, Caesar, Czar, or King was either God or God’s representative, a one-party command-and-control political system plugged straight into an ethnocentric religion. Liberalism wished to go beyond this ethnocentric governance to worldcentric, universal governance based not on specific religious values or conventional family values, but on postconventional freedoms extended to as many as possible. Therefore, the general liberal stance is that the State should not overtly promote any specific or favored version of God or of the Good Life—which is often summarized as the separation of church and state. Liberalism recommends a procedural republic (where right precedes the good), not a substantive republic (where the good precedes right); it generally defends negative freedoms (don’t harm others), not positive freedoms (you should value this). The liberal stance therefore theoretically advocates a type of equality and even egalitarianism: all personal or interior values are a private choice, not generally open to public adjudication; there is no hierarchy of personal values with any sort of cross-individual applicability.

“But here is the difficulty with such traditional liberalism: the very capacity to protect and promote universal equality is the product of at least five stages of interior hierarchical growth (beige to purple to red to blue to orange). The liberal stance that says all people are equal and no values are intrinsically better than others is itself an elite value reached by only a minority of the population at this time. Liberalism is the product of five hierarchical stages of growth that then turns around and denies the importance of hierarchical stages of growth.

“Liberalism thus denies the very path that produced liberalism. And one of the major reasons that it does so, I am suggesting, is that an integral

historiography discloses that liberalism was born in the climate of flatland, of scientific materialism, of economic reductionism, which maintained that all the truly important realities are exterior/sensorimotor occasions. Even the psychological systems that grew up with liberalism—empiricism, behaviorism, positivism—maintained that the interior world is nothing but a series of pictures of the exterior world, which is the real world (again: liberal science maintains there are only facts, no interpretations: that is, only exteriors, no real interiors).

“From the beginning, liberalism therefore misunderstood the genesis of its own stance. It failed to grasp the fact that liberal values arise only through a series of hierarchical stages of growth—and they are fairly late-emerging values at that (beige to purple to red to blue to orange...). Therefore liberalism—because it was in fact a postconventional, worldcentric, universal wave of fairness, justice, and tolerance—immediately extended to all other stances the status of equal value: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’ Well, all men might be created equal, but very soon they reach different developmental waves, only the higher of which start producing liberal values. Whereupon liberal values, still captured by flatland, begin vigorously denying interior hierarchies and thus effectively dissolve their own genesis and work very hard to destroy the path that produced them.

“In place of interior development, merely exterior development is then recommended by the flatland liberal. Material improvement and economic reshuffling become the major aims of governance—(re)distribute the material wealth, provide physical healthcare for everybody, provide physical shelter for everybody, provide physical food for everybody, provide physical wellbeing for everybody. This leaves all values, all interiors, all meaning, all depth, and all divinity to the conservatives, who represent a lower wave of development but who at least haven’t forgotten the interiors!

“Interior talk—values talk, religion talk, character talk, meaning talk—is thus left largely in the hands of the conservatives. The liberal then looks at the typical blue-meme conservative values—which are often ethnocentric and which are adaptive (and unavoidable) at that wave, but which can easily slide into homophobia and gay bashing, sexism and misogyny, militarism and imperialism—and says, ‘If those are what we mean by “instilling values,” then I’m staying out of the values game altogether!’—failing to see that its own worldcentric fairness is simply the next wave of hierarchically unfolding values. It thus attempts to escape ethnocentric values, not by transparently championing its own higher worldcentric values, but by claiming to be value neutral and egalitarian, whereas in fact it is championing the next wave of value structures, the next wave of interiors, failing to see which it then succumbs to flatland floundering. Instead of pioneering a new wave of interior talk—higher values talk, higher religion talk, higher character talk, higher meaning talk—it talks only of tepid egalitarianism, a plurality of authentic ultimates, tractionless multiculturalism, no interior is better than another, yada yada yada.... Whereupon every interior, no matter how lowly, is accorded not just equal respect but equal value, period—and the regressive nightmare is about to begin. Liberalism is much nobler than that, much higher than that....

“Incidentally, it has often been noted that ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ have in some important ways switched their positions since the Enlightenment. What liberalism originally represented—individualism over collectivism, freedom from state intervention, and free market policies—have now been taken over by a branch of conservatism, while many liberals have started recommending policies that look suspiciously like the old conservatism (state intervention, collectivism, interference with the market, suspension of individual rights, emphasis on communalism).

“There are many AQAL reasons for this major shift, but the simplest is: because the conservative impulse is just that—conservative, or conserving the past—it tends to champion only those practices that have historically

demonstrated that they work. They are not progressive or revolutionary—looking to the future for some sort of change and salvation—they are traditional, even reactionary: looking to the past for stable, proven anchors.

“Now, at the time of the Enlightenment, to be conservative meant to be blue, since that is what had worked for a thousand years; the orange Enlightenment, on the other hand, was wildly new and revolutionary (and hence liberal or progressive). In place of blue collectivism and mythic-membership, it brought orange individualism and freedom of choice (through revolutionary means if necessary).

“Even now, if you look in the dictionary, the major difference between conservative and liberal is given as: the conservative is traditional, the liberal is progressive. And there is much truth to that. But the truth is sliding....

“That is, so well did liberalism work (even in its flatland form)—in economics, in science, in technical steering problems, in free-market wealth production—that by the time that 300 years had passed, these orange practices had slowly become... conservative. The new leading-edge wave was then, of course, green, and therefore to be liberal or progressive now meant to be green-meme in your values—and this meant in many ways that if you were a good liberal then you began to fight the previous orange values. Thus the very values that a few centuries ago were the leading-edge (and literally revolutionary) liberal values had now become the values of many conservatives, who in effect began embracing and defending Enlightenment values of individualism and free-market practices—exactly the values that they fought so desperately three centuries ago! Of course, the other most influential subgroup of conservatives stayed closer to the ‘old-fashioned’ conservative blue values, which is why conservatism today is a strange mixture of blue and orange, just as liberalism today is a strange mixture of orange and green.

“This was a huge switch, with conservatives moving into orange and liberals moving on to green. Because all of a sudden the liberals who had gone from orange to green were no longer recommending individual freedom but collectivism; not freedom from the state but state intervention; not academic freedom but politically correct group-think. And these green-meme collectivist liberals—pomo liberals—were now attacked in the name of individual freedom by orange-meme conservatives who site Enlightenment values (the same values they despised at the time)! And green pomo liberals began attacking the Enlightenment and Western modernity with a fury—attacking their own parents! Weirder still, green liberals and blue conservatives would therefore often find themselves in the embarrassing situation of joining forces to encourage government control of individual choice: liberal feminists and rabid conservatives both insisting on state prohibition of pornographic material, for example.

“All of this makes sense if you remember that conservatives ride the waves of yesterday, liberals ride the avant-garde waves. But neither of them, to date, have been able to ride the entire Spiral. And that, exactly, is the problem. Both the conservative and liberal positions are partial, fragmented, alienated and alienating.

“Accordingly, here is what we have today: the typical conservative position correctly recognizes the importance of interior development (or the Left-Hand quadrants), but only up to blue-orange; and it devalues the exteriors in general. In order to become integral, conservatism would therefore have to acknowledge that (1) exterior development and distribution (factors in the Right-Hand quadrants) are often uneven and unfair for various people and this is responsible for a good deal of their suffering; and (2) on the interior, there are higher levels of consciousness—and higher sets of values—than blue-orange, and the entire spectrum of consciousness and values must be acknowledged and addressed for any political governance system that wishes to be comprehensive and therefore adequate to the real world, both at home and abroad.

“The typical liberal position, on the other hand, importantly moves from the ethnocentric (red-blue) to the beginning worldcentric waves of development (orange to green)—a truly higher evolutionary development—only to get trapped in flatland, thus gutting the importance of the interior hierarchy of growth that produced its own noble stance in the first place. Liberalism’s values have always come from the postconventional waves (whether in the modern Enlightenment or the postmodern pluralist forms). But, caught in flatland, liberalism in all its forms failed to realize that liberalism is therefore NOT another version of egalitarianism, but elitism: the stance of liberalism itself demands the growth and development of consciousness and culture to the postconventional, worldcentric waves—which, so far in history, involve only a minority of people. That is, the liberal stance to treat all people equally is a stance embraced only by a minority of people around the world. This is not bad; far from it: it is a simple reminder that liberalism springs from the higher—and therefore relatively rare—postconventional waves of psychological and cultural evolution.

“(Quite apart from the fact that, laboring under genealogical opaqueness and false-consciousness egalitarianism, liberalism then usually champions and even promotes the lower, preconventional waves, waves that all but sink authentic liberal consciousness while aggressively hijacking its liberal slogans. I am not going to discuss this pre/post confusion that haunts the halls of today’s liberalism, important as that is; rather, I am focusing on the leading-edge liberal values themselves and the inherent difficulties that a higher wave of consciousness always confronts in the world at large).

“Since liberalism itself springs from relatively high waves of development, many difficult problems follow in its wake. Precisely because liberalism historically represented the avant garde—the leading edge, the growing tip—of consciousness evolution (put differently: precisely because it is progressive)—liberalism has, so far, represented the highest developmental levels of psychological tolerance, cultural embrace, and political inclusion:

not egocentric policies (what is right for me), not ethnocentric policies (what is right for my tribe), but worldcentric: what is right for all tribes, all peoples, all races. When the world was ethnocentric blue (demanding a rigid and dogmatic belief in an absolutist god, submission to one monarch, death to all heathens and infidels), liberalism arose as worldcentric orange (demanding the universal rights of humankind, regardless of race, sex, color, or creed). When the world itself, or rather its elite governing systems, then began explicitly moving into orange (embracing universal liberal values resulting in the abolition of slavery, the rise of feminism, the revolutionary introduction of the representative democracies around the world), then liberalism moved even further into green (demanding that those universal liberal values be truly and fully applied to all peoples without marginalizing or oppressing any).

“In all of those instances, liberalism represented the next, great, highest wave of consciousness development and inclusion—and therefore liberalism itself was a driving force for each of those major expansions of political theory and practice, extending and pushing political tolerance and embrace from ethnocentric to truly worldcentric (thus riding the leading edge of consciousness and cultural evolution itself, which, we have often seen, tends to flow from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric).

“Thus, in every case of liberalism’s noble history, it rode the leading edge of consciousness evolution—an ELITE leading edge, never amounting to more than perhaps 10% of the total population at the time—and yet it found generally benign ways to force its elitism on others. For example, the American Constitution is, for the most part, a moral-stage-5 document—an orange-meme statement, grounded in Enlightenment values. But when that document was written—and eventually implemented as the law of the land—less than 10% of America’s population was at moral-stage 5. The brilliance of the Founding Fathers was that they found a way to take this rare, elite stance—demanding equality and freedom for all—and force it on an entire population as the backbone of a series of legal and

behavioral codes that demanded that, even if individuals are not at moral-stage 5 in their own interiors, they must conform their exterior behavior to rules consistent with a moral-stage-5 act (e.g., you do not have to love me, but if you shoot me they will lock you up). Thus, at their best, the laws of America embodied an attempt to encode higher, postconventional, worldcentric responses—regardless of race, sex, color, or creed—implemented with the consent of the governed (the moral-stage-5 social contract), even if those laws were developmentally ahead of most of the governed. The legal, judicial, and political structures of the United States thus acted, in their best instances, as both a higher elitist stance imposed on the population at large and a magnet of psychological and cultural development for its peoples, who could grow into the worldcentric values of freedom and equality embedded in and informing the codes. In short, the Constitution was a pacer of transformation—it impressed a set of postconventional, worldcentric, liberal values into the land—but these were not hereditary values or aristocratic values or values given only to a select few and denied to all others: no, they were developmental values—that is, values into which all people could grow: it was an elitism, but an elitism to which all were invited.

“Was liberalism justified in doing this? Certainly. Why? Because liberalism represented, at its core, a truly higher, wider, more expansive set of values stemming from that period’s highest average expectable wave of consciousness (at first blue to orange, and then orange to green, and then perhaps... yet higher? Let’s come back to that in a moment).

“Now for the problems. They are as extensive as are those of conservatism, and for essentially the same reason: neither stance is integral. Both liberal and conservative stances represent very important stretches of the overall spectrum, but neither represents the spectrum itself—both are partial, fragmented, and ultimately oppressive.

“Liberalism demands that all people be treated legally and politically equal—which is certainly correct at this unfolding point—but that does not

mean, and cannot coherently mean, treating all people as having equal cognitive, moral, or spiritual capacity, which they demonstrably do not. Liberalism fully knows this, but it constantly forgets it and thus tends to slide from the exalted, altogether noble stance that ‘all values must be treated fairly and not prejudged according to one’s race, sex, belief, or creed’—into the insipid, self-contradictory notion that ‘all values are therefore the same, period.’

“Most liberals know this, but when they put ‘freedom, equality, and democratic egalitarianism’ front and center, as if that really were the whole of liberal values, they foster a flatland worldview that fails to notice that worldcentric values are better than ethnocentric values which are better than egocentric values—and thus, in effect, they deny the growth hierarchy that produced their own stance—and thus they subtly discourage interior growth and holarchical progress—an agenda that, if ever really carried out, would destroy the actual source of all liberal values—namely, the postconventional waves of development.

“Both orange-Enlightenment liberalism and green-postmodern liberalism severely gut the interiors, savage the Left-Hand quadrants, and then put almost total emphasis on fixing the exteriors (material and economic) as the sole means of alleviating human suffering, failing to realize that without a corresponding interior growth of consciousness and culture (Upper Left and Lower Left), there will be nothing to hold the exterior developments in place. Green liberalism especially claims that no value stances are better or worse than others, and that leads, of course, straight to the mean green meme and the horrors of boomeritis, all courtesy of a massive pathology at the leading-edge. And believe me, at the leading edge is least where you want to see pathology.

“In order for liberalism to become integral, it would therefore have to redress its glaring deficiencies (just as would conservatism): both of them would then be racing to find the first truly integral politics in history. We already saw the two major moves required of conservatism (acknowledge

the exteriors in general, and acknowledge interior levels higher than blue-orange). The corresponding steps for liberalism would be: (1) acknowledge the interiors in general; that is, recognize the interior waves of growth—the growth holarchy—that produced its own noble, expanded, worldcentric stance, and work toward ways to foster that interior growth (not force it, but foster it, making the conditions for this growth freely available to all—one of the original purposes of a truly liberal education). Typical liberalism has forgotten one of Kant’s central points: ‘freedom’ does not mean being able to do anything I want; it means following one’s own highest dictates. Repeat: ‘freedom’ does not mean being able to do anything I want (and therefore personal or political freedom does not mean behavioral anarchy); freedom means following one’s own highest dictates (and therefore personal and political freedom demands interior development). An egocentric person is not free, but is bound to his impulses; an ethnocentric person is not free, but is bound to his prejudices; only a worldcentric person begins to breathe the atmosphere of a freedom and equality extended to all.

“In short, you are not born free, you are everywhere born in chains. But you can become free, growing beyond your narrow perspectives to eventually embrace—and be released into the freedom and fullness of—a worldcentric, global, nonmarginalizing awareness.

“Put in our terms, one is not free by merely possessing all the material comforts imaginable, because somebody at red is a slave to his urges, somebody at blue is a slave to the herd mentality, somebody at orange is a slave to his profit drives, somebody at green is a slave to his subjectivity. Only at second tier does a person begin to transcend those lesser impulses, drives, and dictates, and rise instead to a vision of the fluid, flowing Whole that allows one to begin to be both truly Free and truly Full in an integral embrace that makes room for all.

“Thus, the second step for liberalism to become integral is.... Well, if step (1) is a recognition of the need for interior growth as well as exterior

growth, step (2) involves the necessity to recognize yet higher interior waves beyond orange and green.... Just as traditional conservatism needs to recognize waves higher than blue-orange, today's postmodern liberalism needs to recognize waves higher than orange-green. But beyond green is... second tier. And friends, that would change everything."

Integral: A Union of Conservative and Liberal

Powell looked up. "Okay so far?"

"Doing fine, dear," Margaret said.

"Perhaps the major defining characteristic of second tier is that it can grasp the entire spectrum of consciousness and the full spiral of development (at least up to the day's leading edge, which is now turquoise). This means that the NEW liberalism, as culture's leading edge today—that is, a liberalism that moved from green into yellow/turquoise—would do something that no political philosophy in history has ever succeeded in doing: recognizing, harmonizing, meshing, and integrating the entire spiral of developmental waves (up to turquoise)—NOT by using a flatland pluralism (green's attempt at integral) but a holarchical pluralism (i.e., a nested hierarchy of growth representing an increasing expansion of care and consciousness). Each meme, level, stage, and wave still has a crucial role to play and is still an invaluable part of the entire Spiral, not only because each junior wave is a necessary ingredient of the senior waves (no atoms, no molecules), but also because each holon, junior or senior, has a vital role to play at its own level. Nothing is ever lost; all is included, as this amazing Spiral makes it way from atoms to Infinity.

"A truly integral politics would therefore function to integrate all waves and memes across at least two major dimensions: since each wave is important in its own right, and since many individuals will spend their adult lives at a particular wave (high or low or in between), then ideally a culture would offer ways to integrate the four quadrants at each and every

wave. This horizontal integration would allow anybody to integrate self, culture, and nature (I, we, and it) at whatever level they are at. Beyond that, a truly second-tier, integral politics would allow a meshing of the different value structures across the entire spectrum of consciousness and spiral of development—a vertical integration. No longer would one set of values be viewed as the only set of values that should inform governance systems. The entire spiral of developmental possibilities would be taken into account in any integral decision-making process. Technical steering problems could still be handled by Right-Hand systems science, but governing policies, norms, and ideals would reflect the entire spectrum of human values as they exist in culture at any given time, and as they unfold and develop in the society being thus self-governed. It is the Spiral acting in and through integral political leaders that would govern, not this or that partial meme. Is this managerial elitism? Yes, indeed, exactly as the liberal leading-edge has always done. But again, it is an elitism to which all are invited.

“Let me sum up this section: to date, neither conservatism nor liberalism has been integral—neither of them is ‘all quadrant, all level.’ The typical conservative champions the blue-to-orange waves, and ignores or devalues the Right-Hand quadrants. The typical liberal champions the orange-to-green waves, and ignores or devalues the Left-Hand quadrants. In order to become integral, both would have to correct their imbalances by addressing the ignored quadrants and levels: conservatives, by explicitly including the Right-Hand quadrants and levels higher than orange; and liberals, by explicitly including the Left-hand quadrants and levels higher than green. We discussed each of those items above.

“But such an integral politics would no longer be conservative or liberal, not as we have recognized them up to today. Even liberalism, which otherwise might be able to carry the banner of integral politics—simply because, as the leading edge of cultural evolution, it would be the first to punch into second tier—but even so, it would then become a type of

liberalism that nobody, absolutely nobody, has ever seen before: a liberalism that does NOT claim, when it comes to conservatism, that ‘We’re Right and They’re Wrong,’ as a quaint title from a lovable, leading, liberal loudmouth put it (i.e., James Carville), but rather, ‘We’re Both Right, So Now What the Heck Do We Do?’

As the laughter subsided, Lesa Powell smiled and continued reading from her notes. “So we call this new integral politics by both the terms postconservative and postliberal, although frankly we believe that the leading edge will probably come from highly developed liberals who have broken through to second tier and thus (1) realize that all of the previous memes, values, stages, and waves need to be honored in a holarchical pluralism; (2) which means that not only the entire Spiral of development needs to be integrated (vertical integration), but (3) both the Right Hand and Left Hand, or the interior and exterior, need to be integrated (horizontal integration); so that (4) ‘progressive’ would cease to mean merely progress in material-economic conditions but also would include, and must include, growth and development in consciousness; which would be a radically progressive stance that would also be (5) profoundly conservative in that all of yesterday’s memes would be honored, preserved, and taken up in the ongoing unfolding of consciousness and culture.”

Lesa paused after this long recitation; she had been reading for almost an hour. “Well, that’s as far as I’ve gotten in the lecture. I need to finish it up with an outline of the integral political position itself. As well as recommendations for responses—individual and collective. I thought you all might help me with that.” She looked around the table.

Carla Fuentes was the first to speak up. “Hot damn! What a ride. I know we are going to move on to the transpersonal and spiritual responses to the terrorist attack, but while you were reading that, I couldn’t help but think of the WTC and the various political commentaries on it. And sadly, sadly, ain’t it the truth—neither conservative nor liberal in any existing form is integral; neither addresses all the quadrants in all their levels and

lines. An AQAL approach would take the best of both and jettison their crippling limitations and partialities. A Theory of Everything briefly summarizes this approach, but that book itself states that we are awaiting a detailed application of this integral approach to various issues. Besides, that author just keeps repeating himself, don't you think?

“Anyway, right now we have only lopsided conservative or liberal ideological interpretations. All we have are very intelligent people like Samuel Huntington giving us a conservative blue-meme reading of the clash of ethnocentric culture blocks; or a wonderful orange-meme theorist like Thomas Friedman reading the world situation in terms of market globalization; or green liberals like Laclau and Mouffe reducing everything to discourse as a new way to rail at the brutality of the West. Apart from their partial truths, all of those blue and orange and green analyses are crippled to the core, in that they latch onto one set of value interpretations, see the facts through those lenses, and then unconsciously distort the remaining facts in a way that they themselves are blind to. Each of them has an incredibly important piece of the puzzle; none of them sees the whole elephant.”

Carla Fuentes shook her head, took a long breath. “It does no good to have an exterior-only liberal screaming that U.S. intervention in other cultures has killed some 6 million people around the world. Through an AQAL analysis you would have to show what the cost would have been had the U.S. not intervened but some other, possibly worse devil had the upper hand. Moreover, you have to show what the actual, realistic alternatives were, based on genealogical research and not based on flatland liberal psychology and politics.

“Of course American power is in some ways a bad guy in this particular regard; globalization—meaning in this case an orange-meme capitalistic expansionism—is partly to blame for the causes of terrorism. I'll tell you more of what I think about that mess in a moment! But what I would like to see is how any other country—France, Japan, Iran, Germany, Indonesia,

Rwanda, Peru, Iraq—would handle the same amount of power on a world scale. Would they do better, or worse, or much worse? Get the picture? As far as I can tell, no country can or could handle that amount of power well—with the possible exception of Holland, perhaps the only sane country on the face of the planet, but they're too busy having a life to get that obsessed with power. But it's highly likely that everybody else would be worse than America, some by staggering orders of magnitude—the same countries that scream the loudest about what criminals Americans are. What pathetic hypocrisy, these vulgar critics. Still, bad is bad, and America is bad enough in this regard. Goes to show, if you want to prevent terrorism, get to the root causes of terrorism, yes? But you can only see the real root causes if you are looking through an integral lens.”

Carla took another long breath, then hurriedly continued. “One of the reasons we keep ‘picking on green’ is that it is the highest expectable level found in large numbers of the cultural elite. It dominates academia, liberal politics, social services, education. And therefore its shenanigans cause problems that quickly multiply and cascade throughout the social system, a type of trickle-down pathology. Boomeritis, to use a current phase, is a force multiplier. And therefore, although problems with red, blue, and orange are catastrophic, we reserve a particular, shall we say, nastiness for the mean green meme. Green responds: ‘I’m very concerned with that insensitive tone, aren’t you?’

“That’s part of the problem. The green meme looks at the present political situations here and abroad, and with its unconscious fixation to flatland, whenever it sees a hierarchical imbalance, it is forced to assume that said imbalance is due to—not any interior factors (since flatland recognizes no interiors)—but merely exterior factors imposed on the situation by an imperial, oppressive, malevolent force—usually, the West—and thus it is blind to any interior factors that may be contributing to the situation (such as the fact that the West is the only culture that has legally institutionalized postconventional values, however imperfectly executed).

The West becomes the devil, and anything non-Western, like that nice Taliban, must be innocent victims. The liberal critic sees the West's complicity; the conservative critic sees the Taliban's guilt; neither sees the whole. The West is much less to blame than green-meme liberals believe, and much more to blame than conservatives can see."

Margaret Carlton nodded. "I was particularly struck by the fact that postmodern liberalism—well, as you know, postmodern poststructuralism actually attacks traditional liberalism very aggressively, so the postmodernists would claim that they are not liberals at all. But as you suggest, Lesa, this is simply an attack by green liberals on orange liberals. The same evolutionary shift that produced two major subschools of conservatism—namely, traditional blue (whose premodern values tend to fight those of the modern Enlightenment) and free-market orange (which has evolved into embracing most of the Enlightenment values)—has similarly produced two major subschools of liberalism—namely, orange liberals (representing the original Enlightenment values of individual freedom and equality) and green liberals (who have vehemently attacked the modern Enlightenment and replaced its values of individual freedom with group rights; as we all know, most green expressions at this time in history are riddled with boomeritis and the MGM, so green liberals have yet to find their healthy expression. And likewise, many strong, exterior-causation, orange Leftists—e.g., Chomsky, Albert, Callinicos, Harvey—aggressively attack the pomo Left—e.g., Zizek, Rorty, Laclau—which shows that what divides them—the value-levels of consciousness—are as important as what unites them—exterior causation. Still, any conservative would see all of them as being, well, nonconservative).

"That is, orange liberals and green liberals are both liberals as we are using the term: they place most blame for human suffering on exterior circumstances (if you are suffering, it is NOT your fault); they therefore suggest progressive social improvements based mostly on exterior, material, and economic redistribution (Right-Hand changes) and, in the case of

green, extensive social control of offensive speech behavior; they both ignore—indeed, attack the notion of—the interior (Left-Hand) growth hierarchies that produced their own noble stance, and hence they are clueless as to how to reproduce their insights in others (fortunately evolution does not depend on them!); they both are, whether acknowledged or not, actually representing the leading edge of evolution (though they both have an intense flatland philosophy that would deny it); and they both are therefore correctly agitating for progressive political change to increase the circle of embrace and tolerance (egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric).”

“Quick question,” interrupted Derek. “Granted that liberals generally define most causes of human suffering as being exterior. But the green or pomo leftists talk about subjectivity and feelings and interpretation and interiors all the time—simply because green talks about interiors all the time. Isn’t that interior causation?”

“It’s interior talk, but not interior causation. The green-postmodern Left indeed talks about interiors, sensitivity, caring, possessing a nonmarginalizing attitude, and so on. But when it comes to the causes of your suffering, all of those are exterior. That is, you are not suffering because you have failed to develop your own consciousness; you are suffering because somebody else (namely, the Western Enlightenment) is oppressing you, being insensitive to you, marginalizing you, and so on. If you are suffering, it is because you are a victim, not a responsible causal agent in your own state. When it comes to your values, they cannot be judged inferior because they cannot be judged at all, which removes interior causation from the scene.”

“Got it.”

“Anyway, as I started to say, it is indeed sad that green postmodern liberalism has so vocally championed value egalitarianism and thus ceased being progressive in any consistent fashion. Lacking a coherent view of

how and why society should be improved based on normative, developmental, evolutionary, and progressive values, they revert to a program of social improvement based on nothing but material and economic redistribution and behavioral totalitarianism, never a great idea. But this is why, as critics from Habermas to Taylor have pointed out, the postmodernists so often end up being reactionaries. The real curse of postmodernism: it is deeply reactionary because, lost in flatland pluralism, it can get no traction in order to establish normative, progressive development to a better state of affairs (apart from its standard claim that things would be much better if everybody simply agreed with them and universally embraced the idea that there are no universals worth embracing). Instead of realizing that the values of nonmarginalizing equality arise only from higher waves, they extend notions of equality to people who will not return the compliment, and they can't figure out why this doesn't work! Society thus ends up going nowhere, or sliding backward—especially from worldcentric rights into merely ethnocentric rights—and thus the postmodern pluralists end up being deeply reactionary and exclusionary, as witness the PC thought-police.” Carlton took a long breath and laughed. “Well, jeepers creepers.”

“Jeepers creepers? Right. I find the main problem with trying to argue the facts with both conservatives and liberals is that, for the most part, their facts are correct,” Charles Morin offered. “I think you mentioned this, Lesa. It's not that, for example, America didn't have a hand in millions of deaths around the world, as the liberal says. The problem is that those facts are a selection from among millions of other facts in the case, and typical liberals, looking through an orange or green lens, simply will not see, and cannot see, what other facts might be equally relevant. They will therefore not report those facts. Their overall interpretations will thus be badly skewed. Liberals, as Lesa said, especially put a very strong emphasis on the Right-Hand or exterior factors, and thus they almost never report the Left-Hand or interior factors that are as important—and usually more important—in deciding affairs than are exterior facts. But their exterior

facts are generally correct, if highly selective, and in arguing only those facts they are therefore convinced that they are absolutely right in their analysis—or, anyway, more correct than the alternative interpretations.”

“Oh, they are often more correct than alternatives, because the alternatives are even more fucked!” Fuentes interjected.

“Yes, well, no argument there. But the conservative comes in—Huntington is a fine example—and says to the liberal (to put it in our terms), ‘Hey, wait a minute, you liberals are arguing orange economics or green human rights, but most of the world—some 70% of it—is at red and blue. It’s not about money or rights; it’s about culture and identities. And you liberals just can’t see that the biggest threats in the world today come from a clash of cultures and values, not matter and money—come from red tribes and blue religious fanatics.’”

“Right,” said Jefferson. “You know, one of the great puzzles of modern sociology has been: why didn’t religion go away? By ‘religion,’ of course, sociologists mean purple magic and red-blue myths. They thought that orange rationality would put an end to all that magic and myth—and when it decisively did not, they scratched their heads. But the most amazing thing about the spiral of development is that everybody, in every culture, is born at square 1, is born at beige, and must begin their development from there. So every time human beings anywhere have sex, the world is producing a fresh supply of red tribes and blue fundamentalists. Because everybody starts at beige and develops through those waves—again, and again, and again. And unless those red and blue factions grow up in an orange-or-higher culture, they will remain nothing but red or blue; their actions will not be contained in a culture that imposes postconventional behavioral codes on them (such as, e.g., you are not allowed to shoot somebody because they have a different religion from you). And thus, one way or another, those egocentric and ethnocentric cultures will declare war on all worldcentric cultures. Of course, the red and blue subcultures in orange-green societies will also declare war on

worldcentric values, as the street gangs of any American city and the televangelists will attest. But sooner or later the worldcentric cultures will figure this out.

“Figure out, in other words, that the real threats are not from other cultures per se, but from the lower levels of consciousness development in any culture, including your own—AND, those ‘lower levels’ are and always will be a crucial ingredient and foundation of any higher levels, so that you can’t... well, you can’t shoot them, gas them, oppress them, repress them, or marginalize them, because they are your own roots, literally—and therefore, a la the Prime Directive, it is your duty to protect and promote the health of the entire Spiral, and not any particular wave or meme, however ‘lowly’ it might appear.

“The fascist move—the Auschwitz move—vaguely grasps the hierarchy of development but ignorantly, evilly, imagines that you can cut off the roots and the leaves will flourish all the more. The communist move—the Gulag move—also vaguely grasps the hierarchy of development but equally ignorantly, evilly, imagines you can help the egalitarian roots by hacking off the leaves. Fascism destroys what it perceives to be the lower in order to help the higher; communism does the reverse. Dumb shits, both of ’em. You can’t cut the Spiral in half and expect the other half to live.

“Well, to return to the point,” Jefferson smiled. “Whatever course of action we take, we need—first and foremost—a much more integral analysis of the national and international situation, an AQAL analysis—all quadrants, all levels, all lines—an integral historiograph of the present states of affairs, in order to grasp a more adequate response. Otherwise, we cannot really say what an adequate response would be because nobody—and I mean nobody—has done the integral analysis first. I’m afraid we ourselves simply do not have all the necessary information, much of it classified, that would let us proceed with an AQAL overview. Another reason we desperately need integral leaders home and abroad.”

“That’s why,” Morin added, “we trust so few political commentators on the scene. As I was saying, there’s no such thing as just reporting the facts, because all facts are a selection, and every selection is seen through a value lens. Facts are not created by values, but they are selected by them. The blue conservative will report on the activities of a heinous network of terrorists around the world. This is true. Blue will then say that this is a clear case of good versus evil and we are being innocently attacked. But green liberals will point out that many of those terrorists were in fact trained by America. This is also true. (Usama bin Laden was trained and recruited by the CIA in order to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan—some say in order to incite the Soviets to fight in the first place.) Green liberals will then say that we are obviously suffering at the hands of our own aggression and power drives, and until we change our ways, we have no right blaming somebody else. And so the battle of endlessly fragmented interpretations goes. Both sets of facts are true; but both interpretations are partial, warped, distorted, and distorting. Acting on either will lead to more problems than it solves.”

“What I constantly hear,” said Powell, “is that America talks this great idealistic show, but it rarely, or never, lives up to it. ‘We are protecting peace and freedom’ are just American code words for ‘my freedom to culturally dominate and rape you.’

“Of course America doesn’t live up to its ideals,” Carlton responded, “because we—like everybody else—have red and blue memes all the over the place, hijacking the higher structures for their own morally sluggish or even criminal use. Which is no reason to condemn the higher structures themselves, although, Lord knows, they’re not perfect either. Again, you have to consider the realistic options, given the world’s historiography, in order to assess credit and blame. Of course, it goes without saying that anytime you have country as big and powerful as America, it is going to step on toes everywhere, and the world has a right to resent that. But there has to be some sort of balance in the picture.”

“So the question is, What is the integral approach to the situation?” said Morin. There was a long silence, and then everybody broke into uproarious laughter.

“Yes, and what exactly is the answer to God, Life, the Universe, and Everything?”

“You also didn’t describe third tier’s response to the attack,” Margaret Carlton said as she gently touched Lesa’s hand. Once again, I felt electricity in my body.

“One miracle at a time,” laughed Joan.

“Let’s try this,” Morin suggested. “Let’s discuss the general response of the transpersonal or spiritual waves to the terrorist attack, and then pause and reflect on an overall integral approach to the problem. How does that sound?”

Everybody nodded. Jefferson looked around. “Okay, who wants to give the rundown on the third-tier response? How shall I delicately put this.... Who do we think best understands third tier?” After a few moments of silence, several voices said either “Joan” or “Lesa.”

“Joan, dear, you do it, would you?” Lesa asked. “I’m shot.”

For some reason Joan looked directly at me, the sky collided with the sky and gave way to a shining infinity, stars emerged in the synapses of my brain, crackling thunder replaced the pounding of a torn and tattered heart—all in a nanosecond. Joan: how would I ever repay her?

PART III: THE SPIRITUAL WAVES RESPOND

The World Soul

“All right, dear ones, I’ll do the best I can. In third tier, we have four basic waves of consciousness—psychic, subtle, causal, nondual. I’ll start by trying to describe the psychic wave, and then its likely response to the terrorist attack.” She closed her eyes and seemed to enter some sort of state, or some part of herself, and her skin became even more translucent than usual.

“The psychic wave, the wave beyond turquoise, begins to understand that the universe is not merely physical, it is psychophysical. It therefore moves from the turquoise idea of a cosmic spirituality or cosmic unity to a direct experience of that unity—a direct cosmic consciousness. As ‘far out’ as that sounds, the cross-cultural evidence for the existence of this state is overwhelming; some of the greatest philosophers and psychologists the world over have testified to its reality—from William James to Henry David Thoreau to, yes, even hard-headed Bertrand Russell. In fact, this experience is often the basis of what is known as nature mysticism.

“But every wave has its healthy and unhealthy forms, and nature mystics often mistake their experience as being a unity with nature as opposed to human culture. Emerson corrected this error by referring to ‘nature-and-nation’ mysticism: in other words, the World Soul, the Over-Soul, is the divine ground of both nature and culture. In healthy nature-nation mysticism, you are one with both lakes and windmills, clouds and cars, horses and horsepower. Of course you will work to minimize the human footprint on the biosphere, but you don’t do so by absolutizing the biosphere.

“A profound insight tends to come with nature-nation mysticism: in some deep, awesome, mysterious way, everything that happens is all of a piece.

There is indeed something called ‘good’ over here, and something called ‘bad’ over there. But both of them are necessary pieces of this great work of Art called manifestation. Just as a beautiful painting has both light and dark shades, so this world necessarily has both good and evil, both pleasure and pain, both life and death: you could not see this world without both, it would not even exist as a manifest event.

“Now the average person pursues happiness by trying to find one-half of the pairs of opposites: by trying to find pleasure without pain, life without death, good without evil, health without sickness, left without right, inside without outside, up without down. Not the mystic, who instead rejoices in the unity of the opposites, the vast play of pairs as they erotically unite throughout the manifest realm, their secret joy lighting up the night with screams of their uncontainable delight.

“The great mystical texts, both East and West, always speak, in hushed terms, of the liberated one, the enlightened one, the one who is awakened, the one who understands the ultimate secret of the universe. And you know how this enlightened one is described? He or she, it is said, is ‘freed from the pairs.’ Freed from the pairs of opposites, freed from the dualistic nightmare of tearing the universe in two and trying to identify with only half of reality while running away from the other half. You tear yourself in half as well, and that torn and fractured condition is known by many names, the most common of which is suffering. But wholeness lies in the other direction, freed from the pairs altogether.

“And so the secret message rings out, from the Bhagavad Gita in the East:

*Content with getting what arrives of itself
Passed beyond the pairs
Not attached to success nor failure,
Even acting, he is not bound.
He is to be recognized as eternally free
Who neither loathes nor craves;*

*For he that is freed from the pairs,
Is known as the awakened one.*

“To the Gospel of St. Thomas in the West:

Jesus said to them:

*When you make the two one, and
when you make the inner as the outer
and the outer as the inner and the above
as the below, and when
you make the male and the female into a single one,
Then you shall enter the Kingdom.*

“To the incomparable Lao Tzu, sage of all humankind:

*Is there a difference between yes and no?
Is there a difference between good and evil?
Must I fear what others fear? What nonsense!*

“You see, dear souls, it’s true: the great, great Joy of the nature-nation mystic resides in the blissful union of the opposites. He or she does not rejoice in the light conquering the dark, or the good conquering evil, or life conquering death, but in the mysterious play of light and dark miraculously held together in the Joy of manifestation itself. Somehow, everything is eternally right. No matter how dark the dark, how painful the painful, how evil the evil, the mystic knows that it is all a part of the great painting of Life. Even while we fight to lessen evil—and we should—and punish wrongdoing—and we should—and work ceaselessly to right wrongs—and we should—there is a sense that the world is Profoundly Okay. As dear Aldous Huxley put it, ‘And then there is the sense that in spite of Everything—I suppose this is the Ultimate Mystical conviction—in spite of Pain, in spite of Death, in spite of Horror, the universe is in some way All Right, capital A, capital R...’

“People who haven’t had this experience of cosmic consciousness often get confused at this point. They think that because you are alive to the basic All Rightness of the universe, you shouldn’t be upset by the terrorist attack. Just the opposite! Because you are grounded in the unshakeable security of the perfect All Rightness of the world, you can afford to get totally, absolutely, crushingly upset. You won’t weep for the victims, you won’t weep for yourself, you will weep for all humanity, it all comes pouring through you with a pain and intensity that will melt your neurons, blister your skin, tear your eyeballs out of their sockets: you will cry for every single sentient being that ever lived, cry for every lion who lost a cub, for every husband who ever lost a wife, for every mother who ever lost a son, for every loss in every conceivable world—it will hurt with a pain so unbearably raw you will throw yourself flat on the ground and beg God and the Goddess to please, please make it stop.

“And yet—paradoxically, mysteriously, profoundly—under all the horrible, horrible, horrible pain is that unfaltering Joy in the basic All Rightness of it all. The quiet bliss of the simple feeling of Being is your constant companion; you are one with the sun and the moon and the radiant stars; one with the great cities, the planes and trains and automobiles, one with all the wonders of manifestation arising not around you, but within you—a Joy that is so overpowering you often find it hard to breathe, a Thrill that runs the length of your body, toe to head, and then disappears into the heavens happy to hear from you. You hold the earth in the palm of your hand, bless the galaxies adorning your crown, cry as the rain on nature and nations alike. Your compassionate tears and empathic tortures all arise in the vast Security and swirling Joy of the World Soul that is your own Over-Soul, and the Over-Soul will whisper gently in your ear: ‘I will be with you, even until the ends of the world. How could anything ever be amiss?’”

Margaret Carlton was quietly weeping as Joan talked, and I kept wondering, as I always did in Joan's presence, just how such a one could really move among us....

“And you will rage, too, rage the way rage is supposed to be felt when you are no longer afraid of hurting the world, for the world in its basic All Rightness cannot be hurt, and therefore you can afford to feel the rage—feel all of it, feel every rage that has ever been felt: the rage of the father whose daughter is killed, the wrath of the person whose best friend is murdered, the absolute fury of a husband whose wife is raped and whose body abandoned: you are the Soul, the Over-Soul of humanity, and thus you will feel everything humanity has ever felt—and you will let it all in, because you can afford to. Your rage will find infinity, your blood will circulate plutonium, your heart will feel like Hiroshima, you will suffer wrath and hatred and the incandescent desire to kill and kill a million times over. You will eat it all, you will take it all in, you will open up and stand back and the entire course of nature and nations will come rushing through you, savaging your psyche and leaving the insides of your soul torn and horribly bleeding—because you can afford to. You are not letting in just the light, just the love, just the caring—those are all dualistic opposites, just as rancid, by themselves, as their mirror images of hatred and evil and rage. No, you are letting it all in, letting the universe itself in, because, in fact... you... are... the... universe—in all its wonderfully mysterious play of light and dark, joy and sorrow, cheers and fears, terror and delight.

“But now you understand the secret union of the pairs, the ultimate oneness of all the opposites, and you will never again play the game of looking for light without dark, pleasure without pain, good without evil, left without right, up without down. Freed of the opposites, you rest in the unshakeable Confidence of the basic All Rightness of the entire universe, and through the vast open spaciousness that you now are, the opposites will come and go, moving to a destiny that is no longer

exclusively yours. You are now every nation and every nature that has ever existed—your Heart is that big, dear souls, your Heart is that big.

“How could you possibly be just an American, how could you possibly be just a terrorist? You are all of them, here and now, in a Heart that embraces the entire world and chooses neither this side nor that in the eternal game of the opposites. The rage of the American, the desperation of the terrorist, all come pouring through you in a rushing roiling earthquake that only a Heart as big as the cosmos could possibly contain.

“And yet, and yet... at the very same time, you certainly can recognize relative right and wrong—the opposites are united, not obliterated—and therefore you will work as hard as you can to do good, avoid evil, right injustices, heal the sick, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, curb imperialism, eradicate terrorism. It is just that you will never, never, never again believe that the play of opposites in themselves is anything but a passing nightmare meant to frighten children.”

TOWARD AN INTEGRAL RESPONSE

Joan paused for a long time. The light shifted in the room, seemed to come from her; but then, Joan could bend space—that’s the first thing I ever noticed about her, in that miraculous first day I stumbled into Integral Center and succumbed to the chain of events that would soon end my life, setting my soul afloat in destiny’s display.

Joan looked at everybody present. “Perhaps we should pause here and discuss an integral approach to terrorism that would include not just the spiral up to turquoise but also the transpersonal realms? Then we can come back and discuss the rest of the transpersonal realms themselves. Yes?”

“Yes,” said Margaret Carlton. “I’ve cried enough for right now.”

Lesla leaned over, squeezed Margaret's shoulder, smiled. She looked at Hazelton. "Joan, how do you see a stage or even state like cosmic consciousness affecting practical solutions to these problems? Many people view these experiences as too weird, far out, spooky, or occult to have any practical meaning."

"Well, dear souls, as far as I can tell, in practical terms, this does translate into one action item especially, relating to the terrorist attack. The basic aim of second tier is, of course, to honor and integrate the entire spiral of development—the Prime Directive. In other words, it is the health of the overall Spiral, and not any particular wave or meme, that is the prime ethical imperative. Well, third tier is the actual source of the Prime Directive—the divine ground of the radiant desire to include all sentient beings in an integral embrace of Freedom and Fullness. And that means, in terms of practical recommendations for courses of action, any experience of third tier will strongly reinforce the Prime Directive.

"In other words, the best course of action is that action which satisfies the most number of value memes across the full Spectrum, but apportioned by turquoise informed by third tier."

"Whoa, that's a mouthful!" Fuentes laughed. "One at a time, for dummies like..., well, I was about to say 'me,' but that can't be right. For dummies like Derek."

Derek almost smiled. "You're a yuck a minute, Carla."

"Okay," Joan said, "there is another way to state the Prime Directive: it is actually the same thing as the Basic Moral Intuition—namely: protect and promote the greatest depth for the greatest span. This Prime Directive does not say, act to protect and promote ONLY depth, or only the highest memes—not only would that represent less than 2% of the world's population, it overlooks the fact that the junior memes are components of the senior, and thus to ignore the junior is to kill the senior. (That rancid

elitism is the Auschwitz move.) Nor does it say to protect and promote ONLY span, or only the lowest common denominator, because without the senior memes, the juniors lose much significance. (That would be the Gulag move.) No, the Prime Directive says to act so as to promote the greatest depth for the greatest span in all sentient beings—promote the health of the entire Spiral—and exactly how to do that is the great province of moral intuition and practical wisdom, because there is no one single, best, instrumental answer. This is not calculus; it is the messy world of human flesh and its interactions.

“But we can see the general idea, namely: somehow try to balance the wisdom of the senior memes with the fundamental importance of the junior memes, for none of them can be ignored, devalued, or short-changed without dire consequences for the entire Spiral itself. The best course of action therefore has something for everybody—something for every meme—but gently tilted toward actions inspired by Eros, or a tilt towards the higher, wider, deeper waves of awareness acting for everybody.

“Thus, as for what specific course of action to take in response to the terrorists, a more integral approach would recommend actions that can be justified based on second-tier moral principles informed by third-tier insight—namely, the Prime Directive—but formulated and worded in a way to resonate to some degree with all of the memes, bottom to top, and their values and needs at this time. What we want to do is take actions that would satisfy as many memes as possible, although not for the reasons given by any one meme (e.g., we might decide, based on second-tier moral reasoning, that it is justifiable to kill the terrorists, an action that would satisfy both red and blue, but an action that ideally would not be motivated by their reasons, namely, revenge. This will become clearer as we proceed).

“Very briefly, here are the basic needs of the major waves or memes and the types of responses to the attack that they might prefer:

Beige—physiological necessities, water, food, shelter, safety; needs to reestablish basic physical security disrupted by the attack.

Purple—emotional bonding, vital needs, organic identity, tribal or familial; needs to reestablish emotional ‘us’ versus ‘them’; will retaliate to do so.

Red—dominance, control over rival groups; would like to kill the terrorists, period. Any reason will do, just kill the bastards, which will reestablish my control.

Blue—need for certainty and stability (not merely physical, but in terms of values and principles); the terrorists threaten eternal truths and need to be vanquished; a crusade against evil-doers; rally around the flag, around God, around nationalism: united we stand, divided we fall; this is a simple case of good versus evil—the terrorists need to be removed because the attack on the good demands retribution; only by ‘bringing them to justice’ can the one good and true way be reestablished.

Orange—need for individual achievement, excellence, progress, profit. The attack was an attack on civilization itself and an attack on freedom itself; the terrorists need to be apprehended; whether we actually kill them or not is less important than the fact that we strategically reestablish free market, business, democracy, industry, progress, profit.

Green—need for caring community, sharing of feelings, subjective bonding, self-expression, trying to honor multiple viewpoints; the attack is an opportunity to join together to reestablish community and reaffirm peace and nonviolence, which is the only correct stance. We should have love in our hearts, not military retaliation, which will only increase oppression and further aggravate the problem.

Second-Tier—acting with a view of the patterned whole, how can I best facilitate the health of the entire Spiral? Act to support and promote

actions based on the Prime Directive—i.e., actions that promote the greatest depth for the greatest span. Will support military action if in support of the Prime Directive (i.e., it takes Krishna-Arjuna's view of military action if warranted, as does Third Tier).

Third-Tier—in the basic All Rightness of the Kosmos, all things arise exactly as they should; and therefore, paradoxically, I must work even harder for the health of the entire Spiral. There are no others to save; therefore, I vow to save them all. In practice, supports the Prime Directive.

Joan finished the rundown and paused.

“So,” Charles reflected, “it looks like, on the specific issue of possible military retaliation, all the memes except green would support it.”

“Well,” Jefferson replied, “second and third tier would support it if warranted. That means that it can be strategically justified using at least yellow cognition. The problem is, as an old member of the Rangers, I'm just not sure that we can be very effective militarily in this case. If the Russians couldn't whip Afghanistan, I don't know what makes us think we could.

“Let me add that military action ideally would be sanctioned by appropriate international legal bodies—but since the United Nations has already done so, we will take that for granted. And in the best of all possible worlds, we would simply apprehend bin Laden, take him to the Hague, toss him in jail with Sloba Milosevic and other fun-loving thugs, and try the lot of them according to international law. But we're a little short on InterPol in northern Afghanistan, so we have to go in ourselves; I'm just worried about how well we will succeed with that. In other words, morally and legally, military action might be justified; militarily, I'm not sure it is.”

“At the same time,” Margaret Carlton interrupted, “just because a majority of the memes want to take military action doesn’t mean it’s right.”

“Yes, but that’s not what we’re saying,” Joan reminded her. “The greatest depth for the greatest span means that second and third tier responses are given greater weight; both of them agree that if warranted, military action might be advisable, because in certain cases not using violence leads directly to greater unchecked violence. The question now is, can military action be justified, not on moral and legal grounds—it can—but on tactical and strategic grounds—and Mark is saying that he doesn’t think so.”

“I’m afraid the most we can say about military action,” Jefferson offered, “is that none of us has access to the types of information that would allow us to make an informed judgment. President Bush is spending several hours on the phone with President Putin, and you can imagine that he is getting an earful on the Afghan situation. Plus all the secret military intelligence, troop movements, military strength, you name it. Any decision we would make would be woefully ignorant here. I am worried, however, about an endless morass of ineffective military action. I hope that the likes of Colin Powell would make sure that any military action fits with his own doctrine of swift, effective action or no action at all.”

“Perhaps we can say this,” Morin suggested. “We have established our belief that (1) as a last resort, military action to take out the terrorists might be morally justified in this case; (2) if strategically feasible, it would also fit with the needs of all of the memes except green—although each meme, following its own values, would give a different reason for the retaliation, which is fine. In this particular case, effective military action as a last resort might therefore be consonant with an integral approach. Agreed?”

Everybody nodded. “You always hope, however”—Joan spoke for all

present—“that it never has to come to that. There are easier ways to do your duty and remember the Lord.”

“And we shouldn’t forget the overall or global situation here.” Fuentes looked around the room; she seemed almost angry. “The causes for terrorism are AQAL—that is, we can only understand the causes of terrorism by taking an ‘all-quadrant, all-level, all-lines’ look at the entire situation, here and abroad, because a huge number of factors, a massive number of factors—in all the quadrants, the levels, the lines—have come together to create the problem. A simple solution—bomb the hell out of their Lower-Right quadrant and freeze their Lower- Right bank accounts—is about as fragmented and idiotic as you can get. It’s not the military action that bothers me, it’s the pathetically fragmented and partial nature of the understanding that produced that action and that thinks such an action will permanently fix much of anything.

“Globalization—meaning in this case rampant, market-speculative, profit-driven, boardroom-governed capitalism—is itself partly to blame for terrorism. We did not create poverty or the terrible conditions of the Third and Fourth worlds, much as some would like to lay rancorous blame in that direction; but our actions have contributed to them, even if unwittingly (though sometimes, alas, wittingly).

“Usama bin Laden is a machine created and built by the CIA to fight their war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, fueled by an opium/heroin trade, sponsored in part by the CIA, that at the time produced 1/3 of the world’s entire supply of illegal narcotics, much of the funds funneled to the Mujheddin to fight the CIA’s fights. Well, those cocks have come home to roost, eh?

“Some of which explains, none of which excuses, the terrorists acts. My point is simply that the AQAL situation—or numerous factors in the quadrants and levels all around the world—will continue to produce more bin Ladens until that complex integral is broken into at any of its major

points and organically re-grown from within. We might be able to root out these particular terrorists, but we cannot root out the red and blue waves of development. And unless those waves can grow up in an AQAL situation that encourages their healthy version at every point, then these types of terrorist actions are just the start of a very unpleasant, police-state century. Watch for anthrax in the mail, sarin gas in the Boston subway, smallpox bombs in Washington, plutonium in L.A.'s drinking water."

"Carla nailed it," said Morin. "The problems are AQAL, the solutions must be. But this does not mean what the average green-meme thinks—namely, that if American just stopped its nasty capitalistic imperialism that everything would be okay. Remove America completely from the world picture, and some 90% of the problems would still remain, because at this point the lion's share of development rests with the interiors of the world's cultures themselves. In some cases, America's economic actions actually help countries move from blue to orange; in other cases, our actions dampen or prevent the basic needs of lower memes getting effectively met. But that is only a pitifully small slice of a much bigger picture.

"By focusing on America's exterior actions, we therefore lose sight of the interior development that these cultures must undertake in any event. Obviously, all four quadrants play a role here, so if America's actions decisively disenfranchise others economically (LR), then that will make their cultural growth (LL) more difficult. But little we can do will positively foster that interior growth unless the population of a culture is ready and willing to do so. We can give Lower-Right quadrant aid—and I think we should—and we can desist in certain Lower-Right actions that clearly harm others as shown by a truly integral (not merely flatland) analysis—and of course we should in those cases cease and desist—but none of that addresses the Left-Hand quadrants where the real action eventually must be enacted. That is the part of the integral picture that is so distressingly untouched by tirades on economic globalization.

“It is not that IC’s blind spot is the Left, as is often said by the Left, but that the Left’s blind spot is the interior dimensions, a blind spot that leads them to catastrophic analyses—analyses almost as blind as those of the Right. What has yet to be done, what is still screaming to be done, is an AQAL overview that includes the best of both and jettisons their frankly psychotic fragmentations. Both of them are on to important if partial truths, but partial truths that, when paraded as the whole, demonstrably cause more harm than good. You cannot go into a situation and say, ‘Here are some important economic, Lower-Right problems that we will fix,’ and fix those problems without addressing the corresponding Left-Hand quadrants, and expect anything but absolute disappointment. I don’t know if I’m more furious with the Left or the Right, or the neo-Left or the neo-Right, or the neo-Lefto-Righto-retro, or the whole rotten lot of them!” Fuentes looked up, smiled, and rolled her eyes. “Although, you know, some of my best friends are....”

“The importance of the Lower Left,” agreed Carlton, “and frankly, when it comes to the Lower Left, there is a bit of a problem with Islam. For various reasons, Islam is perhaps the most recalcitrant blue-meme structure now in existence. Historically, Islam rarely developed a self-critical hermeneutics, as did other monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism), and thus it tended to remain medieval in its outlook. Contrary to what is being said, the Koran specifically condones—and on occasional commands—the killing of unbelievers. For the fundamentalist core, ‘Islam’ means ‘peace’ only if you believe in Allah and his one and only prophet, Mohammed. And ‘Muslim’ means ‘surrender,’ but surrender only to Allah and the ethnocentric commands of the Koran. Obviously there are many wonderful exceptions; but just as obviously, Islam—which was vital in moving red tribes to blue bonding via violent means if necessary (a completely adaptive and evolutionary move at that time)—is perhaps the most problematic of all the world’s ancient blue mythologies. There is no breathing room, there are few openings for escaping from that red/blue base into blue/orange worldcentric perspectives. This is why it is

imperative that more developed Islamic scholars and leaders come forth, publicly begin the self-critical stance so often lacking in previous Muslim exegeses, and rely increasingly on the Neoplatonic Sufi trends present but often buried in that tradition. If this happens, then the shining potential of the great Muslim mystics—al Hallaj to the incomparable Rumi—might find a happy home in today's world.”

“I don't know enough about the Koran to comment on that,” Powell said. “It sounds plausible. But I would like to say that I agree completely with Carla in that the root causes are AQAL, and therefore any true solution must be. I don't oppose military action; what bothers me is how alarmingly partial and fragmented that action is. Nor do I really mind that America will gear up its huge Capitalist Machinery to grind the daylights out of those who disagree with it—I don't mind because in the real world, the memes do what the memes do. You know, memes will be memes; deal with it.

“What I mind—Mark was saying this—what I mind is that in our positions of leadership there are no second-tier leaders, no integral politicians, no men and women of global—in the good sense—vision. America, as America, needs to strengthen its blue bonding, and Bush is doing a wonderful job of that, since he himself resonates so deeply with blue. A green-meme President would probably be a disaster right now. But so much better than either would be a second-tier politician, an integral politician, who would let the entire Spiral speak through him or her and to the world at large. You know what they call the yellow meme? ‘The universal donor.’ Know why? Because it can intuitively understand each and every first-tier meme, meet each of them where it finds them, then give them what they need. A president of such caliber would not merely be a blue-note president or a green-note president, but a universal donor, giving to each what is needed, taking from each what can be contributed. And most of all—most of all—such an integral leader would start to see the big picture around the globe and begin to take AQAL

actions that would ever-so-slowly nudge the world in the direction of Eros and basic sanity.”

“That’s a stunning vision, Lesa, but an impossibly tall order, just impossible.”

“Well, better to light one integral candle than curse the first-tier darkness.”

“Sister, yes!” yelled Jefferson, slapping the table and laughing.

“An additional option, on a smaller scale, but still interesting,” Van Cleef added, “has been circulated on the Net by a young integral thinker—name of Dinan—he’s really a little snot-nosed shit but I’m very fond of him. He’s so smart, so intelligent, so arrogant, with an ego so big it has its own zip code, good looking, so obnoxious, so know-it-all, so wise-ass that he reminds me of..., he reminds me of..., oh yes, me!”

Everybody laughed. “I’m pulling the boy’s leg; he’s a terrific dude. Anyway, he suggests a philanthropic bounty on bin Laden’s head, and perhaps that of other terrorists. He writes, ‘By this I mean when somebody kills bin Laden and/or various allies known to engage in terrorist acts, they get not just a personal reward (\$5 million bounty, which already exists) but the U. S. and other countries will put money (amounting to several hundred million dollars) toward a Better World Fund or something like that, which would go toward a variety of defined philanthropic efforts:

(1) Economic and infrastructure development in Third-World countries. This appeases orange in the service of moving toward a global commons

(2) Social, environmental, and peace development projects which would appeal more to green

(3) Killing the terrorists appeases red

(4) Reasserting our moral superiority in the context of eradicating evil appeases blue

(5) Doing this in the service of creating a more cohesive, developed, and safe environment for business in the world without needlessly wasting resources, human life, and money to do so appeases orange

(6) Using this an opportunity to redress past wrongs and move toward peace appeases green

(7) And keeping the focus on moving toward a global commons, ethically and morally, helps all the vMememes, eventually.”

Van Cleef looked up. “Any thoughts?”

“I’m very fond of the general idea,” Lesa Powell said. “It clearly shows second-tier thinking moved by the Prime Directive. A heavy green tone, but he’s just a kid, so what the heck. And I am impressed with the attempt to find a truly integral approach that speaks to the greatest depth for the greatest span. My only concern is the pragmatics of the idea. It would never get through Congress.”

“Yes,” Jefferson concurred. “The major problem with this type of suggestion—but really, almost none of our suggestions get over this hurdle, either—is that it rather thoroughly fails to take into account the single greatest difficulty with integral politics and integral solutions in general: namely, they are solutions coming from a level of consciousness that is shared by less than 2% of the population.

“We all know the stats here: approximately 40% of the population is blue, 30% orange, 20% green, and less than 2% is at second tier (and forget third tier—probably less than 1/100th of 1%). We’re talking stages here, not altered states—we’re talking people’s general center of gravity.

“Well, the solution that this gentleman proposes makes wonderful sense to us—precisely because, on a good day, we are operating from second tier. We therefore immediately resonate with the Prime Directive guiding the suggestion and it makes a great deal of sense. But 98% of the population will not resonate with it—it won’t even make sense to the vast majority (in fact, it will alarm them)—and in a democracy, that means oops.

“The framers of the American Constitution figured out a brilliant, mostly benign way to get around this problem and make the higher waves of consciousness up to orange available to the population at large. But so far, nobody has yet figured out how to go the next stage and repeat that miracle for second tier, let alone third. We are awaiting the Mothers and Fathers of the Integral Constitution. This is the call of integral politics in the coming millennium, which will indeed be the Integral Millennium—as that 2% becomes 5%, then 10%, then 20%, then 30% and maybe higher—but we are at this time merely Moses on the mountain peering into the Promised Land.” Jefferson let out a long sigh, looked around the room.

“Yes,” Joan said, “and in the real world, at this moment, the Spiral is doing the best it can to respond, given its present center of gravity, which is blue-orange in America. And that center of gravity is going to strongly support military action—whether feasible or not—and therefore I fear that we might soon be bogged down, not in effective swift military action, but an endless quasi-Vietnam driven by a blue-orange drive for retribution come what may—an ineffective military lashing-out that merely spends first-tier emotions and certainly cannot be justified by any higher standards, by the Prime Directive, or by second and third tier. Oh dear.” Joan shook her head.

“Right,” Van Cleef agreed. “The collective action is already underway; military retaliation is in full swing; a recent poll showed that a staggering 92% of the American public supports it. All that we can do now, therefore, is give recommendations to individuals on how they can respond

in their own minds, hearts, souls, and bodies. And so what would we recommend. Lesa?”

An Integral Response in an Individual

“What we recommend is: in your response to the terrorist attack, attempt to span the entire spectrum of consciousness. Start by noticing your own, spontaneous, immediate response to the attack. And then tell the truth: was it red, blue, orange, green, second tier, third tier? Whatever it was, allow it, feel into it, be with it, honor it.

“And then try to feel beyond it. Try to feel into the next wave of your own higher consciousness. If you responded red—just kill the bastards!—try to see that there are higher principles involved here, that human beings can only interact based on principles of dignity, honor, and duty, and this act violated principles that most cultures, at one time or another, have found honorable. Move from red to blue.

“If you already responded from that blue position, and felt that your principles of God, family, and nation were violated, then go one step further and see that this was an attack not just on Americans, and not just on your God, but on ideals of freedom and self-determination that most civilized nations have found noble to uphold. Try to expand your emotional resonance from ethnocentric to worldcentric; it was indeed, in some sense, an attack, not on your nation, but on the ideals of civilization itself, however imperfectly any one nation might embody them.

“If that orange response is easy for you, try moving to green. No matter how much this might have been an attack on God and country (blue) or civilization and freedom (orange), still, the terrorists are human beings, and nobody attacks merely out of hatred, but out of deep hurt and despair. Not only might America have contributed to that hurt and despair, America needs continually to critically examine its own role in social oppression, and to reassess and acknowledge the bitter downsides of

global capitalism. Even IF America is generally right to take the action it does, still this can result in great pain for others, and thus in some sense let us have a genuine compassion for people driven to such pain that they would take such suicidal actions.

“If that green response was your basic response, try moving to second tier. No matter how caring that green response might be, it still does not care enough to let the other memes be themselves. It does not truly honor the other memes, but rather tries to convince them that they should all have the same response as green. Green will not let red be red, or blue be blue, or orange be orange.... In order to follow the Prime Directive, green has to let go of its intense and domineering demand that others be like green. Like all first tier memes, green thinks that its stance is the one correct response.

“Therefore, if green was your response, picture a world in which red can be red, and that is fine; and blue can be blue, and that is fine; and orange can be orange, and that is fine. (Litmus test: explain why Republican values are an important and necessary ingredient of any culture.) Of course we can rank memes, and of course we can all work toward helping all of the memes—including green—grow to higher levels. But it starts by realizing that I cannot impose my demand for sensitive feelings on everybody else. I must be strong enough to let go of my own insistence that others see it my way. And I must stop dividing the world into those who are sensitive and those who are insensitive, creating yet more dualisms that contribute to the problem.

“If I can do that, I will stand open to the great vision of a patterned Whole that begins to open to my inward eye, where all the memes, waves, stages, states—call them what you will—can be what they are; while at the same time I start to realize that some of them are deeper, higher, and wider than others, and therefore, even as I let them remain as they are, I can see that they are ranked in order of increasing consciousness, care, and

compassion. I stop asking, how can I make everybody agree with me?, but how can I help the entire Spiral be itself?

“As I stand contemplating that patterned, fluid, flowing and unfolding Whole, it might suddenly dawn on me that in the deepest part of my own awareness, I am one with that Whole. I do not see the world, I am the world. I am the Americans who were attacked, with their anger, fear, and retribution; I am the terrorists who attacked, in their hatred, pain, and desperation. One with all that arises, I feel the pain and joy of a billion human beings in their anguish, turmoil, and travail. One with all that arises, I also feel the irrepressible Joy of manifestation shining brightly, even through the rubble at ground zero. I am unmoved in my Confidence and Equanimity of the basic All Rightness of the universe. And in that All Rightness, I break down and cry, I sob uncontrollably at the sad, sad, infinite sadness of it all.”

Boomeritis Uber-Allies

There was a long silence. “I wonder what the general outcome of this attack will be. Are there any silver linings to this horrible cloud?”

Jefferson spoke first. “There is clearly a political realignment occurring around the globe. However crudely and sometimes hypocritically, the lines really are being drawn between civilization and barbarity. As we said, even the healthy terrorists think this one was way over the top. And out of that political realignment, certain economic new orders will swing into play, with a strong orange component. This is not necessarily good, but it does appear to be the best that the Spiral can manage at this moment in time.”

“This is not as important, but it is closer to home,” Van Cleef said, his spiky edge cutting into the softness of the previous tones. “In academia, extreme postmodernism is dead, and I mean dead. The attack on the World Trade Center ended deconstruction, once and for all, except in an

increasingly lunatic fringe. People simply could not watch those Towers collapse and think that there is no right and wrong, no truth and error, no difference between fact and fiction, history and myth, science and poetry. The alleged 'new birth in pluralistic freedom' of the bloated ego is stillborn; pluralistic relativism took a colossal hit, and its extreme forms will never recover. Deconstructive postmodernism was felled at the knees. This is truly the extraordinary story of our time."

Mark Jefferson looked at Derek, thought for a moment, then said, "The story of our time: the start, and the beginning of the end, of boomeritis. A story that spanned four decades, from the sixties to the new millennium. The WTC event would bizarrely make a perfect end to that story. Somebody ought to write a novel about that! "

"Nobody would ever believe it," Joan said.

"That's the truth." Carlton nodded her head. "Still, I do agree about extreme postmodernism and pluralism being down for the count, probably for good. Just this morning on CNN, there was a professor trying very hard to prop up the old boomeritis slogans and postmodern clichés. He was saying things like, 'The attack on the WTC was REALLY due to imperialist, sexist, racist, patriarchal America and its hegemonic, Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm....' As he was saying this, trying to breathe life into the old clichés, there was deathly silence from the rest of the panel, even the other postmodernists. It was so obvious to all of them that they could never inhabit that stance again, not with any coherent belief, and their sloganeering days were over. It was actually rather painful to watch, I must say."

"Yes," added Lesa, "as painful to watch as Susan Sontag in the New Yorker trying desperately to reanimate the poststructuralist ploys: she was busily inverting hierarchies as instructed by Derrida, so that the 'cowardly' terrorists were actually 'brave' and the 'victims' of the attacks were actually the 'perpetrators.' That old creaky language is as gray as her hair, the entire

enterprise a wrinkled agenda on aging, disillusioned Boomer faces. And poor Stanley Fish, writing ‘Condemnation without Absolutes,’ tries yet again to claim that there are no universals because all cultures have relative standards—and yet Fish asserts that his claim of cultural relativity is unshakably and universally true for all cultures. So he can have his absolutes and universal truths, but deny them to all others, and thus beat us over the head with that which he virulently condemns in everybody else: this is the essence of boomeritis. I tell you, it is sadder than sad, this boomeritis fog, settled on minds of that caliber, bringing a new meaning to Ginsberg’s howl: I have seen the finest minds of my generation wasted. But in this case, contra Allen, the cause was not drugs.” Lesa lowered her head; her entire face looked pained.

“Indeed,” Van Cleef added, warmth nowhere in sight, “you can’t argue Theory and go on about how the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm and the Western Enlightenment have completely ruined your life when non-Western, non-Enlightenment terrorists are bombing the shit out of your children. Kiss extreme pluralism goodbye. I know postmodern scholars now that are so shell-shocked they revert to blue or red; but none of them will easily inhabit the extreme green stance that was the core of pluralistic relativism. The politics of identity, the politics of narcissism, the plurality of authentic ultimates is gone as a theoretically defensible ploy. We have finally seen the contours of deconstructive postmodernism, up close and personal, and it harbors the nihilism and narcissism—and narcissistic rage—that its critics all along have said, critics such as John Searle, Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel, Margaret Carlton, Charles Taylor, Lesa Powell. And now, it has changed, it has all changed....”

“Well,” Joan stepped in—I always had the impression she was clipping Van Cleef off, placing his jagged edge in a more spacious, softer context—“let’s just say that that particular form of boomeritis has suffered a meltdown and probably won’t recover. But good ole boomeritis will go on, raising its

head wherever green goes nuts. Thank god, I say, because what would the world be without its kooks? It's a great big smorgasbord, and I love it all!"

Margaret Carlton touched Lesa on the hand. I wondered exactly how long they had been lovers, and what Charles had told Kim about it. The photographic negatives of each other is what I had thought when I first saw them—white and black, salt and pepper, ivory and ebony, soft and sharp, yin and yang, porcelain and steel, meow and bark—they were the perfect complementary couple, concretely bringing the opposites together in a Goddess of unrestrained Joy. "Lesa, are you really mad at the postmodern scholars? You sounded like it. We talked about his, you remember?"

"Sweetheart, no, I'm not really angry."

"I am."

"Derek, that goes without saying," Margaret laughed. "I was talking to Lesa."

"I was angry three decades ago when deconstructive postmodernism started, and I was furious two decades ago when it took over academia. But not now, I've worked too much on it. Mostly it is just sad, sad, sad. It's romantically noble, in its own odd way: somebody has to pioneer the widespread use of a new meme, and to Boomers fell the task of taking green into the world for the first time on a widespread scale—with all the extraordinary positives that entailed, from civil rights to environmental protection to feminism to health care freedom—and all of the horrifying negatives, implemented by boomeritis and the mean green meme. But I just had an image run through my mind, which a decade ago would have made me furious, but now just makes me sigh: imagine a pluralistic postmodernist explaining to the young weeping wife that her husband was killed in the terrorist attack because she is under sway of hegemonic patriarchal signifiers that marginalized the Other in a metanarrative

discourse that displaced center to periphery in an oppressive chain of sliding signifiers.

“But, you see,” Lesa continued, “even when green is trying to do that, silly as it can get—nonetheless behind it all is the wisdom of the Spiral itself, which is nothing but Spirit-in-action in this world. Green is the great guardian on the threshold of the higher realms of second- and third-tier consciousness. Green sensitizes the entire Spiral, making sure that any who pass to the higher waves possess a genuine caring, sensitivity, compassion, and love. That is the great gift of green—the demand that we be open to all perspectives, no matter how Other they might appear. So of course green is always on hand to say, Please be sensitive to the Other, no matter how odd or even horrid it appears. And good for green! It is only through healthy green that we can get to second tier, not to mention third. My concern, my tears, are that so many have been caught in unhealthy green, in boomeritis, in the MGM, in paroxysms of smugness in the face of higher callings. It’s sad, sweetheart, it’s sad—that’s all.”

Margaret leaned over and spoke very softly. “Well, dear, that’s what you are doing so much to help alleviate, now isn’t it?” and she patted Lesa on the shoulder.

“Speaking of the guardian of higher waves,” Morin said, “maybe we should finish up with that. We were going to describe the response of the remaining transpersonal or spiritual waves to the attack. Does that sound okay? Joan, would you be good enough to continue the tour?”

A Subtle God/dess Speaks

Joan remained silent for several minutes. “Perhaps I should say that, to the extent that the higher transpersonal waves issue forth in action (not all of them do), they generally reinforce the Prime Directive. So I won’t say much more about that, but it should not on that account be forgotten.”

The woman my heart would always love took a breath, gently touched the back and top of her skull. “The basic All Rightness of the entire Kosmos is part of all deeper and higher waves—transcend and include. But the ‘reasons’ for this Rightness deepen, right to their shocking conclusion.”

Joan closed her eyes. “As we move from psychic to subtle, from nature mysticism to deity mysticism, then the actual Ground of the manifest world of both nature and nations comes more to the fore. It’s not just that everything is All Right. Everything is All Right because everything issues from the same divine Ground and Source. If I may again quote Emerson, nature is not Spirit, nature is a manifestation of Spirit. Behind nature, beyond nature—but not against nature!—is the real God and Goddess that issue forth in the gross realms. But to find this subtle Divinity, which is your own deeper condition, you have to let go of the gross world—let go of nature, of nations, of the mind, of the body, of the senses—let go of those gross objects and enter into the subtle spaces of your Heart, the same spaces you enter in dreams at night, although these dreams are more real, more awake, more present to the Present than could any merely sensory display ever be. This subtle Radiance transcends and includes nature, it does not obliterate nature, but it is found only by having the courage to go beyond the gross realm altogether.

“And that Divinity has one ultimate secret, which it will also whisper in your ear if your mind becomes quieter than the fog at sunset: the God of this world is found within, and you know it is found within: in those hushed silent times when the mind becomes still, the body relaxes into infinity, the senses expand to become one with the world—in those glistening times, a subtle luminosity, a serene radiance, a brilliantly transparent clarity shimmers as the true nature of all manifestation, erupting every now and then in a compassionate Radiance before whom all idols retreat, a Love so fierce it adoringly embraces both light and dark, both good and evil, both pleasure and pain equally, for ‘I make the Light to fall on the good and bad alike; I the Lord do all these things’; a

passionately embroiling Heat so painful it will melt your bones while you hurl yourself to the ground with awe and supplication and reverence and surrender.

“And just when you are bowing to that Radiance, thrown to the ground by a Force that crushes mind and body and ego into microscopically insignificant dust, just at that point exactly: that is when it whispers, in barely audible words, a whisper like a beautiful woman calling your name on a shining, silvery, moonlit night: You are bowing to yourself. Don’t you remember who and what you really are? Did not even St. Clement say, He who knows himself knows God?

“Deeper than nature, deeper than the body, deeper than the mind, deeper than thoughts altogether: a luminous shimmering radiance pours out of the Heart, reflects through the crown, and lights up the entire universe. The real secret of the subtle Divine: the light of the sun and the stars and all of nature comes directly from your very own Heart. Wordsworth saw that Light: ‘An auxiliar light, Came from my mind, which on the setting sun, Bestowed new splendour.’ And you can see it, too, in those quiet times when you forget the Shadows in the Cave and start to turn toward the blazing radiant Light of it all.

“The directions to finding God, which are printed on the box in which your Heart came, are simple: relax the mind and body; with reverence and devotion, gaze into the Heart; feel the Love-Light radiance that permeates your entire body, and your entire mind, and all of nature, and all nations everywhere. A Current of Luminous Compassion creates and sustains the entire gross and manifest realm, a Current known by many, many names—the Holy Ghost, the Sambhogakaya, saguna Brahman, Arwah or divine luminosity, Keter, the subtle body—but a Current that, in all events, is simply the sound of the beating of your Heart keeping rhythm to the pulsing of the world.”

Joan paused, her eyes still closed; her translucent skin seemed to glow even more, emitting a type of light I had never seen before, not with these eyes. She finally spoke. “And how does the subtle Sambhogakaya respond to the attacks? Many, many ways; this is only one: All of these dear souls—attacker and attacked, murderer and murdered—these are your very own children. Don’t play favorites, don’t pick and choose, don’t deny that you fathered and mothered every single thing and event in this Kosmos that is yours.

“Still, still, and at the same time, the radiant Current of the Kosmos is itself an Eros, pushing and crashing and pulling and yearning to find a greater Light-Life and Love that is beyond good and evil—but not beneath it. Subtle Divinity—kundalini itself—the Serpent Power of the Kosmos—senses obstructions, contractions, snarls and snags, and moves spontaneously to uncoil them. The Prime Directive of the gross realm issues from the subtle Divine itself: These are my children; what can I do to help each and every one of them grow through the great Spiral that has formless Spirit as its ultimate destination?

“These are all my children. But not playing favorites doesn’t mean not judging, not rebuking, not thunderously acting to burn the knots that obstruct the Current’s free flow. The entire Spiral will react to this event—each and every wave and meme, call them what you will—and sometimes the reactions will be wise and oftentimes they will not. But no one single voice in the Spiral speaks for me, for these are all my children. I do not recommend love, I do not recommend hate; I do not counsel compassion, I do not counsel revenge. These are all my children. I make the Light to fall on the good and the bad alike; I the Lord do all these things. The entire Spiral is my Voice in the world, not any particular wave. A chorus of voices will sing my recommendations, and I will act through the entire Spectrum to achieve the best that can be achieved at this time, in this place, on this planet, with all my children in mind.

“Red will respond red, and that is fine; blue will respond blue, and that is fine; orange will respond orange, and that is fine; green will respond green, and that is fine; yellow will respond yellow, and that is fine..., and all shall be well in the end. If I am to be spotted at all, it is in the gentle pull operating throughout the Spiral that lifts each wave to its next greater expanse—a pull that is Eros longing for the integral Embrace that I AM.

“And if you rise to that level in your very own Heart—the level where you and I are one—then this very world itself will start to take on the nature of a dream, a shimmering shining gossamer film, less and less to be taken seriously than to be rejoiced in as it passes. Leave seriousness at the door, and please take off your shoes, for this is hallowed ground, and bow to the Lightness and Humor that begins to replace solemnity. The entire world begins to take on a glimmering transparency as material atoms are replaced by light, and the days and nights pass before you like so many wandering dreams, while attention increasingly turns to the divine Dreamer itself, your very own Self, radiant in the midst of the madness.”

Everybody around the table continued their silence, with each of them seeming to enter the shimmering spaces that Joan was evoking.

“Go deeper yet, dear souls. As nature retreats before God, so God retreats before the Abyss. The entire manifest realm, gross and subtle, even God and the Goddess herself, issue forth from a vast Emptiness, an infinite Formlessness, a radiant Ursprung that is the Ground and Goal of manifestation itself. As the great sages East and West have long proclaimed, in many different voices: beyond God is the unqualifiable Godhead. This vast Emptiness cannot be characterized in any fashion whatsoever (including that one)—it is neither absolute nor relative, neither one nor many, neither universal nor plural, neither good nor bad—because every word has meaning only in terms of its opposite, and This has no opposite. It can be felt, but not known; it is an atmosphere, not an object; it is infinite Release, the great Liberation, a radical Fullness on the other side of fear. Timeless and therefore eternal, it gives rise to all time;

spaceless and therefore infinite, it gives rise to all space; formless and therefore ever-present, it gives rise to all the worlds, even here and now. Look! Look! Can you find it? It is closer to you right now than you are to yourself! I promise you, it is closer than your heartbeat, nearer than your breath. It is staring you in the face, right here, right now! Can you find it?

“If we must think of it, many poetic metaphors have been used: it is Consciousness without an object; the pure Self that sees but can never be seen; the selfless Witness that is the mirror-mind of all space; a radiant Emptiness that is the transparency of the entire Kosmos. But in all ways, and from the start, it is the great I AMness, the One without a second, the Nature of all natures and the Condition of all conditions, the discovery of which is the Great Liberation that leads to a realm beyond death and mortality, finitude and pain, suffering and separation, tears and terror.

“But those are mere words—bloodless, heartless words, as all words are. Listen to me, dear souls, and go beyond the words:

“How is the radiant Abyss of the Great Liberation found? It is never found, because it has never been lost. This pure formless Witness is the only thing you have never been without. It is the only constant in the entire Kosmos. You have known this utterly obvious secret for 15 billion years, and before that, you knew it eternally. It is nothing other than your own Original Face, the face you had before the Big Bang. Would you like to see it? Really, truly see it? Right here, right now? A dear friend of mine gave its pointing out instructions as follows:

Let your mind relax. Let your mind relax and expand, mixing with the sky in front of it. Then notice: the clouds float by in the sky, and you are effortlessly aware of them. Feelings float by in the body, and you are effortlessly aware of them, too. Thoughts float by in the mind, and you are aware of them as well. Nature floats by, feelings float by, thoughts float by... and you are aware of all of them.

So tell me: Who are you?

You are not your thoughts, for you are aware of them. You are not your feelings, for you are aware of them. You are not any objects that you can see, for you are aware of them too.

Something in you is aware of all these things. So tell me: What is it in you that is conscious of everything?

What is it in you that is always awake? Always fully present? Something in you right now is effortlessly noticing everything that arises. What is that?

That vast infinite witnessing awareness, don't you recognize it?

What is that Witness?

You are that Witness, aren't you? You are the pure Seer, pure awareness, the pure Spirit that impartially witnesses everything that arises, moment to moment. Your awareness is spacious, wide-open, empty and clear, and yet it registers everything that arises.

That very Witness is Spirit within, looking out on a world that it created. It sees but cannot be seen; it hears but cannot be heard; it knows but cannot be known. It is Spirit itself that sees with your eyes, speaks with your lips, hears with your ears, reaches out with your arms. When will you confess this simple secret and awaken from the gruesome nightmare?

Can you see the words on this page? Then 100% of Spirit is present, looking out through your eyes. Can you feel the book in your hands? Then 100% of Spirit is present, taking the world in its hands. Can you hear the sound of that bird singing? Then 100% of Spirit is present, listening to that song.

You cannot look for this Spirit, for it is doing the looking. You cannot see this Spirit, for it is doing the seeing. You cannot find this Spirit, for it does all the finding. If you understand this, then Spirit is doing the understanding; if you don't understand this, Spirit is doing that. Understand it or not, just that is Spirit.

Hence the amazing, secret, ultimate truth that slowly starts to dawn: the enlightened mind—pure Spirit itself—is not hard to attain but impossible to avoid. How could you ever be without that Spirit which is reading this sentence right now?

Show me the Self you had before the Big Bang, and I will show you the Spirit of the entire Kosmos.

Joan paused and looked at each of us. “And how does the radiant Abyss respond to the terrorist attack? Very simply: What attack?

“You see, here in the world of the radiant Void, nothing ever happens. Consciousness without an object is... consciousness without an object. Of course it witnesses everything that arises, but what is it in itself? The sages say it is similar to the realm of deep dreamless sleep, except that it is fully consciousness and radiantly alive, but so infinitely Free and Full that no objects can come close to it. Of course as ever-present Witness you are aware of the attack—you are aware of everything that arises from the Emptiness that is your real nature. But the pure Witness is the great Mirror Mind, supremely impartial to the objects reflected on its surface. This does not mean that you feel indifference. If indifference arises, you are aware of that; if love arises, you are aware of that; if hatred arises, you are aware of that. But none of those are you. You are the great I AMness, the impartial Witness, the vast Emptiness in which the entire universe arises moment to moment. Through your awareness the clouds float, through your awareness the WTC collapses, through your awareness a nation mourns, through your awareness various responses erupt.

“If you experience a particular response—blue or green or yellow, say, instead of being the great Witness of them all—then you have stepped down into the Spiral, and you are manifesting as a particular state. That is well and good, for you are also the Spiral in its entirety. But you are also something else: in your Original Face, in the simple feeling of Being that you are, in your great I AMness, you are none of those responses, you are no response at all: I am not this, I am not that. I am nothing; I am an emptiness, an openness, an infinite clearing in which the world arises, a great expanse in which all responses emerge, stay a bit, and pass. I AM the Ground of the display, the Mirror of the Kosmos, and not any finite object parading by in the dust and dreams of finitude, mortality, suffering, pain, and death. Let mortals contract into the Display and be recycled in the endless torment; but let the great I AM embrace them all with an equanimity that knows no choices, that never enters the stream itself, for to do so is only to perish in time, drawn and quartered in the agony of the dissolution; but the great I AM is timeless, standing Free and Full at the Heart of it All.

“Nothing ever happens, you see. Nothing ever happens. Objects come and go, but the Seer remains; events come and go, but the Self never moves; anything you can see is not real—only the Seer abides eternally. You think objects are the ultimate reality: but, dear souls, I tell you: they are dreams, phantoms, bubbles, shells, ghosts and shadows, gossamer images floating by in the mind of timeless Spirit, fleeting shadows in the cave of the great I AMness that you alone are, mere objects floating by in the vast expanse of Emptiness that is your real Self, that is your own I AMness in this and every moment.

“You think the objects of your awareness are ultimately real—you are riveted by the objects in front of you right now: they are everything that matters, you think. But you can’t remember the objects that were in front of your awareness last week, or last month, or last year: yet then you also thought that those objects were the ultimate reality, the only thing that

mattered—you latched onto them with a life and death fervor, with great drama and upset and hope and fear: and yet where are they now? You can't even remember them....

“A million objects have come and gone, and where are they now? And why were you so upset by them, so obsessed with them, so enslaved by these, your self-made masters? Why did you love them so, hate them so, torture yourself over them when now you can't even remember their names?

“A million objects have come and gone; they have all vanished; they have all been pulverized by the stream of time and torment and returned to the dust that does not care. But one thing has not changed; one thing is the same today as it was yesterday, and last week, and last year, and last century, and last millennia: something in you has not changed, something in you has not entered the stream of time, something in you stands free of the torture and turmoil: what is That? Indeed, something in you has not changed, and you know that something in you has not changed: what is That? I tell you: it has not changed since the Big Bang and even before: what is That?

“One more time, dear souls:

Let your mind relax. Let your mind relax and expand, mixing with the sky in front of it. Then notice: the clouds float by in the sky, and you are effortlessly aware of them. Feelings float by in the body, and you are effortlessly aware of them, too. Thoughts float by in the mind, and you are aware of them as well. Nature floats by, feelings float by, thoughts float by... and you are aware of all of them.

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understanding; if you don't understand this, Spirit is doing that. Understand it or not, just that is Spirit.

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Show me the Self you had before the Big Bang, and I will show you the Spirit of the entire Kosmos. And as for that pure, timeless, formless Spirit: You... Are... That.

The room was one mind, one soul, one beating pulse in the midst of the insanity of the world around us, a world that was also within us, that was us, as the Spirit of the Kosmos magnified through Joan and descended on us all, swallowing what was left of separation and time and tortured dreams, leaving us awash in luminous release, radiant wonder escaping from the hearts of all assembled.

“And then the strangest thing happens. Resting in the pure Self, abiding as the timeless Witness, noticing that the clouds float by in the vast expanse of Emptiness that is my own ever-present awareness, the Witness itself suddenly cannot be found. The Seer vanishes into everything that is seen and never again returns to haunt the universe as a separate and separating force. Subject and object vanish into One Taste, the Nondual announces itself as a Presence that has no within or without, the ultimate Mystery permeates the Kosmos with an Obviousness that is too simple to believe, too close to see, too present to be reached, too This to be noticed.

“The Seer vanishes into everything seen, which sees itself eternally. I no longer witness the clouds, I am the clouds; I do not hear the rain, I am the rain; I can no longer touch the earth, for I am the earth; I cannot hear the robin singing, because I am the robin singing, here in the painful brilliant clarity of ever-present One Taste. If nature arises, I am that. If nature

vanishes, I am that. If God arises, I am that. If God dies, I am that. I am the terrorists with unforgivable murder in their hearts; I am the victims in the Towers who crashed to a fiery death; I am the love in the hearts of those who care, I am the hatred in the heartless souls of those who massacre without remorse.

“Precisely because I am not this, not that, I am fully this, fully that. Beyond nature, I am nature; beyond God, I am God; beyond the Kosmos altogether, I am the Kosmos in its every gesture. Where there is pain, I am there; where there is love, I am present; where there is death, I breathe easily; where there is suffering, I move unconstrained. On September 11, 2001, I attacked me in a distant part of the galaxy on an unremarkable planet in a speck of dust in the corner of manifestation, all of which are wrinkles in the fold of what I am. And none of which affects me in the slightest, and therefore I am totally undone, I cry endlessly, the sadness is infinite, the despair dwarfs galaxies, my heart weeps monsoons, I can’t breathe in this torture.

“Totally insignificant, infinitely significant—no difference, truly. Atoms and Gods are all the same, here in the world of One Taste; the smallest insult is equal to the greatest; I am happy beyond description with every act of torture, I am sad beyond compare with every act of goodness. I delight in seeing pain, I despise seeing love. Do those words confuse you? Are you still caught in those opposites? Must I believe the dualistic nonsense that the world takes as real? Victims and murderers, good and evil, innocence and guilt, love and hatred? What dream walkers we all are!

“Love in your heart? You are caught in illusions. Compassion in your soul? People, wake up! You are a million miles off the mark, wondering what to do, what it means, how to respond, where to find love, how to show compassion—all totally off the mark, careening between the opposites, caught in endless roving dreams that have no reality at all! Let the Spiral do what it must to handle these affairs, and then tell me: can you show me your Original Face, exactly here and now? Who is aware of

wanting to love? Who is aware of the pain of the attacks? Who is aware of wanting to practice compassion?

“Who is aware of all those objects? Forget those objects and show me this Self, and I will show you the Kosmos.

“Where were you before the Big Bang? Show me that, and I will show you the ultimate response to the terrorist attacks.”

Joan looked gently at everyone present, then slowly focused on me, as if she were seeing me for the first time. “Ken, is that you?”

“Yes, Joan.”

“Do you know who are?”

“Yes, Joan.”

“Then show me.”

I hold up a flower and smile.

Joan takes a long breath, lowers her head, and the vision vanished forever.

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