TERRORISM AND OTHER GLOBAL TERRORS: AN INTEGRAL ANALYSIS

Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D.
Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, University of California College of Medicine, Irvine, California 92697-1675

ABSTRACT: Recent events have increased awareness of the many global crises we now face. To date, analyses of these crises have been largely limited to military, political, and economic perspectives. Yet many factors are clearly at work and as such many perspectives are needed, including social, cultural, psychological, developmental, contemplative, and transpersonal. The most comprehensive approach currently available seems to be Ken Wilber's integral perspective which includes multiple dimensions, disciplines, and developmental levels. Integral analysis of our current global crises makes clear that the state of the world reflects the state of our minds, that our global problems are global symptoms of our individual and collective immaturity and pathology, that prevailing understandings of, and responses to, these crises reflect suboptimal, conventional developmental levels. Therefore, individual and collective maturation may be essential for our collective well being and survival and the current crises could conceivably act as developmental catalysts. The transpersonal community might be able to contribute by fostering detribalization and by engaging in social activism as karma yoga or awakening service.

Since September 11, many people have said that the world has gone insane. Terrorism, religious conflicts, biological weapons, and nuclear threats have all come crashing into our collective awareness. Suddenly our lives seem to be infected by a newborn global madness. But is this global madness really new?

Not at all, say the perennial philosophy and the world's contemplative disciplines. According to them the world has not gone insane; rather the world has always been insane. "This is an insane world, and do not underestimate the extent of its insanity," claims a contemporary Christian text (Anonymous, 1992, p. 271). The Hindu sage Ramakrishna put it brutally "this world is a huge lunatic asylum where all men are mad" (Prabhavananda, 1971, p. 15).

Moreover, the insanity of the world is said to reflect the insanity of our individual and collective states of mind. The great religions describe this state as a dream, an illusion or a trance, in which our minds are clouded, confused, and veiled. The Christian St. Paul (2 Cor. 3:15 Revised Standard Version) claimed that "a veil lies over their minds," while Islam multiplied the metaphor to 70,000 veils. For the Indian traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism we live in the all encompassing veil of *maya*.

Philosophers, poets, and psychologists have echoed similar ideas. Plato suggested that we live in a cave, mistaking shadows for reality, while William Blake saw man

The author would like to thank Marcie Boucouvalas, Lawrence Howard, and Frances Vaughan for their suggestions and Bonnie L'Allier for administrative assistance.
Copyright © 2002 Transpersonal Institute

peering through "narrow chinks in his cavern." More recently, the psychologist Charles Tart (1986, p. 5) suggested that we live in a "consensus trance" that is "a much more pervasive, powerful, and artificial state than ordinary hypnosis, and it is all too trance like." While the metaphors differ, the fundamental message is the same: The world is insane because we are insane. Indeed, the precise nature of this insanity has been a central focus of transpersonal psychology, while its cure has been the very *raison d'être* of contemplative disciplines.

What has changed is that we are no longer quite so shielded from this insanity. Until recently, most of us in the West were largely protected from the world's insanity by our good fortune and a vast, collective, semiconscious conspiracy. We were shielded by our social stability and modern life styles, defended by our weapons and wealth, and narcotized by media and political systems less interested in facing reality than in "tranquilizing us with trivia," as Kierkegaard so aptly put it. And of course we were willing victims who largely colluded in our own soporific seduction (Walsh, 2001; Zengotita, 2002).

In some ways the tragedy of September 11 did us the bizarre service of goading us to recognize realities we had long avoided. In the global realm, these include the tragic extent of poverty and inequality, our inescapable interconnection with other cultures and countries, and the world's precarious ecology. In the political realm, they include the unpopularity of some American politics, and the very real possibilities of bio, nuclear, cyber, nano, and eco-terrorism (Elgin, 2000; Howard, 1992; Joy, 2000; Miller, Engleberg & Brad, 2001). In the psychological realm, these realities include our inescapable existential insecurity.

If we truly awaken to the nature and extent of these realities, we could yet save many more lives than were lost on September 11. This feat, however, will require both an unflinching look at our global difficulties and more sophisticated analyses of them. "Instead of averting your eyes from the painful events of life, look at them squarely and contemplate them often," urged the stoic philosopher Epictetus. "By facing the realities...you free yourself of illusion and false hopes" (Epictetus, 1995, p. 28). As Thomas Hardy (1926) put it "if a way to the Better there be, it demands a full look at the worst."

A full look at the worst will require much more sophisticated analyses of our global crises than have been the norm so far. To date, most analyses and responses have been military, political, and economic, and have stemmed from less than fully mature levels of psychological development and worldview. As such they have been very partial and very polarizing.

What is needed, of course, is a much larger perspective. What is needed is a perspective which includes:

1) More dimensions (including previously neglected cultural, social, psychological, and spiritual factors),
2) More developmental levels (especially postconventional, transpersonal ones), and
3) A synthetic framework which encourages recognition of the interactions and interdependence among multiple factors.

To date the most encompassing framework is Ken Wilber's integral approach. Integral theory attempts to incorporate all domains of reality and all levels of development. Domains are divided primarily into four quadrants comprised of inner (subjective) and outer (objective), individual and collective. Together these yield the four quadrants of individual-interior (psychological), collective-interior (cultural), individual-exterior (behavioral), and collective-exterior (social or systems).

Developmental levels can be divided into various numbers of stages. At a minimum, however, these stages need to acknowledge the big three: the prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal–or preconventional, conventional, and postconventional levels. One of transpersonal psychology's unique contributions is its recognition of, and interest in studying, all these levels.

The result is a heuristic framework of enormous scope and integrative potential, which Wilber has described in several of his books, including *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, A Brief History of Everything,* and *A Theory of Everything* (2000a, 2000b, 2000c). Of course the integral perspective is not really a theory of everything. However, it is a worthy attempt at a comprehensive framework for developing far richer and more fruitful analyses of the world's complexities than the usual unidimensional and unilevel approaches.

What, then, can an integral approach tell us about the state of the world? Many things, but three general principles seem crucial: (a) Our crises stem from multiple causes, (b) developmental factors are vital, and (c) integral perspectives offer invaluable understandings.

1. Multiple factors from all four quadrants play crucial causal roles.

As always, any social process is overdetermined, i.e., has multiple causes. Unless this is appreciated, our understanding is impoverished and the appropriateness of our responses diminished.

2. Developmental factors are vital.

There are several developmental principles that are important to recognize:

a) Our crises reflect our individual and collective immaturities.

Our psychological and spiritual immaturities spark our crises, dim our understanding of them, and limit the sophistication and effectiveness of responses to them.

b) Our usual, conventional developmental level is suboptimal and immature.

Certain comtemplative, philosophical, and psychological perspectives all converge on this idea: We are only half-grown and half-awake. Contemplatively, our usual state of mind is said to be dominated, in Buddhism, by the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion; in yoga by the lower three chakras; in Sufism by the lower nafs; and in Judaism by the "evil inclination"—the *yetzer ha-ra* (Feurstein, 1996; Frager & Fadiman, 1997; Goldstein, 1983; Jacobs, 1995). The result, according to Jewish Kaballah, is an immature "mentality of childhood" (*Mochin de hatmuth*) (Kaplan, 1985, p. 8).

Likewise for certain philosophers: Plato, of course, saw us living in the darkness of a cave; Hegel and Schelling described our usual condition as alienated; the Indian sage Aurobindo saw us constricted to the level of the concrete and logical mind; and the Russian philosopher Berdyaev argued that we are currently limited to self-consciousness (Wilber, 1999b, 2000a).

Similarly, contemporary existentialists point to our individual and collective immaturity. They lament that our usual attitudes are defensive and superficial forms of "automation conformity" (Fromm), "Philistinism" (Kierkegaard), "bad faith" (Satre), "everydayness" (superficial conventionality), and "inauthenticity" (Heidegger). For existentialists, we unreflectively submit to the seductive semi-consciousness of conventional living—"the herd" of Nietzsche, "the public" of Kierkegaard, the "mass existence" of Jaspers, "the masses" of Ortega, and "the They" of Heidegger (Cooper, 1990; Walsh, 2001; Zimmerman, 1986).

Psychologists increasingly echo a similar theme. Whether one measures cognitive, moral, ego, or faith development the results are the same: Our usual conventional level is less than fully mature (Fowler, 1981; Kohlberg, 1981; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Vaughan, 2000; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 2000c). As usual, Abraham Maslow (1968, p.16, 142) summarized the issue exquisitely:

> Certainly it seems more and more clear that what we call 'normal' in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we don't even notice it ordinarily. The normal adjustment of the average, common sense, well adjusted man implies a continued successful rejection of much of the depths of human nature, both conative and cognitive.

c) The third developmental principle is that these suboptimal, conventional perspectives dominate our mainstream media, culture, and politics. They therefore determine and limit our understanding of, and responses to, the current crises. Yet according to the contemplative traditions, conventional illusion-based thinking inevitably leads to further limitation and suffering. At best it leads to a better dream, but not to awakening from the dream.

d) The fourth developmental principle is that further possibilities are available.

In philosophical terms, we can find our way out of the cave (Plato); overcome self-alienation (Hegel and Schelling); open to "releasement" (Heidegger); or awaken to supermind (Aurobindo), super consciousness (Berdyaev), or Tielhard de Chardin's omega point (Wilber, 1999a, 1999b; Zimmerman, 1986). From a psychological perspective, we can mature to postconventional, transpersonal levels. From a contemplative perspective, the higher, transpersonal stages include such possibilities as enlightenment, liberation, *Ruach Hakodesh, satori,* and salvation (Vaughan, 2000; Wilber, 1999b). Importantly, greater psychological health and maturity are associated with greater altruism (Heath, 1984).

e) The fifth crucial developmental principle is that our global crises could act as developmental catalysts.

A number of analysts such as Duane Elgin, Chris Bache, Don Beck, Erwin Laszlo, and Ken Wilber imply that humankind is in the throes of a developmental/

evolutionary crisis (Bache, 2000, 2002; Elgin, 1993, 2000; Laszlo, 2001; Wilber, 2000a, 2000b). This crisis is in part developmental and evolutionary because values and worldviews from different developmental levels are in conflict (e.g. fundamentalism versus rationalism), because psychological and cultural development lag woefully behind technological development, and because further psychological and cultural development are essential.

The Chinese character for crisis supposedly implies both danger and opportunity. That describes well our current situation, because developmental crises can precipitate movement in two directions. There is the possibility of accelerated growth, but there is also the very real risk of regression. Which response dominates will depend on our choices.

3. We need integral perspectives, thinking, analyses, and responses.

The first two major principles—that many factors from each of the four quadrants play crucial causal roles in our crises, and that developmental factors are vital—imply that we need perspectives which recognize and integrate multiple perspectives and levels. This suggests that uniperspectival analyses and responses will be necessarily partial, polarizing, and to some degree ineffective and self-defeating.

Clearly, then, we are going to need integral perspectives, thinking, analyses, and responses. Such integral approaches are at our growing edge and a stretch for most of us. However, it is a very useful stretch, and especially valuable for transpersonal psychology which will hopefully mature into a more integral discipline (e.g. transpersonal and integral studies), particularly since integral themes have always been implicit in the transpersonal perspective: themes such as acknowledging the importance of social, cultural, and biological dimensions, and of integrating them with the psychological.

Needless to say, a complete integral analysis of our current global situation is beyond the limitations of this article. Because of the importance of practical responses, I want to conclude the discussion by focusing on two things: A unique contribution that transpersonally oriented practitioners can make (supporting detribalization), and a unique way in which that contribution can be made (awakening service).

Detribalization: The State of the World and the State of Our Minds

Inasmuch as the state of the world reflects the state of our minds, then what we have called our global "problems" are actually global "symptoms": symptoms of our individual and collective pathologies and immaturities. Therefore, truly curative responses will need to address these internal sources. We will need multifaceted interventions in which we not only try, for example, to feed the hungry and work for peace, but also attempt to address the psychological roots of these problems: the greed, hatred and delusion, and lack of love, compassion, and wisdom, which created them in the first place. We are in a race between consciousness and catastrophe (Walsh, 1984).

From this perspective it also becomes apparent that our desire and capacity to contribute depend, not only on our social and political skills, but also on our psychological and contemplative maturity (Walsh and Shapiro, 1983). This in turn depends on our practice of authentic psychological and contemplative disciplines which foster maturity. To the extent we do these practices and grow thereby, to that extent we may become more effective instruments of service. In particular, we may become more effective in the vitally important task of birthing ourselves and midwifing others through the process of detribalization.

Detribalization is part of the transpersonal maturation process by which one moves from a conventional to a postconventional worldview. Specifically, it means recognizing and beginning to win free of the limiting and distorting beliefs and biases of one's tribal culture (Levinson, 1978). This is the process by which we begin to free ourselves from the biggest cult of all: cult [ure]. It is the shift from exclusive identification with a specific group to beginning to identify with humankind, from a parochial perspective to a more global worldview, from "my country" to "our planet." As Jerome Frank (1982, p. 224) put it "The psychological problem is how to make all people aware that whether they like it or not, the earth is becoming a single community." And this is an initial and essential step of transpersonal maturation.[1]

Once detribalization is underway, a person no longer completely looks through the cultural beliefs and biases, filters and distortions. Rather, he or she can now begin to look at them, and thereby transcend them, and then work on them to transform them. Clearly, this is one of the great needs of our time. It is hard to think of a single global crisis that does not reflect destructive cultural beliefs and biases. Here, then, is a vital need that invites much needed contributions from the transpersonal and integral communities.

Awakening Service

Having discussed a unique type of contribution, I want to turn now to a unique way in which this contribution can be made. If we need to mature in order to contribute effectively, then it would make sense to use our contribution to foster our maturation. As Abraham Maslow (1970, p. xii) concluded from his study of healthy people:

> The best way to become a better helper is to become a better person. But one necessary aspect of becoming a better person is via helping other people. So one must and can do both simultaneously.

This is precisely the basis of karma yoga, or as we might call it "awakening service." Karma yoga is one of the traditional Indian yogas and its classic text is the Bhagavad Gita (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1972). Karma yoga uses work and service in the world as a way of awakening self and others. In doing so it works on relieving both suffering and the psychological and spiritual roots from which suffering arises. It therefore attempts to treat both symptom and cause, self and other, psyche and world (Walsh, 1999).

Of course, the essential goal and practice of karma yoga are not unique to Hinduism.

Each of the great religions emphasizes the importance of continuous practice and transforming all activities into practice. Both the Koran and the Christian St. Paul urged followers to "be constant in prayer," (Cleary, 1993; p. 9), Buddhism aims for mindfulness in all activities, and Tantra sees all activities as sacramental (Walsh, 1999). The common goal is to transform "the whole act of living into an uninterrupted yoga" (Aurobindo, 1922, p. 238).

The essence of karma yoga or awakening service is three-fold: dedication, impeccability, and nonattachment. One begins any undertaking by dedicating or offering it to the highest good; traditionally in India it was of course to God or Brahman. This effectively redirects motivation from egocentric to transpersonal. One then attempts to do the task as impeccably as possible, while simultaneously relinquishing attachment to the outcome. In the words of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, "perform every action sacramentally and be free from all attachment to results" (Prabhavananda, 1971, p. 44).

This is the paradox and cutting edge of karma yoga: to work as fully as possible for a goal while simultaneously relinquishing ego attachment to it. The net effect is a training of motivation in which desires are redirected from personal to transpersonal, and associated cravings are winnowed away (Notice the crucial and often overlooked distinction between desires, which are natural and necessary, and cravings or attachments that are pathogenic and unnecessary) (Walsh, 1999).

The practice of awakening service sounds simple, and conceptually it is. However, practically it is a life-long discipline. Redirecting motivation and relinquishing attachments may be crucial for our individual and collective wellbeing, and even for our survival, but they are also major challenges, as we all know. This is especially so when the outcome desired is something as vital and idealistic as the well being of our species and our planet.

But all of us have seen people working for idealistic goals, who out of their attachment to these goals become either burnt-out and depressed, or angry, aggressive, and righteous. Attachment to ideals has long been recognized as problematic. The mind of a mature person "grasps nothing," claimed the Taoist sage Chuang Tzu (1974, p. 159), and according to the third Zen patriarch, "even to be attached to the idea of enlightenment is to go astray" (Sengstan, 1975). When we become attached to them, even the highest ideals can become "golden chains" which hinder our capacity to contribute (Vaughan, 1995). In practical terms, the challenge is how to engage in political and social action as fully and effectively as possible, while simultaneously winnowing egocentric motives.

Conclusion

These, then, are three contributions that transpersonalists may be uniquely qualified to offer: grounding social contributions in an integral perspective, detribalization, and the practice of karma yoga or awakening service. Together they offer

a perspective, an approach, and a practice which could help awaken and empower us to contribute more effectively to the great challenges of this time, and of all times.

Notes

[1] The concept of detribalization is implied by several researchers in their descriptions of maturation on specific developmental lines. For ego development it is the shift from conformist to individualistic and autonomous stages (Loevinger, 1997); for moral development it reflects conventional to postconventional maturation (Kohlberg, 1981); for faith it is the movement from synthetic-conventional to individuative-reflective and conjunctive stages (Fowler, 1981); for the spiral dynamics of Clare Graves and Don Beck it is the leap from first tier (blue and orange) to second tier (yellow and turquoise) thinking, and in Ken Wilber's (2000a,b) wideranging synthesis it is, among other things, a shift in orientation from sociocentric to worldcentric.

References

Anonymous. (1992). *A Course in Miracles.* (2nd ed.). Tiburon, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace.

Aurobindo, Sri. (1922). *Essays on the Gita.* Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

Bache, C. (2000). *Dark night, early dawn: Steps to a deep ecology of mind.* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

Bache, C. (2002). Stepping into the fire. *Noetic Sciences Review, 59,* 16–21.

Chuang Tzu. (1974). *Inner chapters.* (C. Feng & J. English, Trans.). New York: Vintage.

Cleary, T. (Trans.). (1993). *The essential Koran.* New York: HarperCollins.

Cooper, D. (1990). *Existentialism.* Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Elgin, D. (1993). *Awakening earth: Exploring the evolution of human culture and consciousness.* New York: William Morrow.

Elgin, D. (2000). *Promise ahead: A vision of hope and action for humanity's future.* New York: W. Morrow.

Epictetus. (1995). *The art of living.* (S. Lebell, Trans). San Francisco: Harper.

Feuerstein, G. (1996). *The Shambhala guide to yoga.* Boston: Shambhala.

Fowler, J. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning.* New York: HarperCollins.

Frager, R. & Fadiman, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Essential Sufism.* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.

Frank, J. (1982). *Sanity and survival in the nuclear age: Psychological aspects of war and peace.* New York: Random House.

Goldstein, J. (1983). *The experience of insight.* Boston, MA.: Shambhala Press.

Hardy, T. (1926). *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy.* New York: Macmillan.

Heath, D. (1983). The maturing person. In R. Walsh & D. Shapiro (Eds.). *Beyond health and normality* (pp. 152–206). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Howard, L. (Ed.). (1992). *Terrorism: Roots, impacts, responses.* N.Y.: Praeger.

Jacobs, L. (1995). *The Jewish religion: A companion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joy, W. (2000, April). Why the future doesn't need us: Robotics, genetic engineering, and nanotech. *Wired,* 238–262.

Kaplan, A. (1985). *Jewish meditation.* New York: Schocken Books.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on moral development. Vol. I. The philosophy of moral development.* New York: Harper and Row.

Laszlo, E. (2001). *Macroshift: Navigating the transformation to a sustainable world.* San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers.

Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life.* New York: Knopf.

Loevinger, J. (1997). Stages of personality development. In R. Hogan, J. Johnson & S. Briggs (Eds.), *Handbook of personality psychology* (pp. 199–208). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

MASLOW, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being* (2nd ed.). Princeton: Van Nostrand.
MASLOW, A. H. (1970). *Religion, values, and peak experiences.* New York: Viking.
MILLER, J., ENGLEBERG, S. & BRAD, W. (2001). *Germs: Biological weapons and America's secret war.* N.Y.: Simon & Schuster.
PRABHAVANANDA, S. (1971). *Narada's way of divine love: The bhakti sutras.* Hollywood, CA.: Vedanta Press.
PRABHAVANANDA, S. & ISHERWOOD, C. T. (1972). *The song of God: Bhagavad Gita.* Hollywood: Vedanta Press.
SENGSTAN. (1975). *Verses on the faith mind.* (R. Clarke, Trans.). Sharon Springs, New York: Zen Center.
SNYDER, C. & LOPEZ, S. (EDS.). (2002). *Handbook of positive psychology.* New York: Oxford.
TART, C. (1986). *Waking up: Overcoming the obstacles to human potential.* Boston: New Science Library/Shambhala.
VARELA, F. & SHEAR, J. (EDS.). (1999). The view from within. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 6:* (2–3). Also published as Varela, F. & Shear, J. (Eds.). (1999). *The view from within: First person approaches to the study of consciousness.* Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic.
VAUGHAN, F. (1995). *Shadows of the sacred.* Wheaton, Il.: Quest.
VAUGHAN, F. (2002). *The inward arc: Healing in psychotherapy and spirituality* (2nd ed). Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com
WALSH, R. (1984). *Staying alive: The psychology of human survival.* Boston: Shambhala.
WALSH, R. (1999). *Essential spirituality: The seven central practices.* N.Y.: Wiley & Sons.
WALSH, R. (2001). Authenticity, conventionality, and angst: Existential and transpersonal perspectives. In K. Schneider, J. Bugental, J.F. Pierson, (Eds.), *The handbook of humanistic psychology* (pp. 609–620). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
WALSH, R. & D. SHAPIRO (EDS.). (1983). *Beyond health and normality.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
WALSH, R. & F. VAUGHAN (EDS.). (1993). *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision.* New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
WILBER, K. (1999a). *One taste: The journals of Ken Wilber.* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (1999b). *The Atman project. The Collected Works of Ken Wilber (Vol. 2).* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (1999c). *A sociable God. The Collected Works of Ken Wilber (Vol. 3).* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (2000a). *Sex, ecology and spirituality. The Collected Works of Ken Wilber (Vol. 6).* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (2000b). *A brief history of everything. The Collected Works of Ken Wilber, (Vol. 7).* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (2000c). *A theory of everything.* Boston: Shambhala.
WILBER, K. (2000d). *Integral psychology.* Boston: Shambhala.
ZENGOTITA, T., DE. (2002, April). The numbing of the American mind. *Harper's, 304,* 33–40.
ZIMMERMAN, M. (1986). *Eclipse of the self: The development of Heidegger's concept of authenticity* (Rev. ed). Athens: Ohio University Press.

The Author

Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D. is professor of psychiatry, philosophy, and anthropology at the University of California at Irvine. Over the years he has been a frequent contributor to the* Journal of Transpersonal Psychology *and has numerous other publications, both books and articles. Among them are* Paths Beyond Ego: The transpersonal vision *(with Frances Vaughan),* Essential Spirituality: The seven central practices to awaken heart and mind, *and others. He has a long-standing interest in and concern with the human condition on a global scale.