



#### Sidebar E: **The Genius Descartes Gets a Postmodern Drubbing**

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

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

“I don’t know. Confused author, can’t shut up, has to weigh in on everything.

Let me finish. If a postmodern novel had endnotes, and in the novel the characters were two-dimensional, doesn’t that mean that in the endnotes they would only be one-dimensional?”

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

After her lecture on Tuesday, Lesa Powell stayed for an hour or two and talked with interested students about René Descartes, who she said was the first great modern (orange) philosopher and therefore the first great whipping boy of the green postmodernists. Kim insisted that I stay for this, but why, I don’t know.

“It will help you understand that idiotic AI you’re involved with.”

“Oh really?”

“Oh really. The Cartesian dualism is the major sin of modernity, didn’t you know that?” She began laughing, as if this were some sort of inside joke. “And you don’t want to be living in sin, do you? What are you, Wilber, all of 20 years old? And already living in sin.”

At that point, Powell overheard Kim and interjected, “This young lady—is that you, Kim? Yes—Kim here is pulling your leg, folks. The Cartesian dualism is actually the beginning of a brilliant and profound Vedanta for the West, an enormous accomplishment spotted by a few geniuses like Moshe Kroy, but unfortunately a fact completely—and I mean completely—lost on the lemming-like loonies of postmodernism. Care to hear why?” And Lesa laughed her easy laugh, white teeth on black skin in the shimmering soft lights of the stage.

I thought, what the hell, I might as well hear this. My mind had so many stretch marks on it already, I figured, what’s a few more contusions on my cortex, bruises on my brain? It’s not like I actually needed it.

Woody Allen: “The brain—that’s my second favorite organ.”

“Don’t look so pained, Wilber,” Kim grinned.

Lesa: “You’ve heard the constant refrain around Integral Center: this or that theorist is ‘half right, half wrong.’ And you know why we say that so often: it’s because no mind—and therefore no theorist—is capable of producing nothing but falsehood. As Joan quips, ‘No one is smart enough to be wrong all the time.’ That means that every philosophical view and perspective has *some sort of truth to it*, and our job is put all the partial truths together in a wonderful tapestry of human possibilities, and not pick one partial truth and defend it to the death against all others.

“Well, that goes double for poor Descartes. Of course he made some mistakes, most of them glaringly obvious to us of today; but the things he got right were profound—absolutely, astonishingly, outrageously profound. And any sort of truly integral embrace would not be integral without the important, if partial, truths of Cartesianism.

“Almost three decades ago, a person who would eventually become a co-founder of IC wrote an essay called, ‘In Defense of Descartes,’ which began, ‘It has become a fashionable stupidity to rake Descartes over the coals, usually for all the wrong reasons.’ Three decades ago: that was right at the beginning of the postmodern invasion, the rise of the green meme,

and the tsunami of the mean green meme. Needless to say, the fashionable stupidity increased, becoming the first—and arguably the most influential—cornerstone of academic boomeritis. I guarantee you, when you hear an attack on the Cartesian dualism, you are smack in the face of a nasty case of boomeritis.”

“See, Wilber, this could be fun.”

“I’d rather eat airline food.”

Lesa Powell smiled gently. “So let’s start with perhaps the most amazing aspect of Descartes’s work, and then suggest a few ways that he might have gotten sidetracked. To begin with, the cogito. That is, ‘*Cogito, ergo sum,*’ usually translated as, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ But that translation loses the immediacy of the intuition that impelled Descartes. As interpreters such as Kroy and Bonnett have pointed out, this pithy phrase really has the meaning of: ‘consciousness, hence being.’

“In other words—and this was the basis of the famous Cartesian doubt—there are many things that I can doubt, but I cannot *believably* doubt *my own consciousness in this moment*. My consciousness IS, and even if I tried to doubt it, it would be my consciousness doing the doubting. I can imagine that my senses are being presented with a fake reality—say, a completely virtual reality or digital reality, which looks real but is merely a series of extremely realistic images. But even then, I cannot doubt the consciousness that is doing the watching.

“Likewise, I can imagine that my consciousness is delivered to me by a complex brain mechanism of neurotransmitters, synapses, and the like, so that my consciousness is merely a byproduct, an epiphenomenon—but that is merely a rational deduction, and even that deduction is known only in my immediate consciousness. This does not deny that the brain is involved in consciousness; it simply points out that unless the immediate reality of my own present consciousness is included in the equation, I am missing a reality that I cannot believably doubt in any event.

“Consciousness, hence being. The very undeniability of my present awareness, the undeniability of my consciousness, immediately delivers to me a certainty of existence in this moment, a certainty of Being in the now-ness of this moment. I cannot doubt consciousness and Being in this moment, for it is the ground of all knowing, all seeing, all existing. This, of course, is exactly the path that had been taken by Vedanta, by Vajrayana, by the Neoplatonists, and by many other great wisdom traditions. It is the path of I AM, and this great I AMness is said to open directly on to, or even to directly be, nothing other than pure Spirit, radiant God/dess, the Atman that is Brahman, timelessly and eternally—a supreme equation secreted in the fact that you cannot doubt the Immediacy of your own Now-ness. Consciousness, therefore Being. And Being is God in the state of I AM.

“Who am I? Ask that question over and over again, deeply. Who am I? What is it in me that is conscious of everything? This self-inquiry was used by Sri Ramana Maharshi to realize the Self, the Self that is one with the entire Kosmos in all its radiant splendor. In other words, Sri Ramana Maharshi was using the Cartesian doubt to drive to heart of the Atman that is Brahman—although, of course, the technique is centuries old. Descartes did not invent it, he merely rediscovered it. In Descartes’s burning desire to know ‘What is ultimately true? What is so true that it can *never be doubted?*,’ he turned his attention inward with such a fierce and awesome dedication to Truth that he eventually was brought—as all such sincere and prolonged self-inquiry is—directly to the Self that is the Witness of all worlds, a Self that can never be believably doubted because it is *always already* ever-present. Consciousness IS Being, even here and now.

“How similar was this Cartesian doubt to the Path of Awakening in the great wisdom traditions? Here is only one example, taken from Dzogchen Buddhism, generally regarded as the highest of the Buddha’s teachings. This is from the great Paltrul’s ‘Self-Liberated Mind’:

“‘At times it happens that some meditators say that it is difficult to recognize the nature of the mind (note: in Dzogchen, ‘the nature of the mind’ means the ultimate reality of pure Emptiness or primordial Spirit). Some practitioners believe it to be impossible to

recognize the nature of mind. They become depressed with tears streaming down their cheeks. There is no reason at all to become sad. It is not at all impossible to recognize. *Rest directly in that which thinks that it is impossible to recognize the nature of the mind, and that is exactly it.*”

Lesa Powell looked up. “In other words, if you think that you know Spirit, or if you think you don’t, Spirit is actually that which is thinking both of those thoughts. So you can doubt the objects of consciousness, but you can never believably doubt the doubter, never really doubt the Witness of the entire display. Therefore, rest in the Witness, whether it is thinking that it knows God or not, and that witnessing, that undeniable immediacy of now-consciousness, is itself God, Spirit, Buddha-mind. The certainty lies in the pure self-felt Consciousness to which objects appear, not in the objects themselves. You will never, never, *never* see God, because God is the Seer, not any finite, mortal, bounded object that can be seen! (Consciousness, therefore Being—not: objects of Consciousness, therefore Being.)

“Thus, this pure I AM state is not hard to achieve but impossible to avoid, because it is ever-present and can never *really* be doubted. Spirit is not hard to find but impossible to avoid: it is looking at this page right now. Why on earth do you keep looking for God when God is actually the Looker?

“Therefore, simply rest in the ever-present Witness. As Patrul also says: ‘There are some meditators who don’t let their mind rest in itself or in basic immediateness, as they should. Instead they let it watch outwardly or search inwardly. You will neither see nor find the mind by watching outwardly or searching inwardly (for it is the Seer, not the seen!). There is no reason whatsoever to watch outwardly or search inwardly. Let go directly into this mind that is watching outwardly or searching inwardly, *and that is exactly it.*’

“Well, all of that is good Cartesianism—although, again, Descartes didn’t invent it, he just rediscovered it in his own I AMness. This path of self-inquiry—and the Great Liberation that is secreted in the ever-present I AM state—goes back at least 2,000 years (although the traditions always claim, not completely convincingly, that it goes back tens of

thousands of years or more). We find it in Plato and therefore Neoplatonism (and therefore virtually every mystical school in the West), where it appears as a basic Wakefulness present even in sleep; it is clearly announced in India in the Upanishads, where this Atman that is Brahman is the doorway to Enlightenment; we find it in Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism (when faced with those who thought that the attainment of nirvana depended on prayers and chanting, Zen asked instead: 'WHO is that chants the name of the Buddha?'); we find it in the great Christian mystics, such as Boethius, who in his great distress cried out to Philosophia, who ever-so-gently whispered in his ear: 'You have forgotten who you are.' Because who you are is... Spirit itself, even when you think you can never find it.

“At the beginning of the modern world—that is, somewhere between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment—Descartes looked into this own mind and found the Looker. From Descartes this I AM realization poured into modern Western philosophy. When Husserl explains that the world could end and it wouldn't affect the pure Self, or when he describes the splitting of the witnessing self from empirical self (e.g., in section 15 of *Cartesian Meditations*), or when Fichte describes the pure Observing Self as being *infinite* and *supraindividual* Spirit—this is Western Vedanta at its finest. To varying degrees we find it in Kant, Spinoza, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Sartre, Heidegger... oh, it is a long list!

“And I am getting quite ahead of the story!” Powell laughed, shifted her position sitting on the stage, and continued. “Several scholars have suggested that Descartes's major satori occurred in an altered state of consciousness when he climbed into an old stove and curled up on himself. He is quoted as saying something like, When I came out, my entire philosophy was formed.

“Well, what we do know is that Descartes very probably had a peak experience of the causal realm. A peak experience of the pure Self, the formless Witness, the pure Consciousness that cannot believably be doubted because it is the ground of all Being and all doubt. A peak experience of Atman, a peak experience of the ever-present I AM: no wonder Descartes was the first great modern philosopher, powered by that fuel!

“But—and this is crucial—we also have good reason to believe that Descartes’s frontal development—that is, his average center of gravity—was at the orange meme (this was, after all, the beginning of modernity). And therefore Descartes did pretty much what integral psychology predicts that he would do: *he interpreted his altered state or peak experience of the causal realm in terms of the orange meme*. Aye, and there’s the rub.

“We can find no evidence that Descartes was *permanently* developed to the causal realm—the causal was therefore only a passing state, not a permanent trait. Recall that integral psychology maintains that a person at virtually any stage of development (infant, child, adult—purple, red, blue, orange, green, yellow, etc.) can have an altered state or peak experience of any of the great states of consciousness—gross, subtle, causal, nondual (corresponding to waking, dreaming, sleeping, and nondual). But the person will tend to *interpret* that altered *state* in the terms of their present general *stage* of development. And that appears to be just what happened to Descartes: he had a profound altered state of the causal realm and then interpreted that in the general terms of the orange meme—and there, in a nutshell, is the dignity and the disaster of the Cartesian worldview.

“Descartes was not permanently developed to the causal as a stage or wave; he was permanently developed more-to-less to the egoic-rational wave, the orange meme. But even that part—his embrace of the orange wave—was an aspect of his evolutionary brilliance and his developmental genius. Descartes was indeed the first great modern philosopher, because he was the first philosopher to identify with the orange-wave worldview and therefore start asking questions *from within* that worldview. Most (not all) of the previous, premodern philosophers of Europe were still asking questions from within the mythic-membership worldview, from within the blue meme. But in a burst of developmental brilliance rarely seen anywhere in history, René Descartes punched through the herd mentality of blue and started asking, and answering, orange questions. I mean, this was, this was... absolutely amazing.” Lesa Powell paused, smiled, and looked over her shoulder, dreamily, for the longest time.

“Okay. So, at this point we have to take a four-quadrant view to get a sense of what happened to these two basic truths—and their strange admixture—that Descartes possessed: namely, (1) a peak experience of pure I AMness, a peak experience of causal Consciousness that is undeniable, unqualifiable Being, a peak experience that (2) was interpreted through the orange meme, or the egoic-rational worldview as it broke through the mythic-membership worldview. Both some very good news and some very bad news awaited the final results. And the critics, at this point, are not altogether wrong in some of their postmodern pontifical pronouncements.” Powell smiled, looked at us with a sparkle that hinted of things to come.

“In other words, we want to do an *integral historiography* of Descartes: all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states. [See **Sidebar A**: Integral Historiography.] I won’t do an exhaustive ‘historiograph’ right now, but I’ll mention a few major items. We just gave a brief rundown on the ‘states and stages’ features of Descartes’s breakthrough philosophy: namely, a temporary causal *state* interpreted by the orange *stage* (and, I would add, specifically in the cognitive line). So that is a brief summary of the *levels* (orange), *lines* (cognitive), and *states* (causal) aspects of the integral historiograph of our friend René.

“In the *quadrants*—well, we just gave the Upper-Left quadrant, we just gave a brief summary of his integral psychograph as best as we can piece it together today. But what about the profoundly important collective quadrants? In the Lower-Right quadrant—which in some ways is the most important historically, because it is the material-social engine that drives so much of human activity, an insight not lost on Marx—we notice first and foremost that the *social system* is fast approaching the industrial revolution. Now, Descartes is not fully of the industrial era. He wrote his *Essays* in 1637; the Englishman Thomas Newcomen invents the steam engine in 1705 and James Watt perfects it in 1769. *But all of the four-quadrant forces that would eventually give rise to the Industrial Era are starting to simmer beneath the surface.* And the genius Descartes can smell a coming revolution. Or, if you’re into postmodern poststructuralism and you fairly despise all things modern, then you would say that Descartes was the first canary to drop dead in that coming mine shaft disaster.

“The point is that Descartes is indeed riding the emerging orange wave, both good and bad. Putting this all together into an integral historiograph (however abbreviated):

“In the Lower-Right quadrant we find that—in empirical hindsight via a reconstructive science, and NOT in an *a priori* (Hegelian or Platonic) determinism—this emergence would involve a variety of social systems all resting on the techno-economic mode of industrialization; in the Lower-Left quadrant, a variety of cultural worldviews would emerge that involved, one way or another, a postconventional, worldcentric, egoic-rational unfolding of the universe (postconventional worldviews that, among other things, eventually extended individual rights of agency to all human beings, resulting in everything from feminism to the abolition of slavery in every industrialized nation on earth); in the Upper-Left quadrant, a center of psychological gravity that switched from blue to orange (at least in the cultural elite), liberating reason from its confinement in ethnocentric myth; and in the Upper-Right quadrant, a series of behaviors focused on the individual and his or her freedom of action under institutionalized laws.

“One other major item needs to be mentioned. The rise of modernity—or the egoic-rational worldview, or Gebser’s era of perspectival reason, or Habermas’s emergence of an ego identity form a role identity—in short, the rise of orange as a significant and often governing societal structure that supplanted blue and its medieval mythic-membership structures—this emergence also involved the vitally important differentiation of the Big Three—that is, the differentiation of art, morals, and science; or the I, the We, and the It; or the beautiful, the good, and the true. This differentiation—which is common in the general cognitive shift from conop to formop—was a central feature of the European historiograph throughout much of the 1700s. And this differentiation, as many scholars from Weber to Habermas have suggested, was indeed the basis of the great dignities that modernity brought: democracy could supplant monarchy, science could challenge myth, egalitarianism would erode aristocracy, freedom would fight slavery—the incredibly positive gains of the Enlightenment were about to descend the world with revolutionary results.

“However, for various reasons that some of my colleagues have discussed (see, e.g., *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*), the rise of modernity also marked not just the *differentiation* of the value spheres of art, morals, and science—which was the great *dignity* of modernity—but the *dissociation* of those spheres—which was the great *disaster*. In combination with: a tilt to agentic rationalism pervading culture in the Lower Left (an ‘overly’ orange worldview, a valuation of science over morals and art); a pervasive personal dissociation of reason and feeling in the Upper Left (most likely due not to any pathology but simple adolescent enthusiasm); and a rampant industrialization in the Lower Right (which put a massive emphasis on purposive-rational structures and a pandemic materialism of Its), a strange thing happened: *the It domain began to aggressively dominant the I and the We domains*—what Habermas calls ‘the colonization of art and morals by science.’ The famous ‘disenchantment of the world’ was about to begin. Put bluntly, the Right-Hand quadrants just squished the daylights out of the Left-Hand.

“So there was the good news and the bad news of modernity. On the good-news side: modernity marked the emergence of worldcentric, postconventional orange from ethnocentric, conventional blue, a revolution that would, among so many other beneficial things, bring the rise of the representative democracies around the world, the end of slavery, the rise of feminism, the gains of modern medicine, physics, and the ecological sciences. And, as with every other emergence of a major wave of development, there was the downside, the shadow elements, the bad news, foremost among which was the dominance of scientific materialism and an industrial ontology that said: *only ‘its’ are real*. The interior dimensions of consciousness, value, meaning, and intentionality are not really real—the I and the We, art and morals, introspection and intuition, consciousness and spirit—all of them are really nothing but material Its, variations on frisky dirt, illusions thrown up by dust as it wends its way through the lonely Kosmos—for matter alone is real.

“Welcome to the worldview known as *flatland*. As many of you know, there are two major versions of flatland—*atomistic*, which believes that only the Upper-Right quadrant is

real; and *systems theory*, which believes that only the Lower-Right quadrant is real. The former is *gross reductionism*—reducing the world to atomistic Its—and the latter is *subtle reductionism*—reducing the world to dynamically interwoven processes and holistic patterns of Its. Both of them completely gut the interior dimensions of I and We.”

“But is that really true?” The small group of students had been almost completely silent up to this point; one finally broke the circle and almost blurted out his objection. We all suspected he was a systems theorist of one flavor or another. “Because systems theory, particularly its recent forms, explicitly attempts to take all phenomena into account and then give a holistic picture of their interaction.”

“Give us an example, would you please?” Powell smiled.

“Sure. Take the traffic patterns in downtown Chicago. If you look at them as billiard balls in a fragmented Newtonian world, then you can’t really make sense of their patterns. But if you back up and look at the overall flow of cars in Chicago, you can see these beautiful patterns of mutual relationships. You can even describe these patterns using the mathematics of dynamical systems theory. This is the opposite of reductionism! It fights atomism by demanding a big-picture science, a wholistic science!” The student was obviously agitated.

“Okay, okay, I hear what you are saying. But please, just notice: you say that you can describe these beautiful traffic patterns using the mathematics of dynamical systems theory. I’m sure you can, honest. But what you cannot do—and none of your systems theories can do—is tell me what *level of consciousness* the drivers of those cars are at. Is a particular driver red, or blue, or orange, or green, or turquoise? Because a driver motivated by turquoise is going to have a profoundly different agency than a driver at red, yet none of these differences can be seen by systems theory. Yes? Systems theory treats each of the cars as if it had the same level of consciousness in it—because the tools of systems theory have no way to see or understand the interior levels of consciousness in those cars. Each car is therefore treated as the *same type* of entity moving in the dynamically patterned flow. Each

is treated as an equivalent strand in the great Web of Life. In other words, interior intentionality is reduced to exteriorly observed behaviorism, although this time it is the behavior of a collective system and not a single individual. Systems theory doesn't focus on a single flatland strand, as atomism does, it focuses on a flatland web of strands—and in both of them the strands are still completely eviscerated, gutted of their actual interiors, which never display themselves in the exterior web. This is a disaster of the first magnitude.” The student stared blankly ahead.

“Look, my friend, systems theory does indeed fight the atomism of the Upper Right by pointing out that all objects actually exist in systems of dynamical relationships. But systems theory leaves out the *actual interiors* of both those objects and those systems. There is no successful agent-modeling system that accounts for the I and We domains *in their own terms*. And this leads to a series of real catastrophes when systems theory then thinks that it is actually being wholistic, or offering a comprehensive model of the Kosmos. In fact, it is a dreadful reduction of the interiors to flatland systems devoid of consciousness, care, compassion, value, meaning, depth, and divinity. You think you have a cure for flatland, but you are simply magnifying it—thus adding to your subtle reductionism a deep self-deception.”

The student looked absolutely crushed. Powell leaned over quickly. “Oh, dear, I didn't mean it like that. No, no. Oh, it's okay, it's okay. I didn't mean you personally.”

“This is too cool,” Kim whispered.

“You are brutal, Kim,” I replied. “That poor kid. I'm thinking maybe fifty thousand dollars in therapy.”

“Oh, he'll be fine. He's a jerk anyway.”

“Kim, trust me, you need a green-meme transplant immediately.”

Powell looked around. “As some of you know, Fred Kofman is a valued member of Integral Center. Fred was Peter Senge's main collaborator in forming the Organizational Learning Center at MIT, which specialized in applying dynamical systems theory to business practices, an approach which had—and still has—an enormous following. But Fred started to

become increasingly suspicious that something was profoundly wrong with systems theory, and when he began to explore an AQAL model (all-quadrants, all-levels, all-lines, etc.), he realized why: systems theory grasps holistic exteriors but not holistic interiors, and yet both of them are needed for any true wholism. You can find some of Fred's important work in a more integral approach at

“Let's just push ahead, shall we? We were at the point that, historically, flatland began to descend on the world, and flatland involved the denial of interiors, the denial of depth, the denial of the spectrum of consciousness and the spiral of development—all of those realities in the I and the We would be collapsed, crushed, distorted, or completely denied altogether. So powerful was the grip of flatland that all of modernity AND postmodernity would lie in its clutch. When postmodernity finally, *proudly*, claimed that there are nothing but surfaces in all directions—no depth, no within—just sliding chains of signifiers—it had finally and fully succumbed to flatland. And irony of ironies: in doing so it claimed that it was finally free of modernity, whereas it had finally died from it.”

“So, Descartes, yes?” We all laughed.

“Descartes has unfairly gotten much—sometimes all—of the blame for the bad news of modernity, and none of the credit for the good news. Well, we have gone over much of this in the main seminar, yes? The basic reason Descartes has gotten none of the credit for the good news of modernity is that postmodern poststructuralism—PMS for short—does not recognize any dignities, differentiations, or *good news* of modernity: modernity is all bad news and dissociations and disasters, period. Not to mention the fact that his breakthrough to I AMness has been lost on most critics, except those few—Kroy, Bonnett, Catherine Kahill, Margaret Sullivan—who have experienced it themselves and are therefore capable of recognizing it in somebody else. But I tell you, my friends”—Powell seemed to grimace—“the knee-jerk reaction that claims the Cartesian dualism is the root of all evil is a slander

perpetrated by the mean green meme at its meanest and most ignorant.” Powell paused, took a breath, looked again at the poor student slowly recovering.

“Speaking of which, what is the Cartesian dualism, anyway? In other words, what part of the bad news of modernity did Descartes have some hand in? As you might surmise, we at IC reject most of the common claims about Descartes and therefore about the Cartesian dualism (more about that later). So let’s set aside the typical PMS assertions for the moment and state the real shadow side of Descartes as simply as possible: the downside of Descartes was that *not* that he split mind from body, or that he split thinking from feeling, or that he split reason from nature, or that he introduced the disembodied hovering monological eyeball, or that he mechanized nature. The central problem was that he took his peak experience of the pure Self and applied it to the rational-egoic level. He interpreted his experience of the Divine Self in terms of the orange ego.

“From that colossal goof (it’s a common form of what we call ‘the Atman project’ at that stage of development), all the other ‘Cartesian problems’ flowed. But as for most of the ‘problems’ ascribed to Descartes: first of all, most of them aren’t problems but major advances; second, the actual problems are indeed problems, but they are usually quite misunderstood because they are interpreted through the green meme and often the mean green meme (and boomeritis). So a great deal of careful, reconstructive work is required in order to arrive at a more adequate, resonant, second-tier, integral historiograph of Descartes and the period that gave rise to him.

“Let’s start with the so-called Cartesian dualism, which, after ‘patriarchy,’ is probably the single dirtiest word in the PMS canon.” Powell looked up and laughed good-naturedly. “The Cartesian dualism is supposedly the split between mind and body, or subject and object in the broadest sense, and many critics have actually ascribed the origin of this dualism to Descartes—a notion shot down by Karl Popper in his careful review of the problem. No, the Cartesian dualism is the split that *you* feel right now between the perceiving subject—which seems to reside somewhere between and behind your eyes—and the

world you see ‘out there.’ You definitely feel, in your own awareness right now, that you are somehow ‘in here’ looking at the world ‘out there,’ yes?

“Well that, very simply, is the real Cartesian dualism. You feel that you are ‘in here’ and the world is ‘out there.’ Let’s call it the *primary* Cartesian dualism (because, as we will see, there are all sorts of ‘lesser’ and derivative dualisms associated with it). And as for that primary Cartesian dualism, no amount of postmodern poststructuralism will cure you of that feeling of being split from the world. Let me tell you, my friends, I know hundreds of postmodernists, and not one of them has overcome that fundamental feeling of being a subject confronting a world of objects, that fundamental feeling of the self-contraction. And not just postmodern poststructuralism: no amount of systems theory, no amount of chaos theory, no amount of the new physics, no amount of studying transit astrology, no amount of repeating over and over that the world is a unified Web of Life—none of those merely thinking activities will cure you of the Cartesian dualism.

“You see, what Descartes actually discovered, with this dualism, is the great (but not ultimate) dualism between Shiva and Shakti, between Purusha and Prakriti—the great dualism between the pure formless Witness and everything that is witnessed. This dualism is the dualism that you feel right now. But far from being some sort of ghastly error, the perception of this dualism is actually the beginning of the Great Liberation, the beginning of the process of Awakening.

“Awakening to what? To your primordial Divinity, to the Divine Self, to the empty Witness that is free of all pain, suffering, death, and mortality. You can start toward that Great Liberation right now by practicing the Cartesian doubt: simply ask, Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?

“I am aware of my feelings, so I am not my feelings—Who am I? I am aware of my thoughts, so I am not my thoughts—Who am I? Clouds float by in the sky, thoughts float by in the mind, feelings float by in the body—and I am none of those because I can Witness them all.

“Moreover, I can doubt that clouds exist, I can doubt that feelings exist, I can doubt that objects of thought exist—but I cannot doubt that the Witness exists in this moment, because the Witness would still be there to witness the doubt.

“I am not objects in nature, not feelings in the body, not thoughts in the mind, for I can Witness them all. I am that Witness—a vast, open, empty, clear, pure, transparent Self that impartially witnesses all that arises, as a mirror spontaneously reflects all its objects.

“Now that state of pure Witnessing is ‘half-way’ home to the Great Liberation. This *pure* Cartesian dualism is actually Shankara’s great *Crest Jewel of Discrimination*: I am not this, I am not that—*neti, neti*. The pure Seer is not any objects that can be seen—and that PURE dualism is the causal realm in its all formless, pure, empty glory. It is an unbelievably high state—second only the ultimate nondual—and that is why, if you THOROUGHLY experience this pure dualism, you are indeed half-way home. You can already feel some of this Great Liberation in that you already feel that you are free from the pain of mere objects, mere feelings, mere thoughts—they all come and go, but you are the vast, free, open Witness of them all, untouched by their torments and tortures.

“This is actually the profound discovery of Purusha, of Shiva, of the pure divine Self, the formless Witness, causal nothingness, the vast Emptiness in which the entire world arises, stays a bit, and passes. *And you are That*. You are not the body, not the ego, not nature, not thoughts, not this, not that—you are a vast Emptiness, Freedom, Release, and Liberation.

“With this discovery, to repeat, you are half-way home. You have *dis-identified* from any and all finite objects; you rest as infinite Consciousness. You are free, open, empty, clear, radiant, released, liberated, exalted, drenched in a blissful emptiness that exists prior to space, prior to time, prior to tears and terror; prior to pain and mortality and suffering and death. You have found the great Unborn, the vast Abyss, the unqualifiable Ground of all that is, and all that was, and all that ever shall be.

“But why...” Powell looked gently at all of us. “Why is that only half-way home? Because as you rest in the infinite ease of consciousness, spontaneously aware of all that is

arising, there will soon enough come the great catastrophe of final Freedom and Fullness: the Witness itself will disappear entirely, and instead of witnessing the sky, you *are* the sky; instead of touching the earth, you *are* the earth; instead of hearing the thunder, you *are* the thunder. You and the entire Kosmos become One Taste—you can drink the Pacific Ocean in a single gulp, hold Mt. Everest in the palm of your hand; supernovas swirl in your heart and the solar system replaces your head.”

Powell’s radiant skin seemed to glow from within, a translucent ebony plugged into some sort of scintillating Kosmic energy source. She smiled. “To put it in dry technical terms, beyond the causal—which retains the primary dualism of Subject versus all objects—there lies the pure Nondual state, where the Subject and All Objects become One Taste, where Emptiness and Form become ‘not-two, not-one.’ But don’t mistake One Taste for nature mysticism—in the Nondual state, Gaia can disappear entirely, as she does in dreams and deep sleep, and you are still One Taste, you are still Freedom and Fullness in all domains that arise. Gaia is just another finite object, and you are not this, not that. But if Gaia arises, fine, then you are one with Gaia. If nothing arises, you are one with nothing. You are One Taste, the empty mirror that is one with any and all objects that arise in its radiant embrace, a mindlessly vast translucent expanse, infinite, eternal, divine, exalted. And... you... are... That.

“So the primary Cartesian dualism—which is simply the dualism between Shiva and Shakti, Purusha and Prakriti, in here and out there, subject and object, the empty Witness and all things witnessed—is finally undone and overcome in nondual One Taste. Once you actually and fully contact the Witness, then—and only then—can it be transcended into radical Nonduality, and half-way home becomes fully home, here in the ever-present wonder of what is.

“This, of course, is the profound meaning of Tantra. Shiva or Purusha (the Seer or the Witness, the pure formless Consciousness) is usually depicted as a male; and Shakti or Prakriti (the Seen, or the entire world of manifestation) is often depicted as a female. The

point, of course, is that you are supposed to identify *with both*. Tantric art always shows Shiva and Shakti making love, or becoming One and Nondual. This is the eternal, erotic, ecstatic embrace of subject and object, mind and body, male and female, in here and out there—an embrace that lights up the sky with the shouts of the stars as they make love with infinity.

“And so how do you know that you have finally and *really* overcome the Cartesian dualism? Very simple: if you have really overcome the Cartesian dualism, then you no longer feel that you are on this side of your face looking at the world out there. There is only the world, and you are all of that; you actually feel that you are one with everything that is arising moment to moment. You are not merely on this side of your face looking out there. ‘In here’ and ‘out there’ have become One Taste with a shuddering obviousness and certainty so profound it feels like a five-ton rock just dropped on your head. It is, shall we say, a feeling hard to miss.” Powell smiled gently, her awareness floated in the room.

“At that point, which is actually your ever-present condition, there is no exclusive identity with this particular organism, no constriction of consciousness to the head, a constriction that makes it seem that ‘you’ are in the head looking at the rest of the world out there; there is no binding of attention to the personal bodymind: instead, consciousness is one with all that is arising—a vast, open, transparent, radiant, infinitely Free and infinitely Full expanse that embraces the entire Kosmos, so that every single subject and every single object are erotically united in the Great Embrace of One Taste. You disappear from *merely* being behind your eyes, and you become the All, you directly and actually *feel* that your basic identity is everything that is arising moment to moment (just as previously you felt that your identify was with this finite, partial, separate, mortal coil of flesh you call a body). Inside and outside have become One Taste. I tell you, it can happen just like that!” and Lesa snapped her fingers—“The sound of one hand clapping,” she whispered.

“Now in this nondual state of One Taste, of course you know where your body is, and of course you can feel an identity with it and with your conventional ego; but you also feel, as

a constant wave of awareness, that you are one with everything that is arising—in the waking, dream, and deep sleep state. You are both radically *Free*—because you are *dis-identified* with any and all objects—and radically *Full*—because you are paradoxically *one* with all objects in all domains. You transcend absolutely everything, and therefore you embrace absolutely everything, here in the pristine world of the Great Perfection of ever-present One Taste.”

There was a long silence. “And friends, you don’t get this from reading postmodern poststructuralism,” she said with a gentle laugh. “All that happens when you embrace theories or ideas like systems science, pluralism, postmodernism, web-of-life notions, dynamical chaos theories, and so on—no matter how relatively true they might be—all that happens is that you are still on this side of your face looking at the world out there, but instead of thinking atomistic thoughts you are thinking holistic thoughts: both of them experienced on this side of your face. I think somebody once said that this is like switching from iron chains to gold chains.

“Well, perhaps later we can discuss ways to overcome—to really overcome—the half-way home of Cartesian dualism by recognizing, confessing, and realizing ever-present One Taste. But now, let’s drag ourselves back to the topic at hand. What can we say about the Upper-Left quadrant in René Descartes?”

“Geez, Kim, how can she change gears like that? I still can’t find my head.”

“Buckle up, nancy boy. The folks at IC say that Lesa can span the entire spectrum in a microsecond.”

“Is that true? Is that really true?”

“Who knows? Charles says she can. But the funny thing is, she never, never, never talks about it. She’s gone the whole seminar without even mentioning this third-tier stuff. In fact, this talk right now might be a first for her. It’s pretty far out, don’t you think?”

“Okay, we might suppose, with a fair amount of evidence, that in the Upper-Left quadrant, Descartes’s average level of development, his center of gravity, seems to have been

orange—certainly in the cognitive line. But it definitely appears that he had a temporary altered state or peak experience of causal consciousness, of the pure Self, of the absolute Self that is not any object (and therefore can *never* be doubted; only objects can be doubted), the pure Self that transcends nature, body, mind, and manifestation altogether. But he applied this intuition of the certain Self to the rational ego. And there is the real problem: he therefore imagined that *the rational ego itself was dualistically set apart from the world of objects*.

“And that indeed was a colossal catastrophe. And because he backed this catastrophic confusion with the full force of his undeniable genius, then, um, we have a bit of a problem.

“To begin with, you see, the rational ego is just another set of objects. The rational ego is not ultimately a real Self, it is just a set of objects *with which we have identified our Self*, and thus this set of objects called ‘ego’ *appears* as a little finite subject or self (which we imagine is ultimate and *foundational*, as long as we are identified with it). This is what generally happens at the orange wave (in fact, at each wave of development, we identify the Self *with that wave* until we can let go of that wave, dis-identify with it, and transcend it in the next wave. This continues until all lesser selves have been shed, all subjects have become objects of the Self, and thus the Self alone remains as a locus of the Supreme Identity—*tat tvam asi*—You are That. In development, the *subject* of one stage becomes the *object* of the subject of the next stage, until all subjects have become objects of the pure Self, which results in the causal wave).

“Thus, the rational ego merely *appears* to be a real self because we have identified the Self with the ego. But the Self or Witness can in fact witness the ego, can make it an object, can disidentify with it, can transcend it. But, alas, that is exactly what dear Descartes did *not* do. Precisely because he experienced the pure Witness as a passing state and not a permanent trait, he did not actually develop to that stage of the causal Witness. His center of gravity remained orange, and to the orange self or ego he applied his intuition of the radical Self.

“This led him to believe that the rational ego was his real Self, and worse, lead him to believe that this rational ego was separate from, divorced from, the world of objects around it. But the rational ego actually exists only in a world of relationships with all the other finite subjects and objects around it. That is, the rational ego itself exists fully situated in the four quadrants—as all manifest occasions do, whether finite subjects (Left Hand) or finite objects (Right Hand). Only the pure, formless, causal realm is free of the quadrants (because it is completely unmanifest and formless). But Descartes applied his intuition of the purely transcendent Witness to the finite egoic-rational self, and therefore *split* that self from both the body and from nature, *ignored* the cultural intersubjectivity *inherent* in all finite selves, and thus landed us with what has been called, in understandably nasty terms, the Cartesian dualism.

“So, if I may summarize this part, the ‘primary’ Cartesian dualism—which was very likely a part of Descartes’s altered state experience of the causal realm—reflected his fairly accurate experience of the causal Witness, which is indeed set apart from, or transcendent to, absolutely all finite objects. The causal Witness or pure Self radically transcends mind, body, nature, thoughts, and objects altogether. This was the great discovery of *neti, neti*—not this, not that. But because Descartes experienced this as an altered state and not a stage, he was forced to eventually interpret this experience through his present stage of development. In other words, he applied his intuition of the pure Self to the rational ego, and then quite understandably (but incorrectly) imagined that (1) the rational ego is set apart from the body; (2) the rational ego is set apart from nature; (3) rational thoughts alone give absolute and certain truth (which is the misapplication of the certainty of the ever-present Witness—which is indeed Self-evidently Certain—to finite rationality—which is nowhere near certain); (4) the senses give no real knowledge at all; (5) the rational-ego transcends cultural embeddedness; (6) nature and the body are mechanistic objects.

“Well, those six items are indeed all problems, aren’t they? But can you now see how they got started in his profound ‘half-Vedanta’ insights? So we call the first or major

dualism—between subject and object (Shiva and Shakti)—we call that the primary Cartesian dualism. And the other six aspects I just listed, which basically stem from the primary Cartesian dualism, we call the ‘lesser’ or ‘secondary’ aspects of the Cartesian dualism. And my point is that most of Descartes’s critics have swarmed all over the *secondary* Cartesian dualisms and completely missed the *primary* Cartesian dualism. Which is why they *completely* miss the cure for the real Cartesian dualism. I’ll come back to this crucial point in a moment.

“There is no reliable evidence that I am aware of to indicate that René Descartes went further and had an altered state or peak experience of the Nondual, and thus he got rather stuck, not just with the Shiva/Shakti dualism—which in its pure form is a very high accomplishment!—but with the Shiva/Shakti dualism applied to his rational ego. Yikes! And here you can pretty much drag in all the PMS condemnations of this stance that you want.

“But notice immediately that if poor ole René did not overcome the Shiva/Shakti dualism, or the primary Cartesian dualism—namely, the fundamental *felt split* between the subject in here and the world out there—*neither did the postmodernists*. As I said, I don’t know a single postmodernist who has done so (except a handful who also practice meditation). Rather, the postmodernists came up with a series of moves that did several things at once: (1) spectacularly failed to address the original or primary Shiva/Shakti dualism that was the essence of the great Cartesian discovery; (2) confined their attention to several of the lesser, secondary features of the Cartesian dualism, where they (3) very successfully addressed some of the obvious aspects of secondary Cartesianism, such as the hyper-agentic Enlightenment ego and its dissociation from body and nature, but (4) with a few important exceptions, fell short of adequately addressing the subtler, hidden, more obscure—and more important—problems of secondary Cartesianism, such as the real nature of intersubjectivity and its genealogy.

“It’s getting late. Care to go into those briefly?”

My numbed and novocained brain failed to register the question. Kim, the idiot, said, “We’d love to, Dr. Powell.” I looked at the systems-theory student Powell had recently pummeled; he shrugged.

“We’ll do it real fast,” she smiled. “First, the ‘Cartesian dualism’ came very quickly to mean the relation of the finite ego-mind to the finite world of objects (or the finite subject to the finite object). Any consideration of the original Shiva/Shakti dualism and the infinite Self dropped out of the equation (except in a few important cases such as Husserl, Fichte, and so on—which we will not discuss now, except to say that their important philosophies were attempts to come to terms with the pure Self and the Shiva/Shakti dualism; but without a four-quadrant formulation, and without an enduring breakthrough to the Nondual, they fell short of the integral mark. See *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* for further reflections on this).

“Now the simplest way to understand the Cartesian dualism at this historical point is that the *individual ego-mind* was pictured as a separate, autonomous, isolated agency divorced from nature, body, and culture. We call this the ‘secondary’ Cartesian dualism because it does not address the original dualism of an infinite-formless Self witnessing a world of finite objects—part of Descartes’s altered state—but rather has now been reduced (by Descartes himself, as well as most of his critics) to the relation of a finite ego-self to a world of finite objects. That is a very important relation to understand, but it does not capture the original dualism in its purity or importance. Still, it became one of the burning questions of modernity, and rightly so. Secondary Cartesianism, embraced by Descartes himself—precisely because he confused Self and ego—pictured the finite rational ego as radically divorced from body, nature, and world. And *that* was indeed a nightmare.

“In fact, if you look at the four-quadrant diagram, the Cartesian (and eventually Kantian) ego can be pictured as a little person standing in the Upper-Left quadrant *completely disconnected from the other three quadrants*. That is the major epistemological mess that the downsides of the Enlightenment left us with (i.e., the Big Three were dissociated, not merely differentiated). And because the ego-mind (or the Upper Left) is in

fact *inseparably connected* with the other three quadrants, several different schools quickly arose to challenge this truncated picture, to challenge the Cartesian dualism or the Enlightenment epistemology, with each of the schools arguing for the importance of one of the neglected quadrants. All of them had important truths, important pieces of the puzzle, marred only by the fact that all of them thought they had the total picture. Well, we all make that mistake, eh? Even us integralists today only have a piece of the overall pie, as tomorrow's integralists will point out. But, you know, we'll all be dead then, so who cares?" We all laughed with her.

"The first post-Cartesian, post-Enlightenment movement was the Romantic. It pointed out several important *relationships* that the supposedly *autonomous* rational ego was missing (or denying or repressing). The first ignored relationship was that the ego-mind is inseparably connected to the feeling body (and through that, to nature at large). This was an attempt, in the Upper Left, to reconnect the rational ego with the vital, organic body. Nietzsche, Herder, Novalis, Schiller, Schopenhauer, and Freud would all have something important to say about this inward dissociation that began to plague the Enlightenment-self (both in theory and in life).

"But please notice, René Descartes was not responsible for this inner dissociation between thoughts and feelings that sometimes occurred in people of the modern era. It is *the standard possible pathology of the orange meme* (a dissociation that begins at blue), and it shows up wherever the orange meme shows up (in whatever culture, East or West, North or South). The previous memes do not show this inner dissociation between formal-operational mind and felt body because the previous memes *do not have* a formal-operational mind to begin with. The preoperational and concrete-operational minds are not strong enough to dissociate in this way; they are free of this particular pathology not because they are above it, but below it.

"Put it this way: this inner dissociation from the felt body (and its correlative, outward dissociation from sensory nature) would have begun to plague humanity around the

time of the Enlightenment whether or not René Descartes had ever lived; whether or not it occurred in the East or the West; and whether or not men or women were in charge of culture at the time (females may have a lesser propensity to disembodied abstractions, but they do not have a lesser propensity for their forms of orange pathology: both men and women are equally responsible here; indeed, studies show that both males and females at the conscientious stage of development show tendencies to abstract formalism and its dissociation). This is a possible pathology *inherent* in the orange wave of development of both genders. Laying the blame for this at the feet of Descartes (or men in general) is simply preposterous. Of course,” Lesa added, “realizing that the Western Enlightenment would have had essentially the same form even if women had been in charge is at odds with virtually every school of feminism, but that is not my fault,” she laughed. “And besides, my position—that women would have screwed up the Enlightenment in the same basic ways as men—is actually a tribute to women.

“Anyway, I don’t mind naming diseases after their most famous victims. After all, we call amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ‘Lou Gehrig’s disease,’ after its most famous sufferer; and we name ‘boomeritis’ after the generation that was its first great victim. So, in a roundabout way, it’s not altogether wrong to call this dissociation the Cartesian dualism, as long as we realize that René Descartes was its first great victim, not its first great cause. The actual cause or causes of this dissociation were events occurring in all four quadrants, which molded the specific form that the creative emergence of orange out of blue happened to take. But those contours, as I said, would have been essentially similar in other cultures; this particular dissociation is the inherent possible pathology inherent in the orange wave of consciousness and cultural evolution. It can be lessened and mitigated—or exaggerated and exalted—by events in the other quadrants, but it does not exist because babies at age 2 start reading Newton and Descartes and get all screwed up in a billiard ball world!

“Okay, the first positive insight of the Romantics was addressing this split between mind and feelings. The second important insight of the Romantics was that the individual

subjectivity (the Upper Left) is not a disengaged, fully autonomous subject, but rather is set in extensive fields of *cultural intersubjectivity* (the Lower Left). This is most certainly true, and the Romantics, to their everlasting credit, were the first to really articulate this—Herder, Schiller, Rousseau, the Schlegels, Novalis, Coleridge, and crew. It was this emphasis on the cultural context—and hence on the importance of hermeneutics, of recognizing other cultures, of interpretation, and of background context—that made the Romantics the first real postmodernists. In fact, the Romantics were the first truly great green-meme theorists in history. Their lineage stretches to Schleiermacher, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Heidegger, Derrida....”

“I thought you said the Boomers were the first green-meme generation in history.”

“Yes, the Boomers were the first *generation* where a significant percentage had their center of gravity at green—in our case, about 25% of the population is green. Remember that the Romantics were a relatively small group of avant-garde thinkers and artists, probably no more than 1% of the population. The same is true with most of these counter-Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment movements that we are discussing right now: they were an extremely small part of the overall population at the time that they first arose. In fact, most of the population during the time of ‘orange’ Enlightenment itself was at pre-Enlightenment, premodern blue—I’d guess about 60% of the population during the Enlightenment was not orange but blue. And probably 30% was red. And perhaps 5%, if that, was actually at orange; and less than 1% at green or higher. But you get the picture. Remember, Paul Tillich estimated that what we call the Renaissance was participated in by about 1000 people.”

That caught me completely off guard; what a galvanizing thought.

“This is what is so funny about PMS scholars blaming most of the world’s woes on the ‘Newtonian-Cartesian’ paradigm. The vast, vast majority of people—then and now—couldn’t tell you a single accurate thing that either Newton or Descartes said. The dualisms and mechanisms that are associated with their names are features of the world that arise at

various waves of development and would be there with or without those gentleman. Normal infants in every known culture have a conception of object permanence by age 18-24 months, and trust me, the kids ain't reading Newton." She smiled, shifted her position, took a long breath.

"Okay, however few in number, the Romantics were the first great green-meme theorists. Which means they were the first to *also* get caught in boomeritis and the cult of the self. This is now so well known that we needn't dwell on it. But wherever green goes, boomeritis follows, and the Romantics initiated virtually every major form of boomeritis imaginable, from the retro-Romantic slide to the glorification of the noble savage to the celebration of tribal purple consciousness to the cult of the divine ego and the wonder of being me. Ah yes.... And, needless to say, they did not overcome the original Cartesian dualism or the Shiva/Shakti split, although they always claimed to have done so. Instead they centered on various aspects of the secondary Cartesian dualisms, and with regard to those secondary issues, they made both some important contributions and some unfortunate blunders, or so it seems to me.

"To briefly repeat their important discoveries and contributions: in the Upper Left, the rational ego is *intrinsically* connected to its vital, organic, bodily roots; (2) from there it is organically connected to all of nature (in the Right Hand); and (3) in the Lower Left, the rational ego and its *subjectivity* are intrinsically connected to *intersubjective* structures of language, cultural background, and mutual relationships. All of those insights are profoundly true, I believe, a testament to the greatness that healthy green is capable of. We will come back to the problems the Romantics left us with, but let's finish the present story first.

"The second major post-Enlightenment movement was that of the Idealists, particularly Fichte, Schelling, Hegel. The Idealists attempted to heal the split between the Big Three (I, We, and It)—which were all parts of the secondary Cartesian dualisms of self versus body versus world—with the use of mature vision-logic, or turquoise thinking. Now, as we just saw, the Romantics had tried to heal the same splits with green cognition, which also

opened them to boomeritis, a regressive slide, the Regress Express, a rampant narcissism and endless self absorption. No surprise that the Idealists reserved their sharpest polemic for the Romantics. Fichte and Hegel in particular were absolutely brutal in their polemical onslaughts addressed to the regressive trends in Romanticism—which, needless to say, considerably upset the sensitive green-meme self (‘Just how spiritual can that arrogant Hegel be, like you know?’). What we actually see in those barbed exchanges are historically two things: the first major pre/post fallacies—which the Romantics have the dubious honor of committing—and the first great and devastating critiques of those pre/post fallacies—issued by Fichte, Hegel, and crew.

“On balance, the great Idealists were clearly second-tier thinkers, and they managed more than any other post-modern, post-Enlightenment movement to integrate the four quadrants (or the Big Three). Even more important, they actually addressed the original or primary Cartesian dualism. To Johann Gottlieb Fichte belongs the credit for elucidating, in fine Vedanta fashion, the relation between the infinite Self as it gives rise to the finite self and finite world. He was, needless to say, almost completely misunderstood on this topic (simply because so few have had an altered state, let alone stage, of the pure formless Self). The critics assumed that Fichte was talking about, not the infinite formless Self, but merely the finite rational ego, *his* personal ego, and so... well, never mind. To Fichte also goes the credit for first major insight that *genealogy* was the key to an authentic hermeneutic of the Kosmos: what is required, he said, is a ‘reconstruction of the pragmatic history of consciousness.’

“Good lord, dear friends, that is brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Because out of it was born the developmental and evolutionary perspective. So important were Fichte’s insights that even Kant, late in his life, was furiously rewriting his work in response to the developmental perspective (as Hegel later said of Kant’s structures: ‘They can only be conceived as ones that have *developed*’). Schelling took these developmental insights and gave them an astonishingly profound formulation, integrating the Big Three through a series

of peak experiences and profound insights into the causal and even the Nondual, and Hegel hammered out the details in a series of relentlessly bright and boring treatises, while his friend Holderlin took the more poetic route for expressing these extraordinary experiences. But the evidence strongly suggests that for all of them, as with Descartes, these peak experiences were merely temporary states, not permanent traits, a fact that would eventually lead to several insuperable difficulties with the Idealist approach.

“There is indeed substantial evidence suggesting that many of the Idealists had peak experiences of the causal and occasionally the Nondual, but they did exactly what Descartes did, only a notch higher, as it were: *they interpreted their experiences of the Nondual in the terms of the turquoise meme*; they applied their intuition of the Nondual to vision-logic; and thus, at least by the time of Hegel, they imagined that integrative, embodied, nondissociated Reason could capture the Kosmos. The higher states and stages, qua higher states and stages, *were not merely interpreted through vision-logic but reduced to vision-logic*: a major catastrophe in itself.

“The difficulty, the problem, is that you cannot heal the primary Cartesian dualism with thinking, not even turquoise thinking. You can *think* all you want that the world is a unified system of dynamic relationships between nature, body, mind, culture, and spirit—but you are still on this side of your face looking at the world out there, yes? The problem is that they had no yoga, no systematic interior exemplars and injunctions for bringing forth the third tier of consciousness, and so they remained stuck in second tier (misinterpreting all higher consciousness downward into embodied, integrative, dialectical Reason, a turquoise Reason definitely higher than orange rationality or green pluralism, but still far short of the Nondual mark).

“In other words, neither the Romantics nor the Idealists actually healed the primary Cartesian dualism or the ultimate Shiva/Shakti split, although both of them offered extremely important insights into the ‘lesser’ Cartesian problems of the hyper-agentic, egoic-rational self and its dissociations—that is, important insights into the relative problem of how to

integrate the four quadrants in the manifest realm, insights that any integral approach would want to include. From the Romantics we take the necessity to plug the rational ego into body, nature, and culture, and from the Idealists we take the necessity to do so, not by regressing merely to sensory body and nature, but by progressing to turquoise vision-logic. But, we add, please don't stop there....

“Still, as for the great Idealists, my God what genius touched that spot of the world for a brief period of time....

“Okay!” she smiled, again abruptly shifting gears. “Moving right along.... In the field of science, the secondary Cartesian split between the relative mind and relative body was claimed to be healed by two major schools, one of which addressed the Upper-Right quadrant (cognitive science) and one of which addressed the Lower-Right (systems science). In the Upper Right, it was simply claimed that the ego-mind is actually nothing but the brain. Since the brain is in the organic body, then the mind is just something the organism is doing, and that takes care of that. The ‘I’-mind was reduced to the ‘it’-brain, and since the it-brain and it-body are of the same substance, so to speak, then that takes care of that dualism!

“This ‘solution’ to the secondary Cartesian dualism is so utterly stupid that I won’t pursue it any more, other than to say that it is by far the most widely accepted ‘solution’ to the secondary problem.” Powell looked up, grinned, and rolled her eyes.

“The second scientific ‘solution’ was systems theory. You all realize that systems theory, as first codified by von Bertalanffy, was actually called ‘system theory,’ not ‘systems theory’? But everybody calls it systems theory, so what the heck. Anyway, systems theory, in any of its numerous subsequent forms, identified the subject with the organism (UR) and the object with the environment (LR), and then claimed that in unifying the organism and the environment as a dynamic ecological whole, it had unified the subject and the object and thus solved the Cartesian dualism. Actually, of course, it solved neither the original Cartesian dualism (or the Shiva/Shakti split), nor the lesser, secondary Cartesian dualism (the relation of finite mind and finite body/nature), because all it did was *reduce* the I-subject-mind (UL) to

the it-object-brain (UR) and call that overall it-organism ‘the subject,’ and since that objective organism (UR) is indeed ecologically one with the objective environment (LR), then that supposedly solves the problem, when all it really does is reduce all subjectivity to objectivity and all inter-subjectivity to inter-objectivity. This is still the major way that almost all schools of ecophilosophy use to claim that they have cured the Cartesian dualism, whereas, once again, they have not addressed the original or primary Cartesian dualism, although, like the other schools, they have offered important insights on lesser Cartesian problems, primarily the integrating of the Upper Right and Lower Right—or the objective organism and objective environment—via ecological mutual coevolution (none of which touches the Upper Left or Lower Left, not to mention the primary Cartesian dualism). Needless to say, these Web-of-Life schools claim to be all-inclusive.

“Okay, we have seen that none of the major post-Cartesian movements actually addressed or cured the primary Cartesian dualism. But we saw that all of them made important contributions to redressing some of the problems of the secondary Cartesian dualisms, and I tried to outline many of those contributions. But I also hinted that the two major post-Cartesian schools that are still very influential in today’s world—namely, Romantic *postmodernism* and scientific *systems theory*—both addressed some of the *obvious* aspects of *secondary* Cartesianism, but neither of them adequately addressed the more latent aspects of secondary Cartesianism. Let me quickly give a few examples of what I mean by that.

“Recall that the primary Cartesian dualism (the Shiva/Shakti split) refers to the relation between the unmanifest, formless, pure Self or Witness and the manifest world of the four quadrants (whereas the secondary Cartesian dualism refers to the relation of the four quadrants themselves). Discovering that Witness is the first step in transcending the manifest world and the four quadrants altogether (only to fully embrace them in One Taste).

“The secondary Cartesian dualism means that the *infinite* formless Self has dropped out of the equation, and we are now dealing merely with the relation of the *finite* self and the

*finite* world (or the finite mind and finite body, or the relative subject and relative object, and so on). That is, we are looking at the relation—not of the Witness to the quadrants, but the relation of the quadrants to each other (since their Witness has been forgotten or ignored).

“Is that clear? With the primary Cartesian dualism we are trying to solve the relation of Shiva to the four quadrants that are Shakti. Shakti, Prakriti, or the manifest world itself consists of the four quadrants: a finite self/subject (UL), a finite objective organism (UR), a finite culture (LL), and a finite environment (LL)—and Shiva impartially witnesses all of those whenever they arise. Thus, Shiva completely transcends Shakti in pure formless consciousness; a realization that then leads—or can lead—to the complete union or integration or ‘not-two-ness’ of Shiva and Shakti in eternal erotic embrace: the Witness of the four quadrants becomes *one* with the four quadrants in all domains, and Purusha and Prakriti light up the night with their erotic screams.

“But with the secondary Cartesian dualism, Shiva has dropped out of the picture altogether. For whatever reasons, the infinite has been denied, ignored, repressed, or forgotten. In place of the infinite Self or Spirit, there is only the finite self of the Upper-Left quadrant, and therefore the question of the relation of the subject to the object—which is originally the relation of Shiva to Shakti—becomes merely the question of the relation of the finite self to the finite world (all of which occur *within* Shakti, who has now lost her beloved husband).

“So, both the postmodernists and the systems theorists—and virtually every attempt in today’s *consciousness studies* to heal the ‘mind-body’ problem—are dealing with the *secondary* Cartesian dualism, even as they loudly claim they have cured the primary dualism (whereas they apparently have not yet recognized it). And my point is that they actually haven’t even handled the secondary Cartesian dualism very well. That is, none of those schools have managed to integrate the four quadrants adequately—that’s what I mean by saying they addressed some of the more obvious issues of secondary Cartesianism but not the subtler, hidden, more obscure—and more important—aspects. So let’s briefly look at that.

“We’ve already seen that *systems theory*—and most forms of ecology and eco-philosophy—generally fall short in their holistic quest, and instead of truly integrating the manifest world, they merely reduce all I’s and all We’s to a web of dynamically interwoven Its—the Web of Life. We needn’t revisit those inadequacies. The Web of Life is indeed there, but it covers only the Lower-Right quadrant, and if we absolutize that quadrant, it eviscerates the interior domains in their own terms, lying them out to dry in the blazing sun of the monological gaze.... (We’ll return to that ‘monological eyeball’ in a moment.)

“But it is the failures of *postmodernism* that are in some ways more disturbing than those of systems theory, because at its best, postmodernism was a demand that the Lower Left—the cultural contexts, backgrounds, and intersubjectivity inherent in the world—is an inseparable and constitutive ingredient of subjectivity itself (a move that, if carried out adequately, would indeed help heal the split of the proudly autonomous Enlightenment ego—that disembodied, disengaged, hovering homunculus in the Upper Left, cut off from the three other quadrants *and* the higher levels *and* the lower levels *of its own quadrant*: OUCH!).

“But from that promising beginning—in the organically rich musings of Novalis, Herder, Schiller, Heidegger—the green postmodern promise soon degenerated into the MGM and boomeritis. Genealogical postmodernism—*tracing the development of intersubjectivity over time* (in different forms, from Hegel to Heidegger to Nietzsche)—gave way to merely pluralistic postmodernism—yes, because with radical pluralism, ‘Nobody can tell me what to do!’—the motto of boomeritis. [On the two major forms of postmodernism—genealogical and pluralistic—see **Sidebar A**: “Who Ate Captain Cook? Integral Historiography in the Postmodern Age.”]

“As this pluralistic catastrophe unfolded—especially in the wake of the ’68 philosophes—postmodernism itself began to shift from a gentle call to hermeneutically understand the sliding chains of *signifieds* in the Other—that is, a hermeneutic attempt to sympathetically resonate with, and understand, the interior meanings and intersubjective values of others—to a merely exterior pronouncement that there are nothing but sliding

chains of *signifiers*—that is, there are no interior depths to be understood and cared for, there are only exterior surfaces beneath which one can never go: and one can never go beneath them because there is NO BENEATH and NO DEPTH anywhere in the Kosmos. Period.

“And thus, as has often been noted, postmodernism went from a concern with the Lower Left, or genuine semantic intersubjectivity, to an almost exclusive obsession with the Lower Right, or heterogeneous syntactic systems of interobjectivity. Worst of all, this abandonment of the Lower Left meant that most postmodernists—and certainly those that carried the day—completely abandoned genealogical postmodernism for pluralistic postmodernism. And since genealogy is the only cure for pluralism—and pluralism is the home of boomeritis—then the green meme often became the mean green meme, and postmodernism and boomeritis became largely synonymous.

“Even though the dominant postmodernists often slid into the Lower Right—where they often hooked up with the other main theories lying around in the Lower Right (from systems theory to Neomarxism)—their goal was radically different: for example, whereas systems theory at its best is a second-tier science (that is, it uses yellow thinking but applied only to objective systems—i.e., it is yellow thinking restricted to a concern with the Lower-Right quadrant), postmodernism is a thoroughly green-meme movement. And therefore when postmodernism confined itself to surfaces, and shifted from the Lower Left to the Lower Right, its sole aim was *deconstructive*: to tear down the depths, crush the interiors, smash any value system it found. No systems scientists would ever claim that they were dealing merely with social constructions—they rightly insist on the relative objectivity of the systems they study. But pomo green aggressively attempted to deconstruct even that, leaving in its wake, as Habermas noted, nothing but their own power drives.

“A sad affair, is it not? And the greatest irony of the great postmodern ironies is this: the famous Cartesian monological eyeball—despised by all post-Enlightenment movements—came in fact *to dominate every major post-Enlightenment agenda*. All of them—postmodernism, systems theory, virtually all ecology and ecological philosophies—

succumbed to subtle reductionism, succumbed to the very flatland they vowed to fight. They ended up reducing all Left-Hand events to Right-Hand occasions, all depths to surfaces, all values to veneer, all interwoven I's and We's to holistic webs of interwoven Its. Truly, truly, a sad affair."

"But what exactly is the monological eyeball?" a student asked. "It sounds like a Wes Craven horror film."

"Well," Lesa smiled, "that was the motto of the postmodernists: subvert the monological eyeball, but they did so by inadvertently using more of it.

"Here's the problem—and then we have to bring this discussion to a close, I'm afraid, or Margaret will yell at me. Remember that there are two major Cartesian dualisms: the original or primary Cartesian dualism (the relation of the infinite Self to the finite self and finite world, or the relation of the empty Witness to the four quadrants), and the secondary Cartesian dualisms (or the relation of the quadrants to each other). Accordingly, there are two types of monological gaze: infinite and finite. That is, the first type of monological gaze is that of the Witness: it is the supremely indifferent Mirror Mind of all that arises moment to moment; it is Shiva, it is Purusha, it is Consciousness without an object, it is the infinite empty causal realm—a realm that Descartes peak experienced. And that monological gaze is indeed set apart from absolutely all of manifestation, as both its Ground and its Witness—or the radically transcendental Self of all conditional reality.

"But Descartes's blunder, we saw, was applying his intuition of the transcendental Self to his orange rational ego, and then he assumed that his rational ego was SET APART from the rest of the world—set apart from his vital body, from sensory nature, and from culture. In other words, *he assumed that the Upper-Left quadrant was set apart from the other three quadrants*. Therefore, all four quadrants now have intractable boundaries and dualisms separating them from each other. Those dualisms between the quadrants are the secondary Cartesian dualisms, which are assumed to be the original, the real, the primary Cartesian

dualism, but are merely secondary offshoots (*very* important in their own ways, but still not primary).

“The point is that there are two monological gazes: the primary one (which is the radical impartiality of the Mirror Mind of all objects, the pure equanimity of the empty Witness, the supreme indifference of the transcendental Self), which is a ‘half-way’ home discovery of the utmost significance. But when that radical intuition is (mis)applied to the finite self or rational ego, then it degenerates into a rational ego that is imagined to be set apart from, and hovering over, body and nature and world. That monological gaze is the disaster of modernity, the downside of the Enlightenment, the nightmare of a rational light, much too bright, that was the Enlightenment in the West.

“So let’s call the monological gaze of the original Cartesian dualism—that of the empty Witness—let’s call that ‘translogical’ instead of ‘monological,’ because strictly speaking the Witness is not monological versus dialogical, but rather witnesses them both with equanimity. The other monological gaze—which is the real problem, which would be the nasty Monological Eyeball of Wes Craven’s horror film—the horror film starring both modernity and postmodernity—is what occurs when the infinite Self is forgotten and identified instead with the finite self. That finite self (situated behind your eyes, looking at the world ‘out there’), then attempts to heal this horrifying fracture in any number of ways, none of which cure the original or primary Cartesian dualism, none of which escape flatland, and all of which claim to. We have outlined these various moves that struggle to overcome dualism, particularly in their two dominant forms: systems theory, where the interior domains (of I and We) are reduced to a dynamically interwoven web of exterior Its—thus succumbing to flatland; and pluralistic postmodernism, where the Lower Left is approached with a relativistic pluralism that gives to each meme an equal weight of ‘irreducible ultimates,’ thus imposing a flatland pluralism on genealogical developments that would otherwise take us out of flatland and into waves of increasing care and consciousness.

“Thus: (1) whether we claim that the Web of Life is the ultimate reality—and is even spirit itself (as does systems theory and the spiritual paradigms based on it), or (2) whether we claim that the exterior surfaces are nothing but chains of sliding signifiers, full of sound and fury but signifying nothing (as does postmodernism and most of its sanctioned offshoots, pluralism to deconstruction), or (3) whether we attempt to honor pluralistic intersubjectivity of the real Lower Left via a caring hermeneutic of the ‘plurality of spiritual ultimates’ (instead of tracing the actual genealogy of intersubjective waves and thus escaping the performative contradictions of boomeritis and a flatland pluralism devoid of depth): in all those cases we see the haunting legacy of the Monological Eyeball still devouring even those who have claimed to overcome it—*none of them are strong enough to get you out from behind your eyes, are they?*”

“From systems theory to the Web-of-Life paradigms, from JTP’s new birth in freedom to sliding chains of pluralism, from ecofeminism to deep ecology celebrating sensory ultimates, from deconstructive French dreams, perfuming the halls of academia, to contextualism being consumed by its own self-contradictory claims... the haunting legacy of a dissociation that has, rightly or wrongly, forever been associated with the name of René Descartes.

“And so ends our tale of postmodern malaise. Irony of ironies of ironies: the dreaded monological gaze, the hallmark of flatland, the single biggest nightmare stemming from the Enlightenment, the nightmare that all have claimed to cure but none have really spotted: it all came from a peak experience of infinite radiant Purusha, misapplied to the finite self, where there it lived distorted in infamy, playing its game of hide and seek, and whispering gently to all who would listen: do you know Who I AM?”