

When a Body Meets a Body:  
Invisible Bonds  
Towards a New Cosmicpsychic Politic  
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PART ONE: DUEL IN DREAMTIME

It began for me (as it so often does) with a dream.

Two young boys are doing battle. The taller and obviously older of the two combatants—the one who had started the fight—is wielding a heavy broadsword. The younger boy (with whom I identify) is equipped with a far more modest weapon: a small penknife. I anxiously observe the violence: noisy clashing, swinging, and stabbing. Finally, the youthful avenger emerges victorious; he slays his opponent. Bending over the lifeless body of his enemy, the exhilarated victor slices open the head of the loser with but a single expert stroke of his penknife. Now, suddenly, I am no longer merely observing the scene. I actually *become* the younger boy. I'm standing there holding the severed head, which oddly no longer resembles a head, but rather, a clam or mussel. I pry open the bivalve and scoop out the innards with my trusty penknife. As I do this, I inwardly muse, "This is a brain? How strange." As I come to the bottom of the shell, I realize there's hardly any "goop" in it after all. In the pit of my stomach I feel a nauseous, queasy sensation. I realize I am disgusted, revolted by the entire episode. Then I awoke.

At first, the dream made no sense. Yet, the feelings of disgust and revulsion at my own violent behavior stuck with me, like a dull, nagging sensation in the pit of my stomach. "What can't I stomach?" I wondered aloud. What have I done? This was followed by the inevitable excuses, the sly devil of the moral intelligence doing its usual rationalizing thing. After all, I—the youngster—had been attacked by a seasoned pro. I was just defending myself, right? And that poor young lad was at a decided disadvantage! After all, his paltry "weapon" was but a measly little penknife.

*Penknife!*

That's when it hit me. As an intellectual, the pen is my knife, my personal weapon

of choice, so to speak. And it is mightier than the sword. Or so the saying goes.

The story, in brief, was this: An editor friend of mine had invited me to write a book review essay for publication. Subsequently she sent my completed draft out for review by a reader. The paper was returned to me scrawled with some of the sharpest, meanest, most small-minded and irrelevant criticisms I had ever received. It was plain that the reviewer (a respected person in the field—an elder Authority—I was told) was completely unsympathetic to my basic aims and point of view. The Authority was simply (and viciously) cutting me up as best he could.

I fought back, however, and instead of caving in to the Authority's criticisms, I re-wrote the piece, making my original argument tighter and, I felt, even stronger. I felt a vital surge of righteous anger as I put the final touches on the revision. I would lay my invisible enemy flat!

My dream had evidently served to dramatize this conflict. Obviously, the older boy with the broadsword, the instigator, symbolized the elder Authority in my intellectual skirmish. The dream seemed to suggest that we were both acting a bit childishly. It was little more than a playground "pissing contest" between an older bully and his reluctant younger victim. In the end, I do manage to pry open his mind, which the dream imagery suggests is shut tighter than a clam. But at what cost victory? Even if I win the argument, I lose. In truth, there's no such thing as forcing someone else to open up. By merely "defending myself," I'm secretly indulging my own violent fantasies—mock-heroic tendencies I would dearly love to disown, of course. But there they are. And I had to admit that part of me quite enjoyed that "victory."

After jotting down some notes about the dream (which subsequently formed the basis for the above account), I decided to do a little pleasure reading. The book I was reading at the time was an absorbing work entitled *Recurring Dreams: A Journey to Wholeness* (1998), by Kathleen Sullivan, a dreamworker and therapist. I turned to the last page of Chapter 13, entitled "Self-Esteem," where Sullivan gives suggestions for self-

exploration, including ways of overcoming inner blockages, especially fears, in working with dreams. Try not to take the dream too literally, she advises. One technique she recommends is that of objectifying, which can free up resistance. Then, as an example, she tells a story about a client, “ A man [who] was terrified by a dream scene in which his mother was chasing him with a knife” (Sullivan, 1998, p. 112). Sullivan taught him how to “objectify” the situation by replacing the literal, personal interpretation with a metaphorical, impersonal one: “ ‘This is a dream about a man who is being attacked by an energy which is supposed to be nurturing.’ This [alternate reading] led him to see how he was beating on rather than accepting himself” (Sullivan, 1998 p. 112).

The coincidence of opening a book to a page in which someone recounts a dream about a knife attack just after I have finished writing down my own dream of a knife and sword fight was, well, eerie. Despite experiencing such synchronicities, large and small, with great frequency all the time, I am still always in awe when they actually occur. I felt a warm, not unpleasant, tingling sensation, like mildly electrified water, flowing up and down the back of my neck as I realized what I had just read. “Wow!” I exclaimed aloud. An involuntary smile crossed my face as I found myself reading the passage for a second time, like a visual double take to check my perceptions—“just to make sure.”

Following Kathleen Sullivan’s advice, it now occurred to me that the older male aggressor in my dream, while representing an actual person in waking life with whom I was having an intellectual row, might also symbolize some other, older part of myself with which I was now at odds emotionally. But what was that part? What was I having a hard time accepting about myself? Perhaps it was closer to home than I wanted to admit.

My own training in academic philosophy had been in the very type of intellectual combat (scholarship as “a form of Ninja assassination”) vividly described by the maverick thinker William Irwin Thompson, who had quit the MIT philosophy department in disgust back in the late 1960s. Of his departmental seniors, he had written:

There was no question of questioning; there was only the One Truth. If one listened, hidden to the side in the foliage, one could tell how deadly it all was from their language. Conversations, lectures, or presentations were always described as brutal conflicts, and approval was always registered as an act of triumphant violence, such as “I annihilated him.” Or “He was so stupid as to say x, so I murdered him on the spot.” (Thompson, 1989, p. xiv)

Years before I happened across Thompson’s hilarious, if sadly accurate, portrait of what Deborah Tannen (1998) would later refer to as “the argument culture,” I had made my own informal survey of the discourse used by (the mostly male) professional philosophers. In journal articles randomly plucked from my own shelves, I found the following typical phrases: Philosophical “positions”—much like their military counterparts—were variously described as being “defended”, “attacked”, “defeated”, “supported”, “abandoned”, and “maintained.” Ideas were said to provide “useful weapons” to be used against “adversaries” or “opponents.” Statements were “parried,” “hit their target”, “forced the issue”, or else “knocked a massive hole” in an opponent’s position. This was the pugilistic academic culture I met with in graduate school.

Such linguistic violence is a prime symptom of a pervasive cultural disease that I have dubbed (in a book in progress) “Answerism.” As Thompson noted, “There was no question of questioning, there was only the One Truth.” The late David Bohm believed that all thought labors under the illusion that it is perfectly complete, even though it is always incomplete: “The thought of the table doesn’t cover all about the table. It picks up a few points about it” (Bohm, 1994, p. 92). And all the more so when the subject matter is not a simple table but rather such complex realities as Nature, God, and History.

Answerism, the self-righteous conviction that one possesses the full and final Truth (which must be Shared, of course), comes in a wide variety of flavors: religious, scientific, and philosophical, too. The Pope is an Answerist, and so is the Christian Coalition’s Pat Robertson, who once authored a book (modestly) entitled *200 Answers to Life’s Most Probing Questions*. But the chief CSICOP (The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims for the Paranormal) and SUNY philosopher Paul Kurtz, as well

as the late Cornell astronomer and fellow paranormal “debunker” Carl Sagan, are equally dogmatic Answerists. To be sure, as are many in the so-called New Age movement who also never question their own basic assumptions.

I now had to admit that some part of me was still a violently aggressive Answerist, ready to gird my loins and do battle for my One Truth, forcibly shoving it down someone else’s throat—for their own good, of course. Just as hundreds of thousands of people had been tortured to death by good, god-fearing Christian soldiers on the march to save souls. I too, Brute.

If the whole episode had ended here—with one interesting, albeit provocative coincidence—I would not be writing about it now. But what happened over the course of the next several days reads, in my private journal, like an extended meditation—or, to be more accurate, a bizarre dialogue—on violence. Quite without realizing it, I seemed to have become at once a transmitter and receiver of secret messages of assassination.

This dialogue involved a sympathetic thread tying together my inner preoccupations with violence with public events in the external world. It was a dialectic of inner call and outer response too awful too contemplate—and too horrible to predict—let alone prophesy. A “psychic antenna” had been put up (or had simply gone up), and by the end I was no longer clear whether I was a mere bystander or an active participant. But I get ahead of myself.

The very next day following my dream synchronicity, I was leading a discussion in one of my classes about anomalous experiences. I mentioned how death—especially violent or sudden death, or even the threat of it—seems to act as a kind of catalyst, drawing out precognitive dreams, apparitions, and other odd or otherwise “impossible” events like a mysterious magnet. A number of students agreed, offering stories of their own to support my point.

For example, an older woman I’ll call Claire told the class about a dream she’d had of seeing her husband all by himself in a small rowboat on a vast lake. The dream

gave her an odd feeling of impending disaster. The very next day he had a heart attack and died. A pious Catholic, Claire had been reluctant to admit she had had a premonition. Oddly, she confessed, she felt guilty.

Another student, a young woman I'll call Nancy, told of a waking premonition she'd had that her much beloved grandmother, with whom she'd been very close, was about to die. At the time, however, the grandmother was in apparent good health. The day after Nancy had her premonition, her grandmother had a heart attack followed by a stroke. She died two days later. Nancy also said that she felt somehow guilty—not that she was to blame, or could have saved her grandmother, and certainly not that she wished her grandmother dead—and yet . . .

And yet what?

Perhaps the seemingly inexplicable sense of guilt experienced by both Claire and Nancy could be explained as a secret fear that they were not simply passively receiving messages of events yet to come, but that somehow they were actively participating in the creation of those events. After all, who hasn't had a stray bad thought about even their dearest and nearest? Furthermore, what if the unconscious dread that these "mere" thoughts have power to effect results in the "real," i.e., physical, world is not unjustified?

I must have been thinking along these lines that day in class because I found myself telling the students about an incident relayed by the philosopher and longtime student of parapsychology Michael Grosso about his premonition of an assassination attempt on President Reagan in 1981.

## PART TWO: THE MAGICAL WEB

In his book *Soulmaker* (1992), Grosso writes of three dreams he had in early 1981 that warned Reagan would soon be shot—as indeed happened. The dreams included highly specific details, including the fact that the president would be shot in the left shoulder (he was), and also that he would make a remarkable recovery (he did).

Grosso then poses a very pointed, undoubtedly uncomfortable, question: Why

should he, of all people, have received such a warning? Did he telepathically pick up on John Hinckley's plan? If so, what would have established the link between them? To his credit, Grosso does not flinch: "Perhaps, at some level of my being I felt an unconscious sympathy with Hinckley . . . a drifter . . . a confused, aimless young man" (Grosso, 1992, p. 93). Grosso hints at even darker possibilities than merely sharing a general sympathy with Hinckley's adolescent angst: "I might [even] have been in sympathy with John Hinckley's plan to kill the President" (Grosso, 1992, p. 94). Not consciously, to be sure.

Grosso's repeated use of the word "sympathy" is telling, for it hints at the real identity of the special power whose possibility we are here considering: magic. The anthropologist J.G. Frazer described the so-called "primitive" magician as one who "draws his supernatural power from a certain physical sympathy with nature," adding:

He is not merely the receptacle of a divine spirit. His whole being, body and soul, is so delicately attuned to the harmony of the world that a touch of his hand or a turn of his head may send a thrill vibrating through the universal framework of things; and conversely his divine organism is acutely sensitive to such slight changes of environment as would leave ordinary mortals unaffected. (Frazer, 1890/1981, p. 12)

The key word here, of course, is "sympathy," which my dictionary defines as "agreement, consonance, and accord." In his classic *Encyclopaedia of Occultism* (1961), the venerable student of all things "occult", Lewis Spence, writes:

Mr. Frazer believes all *magic* to be based on the law of sympathy—that is the assumption that things act on one another at a distance because of their being secretly linked together by invisible bonds. (Spence, 1920/1960, p. 260)

Contrary to some popular misconceptions, the power of the magician is not a one-way control over nature (or others) conceived as something existing apart and separate from himself/herself. Rather, it consists in the ability to harmonize with the natural energies of the universe—in both their positive and negative aspects. These energies are at once "in here" (psychologically and biologically speaking), but also "out there" (cosmologically and metaphysically). Hence there is an intimate and thoroughly

reciprocal relationship between the universe and the magician—or, as we would say, the psychic—in which it becomes difficult, in the scientific fashion, to sharply demarcate causes from effects. These “invisible bonds” comprise an intricate, multidimensional web of life in which the magician/psychic is but a strand, and therefore, as Chief Seattle, declared, “Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.” Furthermore, like its electronic counterpart and changeling, this primordial World Wide Web transmits messages of hate as easily as vibrations of love, for nature both creates and destroys life. There can indeed be sympathy for the devil.

This is undoubtedly why Carl Jung was so insistent on the moral imperative of confronting one’s own hidden dark side, what he called The Shadow. In his *Little Book on the Human Shadow* (1988), the poet Robert Bly follows Jung in warning that those who do not “eat their shadow” only

contribute to the danger of nuclear war, because every bit of energy that we don’t actively engage with language or art is floating somewhere in the air above the United States, and Reagan can use it. He has a big energy sweeper that pulls it in. (Bly, 1988, p. 43)

What if the poet’s splendid image is more than just a neat metaphor for what happens when we do not consciously own and confront our darker impulses? What of those “energy vampires” whose visits (even if only over the telephone) produce sudden fits of exhaustion? What if Hinckley was sucking in hate energy not assimilated by Grosso and numerous others just as surely as Reagan was busy sweeping in the fear energies of countless millions? It may be that one of the strongest invisible threads that binds the communal body together is our common habit of self-deception, which produces a real force field whose energies may be tapped by the most dangerously psychotic among us. Not a happy thought, to be sure, but one that puts a whole new spin on the old occult idea of the importance of “psychic self-defense.”

Thus the true extent of Grosso’s willingness to think in magical terms is proved by his willingness to follow his own line of thinking to its logical conclusion. It may be,

he admits, that he was not a mere passive spectator to Reagan's assassination attempt, but rather, helped to co-create that event via his own secret antipathy toward the president. "Perhaps," he writes, "my apparent precognition was really a subtle form of psychokinesis. Instead of passively foreseeing the event, I may have unconsciously helped to bring it about" (Grosso, 1992, p. 94).

Laboratory experiments with dice demonstrate that it is far easier for the mind to influence an object via psychokinesis (PK) when it is already in motion. Grosso likens Hinckley's mental instability, wild fantasizing (he imagined a relationship with actress Jodi Foster), and itinerant lifestyle to dice tumbling in space, a cosmic crapshoot. It may be, opines Grosso, that such unstable individuals are more easily influenced by the unconsciously (or indeed consciously) directed thoughts of others. He admits he finds the possibility of such "clandestine power" extremely disturbing. But not, for that emotional reason, is he willing to dismiss it as a possible reality.

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I had finished telling Grosso's story that day in class. I stood there in the front of the room as stiff as a cigar store Indian, awaiting some reaction. More than a few students began packing up their backpacks, a clear signal that class was over. Perhaps because it was all too spooky to contemplate, all I got was an uncomfortable silence. "OK, that's enough weirdness for today," I joked with a wave of my hand, dismissing the class. Was it my imagination that they couldn't wait to get the hell out of there?

Grosso's premonition dogged me as I made my way to my office to collect my things. I walked out to the parking lot at the Brooklyn campus in a sort of daze, and absent-mindedly piloted my car across the Verrazano and Goethals Bridges home to suburban New Jersey. I felt strangely uneasy; somehow "askew" inside, as if I was thinking through the implications of the existence of such "clandestine power" for the first time. It was *not* the first time, of course, so I couldn't quite fathom why I felt so disturbed, so ruffled. I had noticed that the proverbial hairs on the back of my neck had

stood up just as I was concluding my remarks in class. Were those chills I felt, too?

### PART THREE: THE PSYCHIC BODY

Now, our mainstream Western scientific materialist culture teaches us to ignore psychic warning signals such as a chill or a tingling sensation on the back of the neck (or odd, inexplicable feelings of dread or dismay). We are habituated to dismiss these shudders as mere physiological disturbances, secondary side effects of causes that can be explained in purely biological, or reductively psychological, terms. Certainly such bodily symptoms tell us nothing about the world beyond the fleshy confines of our own skin!

Yet, returning to J.G. Frazer's description of the magician, as the anthropologist himself significantly observed, the delicate threads that make up the web of life are *bodily sensed*, conveying a feeling not unlike "a thrill vibrating" through the very marrow of one's bones—what he dubbed the "divine organism." In other words, the secret knowledge of the magician is not deliberately concealed, but rather, is open and available to anyone sensitive enough to feel the rhythm—the endless, pulsating throb of the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Paradoxically, it is only by fully inhabiting the physical body, with deep respect for and confidence in its innate intelligence and wisdom, that we become consciously aware of the trans-physical psychic body of the community.

Nearly twenty years ago, in an introduction to the famed British psychic detective Robert Cracknell's autobiography *Clues to the Unknown* (1981), Colin Wilson expressed a provocative view, one implicitly critical of the assumptions, not only of 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental parapsychology, but also in its 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, psychical research. Wilson suggested that the pioneer psychical researcher Charles Richet had made a terrible mistake when he coined the term "sixth sense." For this idea of *extrasensory* perception seems to suggest a purely mental or "spiritual" faculty that has nothing whatever to do with the physical body. But is this so?

Wilson argued that we are fundamentally mistaken, to begin with, if we think of the range of our ordinary five senses as essentially fixed and limited. The range varies not

only from individual to individual, but may also be indefinitely extended or compacted, depending on our focus of attention. Ordinarily, for example, we are not aware of the vast sea of sensory stimuli in which we are immersed all the time, such as the ticking of the clock or the pressure of the blankets on our body as we lie in bed. Indeed, were we to be fully aware of this background, it would no doubt drive us crazy; we block out what would only be a distraction.

Wilson took this argument one crucial step further. Just as we could become aware of such “irrelevant” stimuli if we choose to pay attention to them, so the psychometrist’s ability to “decode” the emotional vibrations of a letter, or the history of a stone (as well as the dowser’s ability to locate underground streams with a pendulum or forked stick), is best understood, not as a totally separate “sixth” sense, but simply as a yonder “extension of the other five” (in Cracknell, 1981, p. 18). In other words, it is a mistake to suppose that there is a great ontological gulf separating “the psychic” from “the physical.” The practicing (and well-tested) psychic detective Robert P. Cracknell himself has long argued along similar lines. It is an argument that he has reiterated in his most recent book, *The Psychic Reality* (1999).

For Wilson (who has always cheerily described himself as “ESP-thick”), however, this was just a theory—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, a highly interesting conjecture. However, unbeknownst to Wilson, at around the same time he was making his bold conjecture, another psychic by the name of Ingo Swann was discovering this very same principle on his own. Swann actually put this principle into practice in the New York City laboratory of the American Society of Psychical Research, where his abilities were being scientifically studied and tested.

By his own admission, Swann began his career as a test subject as a captive believer of the theories held by his scientific handlers. Most of them were old-fashioned mind/matter dualists of a Platonic, Cartesian bent who assumed that psychic powers are the property of a non-material entity wholly separate from the body, namely, mind. This

“mentalist” view of psychic phenomena had a key corollary. When Swann perceived something “extrasensorily” under controlled conditions, he was required to describe it verbally, thus filtering his psychic experiences—which had occurred spontaneously and often enough since childhood—through the rational intellect, or what dualists regard as the ontologically separate, and functionally separable Mind or Soul.

Swann became frustrated, however, when his initial successes were followed by a steep nosedive in performance. Eventually, he decided to jettison his handlers’ philosophical preconceptions, which he suspected might be hampering his psychic perceptions. Instead of trying to call upon some hypothetical non-material faculty of “extrasensory perception,” Swann says (unintentionally echoing Wilson and Cracknell) that he simply refused to accept that the ordinary sensory awareness of all humans is limited in the ways that we are conventionally taught. “External sensing” by the “bio-mind” of “bio-information” (Swann, 1991, pp. 14-20) came closer to describing his own experience than the “mentalist” talk about “hidden *psi* faculties.” Then, instead of attempting attempt to interpret and verbalize the data through the filters of intellectual processes, Swann (who is an accomplished artist) allowed his hand to draw exactly what he sensed. What Swann dubs his “whole-body processes” approach eventually made for some stellar results in remote viewing experiments—even in the ASPR laboratory.

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Mindful of this link between the psychic and the body, I could not dismiss the shudders or the vague, “woo-woo” feeling that hovered about me like a dark storm cloud in pursuit that afternoon after class. To me, it was like a yellow caution sign, alerting me to possible danger up ahead. This sense of uneasiness followed me all the way back to my local barbershop, a few miles from my house, where I stopped for a haircut.

Carmen, my barber, was busy working on another customer. After waving hello, I plopped down on the couch and proceeded to scan the considerable spread of magazines before me. There were lots of sports magazines, a ton of glossy magazines about yuppie

life in New Jersey, and even, I think, an issue or two of *Rolling Stone*. But none of them caught my eye. Instead, I was drawn to an issue of *Life* magazine. I picked it up without even noticing how old it was, or what was on the cover. Flipping through the pages, I stumbled upon a series of pictures that left me completely dumbfounded.

What had left me reeling turned out to be a photo essay by a British photographer. He had been concerned that the rather strict gun laws in Europe might be liberalized. So off he trundled to America, the home of the American Rifle Association, where more than 30,000 people die every year from gunshot wounds. There he hoped to record something of the American love affair with firearms. (“Happiness is a warm gun,” as John Lennon crooned, well before he was gunned down in front of his Manhattan home.)

The pictures, five in all, were absolutely stunning. Each successive snapshot was more arresting than its predecessor.

The first picture was of an eerie x-ray of a gun suicide victim’s head. The white death skull seemed to be grinning brightly through the translucent skin.

A second photo showed a well-dressed, middle-aged woman (the caption identified her as the president and CEO of American Derringer) standing sideways, arms folded, head turned towards the camera, with her left (bejeweled) hand caressing a derringer. Wearing an ugly frown and with dark circles under her intensely focused eyes, there was no question that she was capable of executing cruel intentions.

The third photo was that of an elegant 60-ish looking man, casually dressed in a short-sleeve sport shirt and khaki pants, with his left hand stuffed informally in his pants pocket, and his right, pistol in hand, down at his side. Except for the pistol, he might have been posing for a Father’s Day Dockers ad. The full incongruity only set in, however, when I read the caption: the man of causal elegance was a surgeon who kept the gun for “self-defense.”

Fourth was a picture of a dark haired, mustachioed man (in his 30s, perhaps) clad in a tee shirt and baggy shorts. He looked like someone you might see walking his dog in

the park, or at Home Depot checking out the power saws. Instead, he was holding a large semiautomatic rifle that the caption says, “he bought for hunting.” Hunting? I thought, incredulously, For what? Elephants? Rhinos? Shoppers at a local mall?

By this point I was beyond even clever inner patter. Indeed, it felt as if everything inside me had somehow “seized up,” frozen solid. My innards felt chilled: cold and hard and smooth, and clear as a layer of fresh December ice on a pond. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing, and the only reaction I could muster was a kind of inner numbing sensation. Perhaps it was a mild form of shock. I don’t know for sure.

But it was the fifth photo that really put me over the edge. I could not lift my gaze. Here was a big, muscular, redneck-type guy, sporting a close-cropped beard and pony tail, dressed in a white tee shirt and too-tight Army camouflage fatigue pants. Facing the camera, with his considerable gut protruding over the top of his fatigues, he held his toddler son in his right arm, braced against his side. His left arm, bent up at the elbow, was lying across his gut, his left hand curled around a huge pistol. The baby’s wide-eyed face showed anxiety, as if he might cry at any moment. But Daddy’s half-smiling face—especially his steely glare—flashed a look of cocky resolve, like “Just you try me, Bud.” The most chilling aspect of the scene, however, was the illusion (provided, I suppose, by the angle from which the clever photographer snapped the picture) that the man was pointing his gun directly at the head of his own child—as if holding him hostage. The caption ran: “Mike, a shopper at a Dallas gun store, says it’s his constitutional right ‘to own a gun and protect my family’.”

What happened next is even more difficult to describe than my previous reactions. The gist of it, however, is that a thought suddenly popped into my head that was mine, and yet not mine. It had (what was for me) an unusual clarity, force, and certainty of expression. At the moment it came to me, it was as if I had been suffering from a head cold that had instantaneously cleared up, or that a light had been flicked on in a dark room. There was no emotional charge as it came to me—it was all very matter-of-fact.

The words floated through my awareness like one of those advertising banners pulled across the sky by a biplane at the seashore.

I said inwardly to myself: “I wonder if he’s going to feel the same way after the next school shooting.”

I was taken aback after “hearing” myself silently utter these words. Again, it’s difficult to describe, but I was absolutely convinced that this was no idle offhand remark. I was sorry I had thought it. But then again, it had just popped out, so to speak.

The definite sense I had was that there *would* be such a terrible shooting, and that it would be soon.

At this point, I breathed an inner sigh of relief when I glanced up and realized that Carmen’s customer was standing at the cash register. I put the magazine back on the table and proceeded to get my haircut. Carmen and I made the usual chitchat about the weather, his golf game, and lazy salespeople in stores. By the time I left, I had pretty much shoved the whole matter under my protective mental rug. I did mention something about the magazine photos to my partner, Cynthia, but I left out the part about my premonition. Maybe, I thought later, I was just overreacting. Or so I convinced myself.

#### PART FOUR: JUNCTION IMPOSSIBLE

The following day in my ethics class we were having a lively discussion on the morality of revenge. We had read three passages: One from Plato, where Socrates states that it is never right to take revenge, even in reply for an injustice committed against one. Another, from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament, where Jesus goes a step further and says that you should actively love even your enemies. And the third from Nietzsche, who decried the impossible, self-mortifying perfectionism of religionists and moralists, declaring that “A little revenge is more human than no revenge.”

Most of the students seemed to side with Nietzsche: Some revenge, in proportion, is right and natural. One student asked, “But who is to decide what’s a ‘little’ and what’s a ‘lot’? Wouldn’t that be completely relative?” Another student, a very bright and

articulate young woman who sat in the back of the room, raised her hand. “What about someone who’s been taken advantage of, you know, abused, deceived, or made fun of?” she asked earnestly. “How could they overcome that kind of treatment to get to the point where they might be more like Socrates or Jesus?”

“That’s an excellent question, Karla,” I responded. “I would say, only by a greater exercise of imagination, or ‘sympathetic identification’ with the ‘other’, and through a willingness to deal with one’s own pain. You have to be able to admit that what you really wanted—but didn’t get—is kindness and truth, as opposed to giving back, in revenge, more abuse and deception. You didn’t want that for yourself, so why should you give it out to someone else?”

As I was finishing my answer, a tall, African-American student (who hardly ever spoke out in class discussions) raised his hand high in the air. “But that’s what revenge is for,” Lewis (as I’ll call him) vigorously insisted, “to force the other guy to open up, to feel what it’s like to have that pain. If you don’t take revenge, how will they know?”

At this point, most of the students were packing up their books. Class was over. But I was experiencing an odd sense of duality, as if two trains running along emphatically parallel tracks had nevertheless just somehow crossed over onto the other’s track, at an impossible junction of inner and outer worlds. Suddenly and without warning I had been yanked back to the issue that had started me off on the whole violence trip: my dream of forcing open the closed mind of my clammed-up opponent with my trusty pen-knife. How damn weird, I thought with a shiver. He’s asking me my own question! How many times have I tried to do just what he’s suggesting? Am I doing it again, right now?

Momentarily caught up in my own internal debate, I neither responded to Lewis nor dismissed the class, but stood there, frozen, my mouth half-open. “Can you force someone to feel, to be open?” I finally manage to squeak. But it was too late. Class was already breaking up, students with backpacks in tow quickly filing out the door. Lewis had disappeared into the flow of exiting bodies, as several students crowded around my

desk, asking questions and making comments all at once. My head was spinning. Too much was going on at once, and I felt the need to escape, to be by myself to sort things out. I answered questions automatically, and hastily made my own exit.

As I hurried back to my office, still mulling over the willingness of human beings to excuse our own callousness, I thought of the old Italian proverb, “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” With my briefcase in tow, I walked to my car, unlocked the door, and took off my sportsjacket, carefully folding it and laying it on the back seat. After turning the ignition key, I turned on the radio, which was tuned to the local all-news station.

It was the afternoon of April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

Dramatic, but still fragmentary, reports were just filtering in of a school shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Perhaps 25 people were feared dead. Later that evening (or perhaps the next day; I can’t recall now), it was revealed that the two shooters (young men, of course)—themselves now confirmed suicides—had committed the assault out of a desire for revenge. It seemed that they had belonged to a clique made up of social outcasts—Karla’s abused and deceived ones. In angry retaliation, they had resolved, as Lewis had said was only inevitable, to forcibly pry open the enemy clam with semiautomatic rifles and explosives, so it could feel their pain.

#### PART FIVE: WHOSE VIOLENCE? WHICH BODY?

I once heard the maverick philosopher William Irwin Thompson suggest to a radio interviewer that the battleground of the emerging post-modern global society will be the human body. Thompson was referring to the radically polarized, highly dramatized political and cultural conflicts that infect our social discourse. The abortion wars, the euthanasia wars—and almost certainly, I would add, the coming cloning and artificial intelligence wars—highlight the way that questions about human biology and its control have become pivotal as our technology has become more powerful and further refined.

But I have a slightly different take. It may begin to dawn on those (poor? lucky?) “sensitives” who pay close attention to their own personal experiences of magical or

psychic “sympathy,” and hence to the secret messages whispered by their own body, that the body is not exactly the battleground, after all. It is not the prize over which a battle is being waged. Nor is it the neutral backdrop, the stage setting, for a culture war. Rather, the body itself is The Enemy against which we have been struggling, pseudo-heroically, for perhaps four thousand years of Patriarchy. The ultimate irony is that those who are “delicately attuned to the harmony of the world” (as Frazer put it) will find themselves tuning into the cultural white noise of disharmony and the dark shadowland of violence; violence directed against the very body revered by the magician as “the divine organism.”

For we are linked, in the subtle communal body that extends from and beyond the physical body, not only by the spontaneously produced psychic threads of nature, but also by the artificially manufactured, synthetic web of culture. Here lie concealed, like slimy silverfish burrowing under a garden rock, the body-hating ideologies of our organized religions, which derogate the body as inherently “unspiritual” or “sinful,” along with that of our secular religion, science, which derides—and fears—the body’s preverbal intelligence as “irrational.”

In defense of our rational ideals of control, science gleefully supplies us with the chemical weapons to make our breasts ever larger, our penises ever stiffer, our suburban lawns ever greener. We are lulled into the superstition that the side effects of waging such a campaign can also be managed technologically. So perhaps it is not ironic that the primary corporate sponsor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is the same multinational chemical giant that produces *both* the cancer drug tamoxifen *and* carcinogenic herbicides and fungicides. As reported in a recent issue of *Sierra* magazine, the Perry, Ohio chemical plant belonging to AstraZeneca “is the third-largest source of potential cancer-causing pollution in the United States, releasing 53,000 pounds of recognized carcinogens into the air in 1996” (Batt and Gross, p. 36).

Science, however, is a relative newcomer in this game against the body. Religion has been at it far longer, busily inculcating what Carl Jung (in understated fashion)

referred to in his 1930s Visions seminars as “too heroic attitudes” towards the flesh (Jung, 1997, p. 138). As Jung noted, demonstrations of spiritual power in both Western and Eastern religious traditions characteristically involve a display of overcoming the “mere” body. For example, the Catholic saint Simon Stylites stood on one leg on a column for seven years, while Tibetan Buddhist monks had themselves walled into closed cells for sixty and seventy years until they actually shriveled up.

If respecting and paying attention to the spontaneous natural intelligence of the physical body is forbidden by our official ideologies, it is no wonder that they equally share contempt for the psychic reality: the subtle communication network of the communal body that can be directly sensed—and used—by the individual thus attentive. Mainstream science dismisses psychic phenomena as superstitious nonsense, and attempts to explain away all evidence for its existence as based on error and deception. Although the religions accept the existence of the psychic, the biblical traditions rail against it as demonic and diabolical, whereas the Asian approaches by and large condescendingly dismiss it as irrelevant to a “true” spirituality of an absolutely disembodied consciousness. Hence the bizarre cognitive dissonance of the psychic network serving to promulgate messages of its own non-existence and the powerlessness of individuals to make us of its prodigious resources, even as they (unconsciously) do so.

My violence is your violence is our violence. To the extent that I do not become conscious of the principles of Patriarchy operating within me, so that I cannot question their right to be there, I become not merely a passive psychic eavesdropper on the violence without, but an active contributor to its wealthy bank of energies. My dream had shown me that, like any good medieval Christian (and my own student, Lewis), I was capable of being possessed by the moral fallacy that I can save a person’s soul by destroying their body, that violence has a redemptive role to play. Was this secret belief of mine merely the magnet that psychically drew the coincidences and premonitions to me? Or, more ominously, was my own tendency toward Answerism a timely tinder to the

raging fire of vengeance that swept through the bloody halls of Columbine High School?

Like Michael Grosso in the aftermath of his premonitions about President Reagan, I was left to wonder: What was cause, and what effect? Were the thrills, chills, dreams, and synchronicities I had experienced mere symptoms of the delirium of the communal body? Was I merely “listening in” to the moans and groans of the Patriarchal body politic thrashing about in its sweaty nightmare of dissolution? Or was I also feeding that body’s self-hatred with my own secret fantasies of violence? Did it mean that to be “so delicately attuned to the harmony of the world” (as Frazer had put it) at the present moment meant to be attuned to those so horribly out of sync with that natural harmony—the harmony of their own bodies—that, for them, life itself has meaning only in the act of snuffing it out? These questions haunted me.

\* \* \*

There was a fitting postscript to this wild roller-coaster ride of inner/outer events.

Two days after the Columbine massacre, I heard, through the grapevine, of a “minor,” officially unreported, incident of violence at a local middle school in my own quiet suburban New Jersey town. It seems that one student attacked another with—you guessed it—a penknife. A Swiss Army knife, to be exact.

According to the old rules of war, the Swiss could at least pretend to be neutral. Perhaps this coda serves to underscore the illusory nature of all such claims today. Or, as it used to be said, “If you’re not part of the solution you’re part of the problem.”

How can the problem be solved? How can we learn to trust not merely this particular tangible body that types these very words (as I am doing now), but also the intangible, invisible, magical bonds that secretly link us all together as a vast communal body? What sort of community can we imagine ourselves being after Patriarchy? Where can we go for the tools to re-imagine the cosmic, psychic, and political dimensions of our larger identity, our greater wholeness? Can we construct a model that will respect the freedom, dignity, and uniqueness of the individual while at the same time cease blocking

(and deprecating) “magic,” that is, our natural and spontaneous experiences of psychic sympathy with our larger identity, the communal and cosmic Body-Mind At Large?

#### PART SIX: WHOSE HISTORY? WHICH INTERPRETATION?

As one who cut his undergraduate wisdom teeth on the evolutionary historical philosophy of Hegel and such Hegel-influenced thinkers as the Oxford philosopher R.G. Collingwood (1889-1943) and the contemporary Anglo-American philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, I am habitually inclined to turn to History for guidance in finding answers to such perplexing questions. But here we have to be very careful indeed, lest we step into an intellectual minefield that has already dismembered more would-be armchair sages who yearn to “explain it all” than I care (or dare) to count.

I think it was Santayana who said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. I would add that it is essential to distinguish between the remembrance of the actual past—with all its messy, bloody historical facts—and the bloodless, rigidly tidy conceptual schemata often substituted for actuality by highly perched armchair intellectuals infected with some strain of Answerism. Those who cannot make this distinction between the actual and ideal, or between experience and theory, are likewise condemned, not only to repeat the past, but to do so compulsively — that is to say, unconsciously. How might we avoid this type of philosophical neurosis?

One good place to start is with a story about Collingwood himself who, in addition to his philosophical post, held a chair of ancient history at Oxford. In the summer of 1939, Collingwood agreed to join a group of Oxford undergraduates as a tour guide and first mate on a schooner voyage to the Greek islands. A year later he published his reminiscences in a little travel book entitled *The First Mate's Log* (1940).

There he tells a revealing story about a visit made by the group to an Orthodox monastery located on the Greek island of Santorin, where the sailors received a warm welcome from the island's delightful inhabitants. Invited by the archimandrite, Papa

Loukas, to attend an Orthodox service, Collingwood's sailing companions were astonished to witness the freethinking philosophy professor piously kissing the icons and crossing himself. Following the service, Collingwood scolded his young companions for their protestant disdain of the monks' form of religious devotion and their modernist contempt for the "uselessness" of the medieval life of piety which the "ignorant, unenlightened, and superstitious" monks persisted in living. In defense of the monks, he pointed to the islanders' enthusiastic support of the monastic community and the invisible bonds that unite the communal body of the Santorins as a whole:

Here is Santorin, inhabited by such and such persons whom we have met, having such and such manners and customs which we have observed. There is something which we may call the Santorin way of life. It is not a mere aggregate of disconnected units; it is one pattern into which the monks and the children who gave us water and the unknown person who painted the words of welcome at Pyrgos all fit as parts. What do we think of the Santorin way of life? Do we think it a good way or a bad way? (Collingwood, 1940, p. 152)

The clear implication is that if one finds the body as a whole good (or the one pattern harmonious), then it is inconsistent to condemn as evil an organic part (or as disharmonious a single element) which performs an essential role in the overall functioning of the whole. It's a take it or leave it proposition. But is it?

As Collingwood framed the argument, we are forced to choose between two unsatisfactory alternatives: a medieval European Oneness on the one hand, and a modern European Manyness on the other. With the former, the responsibility for tending to the invisible bonds is handed over by ordinary individuals to a specialized elite, a spiritual aristocracy that becomes parasitic on and dissociated from the masses. The many degenerate into passive spectators of, rather than active participants in, what Frazer termed "the universal framework of things." With the latter, we have a secular, pseudo-scientific atomistic individualism comprised of, in Collingwood's words, a Newtonian "aggregate of disconnected units." This gross social machine does not even accept the existence of the invisible bonds, the subtle pattern which connects and unites us all.

A third alternative (one which Collingwood could not have envisioned in 1940), the current postmodern dream of a pan-Gaic body, a global supercommunity linked by the world wide web of the Internet, does not in fact represent a radical break from the modernist option. For it presupposes, rather than challenges, the modernist assumption that separateness is primary and fundamental, and therefore natural, while wholeness is regarded as an artificial construct. Connectedness is a mere secondary effect of information technology, in the absence of which we would all deteriorate into the lonely, dangerously unstable atoms of Hobbesian political fantasy. Indeed, I recently heard the technoguru Jaron Lanier (the 40-year-old computer scientist and father of the much-hyped virtual reality) on a TV news program proclaiming that the recent drop in the crime rate is due to the fact that computers have made young people feel happy and loved. Take away their PCs, and the *Pokemon* tribe will make *The Lord of the Flies* look like *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* by comparison.

In truth, we have yet to locate an image and idea of Oneness—of the invisible web—that is fully compatible with the distinctive and innovative institutions of indigenous American democracy, the political body of our own historically specific community. Athenian “democracy” and Roman ‘republicanism’ (and the religious images that supported them) were alike based on slavery. The élites could perfect their souls while the servants took care of the “lowly” life of the body. Our biblical traditions are based on an autocratic image of the cosmos as an absolute monarchy, where God is King and Father, and the rest of us are obedient subjects and faithful children who cannot question the Higher Wisdom. And the hierarchical Tibetan lamaism today admired and embraced by so many otherwise egalitarian New Agers was dependent for its development upon the existence of an institutionalized impoverished peasantry that was called upon to do the dirty work of bodily life deemed too earthly and unspiritual. The monks could keep their Buddhist vows not to kill sentient beings by paying the lay community to slaughter the animals that were brought to sumptuous monastic tables.

But perhaps the real difficulty is that we are searching for new inspiration concerning the invisible bonds in all the wrong places: Athens, Rome, Lhasa, London, Paris, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. This may be due to a pre-existing condition of ignorance, an egregious lack of historical knowledge. For American democracy emerged from none of these foreign centers. It was invented right here, on these very shores.

Recently I happened upon a book that was not part of my high school or even college curriculum, neither of which did anything to dispel the notion that democracy had exclusively European (Greek) roots. (Indeed, Athenian slavery did not seem to trouble my college philosophy professor one wit; a paltry price to pay, he intimated, for producing the greatness of Plato and Aristotle.) But in his introduction to *The American Heritage Book of Indians* (1961), the amateur historian and 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, acknowledged a salient, if little remarked-upon, fact:

When the Indians controlled the balance of power, the settlers from Europe were forced to consider their views, and to deal with them by treaties and other instruments. The pioneers found that Indians in the Southeast had developed a high civilization with safeguards for ensuring the peace. A northern extension of that civilization, the League of the Iroquois, inspired Benjamin Franklin to copy it in planning the federation of States. (In Brandon, 1961, p. 7)

As the anthropologist Jack Weatherford points out in his indispensable book *Indian Givers* (1988), however, this copy was decidedly imperfect. For example, the Patriarchal Founding Fathers quickly dispensed with the practice of the (Matriarchal) Iroquois that women have a vote, as well as with their prohibition against slavery (Weatherford, 1988 p. 139; p. 146). Still, perhaps the time has come to continue the lessons begun 200 years ago, but aborted when the pupils decided that they had learned quite enough, thank you, and proceeded to violently slaughter their teachers. For the Indians stood in the way of the White Man's Manifest Destiny to rule the continent.

Do you wish to know how order within a communal body can be produced, peacefully and spontaneously, without coercion, while preserving both individual

autonomy and the magical principle “that things act on one another at a distance because of their being secretly linked together by invisible bonds”? Then read Weatherford’s affectionately humorous account of attending a powwow near Fargo, North Dakota. After admitting that many of us might find such events utterly chaotic, he hints at a hidden harmony below the surface—what David Bohm (1980) termed “the implicate order”:

This seems to be typical of Indian community events: no one is in control. No master of ceremonies tells everyone what to do, and no one orders the dancers to appear. The announcer acts as herald or possibly facilitator of ceremonies, but no chief rises to demand anything of anyone. The event flows in an orderly fashion like hundreds of powwows before it, but leaders can only lead by example, by pleas, or by exhortations. Everyone shows great respect for the elders and for warriors, who are repeatedly singled out for recognition, but at the same time children receive great respect for dancing and even the audience receives praise for watching. The powwow grows in an organic fashion as dancers slowly become activated by the drums and the singing. The event unfolds as a collective activity of all participants, not as one mandated and controlled from the top. Each participant responds to the collective mentality and mood of the whole group but not to a single, directing voice. (Weatherford, 1988, pp. 120-121)

Here a very large objection will be made (if not howled derisively). By suggesting that the native animistic tribes of the Americas may hold the key to envisioning a new model of the invisible web of wholeness, it will be argued that I have wittingly stepped into the doo-doo of some sort of elementary developmental error. Or that I am succumbing to primitivist chic, or unknowingly committing some other version of what transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (1980, pp. 7-9) has dubbed “the Pre/Trans Fallacy.”

I believe that the Pre/Trans Fallacy is itself fallacious. (Although the PTF is often cited uncritically and reverentially, as if it were Holy Writ—a popular New Age writer once gushed that Wilber is “The long sought Einstein of consciousness research” — Steven M. Rosen [1994, pp. 170-171] is a conspicuous counterexample.) But before I say why, I will summarize my understanding of Wilber’s abstract historical scheme.

Wilber distinguishes a triadic sequence of evolutionary development of wholeness

or “perfection,” which likewise represents an ascending movement from lower to higher stages of being, truth, and value, or from less to more pure forms of consciousness. In what he calls the “pre-personal” stage (which is where he would place “primitive animism,” the “nature religions,” or what I’m herein calling “magic” or the “psychic”) the “physical and the psychical have not yet been differentiated” (Wilber, 1980, p. 9). The second stage is the “personal” or “egoic” stage, where such differentiation, painful as it is, has been made, and thereby true self-consciousness is achieved. In religious and historical terms, this represents the monotheistic-biblical traditions, which see God (and humanity) as separate from nature, and God as separate from humanity. But the third and “highest” stage is the “transpersonal” stage. In the transpersonal paths of Zen, Vajrayana, and Vedanta, says Wilber, the earlier divisions are overcome with the annihilation of the ego personality and the realization that all truly and ultimately is One.

But this stratified, complex Oneness, which places Pure Consciousness at the apex of a developmental hierarchy of consciousness, starting at the bottom rung with the purely physical and rising up to the Ultimate level of purity, is not to be confused with the simple, undifferentiated Oneness of the pre-personal stage. The latter erroneously “confuses” mind and body, self and other, nature and spirit, lower and higher:

The higher transcends but includes the lower—*not* vice versa. That is, all of the lower is “in” the higher, but not all the higher is in the lower. As a simple example, there is a sense in which all of the reptile is in man, but not all of the man is in the reptile; all of the mineral world is in a plant, but not vice versa, and so on. . . . Thus, when the [transpersonal] mystic-sage speaks of mutual interpenetration [i.e., wholeness, unity, or perfection], he or she means *a multidimensional interpenetration with nonequivalence*. (Wilber, 1985, p. 160)

From a Wilberian perspective, then, it would seem that I am advocating the regression to a childish form of consciousness, a primal bliss. Instead we need to move only upward through the (violently dualistic) Patriarchal level, to the ultimate peace and harmony that is the “already realized Truth” of the pure, disembodied consciousness achieved through Zen, Vajrayana, and the Vedanta (Wilber, 1985, p. 162). As far as

Wilber is concerned, the only task ahead for the rest of us imitative. We are to erase what remains of our unique individuality (and infantile love of “the psychic”) and don the sandals of the great Hindu and Buddhist sages, who have already paved the road to Enlightenment and Absolute Truth ahead of us. “What remains,” he says, “is for the world to follow suit, via evolutionary or process meditation, into the higher realms, culminating at infinity” (Wilber, 1985, p.162). And that, eschatologically, will be that.

How do I respond to this objection? Simply by playing Marx to Wilber’s Hegel.

You will recall how Marx responded to Hegel’s dialectical treatment of history in general, and his exaltation of the Prussian State of King Frederick William, as worked out in his *Philosophy of Right*, in particular. Hegel, of course, had believed that human history exhibits a dialectical progression from unreason to reason, from unfreedom to freedom, from the rule of chaotic, spontaneous, self-interested, natural impulses to the genuine rule of an impartial, impersonal law in civil society and the state. He also believed that this process had culminated in both himself (that is, in his complete philosophical System, which could answer all questions) and the Prussian constitutional monarchy of Frederick William (MacIntyre, 1966, p. 209). (Much as Wilber apparently believes that transpersonal consciousness culminates in his own Theory of Everything and favored religious practices.) Hegel regarded the Prussian state as the highest embodiment of the Absolute Idea, and hence perfectly rational, and utterly free of such “egoic” manifestations as internal strife or petty self-seeking.

What Marx pointed out, of course, was that Hegel had substituted his own idealized fantasies, his beloved dialectical abstractions, for actual history, and in the process had falsified and distorted the facts. Marx exhibited the actual Prussian state (as opposed to Hegel’s unreal idea of it) as a seething hotbed of conflicting class interests, an irrational clash of competing economic forces and power struggles—far and away from the disinterested, conflict-free, impersonal rule of law projected by Hegel. Marx himself was a gross oversimplifier of another (materialist) kind. Yet, even so, it is his

observations that by and large have been borne out by later historians.

For example, in his classic study, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, and Autocracy* (1958), the historian Hans Rosenberg noted the gross irrationality and self-seeking egotism that characterized the actual Prussian State of Hegel's own day:

Most innovations in the direction of greater rationality and economy proved detrimental to the monetary self-interests of officialdom. . . Besides, bureaucratic dignitaries frequently yielded to the temptations of violating the service codes by exploiting their authority for personal ends or vested group interests. . . . petty graft as well as criminal conduct in the civil administration only too often remained undetected. . . . The Prussian government executives were not a particularly virtuous or high-spirited group, but rather a perplexing association of jealous, intensely selfish, and often mean and treacherous individuals whose day-to-day life was embittered by spies, informers, self-appointed snipers, and experts in intrigue. . . Internal disunity and conflict sprang from many sources. . . . Thus intradepartmental brawls over the service codes were enlivened by differences of opinion, the clash of personalities and temperaments, the flaring up of vanity, avarice, and envy. (Rosenberg, 1958 pp. 103-104; pp. 112-113)

This may seem like a detour, but it is not. For Wilber and his progeny share Hegel's dangerous and deceptive fantasy that "perfect egolessness" is not only actual (and hence possible) but also a highly desirable aim. In fact, a set of observations precisely parallel to those Rosenberg (and Marx) made about Hegel's Prussia could easily be marshaled in the case of Wilber's transpersonal gurus to show that, in fact and in truth, such transcendence of ego is a delusion. It would be tiresome, however, to rehearse the details of the well-known recent scandals of sex, money, and power surrounding such figures as Swami Muktananda, Sogyal Rinpoche, the former head of the Kripalu Yoga society, Chogyam Trungpa, and other luminaries. Suffice it to say that anything that could be said of the Prussian bureaucrats could apply equally to Wilber's transpersonal "saints". Indeed, if Wilber himself aspires to such egolessness, why does he cultivate the image of the J.D. Salinger-like reclusive sage, his shaved head and wizened countenance boldly adorning, in typical guru-style, the covers of his books? Nor is this a personal criticism of Wilber. But this inconsistency does reflect on the validity of his imposition of

a simplistic logical scheme on history; a scheme that, by deifying the ideal of an absolutely disembodied, “pure” consciousness, distorts and falsifies, rather than illuminates, the complex human truth of that exceedingly untidy process we call history.

Is a “pure” disembodied consciousness even a possible goal for a human being? Does embodiment and the ego represent a “fall” (even if an admittedly necessary one)? Nietzsche’s great reply reflected his disgust for those who seek to fly high and away from the body and its matrix, Mother Earth, which in the end is the *sine qua non* of all bliss:

The sick and perishing; it was they who despised the body and the earth, and invented the heavenly world and the redeeming drops of blood. . . . Beyond the sphere of their body and this earth they now fancied themselves transported, these ungrateful ones. Yet to what did they owe the convulsion and rapture of their transport? To their body and this earth.” (Cited in Campbell, 1976, p. 139)

As for perfect egolessness, it too is neither a possible nor even a desirable aim.

With Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad (1993), I would agree that the “positive and necessary aspects of self-centeredness related to creativity and individuation are overlooked” (p. 358) not only by Wilberian-style transpersonal psychology but also by all the major exoteric and esoteric religious traditions of both East and West. Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, the universalistic “perennial philosophy” popularized by Aldous Huxley and embraced by Theosophists and esoteric thinkers like Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon, to name but a few, are all at bottom philosophies that emphasize an undifferentiated Oneness at the expense of individual creativity and genuine spiritual innovation. Such invisible bonds are indeed too religiously binding. (“Religion,” from the Latin *religio*: meaning, to bind back, i.e., to be bound by an unquestionable Authority.)

The moral implications of envisioning the monotheistic Patriarchal annihilation of the magical philosophy of animism as a “necessary” way station on the pilgrimage back to a disembodied Absolute are weighty indeed and cannot be ignored. Can one, in truth, morally justify the holocaust visited by White Christian society upon the indigenous peoples of the North American continent, in all its gory detail? From the “gifts” of

smallpox-infected blankets, to the Trail of Tears, to the assassinations of chiefs and warriors such as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, to the string of lies, broken treaties, and broken promises, to the forced religious conversions, religious intimidation, and persecutions? When one blithely remarks that, “Oh, one must break eggs to make an omelet, after all,” it’s easy to forget that what’s good for the diner is bad for the dinner. (Just try that old egg argument out in the chicken coop if you don’t believe me.)

This moral perfidy is no side issue. Nor is it some self-indulgent liberal guilt-trip. If indeed Wilber’s triadic sequence of evolutionary development represents a rational transition from lower to higher stages of Being, Truth, and Virtue, then this claim must stand up to an examination of the actual facts.

Yet, Weatherford ably demonstrates that when we examine the facts, the true motive force of history in this case was not sweet reason, but rather, power, pure and simple—along with a crazy, unpredictable, thoroughly irrational little thing called luck:

The Indian civilizations crumbled in the face of the Old World not because of any intellectual or cultural inferiority. They simply succumbed in the face of disease and brute strength. While the American Indians had spent millennia becoming the world’s greatest farmers and pharmacists, the people of the Old World had spent a similar period amassing the world’s greatest arsenal of weapons. The strongest, but not necessarily the most creative or the most intelligent, won the day. (Weatherford, 1988, p. 252)

Patriarchy long ago became not merely pathological but evil. As such it is no longer a halfway house to anything. It is an evolutionary dead-end, a cultural Dodo bird, a cul-de-sac of consciousness. The long, bloody War On The Body (and the psychic bonds that link all bodies together) yielded the Indian holocaust, the H-bomb, the insanity of Columbine, the Mengele-like practice of having the sponsor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month be the corporation that at once causes and profits from cancer. And how, then, do you find your way out of a dead end? Only by going the way you came.

This does not imply, however, that the individuated self or ego is either pathological or evil—or something to be simply transcended. Nor does it literally mean

“going backwards,” either in thought or in practice. As Steven Rosen has argued, “we ‘go back’ by ‘going forward’, that is by bringing antecedent phases into *harmony*” (Rosen, 1994, p. 170). Thus I am not recommending that we smash our computers and quit our stultifying urban jobs (though some of us might be tempted to do this, too) in order to return to a tribal-gatherer lifestyle. It is impossible to recapture intact a form of consciousness that was, even for the Old World Europeans who came to these shores three centuries ago, already a relic of the distant past—as it was not for Native American tribes like the Sioux, who were still living it well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

My suggestion, then, amounts to this: If we wish to think new thoughts about the body and to come to a new understanding of the invisible bonds of nature, we shall have to remove the inner obstacles that Patriarchy long ago deliberately set up in order to block those spontaneous, primordial bodily experiences of psychic “magic.” Materialism consigns such experiences to the categories of mental and social pathology. For biblical monotheism, they are demonic or diabolical. To the transcendental mysticism of the perennial philosophy, they are insignificant distractions from the Absolute. But if we wish to discover how to go about deconstructing these rigid ideological barriers, we have only to renew our acquaintance with peoples for whom such experiences remain, as it were, second nature. It will do not the least bit of good to theorize grandly about new forms of community, or new models of wholeness or self, apart from enjoying the actual experiences of psychic sympathy and natural harmony that have been forbidden to us by the guardians of the Patriarchal traditions. New theories will have to be grounded in the fertile soil of direct psychic experience or they will wither and die.

#### PART SEVEN: BREAKING THE TRANCE (TO SEE THE INVISIBLE)

The late science writer and paranormal researcher Michael Talbot (1991; pp. 141-142) once attended a party where a professional hypnotist was giving a demonstration. The hypnotist put one of the guests (a friend of Talbot’s father) into a deep trance and gave him a post-hypnotic suggestion that he would not see or hear his daughter, who was

also in the room. When the man awoke, lo and behold, he could not see or hear his daughter—even though she was standing right in front of him, giggling away. She did not exist in his experience. Entranced—though seemingly awake and aware—his mind somehow filled in the perceptual holes created by her absence (or was it presence?).

We have all been locked tight in the trance of Patriarchy, in which we do not (as a rule) experience either the full range of the body’s potential or the inherent connectedness of all bodies, physical and non-physical. We do not directly sense the earth as a living being and as the living ground of our own being. (And if we do experience these things, other people will have all sorts of nasty things to say about us.) As the nightly news reveals, this blindness is literally maddening and prevents us from thinking straight. It is impossible to think our way out of this predicament because we can’t think clearly and truthfully until we are experiencing reality. To break the hold of the hypnotist, we have to know that we are “under.” And the only way to do this is to encounter those who have not been so entranced. Talbot’s friend was in no danger, because the others knew it was all just a trick. But what if they had all been hypnotized (including the daughter)?

Nor, I might re-emphasize, will the current stalemate be broken if we were suddenly to shift primary allegiance from the dominant materialist and biblical branches of Patriarchy to the more recessive mystical branch represented by Wilber’s perennialist sages. Sri Aurobindo (one of Wilber’s favorite gurus) has flatly stated that:  
Even the highest individual perfection, even the blissful cosmic condition is no better than a supreme ignorance. All that is individual, all that is cosmic has to be austere renounced by the seeker of the Absolute Truth. (Cited in Jambor, p. 174)

It is sheer lunacy to think that the body will be creatively re-imagined by those whose only interest lies in escaping from it and Mother Earth. “[T]o my mind,” declared Bohm, “the mysticism which would devalue cosmic consciousness [i.e., unity with nature] and hold only to the transcendent experience is absurd” (Bohm and Weber, in Wilber, 1985, p.193). It is more than absurd; it is at once suicidal and matricidal.

The poet Robert Graves (1948) once ridiculed the Hindu guru Sri Ramakrishna as

a spiritually ambitious Onanist for abandoning his devotion to the goddess Kali for the supposedly “egoless” act of blissful absorption in the ineffable Absolute (*samadhi*). Graves contrasted Ramakrishna with his mystical predecessor, Ramprasad Sen (1718-1775). Sen, wrote Graves, “rejected the orthodox hope of ‘not-being’ . . . as irreconcilable with his sense of individual uniqueness as the Goddess’s child and lover” (Graves, p. 484). Graves then cited a delightful verse of Sen’s ecstatic poetry:

*Sugar I like, yet I have no desire  
To become sugar. . .* (Cited in Graves, 1948, p. 484)

Our hope for the future of the body rides with those who will hold fast to humor and poetry, rather than those who find their *metier* in dry humorless pedantry. For in order to formulate a genuinely new theory, we will have to develop a new attitude, a more direct and grounded experience of life—of nature in all its wild, unmanageable energies—from which to build our theoretical abstractions. Otherwise it will simply mean a brand new costume for the same old, worn out Patriarchal ideology of mastery and control—by the silver sword or silver-tongued word, it makes little difference.

Poetry and humor return us from the airy-fairy flights of intellectual Icaruses to the grounding sanity of the body (cf. Rosen, 1994, p. 267; p. 271; and 1997, p. 417). The logically nonsensical metaphors of the poet and the zany antics of clowns (like the Indian *heyokas*, who perform sacred ceremonies backwards) snap us out of the deadly trance of literalism, in which we believe that our abstract ideas are purely objective facts worth killing and dying for. Poetic images arise from the senses and imagination. Laughter originates down in the belly—the very place, as the psychic Robert Cracknell (1999) reminds us, that births the crude intuitions (as those familiar “gut feelings”) that herald the opening of the psychic faculty. The place, in other words, of the invisible umbilicus that ties all of Earth’s children to Her and each other. By coming to our senses and down to earth, we are plunged into a direct, restorative experience of Bohm’s implicate order.

There is a story about an acquaintance of Carl Jung’s who came to the doctor’s

office one day thinking that he needed analysis. Jung listened intently to his friend's tale of woe and decided—as my own mother would have put it—that the fellow had simply “worked himself into a dither.” The psychiatrist paused, as if in deep reflection, as his friend leaned in closer, nervously awaiting the sage doctor's diagnosis. “What you really need,” began Jung in a mock serious tone, “is a good Swiss sausage!” At that the man laughed, snapping out of his self-imposed trance, ending his exile in the sealed container of his own fixed ideas. He had come back to the living body, the process of nature.

For Wilber's elite mystical gurus, however, the beauties (and terrors) of nature are condescendingly dismissed as illusory byproducts of a “fall from divinity . . . a fall . . . into worldliness” and the snake pit of “individuation” (Jambor, 1997, p. 169). But the poetic, body-loving, earth-grounded, intelligence of the nature mystic, the true psychic, and the real magician revels in the beauty and accepts the terror as part of the price of admission. The loneliness and responsibility of true individuality, the pain of separation, the reality of death and our imperfection, our partial, fallible, ever-evolving knowledge—all of these are terrifying conditions. But they are conditions without which there could not be a world, such as ours, in which the curiosity, creativity, and spontaneity of unique individuals attuned to their own inner processes and the larger rhythms of nature—as the despised Mother Eve was—is the ultimate heroism.

Joseph Bruchac (1996), the Abenaki Indian storyteller and scholar, reminds us that the Navaho (Dineh) word that is usually translated as “beauty” (*hozó*) also means “balance.” Those who flee the wild beauty of the body are unbalanced. These deranged control-freaks, the creators and perpetrators of violence, yearn for a static order, a pure, fixed, unchanging Oneness that is utterly incompatible with the multifarious dance of life.

John Ruskin said that all truly great art expresses “the love of natural objects for their own sake, and the effort to represent them frankly, unconstrained by artistical laws” (1853/1981, p. 123). Our general concepts must accommodate themselves to the unique particulars of our experience, not vice-versa. True Beauty (and true love), he said, accepts

that all life is imperfect; that life in a mortal body is ever in a state of progress and change; and that some part of us is always dying while other parts are crying to be born.

Unless our ideas of the body come to reflect our actual, natural experience of this life dance, we will remain the hijacked prisoners of those puritan madmen, the intellectual ayatollahs who want to stop the dance and silence the music, once and for all.

To overcome this imbalance and re-associate ourselves with the processes of nature (and of our own nature), we must end the fruitless struggle for control and possession—including intellectual domination with thought-systems and abstract schemes—that is our Patriarchal heritage. Though I am certainly no poet, I have nevertheless taken to meditating on a little verse of my own during my daily walk in the park. Inspired by the well-known Navaho prayer of beauty mention by Bruchac, it serves to remind me of the true Body of Wisdom:

*Thank you, Mother Earth, for all the gifts that You've given  
In beauty, I walk upon Your skin.*

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