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What happens when you mix the powerful theory of integral philosophy with the intractable troubles of our global society? That's the question we asked businessman turned philosopher Steve McIntosh, and he responded with a bold and provocative analysis of the relationship between the evolution of consciousness and the evolution of culture—from Russia to Rwanda to the Republican party. Ranging across the geopolitical spectrum, this interview is political punditry unlike anything you've ever seen on CNN.

by Carter Phipps



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Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber

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Interview by Carter Phipps



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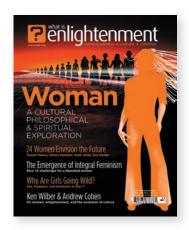
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### A Letter to Our Readers

From WIE Senior Editor Elizabeth Debold





IN ASKING THE CENTRAL QUESTION that framed our last issue, "What is liberation for women today?", we thought we were opening a door and discovered that it was a floodgate! Never in WIE's history have we had such a response to an issue. Not just in the number of letters we received,

"We have all had

to transcend the

fears of the ego

that arise when

in this spiritual

called to participate

evolution in unity

typal feminine."

beyond the arche-

but in the diversity of views expressed. The passion evoked by our thirty-seventh issue, *Woman: A cultural, philosophical,* and spiritual exploration, reflects just how important women's

next leap forward is. Women, and men (because we did get responses from men too), care deeply because the future depends on it. At this point in history, without women and men in equal, conscious partnership, real change won't happen.

The aim of the issue was to explore women's evolutionary edge, and how a transformation in women's consciousness could catalyze cultural change at the core—our relationships with each other. If women at the leading edge transcend our culture's foundational dynamics and patterns of relationship in order to create something new, what could happen? While we came at this question from a variety of ways, two features drew

the strongest responses from our readers. The first was the Guru and Pandit dialogue between WIE's editor in chief, spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, and integral philosopher Ken Wilber, which flew in the face of political correctness by having two men speak about the challenges women

face on the evolutionary spiritual path. Specifically, Cohen spoke about his work with his women students—the women from EnlightenNext, *WIE*'s parent organization. The second feature was a pair of profiles, one on women from Integral Institute and the other on the EnlightenNext women.

It was the strength of the responses—both extremely

It was the strength of the responses—both extremely enthusiastic and extremely critical—that has led to our expanding the "Letters" section and to my writing this letter back to you, our readers, to keep the dialogue going. We are serious about doing all we can to catalyze a new women's liberation. Putting forward what we are engaged in here at EnlightenNext, as women with our teacher, was as one reader exclaimed, "getting down to the nuts and bolts of this self transcending . . . conscious evolution business!" This was just a first step. And it stirred up important questions

that reveal the varied assumptions that we each hold about women's nature and potential, men's relationship to women, and the purpose of spiritual development. Lifting all of this up to shed light on our deepest beliefs is exactly what we want to do. Our mission here at WIE is to create cultural spaces where we can challenge ourselves and each other to think more deeply, make distinctions, and strive for higher integration. This ongoing inquiry is essential for building a foundation for a new movement in women's consciousness at the leading edge of culture.

Sarah M.

While the letters speak for themselves, I'll briefly summarize some of

the key questions they raise. To a great extent, they point to how fraught gender dynamics are in our culture. Some writers commented on the persistence of structural inequalities in our society that favor men. "Power continues to be accumulated and hoarded by male social structures which

are pervasive," writes Caroline Hurley of Dublin, Ireland. A few questioned whether men could have anything of value to say about women's spiritual development or if a male spiritual teacher is appropriate for women. One woman, for example, writes: "I find it offensive for any man to think he has the knowledge and ability to say anything intelligent or

"Why is the feminine so shunned? Why has autonomy been elevated to the only path to liberation?"

Michelle

relevant on women's issues." And despite the fact that the issue was on women, several responses reminded us that "men are not removed from this journey." Forty years after the women's liberation movement started in the 1960s, women remain

"How we all (men

innate creative

processes is the

the species."

and women) relate

to women and their

single-most critical

very aware of the power differences between men and women, and are sensitive to comparisons between the sexes. While this is more than understandable, it begs the question of how we are going to move toward a culture where women and men respect and trust each other wholeheartedly.

Perhaps the way that many think we will get to this

new culture is implied by another line of responses about women and spirituality. Several readers, surprised by Cohen's and his students' descriptions of how difficult it was for women to meet beyond ego, asserted that women easily reach, as Judy O'Brien says in her letter, "the level of unitive consciousness"—especially when they are safely separate from men. A couple of responses mentioned that men need to awaken to the feminine, and this will transform gender dynamics. "As we unite as the divine

feminine, we will coexist in deep companionship," remarks Sarah McIntyre of Sydney, Australia. Several responses to the Guru and Pandit dialogue argued that women's spiritual path is very different from male spirituality. In that dialogue, Cohen spoke about women going beyond, or transcending, core biological and social conditioning. Women's path is about embodiment, some readers say, not transcendence. As Michiel Doorn and Wendy Burkland write, "The compulsion to become free at an existential level is a one-sided,

masculine affair!" This position—shared by quite a few who wrote to us—raises important questions about what we see is possible for us as women and men. Is the impulse toward transcendence—the urge of evolution itself—unnatural to women? If so, then what does that mean about women and men cocreating the future together?

We each may have different answers to our central question "What is liberation for women today?" Everyone senses that women's transformation will unleash enormous potential. From the responses, it also seems

"In the goddess tradition, enlightenment is found within."

Emma C.

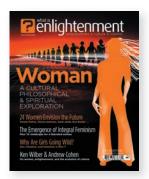
that there is a consensus that the next women's movement must be distinctly spiritual—an *inner* liberation. How we go about doing that work, and how it will have an impact on culture, is where the rubber hits the road and the sparks begin to fly. My colleagues here at WIE, my sisters at EnlightenNext, and I are eager to engage this question. We're looking for new ways to do that—through teleconferences, salon discussions, online, or face-to-face, and

> EnlightenNext sisters and I met with five women, friends and allies of our evolutionary mission, who took issue with what we were saying in the magazine. We've had one spirited discussion so far—creative friction in action!—and all want to go further. I just returned from a quick trip to Chicago where I engaged in a passionate dialogue with women and men about where we are and where we need to go. There is a tremendous hunger, a real desire for more—engagement, contact, and liberation. And there is so much further to go, for every one of us. We're just beginning; at

WIE we are thinking about next steps. For those of you who asked, "What about the men?" we're talking about an issue on men's evolution. And in an upcoming issue, I'm going to explore the Feminine. As one woman said, we've "hit a nerve" with this issue on women. Let's follow that nerve, allowing our own reactions to lead us right to the heart of what is most important, what needs to be transformed, and who we have the potential to be. Thank you all for your powerful responses—and let's keep this inquiry alive.

are open to your suggestions. Two of my matter in advancing Marcus A.

# Letters



Issue 37 July-September 2007

### UNDERSTANDING THE GENDER GAP

I want to thank all of those who worked on your latest edition, Woman: A Cultural, Philosophical, and Spiritual Exploration. For the last three years, I have served as a panelist on the PBS program To the Contrary. As a progressive feminist, I join the voices of wellknown feminists, as well as my conservative sisters, in grappling with the issues concerning women in contemporary America, such as the fact that the percentage of working moms in the workforce started to go down in 2000 and has stayed flat for almost six years. Women continue to earn seventy cents for every dollar earned by men, and although women average fifty percent of students enrolled in top professional and graduate schools, we are not adequately represented in the corporate and governmental power structures that shape this country.

No doubt, these issues are complex. But for years, many women have focused their attention solely on barriers to progress caused by existing political, legal, and economic structures. As we have delved into these issues on To the Contrary, I have been intrigued by the premise put forward by Linda Hirshman in her article "Homeward Bound" for The American Prospect, as well as in her recent book Get to Work. Hirshman puts the burden squarely on the shoulders of educated women who are making the choice to stay home despite their high educational attainments. "Great choice," applaud many of my conservative sisters, but Hirshman believes that women are really making these choices out of fear and resistance to being active participants in the workforce. And your issue on women has added yet another dimension. To fully understand the gap between our high level of education and our lackluster performance in the workplace, WIE suggests, really requires a deeper understanding of our psychological and spiritual wiring.

Your latest edition is helping me think about how to incorporate this perspective into my own work. As Ken Wilber suggests in his dialogue with Andrew Cohen, it is a good idea to get a map of the prison if you want to get out, and I found many of the articles in the issue a first attempt at drafting that map. I especially enjoyed Elizabeth Debold's breathtaking effort to put our struggle for liberation in a historical perspective.

If we can break these "core dynamics of dependence on men and separation from women," we will be better prepared to build social and political structures that are more equitable and conducive to the full realization of both genders. At the same time, I don't see your perspective as a substitute for the political and social struggles that are ahead. Outgrowing our old wiring about the proper role of women and updating our definition of what liberation means today will not only make us stronger in our short-term political battles but better position us to win permanent freedom for this generation and generations to come.

### Patricia Sosa

 $Washington,\,DC$ 

### A VOTE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

I must say that I was saddened to read your issue on women. Those of us involved in the first wave of feminism sought to define ourselves as essentially different from men. We recognized that women possessed a deeper and more authentic moral sense, and we sought to improve our lot by stressing this virtue. Within a short time, however, we found this virtue being used against us by men, obviously fearful that women would change too much.

I thought by the year 2007, after a second wave of feminism and the fact that women have come so far, men's fear would have been more readily recognized and identified for what it was. In fact, I am surprised that the seemingly bright women around Cohen bought it at all. Did they somehow miss the fact that men have always sought to define women? Were they not somewhat on guard when their very relational strengths were used against them as the reason they could not transcend their egos? Did they not question the male premise that competition among women is a more potent shaper of women than the wonderful female ability to relate deeply to each other? Were they not, as was I, shocked by the very premise presented by Cohen?

Your issue on women serves as an excellent example of how little things have changed in the last hundred years and points sadly to the fact that while women have made many strides, they are still playing the game according to men's rules. WIE's error is further compounded and more grievous because it hides under the guise of spirituality. What saddens me most is that there is so much more information available today that truly does begin to redefine women, spirituality, and enlightenment. Your issue could have made a real impact toward creating a more fair and balanced epistemology. But, you chose to ignore it.

"Elizabeth Cady Stanton" via email

letters continued on page 126

I'M WRITING THIS FROM AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION deep in the Berkshire Mountains, because ever since our last issue on women's liberation came out, I've been a marked man. © In fact, we expected a strong reaction—both positive and negative—to some of the more provocative contents of our last issue. And we weren't disappointed. Senior editor Elizabeth Debold responds to the passionate debate in full on page ten.

Even though the dust is far from settled, we've been hard at work on the new issue you're holding in your hands. For what seems like forever now, we have intended to get at least one or two issues ahead of our production schedule. But the truth is, we get so involved in every detail of each issue—from the philosophical to the grammatical to the graphical—that so far, anyway, we barely make it to the printer in time, every time!

This issue attempts to answer what is perhaps the most common question spiritual teachers get asked. Whenever the subject of enlightenment comes up in public forums, lectures, and dialogues, inevitably someone raises the obvious question: "But what does higher consciousness have to do with the reality of our day-to-day problems? How can spiritual insights help us respond *practically*, appropriately, and efficiently, to the real-life challenges of a world in trouble?" In fact, the very heart and soul of what we are trying to share with others through the creation of this magazine has *always* been about attempting to answer that question, and even more so in the last few years. The current issue, "Envisioning the Future of Ecology, Politics, and Consciousness," is probably the most direct response to that question to date.

Ross Robertson's special feature article, "A Brighter Shade of Green," introduces the "bright green" eco-movement, which presents new and startlingly revolutionary ideas about how to respond to our urgent environmental crisis. All of my previously held notions about environmentalism were challenged in the most inspiring way by our energetic discussions on this hot topic.

As we navigated through new perspectives on the future of our world, many of our habitual ways of think-

ing about nature and our relationship to it were turned on their head. Carter Phipps' comprehensive interview with integral thinker par excellence Steve McIntosh on "integral politics" is breathtaking in its scope, precision, and depth of vision. In their discussion about the multidimensional complexities of our many global conflicts, a brilliant vision of order and hope shines through. McIntosh has a unique gift for conveying the fundamental tenets of integral thinking in a way that is clear and profoundly rational, and that (after you understand it) always appears to be obvious!

Completing the feature section is my most recent "Guru and Pandit" dialogue with evolutionary pioneer, philosopher-genius, and comrade-in-arms Ken Wilber. This exploration of the emerging level of development that many are calling "third tier" may be one of the most important discussions we've had . . . though I'm probably not in the best position to judge!

Other treats in this issue include "The Death of the Mythic God," an important conversation about the evolution of religion with former Catholic monk and Washington-based public-policy attorney Jim Marion; "Music for an Integral World," a lively discussion about creativity, consciousness, and culture with legendary producer and master guitarist Corrado Rustici; and finally, something close to my heart, a tribute in memoriam to Ajja, the great enlightened "avadhut" saint, whom I first met and interviewed for *WIE* in 1998.

Last but not least, please take note of the new and improved "Pulse" section of the magazine, created through the many late nights of editors Ross Robertson and Tom Huston.

Enjoy!

Andrew Cohen

Founder and Editor in Chief



# New & Upcoming

### Documentaries.....



As the battle between evolution's believers and disbelievers wages its way forward into the twenty-first century, a new documentary has captured one of this particular culture war's defining moments in all of its dubious

splendor. Kansas vs. Darwin takes viewers behind the scenes at the infamous evolution hearings of 2005, where the Kansas State Board of Education sparked a media frenzy by actually putting Darwin's theory of evolution on trial. From the looks of the trailer, this one promises to be a wild—and educational—ride. Premiered in September at the Kansas International Film Festival, the film is slated for general release next year.



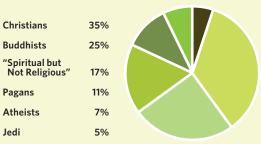
What ever happened to Werner Erhard? For the millions of Americans whose lives were touched by est (Erhard Seminars Training) in the '70s and '80s, or its successor, The Forum, that question has long been more than a curiosity. A fascinating new documentary created by Robyn Symon called

Transformations: The Life and Legacy of Werner Erhard provides some answers, but its main focus is a closer look at the life of this unique figure. Erhard, now in his seventies, is alive and well and is interviewed in London, where he now resides. He's described in the movie's trailer as a mixture of Aristotle, Frank Sinatra, and Gandhi. We'd go with Wittgenstein, Tony Robbins, and Dogen, but whatever the case, look for Transformations to be released soon.

# Virtual Faith

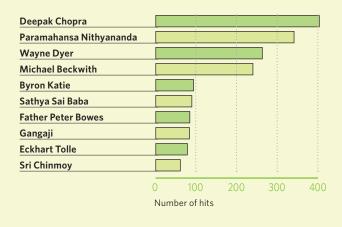
With YouTube and Second Life as the battleground, which religions and spiritual teachers are winning the hearts and minds of the internet generation?

### The Religions of Second Life



### The Top 10 Gurus of YouTube

Jedi



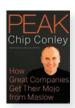
Data from searches conducted in August 2007.

### New & Upcoming continued

Whether or not you wash with **Dr. Bronner**'s famously tingly peppermint soap, a new documentary about the famously eccentric soap maker from director **Sara Lamm** looks intriguing. **Dr. Bronner's Magic Soapbox** explores the life and career of Dr. Emanuel Bronner, who plastered poetic admonitions to protect "Spaceship Earth" and unite humanity in world peace and "All One God Faith" across the labels of his products. His natural-soap company was one of the world's first green businesses, and it still donates seventy percent of its profits to social causes. Now screening in select cities, the film is due out on DVD this fall.

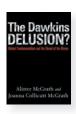


### Books.....



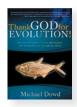
California hotel mogul **Chip Conley** has just published **Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow**, which creatively combines his own experience of business management with twentieth-century psychologist **Abraham Maslow**'s "hierarchy of needs." This pyramidal

staircase of human needs and desires is often referenced by integral philosophers for its simple explanation of spiritual and psychological growth. For Conley, it was the inspiration for his own company's dramatic turnaround, as well as the seed for a new theory of organizational transformation based on self-actualization.



The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist
Fundamentalism and the Denial of the
Divine, by Alister McGrath and Joanna
Collicutt McGrath, drew a gem from
Publisher's Weekly: "The McGraths expeditiously plow into the flank of Dawkins'
fundamentalist atheism, made famous in

The God Delusion, and run him from the battlefield."



Michael Dowd, evangelical Christian minister turned evangelical Christian evolutionist, is a man on a mission. Along with his wife, conservation biologist and author Connie

Barlow, he's spent the past few years touring the United States in a van to promote the "Great Story" of evolutionary cosmogenesis

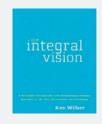
far and wide. His new book, *Thank God for Evolution! How the Marriage of Science and Religion Will Transform Your Life and Our World*, is already garnering a lot of attention, including endorsements from three Nobel Laureates.

# News from the World of Integral Philosopher Ken Wilber

The latest release from the Integral Institute should be in bookstores by the time you read this. Praised by *Publisher's Weekly* as

"reminiscent in spirit to the watershed import of **Ram Dass**'s *Be Here Now,*" *The Integral Vision* is a beautifully illustrated introduction to all things integral—the Cliffs Notes version, if you will, to Wilber's far-reaching worldview.

For those who like their integral theory delivered in higher doses, we also have good news. The word from chez Wilber is that our favorite Rocky Mountain sage has managed to knock out two books this summer—Overview







and Superview. Wilber always has a knack for cool titles, and these two hail from the work of the ayatollah of integral yoga himself, **Sri Aurobindo**. In fact, they are a clever play on two of his

highest stages of consciousness, "overmind" and "supermind." The two books will further examine the fascinating relationship between states of consciousness and structures of consciousness and how one develops through them—an area that Wilber essentially pioneered.

Finally, it seems that the lights of Hollywood are continuing to show some love for the integral vision. By the time you read this, a dialogue between Wilber and **Sharon Stone** will be featured online at Integral Naked (www.integralnaked.org).

### On Our Bookshelf

From the Suicide Dictionary by Paul Lonely, a post-postmodern long poem envisioned as a series of "contemporary Upanishads" and due out from O Books in November:

The coal in your hand is sketching on paper,
Your muscles are moving connected to Mind;
You feel you are made but also the Maker,
The Portrait you're drawing to nothing will bind.
Silhouettes of this face cascade on your Wall,
The contours are rounded, erotic, and pure;
But when this Wall crumbles post-partum your Fall,
The Stillness that's missing is Krishna's allure.
I speak as an Artist involved with your death,
Your dying is dead to my death at your door;
This Secret begins when you're counting your breath,
And find that the Ground is the sound of your Roar.
These Lions and Tigers inside of your zoo,

Will die to themselves . . .

but revamp into You.

### New & Upcoming continued



Part spiritual teacher, part journalist, **Arjuna Ardagh** takes a fascinating look at one of the spiritual world's hottest new movements—deeksha. In *Awakening into Oneness*, Ardagh follows this popular spiritual phenomenon, which involves the transmission of spiritual energy, to the

East and back, exploring its roots, revealing the ambitious dreams of the movement's founders, **Bhagavan** and **Amma**, and even consulting neuroscientists as to deeksha's effects on the frontal cortex.

### Souls in Transition

#### **U.G. Krishnamurti** (1918-2007)



One of the original anti-teacher teachers, U.G. Krishnamurti earned widespread recognition among Western spiritual seekers during the 1980s and '90s for his unusual spiritual awakening and his strong anti-authority message. Born in India in 1918, U.G., as he was known

to students, was interested in spiritual matters from an early age; he spent time in his youth with such spiritual icons as the Himalayan master **Swami Sivananda** and the great South Indian sage **Ramana Maharshi**. In the 1940s, he began working at the Theosophical Society in Madras, eventually rising up the ranks and becoming an international lecturer for the organization.

While at the Theosophical Society, U.G. had a contentious and difficult relationship with the legendary Indian spiritual master J. Krishnamurti. At one point, he engaged in a series of discussions and dialogues with the elder teacher, but grew frustrated with what he felt was Krishnamurti's abstract and obscure teaching style. Finally, after nearly a decade of listening to Krishnamurti's words and lectures, U.G. left the theosophical society altogether, cynical and disillusioned. Nevertheless, the relationship with Krishnamurti would prove enormously influential in his own awakening. Indeed, it was after attending a talk by his former mentor years later in 1967 that U.G. underwent a powerful and life-changing transformation. Refusing to characterize this event as enlightenment, he instead referred to it as the "calamity." In his book The Mystique of Enlightenment, he explains:

I call it "calamity" because from the point of view of one who thinks this is something fantastic, blissful and full of beatitude, love, or ecstasy, this is physical torture; this is a calamity from that point of view. Not a calamity to me but a

# In the Noosphere

## Senator Joseph Biden, Democratic presidential "All the prover in

3

debate, August 2007

"All the prayer in the world will not stop a hurricane. But prayer will give you the courage to be able to respond to the devastation that's caused in your life and with others to deal with the devastation."

"According to anthropologists... population-wide rates of death in tribal warfare... dwarf those of modern times. If the wars of the twentieth century had killed the same proportion of the population that die in the wars of a typical [ancient] tribal society, there would have been two billion deaths, not 100 million."

Steven Pinker
"A History of Violence,"
The New Republic
(March 20, 2007)



James Gardner, The Intelligent Universe



"Because the vast preponderance of the lifetime of the universe lies in the distant future rather than in the past, the historical achievements of life and mind are meager adumbrations of the starring role that intelligent life is likely to play in shaping the future of the cosmos."

### THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

### Americans look in the mirror

and like what they see

### Percentage of Americans who think of themselves as . . .

leaders 71% independent thinkers 95% loyal and reliable 98% making a positive difference in the world 80% concerned about the moral state of the nation 86% supportive of traditional family values 92% "very open" to alternative moral views 75% "deeply spiritual" 65%

Percentage of Americans who ... are "very convinced" that they are right about things in life 50% are turned off by politics 50%

try to convince others to change their views on moral issues

are "active in the community"

Based on interviews with more than 4,000 adults, from a study released by the Barna Group on July 23, 2007.

100

### Se Souls in Transition continued

calamity to those who have an image that something marvelous is going to happen.

U.G. eventually gained a reputation as an enlightened man, a reputation that earned him many requests to speak and meet with seekers around the world. Always willing to engage in dialogue with those who came to him, he nevertheless insisted that he had nothing to teach and nothing to share, and he counseled others to reject any and all philosophies, spiritual teachings and authority figures. By the 1990s, the anti-authority, anti-guru message had gone from being edgy and radical to commonplace, with a number of popular spiritual teachers espousing similar themes. In this way, perhaps, U.G. was a more influential authority than he ever intended to be.

U.G. likely would have found little to agree with in the editorial pages of this magazine; he did not see the value in philosophy or spiritual inquiry. His teaching, or antiteaching, bordered on nihilism and is unlikely to contribute much to the spiritual canon of our age. He nevertheless was a unique figure, and will be remembered both for the authenticity of his powerful personal awakening and for maintaining his radical, iconoclastic relationship to life right up to the end. Indeed, even as he faced death's door in a last meeting with friends and supporters, he refused to bow to any conventional religious or spiritual impulses, declaring that he was "free from all outside influences" and that when he dies, nothing sacred or remarkable would happen, but that he would simply "rot in the field like a garden slug."

### **Ian Stevenson** (1918-2007)



A tireless researcher, courageous academic, and esteemed leader in the much-maligned field of survival research (research into the possibility that some part of the personality survives physical death), Ian Stevenson's work will be remembered long

after his own physical death. For several decades, Stevenson traveled the world, investigating stories of young children who claimed to remember recent past lives, stories that he then painstakingly researched for any possible verification. While his work is little known outside the field of parapsychology, his careful and rigorous methodology set a standard for those undertaking similar lines of research, and his numerous books—outlining the thousands of fascinating case files contained in the Division of Personality Studies at the University of Virginia—continue to challenge the conclusions of a materialist worldview. They represent significant evidence, some of the most convincing yet, that there is more going on in heaven and earth than is yet proved in our science or philosophy.

### Sites & Blogs



### www.buddhistgeeks.com

If you're trying to find your way as a young twenty-first-century Buddhist, don't miss this funny, sincere, NPR-esque podcast by three Gen-Y geeks from Boulder.

#### www.skeptiko.com

A great weekly podcast on science and consciousness featuring interviews exploring "the possibility that the existing materialistic paradigm might be overturned (and may already be at a tipping point)."





#### www.istheforcereal.com

This fun animated short features psi researcher Dean Radin as a Jedi explaining the evidence for global collective consciousness. "Open your mind," says his character Oh Be One Kenobi, "and let the invisible side of reality in."

#### www.poodwaddle.com/ worldclock.swf

Even if you take statistics lightly, there's something unnerving about this site, which clocks world population growth, species extinction, forest loss, rising temperatures, and other global indicators second by second.





### The World of WIE

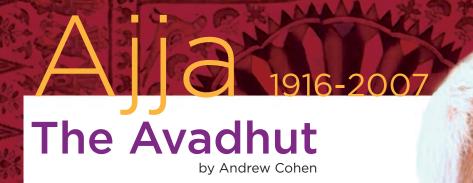


What's new in the world of WIE? Editor in chief (and spiritual teacher) Andrew Cohen is leading his first weekend intensive for women, October 26-28, which promises to pick up where last issue's provocative inquiry left off by exploring the bold new future of women's liberation. And keep your eyes peeled for WIE's own Carter Phipps in the upcoming documentary film The Shift (check out the advance trailer at www.theshiftmovie.com). Following the great success of Elizabeth Debold's fall series of teleconferences exploring "The Spirit of Woman" in history (available on mp3 at www.wie.org), a second series is in the works through the **Universe Project**—a venture of *WIE's* parent organization EnlightenNext (www.enlightennext.org/universe-project). Finally, Ross Robertson has a new home on the net at Frontier Mentality, where he's peppering the blogosphere with explorations of the "uncharted territories of spirit,

culture & thought" (www.frontiermentality.org).







"I am not in mind at all. I am in a state beyond all thoughts and emotions. I am speaking, but I don't know anything. I don't think; I read no books. For the true knowledge itself, none of this is necessary. For intellectual discourse, books are necessary, but for Self-experience, nothing is required. If I am in some remote corner, also it doesn't stop. It spreads through the whole universe, percolates through the whole universe. If one reaches that state of ananda,\* even if he is in some remote corner, it just spreads. Even if he tries to hide, it just radiates from him. It reaches throughout the whole universe, the entire cosmos."

\* the spiritual bliss of Self-realization

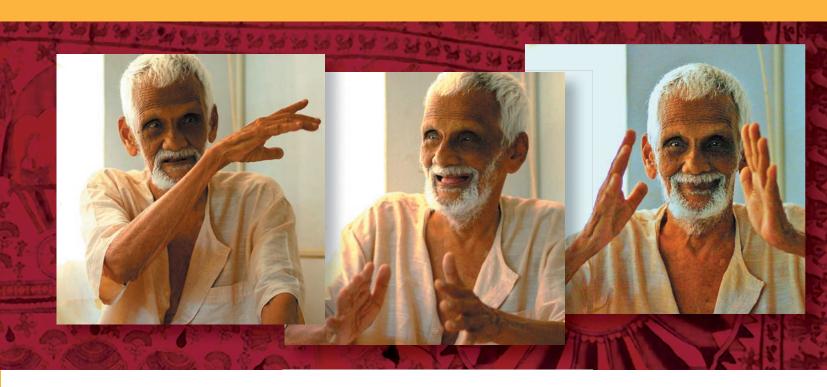
Ajja

### Avadhut [n., Skt.]:

 one who has transcended ego-consciousness duality, and worldly concerns and acts without consideration for standard social etiquette.
 one no longer identified with the body or mind; pure consciousness in human form.

"The Avadhut in unshakable equanimity, living in the holy temple of nothingness, walks naked, knowing all to be Brahman. . . . Having given up all activity of the mind, he is in his natural state of indescribable bliss."

The Avadhut Gita



jja, or "grandfather" as he was fondly called by those who knew him, was one of the most truly liberated human beings I have ever had the privilege to meet. What struck me most about him was that he seemed to literally have no ego-consciousness left in him—at all. His ego, apparently, had been burnt to ashes in the fire of his own passion for the Divine.

I met him three times over a period of several years, and I was always taken aback by the power of his childlike innocence and the profound freedom from this world and everything in it that he emanated from every cell in his frail body. His absolute transparency and utter lack of even a trace of self-consciousness always highlighted the subtle, and often not-so-subtle, inner duality of everyone else in his vicinity. It's only possible to know what enlightenment truly is when you're in the presence of someone like Ajja.

The story of his life and awakening is a wild one indeed, the likes of which only seem to happen in Mother India. Ajja had been a wealthy farmer until the age of thirty-six when, as a result of a sudden illness and an experience of extreme pain that lasted for six months, he began a process of onepointed inquiry that led to a dramatic and profound awakening. "I am not the body," he reportedly declared at the time. "I have no mother. I have no father. I am that Brightness."

Ajja made some truly outrageous claims, including that the great Mahatma Gandhi's soul had apparently entered his body at the moment of his awakening, making it possible for the great social activist to achieve final emancipation. "The one who was here is gone," Ajja said. "Someone else has come."

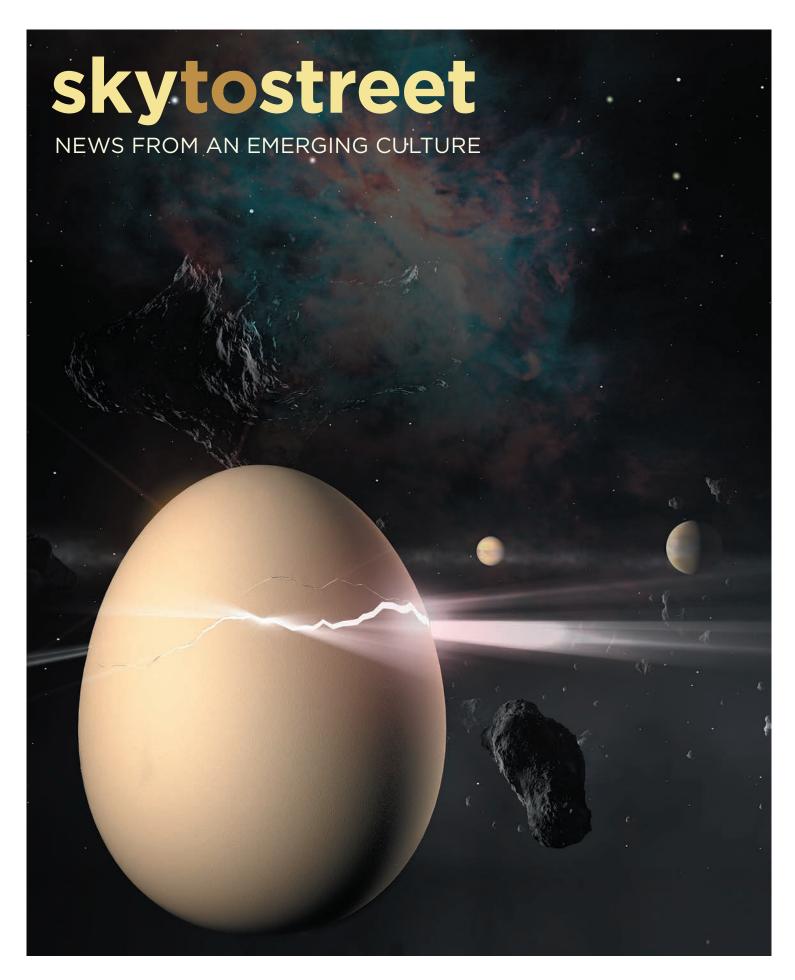
Ajja's awakening initiated a sixteen-year period of wandering throughout India, often naked, moving in and out of ecstatic states of consciousness, and frequently losing touch with bodily awareness for long periods of time. In 1961, while in Rishikesh, he heard a voice that called out to him: "Come to me. You come to me. I am here in Ganeshpuri." Responding immediately, he went to Ganeshpuri to see the legendary Avadhut Swami Nityananda, with whom he spent only five minutes. Not a word was uttered as they stared into each other's eyes. It was this meeting that enabled Ajja to "come back to earth"; he soon began wearing clothes again and speaking with others.

This kind and very gentle man was not really a "teacher" in the traditional sense. I'm not even sure he was able to share directly with others the true depth of his own profound experience. But his living example of absolute egolessness and surrender was unparalleled, reminding me of a sign in the office of the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh with a statement that always took my breath away: Teaching means Being.

I conducted an in-depth interview with Ajja in 1998, which was published in Issue 14 of WIE. I was pleased to discover when I went to see him again the following year that my article "Who Is Ajja?" had generated a lot of interest in this great being not only among Western readers but, to my surprise, even more so in India itself!

Ajja left this world on March 12, 2007. In the last years of his life, a small ashram was built for him outside Mangalore, where his devotees continue to live under his guidance. As Srinath Radha, one of his closest disciples, confided in me last spring: "I am quite sure he will continue to take care of us. I mean, that's too small of a thing for him to really bother about—but he will take care."





# Which Came First: The Chicken or the Big Bang?

New explanations for why the cosmos is perfectly suited for life are cropping up every day, and some are far stranger than others . . .

by Tom Huston

his past spring an international team of astronomers announced their discovery of the most potentially Earth-like planet yet detected, a relatively small world orbiting a red dwarf star twenty lightyears\* away. At such a distance and with the rather unfortunate name Gliese 581c, the rocky orb probably won't be in the running for its own Lonely Planet guide anytime soon. But that hasn't stopped scientists dedicated to the search for ET from carefully uncorking champagne bottles and stoically expressing their barely contained glee. "Because of its temperature and relative proximity, this planet will most probably be a very important target of the future space missions dedicated to the search for extraterrestrial life," said one of 581c's codiscoverers, Xavier Delfosse of Grenoble University in France. "On the treasure map of the universe, one would be tempted to mark this planet with an X."

With no less than 240 other planets having been discovered outside our solar system at the time of this writing—a number that is rapidly growing as planet-hunting skills and technologies evolve—the chances of finding life elsewhere in the cosmos have never seemed greater. But why is the universe hospitable to life in the first place? Physicists tell us that if any of the fundamental constants of nature—

such as the mysteriously low strength of gravity or the precise values of atomic forces—had differed during the universe's initial conditions to even the tiniest degree, life as we know it would never have formed. They call this the "fine-tuning problem." According to some cosmological models, if we simply adjusted a decimal place or two, the quantum chaos that exploded from

the big bang would still be a seething hot miasma, never having cooled and evolved into atoms. With another subtle tweak, the rate of cosmic expansion would already have spread all particles so far apart from one another that the universe would be a featureless void. Fortunately for us, the laws of physics happen to be fine-tuned exactly as they

be fine-tuned exactly as they are, and here we find ourselves, contemplating a cosmos that we now know contains planets—some presumably even lush, living worlds like ours—in numbers far exceeding its trillions of stars.

So how did we get so lucky?

"Since the 1970s, theists have invoked this fine-tuning argument as empirical evidence for a creator by asserting that there are only two explanations: God or chance," writes Robert Lawrence Kuhn, host of the PBS roundtable discussion series Closer to Truth, in the summer edition of Skeptic magazine. "However," he adds, "to pose such a stark and simplistic choice is to construct a false and misleading dichotomy."

Instead, Kuhn proposes no less than twenty-seven different explanations for why we happen to find ourselves in such a biologically accommodating place. Grouping his "taxonomy of ultimate reality generators" into four broad categories—"One Universe Models," "Multiple Universe Models," "Nonphysical Causes," and "Illusions"—Kuhn hopes to account for

# The chances of finding life elsewhere in the cosmos have never seemed greater. But why is the universe hospitable to life in the first place?

every explanation, or combination of explanations, that scientists, philosophers, and mystics have proposed as possible answers to the perennially perplexing question of why we exist.

Aside from more traditionally theistic notions like Intelligent Design,
some of the currently fashionable
theories in Kuhn's cosmological taxonomy are those involving multiple
universes or multiple dimensions,
espoused in such recent books as
Leonard Susskind's The Cosmic
Landscape, Lisa Randall's Warped
Passages, and Victor J. Stenger's God:
The Failed Hypothesis. Exceedingly
popular among quantum physicists
and string theorists, these "multiverse" ideas attempt to account for

<sup>\*</sup> approximately 120 trillion miles



our universe's life-friendliness by proposing that it just happens to be one of billions of other universes that didn't turn out so well. After all, in a "multiversal" ocean of zillions of infinitely varied soap bubbles, they reason, there would have to be at least one with the precise qualities necessary to give rise to living beings like ourselves, and of course, that's the one we're in.

Still other scientists, arguing on behalf of what's known as the anthropic principle—the general idea that our universe's life-friendliness is not a random accident—find this kind of speculation absurd. "To be blunt, in my view, it's just giving

in our universe, or 2) what's been described as Davies' "self-creating universe in a teleological backward causation" theory.

Yes, the theory is as strange as it sounds, but Davies believes it's no more bizarre than any other explanation in Kuhn's taxonomy. He proposes that the natural laws forged so precisely fourteen billion years ago in the big bang happened to favor the eventual emergence of life because our existence as living beings, here and now, actually fine-tuned them to be that way—retroactively. "Crazy though the idea may seem at first," Davies explains, "there is in fact no fundamental impediment to a

# If any of the fundamental constants of nature had differed during the universe's initial conditions to even the tiniest degree, life as we know it would never have formed.

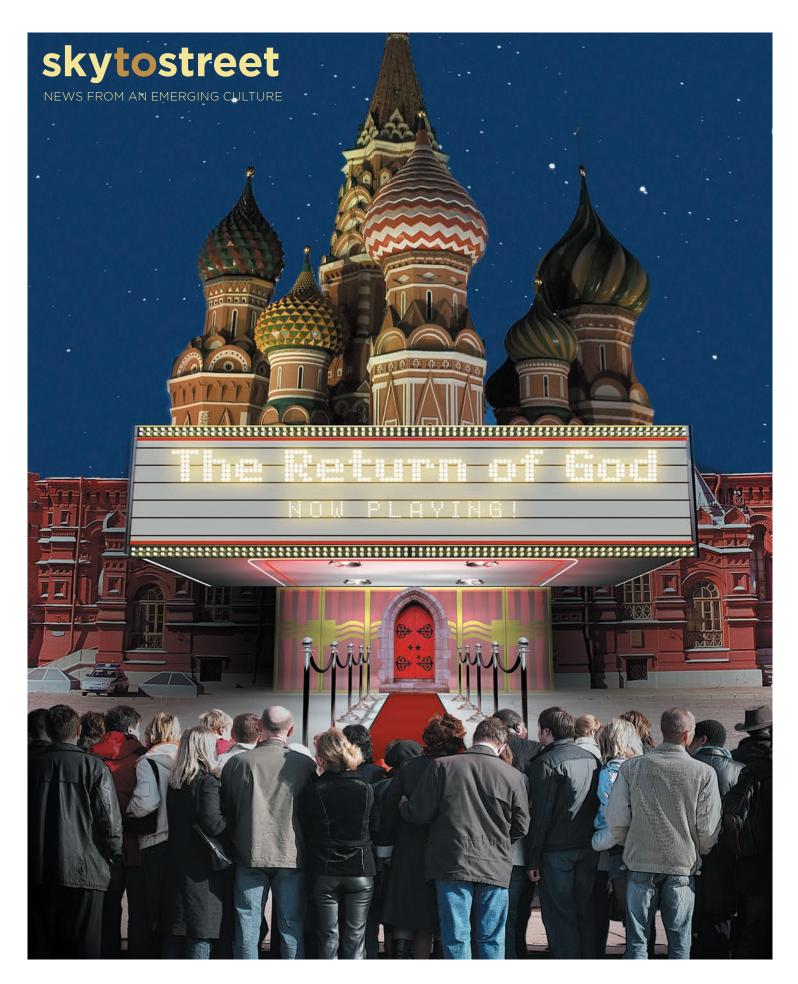
up," cosmologist James N. Gardner, author of Biocosm, told WIE. "It represents a failure to recognize that just as the appearance of a seemingly well-tuned natural world constituted a vital set of clues for Darwin to follow, so, too, does the appearance of a seemingly well-tuned cosmos constitute a vital set of clues that should be pursued." Arizona State University physicist Paul Davies agrees. In his latest book, Cosmic Jackpot: Why Our Universe Is Just Right for Life, he argues that most theories about a multiverse simply represent a failure of the imagination. He much prefers two alternatives: 1) the idea that there is some kind of implicit life force or evolutionary impulse guiding the emergence of life and consciousness

mechanism that allows later events to influence earlier events." Invoking arcane mysteries of quantum physics such as entanglement, nonlocality, and the idea that conscious observation plays an essential role in "collapsing" quantum potentials into concrete reality, Davies contends that the presence of conscious observers today is no accident. Our existence, he says, is due to the ability of conscious observations to ripple forward and backward in time, influencing even the quantum fluctuations that took place in the initial nanoseconds of the big bang itself—a time when the laws of physics were still susceptible to subtle tweaking. "If the conditions necessary for life are somehow written into the universe at the big bang,"

Davies told New Scientist last fall, "there must be some sort of two-way link." In other words, the universe may be continually pulling itself up by its own bootstraps—from the future to the past—as a self-correcting, self-contained, and very living system.

The concept of events preceding their causes, technically known as retrocausality, has long been theorized among scientists (and science fiction writers), with creative thinkers such as the famed Richard Feynman even offering mathematical proofs of how certain properties of physics work just as well backward as forward in time. Still, there's never been any experimental evidence to lend realworld validity to the idea. But scientists are nothing if not inventive, and soon University of Washington physicist John Cramer hopes to conduct an elaborate quantum physics experiment (involving, among other household objects, six miles of fiber-optic cable and two photon detectors) that should put retrocausality to the test. If Cramer succeeds, Davies' retrocausal, closed-loop theory may become the top contender for explaining why the universe seems so intricately suited for life. But Davies remains openminded, insisting that all scientific explanations for the universe that have been presented so far may be limited not only by an overly materialistic bias but also by the limited cognitive framework in which we're approaching the problem in the first place, "a mental straitjacket inherited from evolutionary happenstance." The future, he believes, may yield possibilities that present-day theorists can't even imagine.

In the end, perhaps we'll admit that the great Bertrand Russell already came up with the simplest explanation: "The universe is just *there*," he once declared, "and that's all."



# **Reviving the Russian Soul**

The surprising success of spiritual films in Russia reveals a longing for depth in post-Soviet culture.

by Mike Kauschke and Elizabeth Debold

f you are in Moscow and decide to see a popular spiritual film, expecting to see the likes of *The* Secret or What the Bleep Do We Know!?, you're in for a surprise. Rather than being presented with the uniquely American "can-do" message that we can create our own reality and prosperity, you are more likely to be confronted with core existential questions about the meaning and purpose of life and the nature of God. After the fall of the Soviet regime and the violent trauma of shifting to capitalism, the Russian soul seems to be stirring, and new films are expressing a powerful revival of religious interest. The father-andson drama The Return (2003), by Andrey Zvyagintsev, was one such popular film. But the most stunning of these films to date is Ostrov (The *Island).* Stunning in the starkness of its visual imagery as well as in its narrative power, this story of a rebellious Eastern Orthodox monk is being lauded as a masterpiece. Even more significantly, its success at the box office may mark the beginning of a sea change in Russian culture.

Ostrov's story of repentance and faith in God hardly seems to be the stuff that blockbusters are made of. The main character is a monk named Anatoly who lives on the outskirts of an Orthodox monastery. With ecstatic forcefulness, he transmits an experience of the divine to all who come into contact with him—the self-assured monks of his monastery, simple people asking him for help, a woman "possessed" by neuroses. For Anatoly, there is only one solution to all the questions of life, one kind of healing for all human

traumas: the direct experience of and devotion to God. His character is reminiscent of the *staretz* (the archetypal enlightened saint of orthodox Christianity) or the God-possessed fools in Dostoyevsky's novels. These well-known motifs in orthodox mysticism seem to be one of the reasons for the movie's success, touching the deep spiritual and cultural roots of the Russian psyche. But at the same time, Anatoly expresses a refreshing freedom from dogma and tradition, a lone spiritual warrior skillfully pulling people into his spell.

And Anatoly has cast his spell over a remarkable number of Russians. When the film was televised for the first time in January, half of all Russians watched it. Only President Putin's New Year's address attracted more viewers. The question is: Why?

The story of the film's principal actor Pyotr Mamonov may offer some explanation. Back in the eighties and nineties, Mamonov was the lead singer in an avant garde Russian rock band that reached cult status. But these days, he lives as a religious hermit near Moscow, and apparently it took a great deal of effort to get him to commit to make the film. Ostrov director Pavel Lungin says: "In a certain sense, this is also a movie about Mamonov's life. He transformed from being a rock star embroiled in scandals into a deeply religious man." Lungin realizes that both Mamonov's life and the life of the monk he plays are resonant for Russians today. "The times of perestroika are over and we need to think about things like eternity, sin, and conscience," he observes. "These have disappeared from our lives in the rat race for success and money. But people can't just live for material things alone."

This fundamental change of direction in Mamonov's life seems to reflect a broader trend in the lives of ordinary Russians. According to one study, a growing number of Russian teenagers and young adults believe in Godfifty-eight percent of those twentyfive and under. And the average age of all believers has dropped from sixty to forty-eight in the past decade and a half. In total, eighty-four percent of Russians consider themselves religious. Sociologist Detlef Pollack from Europa University in Frankfurt observes that this reemergence of spiritual longing in postcommunist countries is not only strengthening traditional churches but also inspiring contemporary forms of spiritual practice and belief.

Perhaps what is most interesting about Ostrov and films of this kind is that they reveal a society poised between the ruin of Soviet times and an unknown future. Journalist Andrei Plachov writes that societies in Eastern Europe are increasingly "turning inward to resolve deeper existential problems." This turning within is expressed in the way these films blend elements from traditional Eastern Orthodoxy. Far Eastern religion, and the Western postmodern spiritual marketplace. But whether a renewed interest in Eastern Orthodoxy will calcify into fundamentalism or help to provide Russia with a deeper moral ground from which to move forward is not yet clear. Russians are currently debating these issues with great passion. And no matter how the guestions are resolved, it is evident that the spiritual side of Russia that seemed dormant for so long, first under the Soviet system and then under mafiastyle capitalist opportunism, will play a growing role in the country's future.



# A New Perspective for Palestine

Elza Maalouf and Don Beck are bringing the wizardry of Spiral Dynamics to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

by Igal Moria and Elizabeth Debold

n the wake of decades of war and conflict in the Middle East, the last thing the region would seem to need is another crisis. But Dr. Don Beck, the world's foremost expert in the systems-change theory of Spiral Dynamics Integral, surprisingly argues that crisis—a particular kind of crisis—is just what is needed. [Visit wie.org/spiral for more on Spiral Dynamics.] Beck has made four trips into this conflict zone in the past eighteen months, joined by his partner in the Center for Human Emergence-Middle East, Elza Maalouf. Maalouf, a lawyer and integral consultant born and raised in Lebanon and now living in the U.S., has been instrumental in arranging strategic meetings with leaders in Palestine and Israel. In May, the two successfully completed an intensive training in Spiral Dynamics with members of the executive committee of the Fatah movement. They have also launched the Build Palestine Initiative, which will attempt to integrate the influx of aid and support from the 4,200-plus nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that want to help the Palestinians move forward.

But as Maalouf and Beck explained in a recent conversation with WIE, it all has to start with crisis—a crisis that would spur the Palestinians to realize that something fundamental has to change among themselves. The fighting in the streets of Gaza between adherents of secular

Fatah (which means "victory") and fundamentalist Hamas (which means "zeal") could be such a catalyst. It may enable the Palestinians to see that the problem isn't simply the Israeli occupation of Arab lands, but that they have deeper issues



Spiral Dynamics Integral training for Fatah leaders in the West Bank

to confront about who they are and where they are going. At least, that's what Maalouf and Beck believe is starting to happen.

The two note that, due to an increasing recognition of a need for development, there seems to be a shift in thinking about even the most sacrosanct issues, such as the readiness for an independent Palestinian state. "At present, Israel is a development-prone culture, whereas Palestine is a developmentaverse culture for many reasons," said Maalouf. "This needs to change,

and it will happen through education and job creation, but it's going to take time." She pointed to a statement made in a recent letter to Tony Blair sponsored by the Center for Human Emergence-Middle East, in which a group of young Palestinian leaders wrote: "If the occupation

"The conditions for change in Palestine are starting to line up, and things are going beyond our expectations."

Don Beck

disappears tomorrow, are we ready to build an independent state? We know that as prerequisites to Palestinian statehood we need to build healthy institutions for a well-functioning government; build capacity in our people to enable them to take Palestine to the twentyfirst century; address the psychosocial problems inside the Palestinian communities caused by decades of conflict; and build sound economic, educational, judiciary, religious, and healthcare systems for a wellfunctioning society."

Such complex problems in cultural development are the kinds of issues that Spiral Dynamics is



meant to resolve by changing the core values, motivations, and worldviews within a society. As Maalouf explained, subtle shifts in people's motivations could create significant change: "The Palestinians who live in the refugee camps are descendants of Arabs who fled Israel during the wars of 1948 and 1967. These refugees' desire to go back to their family homes has been the thorniest issue during any negotiation between Israel and the Palestinians. Many of those homes no longer exist, and as for those that do. Israel does not intend to give them back. These refugees see life as a jungle where the strongest survive, and where honor is held in higher regard than life. Thus, getting back the family's home is about restoring lost honor. If you understand that there is this strong need, then you can help them change how that need is met." Maalouf and Beck worked with the Fatah leaders to help them see that Palestinian men could gradually develop a different code of honor. "Instead of these men believing 'I'm not a man unless I get my family house back," Maalouf continued, "they can satisfy their need for honor by aligning with the idea that 'I am not a man unless I secure the future of my children and my grandchildren.' This would serve as a different attractor. And our trainees understood that."

Even if creating this new "attractor" is successful, it will undoubtedly take time—time that this volatile area simply might not have. Given the urgency of the situation, Beck urged the Fatah leaders to seize the rare opportunity they now have. "There are over four thousand NGOs in Palestine. They are well-meaning organizations, but unfortunately their

work is never aligned, and quite often their efforts are fragmented, ad-hoc, piecemeal projects without a comprehensive command structure that leads to sustainable outcomes. We told the Palestinians that because of the world's attention and interest. they have more power and influence today than they probably ever will have again." But if the Palestinians don't organize and coordinate the money and projects flooding into the area, all that goodwill could be wasted. This is the idea behind the Build Palestine Initiative. "You need to mobilize all the NGOs and focus them like a laser beam," Beck said. "So we're recommending the establishment of an 'integral office' in the government, one of the main purposes of which would be to guide and direct all the help pouring into Palestine to strengthen the educational systems and create job opportunities for people."

If this office is established and the Initiative gets underway, the theory of Spiral Dynamics would be well suited to guide its implementation. Spiral Dynamics could help leaders determine the natural strengths of different sectors in Palestinian society and thereby integrally utilize the efforts of NGOs from so many different cultures. As Maalouf clarified, "The only way you can have NGOs contribute wisely to a successful Palestinian state is to analyze the value codes they represent. So for example, you would not ask a Scandinavian NGO to help you start a police force in Palestine, because Scandinavians aren't accustomed to the volatility of life in the Middle East. But you may want to ask them to help you design a healthcare system or create an environmental

policy." Beck noted that there is enough money coming through international aid to shift the value structure of the Palestinians as a whole. Through education, job creation, healthcare, and real stability, he said, the Palestinians could develop a more complex and evolved system of values that faces them toward a new future for themselves and their families.

The challenges are formidable, and many a well-intentioned project has failed in this global hot zone, but Maalouf and Beck remain cautiously optimistic. "We saw transformations

# "In such an entrenched conflict, optimism is a rare commodity."

in our training," said Maalouf, "especially with the resilient young men and women who honor the past but are determined to change the present and create a better future." Beck added, "They took the tools that we gave them and used them to see this all for themselves. The conditions for change are starting to line up, and things are going beyond our expectations." In such an entrenched conflict, optimism is a rare commodity. Perhaps a new willingness to take stock and move forward that may be emerging in segments of Palestinian society—when combined with the goodwill of so many nations and NGOs and synergized within the integral framework of Spiral Dynamics—will enable the development of the stability that this area so desperately needs.

# voices from the edge



### Get a (Second) Life?

by Thomas de Zengotita

**Avatar:** Hindu Myth: the descent of a deity to the earth in an incarnate form.

- Oxford English Dictionary

**WHAT IS SECOND LIFE? FIRST** of all, it is not a game—no score, no winner, no goals. It is a multi-user website, an indefinitely expandable digital environment in which people from the real world embody themselves as "avatars" and become residents of a virtual world they themselves are constructing.

An avatar template is provided by *Second Life* when you first register. Humanoid in appearance, it is subject to modification at your hands. You can be either sex, be clothed in various ways, and have a whole spectrum of physical attributes—size, age, weight, hairstyle, and color. Shapes of heads, ears, eyes, noses, and chins can be modified incrementally, so you can construct a recognizable facsimile of your actual self for your second life. If you want to. On the other hand, you can embody yourself as a facsimile of your mother or Mick Jagger. Or a giant walking bird. Or a metallic android.

In *Second Life*, the old saw that best expresses our post-modern sense of personal entitlement—"Be what you want to be"—is realized. There are more than eight million registered residents as of this writing (up from one million in October 2006). One extrapolation projects twenty-five million by mid-March 2008.

In a word, this is huge.

But why? What's the appeal? To answer that, we have to put *Second Life* in context. It is part of the "virtual revolution" that has come to dominate the culture in recent years. Remember the old industrial age scenario for revolution, the one in which workers were to organize against capitalists for control of the means of production? That didn't work out as planned—but conditions have changed. The new economy isn't about mines and factories. It's a "soft" economy—it's about presentations and representations, depictions and performances. In this new realm, where a show of some kind is always the commodity, the "means of production" have fallen into the hands of the people. It isn't only up to the movie studios or TV networks anymore. Anyone can have a cell phone with a camera, a digital video

recorder, a Blackberry, an iPod, and of course, a personal computer with applications that can do almost anything—make movies, burn CDs, broadcast live by webcam.

The result? An information age scenario that pits spectators against celebrities—a virtual revolution, a struggle over the only scarce resource that matters in this media-saturated society: attention.

Reality television is only the most obvious manifestation. Spectators are rising up wherever venues promise to give them some of the attention that celebrities once monopolized. MySpace, YouTube—the very names tell the tale. When *Time* magazine named "you" person of the year in 2006, it was acknowledging the virtual revolutionaries on behalf of beleaguered mass media platforms everywhere.

Narcissus never had it so good—and in *Second Life* it's even better. When you enter that virtual world, by way of your custom-made avatar, the ways in which you can be the center of everything multiply indefinitely. It's a plasmic wonderland, saturated with that dreamy *anime* aesthetic—only now you aren't just watching; you are in the middle of it. You can wander around at will, socialize with anyone, buy and sell property, have sex, organize political movements, create landscapes and buildings, make and sell clothes, art, music, films. You can join a church, enter therapy, go to college. A Harvard professor has an avatar through which he teaches classes to student avatars. IBM avatars hold research and development sessions in virtual conference rooms. MTV offers a *Second Life* version of its hit show *Laguna Beach*. You can go there and hang with the gang.

You can also teleport yourself instantaneously to anywhere in the world. Oh, and you can fly. Just press "page up"—and soar away. As the architect for *Wired* magazine's offices in *Second Life* put it, by way of explaining his radical design: "Why let Newtonian physics get in the way?" Divine powers these, and now they're yours.

But the most significant of all these powers is subtler than flying: Once you've mastered the keyboard, the physical dimension of your situation in the real world recedes to the horizon of your consciousness. You are only barely aware of it. You fuse with your avatar. You become the agent on the screen.

But, of course, you are still at your computer, presiding over everything. Thanks to the very nature of an avatar, that is, you get to perform and you get to watch at the same time. Spectator and star—the essential roles of a mediated society—are merged. Some new synaptic closure is attained; some new kind of human gratification emerges. With the whole sweep of history in view, we could even say that a novel form of existence has been realized.

But it's the climax of a long, long story. When science and its applications developed in the Renaissance, the implicit goal of modernity was established. People set out to refashion nature—and themselves—in accordance with their own designs. That meant they were putting themselves in competition with God, the original Maker, however pious their conscious intentions might have been. At the same time, political and educational reforms were promising ordinary people self-government, a kind of centrality that had once belonged to monarchs. In just a few centuries, whole continents of wilderness, vast populations of native peoples, were transformed by this modern enterprise.

When Nietzsche declared that "God is dead," he was hailing (and lamenting) the triumph of modernity. At the same time, he announced the arrival of the *ubermensch*, "the one who makes himself."

But Nietzsche was thinking about Newton and Goethe and Napoleon. He had nothing but contempt for democracy, for middle-class masses immersed in average lives. He never dreamed that modern technologies would one day confer world-making and self-making power on everyman—on you.

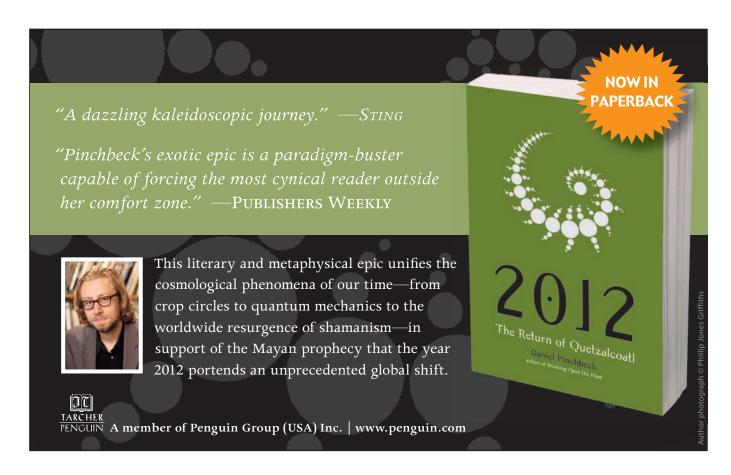
Viewed from this perspective, *Second Life* appears as an especially potent exemplar of the virtual revolution in general—and as a culmination of the modern project as a whole. For this is an extension of that project into spaces much more pliable than the real world of atoms and molecules and Newtonian physics could ever be. In virtual spaces, people really are the gods.

But in the long run, will that just mean that people have a whole new way to escape? Or a whole new way to transcend? Or both?

No one can know. This technology is just beginning. We are the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk, Alexander Graham Bell squawking into a tin can. Right now, a lot of mindless internet things happen in *Second Life*, of course—endless dancing and fashion and virtual sex. But serious experiments are under way as well, and the big question is: As these virtual worlds for virtual beings evolve, how much will our understanding of what it means to be human have to change?

**THOMAS DE ZENGOTITA** is the author of *Mediated: How the Media Shape Your World and the Way You Live in It,* which won the Marshall McLuhan Award for outstanding book in 2006.







# Are We Feeling Too Good about Ourselves for Our Own Good?

by Maura R. O'Connor

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, I came across an online ad for a psychological self-esteem test. Interested to discover how such a thing as "good self-esteem" is measured, I decided to investigate. Essentially, the test is composed of statements such as "In social situations, I have something interesting to say," "If I don't do as well as others, it means that I am an inferior person," and "I am an important person." One rates his or her agreement or disagreement with these statements, and the answers are given a numerical value, the total of which is rated on a scale representing good to bad self-esteem.

Self-esteem is generally defined as the confidence in one's own merit as an individual. Since the 1970s, when baby boomers discovered and embraced the concept en masse, it has become a tenet of the psychological canon and is so ingrained in popular wisdom and parenting techniques as to seem like natural law:

The higher a person's self-esteem, the happier, more productive, and more mentally healthy that person will be. Like most people my age, I'm a product of this movement, which means that from a very young age I've had parents and teachers telling me that I'm fundamentally great and that it's important for me to know and accept this fact. So how did I rate on the self-esteem test? Let's just say I'm not lacking any.

According to many psychologists, I'm not the only one. In her recently published book Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—And More Miserable Than Ever Before (2007), psychologist Jean M. Twenge cites a fascinating statistic. In the 1950s, just twelve percent of teens age fourteen to sixteen agreed with the statement "I am an important person." Yet by the late 1980s, an incredible seven times that-eighty percent-of teens said they agreed with it. The increase attests to the steadily greater adherence in America's schools, families, and popular culture to the belief in the power of self-esteem. Even government officials have embraced the concept. For example, in 1984, a state representative from California, John Vasconcellos, launched a statewide initiative to raise self-esteem in young people in order to reduce the social ills of teen pregnancy, drug abuse, unemployment, and crime.

The concept of self-esteem has actually been around for over one hundred years—since 1890, in fact, when William

James, the American philosopher and psychologist, coined the term and explored it in his book *The Principles of Psychology*. James posited that a person's self-esteem could be objectively measured through a simple ratio of goals, aims, and purposes to the actual attainment of those things. In essence, James believed that if people succeed in attaining their goals, their self-esteem goes up, but if people do not attain the goals they strive for, their self-esteem goes down.

With this simple equation, it's easy to see why he is considered the father of American pragmatism. But one has to

wonder what James would make of our modern concept of self-esteem, which has become so divorced from a person's actual achievements that eighty percent of fourteen- to sixteenyear-olds could believe they were important people before they'd even graduated from high school, gotten their first job, or voted. As Twenge

points out in *Generation Me*, these days "we simply take it for granted that we should all feel good about ourselves, we are all special, and we all deserve to follow our dreams."

What's wrong with this? As it turns out, *a lot*. Contrary to popular belief, self-esteem does not make better people of us at all. From 1970 to 2000, there have been over fifteen thousand articles published on the relationship between self-esteem and every aspect of life you can imagine: academics, career success, relationships, sex, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, happiness, and even good looks. Working with a team of researchers in 2002, psychologist and Florida State University professor Roy Baumeister undertook the massive project of reviewing the findings of these thousands of studies. Out of fifteen thousand studies, Baumeister discovered that only two hundred of them exhibited sound science.

In a report published in *Scientific American* in 2005, Baumeister challenged a number of previous findings about self-esteem. For instance, boosting self-esteem artificially (being told you're a good soccer player, for example, even if you never score a goal) appears to lower performance, contrary to the commonly held idea that raising someone's self-esteem enables that person to perform better. High self-esteem was found to have no positive correlation to a person's ability to have successful relationships; on the contrary, as Baumeister writes, "Those who think highly of themselves are more likely

than others to respond to problems by severing relations and seeking other partners."

Low self-esteem, he found, does not cause teens to engage in earlier sexual activity as previously believed; instead, those with high self-esteem were found to be less inhibited and more likely to have sex. Low self-esteem also doesn't cause people to be more aggressive or violent—in fact, perpetrators of aggression generally hold favorable and perhaps even inflated views of themselves. In the report's conclusion, Baumeister tackled perhaps the central tenet of the self-esteem movement: Higher self-esteem leads to happier individuals. "It seems possible that high self-esteem brings about happiness, but no research has shown this outcome. Any correlation between the two is just that, a correlation."

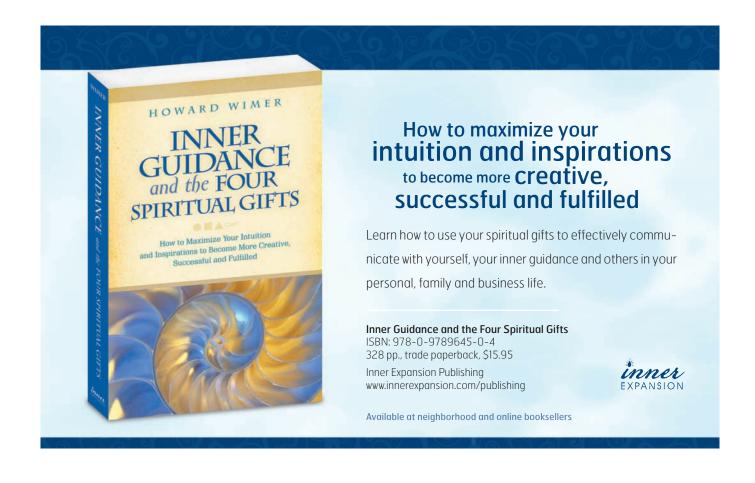
The implications of this research are interesting for anyone to consider, but for Gen-Yers they paint a grave picture: No other generation has been raised to have higher self-esteem than we have. Since we were literally toddlers, we've been told: "Value yourself." "Believe in yourself." "You're great just as you are." "Trying is just as good as succeeding." As Twenge points out, ideas like these have become "some of our culture's most deeply entrenched beliefs, and Generation Me has grown up hearing them whispered in our ears like the subliminally conditioned children in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.*"

Would this explain the higher rates of narcissism being

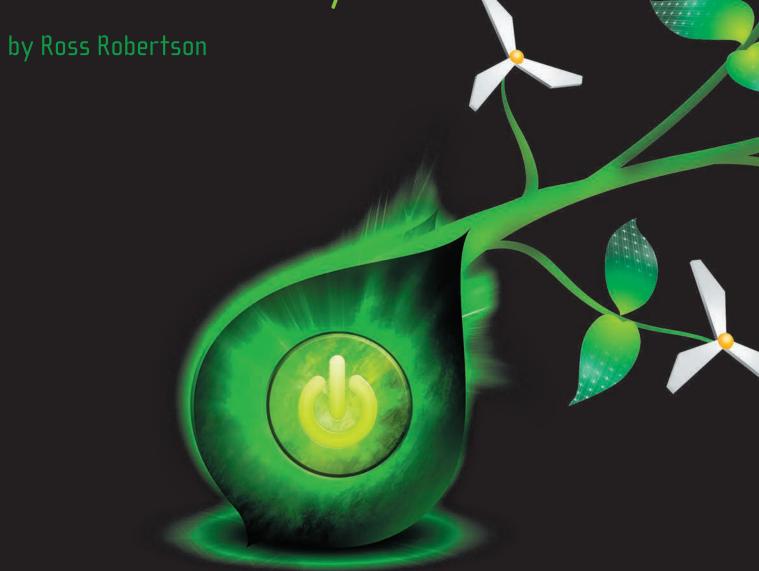
reported in studies like one released by San Diego State University this year? The report is based on the results of over sixteen thousand Narcissistic Personality Inventory tests taken by college students since 1982. What the researchers discovered by tracking scores over the past twenty years is that college students today are more narcissistic, have a greater sense of entitlement than ever, and are increasingly likely to agree with statements such as "I think I am a special person" and "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place."

If my generation were interested in tackling this problem—our inflated self-esteem and the narcissism it has bred in us—there are a number of solutions we could employ. But it strikes me that one of the most powerful could be resuscitating the original concept of self-esteem as William James first conceived it—not as a way to make us feel good about ourselves indiscriminately, but as an objective measure of our ambitions, desires, and worth as they relate to the *reality* of our personal life. If we undertook this stark exercise every now and then, it's hard to imagine that so many of us young people could continue to delude ourselves into thinking we're really so important. Instead, we might actually start proving it.

**MAURA O'CONNOR** is a regular contributing editor to *WIE*. She currently lives in New York City and is a student at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.









"Nature" is over. The twentieth century did it in. There's not a liter of seawater anywhere without its share of PCB and DDT. An altered climate will reshuffle the ecological deck for every creature that breathes. You can't escape industrialism and hide from the sky. It's over. From now on, "Nature" is under surveillance and on life-support. A 21st century avantgarde has to deal with those consequences and thrive in that world.

Bruce Sterling, Founder of the Viridian Design Movement

've always been a somewhat reluctant environmentalist. I was practically weaned on John Muir's Yosemite, and as a kid growing up in the suburbs of California in the last decades of the twentieth century, I fell fast in love with the depth and space and beauty of the mountains. They were everything my world of clay lots and cement and computer technology was not—cool, silent, elemental, rich with unquestionable mystery. They were every bit as spiritual as church, minus the dogmatism and the bake sales. The forest wilderness of the Sierra high country made a green romantic out of me, and when I got to college in Atlanta, I became concerned enough about the fate of nature to do something about it. I organized river cleanups and letter-writing campaigns, studied the classics of American nature writing, and sat on the environmental

committee of the university senate. I lobbied on Capitol Hill in Washington and protested chip



**BUCKMINSTER FULLER** (1895-1983)

was a visionary American thinker and designer. Inventor of the geodesic dome and author of nearly twenty books, including *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* and *Critical Path*, his quest to revolutionize the way we view technology, architecture, and the environment was an early forerunner of the movement known today as "bright green."

mills and nuclear reactors in Tennessee. I even intercepted a Brazilian merchant ship on its way into Savannah harbor and blocked it from unloading its illegal cargo of Amazon mahogany, which was still wet with the blood of indigenous tribes.

I'll always remember the incredible sense of purpose I felt that day as our small skiff shot over the waves at sunrise, the righteous, lawbreaking freedom of putting my future on the line for what I believed in. Even more than that, however, I'll never forget the confusion and the strange unease that came over me when the action was done and we headed for home through the twilit forests of coastal Georgia. It had been the ultimate statement of "us versus them," but somehow it left me feeling at odds with myself. Less than a week from my twenty-first birthday, I was frightened to realize how far I'd already come from love and idealism and the will to change things to anger, frustration, and a cynicism that increasingly bordered on desperation. I saw this in my friends, also. It cut us off from one another, and when the urgency of our common mission brought us together, it set us in opposition to the rest of the world.

I knew my days as an eco-extremist were done. What I didn't know then was that I was coming up against a shadow so basic to the character of modern environmentalism, it would take me more than a decade to find my way out from under it. That everywhere my path would take me as a young activist in the coming years—from a lonely biodynamic cooperative in the farmlands of rural Missouri to the networked high-rises of the San Francisco nonprofit world—I was walking down a well-worn track toward a dead end. It was only one day last spring, in fact, that I finally figured out what was wrong and what to do about it. That was the day a book called Worldchanging came across my desk and made me proud to call myself an environmentalist again.

f you bleed green like I do, you may also be under the wings of a shadow so close to you, it's difficult to see. This blind spot has less to do with the environment and more to do with how we perceive it—and how we perceive ourselves. To me, the most pivotal environmental issue we're faced with is not climate change or hunger or biodiversity or deforestation or genetic engineering or any of those things. It is an issue that is going to determine what we do about it all: our deeply felt ambivalence toward the human race and our presence here on planet Earth.

"Within environmentalists and environmentalism reside

The most pivotal environmental issue we're faced with is not climate change or biodiversity or deforestation or any of those things. It is our deeply felt ambivalence toward the human race and our presence here on planet Earth.

both a love for and a hatred of humanity," one of my generation's more controversial environmental heroes said in a now-famous speech at San Francisco's Commonwealth Club in 2004. His name is Adam Werbach, and he was describing what my own experience tells me is the most difficult underside of the green mind—the "misanthropic nostalgia" for a time before modern society crashed nature's party and ruined everything. "Because misanthropy at a political level is suicidal," he went on, "it merits remaining private. But over the years, ordinary Americans have sensed it, the media have magnified it, and during the springtime of the environmental movement, the keenest conservatives saw an opportunity to exploit it. Ayn Rand, for one, saw environmentalists' 'ultimate motive [as a] hatred for achievement, for reason, for man. for life." I met Werbach once in Washington, DC, in 1995, not long before he was elected the youngest-ever president of the Sierra Club at age twenty-three. And I can't help but wonder if his assessment of the current state of things would make the Sierra Club's founding father, the great Scottish naturalist John Muir, turn over in his grave.

Around a hundred years before I did, Muir fell in love with the glades and glaciers of Yosemite and began to articulate the wilderness ethic that helped shape the birth of the American conservation movement. "In God's wildness lies the hope of the world." he wrote, "the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and wounds heal ere we are aware." As environmental historian Andrew Kirk explains it, Muir and other early conservationists constructed rigid dichotomies between nature and human civilization, between the utopian purity of the wilderness and the polluted blight of industrial society. From their perspective, the essential flaw of modern humanity was to set ourselves above and outside the natural world, harnessing its energies to our own ends through the machinery of technological enterprise. In so doing, we stepped outside the delicate ecologies of nature, risking the health and survival of species and ecosystems, including our own. What brought us down that road was the hubris of seeing ourselves as separate from nature, and the only way back was to become part of it again. Yet the irony of their position was that it defined nature in terms that made such a reunion impossible: The natural was all that was untouched by the human; the human, in turn, was nature's erratic antithesis.

That sharp dichotomy between human nature and nature itself set the tone for American environmentalism's thorny confrontation with modernity. Suspicious of industry, wary of progress, and often hostile toward innovation and enterprise, the environmentalists of the twentieth





French engineer Guy Negre's switch from designing state-of-the-art Formula 1 engines to developing a lightweight motor that runs on compressed air might seem like a bit of a comedown. But when you consider that true zero-emissions technologies for motor vehicles have been something of an environmental holy grail in recent decades, it starts to look more like a bold career move. Air has been used before to power things like mine locomotives and naval torpedoes, but Negre is the first to bring a viable compressed-air car to market. After fifteen years of research and development, six thousand of his vehicles are expected to hit the streets of India by the end of 2008, with three thousand a year rolling off the production lines each year after that. The basic mechanics of the air car are simple: a more or less conventional piston engine is powered by short blasts of air, with no batteries, no combustion, and no polluting exhaust. With a lightweight tubular chassis and a body constructed of fiberglass, the air car can drive 125 miles on a single tank, which only takes two or three minutes and an air hose to refill. Negre has designed two models of the air car, one primarily for urban use and a second hybrid model for country driving. Incorporating a gasoline engine for powering an on-board air compressor, the hybrid version can go from Los Angeles to New York City on a single tank of gas.





### **FUTURE CITIES**

### Dongtan

In a country like China that is scrambling to build housing for four hundred million people by 2017, the commitment to construct a city for total environmental efficiency is an achievement in itself, signaling a welcome shift from short-term expediency to long-term sustainability. The city of Dongtan, which is currently competing with Masdar (see below) for bragging rights to the moniker "World's Greenest City," is planned for a small island off the coast of Shanghai. Designed by the British firm Arup, Dongtan's dense neighborhoods of super-efficient buildings will be home to five hundred thousand residents, with the remaining sixty-five percent of the site reserved for organic farms and wildlife habitat. Dongtan will receive power from local wind farms and photovoltaics, employ advanced cogeneration plants (whereby excess heat from burning rice husks generates electricity used to heat buildings throughout the city), ban cars that emit carbon dioxide, and aims to reuse ninety percent of its waste.





### Masdar

Blessed with the world's third largest oil reserves, the United Arab Emirates is exploding like a gold rush boom town, but some builders are keeping sustainability in mind amid the growing frenzy. Billed as "the first zero-carbon, zero-waste city in the world," Foster & Partners' Masdar project in the Abu Dhabi desert will be a high-density square walled city (pictured above) centered around a gargantuan photovoltaic power plant. Car free, linked by a web of shaded pedestrian walkways to beat the 130-degree summer heat, and surrounded by wind and solar energy farms, Masdar is the recent winner of the 2007 World Clean Energy Award. "A new era is now upon us, challenging us to venture beyond the achievements of the past and to lay the groundwork for the next 50 years of progress," says Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi government's Masdar Initiative. The six-square-kilometer development will also house an advanced energy, science, and technology community that will include a research institute in cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

This, more or less, is where things stand in much of the environmental world today. On the radical fringes, militant extremists still beat the drums of rebellion against the ravages of commerce and industry. Derrick Jensen's double volume Endgame, for example, recently called for the voluntary destruction of civilization in order to save the world. Even mainstream thinkers who disagree strongly with extremist tactics are largely in agreement with their message. Take the popular nature writer Bill McKibben, whose 2003 bestseller Enough laments: "Meaning has been in decline for a very long time, almost since the start of civilization." His latest book, Deep Economy, argues passionately against the very idea of prog-

McKibben's dream of a future marked by simple things—shopping at the farmer's market, bird watching, baking your neighbor a pie—is shared by many, and I can certainly sympathize. In a world of strip malls and postmodern alienation and neighborhoods choked with carcinogens and asthma, the romantic tug of some idyllic agrarian yesterday can be a strong one. Yet every time I indulge in these reveries of years gone by, I end up feeling like I did that day in Savannah—stuck, hamstrung, oddly out of step with my own

ress, claiming that the only "durable future" for our imper-

iled planet is one based on the revitalization of small-scale

yourself on the green spectrum, it seems, people are trying

one way or another to step on the brakes, if not reverse the

local cultures and economies. No matter where you find

century found themselves caught in a peculiar double bind. On one hand was the desire to reach for a brighter future for the world and its children; on the other, the fear that the very tools and technologies that might get us there were themselves our future's greatest enemy. Competing currents of thought pitted faith in the progressive solutions of science against the urge to conserve the purity of nature while we still had the chance. Yet as the century progressed from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Rachel Carson's terrifying Silent Spring, it became more and more difficult to ignore our power to destroy the world. "Within the conservation movement," Kirk writes, "a growing ambivalence toward technology turned into full-fledged technophobia." With fears of ecological meltdown and postindustrial apocalypse growing more plausible by the decade, the majority came to see the brightest future of all as a swift return to the way

things were in the past.

tides of history.

**ALEX STEFFEN** is a pioneering thinker on global sustainability and the cofounder of Worldchanging, an international weblog that has garnered significant accolades over the past few years as a clearing house for cutting-edge environmental thought. He is credited with coining the term "bright green," which is now beginning to enter popular usage.

times. Is it not modernity itself we have to thank for the fact that most of us haven't died of starvation or disease, or that liberty and equality are basic rights we enjoy, or even that we know enough about how the world works to think about things like global ecosystems? Besides, I wonder whether going backward is even an option anymore. Half the people on the planet are under the age of thirty, and a third are under fifteen. (That's 2.2 billion kids, if you're counting.) We're adding just shy of a thousand coal plants to this warming globe over the next ten years, and a city the size of Seattle every four to seven days. In upcoming decades, billions of people will migrate to the squatter cities of the developing world in order to bring themselves up out of poverty. Ready or not, we're all on a trajectory that is lifting us rapidly beyond a world that makes any sense whatsoever by even twentieth-century standards. And the future isn't waiting for anybody.



**BRUCE STERLING** A science fiction author and futurist best known for his influence on the cyberpunk genre and his popular writing for *Wired* magazine, Sterling is also the founder of an innovative green design movement called "Viridian Design." Sterling's radical approach to environmentalism, including his embrace of consumerism and high-tech solutions, helped inspire the founding of Worldchanging.

his brings me to Worldchanging, the book that arrived last spring bearing news of an environmental paradigm so shamelessly up to the minute, it almost blew out all my green circuits before I could even get it out of its stylish slipcover. Worldchanging: A User's Guide for the 21st Century. It's also the name of the group blog, found

at Worldchanging.com, where the material in the book originally came from. Run by a future-savvy environmental journalist named Alex Steffen, Worldchanging is one of the

central hubs in a fast-growing network of thinkers defining an ultramodern green agenda that closes the gap between nature and society—big time. After a good solid century of well-meaning efforts to restrain, reduce, and otherwise mitigate our presence here on planet Earth, they're saying it's time for environmentalism to do a one-eighty.

"We need, in the next twentyfive years or so, to do something never before done. We need to consciously redesign the entire material basis of our civilization."

—Alex Steffen

"bright green," and if you're at all steeped in the old-school "dark green" worldview (their term), they're guaranteed to make you squirm. The good news is, they just might free you to think completely differently as well.

Worldchanging takes its inspiration from a series of speeches given by sci-fi author, futurist, and cyberguru Bruce Sterling in the years leading up to the turn of the millennium—and from the so-called Viridian design movement he gave birth to. Known more in those days as one of the fathers of cyberpunk than as the prophet of a new twenty-first-century environmentalism, Sterling nevertheless began issuing a self-styled "prophecy" to the design world announcing the launch of a cutting-edge green design program that would embrace consumerism rather than reject it. Its mission: to take on climate change as the planet's most burning aesthetic challenge. "Why is this an aesthetic issue?" he asked his first audience in 1998 at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts near my old office at the Natural Resources Defense Council, "Well, because it's a severe breach of taste to bake and sweat half to death in your own trash, that's why. To boil and roast the entire physical world, just so you can pursue your cheap addiction to carbon dioxide."

Explaining the logic of the bright green platform, Sterling writes:

It's a question of tactics. Civil society does not respond at all well to moralistic scolding. There are small minority groups here and there who are perfectly aware that it is immoral to harm the lives of coming generations by massive consumption now: deep Greens, Amish, people practicing voluntary simplicity, Gandhian ashrams and so forth. These

public-spirited voluntarists are not the problem. But they're not the solution either, because most human beings won't volunteer to live like they do.... However, contemporary civil society can be led anywhere that looks attractive, glamorous and seductive. The task at hand is therefore basically

an act of social engineering. Society must become Green, and it must be a variety of Green that society will eagerly consume. What is required is not a natural Green, or a spiritual Green, or a primitivist

They're ditching the long-held tenets of classical greenitude and harnessing the engines of capitalism, high technology, and human ingenuity to jump-start the manufacture of a dramatically sustainable future. They call themselves

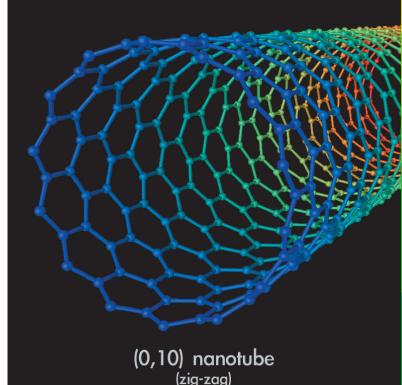
Green, or a blood-and-soil romantic Green. These flavors of Green have been tried and have proven to have insufficient appeal. . . . The world needs a new, unnatural, seductive, mediated, glamorous Green. A Viridian Green, if you will.

Sterling elaborates in a speech given to the Industrial Designers Society of America in Chicago in 1999:

This can't be one of these diffuse, anything-goes, eclectic, postmodern things. Forget about that, that's over, that's yesterday. It's got to be a narrow, doctrinaire, high-velocity movement. Inventive, not eclectic. New, not cut-and-pasted from the debris of past trends. Forward-looking and high-tech, not William Morris medieval arts-and-craftsy. About abundance of clean power and clean goods and clean products, not conservative of dirty power and dirty goods and dirty products. Explosive, not thrifty. Expansive, not niggling. Mainstream, not underground. Creative of a new order, not subversive of an old order. Making a new cultural narrative, not calling the old narrative into question. . . .

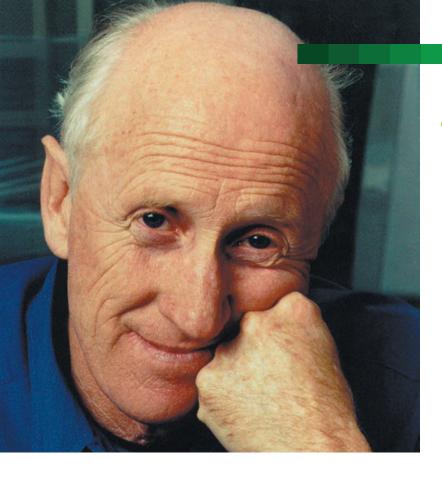
Twentieth-century design is over now. Anything can look like anything now. You can put a pixel of any color anywhere you like on a screen, you can put a precise dot of ink anywhere on any paper, you can stuff any amount of functionality into chips. The limits aren't to be found in the technology anymore. The limits are behind your own eyes, people. They are limits of habit, things you've accepted, things you've been told, realities you're ignoring. Stop being afraid. Wake up. It's yours if you want it. It's yours if you're bold enough.

It was a philosophy that completely reversed the fulcrum of environmental thinking, shifting its focus from the flaws inherent in the human soul to the failures inherent in the world we've designed—designed, Sterling emphasized. Things are the way they are today, he seemed to be saying, for no greater or lesser reason than that we made them that way—and there's no good reason for them to stay the same. His suggestion that it's time to hang up our hats as caretakers of the earth and embrace our role as its masters is profoundly unnerving to the dark green environmentalist in me. But at this point





From elevators linking Earth with outer space to longer-lasting tennis balls, nanotechnology is radically transforming the way we think about manufacturing and design. Learning how to build at the ultramicroscopic, or nano, scale has potentially enormous consequences for eliminating waste, saving energy, eradicating resource scarcity, and generally making things that once seemed impossible more possible than ever. One instance in which nanotechnology is having an immediate, practical, and potentially lifesaving impact is in the field of water purification. The scarcity of potable water is a growing problem in many developing countries, and current desalinization technologies are prohibitively expensive and energy-consuming. By making water filters with carbon nanotubes—very smooth, very tiny cylinders constructed of carbon molecules—salt can be removed from seawater without applying the extreme high pressure needed to force water through conventional semipermeable filters. The resulting savings in energy costs is seventy-five percent.



"Urbanization is the most massive and sudden shift of humanity in its history. Environmentalists will be rewarded if they welcome it and get out in front of it."

-Stewart Brand

**STEWART BRAND** Founder of the influential *Whole Earth Catalog* and early contributor to the budding development of the internet, Brand has been predicting trends and pushing forward new environmental and social thinking since the 1960s. His continually evolving ideas have inspired and informed an entire generation of environmentalists, including many of the bright green movement's leading lights.

in history, is it any more than a question of semantics? With PCBs in the flesh of Antarctic penguins, there isn't a square inch of the planet's surface that is "unmanaged" anymore; there is no more untouched "natural" state. We hold the strings of global destiny in our fingertips, and the easy luxury of cynicism regarding our creative potential to resolve things is starting to look catastrophically expensive. Our less-than-admirable track record gives us every reason to be cautious and every excuse to be pessimists. But is the risk of being optimistic anyway a risk that, in good conscience, we can really afford *not* to take?

Sterling's belief in the fundamental promise of human creativity is reminiscent of earlier design visionaries such as Buckminster Fuller. "I am convinced that creativity is a priori to the integrity of the universe and that life is regenerative and conformity meaningless," Fuller wrote in I Seem to Be a Verb in 1970, the same year we had our first Earth Day. "I seek," he declared simply, "to reform the environment instead of trying to reform man." Fuller's ideas influenced many of the twentieth century's brightest environmental lights, including Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth Catalog and the online community The WELL, an early precursor of the internet. Brand took Fuller's approach and ran with it in the sixties and seventies, helping to spearhead a tech-friendly green counterculture that worked to pull environmentalism out of the wilderness and into the realms of sustainable technology and social justice. "We are as gods, and might as well get good at it," he wrote in the original

1968 edition of the Whole Earth Catalog, and he's managed to keep himself on the evolving edge of progressive thought ever since. Brand went on to found the Point Foundation, CoEvolution Quarterly (which became Whole Earth Review), the Hackers Conference, the Global Business Network, and the Long Now Foundation. As he gets older, he recently told the New York Times, he continues to become "more rational and less romantic. . . . I keep seeing the harm done by religious romanticism, the terrible conservatism of romanticism, the ingrained pessimism of romanticism. It builds in a certain immunity to the scientific frame of mind."

Many remember the Whole Earth Catalog with a fondness reserved for only the closest of personal guiding lights. "It was sort of like Google in paperback form, thirty-five years before Google came along," recalls Apple cofounder Steve Jobs. "It was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions." For Alex Steffen, it's the place "where a whole generation of young commune-kid geeks like myself learned to dream weird." And at Worldchanging, those unorthodox green dreams have grown into a high-speed Whole Earth Catalog for the internet generation, every bit as inventive, idealistic, and brazenly ambitious as its predecessor: "We need, in the next twenty-five years or so, to do something never before done," Steffen writes in his introduction to Worldchanging. "We need to consciously redesign the entire material basis of our civilization. The model we replace it with must be dramatically more ecologically sustainable, offer large increases in prosperity for everyone

on the planet, and not only function in areas of chaos and corruption, but also help transform them. That alone is a task of heroic magnitude, but there's an additional complication: we only get one shot. Change takes time, and time is what we don't have. . . . Fail to act boldly enough and we may fail completely."

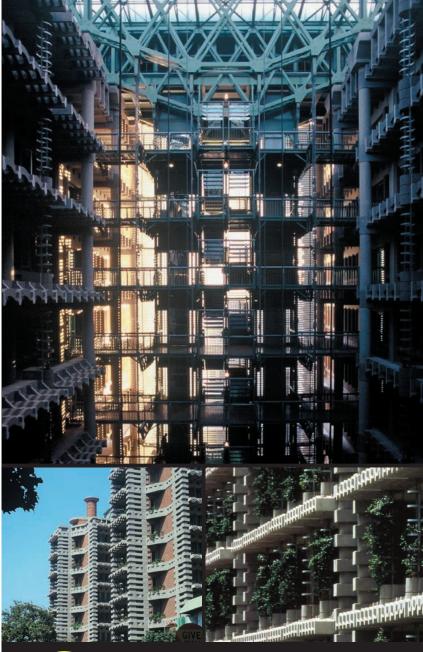
nother world is possible," goes the popular slogan of the World Social Forum, a yearly gathering of antiglobalization activists from around the world. No, counters Worldchanging in a conscious riff on that motto: "Another world is here." Indeed, bright green environmentalism is less about the problems and limitations we need to overcome than the "tools, models, and ideas" that already exist for overcoming them. It forgoes the bleakness of protest and dissent for the energizing confidence of constructive solutions. As Sterling said in his first Viridian design speech, paying

Of course, nobody knows exactly what a bright green future will look like; it's only going to become visible in the process of building it. Worldchanging: A User's Guide is six hundred pages long, and no single recipe in the whole cornucopia takes up more than a few of them. It's an inspired wealth of information I can't even begin to do justice to here, but it also presents a surprisingly integrated platform for immediate creative action, a sort of bright green rule set based on the best of today's knowledge and innovation—and perpetually open to improvement.

homage to William Gibson: "The future is already here,

it's just not well distributed yet."

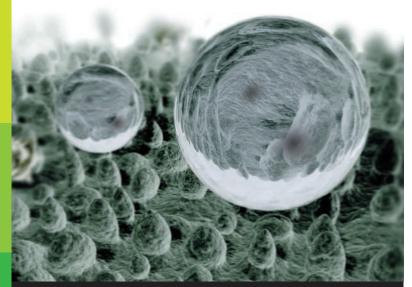
To start with, Worldchanging's core principles are based on the concept of the ecological footprint. "Ecological footprints give us a metaphor for understanding our impact on the planet and the meaning of sustainability," Steffen writes. "They boil that impact down to a single number and measure it in terms of land area." Your ecological footprint represents the amount of land required to provide you with absolutely everything you consume, both directly and indirectly—from your water, shelter, and electricity to the food you eat, the truck that took it to the grocery store, the gasoline the truck burned, and even the roads it drove on to get there. Divide the planet into six and a half billion or so equal pieces and you get what's called a "one-planet footprint," which is each





### TERMITE AIR CONDITIONING

When architect Mick Pearce was designing Zimbabwe's largest multi-use office and shopping complex, he sought an alternative to installing a costly conventional air conditioning system that would require an exorbitant amount of energy to beat the Harare heat. He found his inspiration in the termite mounds that populate the country's savannah. Because termites must maintain the temperature of their food supply within the narrow range of a degree or two, they ingeniously construct their mounds with a system of ventilation tunnels and earth banks that they adjust throughout the day as the outside air temperature fluctuates. Applying a similar system to the design of his Eastgate building, Pearce was able to reduce its energy consumption by ninety percent.





### Inspired by Nature

In hindsight, it's not hard to see that industrial society has been relatively clumsy and wasteful in making the things we need to survive here on Earth. Using sheer brute force, we "heat, beat, and treat" all manner of materials to manufacture most everything we use. But there's a new design paradigm on the scene called "biomimicry" that looks to nature as a mentor for how to do things differently. Indeed, with 3.8 billion



**Janine Benyus** is the author of *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature.* 

years of research and development under their belts, the organisms that have made it this far down evolution's unforgiving path have developed adaptive strategies we humans are only just beginning to be able to understand—and copy. According to science writer Janine Benyus, author of Biomimicry, as today's biology becomes more and more sophisticated, designers and manufacturers are learning to blur the distinctions between the "made" and the "born" like never before, modeling nature's ingenuity in fields as diverse as engineering, medicine, architecture, and computing. The Lotusan brand of paint, for example, was inspired by the lotus flower, long considered a symbol of purity because it always

remains clean even though it grows in pools of muddy water. Inspecting the lotus leaf under a microscope, scientists found a unique surface configuration of tiny crags and peaks that causes water molecules to ball up and roll off, carrying dirt away with them. The paint they designed to mimic this microscopic surface structure not only cleans itself every time it rains but offers greater mold resistance and lasts up to twice as long as conventional paint.

person's fair and sustainable share of a finite resource base. Here in the West, our footprints are more like five or ten times that size, and the bright green bottom line says we've got about thirty years to get that number down to one.

Lest you think you can achieve this roughly eighty or ninety percent reduction of your demand on the planet's carrying capacity by swapping out your light bulbs and spending extra on organic groceries, forget it. Buy yourself a Prius, put up some solar panels, clothe yourself in vegan leather—no matter what, you can't shop your way to a bright green future. At Worldchanging, they call this the "myth of individual lifestyle responsibility." Small steps are good, Steffen says, but they won't get our ecological footprints anywhere near the one-planet standard because they won't transform the severely unsustainable systems and infrastructures our lives are utterly entrenched in:

We don't need more recycling, we need a completely different system of closed-loop manufacturing, and no matter how many cans I crush, my personal actions at the consumer level are of very little importance in getting us there. Even millions more ecoconsumers will not get us what we need. What we need instead, it seems to me, is a global movement of smart people who understand the systems in which we're embedded, are actively pursuing better models which could replace them, and are clever as heck about communicating visions for doing so to their fellow citizens.

Canadian ecologist William Rees, who coined the term "ecological footprint" in 1992, agrees. "We're all on the same ship," he told the *Vancouver Sun* recently, "and what we do in our individual cabins is of almost no consequence in terms of the direction the ship is going." (In the meantime, we still have to buy stuff anyway, and the bright green ethos suggests spending less time sweating the little things and more time strategizing your bigger purchases to support emerging innovation and help leverage markets toward sustainability.)

When it comes to changing the structures and systems that are the real lynchpins of one-planet living, Worldchanging takes its lead from two of the most celebrated exponents of bright green environmentalism to date: Virginia architect William McDonough and German chemist Michael Braungart, authors of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. For over twenty years, these prescient pioneers of ecologically intelligent design have been doing their best to make twentieth-century industry and architecture obsolete by eliminating the concept of waste from buildings, manufacturing processes,

# WORLDCHANGING A USER'S GUIDE TO THE 21ST CENTURY



This compendium of ingenious green "tools, models, and ideas" from all over the world will completely reframe the way you think about sustainability. Says Earth Day founder Denis Hayes, "Worldchanging might well be the most complete, compelling articulation of the possible look and feel and actual operation of a sustainable society ever written."

an excerpt from WorldChanging

# The Editt Tower, Singapore

### by Sarah Rich

Imagine walking through a verdant urban park and finding yourself in the atrium of a skyscraper. This will be the experience at Singapore's Editt Tower. Still in the planning stages, under the direction of Dr. Ken Yeang, Editt Tower approaches the fusion of indoors and outdoors by bringing greenery to the whole building—inside and out, top to bottom. Though relatively tall, the twenty-six-story building is designed to minimize the disconnect between upper-floor offices and street-level pedestrian traffic. Visitors will stroll along landscaped ramps and greenways lined with shops that climb to the sixth floor. The indigenous plants that line the walks will be irrigated by means of rainwater harvesting and sewage recycling. When someone in a twentieth-floor office flushes the toilet, that water will run through an on-site cleaning system and into the irrigation lines, forming a closed system for the building's resources. Other green features, such as solar energy and natural ventilation, will keep costs down and spaces comfortable. The Editt Tower design has undergone an evaluation of its strategies for eventual retrofits and the long-term disuse of building components, ensuring that its environmental accountability doesn't apply only to its initial construction, but to its entire life cycle.

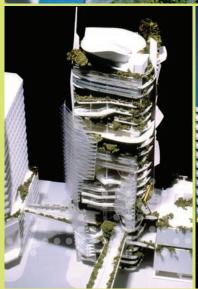
Dr. Yeang, whose tower design won the Ecological Design in the Tropics 1998 award, made human experience a priority in the development of Editt Tower. In contrast to the cold, disconnected, and hollow feeling of many skyscrapers, this place will be alive with people, commerce, and greenery. Integration of inside with outside and top floors with ground floors will bring the otherwise diffuse energy of a large building into a cohesive whole. Even in its conceptual stages, Editt Tower serves as an inspiring model for what's possible in the revitalization of skyscraper landscapes. Hopefully, by the time it's done, similar concepts will be in the works everywhere.



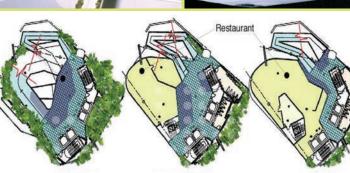
**Sarah Rich** is a writer and editor working at the intersection of sustainability, bright green design, and mainstream culture. She is Senior Managing Editor at Inhabitat.com and is the former Managing Editor of both Worldchanging.com and the Worldchanging book.















MICHAEL BRAUNGART & WILLIAM McDONOUGH, authors of Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things, are leading proponents of a philosophy of sustainability that takes fullness and abundance rather than scarcity and limitation as the starting point for industrial and architectural design. Their work has laid crucial ground for the bright green reinvention of modern industry and commerce.

and material flows. "Achieving a sustainable system of consumption and production is not a matter of reducing the footprint of our activities on this planet," Braungart insists, "but transforming this footprint into a source of replenishment for those systems that depend on it." He and McDonough have a simple revolutionary dictum—waste equals food. Every structure, process, and product they design is anchored in closed-loop cycles that use materials of only two kinds: "Biological nutrients" are biodegradable materials that can be safely discarded when their life cycle is complete; "technical nutrients" are nonbiodegradable materials like metals and polymers that can be reused indefinitely in industrial chains. Everything else gets phased out as fast as possible, and a world where that standard was being met would be a world where landfills and pollution were relics of history. To get there, we need the freedom to analyze every stage in the life cycle of every product and service we utilize, and that means new levels of transparency and accountability up and down the marketplace.

As revolutionary as the shift to a cradle-to-cradle design paradigm will be, it's just one part of a bright green future. That future will also be significantly more urban. "Manhattanites use fewer resources and less energy than anyone else in America," writes Steffen—even people living in super-efficient green homes in the country. In fact, urban density is not only one of the best drivers of sustainable consumption but one of the best strategies for preserving wild nature as well. Rejecting the lavish inefficiency of the suburbs and learning how to integrate densely orchestrated urban

"Achieving a sustainable system of consumption and production is not a matter of reducing the footprint of our activities on this planet, but transforming this footprint into a source of replenishment for those systems that depend on it."

-Michael Braungart

communities with agricultural greenspace and healthy natural habitats will be essential to building a one-planet society. "The environmentalist aesthetic is to love villages and despise cities," wrote Stewart Brand in MIT's Technology Review:

My mind got changed on the subject a few years ago by an Indian acquaintance who told me that in Indian villages the women obeyed their husbands and family elders, pounded grain, and sang. But, the acquaintance explained, when Indian women immigrated to cities, they got jobs, started businesses, and demanded their children be educated. They became more independent, as they became less fundamentalist in their religious beliefs. Urbanization is

the most massive and sudden shift of humanity in its history. Environmentalists will be rewarded if they welcome it and get out in front of it.

Everywhere that we see the rural-to-urban demographic swing around the world, Brand explains—about two hundred thousand people a day leave the countryside for life in the city, and the planet just passed the fifty percent urban point this year—birthrates plummet and population growth stabilizes. That's good news for developing nations being crushed under economic, environmental, and social pressures never before seen on Earth, because hand in hand with the challenges of urbanization comes an unprecedented explosion of opportunity. According to Steffen, the bright green vision of sustainable development is one that treats "entrenched social and sustainability difficulties as problems capable of solution through the conscious and context-sensitive application of innovation." But those solutions won't come from the developed world, he cautions. They will be created "on the streets of developing-world cities, by a younger generation just now coming into its own. They don't need our answers; they need the tools for finding and sharing their own answers." To that end, Worldchanging advocates open-source models of design, copyright, and licensing that encourage collaboration, maximize the appropriateness of solutions in local contexts, and allow for uninhibited retooling of technologies to keep pace with evolving realities on the ground. They also call for "leapfrogging" expensive first-world infrastructures and going straight to cutting-edge technologies in developing nations, skipping land lines for cell phones and power poles for solar cells. The more we knit the whole world together in open and accessible webs of information technology, they believe, the more the precarious tension "between urban possibility and urban collapse" will swing in the direction of a bright green future.

Worldchanging's radical tool kit for the world of tomorrow is marked by much, much more—some of it more familiar from the mainstream environmental agenda (clean renewable energies, carbon neutrality, sustainable transportation and agriculture, environmental justice), and some of it less so. Of that latter category, one aspect in particular stands out. According to Sterling at least, the bright green paradigm will be one that is completely free of spiritual or mystical overtones. "[These are] simply absolute anathema for us," he declared the day he inaugurated the Viridian design movement. "If it doesn't pass muster over at the Skeptical Inquirer magazine, we don't want to know about it. It's not that we're going to pick big public fights with spiritually motivated Greens and other illuminated hippie types. This is useless and a waste of time, like beating up Quakers and the Amish. We're simply going to serenely ignore them, the way everyone else does."







# HOW A SEASHELL MADE Drano OBSOLETE

As we follow the course that economist Jeremy Rifkin predicted some years ago and move further away from the age of physics and chemistry and into the age of biology, scientists continue to find innovative solutions to formerly intractable problems by taking cues from how nature has solved similar ones. Take the unwanted buildup of mineral deposits inside pipes, a plumber's nightmare that has hampered everyone from wastewater treatment engineers to most homeowners at one time or another. When industrial designers learned from biologists that seashells grow by precipitating minerals out of ocean water to form their shells, they recognized a process analogous to the formation of clogs in pipes, and they became curious to find out how marine mollusks regulate their size by turning this process off. It turned out that a protein released by the mollusks is all it takes to stop the accumulation of calcium carbonate, and there are synthetic alternatives that mimic this same stop-action mechanism. The designers soon developed a nontoxic product that can be released into the plumbing, sticking to the inner surface of pipes and keeping them free-flowing. Now, thanks to a seashell protein, we stand to prevent millions of gallons of noxious chemicals from being flushed into the environment.

ecause I was an "illuminated hippie type" myself, I can understand what Sterling is rejecting here. These days, the quaintly Old World mysticism of dark green—the kind of spirituality that reveres the earth, celebrates full moons and solstices and harvest time, and idealizes the pastoral simple life—often makes forward-thinking folks of all stripes

run in the other direction. But we have to make sure we don't lose the baby with the bathwater. Environmentalism itself was born out of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "discovery" of nature—a spiritual awakening if ever there was one—in which Europe's Romantics and later America's Transcendentalists began to contemplate the aesthetic beauty of the world and saw reflected in its mirror new and unseen depths within themselves. Not coincidentally, the emergence of environmentalism as a movement in the late 1960s happened in conjunction with that same romantic awakening in the popular counterculture. It was in 1968 that NASA released the first photos of the entire Earth from space taken by the Apollo 8 moon mission, and that familiar shot of a tiny blue-green marble floating alone in the black distances of eternity graced the cover of Brand's first Whole Earth Catalog. People made it into buttons for Earth Day 1970. The astronauts who came back spoke of seeing a planet without nations or borders, a home more like home than the places they grew up in. James Lovelock, whose "Gaia hypothesis" proposed a vision of the Earth as a single living superorganism, called it the most extraordinary image he had ever seen.

"When people look at Earth from the outside," NASA scientist John Oró predicted, "something strange [and] revolutionary will happen: people will alter their thinking."

And he was right. In those days, it was as if some cosmic aperture began to open in the human mind that helped shift us out of ethnic and national identities and into a deeper resonance with the rest of creation. This awakening to a heartfelt unity and affinity with all of nature and life—the same thing I discovered myself as a young man walking the prehistoric Sequoia groves and lupine-dotted valleys of Yosemite—is the foundation stone of environmental consciousness, the very platform of relatedness and responsibility that makes dark, bright, or any other shade of green possible. It changed the entire historical trajectory of the industrialized world, for starters. If you want to give yourself nightmares, just imagine what our planet might look like today if it weren't for this flowering of spiritual and moral sensibility that emerged within postmodern culture in the sixties and seventies in response to the reckless exploitation of nature and the runaway materialism of modern society. Those were the decades of every major American environmental law, from the Wilderness Act to the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and Endangered Species Act, and in no uncertain terms, we have the evolution of consciousness to thank

In his glittering exuberance for high-tech solutions and glamorous green consumerism, Sterling seems to have forgotten all that. "The cybergreens are winning," he writes in a recent op-ed for the Washington Post, because unlike the rest of the environmental world, "they're not about spiritual potential, human decency, small is beautiful, peace, justice or anything else unattainable. The cybergreens are about stuff people want, such as health, sex, glamour, hot products, awesome bandwidth, tech innovation and tons of money." While he's clearly delighting somewhat in the role





## Fueling up on Algae

Hydrogen is the most abundant chemical element in the universe and has long been considered the ideal pollution-free replacement for fossil fuels. Yet here on Earth, it doesn't exist naturally in its pure gaseous form. Extracting it from larger molecules, such as water, is too energy intensive to be feasible. But scientists are now working to employ a common species of green algae to do the same task with far less fuss. Withhold sulfur and oxygen from the algae's growing environment, and voilà, they happily excrete hydrogen gas. Though the process is still confined to the laboratory, once production rates are sufficiently improved, you might find yourself bypassing your favorite gas station en route to your local scum-covered pond when you want to fill up your tank. According to researcher Tasios Melis, of the University of California, Berkeley, "A single small commercial pond could produce enough hydrogen gas to meet the weekly fuel needs of a dozen or so automobiles."

of the provocateur, his anti-spiritual triumphalism is not only shortsighted but confused. Imploring us all to become environmentalists in one breath, he turns around and mocks the very impulse that encourages us to do so in the next. This sort of hyperbole is obviously self-defeating, but it also points to a deeper irony within the bright green movement as a whole. Indeed, the greatest danger for bright green today seems to be that the very thing that makes it so progressive its attempt to integrate postmodern ecological consciousness into the modernist project of economic and social

progress—is the same thing that threatens to drag it backward into an overly materialistic orientation toward sustainability and global development.

Luckily for bright green, its center of gravity is not entirely settled yet. The movement has many voices, and Sterling's is only one of them. Many tend toward unbridled materialism in the same way that Sterling does, if not so vociferously; others seem to recognize that

being ruthlessly pragmatic about moving forward doesn't have to mean flattening everything down to the lowest common denominators of "sex, glamour . . . and tons of money." At times, progressive environmentalists have certainly been able to embrace technological optimism and capitalist ingenuity without rejecting spiritual idealism, and there's no reason they can't do so again. Bucky Fuller, for example, was a man for whom a certain reverential depth seemed to be synonymous with the attitude of progress. "I live on

Earth at present," he wrote, "and I don't know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing—a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process—an integral function of the universe." Brand has always held a richer, more integrated view as well. One of his current projects is called "The Clock of the Long Now," a mechanical clock that will be built to last 10,000 years out in the Nevada desert, ticking once a year, bonging once per hundred, and letting out its cuckoo each time a millennium rolls around. The idea is to create a public icon of "mythic depth" that will do

for the concept of "deep time" what the photos of Earth from space did for our awareness of

In continuing to define and consolidate the next stage of green for the twenty-first century, perhaps the insights of the nascent field of integral ecology can help orient us. Environmental philosopher Michael Zimmerman is coauthor with Sean Esbjorn-Hargens of the —Buckminster Fuller forthcoming Integral Ecology, due out in 2008. "There's such a revul-

the environment.

sion against modernity among modern environmentalists," he told WIE, "that their interpretation of modern history is always colored by the worst possible way of looking at it. But there's no going back to a naïve time when humans are just like the other animals running around. It's too late for that now." At the same time, integral ecology would argue that as we take up the mantle and the moral burden of absolute creative stewardship over the biosphere, we have to make sure we don't lose touch with the reason

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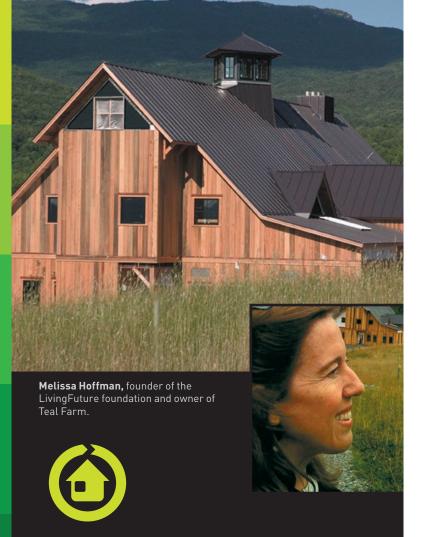
be a verb, an evolutionary pro-





# weeding out Land Mines

There are an estimated 45 million land mines still buried throughout the world. Not only are they brutally dangerous, but they keep much-needed arable land from cultivation. In search of a reliable yet uncomplicated means for their detection, a Danish biotechnology firm found that the lowly thale cress, a flowering weed, could effectively do the job with a bit of genetic modification. Their customized variety of the plant changes color when its roots encounter nitrogen dioxide, a byproduct released by buried explosives after they've been in the ground for a while. Grown on fields infiltrated with land mines, the thale cress indicates the location of the treacherous devices when its leaves turn from green to red.



# A MODEL OF PERPETUAL LIFE

Vermont has no shortage of eco-minded residents, but when Melissa Hoffman of the nonprofit foundation LivingFuture purchased the historic Teal Farm—1,300 acres of pastureland and forests in the center of the Green Mountain range—she had plans far more ambitious than an organic garden in the backyard. Her goal? To create a perpetually self-sustaining, life-enhancing farm ecology "capable of meeting regional food and energy needs within the tumultuous conditions of global warming, fluctuating energy supplies, and an oil-dependent global economy." The key word in her vision is perpetual. Inspired by William McDonough and Michael Braungart's "cradle to cradle" design principles, the idea is that Teal Farm will function as a living, evolving organism—one that eliminates waste by continuously deriving all its nutrients locally and producing or capturing all the resources it needs for powering machinery and heating and cooling the buildings on the property. Intended to serve as a prototype of highly integrated, state-of-the-art energy, food, building, and ecosystem technologies, Teal Farm will incorporate wind, photovoltaics, solar hot water, wood gasification, and small-scale hydroelectric generation into a single unified system.

people such as John Muir railed against modernity in the first place. "Most people are on the world, not in it," Muir wrote in John of the Mountains in 1938. "[They] have no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them—undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate." This is not only the perspective that gave birth to environmental awareness, Zimmerman explains, but the only perspective sensitive and sophisticated enough to sustain it:

Environmentalism has to align itself with a developmental, even progressive interpretation of human history. The developments of modernity are extraordinary, including the human emancipation from terrible political systems, the elimination of slavery, the elimination of poverty in many ways, the development of science, the separation of church and state, the development of rights for women . . . I mean, these are not trivial achievements. Yet there is also a dark side to modernity, which includes this continuing practice of domination over other species, and a kind of willful ignorance, at times, in regard to our dependence on the natural world. But the solution to modernity's dark side is not to abandon modernity and regress to premodern social formations, which would just be a disaster. The only solution is to encourage and facilitate the further development of human consciousness, and the institutions and practices that are necessary to sustain it. We have to be able to go forward constructively, to open up and envision further developmental possibilities while respecting everything that's gone before in a way that's not naïve.

he crisis that confronts us is "unthinkable," Alex Steffen likes to say. The solutions we must implement, he continues, are as yet "unimaginable." And between these two seemingly paralyzing poles lies the liberating perspective of the bright greens. To stretch way beyond our comfort zones into the unknown, they propose, may be the only real shot at survival that is left to us. To let go that much, with both feet on the (hybrid) gas pedal, may be our only chance at moving fast enough.

"The most important thing that professionals in sustainability will have to offer in the future is not ready-made solutions," writes Worldchanging contributor Alan AtKisson, "but

an ability to improvise, adapt, innovate, and dream up still more visionary-yet-feasible ideas about how to transform a global civilization or rescue ecosystems in trouble. This is going to require even more exertion, more creativity, more risk. . . . In the next few years, people who have been working on sustainability, especially where it touches the climateand-energy nexus, are going to be seriously tested—not by resistance to their ideas, but by the ever-increasing demand for them." Perhaps our greatest asset in this enterprise of possibility and uncertainty will be the willingness to question everything—the courage not to take easy positions but to insist on searching for the right ones. Worldchanging itself is a real example of this in that they're honestly grappling with the whole integrated matrix of sustainability in ways I've never seen before. Everything, it seems, is up for reinvention, and nothing's off the table—including some of environmentalism's heftiest sacred cows.

Two years ago, for example, Brand published a piece titled "Environmental Heresies" in which he called for a serious reconsideration of two of the most sacrosanct issues of the day: biotechnology and nuclear power. Setting off predictable storms of controversy, Brand's arguments were mostly practical ones. On genetic engineering, he feels knee-jerk anticorporatism has won out over science and that genetically modified crops and microorganisms have the potential to dramatically ameliorate hunger and disease in the developing world, produce new and cleaner fuels, and combat invasive species. On the nuclear issue, he believes that our burning need to decarbonize energy production and avert the "universal permanent disaster" of global warming trumps the risks of nuclear generation and nuclear waste, which, great as they are, are nevertheless known quantities. Several prominent environmentalists agree with him, including James Lovelock, and heated debates are taking place on all sides of the fence. Worldchanging comes down more in agreement with Brand on bioengineering and less so on nuclear issues, according to the website's cofounder Jamais Cascio:

The Bright Green reluctance about nuclear power has far more to do with it being centralized infrastructure and dated technology than with any fear or loathing of atoms. The environmental situation in which we find ourselves demands a fast-learning, fast-iterating, distributed and collaborative technological capacity, not a system that bleeds out investment dollars and leaves us stuck with tech-

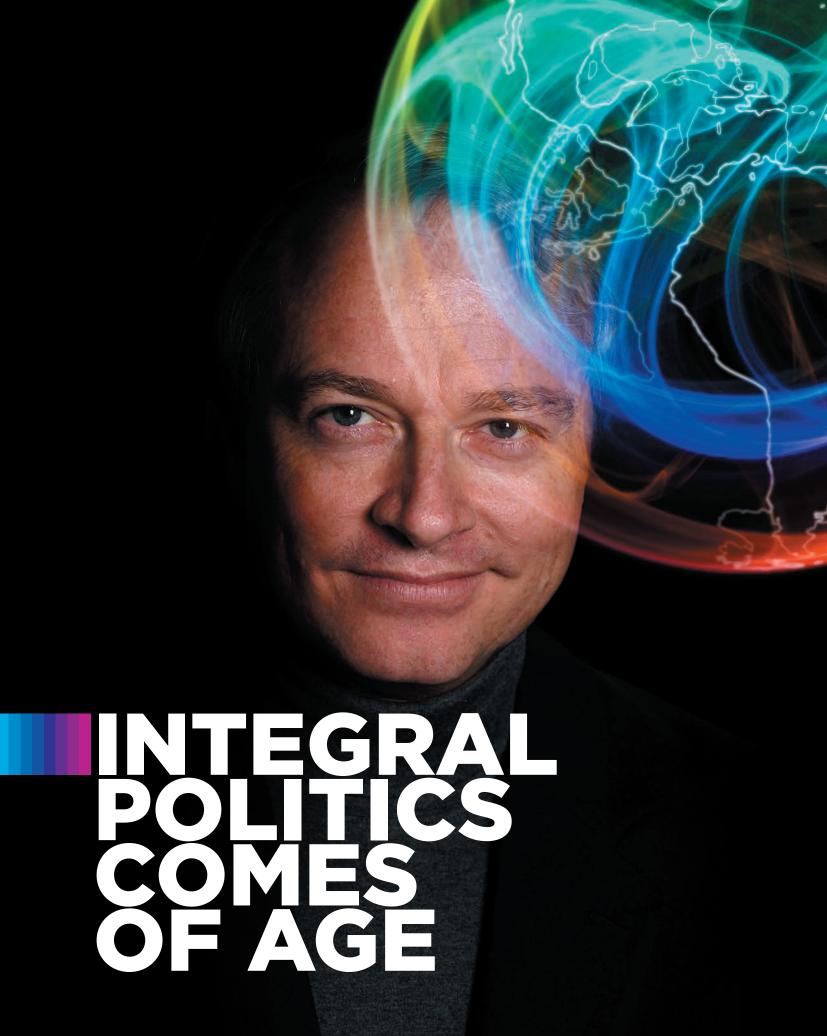
nologies already on the verge of obsolescence. If we're looking for resilience, flexibility and innovation, the nuclear industry is not a good place to start. With regards to biotechnology, resilience, flexibility and innovation are definitely possible, at least in the years to come.

In the years to come, I can't wait to participate myself in the creative unfolding of a future so bright and green it's currently impossible to imagine. And while the avantgarde eco-philosophers at Worldchanging and elsewhere are doing their best to question everything, reconfigure all our dark green assumptions, and blow the old sacred cows out of the water, I hope they don't make a sacred cow out of spirituality. If the future of environmentalism depends on the evolution not just of our physical circumstances and social formations but also of the deeper interior structures

While these avant-garde ecophilosophers are doing their best to blow the old sacred cows out of the water, I hope they don't make a sacred cow out of spirituality.

of consciousness and culture, the most important question of all may be whether the bright green vision of sustainability is willing to grow broad enough to encompass these interior dimensions.

The good news is, I think it can. If Zimmerman is right when he characterizes the dark green call for a romantic return to nature as reflecting a kind of nostalgia for older, safer, more familiar structures of consciousness within ourselves, then why shouldn't the call of the bright green future be the call to completely let go of them, making room for something as yet unknown? With bright green, the pressing moral obligation to take the fate of the world consciously and carefully into our own hands right now, or risk losing everything, is really inseparable from the thrilling possibility inherent in the human capacity for progress that we can make life better, richer, and more inclusively prosperous than ever before in history. And to me, that's not just the voice of technological optimism. It's the voice of the spiritual impulse itself.





Integral philosopher Steve McIntosh explains the revolutions in consciousness and culture that are shaping the geopolitical future of the planet and leading us toward an integral world federation

by Carter Phipps

HEN I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT Descartes, at the tender age of eighteen, and was told that his famous statement of truth, revered for centuries in philosophical lore, was "Cogito ergo sum" or "I think therefore I am," I found myself surprisingly unimpressed. No doubt I was a touch arrogant or a little bit clueless, or both, but the notion that one's capacity to think constituted evidence of one's existence seemed to my youthful and unenlightened mind just a little too . . . well, obvious.

Flash forward a couple of decades, and my more mature self has come to appreciate the deeper meaning in those simple words and in philosophy in general. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that this scientifically informed technological society of wealth and freedom that we in the West take for granted today can be traced back to realizations embedded in Descartes' radical declaration. In those formative days, when the foundations of our modern world were still being forged, Descartes' words heralded the arrival of the rational, autonomous modern self and helped give human beings the capacity to see the world as they had never seen it before—objectively. Every scientist of the last four hundred years owes him at least a small debt.

Philosophy, as it turns out, is not just a clever way to test the patience of first-year college students with early morning lectures and parsings of logic that would challenge the endurance

of Sisyphus. At its best, it is an exercise in laying the structural foundations of culture, and philosophers can be likened to a sort of advance team on the edges of the development of our society, setting up outposts on the borders of our collective consciousness. Do you want to know where human society is headed in the next one hundred years? Check out the leading edge of philosophical thought today.

That brings us to integral philosophy and Steve McIntosh, author of the just-released *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution*. In a series of recorded conversations for *WIE*'s online multimedia service over the last year, I have had the good fortune to engage in a little philosophy

myself, exploring the contours of an emerging worldview that has come to be called "integral." My partner in this endeavor has been McIntosh, a fortyseven-year-old businessman from Boulder, Colorado, who is equal parts visionary CEO, inspired political scholar, and gifted philosopher. McIntosh has been following many of the insights of inte-

To appreciate the unique perspective of integral philosophy, it is important to understand what is perhaps its most basic and revolutionary insight—that human consciousness and culture have evolved over time through a series of ascending stages or levels of consciousness.

gral theory for decades, but it was not until a few years ago that he became aware of their significance as a new cultural movement. In a series of gatherings in the year 2000 with Spiral Dynamics cofounder Don Beck and the founders of Ken Wilber's Integral Institute, McIntosh began to recognize that the integral worldview was more than just a series of fascinating ideas or an interesting trend in culture. It was, he realized, a historically significant new stage of culture, or as he puts it, "a real, authentic social movement that transcended and included all the problems of the postmodern worldview and the countercultural scene. A new kind of cultural organism was beginning to emerge, one that had a life of its own, and I was beginning to see it with more clarity than ever."

Inspired and invigorated, McIntosh set off to educate himself in this new worldview with all the passion of a man who has glimpsed the potential of a new future and has not a moment to waste. He dedicated himself to the study and practice of integral philosophy—reading, teaching, exploring, and writing about the implications of this new histori-

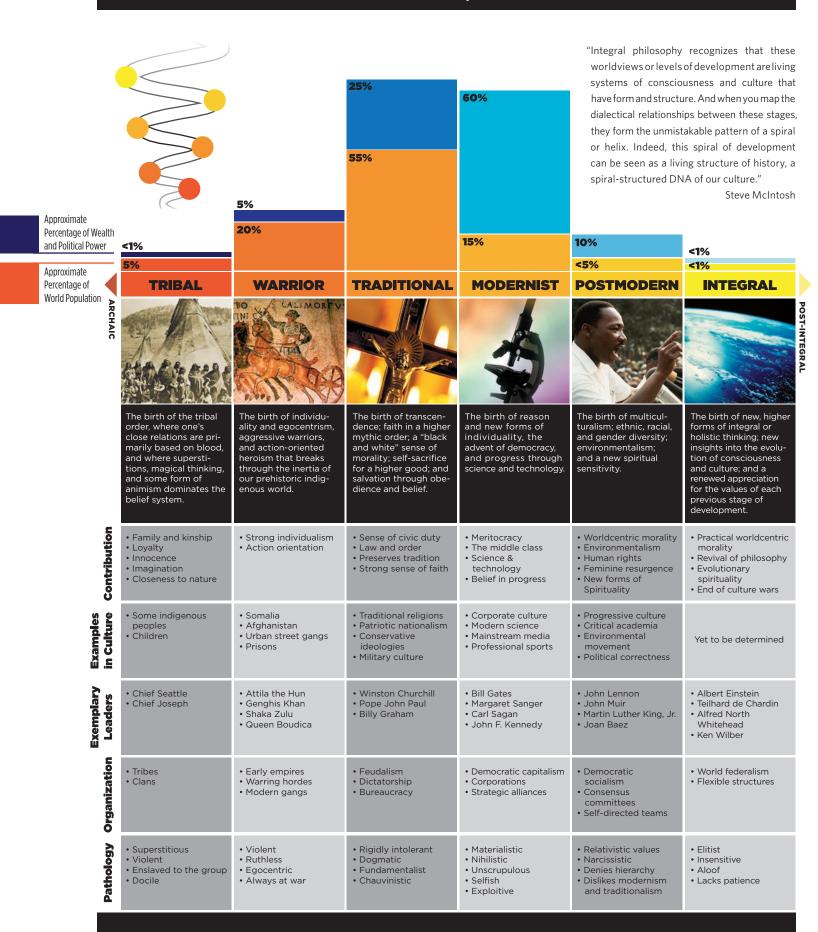
cal development. And the insights of integralism began to reshape his political sensibilities as well. Democracy, geopolitics, international law, global governance—all long-time personal passions—began to reconfigure themselves under the clarity and perspective of this new way of looking at the world.

My conversations with McIntosh have been stimulating on many levels as we've explored the ever-fascinating geography of the integral landscape. But I've been particularly struck by his perspective and insight when it comes to politics. With a background in law—he was once a young, upwardly mobile attorney in one of the biggest law firms in

the world—and his long-time interest in the potential of global governance, McIntosh has a gift for bringing integral philosophy to bear on the political realities of our world in a way that is inspirational, provocative, and definitely ahead of its time. It wasn't long before I began to think about bringing some of those insights to the print edition of What *Is Enlightenment?* 

In order to better understand the perspective of integral politics, however, it is necessary to say a few words first about integral philosophy itself. As the name suggests, the integral movement is attempting to reverse the trend toward fragmentation and specialization that has gripped so many fields of knowledge in the last century and to pursue new, integrated, inclusive frameworks that can provide powerful insights into the evolution of consciousness and culture. In a sense, integral philosophy is not new but has been slowly emerging through the thoughts and words of a number of leading thinkers and researchers—individuals such as Georg Hegel, Friedrich Schelling, Henri Bergson, James Mark Baldwin, Sri Aurobindo, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Piaget, Abraham Maslow, Jürgen Habermas, and Clare Graves—over the last two centuries. And though it has yet to capture the attention of most professional academic philosophers, integral theory has continued to forge ahead through the insights and efforts of brilliant maverick thinkers, most notably theorist Ken Wilber. Indeed, it is Wilber who is the central organizing force of integralism today, and his work

# Levels of Human Development



has helped cohere the many various streams of thought that help make up integral philosophy's synthesis. As McIntosh writes in his new book, "Wilber's 21st century integral synthesis... does for the *internal* universe what Descartes' philosophy did for the *external* universe."

To appreciate the unique perspective of integral philosophy, it is important to understand what is perhaps its most basic and revolutionary insight—that human consciousness and culture have evolved over time through a series of ascending stages or levels of consciousness. These stages are psychological and cultural levels of development; they are levels of consciousness that individuals pass through in their personal evolution and that societies pass through in their cultural evolution. As McIntosh explains, "The integral worldview recognizes that, in some sense, these levels of development in consciousness are correlated to stages of human history. What I mean is that the stages of psychological development that individuals go through as they mature are a rough approximation of the stages of history that human beings have passed through over the last fifty thousand years—and are still passing through."

Now, it is not uncommon for sociologists or psychologists to come up with theories regarding the evolution of people and societies, and many of those theories may have stages. But what distinguishes integral philosophy's adherence to this type of schema is the conviction that these levels are not just a good idea or an interesting proposal but that they are real "structures in consciousness," actual "living systems of culture" that exist within the fabric of society and have empirical validity.

"Integral philosophy shows us that these internal structures of culture, these internal organisms, if you will, have an evolutionary reality, an ontological reality," McIntosh explained to me in one of our phone conversations. "And it's through this description that integral philosophy attains its power. These stages aren't just created by the human mind. They are historically significant worldviews, self-organizing dynamic systems of values that have an existence that is independent of any particular person's writing or thinking."

The term often used to describe the location in consciousness of these stages is "intersubjective," which literally means "between subjects." In the same way that subjective consciousness describes that which exists inside or within the individual, intersubjective is a term that is used to describe that which exists inside or within culture. As McIntosh puts it, "These worldviews are structures of culture—not just of individuals. They actually exist, you could say, in the intersubjective."

In our materialist society, where many people have a hard time acknowledging the legitimacy of subjective consciousness, much less the reality of this relatively new concept called *intersubjective* consciousness, such assertions

require us to step out of our usual patterns of thinking. They ask us to embrace the possibility that there may be more going on beneath the surface of culture, in the subterranean corridors of our collective consciousness, than we previously realized. They ask us to entertain the notion that there may in fact be crucial patterns of order, created in the crucible of fifty thousand years of human evolution, that give shape and form to the complex and often chaotic nature of human life. Indeed, many theorists feel that these levels, when seen together as a hierarchical, interrelated evolutionary system, represent a sort of DNA-like structure in consciousness, quietly influencing the dynamics of culture, shaping our minds even as our minds, in turn, shape the structure itself. Even the form of this structure fits the analogy—a spiralpatterned helix that matches the distinctive shape of our physical DNA.

While thoughts about stages and structures within culture may be heretical in a postmodern society weaned on the notion that all values are created equal and that no culture is inherently more developed than any other, they are hardly without empirical support. Indeed, integral thinkers like to point to a long tradition of research in developmental psychology from Piaget to Maslow to Graves to Robert Kegan that gives tremendous empirical support to this kind of developmental map. Moreover, there is increasing evidence from sociology that also confirms the basic schema and lends particular credence to the existence of the last three significant stages—traditional, modern, and postmodern.

It is worth noting that these three—the three worldviews before integral—are not difficult to discern in American society; that is, if we remember that we are talking about general patterns in consciousness and culture, not rigid and exact definitions. In the United States, for example, we often hear talk about a traditional culture, or a section of the populace that is more religiously oriented and shares more conservative values. Then we can see that there is a more secularoriented section of the populace, individuals whose values lean toward science and reason, individualism, pragmatism, and achievement. Those are expressions of what is often called *modern* consciousness, or the culture formed by modernity. And then we can see a more progressive part of the populace, sometimes called cultural creatives, comprising individuals whose values lean more toward liberal politics, environmental awareness, social change movements, and new forms of spirituality. We often associate that segment with the revolution of the sixties. Integral theory understands this grouping as representing postmodern consciousness. Even our political pundits refer to these cultural subgroups—but not as actual structures in consciousness, and certainly not as part of an ascending scale of cultural development.

While the stage-oriented view of cultural evolution is fundamental to integral philosophy, it is even more essential to



integral politics, as knowledge of any given society's general level (or levels) of development is a powerful aid in political analysis. Whether we're talking about appealing to "family values" in local elections, dealing with foreign dictators, evaluating the rise of China, or reducing conflict in the Horn of Africa, the more deeply we understand how these largely unconscious structures are informing the values of any given society, the more we can respond in effective, targeted ways that have the greatest evolutionary influence. As McIntosh writes, "The integral worldview gives us an understanding of culture that allows us to begin to address the global cultural problems that are at the heart of pretty much every problem. What I mean is that every problem in the world has its solution at least partially in the raising of consciousness. And that's what the integral worldview does more effectively than any other worldview before it—it can literally raise consciousness at every level."

There is ultimately much, much more to the integral worldview than its unique understanding of the spiral-structured nature of human evolution. From Wilber's breakthrough model of the four quadrants to radical new forms of evolutionary spirituality to original insights into psychological development to innovative perspectives on business and organizational management, integral ideas are destined to touch and influence all areas of life in the twenty-first

century. Indeed, if McIntosh and his colleagues are correct, then our time in history is a unique one. It affords us the opportunity to shape not just the philosophy but the spirituality, politics, art, economics, and science of this emerging cultural worldview. For his part, McIntosh is forging ahead on many fronts, with a particular focus on international law and global governance. Last May I spoke to this unusual attorney turned businessman turned philosopher about integral politics and how it might transform the geopolitical dynamics of our global society.

**WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT:** So how would you describe integral politics?

**STEVE McINTOSH:** There's a variety of ways to describe integral politics, but one way is that it is the political platform or agenda of those who share the values of the integral stage of consciousness. Integral politics examines how those values are applied to the political arena.

**WIE:** What distinguishes integral politics from the politics of left and right, and the way that we normally think—conservative versus liberal?

**McINTOSH:** It's actually a blind spot in the media to have a political discourse that's framed by that left-right paradigm. It's a worn-out category that needs to be discarded. Integral politics transcends the politics of left and right and provides a whole host of amazing new political insights, both domestically and internationally. Among other things, it shows us more clearly how these historical stages of development are still quite active and influential in the world today.

**WIE**: So where would President Bush be in terms of these stages of consciousness?

**McINTOSH:** Like almost all prominent national politicians, Bush's center of gravity is modernist, just like Bill Clinton's center of gravity is modernist. So when we speak about left and right, we are mostly speaking about what is going on within modernism.

Now Bush, although a modernist, is heavily influenced by traditional consciousness. And Clinton, though also a modernist, is heavily influenced by postmodern consciousness. According to social scientist Paul Ray, about fifty percent of the U.S. population has a modernist center of gravity, so that's where the majority of the political debate is occurring. It's within that milieu. But traditionalism and postmodernism

are both pulling on the modernist majority to capture its allegiance—traditionalism with the Republicans and postmodernism with the Democrats.

**WIE**: How do you think integral politics will change the political landscape?

**McINTOSH:** Well, as we look at this spiral of development, we see that each stage of consciousness and culture has emerged partially in the crucible of politics. What I mean is that each significant new worldview is cocreated by the politics—the politics help define the worldview and the worldview defines the politics, or the specific type of political organization that goes with it. So the political expression of the values of each emerging worldview is what draws people to the higher level of consciousness that they can see demonstrated in this higher level of politics.

Looking at history, for example, we can see this with modernism and the European Enlightenment. Its new values of equality and freedom and rule of law were brought to bear through the advent of democracy as a new transcendent form of political organization. And then with postmodernism, we can see how it championed the new ideals of civil rights, women's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, and, later, gay



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rights. We see in postmodernism the political agenda of righting the wrongs of modernism, bringing an end to colonialism, and ending the Cold War and the war in Vietnam. So the twin political agenda of human rights and peace was the showcase for the higher transcendent values of postmodernism.

So now the integral worldview, because it is a historically significant new worldview, can be expected to do something similar politically. There's a new understanding of the internal universe, which recognizes that political progress, at least in our time, can be made most directly by raising consciousness. So when we talk about achieving any tangible, concrete political agendas, we can see that the best way to achieve those is by raising consciousness within the body politic.

**WIE:** In your book, you suggest that each succeeding level or stage of consciousness along the spiral of development has given rise to different types of political structures. Could you describe the different structures?

McINTOSH: Yes, we can see that in history. Each distinct stage of consciousness—tribal, warrior, traditional, modern, postmodern, and now integral has a corresponding political form of organization that almost always goes with it. We see that the tribal stage of consciousness produces a tribe and the permanent authority of a chief. Warrior consciousness, whether we're talking about the early Vikings in Europe or the Incas in South America, retains many of the political characteristics of the tribe, but now the tribe is based on con-

quest, so you have early forms of empire building. Then the traditional stage of consciousness produces a feudal kingdom; indeed, no matter what kind of traditional consciousness we are talking about, East or West, feudalism is a political system that goes with it. That's not to say that feudalism is an ideal system by any means, but the point is that feudalism is appropriate for traditional consciousness. Then with modernism, we have democracy and the multiethnic nation-state, and this is still basically the de facto system of global politics today—a world of competing nation-states.

Then with postmodern consciousness, we have a political organization that we might characterize as a form of social democracy, which we see, for example, in Scandinavia. There the welfare state is much more developed than it is in the United States; however, that system of government works because you

have relatively homogeneous populations in Scandinavian countries. There is also a high level of education and therefore a high level of human capital. You don't have huge segments of the population that are at premodern stages. And so, in narrow circumstances, a social democracy is a really highly evolved form of political organization, but it's only one rung on the ladder. I think that to solve the problems of places like the United States, and indeed, the world, you need a stage of organization beyond that—one that can simultaneously accommodate all of the rungs on the ladder. So what type of government is associated with the integral stage? I'm suggesting that it points to the eventual emergence of an integrally informed, integrally structured, democratic federal world government.

### INTEGRAL WORLD GOVERNMENT

**WIE:** You've written extensively about what this kind of integral world government might look like. Why do you feel it is so needed in the world today?



Just as Enlightenment philosophy was essential to the structure of the U.S. Constitution, integral philosophy will be essential in helping structure a world federation.

McINTOSH: Increasingly, global problems call for some kind of supranational federation to deal with them in a realistic way. We need something that can achieve the key goals of providing international cooperation on environmental regulations, democratizing the rules of the global economy, providing enforceable human rights, and eventually bringing greater peace, justice, and prosperity. Also, as the modern world becomes increasingly international in scope and economically interdependent, it cannot

be adequately defended by limited treaty organizations or individual nation-states acting unilaterally. So if you'll pardon the cliché, it is an idea whose time has come.

So what I'm envisioning is a limited form of federal union among modern democratic nations. It could also include other nations that could have various forms of probationary status, similar to what the European Union is doing.

**WIE:** There is tremendous resistance to the idea of giving up national autonomy to a global governing body. Some feel it's dangerous.

**McINTOSH:** Yes, many people intuitively feel that the answer is less government, not more. And I think it's worth saying that all of these are temporary stages. I think in the distant future when consciousness has evolved much further, we'll be able to

do away with most forms of government. So this proposal is a means to an end. It's scaffolding for further evolution, not an end state in and of itself.

Some also feel it's dangerous because too much of the world's population is at premodern levels of consciousness. And it's true that even modernist consciousness is not moral enough or worldcentric enough to be able to undertake such a project and do it without corporations taking over or without creating some kind of horrific despotism in the process.

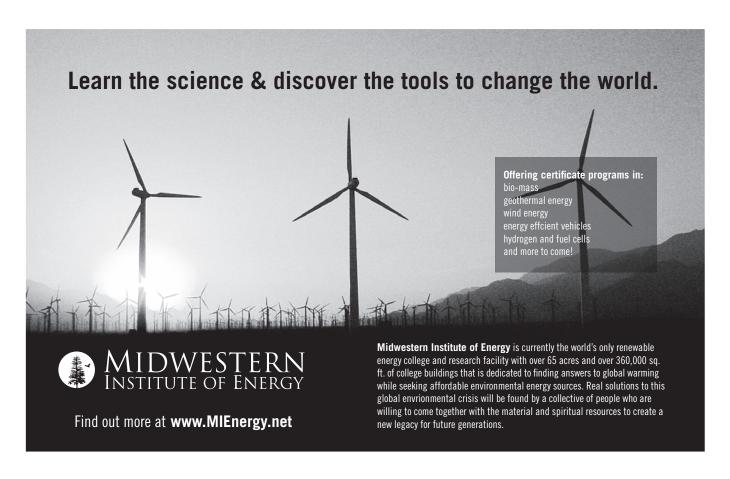
But if we look at history, if we look at the emergence of modernism and the democratic institutions that came with it, there were safeguards built into the structures of democracy. For example, look at the U.S. Constitution—there are checks and balances, separation of powers, etc. It's a legal structure, and for a population that's willing to be voluntarily bound by a legal structure, one that is largely modernist and above, a constitution provides for a functional democracy. Despite all of the setbacks, problems, and malfeasance that we've seen in American history, it's continuing to function in at least moderately acceptable ways. So these same safeguards can be evolved to an even higher level in a world federation. And just as Enlightenment philosophy was essential in the creation of the structure of the U.S. Constitution, integral philosophy, similarly, will be essential in helping structure a world

federation as one that would be informed by the knowledge of these stages of development.

Now the biggest problem facing any kind of proposed constitution for a world federation is the uneven development of consciousness and culture across the world, which means that a one-person, one-vote structure is going to be problematic if you involve the predemocratic populations of the developing world. That would give them eighty percent of the vote, which would have the tendency to redistribute wealth toward the larger populations, whose level of development is understandably more ethnocentric in scope than the worldcentric perspectives of modernists and postmodernists. And that would do a lot, I think, to destabilize the development of modern and postmodern economies, and thus cultures.

**WIE:** It's hard for us in democratic countries to admit that in certain situations, one-person, one-vote can actually set things back in terms of development.

**McINTOSH:** Right. Well, we saw it in Nazi Germany. You can use one-person, one-vote to bring despotism. The ethnocentric, conformist consciousness of premodern populations can be easily manipulated and swayed by emotional loyalties. Jefferson was extremely clear on the prerequisites to



functional democracy. He called for a degree of public virtue within a population; he felt that the society needs to have an enlightened self-interest in what is good for them and that the public must to be able to think independently.

However, the egalitarian nature of one-person, one-vote is also one of the primary moral strengths of democracy. So if we're going to mess with the key moral underpinning of democracy, we need to be careful not to wipe out the moral superiority of democracy in the first place. We need to preserve the ideal of one-person, one-vote and acknowledge that as consciousness in the world evolves over time, and when the majority of the world is modernist and above in their consciousness, we could probably go to a world federal system that employed one-person, one-vote entirely. But currently that's not feasible. In other words, if we acknowledge that modernism and postmodernism are worth protecting, and if we recognize that in these stages there is a natural tendency toward a significant decline in numbers, then we can also recognize that modern and postmodern populations would need some kind of insulation from the larger premodern populations in our federal structure.

**WIE:** The League of Nations and the United Nations were both formed in the wake of world wars. Will another such catastrophe

be necessary to rally the political will for this kind of world governing structure?

**McINTOSH:** Clearly there will be the need for appropriate life conditions, and we can already see those on the horizon, but they don't necessarily involve a third world war. Global warming, nuclear proliferation by rogue regimes, Islamic terrorism, genocide in Africa, global pandemics—these kinds of conditions are threat enough.

**WIE:** Many of those issues are likely to get much worse in the next ten to twenty years.

McINTOSH: The trajectories are unmistakable. We no longer live in a world where we can be insulated in our own nation-state. So the higher your consciousness is, the more these global problems seem urgent and real. They're threatening and they motivate you. If you're worried about feeding your children, then global warming over the next fifty years is not something that's going to be at the top of your agenda. It's up to those of us who are living in the lap of material luxury, with the benefits of free societies, to feel the pressure and to do something about these threats before it's too late.



### **WAR AND PEACE**

**WIE:** How does integral politics view peace, pacifism, and the use of military force?

McINTOSH: Integralists are much less willing to engage in war than any of the previous stages, except perhaps postmodernism, but they aren't satisfied with passivity either. They're not peaceniks. Integralists recognize that there are things in the world that are worth fighting for, things that have to be battled against. So rather than simply resign themselves to living at a time in history when there are wars, integralists recognize that we want to end war once and for all. The only way to do that is the only way it's ever been done, and that is to replace violence with law, with an agreement or social contract that actually monopolizes violence in a way that's sustainable, that is moral, legal, democratic. In the United States, for example, the states no longer fight one another because the rule of law has replaced the state of nature in which violence flourishes. Indeed, what makes the rule of law effective in this way is that it monopolizes violence.

**WIE:** You're saying that the only way to prevent violence is to monopolize it within the context of a legal structure?

**McINTOSH:** You can also monopolize it within a dictatorship or some kind of autocratic authority, but that's not sustainable. Freedom will break that mold. If it's not moral, if it doesn't preserve freedom, if people don't agree with it at a deep level, if they have to be coerced into that monopoly on violence, then it's not a monopoly that can be sustained.

So integralism takes an important value of postmodernism, which is the rejection of war, and says that we want to end war once and for all. It turns this admonition against war into something that's practical, something that we can actually implement. The only way to prevent war worldwide is to replace it with law, and the only way to do that is some kind of democratic world federation.

### RADICAL ISLAM

**WIE:** One of the biggest problems today is Islamic radicalism. Of course, it's not just Islam that has produced a violent form of fundamentalism, but it has been the most virulent over the recent decades. How would an integral perspective respond to the dynamics around this clash between the West and Islamic radicalism?



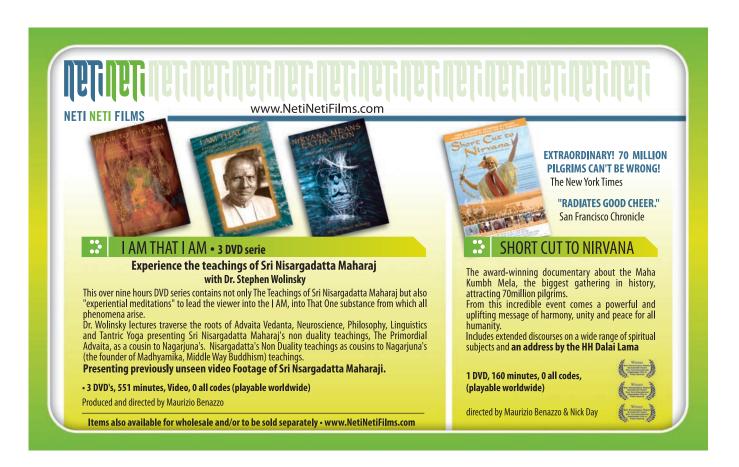
McINTOSH: It doesn't take integral consciousness to see that the answer to radical Islam is healthy forms of traditional Islam. Postmodern or modern solutions are not going to apply. We need to help strengthen Islam, making it more successful as a traditional form of civilization and helping to empower the moderate voices. Currently, the moderate voices in the Islamic world are mostly silent. And even those who can be heard are not addressing the core problems that are causing the radicalism in the first place, which is that many of the people in Islam feel disgraced, deeply wounded, and ashamed that they find themselves in what's unmistakably a backward stage of history and civilization. They have a great sense of pride about the fact that Islam was once the leading culture in the world. It was once great and they know that it could be great again.

So the forces that are creating radicalism are this feeling of being stuck, this feeling of having failed, this feeling of disgrace. And these feelings of disgrace are particularly destabilizing to the Islamic civilization because it is such a proud civilization. This pride is seen in a variety of ways; it's seen, for example, in the status of women. All forms of traditional consciousness, East and West, are chauvinistic. Women are second-class citizens in all of them, but currently Islam is

probably the worst on this account. So this machismo, this male superiority is part of the sense of dignity and the need for respect that are the values of warrior consciousness. The warrior needs respect.

The reason that Islam fails in many ways is because—this is controversial, but I'll say it—it lacks certain degrees of truth. In other words, the quality of the religion as a whole has certain truth blind spots. We see this in the way these warrior values have been carried forward and embodied in the traditional stage. There hasn't been enough of a separation between warrior consciousness and traditional consciousness—they're too close. You can see this in the pride. So when colonialism comes along and conquers Islam, the moral authority of the traditional consciousness is sacked. It can no longer serve in the way that it must in order to make people behave well and be civil actors in the society. It's been shamed and disgraced. And this is in part because of the excessive pride. The traditional consciousness wasn't far enough away from warrior consciousness in the first place.

**WIE:** Is that the sense in which you mean that it doesn't have enough truth? It hasn't separated itself enough from warrior consciousness?



McINTOSH: Yes. Christianity had many of the same problems. It had regressed around the time of the Renaissance; the Catholic Church had become corrupt. If you read, for example, the account of the Renaissance popes, they were having orgies in the Vatican. Warrior consciousness had clearly infected and destroyed the moral authority of traditional consciousness. This situation was rejected by Luther, who declared that a more moral form of Christianity was necessary. This led to the Reformation, which purged the warrior elements from Christianity, creating the Protestant structure that then became an effective platform for the Enlightenment. The Reformation was a prerequisite for the Enlightenment. It purified the religion and made it more moral. It made it more good, more true . . . maybe not more beautiful, but nevertheless! So again, it's not just integralists who are calling for a reformation of Islam. That's the next step in its history. That's what is going to be required prior to functional forms of sustainable modernism emerging within Islamic civilization.

**WIE:** So what are the dynamics that would give rise to that?

**McINTOSH:** You need to strengthen those who would be voices of moderate Islam, give them a little integral technology, if you will. But again, they can't be coming from a modernist or post-

modernist perspective. They have to be at a traditional center of gravity themselves; they have to show those loyalties.

So the way to do that, for example, is to look at the Qur'an. That's what we want to use to bolster the morality, just as Luther used the Bible. It's all there in the Qur'an. So that means helping to sponsor individuals who can be positive voices, without making them puppets.

The other thing we could do is to recognize how important dignity is to the Islamic world and give them back some of that dignity. For example, we could pay for a memorial in downtown Tehran that memorializes our shame at the CIA's political manipulation of the Iranian government. We can atone for those sins, help heal that little bit of history, and thereby become more moral ourselves.

**WIE:** I remember when Clinton went to Rwanda and apologized for not doing anything to stop the genocide. It had a tremendously positive effect.

**McINTOSH:** There could actually be an entire art movement in memorials of this type. I had an idea for a memorial in downtown Baghdad to help restore dignity after the initial invasion. It would be called "We all speak Arabic" and would be a memorial to Islamic civilization's significant contributions to our international system

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of decimal numbers and to mathematics in general. The actual forms of our numbers, zero through ten, are taken directly from Arabic script. Think about how important ones and zeros are to the digital age. So this memorial would celebrate Arab achievements in mathematics, which were adopted by Europe several hundred years later and made a big difference in the development of capitalism. We could commemorate that and memorialize the accomplishments of the Islamic civilization in a way that could help restore some of the dignity that they lost by being conquered in three weeks.

But if we're doing all of this in such a way that it's obviously self-interested, if we're doing it only for strategic reasons, then it's not truly morally fragrant, and people at the traditional stage of consciousness can smell that a mile away.

#### IRAQ

**WIE:** That brings up the question of the Iraq war, which is dominating the media in America. What does integral politics have to say about the war in Iraq?

**McINTOSH:** Part of the reason that we failed in Iraq, and why we'll continue to fail when acting militarily and unilaterally as a nation-state, is because the battle is not so much on the ground

as it is a battle for hearts and minds. And hearts and minds can't be won if we're acting from national self-interest with a history of exploitation and colonialism. They're never going to believe us, even if we have genuinely good intentions, and for good reason. We've screwed it up at the modernist level, and until we heal that history, the moral fragrance, the spiritual fragrance that's going to be required to win hearts and minds, will not be evident. We need the larger moral vision of integralism, which transcends but also includes postmodernism. And what postmodernism brings is a sincere worldcentrism, a multicultural solidarity, an environmental priority, and a spiritual sophistication, which are all prerequisites to making the approach to all of these problems more moral than it can be with modernism.

So in Iraq there were several missteps along the way. The first mistake was invading unilaterally, but even then it wasn't completely hopeless. I was giving talks about global governance back in 2003 and advocating that at least now that we had invaded, we had to recognize that having this colonial artifice created by the British called the nation of Iraq is part of the problem. The Iraqi people have not gotten to the modernist level, which would allow a functional, healthy, multiethnic nation-state. What I advocated was dividing up the country—maybe not into separate countries, but at least significantly independent districts. And I felt that they were not ready for the separation of church and state, so they needed,



for example, to put somebody like Shiite spiritual leader Sistani in charge of the Shiite faction. Then we have to help encourage the more moral aspects of the religion and work with them so that they don't become too harsh in their application of sharia law. Then there would need to be some kind of a trust that holds the oil wealth and divides it equitably among the three districts.

So integralism would help us move forward in Iraq by recognizing that trying to get them to become a Jeffersonian democracy and function as a nation is hopeless at this stage in their development. The failures in Iraq are actually an evolutionarily potent life condition because they show how inadequate the nation-state structure is on ten different levels.

As soon as you begin looking through the lens of the spiral of development and you cast that lens on the situation in Iraq, everything comes into view. All of a sudden that lens turns and—boom—you've got clarity. That clarity doesn't exist now, even among our most intellectual, well-intentioned leaders and pundits. And it's also a showcase for why the United Nations is not adequate and why we need a functional world federation. A world federation is many years away, but when we recognize that this is the future of positive political evolution, we can begin to see where we're heading and use this knowledge to make better strategic decisions in the present.

# DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

WIE: I'd like to hear your thoughts about the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Rwanda. Of course, your heart goes out to the people there and the horror that unfolded, and the ethnic tensions that continue to this day. At the same time, there is a great deal of hope in Rwanda. The president, Paul Kagame, has established some kind of order. Aid is starting to come back. It's one of the more hopeful cases in Africa, despite the fact that the genocide happened so recently. So I'm curious what you feel integral politics might have to say about a situation like Rwanda.

McINTOSH: I'd like to talk about sub-Saharan Africa in general, and Rwanda as a special case with the recent genocide. From an integral perspective we can see—and I'm generalizing here—that there are people in sub-Saharan Africa who have achieved modern and postmodern levels of consciousness. There is also plenty of traditional consciousness. But it seems, and I don't claim to be an expert, that the majority of the individuals in this region have a center of gravity that is still centered in tribal or warrior consciousness. So what the integral worldview would prescribe in sub-Saharan Africa for recalcitrant forms of



tribal and warrior consciousness is healthy doses of traditional consciousness. And that's not only for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole; it's the next step for Rwanda, in particular. Any form of traditional consciousness that would be acceptable to both Tutsi and Hutu would be the most ideal form—whether it's Christian or Islamic or Buddhist. Any will do, as long as it's healthy and can be accepted by both ethnic groups. So then it makes sense that traditional consciousness, especially in the form of Anglican Protestant Christianity, is proving extremely successful. It's being adopted and seeming to have a positive effect—despite all the negatives we associate with evangelical Christianity here in the developed world. Healthy forms of traditional consciousness can join the two racial groups into one ethnic identity. That would be an important next step for them, so they can develop a healthy sense of public virtue that can eventually generate its own form of native modernism, as we've seen in some successful situations around the world.

So with Rwanda, we can see hope; we can see them recovering from this outrageous holocaust. But from a cultural and psychological perspective, this is a deep and gaping wound that's going to go on setting them back for generations. There have recently been quite a few magazine articles about a process of cultural and psychological healing that was developed

by German psychologist Bert Hellinger. The Hellinger Work, as it's called, has been extremely effective with holocaust survivors. Some kind of ongoing work like that on a national basis in Rwanda would be important to help heal those wounds, which are carried on for generations. We need this kind of work, not only as a stopgap to prevent further genocide but as an important crutch to help these levels of traditional consciousness take hold so that they don't continually collapse back into warrior levels. When you have an understanding of the internal universe from an integral perspective, you can see how important such measures would be.

**WIE:** What about democracy? Integral politics would seem to suggest that democracy is hardly a one-size-fits-all cure for a dysfunctional political culture.

**McINTOSH:** You can't thrust democracy on a population that hasn't achieved a corresponding level of cultural evolution if you want that democracy to be functional. Rwanda is pretraditional to a large extent. So the next stage for them is unlikely to be a democratically elected government. I would *like* to see it, and if they can pull it off, great. I hope they prove me wrong. But when we recognize that these stages of consciousness go



with certain types of political organization, we can see that a dictatorship, hopefully a benign one, or some kind of predemocratic rule is probably inevitable, if not appropriate.

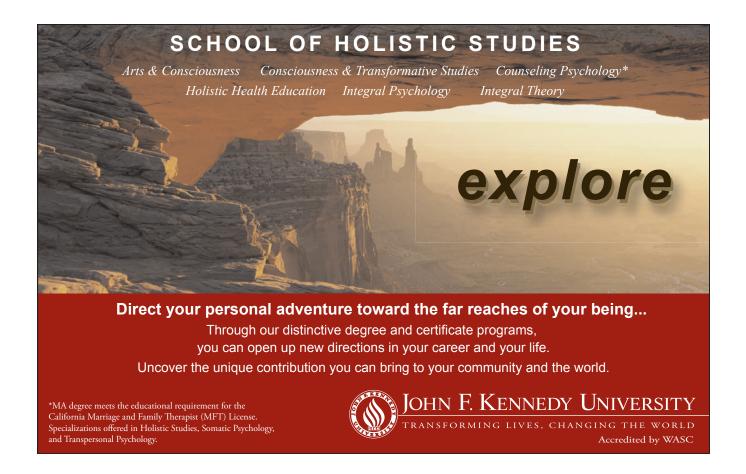
But the way to make sure that it's appropriate in cases like this would be if we had some kind of international authority that could say, "We understand that you're not ready for democracy, but the dictator is still subject to international global law and could be arrested if there are human rights violations or if the money of the country is stolen or if there is genocide or ethnic cleansing." It would help to allow these earlier stages to exist as they must, but in moderated forms, so the worst abuses that have characterized these levels of consciousness are not repeated.

### THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

**WIE:** I wanted to ask you about the current situation in Russia. There is a lot of concern in the West about the lack of true democracy in Russia today. After the collapse of the Soviet system, there was an effort to create a modernist economy in Russia, one that failed quite badly. The country seemed to be slipping into an almost tribalistic governing structure with these oligarchs becoming more and more powerful. There is a lot of legitimate

frustration with Putin right now, but there is also more internal stability. So what does integral consciousness have to say about the future of Russia?

McINTOSH: First of all, we can't hold Russia to the standards of a postmodern democracy when they're not there from a historical point of view. I think what we can do is respect them and give them space, because if any people have demonstrated an ability to resist any outside imposition, it's certainly the Russians! We want to help Russia in ways that are appropriate and respectful of its national autonomy. One of the ways we can do that is to recognize that the reason Russia is struggling to develop a functional modernism is because it is still lacking an appropriately functional form of traditional consciousness. We have the Russian Orthodox Church, but the society never became fully traditional, although the Church was once the functioning traditional structure. Communism then completely swept that away and became a replacement form of traditional culture. Now communism has been swept away, and all the loyalties and all the higher purpose of the workers' paradise are gone, leaving hardly any structures of traditional consciousness in place at all. So the inevitable collapse back into warrior consciousness was predictable.



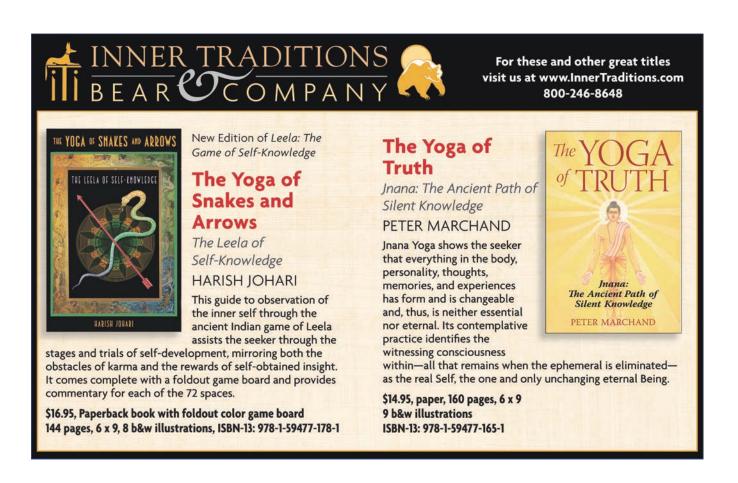
So how do we sponsor the development of healthy traditional consciousness within Russia? I'm not sure. It would be good to consult some experts on the Russian culture to give us more insight into this. Communism is not a desirable option. The Eastern Orthodox Church does seem to be functioning as a decent platform for modernism in places like Greece. Greece isn't France, but it's certainly got a modernist economy and a functional democracy. That is testimony to the fact that their form of traditional consciousness will sustain functional modernism, that it provides enough public virtue for it to not collapse back into a kind of kleptocracy, a corrupt structure.

So perhaps over time, the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia can be nurtured and restored so that it does create good citizenship and a sense of ethnic solidarity among the people, and then it can begin to serve as a foundation for functional modernism. But the Eastern Orthodox Church was founded in Greece and has historical roots in Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire. It was more of a transplant in Russia and was never as strong there. An alternative might be a form of Russian patriotism. Nationalism and patriotism can shape forms of healthy traditional consciousness, although the morality brought with a religious form of traditional

consciousness is often far more potent than one that is merely based on national solidarity.

The problem is not dissimilar to the problems with modernism in Latin America. We can see that the Catholic Church in Latin America is not creating a successful enough level of traditional consciousness to keep corruption from continually decimating the economy. Modernism keeps collapsing in these countries because of corruption—and not just because of the people who are taking the bribes, but the people who are tolerating the bribes, tolerating the system. It's like, "Oh well, the guys are corrupt, but what can we do?" There's corruption in modernist countries, too, but people won't stand for it, at least not for long.

Healthy forms of traditional consciousness are generally not on the radar screen of the modernists and postmodernists who want to help the world get better, yet from an integral perspective, this is where we need to start. We need to go back down to those levels of culture and begin there. The pattern of evolution is so instructive; it's like a road map for exactly what we need to do to make the world a better place. We need a vertical perspective because one size does not fit all when the world's development is spread out across the last two thousand years of history.



### LIFE IN A BALKANIZED WORLD

WIE: One of the issues we are confronting today is how to satisfy the many ethnic groups around the world and their desire for self-determination. As empires have fallen and colonialism has ended, there is a great desire for more autonomy on the part of different ethnic groups that have been subjugated for so long. It can cause a lot of instability in regard to existing national boundaries and political structures—whether it's the Kurds in Turkey or the Basques in Spain or the Croats in the Balkans. So how does an integral worldview begin to deal with this difficult issue of self-determination?

**McINTOSH:** The integral worldview recognizes that the de facto nation-state structure of most of the world today has, in some places, been inappropriately imposed on popula-

tions. One of the things that makes the integral vision of a world federation different from the type that has been proposed before is the idea of simultaneously pushing power down and pushing power up. In other words, with an integral world government, we push power up by creating a supranational political organization. And then simultaneously we push power down where we need to by allowing the more naturally existing political groups to consolidate and rule themselves.

Pushing power down means that we would allow some countries to become Balkanized, if you will, allowing them to scale back in history to a time when they had all these

different ethnic identities. It allows those ethnic groups to be empowered, to be a bunch of tiny little countries, miniature national identities, miniature linguistic identities. They can go back to the level at which they are stable, go back to the level at which they have authentic evolutionary development. It's only when you force countries into forms of political organization that they haven't grown up into naturally that these forms are unstable. So when we see instability in the world, what we need to do is push power down to the level at which it exists naturally—the level to which it has developed in terms of consciousness. Then we can let it stabilize at that level and gain some autonomy and political authority, but we do it within the larger context of a supranational legal structure that can help preserve human rights within these smaller structures. Then gradually they can grow up to the point where they can become a nation-state on their own. But trying to force fit these populations into forms of political organization that they haven't yet evolved into is never going to work. We see this in Iraq and in other parts of the world. The Turks, for example, are afraid of the Kurds having power pushed down to them because then maybe Turkey will have to defend the integrity of its national border from a new Kurdistan. But if there were an overarching global political organization that would secure peace among the Kurds and Turks, the Turks would be less defensive about the Kurds.

**WIE:** So in order to grant more autonomy to these ethnic groups, we also need a larger meta-organization that can help oversee the process?

**McINTOSH:** Yes, you can't push power down unless you have pushed enough power up. The example that I use is the

European Union. The formation of the EU allowed power to be pushed down to Scotland, for example. England originally consolidated Scotland and Wales as a way of making it competitive with France and Spain. But recently Scotland has achieved more independence from England, and England didn't have to hold onto it because with the EU it was no longer just a nation-state competing against other European states. Power had been pushed up, so it could then be pushed down. The same thing has happened with Spain and Catalonia. The EU has reduced the competitive pres-

sures between the nation-states within the union in a way that's allowed the substates that exist within them to be given more autonomy.

Part of what keeps nation-states clinging to every piece of territory that they've managed to accumulate through their history is that they don't want to be competitively disadvantaged by having territorial disintegration. But a certain degree of territorial divestment can be healthy and appropriate, and that can occur when the competitive pressures are reduced by an overarching governing system that provides more security. That dynamic could happen at a global level if we had a functional world federation.



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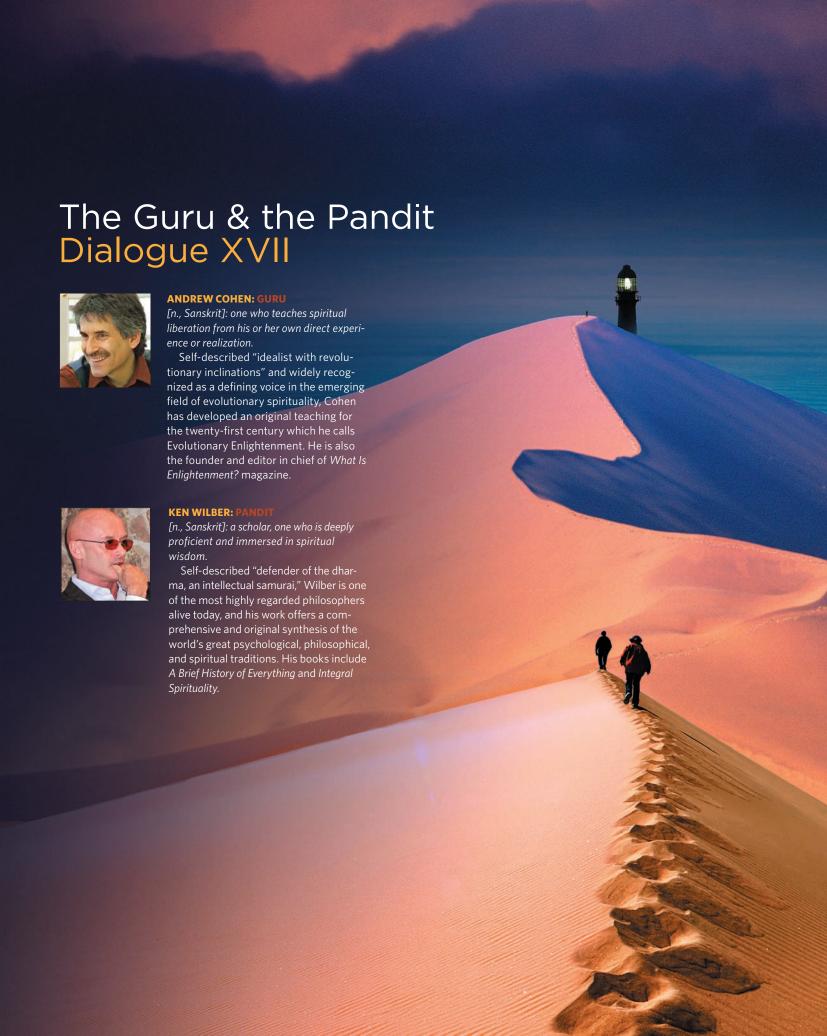
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# The Leading Edge of the Leading Edge

An Exploration of the Emerging Potential of Third Tier

NDREW COHEN: Generally speaking, in the postmodern spiritual marketplace, defining spiritual attainment has become, it seems, almost entirely a subjective matter. In the great traditions, there have always been important milestones to indicate levels of spiritual development. But these days, our spiritual goals are rarely described in terms that are clear and concrete. In the work I'm doing, I'm trying to shift the focus of the spiritual aspirant away from what I feel has become an excessive preoccupation with internal feelings and states, sorely lacking any higher trajectory or serious developmental context. I'm trying to reorient people toward the necessity for objective change and dynamic development that can be seen—and even, dare I say, measured—in action.

That's why, over the past few years, I've become so interested in developmental models such as Spiral Dynamics and, of course, your own work. Spiral Dynamics speaks about individual and cultural development progressing through color-coded stages or levels that are divided into two tiers. [See diagram.] We've spoken at length about the enormous significance of the leap from first to second tier—which is usually about the shift from the green pluralism that defined the social and cultural revolutions of the sixties to the emerging integral perspective, which you've been championing.

We've also touched upon the idea of a third tier—a barely emerg-

ing set of higher stages or structures in consciousness that could define future potentials in culture. That's what I'd like to speak about in more depth today. Lately, I've been thinking a lot about what third tier could actually mean, because it seems to me that this is where enlightenment, which in the East is traditionally seen as the highest spiritual attainment, comes together with the understanding of evolution to form a new and higher worldview. I think it's really important that we strive for a clear understanding of what this newly emerging level means in order to help us define the goal of higher development for our own time, based on the shared experiences and observations of those of us who are experimenting with these higher potentials. Not only will this provide us with an orienting vision as we move forward, but most importantly, it will inform and empower our capacity to consciously evolve.

**KEN WILBER**: Right. I agree with all of the above. It's so crucial. But one of the problems with a topic like this is that, unfortunately, it can't be explained in sentences that fit on a bumper sticker.

When we speak about tiers, what we're looking at is indeed this growth through our own structures, which are stable patterns of unfolding. It's too bad "structures" sounds so stodgy and stiff. It really just means holistic patterns of growth, and we do have to become aware of those and then, therefore, we are responsible for them. And one of the most important things that any developmentalist is looking at is that there is this extraordinary leap from what psychologist Abraham Maslow would call deficiency needs to self-actualization needs or between what Clare Graves, who founded Spiral Dynamics, refers to as first tier and second tier. And that growth is a very important growth, because second tier is the first set of major stages of development that has the understanding that its values are not the only values in the world—that is its fundamental definition. First tier includes five or six major stages of development, and all of those are defined by the fact that they think their values are the only correct values in the world. And so much strife and conflict on this planet come from the fact that ninety-five percent of people are at one of these first-tier stages. Remember, a tier is just a conventional grouping of stages. The things that are real are the stages themselves. And psychologists generally group stages together if they think they have similarities. Sometimes, if they find that there's a huge difference between one stage and another, they'll use that as the dividing line between two tiers. What

we call first tier actually has three very important groupings within it: egocentric, ethnocentric, and worldcentric. So the lowest stages, up through what we would call red,\* are egocentric, which means they can only take a first-person perspective. And then the stages up through amber are ethnocentric, which means they can take a second-person perspective. And then orange and green are worldcentric, which means they can take a third- and fourth-person perspective.\*\*

But then there's that leap into integral, which would be teal. That's the first real leap, so much so that the first three groupings are just labeled first tier. The leap to second tier is going to remake the planet as we know it. In cultures like Western Europe, Canada, and America, about fifty percent are at the worldcentric or orange level; about twenty percent are at the pluralistic or green level. But then there's this huge drop in numbers to second tier, which is only two to three percent of the population. So as the green or pluralistic stage moves into the integral stage, we expect that two or three percent to jump to about ten percent within a decade.

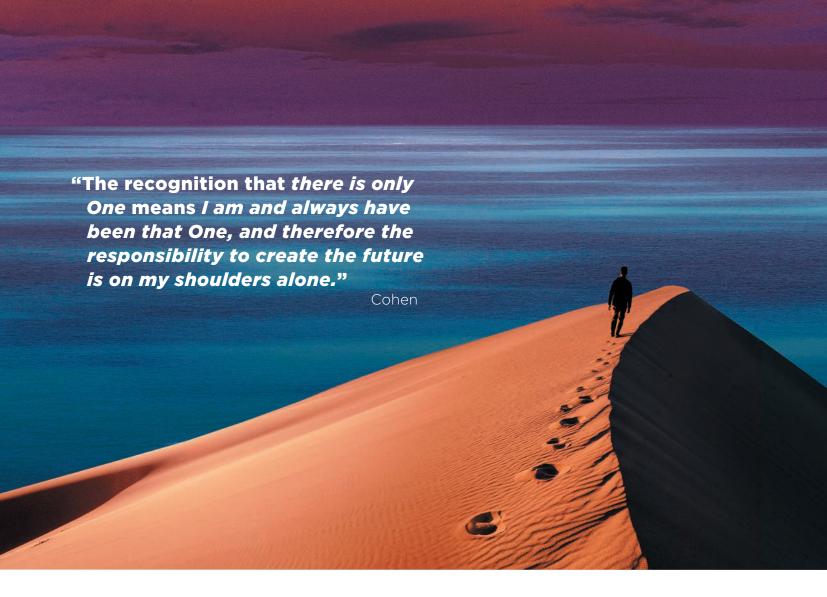
Another of the important issues here is that, as always, we have to talk about the difference between *states* of consciousness, which are waking, dreaming, deep sleep, witnessing, nondual, etc., and *structural* or *stage* development, which is dealt with in models like Spiral Dynamics. The fact of the matter is that we now have enough evidence to compellingly suggest that these two types of development are relatively independent.

We can measure these things. And so, as we've often said in our dialogues, a higher state, such as Big Mind or the ever-present timeless ground of awareness right now, is available to people at virtually any stage or structure of development through practices such as meditation.

But there are higher structure-stages that are now unfolding, and those will not necessarily be found through meditative training. As a matter of fact, you can't even see those stages in meditation. So a lot of meditation teachers get very upset and say, "If you actually do this meditative training, it covers everything." But it doesn't. It covers states of consciousness beautifully. But in terms of structures, it doesn't cover anything. You can go through state training, but that doesn't deal with what we could call vertical development through stages. And we now know enough to know that we have to grow in both of those dimensions. Meditation teachers generally don't take the structural dimension into account,

<sup>\*</sup>All colors refer to Ken Wilber's model, as shown in the diagram. Colors for certain stages differ from those in the Spiral Dynamics model.

<sup>\*\*</sup>According to Wilber, a fourth-person perspective, although it can be defined in several different ways, is one in which the other three perspectives are held in mind. Thus, when we say that there are first-, second-, and third-person perspectives, that itself is a fourth-person perspective..



and that's what's getting a whole lot of people in trouble. On the other hand, a lot of people don't even undertake state training, so they just go through structural development, through the stages that are measured with Spiral Dynamics, for example. But there's nothing in Spiral Dynamics that has anything to do with states of consciousness.

In terms of vertical growth or structural development, the leading edge of the evolutionary impulse right now is moving people into second and third tier. Of course, what you're talking about is not just moving people into third tier, but moving people with enlightened awareness into these structures. So you're talking about state and stage, or structure. That's part of what your message is and the message of anybody who's working with a more integral approach to spirituality.

**COHEN:** That's right.

WILBER: I see some of what you're doing as a combination of helping people get into a particular state, meaning the recognition of the ever-present, timeless ground, and then also working to help them push forward with their authentic self into these literally higher structures that are being formed.

#### Is that accurate?

**COHEN:** Absolutely correct.

WILBER: And that is the single most important thing that I can think of right now: that both of these dimensions need to be taken into account—and very few people are doing it. People are doing a fine job with state training. But because you cannot see these vertical structures when you introspect or meditate, you miss them.

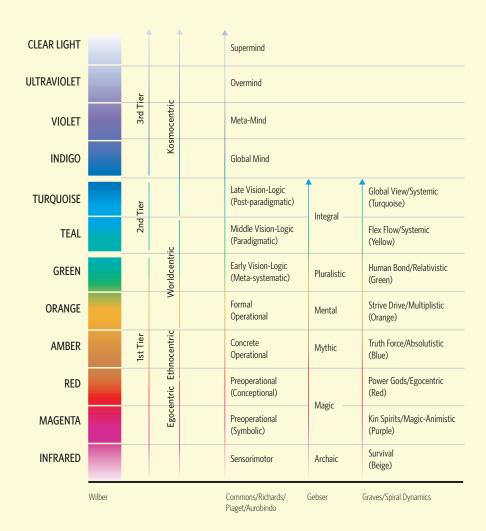
**COHEN:** Yes, and also, as we've spoken about many times, the stage or structure that you have reached will have its own interpretation of whatever particular state you may be experiencing. How we interpret our experience of states is going to determine what meaning we give them, and the meaning we give them is going to determine what our ultimate relationship to life is. The way I see it, anything less than a third-tier perspective will not be broad or deep enough to ensure that we consistently interpret our state experiences in a way that is free from the relentless spiritual narcissism of the postmodern ego.

WILBER: That's true. As we have talked about in the past,

## The Spectrum of Consciousness

ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS of Ken Wilber's integral approach is the recognition that human consciousness evolves, develops, or unfolds through a fluid but hierarchical sequence of levels or stages. Integrating over one hundred developmental models into his framework, Wilber uses a rainbow-hued scheme (based on the colors traditionally ascribed to the seven chakras) to generically represent these different stages, which are grouped into three major classes or tiers.

First tier spans all stages from primitive, infantile consciousness (infrared) to postmodern, pluralistic consciousness (green); second tier represents a leap into holistic, systemic, and integral modes of consciousness (teal and turquoise), which many believe to be the leading edge of mainstream culture today; and **third tier** reaches into even more integral, transpersonal, and higher "spiritual" territory (indigo and above)—potential stages of consciousness that remain largely unexplored.



LINES OF DEVELOPMENT

# **Evolving Worldviews, Expanding Self**

Although the spectrum of consciousness includes twelve colors to denote twelve specific levels, stages, structures, or waves of development, for ease of explanation Wilber often uses a simpler, three- or four-level scheme pioneered by developmental psychologists like Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan. Tracing the most general contours of psychological growth, this scheme highlights the fact that increasing consciousness corresponds to a broadening of worldviews and an expansion of one's sense of self.

Egocentric ("me"): A stage characterized by narcissistic self-absorption, bodily needs and desires, emotional outbursts, unsocialized impulses, and an incapacity to take the role of the "other"; seen today predominantly in infants and young children, rebellious teens, wild rock stars, and criminals. (Infrared to red)

Ethnocentric ("us"): An expansion of self-identity to include one's family, peers, tribe, race, faith group, or nation; the adoption of socially conformist rules and roles; commonly seen in children aged seven to adolescence, traditional religious myths and fundamentalism, the "moral majority," Nazis, the KKK, right-wing politics, patriotism, sports teams, school rivalries. (Amber)

Worldcentric ("all of us"): An even greater expansion of self to embrace all people, regardless of race, gender, class, or creed; a stage of rationality that questions rigid belief systems and transcends conventional rules and roles; commonly seen in late adolescence, social activism, multiculturalism, science, moral relativism, liberal politics, the "global village," interfaith spirituality; the emergence of integral cognition. (Orange to teal)

Kosmocentric ("all that is"): An identification with all life and consciousness, human or otherwise, and a deeply felt responsibility for the evolutionary process as a whole; "super-integral" cognition and values; innate universal morality; nondual spirituality fusing being and becoming; an emergent capacity, rarely seen anywhere. (Turquoise to clear light)

these state experiences are interpreted according to whatever structure or vertical stage you're at, and certainly not often enough according to third-tier values.

**COHEN:** So, in relation to this whole notion of third tier, I'd like to try to describe some of the qualities of what I understand third tier to be about, based on my own experience and inquiry.

An individual who reached third tier would be someone who had a fairly good grasp and awareness of the individual and collective developmental structures that make up the self. Because he or she had developed through second tier, there would be a deep sense of how the fact that humanity has evolved through these structures over a very long period of time has made it possible for us to begin to interpret our experience in such extraordinary ways. I'm talking about an understanding that is more than just cognitive—there is almost a precognitive knowing of the fact that a conditioned self is an evolving self.

Such an individual would also have experienced a deep awakening to the primordial empty ground of all being. He or she would be conscious of an ultimate context that transcended time and form and therefore would have a deep intuitive knowing of freedom from form, from creation, from manifestation—a knowing that *I am already free from this process*. That is what, in a very fundamental way, liberates the self-sense from being trapped in the life process. But what distinguishes third tier, as I understand it, is that the individual has simultaneously awakened to the evolutionary impulse or authentic self, to Eros, and therefore has discovered an ecstatic and passionate sense of care for the future of that process.

This is how I would define a Kosmocentric orientation: when the individual realizes that as the authentic self, he or she is not separate from the energy and intelligence that initiated the creative process. In this orientation, the recognition that there is only One means I am and always have been that One, and therefore the responsibility to create the future is on my shoulders alone. When we embrace this Kosmocentric orientation, we realize that I'm not here merely to live my own life. I'm not even really here for my own personal liberation. I'm here to create the future. Indeed, I find my own liberation as an incarnate sentient being through giving myself to that unimaginable task.

One of the signs that such an individual had really reached this point in their own development would be that their relationship to their own inner personal experience, and the actions they would be taking in life—the way they would be choosing to live their life and what their life would be devoted to—would undeniably express the fact that there had been a profound transformation at the core of their being. Now their personal responses to life would begin to reflect the awakening of a higher moral, ethical, philosophi-

cal, and spiritual orientation over anything that was personal or cultural or even ethnically driven. This higher and deeper perspective would begin to inform, pre-thought, the way the liberated self or personality would be responding to inner and outer life. In other words, such an individual would really be a very different kind of human being because their self would be expressing the liberated, committed passion of the evolutionary impulse.

**WILBER:** Okay. Well, I think that's great. In general, I think it's right on the money. Let me say a few almost simplistic things to kind of orient it, and then we can just talk about it free form. What we're really talking about, most fundamentally, is that because evolution has become aware of itself, because we actually understand growth and development now, we can see that we do have to awaken our own fundamental potentials, and part of that means awakening capacities to push into potentials that have not yet been created.

Incidentally, Clare Graves and Spiral Dynamics don't talk about third tier like this.

COHEN: They don't really talk about third tier at all, do they?

"Second tier is the highest of the personal levels. But once you step into third tier, *kaboom*—you're stepping into the transpersonal."

Wilber

WILBER: No, the highest stage they mention is coral. But I think they would see coral as still part of second tier. Clare Graves believed that there would be six stages laid down in second tier, as there are in first tier, but I just don't think it works like that—I don't think it's nearly as neat. What is starting to be seen in empirical research, for example in the work of Susanne Cook-Greuter, at the level that I call indigo and what Spiral Dynamics calls coral, is the emerging sense of a transpersonal witness as the individual identity, a sense of I AM-ness. And there is a realization that the world truly is a co-construction, not in the postmodern sense but in the sense of recognizing that the individual's power of intentionality is part of that which co-creates the universe.

So the easiest way to talk about third tier is to say that it's transpersonal. People don't just think that the planet is a single organism with one consciousness; they start to say, "I am that." At second tier, that's still a conceptual identity. They think of themselves as part of all sentient beings and not just part of all humans, but it's still not a felt identity; it's a thought identity. Even if second tier has a cognitive understanding of a Kosmocentric perspective, and can indeed

embody it to some degree, the actual sense of identity in second tier is still personal. Another way to put it is that second tier, turquoise, is the highest of the personal levels. And then, once you step into third tier, *kaboom*—you're stepping into the transpersonal. And at that level, as you said, there is an assumed responsibility for this evolutionary impulse. It's as if people *live* Eros.

#### **COHEN:** Exactly.

**WILBER:** It becomes the core of their being. It's why they get up. When people get into second tier or higher, they feel already full, and they act out of superabundance. So there's a sense of overflowing to it, in addition to a necessity to *create* out of an almost ethical or moral view. And then I think the description you gave is one very good version of some of the stuff that goes on there. And of course, a lot of what goes on there is still being laid down.

#### COHEN: Right. Of course.

**WILBER:** Another definition of third tier is that it's the level at which you start to permanently realize the major states of consciousness, and it just so happens that the three major stages in third tier are ones that, of necessity, objectify the subtle, then causal, then nondual states. Second-tier stages

are about the highest stage structures you can get to without necessarily having some sort of state realization. And you see this a lot—people who are at an integral stage of development but don't have a state awakening. And so one of the things that becomes really important is that in order to move into third tier and true transpersonal structures, you have to have some sort of state training and state realization to allow wakefulness, which starts out confined to the waking state, to be able to move into subtle states of consciousness and not lose track of its own I AM-ness, or its own ground. Sometimes that actually includes lucid dreaming, or it may not. But it always includes being able to objectify the subtle, to transcend and include it, to make that subject and object.

#### COHEN: Right.

**WILBER:** And then also to move into causal where there's just a permanent, ever-present witnessing. And so we have to make careful distinctions here, because you can have people who are just at green who have done a lot of state training and have a certain Big Mind awakening whereas you can have people at turquoise who don't. But when you get into third tier, it comes with the territory. I use Aurobindo's term "Supermind" to describe the highest structure in third tier, the end limit of vertical growth. And the end limit of horizontal or state growth



I call Big Mind. Supermind includes Big Mind, but Big Mind does not include Supermind. That's an important point. So third tier is where you really do have to start consciously making the ground of all being part of *your* being.

**COHEN:** One of the ways that I look for the evidence for what you were just describing is that the individual would begin to respond in a way that showed that their egoic or narcissistic conditioned responses were being contained within this higher perspective to such a degree that they are obviously a transformed man or woman. To put it in the simplest terms, it would mean that they had authentically transcended our highly developed postmodern narcissistic ego to a profound degree. They are not necessarily a perfectly liberated self, and I don't even know if such a thing actually exists. But they have crossed what I call the fifty-one-percent threshold, which means that the evolutionary impulse—the authentic self and its Kosmocentric orientation—has become the dominant part of the self, which makes *all* the difference.

**WILBER:** I think that's a good definition of what happens when you shift from turquoise into indigo, when you shift from second to third tier. That fifty-one percent just comes with the territory. And if it's forty-nine percent, you're still tur-

quoise, even though there may be other things happening that are important as well.

COHEN: Sure. Now the reason, as I was saying, I think this really is the kind of attainment that is essential right now is that, at least in terms of my own understanding, when one begins to reach this third-tier level of development, the urge to create the future supersedes or becomes a stronger impulse than merely the impulse to liberate the self or to transcend the world. At that point, we realize that we need to work with other individuals in order to create this future because we can't do it alone. And it's hard to work together with others, especially when we're getting into the kind of delicate and subtle territory that's necessary in order to take these next steps together. It becomes apparent that the only way human beings will actually be able to work together to authentically create a future that expresses a truly Kosmocentric perspective is if the individuals have actually reached this third-tier level of development themselves. Because what happens when we reach this level is that our capacity to create becomes truly chaordic—which means we are willing to live in a context of chaos that, unless there was a little bit of enlightenment, would be personally unbearable. And we can do so without losing our



center of gravity so that new and higher expressions of order can arise out of the chaos—again and again and again.

#### WILBER: Indeed.

**COHEN:** That would really seem to be the task at hand for the collective of individuals at the leading edge who have realized that the only reason they are here is to create the future. Actually, it would be essential that they reach nothing less than this third-tier level of development to be able to work together and create a context that could be an expression of what Ken Wilber would call superintegral.

#### WILBER: Amen, brother!

**COHEN:** Because otherwise we'd be able to talk about it, we'd be able to be inspired by the idea, but we wouldn't actually be able to pull it off. And as far as I understand it, the task at hand for those of us at the leading edge is to actually be able to pull this off together. I personally think that the only way anyone will believe you or believe me or believe us is by seeing objective evidence that this is really happening, that this is working. That's going to be the ultimate proof.

**WILBER:** Indeed. And we need to provide leadership in these ways of togetherness that are going to work. Because plu-

ralistic togetherness just doesn't work; it's a mess for our day and age. We need higher types of leadership on this type of togetherness. In terms of being responsible for our own growth and development, the first important thing is to realize that there is a *second* tier, an integral stage of growth, and that's really where, in a sense, the largest leading edge is. But then the leading edge of the leading edge is third tier, where we are actually starting to *embody* that potential in ways that consciousness necessarily awakens.

We have to remember that what's really important on a large scale right now is for people to get into second tier. The green level of development, which includes the fifty-five million Americans often called cultural creatives, is the leading edge for the mainstream, and about a third of them are ready to transform to second tier. That in itself is going to be staggeringly huge. But it's the pioneers who help define what second tier is. And that's third tier.





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# The **Death** of the **Mythic God**

A FORMER CATHOLIC MONK EXPLORES THE REVOLUTIONS IN SPIRITUAL THOUGHT THAT ARE TRANSFORMING RELIGION AND FOREVER CHANGING THE FACE OF GOD

od is dead. And we have killed him," wrote Friedrich Nietzsche in his most famous work, Thus Spake Zarathustra. That statement coincided with the beginning of a century of religious upheaval unprecedented in human history. Only three generations after those words were published, the religious make-up of Western culture is almost unrecognizable from the way it looked when Nietzsche penned his declaration. In Europe, traditional forms



An interview with Jim Marion by Carter Phipps





of Christianity have plummeted in popularity, and many churches and synagogues are becoming monuments to a bygone age. And in the United States, a rapid decrease in adherence to Catholicism and traditional Protestant denominations combined with a rapid rise in nontraditional forms of Christianity, particularly Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, has left social scientists struggling to keep up with the changes. Moreover, there has been an explosion in nontraditional forms of spirituality. New religious movements, New Age philosophies, and transplanted Eastern religions have all attracted millions and millions of the so-called spiritual but not religious contingent of the Western population.

So after a century of change, hindsight has proven Nietzsche's words both prescient and premature. Religion has not died, it would seem, so much as utterly transformed itself. Even highly respected secular intellectuals like biologist E.O. Wilson have come to the conclusion that religion is, as Wilson puts it, "an ineradicable part of human nature." And despite recent polemical books by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, it nevertheless seems that the mainstream opinion is more reflected in science writer Connie Barlow's statement that "smug disregard of the religious impulse has recently fallen out of fashion."

But even if God is still alive and kicking, He or She has certainly undergone a rather extreme personality makeover in the last century. And the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question is: Why? What are the cultural dynamics responsible for such a dramatic transformation? And even more importantly, where are these cultural changes leading us? In his book *The Death of the Mythic God: The Rise of Evolutionary Spirituality*, author Jim Marion examines these questions,

beginning with his own interpretation of Nietzsche's classic declaration. God is indeed dying, Marion suggests, but only a specific version of God, and another version is taking its place. Our culture is not leaving behind religion, he maintains, but a particular phase in our understanding of religion.

A former Catholic monk with a passion for the mystical, Marion is one of a small group of spiritual thinkers who are tracking the rise of a new vision of religious and spiritual life broadly called "evolutionary spirituality." And he feels that this emergence is significant enough to delineate it as an entirely new stage of spiritual development, fundamentally distinct

#### Religion has not died, it would seem, so much as utterly transformed itself.

from the last several millennia of religious thought. Now working as a public policy attorney in Washington, DC, but still deeply engaged in his own mystical life, Marion is both studying the rise of this cultural emergence and wholeheartedly participating in it. In collaboration with integral philosopher Ken Wilber and his Integral Institute, Marion is helping to develop a philosophical framework for a posttraditional age, one that incorporates the insights of evolutionary spirituality into the theological framework of Christian life. He recently shared with WIE his thoughtful analysis of the changing face of American Christianity and his personal enthusiasm for the promise and potential of the higher levels of development that he feels are available to us all.

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT: The title of your latest book is The Death of the Mythic God: The Rise of Evolutionary Spirituality. The theme of the book is that we in the West are leaving behind a certain stage in our understanding of the nature of God. You claim that it is not God who has died, but a particular conception of God. What do you mean by that?

JIM MARION: Over the last fifty years probably longer, but especially in the last fifty years—modern psychology has shown that people progress in consciousness from one level to another to another, and every time you go up a level in consciousness, your worldview changes. That includes your idea of who or what God is. So a person who operates, for example, at a rational level of consciousness has a very different idea of God than a person who operates at a mythological level of consciousness. The average person in the West, and probably in the East, too, has basically conceived of God in mythological terms for most of the last three thousand years.

**WIE:** What do you mean by mythological?

MARION: It's a God, usually male, who is separate from humans and who lives in the sky. It's a conception of God as a ruler, a punisher, a patriarch—all of the traditional male symbols of God. This God actually intervenes at times in human affairs and, if we pray, creates miracles.

**WIE:** We mostly associate that vision of the God with Abrahamic religions. But you're saying this is also universal.

MARION: It's universal in some sense. I'm talking mostly about the Western myth of what God is. But in the Eastern cultures, they also have a lot of mythological miracles. Of course people at the mythological level believe in those things literally. They literally believe that God created the world in six days. They literally believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. His resurrection is

conceived of as a bodily resuscitation. And they believe that after about forty days, his body actually went up into the sky to heaven, which is conceived, in the mythological sense, up until Galileo, as being on the other side of the vault of the heavens. It was a physical place, so somebody conceivably could ascend with their body up there. Of course, they had no idea that they were talking about billions of light-years.

**WIE:** But you feel that this mythic conception of God is dying?

MARION: It's coming to an end. It came to an end probably a couple hundred years ago with a lot of Western intellectuals and philosophers, but it has taken, as these things usually do, a couple hundred years to get down to the popular level. Two things are happening. You have individuals—fundamentalists in particular—whose vision of God remains mythic, who are trying tooth and nail to hold on to the old thinking. And you have what I would say is most mainstream Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, either going to church but not believing half the stuff or just walking out of the church altogether.

The polls now show—I cite the Barna Group in the book—that around 1950, something like fifty percent of the Christians in the United States could be defined as traditionalist Christians, which are basically mythiclevel Christians. That's now down to nineteen percent.

**WIE:** You write that this slow death of the mythic God in Christianity has initiated a crisis more serious than the crisis that gave rise to the Reformation. Could you elaborate on the dynamics of this crisis and why you feel it is so significant?

MARION: Well, most of the people on both sides in the Reformation still believed in the mythic God; they still believed in all the fundamental things. Maybe they didn't like the way the Pope was raising money or didn't like the



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authority of the Roman Church, but the fundamentals of the Christian faith pretty much stayed intact. What's happening now is that because people can't believe in that old mythological God who lives in the sky anymore, they're walking out of the churches by the millions, especially in Europe, but also in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. The same thing will happen in Eastern Europe to the Orthodox Church. So you have a massive crisis across Catholicism. Protestantism, and probably Orthodoxy soon as well, unless those churches can adapt to a different conception of God, one that makes sense to modern educated people.

WIE: When you talk about religious faith in America, you immediately hear of the rise of fundamentalism, the rise of evangelicals, and the so-called megachurches. How does that square with the thesis of the book and the death of a mythic God?

**MARION:** Well, there's a resurgence of interest in what I would call spirituality more than religion. And it's Pentecostalism that is really growing.

WIE: You're not calling that religion?

MARION: Well it's in a religious framework, but what people are looking for is the experience of God: They want to go to church a nd speak in tongues; they want to go to church and feel the Holy Spirit; they want to go to church and hear fabulous emotionally uplifting music from two-million-dollar sound systems, which is what you have in these megachurches. Most of the megachurches don't belong to any particular Christian denomination. They're independent. They do their own thing. And in that sense they're very modern. They have daycare centers; they have twelvestep programs galore. But they don't have a lot of dogma, and they don't have a lot of rules and regulations.

The Southern Baptists are still pretty mythic, and probably the

Missouri Lutherans and some other denominational groups too. But many of these new churches that you're talking about, megachurches and the Pentecostal movement, are different. They're sort of halfway in between. Take, for example, Reverend Rick Warren's popular book, The Purpose Driven Life. He's the head of a megachurch and is one of the leading evangelicals in the country these days. And if you read that book, it's more like a self-help manual, with a lot of pious quotes from the Bible and so forth. But you don't find the dogmas and you don't find heaven, hell, and purgatory and those kinds of mythic beliefs.

Because people can't believe in that old mythological God who lives in the sky anymore, they're walking out of the churches by the millions.

**WIE:** You mentioned that there is also a corresponding reactionary movement back toward the more fundamentalist version of mythic faith.

MARION: Yes, a lot of people are just terrified of losing the old religion and the old conceptions of God. But there are two things that the fundamentalists are right about: First of all, they're right in saying that there is a God; second, they're right in saying that the world has a purpose, the world has a meaning, the world has an intelligent design of some kind. And they're reacting against a secular world that basically doesn't believe any of those things.

### EVOLUTIONARY SPIRITUALITY

WIE: As our conception of a mythic God is dying, you suggest that the result is not that people are becoming universally secular or simply embracing atheism. You claim that there is simultaneously a new understanding of the spiritual life emerging in the culture. You refer to this as—and many people are now using this term—"evolutionary spirituality." Could you explain what you mean by evolutionary spirituality?

MARION: Just to set a little context for that term, integral philosopher Ken Wilber (and other theorists as well) talks about "lines of development" that exist within the self. For example, there is the cognitive line of development, the emotional line of development, the moral line of development. There is also a religious, or spiritual, line of development. What I mean by evolutionary spirituality has to do with the religious line of development. As you progress in your prayer life, or in your spirituality, you tend to move from the lower, more materialistic levels to the higher, more mystical levels. My basic contention in my first book was that when Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven, he was talking about a particular level of consciousness, an extremely high level of consciousness that hardly anybody gets to. But to get to that level, you can't jump steps. You have to go through the other levels. It's really only in the last fifty years that we have a pretty good and clear notion of what these evolutionary levels are, thanks to modern psychology, especially transpersonal psychology. Psychologists have studied tens of thousands of people, and they have been able to mark out one level of development from the next.

**WIE:** So when you talk about evolutionary spirituality or evolutionary Christianity, you're talking about this recognition that spiritual growth goes through these developmental stages?

**MARION:** Not only the recognition that it goes through these stages but that the *purpose* of religion, the purpose of spirituality, is to move people up through these stages. It's to actually help people develop.

There have always been developmental stages in the Christian path, going all the way back to within a hundred years of the time of Christ. I think that around 150 AD, Clement of Alexandria was dividing the spiritual path into three steps—the purgative step, the illuminative step, and the unitive step. They were recognized as stages. What's happening today is that these stages are much more scientifically elaborated; they can be taught to people, and people can be helped from one level to the next.

**WIE:** So how did this understanding reorient your relationship to the Christian tradition?

MARION: It helped me to understand it much better. Basically I've been on the spiritual path since I was a little kid; I went into a monastery when I was fifteen and was familiar with John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila and so forth since I was a teenager. So I always had a sense of the developmental aspects of the Christian spiritual path. As I went through the various stages in my own development, I used to keep a journal. I'd keep track of everything that was happening to me, and I always had this conception that I was moving up the ladder, so to speak, toward God. But I never could explain it very well until I found Wilber's work in which he synthesizes all of the developmental psychology and spirituality and philosophy of the last fifty or sixty years. That gave me a language to explain my own experience and the different stages that I had been through and hopefully to connect with others and show them what the Christian spiritual path has in fact always been, but to express that in modern terms.





**WIE:** Do you feel that there is a receptivity in the Christian community for this perspective? Are people talking about this?

MARION: I think so. It may still be a little bit ahead of the curve for your average person in the pew, but I've gotten literally hundreds of letters from people of every Christian denomination who say that they resonate with what I have written.

#### THE FUTURE OF FAITH

WIE: That brings up another question. While it seems like the death of the mythic God is proceeding in the West, in Africa it would seem the opposite—that there is a simultaneous rise in a belief in a mythic God.

MARION: Yes, in Africa you have people converting by the thousands every single week from tribal religions to either Christianity or Islam. This has been going on for ten or fifteen years. They are basically moving up from a magical level of consciousness to the mythic level of consciousness. Now in today's globalized world, they're not going to stay at the mythic level for two thousand years like the rest of the West did. I mean, in another generation, they may have gone up another step.

**WIE:** Can you articulate simply what you mean by a magical worldview?

MARION: Well, at the magical level, which is the level of most of the tribal cultures, you generally have polytheism, a belief in all sorts of different gods and goddesses. You have a belief in magical thinking; for example, if I say a magical word, I can make it rain or put a curse on you, or if you take my picture, you'll capture my soul. Those kinds of magical beliefs are what we'd call superstitions in the West, which is pejorative, but that's the kind of religion you have at the tribal level.

**WIE:** You were a monastic. Do you think

that monasticism is also dying along with the mythic level of Christianity?

MARION: It appears to be. But maybe in a sense that's good, because even a lot of priests and ministers were taught that it was useless to try to teach the person in the pew about mysticism or about the higher levels of the spiritual path because they just wouldn't get it. Most of them were too busy running their parish and all the activities that go with running a parish even to do much meditation themselves. So it was basically left to the monastic orders to do the meditation, so if you really wanted to grow on the spiritual path, the only place you could go was into the monastery.

These ideas have to reach the person in the pew. I think that's what we're all trying to do these days—Wilber and myself and also Father Thomas Keating, who goes around all over the place teaching centering prayer. You

It's good that the monastic life is dying off because Christianity's emphasis now has to be on reaching ordinary people.

have to go out and reach your average educated layperson. That's where the action is now. You can't just depend on the monasteries to turn out a few saints here and there. It has to be thousands and thousands of people, regular people in their everyday lives. So that's why I say that it's good that the monastic life is dying off because the emphasis now has to be on reaching ordinary people.

**WIE:** As people evolve and embrace these deeper, higher levels of development

in terms of their particular path—as Christians evolve up these levels of development that we're speaking about—do you think that people's identity as being Christian, or of belonging to any particular religion, will fall away? Does their religious affiliation drop away once they reach those higher, more integral and mystical levels of development?

MARION: Yes, I think that's happened to some extent. After all, the goal, even on the Christian path and of course it's the same with Islam, Iudaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism-is union with God. And if you become united with God, you have evolved or have transcended all religions because God is not a Methodist or a Buddhist or a Lutheran. Once your identity reaches that level of transcendence, you're not any of those things either. You still may go to church and be in the Christian tradition, so to speak, or in the Buddhist tradition or whatever tradition you're in, but basically you've transcended it. Didn't Gandhi say "I belong to all religions"?

You can see it happening already. I know a church here in Washington that I go to quite a bit that calls itself interfaith, and they really mean interfaith. It has Baptists, it has Catholics, it has Jews, it has Hindus, it has Muslims, and it has Buddhists. And almost every week, the services are chosen from a different tradition.

**WIE:** So if Jim Marion develops to higher and higher stages of spiritual development and takes the next nanotechnology life-extension pill, will he still identify himself as being a Christian in seventy-five years?

MARION: I'll put it this way. My tradition is Christianity—I've come out of the Christian tradition—but I have great respect for all the traditions, and I think they all end up at the same place anyway, so it's not that important that I label myself Christian.

## A NEW KIND OF ENLIGHTENMENT

WIE: The last thing I wanted to ask you about is what Ken Wilber calls states and stages. He makes a distinction between states of consciousness and stages of evolutionary development. In his recent work, Wilber talks about two different evolutionary paths. One is the path through states of consciousness, the mystical states we often associate with high spiritual attainment. The other kind of development is the path through stages of consciousness, which are often associated with more psychological levels of development.

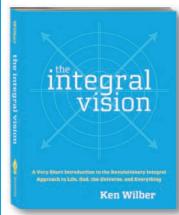
MARION: In terms of the title of your magazine-What Is Enlightenment?-Wilber's recent work does suggest that there are two different types of enlightenment: vertical and horizontal. Vertical enlightenment has to do with, as you described, ascending to the very highest stages of development; on the other hand, there is horizontal enlightenment, which has to do with states, not stages. All the traditions have stressed over the years the mastery of the mystical states of consciousness. When I talk about the old Christian map of the three steps of mystical life, that's probably more a description of states of consciousness.

Now if we're going to have two kinds of enlightenment, I would argue for three. The third one, I think, is represented by Jesus in the Gospels-it's practically all he talks about. It's psychological wholeness. It's the elimination of the shadow or the total integration of the shadow into the personality. I think there are a lot of gurus and masters out there who may be enlightened but who are, nevertheless, not psychologically whole. That's a critical type of enlightenment. Jesus says in the Gospel of Thomas, "When the male and the female are united as one, then you will enter the Kingdom." He's talking about uniting the rational masculine side of the self with the affective feminine side of the self and making them completely

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whole. Jung called it individuation.

So I think if we're going to differentiate between states and stages, I would also differentiate this one. Usually what I stress in my talks is meditating to go from one state to another, but also the absolute necessity of emotional integration. You really have to work hard to integrate the shadow.

**WIE:** Do you think it is actually possible to achieve that kind of deep wholeness or deep integration of the shadow? Because a lot of people say, "Well, you'll always have these shadow elements."

MARION: You'll probably always have a little bit, but there's a real difference between a whole person and a nonwhole person.

**WIE:** Could you describe what you feel a culture based on the higher levels of development would look like?

MARION: I think you can see it in individual people, but in the culture as a whole, we're so far away from that, I just wouldn't have any idea how it would look. I think basically people at the highest levels of development see no separation between themselves and God. You know, as Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." They see no separation between heaven and earth. Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is in front of our face and lying all about us. They see no separation between themselves and other people. "Whatever you do to one of these, you do it unto me." So you actually do treat people as Christ, not as if they were like Christ or pretending they were Christ; you actually see people as divine and you treat them accordingly. Of course, that would be a whole different world if we ever got people to that level.

But you're also talking about people who haven't maybe made it all the way but who are very spiritual and

relatively integrated, dynamic people. Maybe the best examples would be people like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Clara Barton or Booker T. Washington or Abraham Lincoln—people who are profoundly spiritual and who bring their spirituality into politics or medicine or science and have a tremendous effect on the world. They may not technically be enlightened, but they are so evolved spiritually and have developed themselves so much—emotionally,

Somebody at the highest levels of development sees no separation between themselves and God. As Jesus said, "The Father and I are one."

psychologically, spiritually—that they make tremendous contributions to this world. Now imagine if everybody in the world were operating at the level of a Martin Luther King or a Clara Barton or a Booker T. Washington or an Abraham Lincoln. This world would be nothing like it is now. There would be no comparison.



Listen to the complete interview with Jim Marion at wie.org/marion

This interview was underwritten by the Trust for the Meditation Process, a charitable foundation supporting contemplative practice among Christians and encouraging dialogue and cooperation among all contemplative traditions.

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# MINTEGRAL WORLD

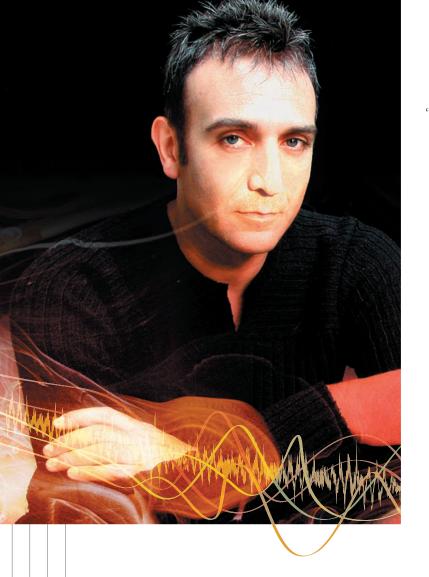
# An Interview with Corrado Rustici by Andrew Cohen

s any anthropologist will tell you, every stage of cultural development is accompanied by its own distinctive forms of art. In the concert halls, the dawning of modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the ascendance of the great classical orchestras, led by composers such as Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. With the postmodern revolution of the mid to late twentieth century came the birth of wildly diverse musical styles like rock and roll, jazz-fusion, hip-hop, punk, pop, metal, and electronica, pioneered by countless more iconic names. But who can imagine what manner of soundscapes humanity's next stage of evolution will bring?

In the following dialogue with WIE founder (and jazz-fusion drummer) Andrew Cohen, "integral musician" Corrado Rustici suggests he might have an answer or two. As an Italian guitarist and producer who has worked and played with some of the greatest artists of the past three decades—including, among many others, Eric Clapton, Miles Davis, Aretha Franklin, Herbie Hancock, Sinead O'Connor, Phil Collins, and Luciano Pavarotti—Rustici's career has encompassed nearly every genre of modern and postmodern musical expression, which perhaps puts him in an ideal position to attempt to discover what might come next. Aided in this quest by his experience as a former student of spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy and his years studying the work of integral philosopher Ken Wilber, Rustici seems to be well on his way to defining the deeper musical contours for the coming "trans-modern" world—a world in which, he explains, the traditional distinctions between artist, music, and listener will steadily become integrated into something wholly new.

-T.H.

**ANDREW COHEN:** Our mutual friend Ken Wilber has defined integral art and music as "anything created by an artist with integral consciousness." Is that basically how you would define it as well?



"With the advent of the Web (not by chance a manifestation of this post-modern world to which we belong) a more interactive, more immediate and more integrated way is erupting out the creative minds of young new artists. By accepting and not refusing new technologies, these artists are creating a new art form that will mirror the trans-modern world that humanity will eventually belong to."

Corrado Rustici

CORRADO RUSTICI: I agree with that, but I'm also trying to be a little more specific. I am just a musician, so my focus is not so much on the bigger picture but on what I'm really close to. In my life I've had the good fortune of playing many different kinds of music. I've played jazz, I've played rhythm and blues, I've played rock, I've played progressive, I've played pop. I've been fortunate enough to be not just a guitar player but a keyboard player and a singer, and I've also been a producer. So there are all these different aspects of me, which were all kind of separated. And then something happened, and I found that there is a way of manifesting one's creativity in a way that doesn't have to be fragmented. That's what

my new record, *Deconstruction of a Postmodern Musician*, is about. Working on it was a way of really applying to music what I've been trying to apply in myself, which is to get rid of the ignorance, to get rid of all the egoic parts, in order to express something more integrated, more whole. I guess I'm trying to manifest more of who I already am in a much fuller way, and that can take some very practical forms.

In other words, from one point of view, you can say that if you're a person who's into integrative activities, then you will obviously manifest that in whatever you do. But from my point of view as a musician, I enjoy the fact that I can also be very pragmatic about defining this new genre.

To me, being an integral musician is not only about where I'm coming from as an individual but about pushing the edge technologically and culturally as well.

**COHEN:** In what ways are you attempting to do that?

RUSTICI: Well, for the past decade I've actually been working to position music as a more vertical, evolving product. I've been talking to all the people in my industry and trying to evangelize the fact that the actual manifestation of a musician's work has to change. We're seeing that the era of the CD has been over for a while, and a new generation of listeners doesn't necessarily care about that traditional medium very much.

Ten years ago, I started talking to Sony about trying to create a record label connected with the PlayStation. Back then we didn't have broadband internet, so I came up with this vision of putting graphics on a music CD, which would be played through a device attached to the PlayStation, called the Synchronicity, in order to connect people to a whole interactive world online that would allow community building, the downloading of new music, etc. I was trying to convince both the gaming industry and the recording industry that there needed to be an integration of these two worlds. And it seems like now that's finally starting to happen. We're beginning to see people interfacing through things like Second Life, or the PlayStation 3, or the latest mobile phones. There's a new way people are relating to digital technology today, and this could create a lot of interesting possibilities for integral musicians who want to push the cutting edge.

For example, I'm currently working on something called generated music, which is something Brian Eno has been doing for a while. Basically, I compose a song made up of different holons—small holons, hundreds of them—which are just little samples or snippets of music that collectively make up the song. But they're all interrelated, so with the right software, you can download the song and you can hear that piece of music. But it could be different every time that you play it, and it could also be adjusted to get what you want out of the piece of music. You could say, "I want to be more relaxed, I want to be more excited, I want to get this feeling or more of that feeling," and so that particular piece of music would always evolve and generate itself in different forms.

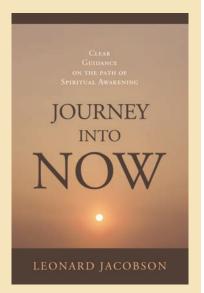
**COHEN:** So you're talking about being able to interact with the music, a way for the listener to manipulate one piece of music to express itself in different ways.

RUSTICI: Exactly. And that, I think, is an example of one of the many things an integral musician could do—to use the latest technology to create a new way of engaging with the community of listeners, changing the way songs are even created and experienced. If I talk to some of my colleagues about what they intend to do with a song, they'll say, "I'm making a video, and I'm going to play live," which of course is fine. But that approach isn't inherently more vertical or integrated.

I think that integral music is an expression of an integral life. You know how people talk about "intellectual altruism" on the internet, the idea that people seem happy to freely share their knowledge and expertise if given an opportunity? Well, I think we need more artistic altruism, where an integral artist can freely put a piece of music out there, and then people can just shape it however they wish to and make it their own. It's still your music; you're just significantly expanding the creative process.

COHEN: You said that "integral music is an expression of an integral life," and one thing that I've found confusing ever since I was an aspiring musician as a kid is a striking lack of what I suppose we could call integral development in many of the world's great artists and musicians. I'm talking about the creative and improvisational geniuses whose performances are capable of really invoking the presence and majesty of Spirit, of giving people a direct experience of the overwhelming nature of Spirit itself in a way that is literally transcendent and awe-inspiring. Maybe they'd even cause people to begin to weep in ecstasy. But after the performance, if you would go and stand near those same individuals and listen to what they're saying, it would be shocking to see how crude and spiritually undeveloped they were as people. Yet while they're playing their instrument, they're expressing something of extraordinary depth.

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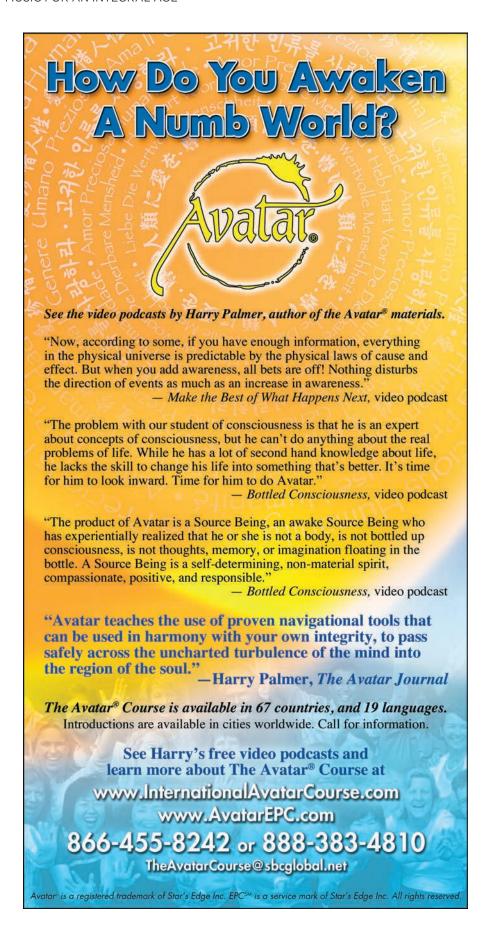


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**RUSTICI**: Yeah, I've felt this many times. After so many times witnessing it, I actually decided to not get too close to some of the people I regarded as really great musicians, iust so I wouldn't have to experience that kind of disillusionment. I think some people are born with a greater ability to directly access that part of themselves through music, and they've found that their music creates a direct connection to that space for others, that deeper reality within us that we all strive to reach. But most of them haven't dedicated themselves to expressing that depth through other aspects of their lives. This is something that you and Ken have been talking about for years—the fact that development doesn't necessarily move smoothly across all lines of development at the same time.

So, yes, some musicians have that direct access, and they enjoy it, and they are really unbelievable in certain ways. I remember one experience I had listening to Allan Holdsworth in Los Angeles. He was playing some incredible guitar solos and then he played this one tune that was nothing but chords, and I just went into a different realm. I saw God as this unstoppable force coming through this human channel. I looked at Holdsworth and could tell that he was not conscious of it-it went so far beyond his personality. It was almost like he was being dictated what to play by this other power. And that's when I realized that it goes beyond one's own will to express that. All you can do is get ready and develop yourself so that when you tap into that deeper source, something extraordinary will be able to manifest and flow. A lot of people just focus on developing musical skills, so they can express that depth of Spirit through their music. But it isn't necessarily integrated into the rest of their life, and then, as you said, they become like two different people.



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# Anarchy in the Sangha

#### **AGAINST THE STREAM**

A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries by Noah Levine (HarperOne, 2007, paperback \$13.95)

#### SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP

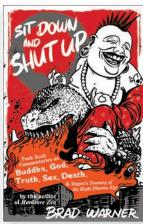
Punk Rock Commentaries on Buddha, God, Truth, Sex, Death, & Dogen's Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye by Brad Warner [New World Library, 2007, paperback \$14.95]

wenty-five hundred years ago, the Buddha subverted the status quo of human ignorance by rebelling against all external sources of authority and boldly discovering for himself what is ultimately true. If all he needed to succeed was a little antiauthoritarian angst, who's to say that the punk rockers and juvenile delinquents of today aren't already halfway up the mountain to perfect Buddhahood?

At least that's the basic idea behind two recent books by a couple of young American Buddhists with more than a little punk-rebel rage running through their veins. Could they be on to something? Demolishing the peace-loving, mellow-yellow Buddha Way preached by their parents' generation as they passionately promote something slightly more radical?

That's certainly the spirit fueling the latest work by Dharma Punx author Noah Levine. Titled Against the Stream: A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries, Levine's short new book is an all-out blast of traditional Theravada Buddhism, which prides itself on preserving and practicing the Buddha's teachings in their original (Pali Canon) form. Departing from the autobiographical troubled-teen-finds-Buddhism backbone of his first book, the thirty-six-year-old Levine has stepped into the role of a full-fledged spiritual teacher, expounding the Buddha-dharma as it was taught to him by his mentor, American meditation teacher Jack Kornfield—only with far more of an edge. As Levine told WIE in 2004, he has different aspirations in mind from those of Kornfield and his baby-boomer Buddhist peers. "I'm not going to hang out with these people all the time," he said,





"and I don't really want to be like them, because my attitudes are different. But they have this wisdom that I want."

In Against the Stream, it's clear that Levine has developed plenty of original Gen-X wisdom all his own, and his progress on the Eightfold Path has been a tumultuous tale of punk rock reformation. "In 1988," he writes in a brief autobiographical intro, "I woke up in a padded cell, addicted to drugs, committed to a life of crime and violence, and wanting to die." Now that he has your attention, he continues: "Prior to that day, I had seen myself as a rebel, a punk rock revolutionary. . . . And I had been successful at defying the cultural norms of society's laws and structure—at least externally. I had raised myself on a steady diet of punk rock nihilism and antiauthority ethics in a haze of drug-induced self-destruction."

Yikes. But these days, having turned his life around completely, Levine is a passionate advocate for what he calls "inner revolution," the "radical and subversive personal rebellion against the causes of suffering and confusion" within. And though this revolution begins inside each of us, its effects are meant to be felt far and wide. "We have the ability to effect a great positive change in the world," he writes, "starting with the training of our own minds and the overcoming of our deluded conditioning. Waking up is not a selfish pursuit of happiness; it is a revolutionary stance, from the inside out, for the benefit of all beings in existence."

Throughout Against the Stream, Levine keeps his revolutionary stance running strong. Chapter titles include (in military-stencil typeface) "Basic Training," "Boot Camp," and "The Revolutionary Manifesto." Levine is clearly not lacking in

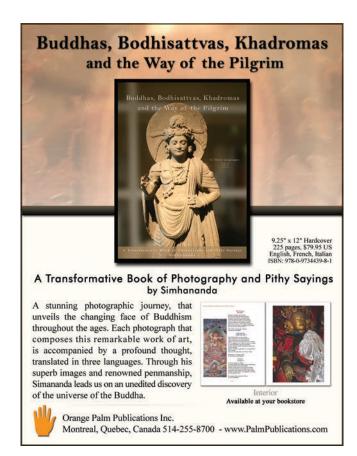
idealism, but his rebellious theme does eventually feel a bit overdone. After all, we're talking about individuals learning to practice a twenty-five-hundred-year-old teaching of mindful living—which isn't exactly the most socially destabilizing or spiritually progressive practice I can think of. But that's why it's important to consider who the book is, in large part, trying to appeal to: wayward young punks. Levine regularly teaches the theory and practice of Buddhist vipassana meditation at juvenile halls and prisons, using the dramatic authenticity of his own story to open the minds of rebellious Gen-Y kids and introduce them to the path of insight and care that saved his life and, therefore, might save theirs as well.

"The whole point of spiritual practice," he writes, "is to have a meaningful and fulfilling life of ease and well-being and to utilize our life's energy to bring about positive change in the world." According to Levine, such positive change includes "taking the practice to the streets, serving the needy, protecting the oppressed, and educating the masses in the universal truths of kindness, generosity, and forgiveness."

I suppose if Levine can get a few kids to give up a life of drugs and violence for ideals like *those*, well, maybe he *will* have something of a revolution going on. But its peaceful, compassionate nature will be anything but "punk." Ironically, the ultimate message of Levine's punk Buddhist manifesto is that if you're an angry punk today, your raging ways will fall away the day you meet the Buddha.

o is it even possible to reconcile a punk attitude with the Buddha-dharma? Or are the two, from the start, diametrically opposed?

Our next clue comes in the form of an entertaining primer on Zen Buddhism by Brad Warner, a Gen-X ex-punk rocker from Ohio. Framed around a trip Warner takes to his hometown (Akron) for a reunion gig with his early-eighties punk band (Zero Defects), Sit Down and Shut Up is a fun but serious explication of Zen practice and theory by a self-avowed master. Because Warner hails from the Soto school of Zen, his primary love is the committed daily practice of seated meditation, or zazen, which he stresses the importance of every chance he gets. And just like in his first book, 2003's crude and brazen Hardcore Zen—which I criticized in Issue 25 of WIE for its adolescent inanity—he doesn't pull any punches in his attacks on other spiritual paths, giving special attention to those that appear to promise any kind of instant enlightenment. (This includes Soto Zen's traditional arch rival sect, Rinzai, with its fascination for sudden enlightening blasts of insight called satori.) But this time around Warner doesn't seem to be nearly so interested in rebuking the rest of the spiritual world merely for his own amusement; instead, his periodic volleys of vitriol actually tend to advance his philo-







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sophical arguments, and he sounds refreshingly sincere.

Having lived many years in Japan, "working for a company that makes cheeseball sci-fi movies," Warner was able to find himself a genuine Japanese Zen master, an octogenarian ex-banker named Gudo Nishijima. And despite Warner's own repeated warnings about following "authority figures," his respect for his master runs deep. He quotes and refers to Nishijima throughout the book, highlighting his teacher's West-friendly, no-nonsense, no-metaphysics approach. The pragmatic brand of Buddhism espoused by Warner and Nishijima, however, often comes across as a form of scientific materialism, discounting the traditional Buddhist notion of reincarnation entirely and lending a flatout reductionistic interpretation to the nature of consciousness. "What we call 'consciousness' is just electrical impulses bouncing around in that lump of meat in our skulls," Warner writes. "Nothing more." Statements like this, coupled with his apparent cosmic pantheism ("God is the Universe"), make his repeated insistence that he's not a materialist rather dubious. Yet Warner is convinced that his position represents neither materialism nor idealism but simply the nondualistic viewpoint of a masterpiece of ancient Zen-speak known as the Shobogenzo, which much of Sit Down and Shut Up is devoted to interpreting.

Written by Zen Master Dogen, famed thirteenth-century founder of the Soto sect, the Shobogenzo is a ninety-fivechapter summation of Dogen's shikantaza, or "just sitting," philosophy—the idea that the posture and attitude of formal meditation practice are synonymous with the state of Buddhahood itself. It's this basic Soto tenet that inspires Warner's frequent attacks on all who would naively aspire after a sudden be-all, end-all goal of spiritual practice called enlightenment. After he spends many pages criticizing a stereotypical version of that transcendent ideal, in a chapter titled "Enlightenment Is for Sissies!" he admits that "enlightenment experiences do happen," but he explains that "in Dogen's way of thinking, zazen itself is the practice of enlightenment—meaning enlightenment is not something you can achieve; it's something that you do every single moment of every single day until you can't do nuthin' more." In the context of today's quick-fix pop spirituality, where occasional glimpses of the eternal Now are often taken to be a complete spiritual path unto themselves, some readers may find this message of lifelong effort off-putting. But if you're one of them, Warner has nothing but contempt for you, insisting that the authentic spiritual life is a never-ending daily grind, fueled entirely by one's "will to the truth"—and definitely not for sissies.

As much as I admire such hardcore sentiments, I'm not sure what he finds so radically punk rock about *zazen*, which essentially means sitting quietly for "an hour each day." His attempts to dispel the mythical aura surrounding the concept

of enlightenment, while often clarifying, also tend to suck a lot of the fire out of the spiritual guest, and at times I found myself wondering if he and the Buddha (and Zen Master Dogen) are really on the same page with this enlightenment thing. In any case, Warner is up front about where his chosen path has taken him. He explains how his decades of committed Zen practice have given him some degree of distance from his mental and emotional experience and dramatically changed his outlook on life, making him—surprisingly highly critical of even the punk ethos he once held dear. In a powerful passage, he explains that the victim mindset of the punk rocker (and everybody else) becomes ridiculous once you truly realize that "all is one," because you then find it impossible to rail angrily against "the System" or in any other way avoid the fact that, ultimately, you are the entire universe and therefore ultimately responsible for everything that happens in it. "Try that one on for size sometime," he says, in all seriousness. "Don't make any excuses or exceptions for any reason whatsoever. Accept all responsibility yourself and see how easy or nice the whole 'all is one' thing sounds to you."

In the end, though, the power of Warner's book is somewhat diluted by the ambiguous dichotomy between its premise and its message. On the one hand, Warner seems to believe, like Noah Levine, that the punk attitude of his youth and the Buddhist wisdom of his adulthood go hand in hand rebelling against authority figures and sacred scriptures, freeing oneself from an oppressive and ignorant society, etc. On the other hand, his profound adoration for his own favorite authority figures and holy books, along with his explicit deconstruction of the punk victim mentality, seems to convey exactly the opposite stance. And Warner seems unable to reconcile these two aspects within himself, drawing a sharp line between them: "In Ohio I was a rock star. But out here in California, I was a Zen teacher. It's hard to say which I prefer." Thus, in a way, Warner appears to be much more conscious of this discrepancy than Levine, admitting to at least some inherent contradiction between peace-loving Buddhism and rabble-rousing punkdom. Undoubtedly, his book could have made a stronger philosophical statement if he'd put some more thought into explaining the actual relationship (or lack thereof) between the two, but for some reason, I suspect he doesn't give a damn. "It's hard to worry what other people might think," he writes, "when you realize their thoughts are just as dopey and meaningless as yours."

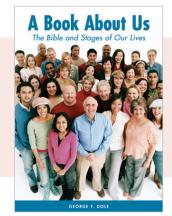
And in that seamless blend of an F-you attitude and deep insight into the nature of the mind, perhaps he proves—in action if not in theory—that it's possible to be a true Punk Buddhist after all.

Tom Huston

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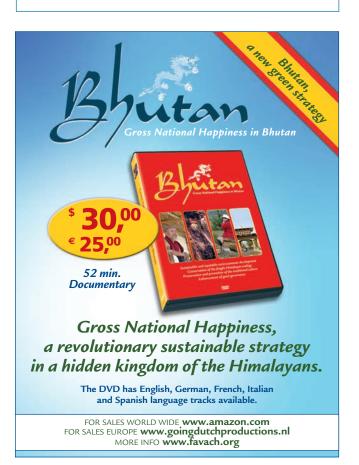
—Dr. James F. Lawrence, Pacific School of Religion

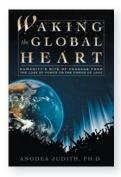


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#### **WAKING THE GLOBAL HEART**

Humanity's Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love by Anodea Judith (Elite Books, 2006, paperback \$17.95)

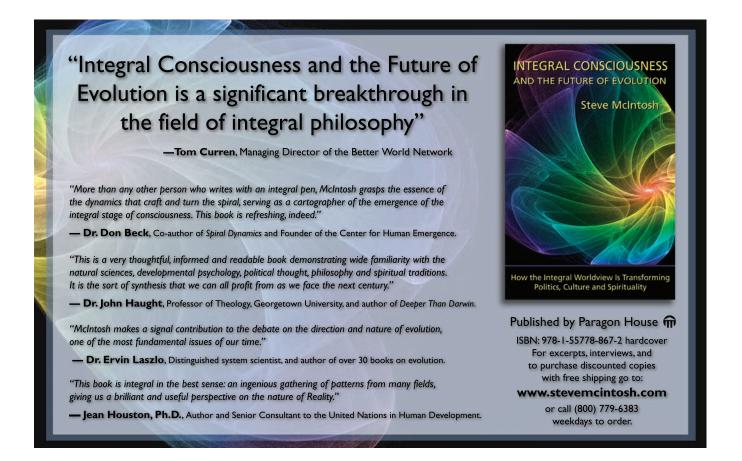
"The human drama is nearing its denouement," writes Anodea Judith at the opening of her latest book, Waking the Global Heart. "Birthed from the primal womb of nature, billions of years in gestation, we have risen out of Stone Age infancy, crawled across the land in teeming toddlerhood, and

labored through thousands of years of sibling rivalry, to arrive at the present time—in the tumultuous throes of adolescence." And the big question, according to Judith, is whether we will make it beyond the egoism and risk-taking of adolescence to mature as a species. In this 2007 Nautilus Book Award winner for social change, Judith offers important insights about our collective journey by bringing her understanding of the individual developmental process to bear on our current evolutionary predicament.

Judith has taken on a daunting task. Few among us have the unique combination of curiosity, care, and chutzpah, not to mention intellectual fortitude, to develop a scheme to explain the human trajectory. But Judith is no stranger to daring syntheses: as a practicing psychotherapist, she integrated the Eastern chakra system with Western models of psychological development. For

her new theory, she applies her earlier synthesis at a cultural level and adds an overarching framework of masculine-feminine archetypes based in Jungian depth psychology. Through the book's three sections—"Who are we?" "Where did we come from?" and "Where are we going?"—Judith argues that humanity is undergoing an initiation that is already painful, but is the process by which we will collectively mature into a global civilization awake to the heart.

Using a conceptual framework developed by Jungian analyst Gareth Hill, Judith explains the movement of culture from prehistory to today. Hill divides the masculine and feminine into two forms—static and dynamic—to come up with four typologies. Judith's insight is to apply Hill's four categories to create four phases of cultural history. The first is the Static Feminine, in which the primary focus is the nurturing space of mother and



child. While this era created enough stability to allow human culture to first emerge, she notes that it was also restrictive, boring, unconscious, and limited. Humanity, she argues, eventually found such stasis suffocating and shot forward in rebellion into the next epoch, the Dynamic Masculine, which began about 4400 BCE in response to environmental and social catastrophes. Here we have the beginning of the mythic worldview and the birth of the Hero, whose task it was to rule societies that were exploding in size. From here, Judith introduces the Static Masculine, in which new structures, such as legal systems, were created to govern society. While this phase, which Judith contends lasted from about 800 BCE up to the present, has led to rationality, order, and stability, it can be rigid, dissociated from nature, punitive, and ultimately disempowering. Surprisingly, she places the Western Enlightenment, which

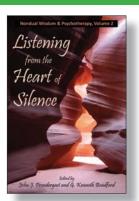
most theorists mark as a distinctly new phase in cultural development, within the Static Masculine, along with all of Western history. Then, beginning less than two hundred years ago, the Dynamic Feminine begins to emerge to liberate humanity from the structures of the past so that we can play, create, and live in egalitarian inclusiveness. With the Dynamic Feminine, Judith contends, humanity will return "once again to the garden from which we came. . . . We come back as awakened souls, awake to our possibilities and awake to a world we can create together."

While Judith's scheme captures important qualities and dynamics that have been at play in Western history, this final "we" strikes an odd chord. Who is this "we"? Does it seem likely that all of us on this planet—from a Maori boy in New Zealand to the Wall Street capitalist to the Indian ragpicker to a New Age personal fulfillment

coach—are actually at the same point in our understanding of who we are and why we are here? While in the broadest terms, one can say that we're all on the same journey, we certainly haven't all gone to the same destinations in our development. What about the significant portion of humankind that, if we use her scheme, appears to be still struggling with the Dynamic or Static Masculine? Will all of us experience the same heart awakening in this next initiation—or is this only for those who are living and expressing the Dynamic Feminine?

Before that question takes too much of our attention, however, Judith's scheme itself bears closer scrutiny: Do her four archetypes actually describe a developmental sequence in human culture? Masculine and feminine archetypes are usually patterns or characteristics within the human psyche, not developmental levels that indicate a vertical trajectory. Judith

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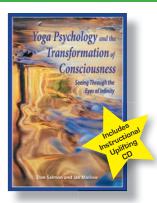


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definitely sees these four in terms of a developmental progression, but it's not clear what is progressing. When researchers speak about development, they are usually observing self-organizing capacities in psychology, biology, evolution, and complex systems whereby each new step in the progression transcends and includes the capacities of the former. Each step creates an irreversible sequence that moves toward greater complexity, depth, and an ever-widening scope of action. But in Judith's scheme, each new phase seems simply to be a reaction to the former one, which may trigger development but is not synonymous with it. Her response to the Western Enlightenment provides a case in point. While she acknowledges that the Enlightenment has brought about progress-improved quality of life, a deeper interior self-sense and individuation, and higher capacities of reason—she doesn't see this as a

new developmental stage. Her view is colored by loss, a reaction to what has come before: "We had become spiritual orphans, lost from our mythic ground, abandoned by both Mother and Father, hungry for a new spiritual home."

This makes the book rather puzzling. At the end of the sequence, which she says is taking us from adolescence to adulthood as a species, we end with the Dynamic Feminine, which is anarchically playful, inclusive, erotic, and freedom-seeking. Oddly, this sounds archetypically adolescent. How do we get to the maturity that she is calling for?

Maybe the answer lies in her sense that humanity is in for a rough time that will eventually catalyze an awakening to our deeper nature. Her view is stark, perhaps rightly so, because we may well be so far into ecological destruction that cataclysm is inevitable. She predicts that humanity's next initiation is not going to be immediately uplifting

but rather a tumble down the steep, brutal slope of the "descending path" to awakening, one that is the essence of Jungian psychoanalysis. On this path, attachments "are pried from [you], destroyed before your very eyes" until you are stripped down to your core, to the "deep, hidden layers of the collective unconscious" that form "instinctual roots" from which we can create again. But while this may make sense in an individual psychotherapeutic context, can it be applied to humanity globally? Given the diversity of cultures on this planet, it is hard to imagine what it would mean for the entire world to be stripped down to those instinctual roots, not to mention how a radically new future might arise from this. Despite these serious concerns, Waking the Global Heart is a poetically written wake-up call urging us to respond to the critical moment in which we find ourselves.

Flizabeth Dehold

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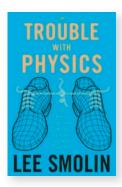
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#### THE TROUBLE WITH PHYSICS

The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a Science and What Comes Next

by Lee Smolin (Mariner Books, 2007, paperback \$15.95)

There is an old cliché in legal theory that says, "When the law is against you, argue the evidence. When the evidence is against you, argue the law." The same principle could probably be applied to the current state of the field of physics if we just replace "law" with

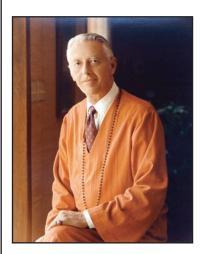
"mathematical law." As acclaimed physicist Lee Smolin explains in his recent book, The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of a Science, and What Comes Next, many physicists today don't have any empirical evidence for their claims about the makeup of the universe, so without the evidence, they are arguing the law mathematical law. This is upsetting conventional particle physics, Smolin complains, where theories, even mathematically derived theories, are supposed to give one the capacity to make predictions about the universe—predictions that can be tested, observed. and verified. Thus, ever since Einstein upset the world of physics with his radical views of time and space and his elegant mathematics (think  $E = mc^2$ ). it has generally been accepted that mathematical theories should eventually lead to testable hypotheses that then lead to verification or rejection of the theories. It sounds straightforward. But in the high-stakes world of particle physics, where our brightest scientific minds debate the ultimate nature of the universe with all the intensity and passion of rabbinical scholars, things have strayed from this simple formula. And Smolin, at least, feels it's time to step away from the chalkboard, come down from the observatory, turn off the particle accelerator, and take stock of the state of physics in particular, and of science in general.

While I have no background in physics, I have long been a curious lay reader of science, and I found the first part of *The Trouble with Physics* relatively easy to follow. Smolin begins with a description of the five major unresolved theoretical issues in physics today, that is, the major conundrums that continue to confound our best efforts at comprehension. The first is that there is no one theory of nature that unifies general relativity and quantum theory. General relativity describes



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the large (time and space, galaxies, black holes, etc.) and quantum theory the small (quantum particles, molecules, enzymes, etc.), but they each have problems, and they don't work together. String theory, the idea that the most fundamental elements of matter are tiny one-dimensional string-like units of energy, is an effort to get these two fundamental theories to coexist in a larger, unified framework.

In fact, for at least a decade now, string theory has been just about the only game in town when it comes to getting these two heavyweight theories to work together. Originally, it was an obscure notion put forward in the 1980s that few people paid attention to. Fast forward a couple of decades and string theory dominates physics, both within the field and in the public's perception. Current pop cultural science fiction ideas, such as multiple dimensions or even multiple universes, are taken from conclusions derived from string theory or its partner, M-theory. The only problem with all of this attention, as Smolin points out, is that string theory has yet to make what in science is called a falsifiable prediction, meaning a prediction that can be tested and proved wrong. In other words, it has yet to be verified experimentally—a rather important feature of any grand unifying theory of nature. As Smolin writes in his book, "One way to describe the trouble with physics is to say that there is no work in theoretical elementaryparticle physics over the last three decades that is a sure bet for a Nobel Prize. The reason is that a condition of the prize is that the advance has been checked by experiment."

While Smolin himself has primarily focused on other areas of research, he has also done significant work in string theory, even writing a book about its implications in the nineties called *The Life of the Cosmos*. So his knowledge of the field, and certainly of physics in general, is far-reaching. And though he does an impressive job of trying to keep things simple, at a certain point, the complex nature of the material

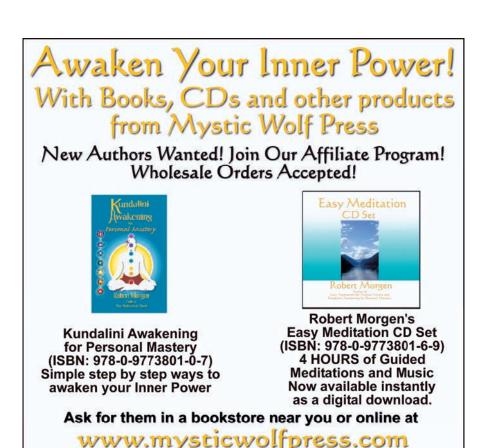
overcomes the clarity of his prose. Indeed, lay readers like myself are likely to find the middle third of the book, which essentially amounts to a review of the last fifty years of particle physics, quite challenging. Despite my best efforts, there were times when it seemed like it might as well have been written in Old English for all my capacity to translate the words on the page into something meaningful. Nevertheless, I hung in there by my fingernails and the reward, despite the confusion, was a richer understanding of the hard science that goes into building new theories and the kind of scientific heroism that is required to forge new paths in these areas where human knowledge has never traveled.

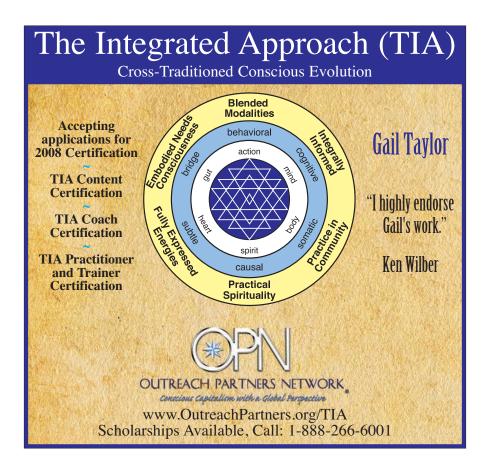
The final third of the book, thankfully, leaves behind the review of theoretical physics for a much less technical discussion, not of science itself but of the politics of science and the philosophy of science. Smolin has deep concerns about what he feels is a conformist culture that has grown up around string theory advocates, a culture that is exacerbated by the peer-review system of grant hiring committees and application protocols that is risk-averse, tends to favor those who accept the consensus of the scientific community, and marginalizes those with radically new or different proposals. "If science is based on the consensus among a community of experts," he writes, "then what you have in string theory is a community of experts who are in remarkable agreement about the ultimate correctness of the theory they study." But is it actually correct? Consensus among a community of peers is essential to science, Smolin recognizes, and a tremendous amount of critical science is done by individuals who work within existing theoretical frameworks, what he calls "technical problem-solving within existing theories." But such science, he suggests, must be balanced by those who are willing to step outside established patterns of thinking. He suggests these "seers" are

particularly needed when science is at a crossroads—when foundational problems are up for question and new paradigms must be created. Given his increasing concerns about the viability of string theory and his worry that little progress has been made over the last decades on some of the foundational issues of physics, he suggest that now is the time for the seers to come to the forefront. "If our generation of theorists has failed to make a revolution," he concludes, "it is because we have organized the academy in such a way that we have few revolutionaries, and most of us don't listen to the few we have."

The Trouble with Physics is a powerful indictment of the state of physics today, but it is also a fair, deeply considered, and ultimately optimistic book. Smolin is hardly bitter, and his analysis is refreshingly free of cynicism. And except for the more technical parts of the book, he is a clear and engaging writer and thinker who includes fascinating personal and professional anecdotes culled from the close-knit world of particle physics. There are several moments in the narrative where I felt like I was right there with Smolin and his colleagues, passionately debating the foundations of our universe with some of the most brilliant thinkers in the world. While the lay reader will be unable to accurately assess his scientific evaluations, Smolin's strength is that he brings several other levels of evaluation to his inquiry—psychological, philosophical, and sociological considerations, as well as gut instinct and common sense. In this we realize that the story of physics is not only an obscure scientific epic, unfolding on the far reaches of academia; it is also a human drama, and in it we can see so much of human nature, its remarkable strengths and troubling weaknesses, all playing out against the backdrop of this tremendously important quest for knowledge—knowledge about the universe we live in, but also, ultimately, about ourselves.

Carter Phipps









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#### THE MEANING OF LIFE

by Terry Eagleton (Oxford University Press, 2007, hardcover \$19.95)

In a culture that's trying to steer the narrow passage between absolutist fundamentalism and an equally absolute "my way or the highway" narcissism, it takes guts to write a book on the meaning of life—and to do it in fewer than two hundred palm-sized pages with elegance, wit, heart, and panache. That takes more than guts. It takes soul. While "soul" isn't a word that usually pops to mind to describe the output of an academic, it's apt for Terry Eagleton, professor of English and fellow of the British Academy. In his latest book, simply titled *The* Meaning of Life, he soars past the pitfalls of modern philosophy's pessimism and postmodernity's empty irony and leaves us, in a crescendo of increasing positivity, with something truly to live for.

Eagleton is a remarkable character, perhaps best known for his lucid introduction to literary theory that saved many an undergraduate from falling into despair over the language games of postmodern theory. An Irish working-class boy who became an Oxford don, Eagleton has a brilliance that has partly emerged out of his capacity to stand astride usually separate worlds and worldviews to reach for a higher synthesis. Schooled as

a Marxist, and also an activist in the Workers Socialist League, he is paradoxically indebted to the Catholicism of his childhood that rooted him in an appreciation for the religious impulse. In fact, it was Eagleton, not a theologian or religious figure, who trounced Richard Dawkins's *The* God Delusion in the London Review of Books. He opened with the zinger "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the Book of British Birds, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology." So Eagleton's stepping onto quintessentially philosophical and often religious ground in daring to ask the big question—What is the meaning of life?—is quite a noteworthy event.

Flying through his argument, Eagleton quotes the likes of Shakespeare and Beckett, Wittgenstein and Nietzsche; he dismisses stale arguments with barely a backward glance, and uses every opportunity to take a swipe at the emptiness of postmodernism along the way. God, as the meaning of life, is dispensed with early on as too tautological to give most of us much to go on. To the theologian, he asserts, the answer to the question of why there is something rather than nothing is simply God—one who is an "artist who created [the universe] simply for his own self-delight, and for the selfdelight of Creation itself." As Eagleton comments wryly, "It is understandable, then, why he is widely considered to have something of a twisted sense of humor."

Eagleton's real nemesis is postmodern thought, which he sees as leading us to disaster. Noting the conflict between the West and Islam, he says, "The West finds itself faced with a full-blooded metaphysical onslaught at just the historical point that it has, so to speak, philosophically disarmed. As far as belief goes, postmodernism prefers to travel light: it has beliefs, to be sure, but it does not have faith." He excoriates postmodern thinking for refusing to acknowledge that life has depth beyond the endlessly superficial. And one aspect of this superficiality is postmodernity's dismissal of the question about life's meaning as irrelevant. Eagleton pushes into a subtle contradiction here, noting that postmodernists argue against meaning while simultaneously despairing over its loss. "Why then should we bewail the fact that [life] does not present itself to us as bursting with significance?" he asks. "You would not lament the fact that you were not born wearing a small woolly hat. Babies being born sporting small woolly hats is just not the kind of thing one should expect to happen." Life really may have no inherent meaning, he is saying, but that is no reason to cause us such angst.

For Eagleton, the search for the meaning of life is a uniquely human endeavor. He takes us through a sequence of ponderings that steadily mount to an affirming conclusion. Is happiness the meaning of life? he asks, and then deftly distinguishes narcissistic pleasure pursuits from an Aristotelian view that involves "a creative realization of one's typically human faculties." Happiness, in this regard, is a moral and social virtue, not a feeling state. Flirting with Freud's gloomy view that the center of life is the death instinct. he turns it on its head, arguing that "we die every minute" in a "constant self-transcendence" by which the force of our desire for the next thing, for more, creates the narrative and drive of history.

Ultimately, Eagleton argues that

"the meaning of life is not a solution to a problem, but a matter of living in a certain way. It is not metaphysical, but ethical." He's calling us to agape, which is "purely impersonal," a command to love that is, like happiness, of our deepest nature. The image that Eagleton leaves us with is of a jazz band in which each member's creative expression is an inspiration to the rest: "There is no conflict here between freedom and the 'good of the whole, yet the image is the reverse of totalitarian. . . . There is self-realization, but only through a loss of self in the music as a whole." Such an aspiration, brought to the level of human community, is utopian, as he readily admits. Meaning is found not in some metaphysical realm or mundane accumulation, Eagleton concludes, but as social engagement in which happiness and love embue life with "delight in itself" that "needs no justification beyond its own existence." And isn't that, he asks us, the essence of God and, therefore, the only way that we can actually share in his life and creation?

Elizabeth Debold

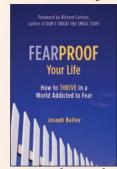
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#### LOOKING WITHIN TO THRIVE



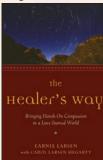
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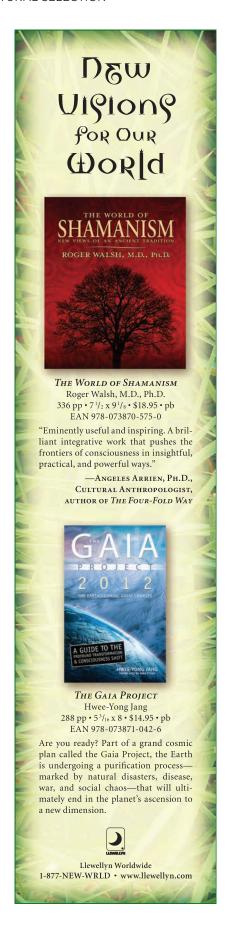
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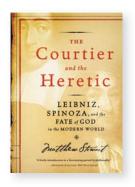


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#### THE COURTIER AND THE HERETIC

Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World by Matthew Stewart (W.W. Norton & Company, 2006 paperback, \$15.95)

Every few years, it seems, I buy a book on philosophy, a history or a new translation of Wittgenstein or Descartes, for example, inspired as much by an attractive jacket design or a reviewer's praise as by the topic itself. I've always been interested in philosophy but have rarely been able to get beyond the first few chapters of the often dense prose of philosophers themselves. So when I picked up Matthew Stewart's The Courtier and the Heretic and couldn't put it down, I was not only glad for the great read but relieved that at last I was learning something substantive about the ideas that constitute the philosopher's trade and underpin much of our own interpretations of the world around us.

The courtier and the heretic of the book's title refer to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Baruch de Spinoza, two of the greatest philosophers of the seventeenth century who responded to the transformation of life at the dawn of the Age of Reason in decidedly different yet not entirely contradictory ways.

Spinoza was a Jew living in Holland who had been excommunicated because of his radical ideas. He believed in rational thought as the way to know the truth, and he rejected the revelations of the Bible and religious authorities. A self-sufficient man who never married and ground lenses to earn a living, he based his philosophy on the value of individual freedom as the source of happiness and on the pursuit of one's own self-interest, or true nature, as the way to benefit society. God, similarly, he defined as Nature, or the essence of things. God is not out there, for Spinoza, but in the world itself as its very "Substance."

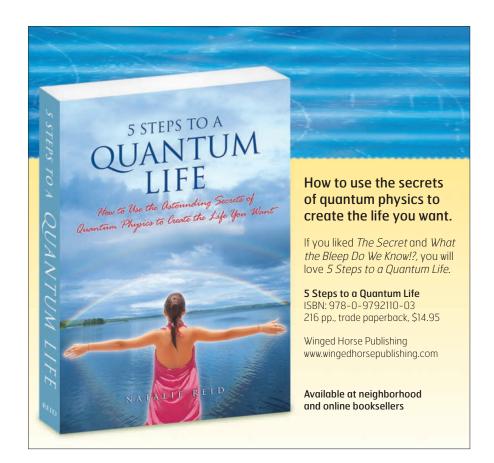
Leibniz was no less a man of reason than Spinoza, but he was less willing to relinquish the tenets of traditional religion. He believed in a transcendent God whom humans love but who loves humans in return. Dependent on royal patronage for his livelihood, Leibniz sought to provide a rational foundation for Christian dogma and was on a personal mission to unite the Protestant and Catholic churches of Europe into a single church serving a unified Christian republic. He was skeptical of Spinoza's God who was stripped, he believed, of divinity, though he recognized, Stewart claims, the insights of Spinoza's embrace of scientific objectivity that was changing their world forever.

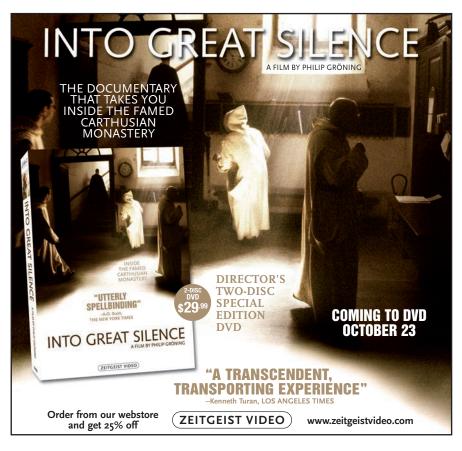
The central intellectual drama of the book is a pivotal encounter between the two men that occurred over a period of a few days in November 1676 at Spinoza's home in The Hague. It is Stewart's contention that this meeting "dramatically alter[ed] the course of Leibniz's life and the subsequent history of philosophy." He builds his case through careful scrutiny of Leibniz's personal notes and copious correspondence along with his own interpretation of the philosophical writings of both gentlemen. (Spinoza left few traces of his private thoughts and personal life for historians to assess.) What Spinoza and Leibniz actually spoke about during their few days together is pure conjecture, but Stewart so effectively brings these two brilliant thinkers to life that reading about the minutiae of their philosophical differences is like unraveling the trail of an unsolved crime in some murder mystery.

What makes his book such a compelling read is the skill with which Stewart weaves the context of each philosopher's life into the development of their respective ideas. Because Spinoza and Leibniz are "unsurpassed today as representatives of humankind's radically divided response to the set of experiences we call modernity," their experience and the conclusions they draw from it still resonate today as we continue to confront many of the same dichotomies they faced three centuries ago. The debate between reason and faith, science and religion, transcendence and immanence is every bit as important at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was during their lifetime.

In the end, what Stewart demonstrates in The Courtier and the *Heretic* is that philosophy is not a set of abstract ideas divorced from life. It is, in Stewart's depiction of these two fully engaged human beings, the consequence of responding to the circumstance of one's life and ascribing meaning and value to what one encounters while doing so. This is true for all of us. How we interpret our experience and what we believe to be true about the world are revealed in the choices we make and the actions we take. The philosophical is political, as Stewart makes clear. His lively account of Spinoza and Leibniz proves that philosophy is, to rephrase a premise of the book, less about what you see than how you see it.

Carol Ann Raphael





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continued from page 14



Issue 37 July-September 2007

#### THE PLAYING FIELD IS FAR FROM LEVEL

The July issue of WIE presented a rather glib but lengthy exploration on the topic of the state of woman in the world today. There seemed to be a lot of confusion, contradiction, presumptions, and didactic prescriptions such that I wondered if I hadn't entered a paternalist Vatican-like forum! Infinite chocolate? Come on!

Women's organizations everywhere are still battling for dignity, security, and access to resources. Power continues to be accumulated and hoarded by male social structures, which are pervasive. The playing field is far from level, and this fact cannot but seep into the landscapes of individual psyches.

A tale told 2,500 years ago by Aristophanes might hint at one possible corrective. It is that of Lysistrata, where women on both sides call a sexual strike to halt

a war that is hopeless and humanly meaningless. Would the world then live as one?

Caroline Hurley
Dublin, Ireland

#### CLEARING THE WAY TO COLLECTIVE EVOLUTION

Thank you all for the fabulous issue on the next waves of women's unfolding (July-September 2007). As a lifelong feminist with a very strong spiritual practice and deep commitment to clearing anything in the way of our collective evolution, I have spent many years working through a very painful personal legacy with a mother and sister. I found your articles so timely and very illuminating.

The last ten years I have been in two work groups of spiritual/activist women and have been shocked to come up against the very issues described in the interview with the EnlightenNext women [p. 78]. I have spent many years seeing just what you describe and attributing it to my own wounding and the sense that somehow no matter what work I did, I could not get beyond the egoic "stuff"theirs or mine.

I can now see how deeply embedded this material is in all of us, and it brings a gentle and spacious compassion and patience as we all work our way home to G-d. **Rachel Eryn Kalish** 

#### SAY IT ISN'T SO ... SMALL

Woodacre, CA

I have been an avid reader of What Is Enlightenment? for five years, devouring each issue, struggling with many of them, but ALWAYS finding my worldview expanded and altered. You have my full respect and support for the work you are doing, for the dialogues you are forging, and for the depth and perception that you tackle each of your subjects with.

I dove into this issue with urgency and interest, only to find myself experiencing mild despair. What was so uncharacteristically missing was why this women's liberation is so important for the whole. Even Ken Wilber and Andrew Cohen [Guru & Pandit, p. 54] spoke of the attainment mostly in terms of relationship, but very little in terms of why this must happen. In the article "A New Women's Liberation" with the four EnlightenNext women, none of these four women really spoke to the impending issues of the day, to the urgency for more women to join with them, to the importance of women fighting for change in the world, or to any obligation to

something more important than ourselves. It was all so contained in a narcissistic small sphere. Please tell me it isn't so . . .

#### Diane Weber

via email

#### **INSPIRATION AND HOPE**

Having just read the latest issue of WIE from cover to cover, I am imbued with inspiration and hope for our future. We all know that we must first identify a concern, and then seek to understand it, before we can effectively work toward a solution. This whole issue of WIE went right to the core of a major stumbling block on our evolutionary footpath—the hardwiring of the feminine psyche.

I would like to thank all of the women who contributed. At the fundamental core, we all know that we have to get out of our own way in order to be truly liberated. As women, we now understand we might have to work a little harder on this than the men do. It's funny how many of us, for how long, in varying degrees, have distracted ourselves with trying to fix the man! I think the subject of this issue was the first time I fully understood what we, as women, collectively and individually must contribute. It calls us to take a long look in the mirror and

demand absolutely nothing less than total honesty within ourselves and total compassion toward each other, from now on. Even as I write this and contemplate what this really means, I sense a major fault line trembling within. What will it really feel like to let go? What will it really feel like to fully understand and know that no one is going to catch me or save me—no one?

#### Kathy Edwards

Asheville, NC

#### NO NEED FOR MALE TEACHERS

While I very much appreciate you "white guys" taking up the task of examining the higher evolution of women and presenting some excellent insights and observations, I feel you are missing some huge pieces.

We do not need male teachers to tell us how to drop our egos and disidentify with our own Source, the emotional, diverse, juicy, sexual, wild nature of the Divine Feminine. Evolved Feminine Spirituality includes consciousness and transpersonal caring, for each other, our people, our communities, our world, and our planet . . . all four quadrants. Please, can we start talking about another kind of enlightenment? Can we

acknowledge Descending and Agape as a valid spiritual path?

Let's bring heaven to earth for a change. Let's acknowledge that the real reason we need the New Divine Feminist to take the lead is so we can finally integrate the Feminine Face of God~Spirit~All That Is within each of us . . . including you white guys.

#### Anyaa McAndrew

via email

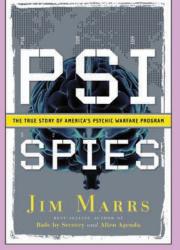
#### FEMINIST IDEALS GONE WILD

Maura O'Connor's article "Freedom and Choice in Pornutopia: Why Girls Are Going Wild" reveals our fragmented ideals at the bottom of what O'Connor points out is the thirdwave form of "feminism" created by my generation of women, Gen-Xers. Through O'Connor's history of women's liberation gone wild, we are offered a chance at cracking through this very popular and toxic form of freedom that narcissistically asserts that "whatever I want is perfectly fine—and I deserve it," and which has led, sadly, to the raunchification of empowerment.

There is a significant trend in academia, particularly in the Ivy League and in women's studies programs, that is

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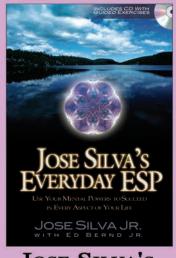
—Whitley Strieber, author of Communion



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also responsible for driving this "wild" movement forward. College women are increasingly posing nude, writing for soft porn publications, or taking pole dancing courses right on college campuses. Pole dancing or the art of stripping has replaced yoga for some, and colleges such as Swindon University in England are pairing up with strip nightclubs to offer these brand-new courses.

There is a lot more to explore as all of us, Gen-Yers, Gen-Xers, and Baby Boomers, reinvent a true sense of freedom—one that can offer girls a chance to grow up with an integrated and responsible perspective on what it means to be "Woman."

Jill Uchiyama Boston. MA

#### WISDOM OF THE FEMININE

We were terribly disappointed by the last issue of WIE on exploring women's spirituality. From our perspective, the ideas put forth by Cohen and Wilber in the "Guru & the Pandit" were shockingly lacking in a true depth of knowledge of feminine spirituality.

The compulsion to become free at an existential level is a one-sided masculine affair! Coming from the feminine, the whole point of this earth experience is NOT to be free from physical form but consciously revel in it! And the realization of that is equally as

"spiritual," if not more so, as trying to get out of it (be free). The feminine offers us the wisdom of complete spiritual relationship with incarnate Spirit, as Earth, as Life. Life that births new life in messy, simultaneous agony and ecstasy and total surrender. No, women don't want to be free at an existential level, because in their spiritual reality freedom is irrelevant and spiritual maturity equates with the full embrace of Existence.

#### Michiel R.J. Doorn Wendy C. Burkland

The Center for Education, Imagination, and the Natural World

#### STOP THE GURU-PANDIT LOVE FEST

The "Guru & Pandit" articles include highly enlightened thinking, but the messages get lost in the love fest bantering between Andrew and Ken. They never seem to disagree! In the last "Guru & Pandit," with their pats on each other's backs, the magazine took several leaps backward in the discussion about women. The generalizations applied to the 1980s, not today. A woman's voice was grossly missing in that discussion to keep the men off their pedestals. Please, get off the pedestal, stretch the reader with debate and challenge, and stop the love fest with the guru and pandit. I will be interested to see if you print this.

Nancy R. Daly

via email

#### RICH DIALOGUE BETWEEN BROTHERS

I have always greatly enjoyed and appreciated the rich dialogue between brothers Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber, yet the current issue offers us a particularly exciting description of working with a group that has transcended the dictatorial constraints of ego. It is so important to trust that in being able to give up or transcend our ego-self and move beyond its constraints, we are not having to face a dark chasm of nonexistence but rather a glorious new Self-sense that is free, fully authentic, secure, and integral in its evolutionary understanding and purpose. This is big-time news, for it completely alters how we relate to everything and gives new meaning to what we understand by existential freedom.

The fact that these two individuals are helping to expand and clarify what each has to contribute by "talking" with each other in this way is absolutely beautiful and poignant to our current evolutionary mandate.

John H. Boyd Toronto, Canada

#### **AREN'T MEN VULNERABLE?**

I just finished reading Issue 37. One of Andrew's quotes stands out to me: "On an almost preconscious level, women experience a state of visceral biological vulnerability that is just not part of the male experience." While I am not a man, I am not at all sure this is true. Throughout history, men have also been subject to the forces of domination and have been forced to witness the rape and murder of their wives, daughters, and sisters and the destruction of their homes and habitats while being rendered helpless to protect them. It seems to me that this would leave all kinds of preconscious imprints on the personal and karmic levels. Are men immune to the kinds of responses women would have (due to conditioning and/or biology), and if so, is that not problematic?

#### Debra Cohn

La Canada Flintridge, CA

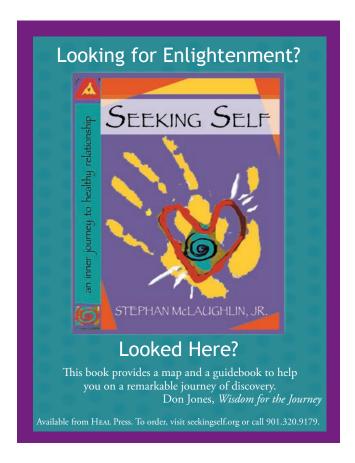
#### INSPIRING TO A MALE READER

Your article in Issue 37. "A New Women's Liberation," was inspiring and uplifting to this male reader. Where can I find additional information on radical evolutionary enlightenment focused on women, and where can I find equivalent information specifically focused on males seeking to transcend the mass cultural belief patterns regarding maleness? I would especially love to find the male equivalent of EnlightenNext's "10 Challenges of a Liberated Woman."

#### **Richard Ross**

Albuquerque, NM

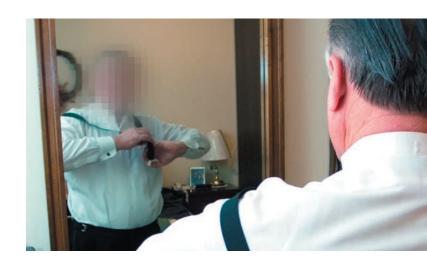
Send your letters to letters@wie.org or PO Box 2360, Lenox, MA 01240 USA





#### Peter Ragnar on **Health**

## Will You Know Who You Are at Eighty-Five?



ging for most people is first a dice roll to see if you'll reach eighty-five, and then it becomes a coin toss. Why is that? Because by age eighty-five, one in two people will have Alzheimer's disease—the most feared ailment in Western society. According to leading Alzheimer's researchers cited in a 2001 Time magazine article called "The Nun Study," not only do you have a fiftyfifty chance of contracting Alzheimer's

The reason you'll be excited is because of your intellectual curiosity. As an example, you wouldn't have subscribed to WIE had you not developed this protective trait that you're about to read about next. Though I'll caution you, while this can be good news for some, it will be bad news for others.

David Snowdon, a scientist with the University of Kentucky's Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, and a team of neurologists and psychologists began studying a group of older nuns at the

convent of the

School Sisters of Notre Dame. They were curious why some of the lifelong nuns had Alzheimer's and others didn't.

since they had shared an identical environment for decades. With the help of University of Kansas psychologist Susan Kemper, they looked at the early autobiographies written by the nuns when they were first accepted into the convent.

What the team was looking for was the connection between Alzheimer's disease and aging, language usage, outlook or early attitudes, and educational level. The stunning discovery was that the team of researchers could predict with eighty-five to ninety percent accuracy who would succumb to Alzheimer's disease. How? By examining the "idea density" in the

way the nuns expressed themselves sixty years before. The clarity of thoughts written down indicated how well the brain would continue to work, as well as an extra reserve of mental capacity that would make up for any later loss of brain tissue associated with aging.

It hasn't been very many years since the medical profession scoffed at the idea that the brain can regenerate itself. Today, the plasticity of neural elements is widely accepted. Abundant research conducted with laboratory rats indicates that even rats that were specially bred to be "stupid" (deficient in the neurotransmitter glutamate) once put into an enriching and thought-provoking environment generated new brain tissue and new glutamate. If you've ever had that "ah-ha!" experience of discovering something new and exciting, chemically it was the result of your brain dumping glutamate into your neural synapse and sending it to other parts of your brain. This process shuts down in Alzheimer's sufferers. But the question is, which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

One thing we know for certain is that stimulating the brain with continuous intellectual activity will keep your neurons healthy and alive—as long as this is joined with positive emotions. Since body and mind are one, this is an encouraging solution in part. Nutrition also plays a role. Alzheimer's patients,

#### By age eighty-five, one in two people will have Alzheimer's disease—the most feared ailment in Western society.

by eighty-five, but a ten percent chance by sixty-five.

In June 2007. NBC news announced that the chances of suffering from severe mental decline by age sixty-five are now one in eight. Even more shocking is the prediction of fourteen million people with Alzheimer's in the United States by the year 2050. Believe me, I'm not trying to depress you. The good news is that researchers are like hounds on a trail, stumbling over plants that may possibly stall or even reverse this nightmare. But first, let's look at some exciting new indicators of which side of the coin toss you're apt to be on.

for example, have especially low concentrations of folic acid. The toxic protein beta-amyloid has also been indicated in a recent Japanese study as the cause of brain cell atrophy. Because it resists being broken down by enzymes, beta-amyloid accumulates in brain tissue. It then builds up as senile plaque, which inhibits neurons from transmitting their signals. It has now been discovered that this can be reduced by the herb ashwagandha. Now, I don't want you to leave out blueberries, grape seed extract, and ginkgo leaf. Blueberries, because of their antioxidant pigments called anthocyanosides, help strengthen brain capillary circulation and neuromotor function. Grape seed extract and ginkgo are similar and exhibit enhanced microcirculation of brain tissue, along with supplying potent antioxidant properties. According to a Tufts University study published in the September 1999 Journal of Neuroscience, rats of an age equivalent to seventy- to seventy-five-year-old humans demonstrated improved memory, grew new brain cells, and reversed the aging process.

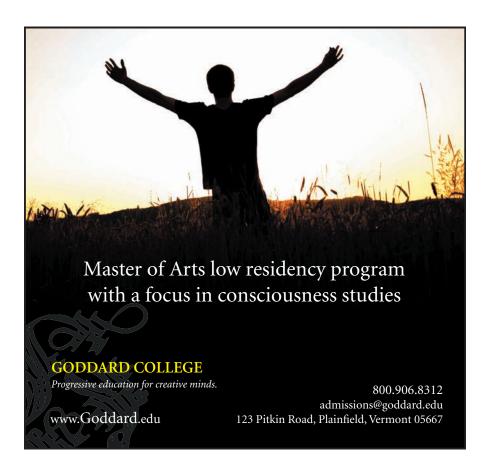
There's no reason you and I can't do the same thing! You can only learn what you can consciously grasp.
Expand your consciousness, and you'll also expand your mental powers. So about that coin toss with the fifty-fifty odds . . . Apply these suggestions and you'll have a double-headed coin!

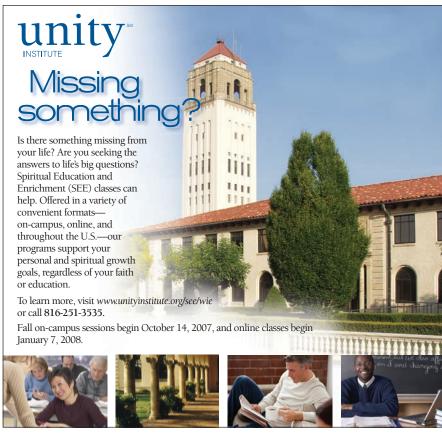


Learn more about the amazing life and work of Peter Ragnar at **wie.org/ragnar** 



PETER RAGNAR is a natural life scientist, modern-day Taoist wizard, and self-master par excellence. A martial arts practitioner for over fifty years, he is renowned for his teachings on optimal health and longevity. He is the author of twenty books, including The Art and Science of Physical Invincibility.







#### Enlightenment for the 21st Century

## It's Hard to Be Happy!

by Andrew Cohen

It's fascinating to observe

what happens to our

perspective when we don't

assume that we necessarily

deserve anything.

ONE UNFORGETTABLE DAY IN NEW YORK CITY, over ten years ago, I was crossing Park Avenue on my way to give a lecture when a Yellow Cab that had decided not to stop at a red light careened out of control at about forty miles an hour. It sideswiped me and my wife, shortly after we had stepped off the curb, before hitting a few other people and crashing into another car. I can clearly see the picture in my mind's eye even now. I was standing in the street, my right arm badly broken, dangling as if by a thread, and my right calf so deeply ripped open that later I was told that my shin bone was clearly visible. My wife lay unconscious at my feet with blood

trickling from the corner of her mouth. In that instant, I thought she might be dead. Hours later, in my hospital bed, having received the news that she and I would recover and be more or less as good as new within a year, I remember witnessing the thought, "How could this happen to me?" arising in my awareness. And then the answer came, "Why shouldn't it?"

For some time now I have been reflecting upon the bizarre irony of the fact that so many of us at the leading edge of Western culture—the wealthiest, most highly educated, and privileged generation ever to exist on the face of the earth—have somehow gotten the idea in our heads that we *deserve* to be happy, healthy, and prosperous. It would seem that many of us, consciously or unconsciously, believe that before we incarnated into this developmental process, we signed some sort of contract with our maker stipulating that we would be willing to endure a certain degree of fear, stress, and insecurity as long as sooner or later we got to be *happy*. And the wealthier and more privileged we are, the greater, it seems, is this expectation.

After more than two decades of working intensively with men and women who claim to want to transform and develop spiritually, I've come to the conclusion that one of the reasons it is so challenging for us to attain and sustain higher levels of spiritual development is that we expect so much and are willing to give so little in order to get what we think we want. The truth is, it's hard to be happy. These days, it's become almost a truism that simply fulfilling our narcissistic and materialistic desires will not necessarily make us truly happy. But how many of us have really dug deeply enough to reconfigure our own ideas of what happiness means in light of a higher set of values than those held by our

crazy culture? For our values to change in a way that is nothing less than dramatic, we have to be willing to make a hell of a lot of effort. More and more of us are turning to the spiritual dimension of life. But it is telling that many of the most popular expressions of postmodern spirituality are based on a philosophical perspective that encourages us to pursue the promise of effortless peace, happiness, and release rather than an engagement with the life process that would always require more from us.

Why, for the luckiest people who have ever been born, should happiness be a birthright? Why should our spiritual aspirations

be focused on the pursuit of inner peace alone? Did God create the universe so that you and I, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, could be happy? Is that really all there is to this fourteen-billion-year process? And why is it that so many of us presume that we deserve to be happy in the first place? What is it that we have actually *done* to give us such an innate privilege?

It's fascinating to observe what happens to our perspective when we don't assume that we necessarily deserve anything, especially not the promise of happiness or perfect peace. Just give it a try. You may be surprised to discover that a whole universe of previously unimaginable possibilities opens up to you. You may even begin to awaken to the overwhelming revelation that the very process that gave birth to your own capacity for life and consciousness urgently needs your willingness to make effort and even, I dare say, suffer, for *its* higher development.

I'm convinced that this evolving Kosmos is in desperate need of our conscious participation in order for its creative potential to continue to develop. Our postmodern spiritual pursuit of peace may in fact just be taking us out of the game. As our spiritual values evolve, if we reach high enough, we may come upon a surprising revelation: that in order to experience a happiness that is profound, we must be willing to struggle to find nothing less than a Kosmic sense of care for the life process that *will* set us free but, ironically, will never leave us in peace.



Explore all of Andrew Cohen's WIE articles, audios, and videos online at wie.org/cohen

Andrew Cohen, founder and editor in chief of *What Is Enlightenment?*, has been a spiritual teacher since 1986 and is the author of numerous books, including *Living Enlightenment* and *Embracing Heaven & Earth*. He is currently at work on a new book, *When God Falls Out of the Sky.* For more information, visit **andrewcohen.org**