

# Reimagining Humanity's Identity: Responding to the Second Shock of Existence

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**Abstract:** Foreshadowing arguments from the forthcoming book, *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*, this paper suggests that humanity is the throws of a species wide identity crisis, precipitated by a broadening awareness of our impending self-inflicted extinction. This growing awareness that humanity is responsible for its own fate and the fate of the planet is referred to as *the second shock of existence*. The second shock has spawned a great deal of discussion about the need for revolutions in technological, economic, and ecological infrastructures, yet this focus on *exteriors* addresses only half the picture. Comparable revolutions of our *interiors* must also take place—radical transformations in the very structure of our consciousness and species-wide self-understanding. This is a call for attending to the *interior* dimensions of the current global crises, recommending in the strongest possible terms that tremendous energy and resources be rechanneled into planning for the vast educational reconfigurations facing humanity in the coming decades.

**Keywords:** Global crises; Integral Theory; Human Identity; Unique Self Theory; Cultural Evolution

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In every era of human history there have been those who believed that the world as they knew it was coming to an end, and that a new world was preparing to be born, either on Earth or in Heaven. From the ancient cults of the sun god, through medieval millennialism, to 19<sup>th</sup> century utopians and revolutionaries, humanity has often understood itself as somehow on the edge of a cataclysmic transformation of the world. Today is no different: the recent flurry of speculation surrounding the year 2012; the declarations of a new “post-scarcity” age; the trepidations about global climate change; the revolutionary political energies that swept the Middle East during the Arab Spring; futurist speculations about a coming “Singularity;” trans-humanists bent on designing some kind of silicon immortality. We are, as we have always been, a species that understands itself as a privileged witness to the birth of a new world. While we echo our ancestors in declaring that our age is the fulcrum of history, there is one difference between them and us: *we are right*. Today we are witness to the greatest transformation of the planet since the first *homo sapiens* began building languages and societies.<sup>1</sup>

*The Second Shock of Existence: At Last We Know We Are One*

It is not as strange as it may seem to compare ourselves to the so-called “dawn humans”—those who displayed the first glimmers of self-awareness, as evidenced most clearly in their meaning-laden burial rituals. In the shadows of pre-history humanity faced *the first shock of existence*, as self-consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete discussion of all the issues raised in this paper see our forthcoming book, Gafni, M. & Stein. Z. *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*. (San Francisco: Integral Wisdom Press, 2015).

emerged from the ouroboric eternity of nature and humans became the first (and only) organism on Earth with an awareness of its own death. Each member of our species comes to understand and face its own mortality, a situation unique in the whole of the natural world. At some point, we came to know that everything in nature dies, and that this holds true for each and every human being. Imagine the dawning of this realization in pre-historic man. Consider that there was a first time this realization was uttered in human language. What were these first words spoken about death? What fearful and sublime things did the earliest humans speak when conducting the first funeral rites? What grief, confusion, and anger did they express? Could we today even understand? How did they make sense of it, make it a part of their story, a part their world?

The first shock of existence—the awareness of a separate self, and its mortality—kicked off thousands of years of what might best be described as the collective construction of compensatory and defense mechanisms. We worked to deny death by any means possible, from human sacrifice to immortality cults, the multitudinous “Atman projects” that litter the landscape of political history, and the often ill-advised attempts of modern science to control and predict nature.<sup>2</sup> Awareness of death invested life with a sense of urgency and meaning. Ritual, art, agriculture, poetry—all proliferated, as the first shock of existence and separation became one of the touchstones of human self-understanding.

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<sup>2</sup> See: Mumford, L. *The Myth of The Machine, Vol 1*. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967); Becker, E. *Denial of death* (New York: Free Press, 1972); Wilber, K. *Up From Eden* (Boston: Shambala, 1981).

The first shock of existence resulted in profound creativity and a genuine unleashing of Eros, as humanity sought to overcome limitation, separation, and (in some cases) even death itself. We have since woven a vast and complex interconnected world. We have abundance of almost unimaginable scale, human creations so large and beautiful they would have appeared as if of divine origins to our ancestors.<sup>3</sup> The weaving of these vast and complex energy regimes produced two kinds of results, Eros, and Pseudo-Eros—dignity and disaster, beauty and tragedy<sup>4</sup>. At the same time we came together as one world, we eventually created the very conditions of that world's destruction.

In the passions of Eros (and the delusions of pseudo-Eros) we forged ahead unwittingly seeding ecological destruction, social dysfunction, and individual alienation. Simple ignorance has always been part of the problem. Our ambitions to engineer natural and social systems have often far outstretched our knowledge of how these systems truly work. Unforeseen consequences and “collateral damage” have always accompanied large-scale innovations. New technologies (with their own unforeseen consequences) are used to fix the unforeseen consequences of previous technologies. This is a trend that has characterized endless “innovations,” from agro-business to bio-medical technology. Moreover, with *separation* as the underlying assumption about the human personality, our alienation from nature and each other has resulted in a sense that we are each “abstract isolated self-interested individuals,” who

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<sup>3</sup> And so they would appear today to our unjaded eyes: “*Not “Revelation”– ‘tis– that waits, But our unfurnished eyes*” -Dickenson.

<sup>4</sup> See, Gafni, M. *The Mystery of Love*. (New York: Atria Books, 2003) on the distinction between Eros and pseudo Eros.

calculate actions in terms of “cost-benefit analysis” and always seek to off-load damages as “externalities”—unable to see that more for the self does not necessarily mean less for the other.<sup>5</sup> So while the first shock brought with it profound innovation, adventure, and genuine world-transforming Eros, it has also been profoundly destructive and wasteful, and has ultimately brought humanity to the verge of self-inflicted extinction. And ironically so, in that our extinction will have resulted from our attempts to avoid and deny death.

Today, in the maelstrom of post-modernity we are collectively facing *the second shock of existence*, which is the realization that the survival of the entire human race is in danger.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we now face this second shock—this *awareness of the mortality of the species*—precisely because of the actions that followed in the wake of the first shock. Our attempts to build a world that would insulate us from death have brought us to a point where we must now face death on a scale that is almost unimaginable. The more perceptive among us know that it is our own actions that brought us to this point, and we know that it is only by our own actions that we might avoid the apocalyptic scenarios that haunt our

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<sup>5</sup> As explained more fully in Gafni & Stein *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*, one important way to understand the Enlightenment is in terms of the insight that “*there are no externalities*.”

<sup>6</sup> The idea of the second shock has been around for some time, although it had not been explicitly named until Gafni explicated the intimate relationship between unique self and a new politics of love in response to the Second Shock of existence and Mauk Pieper, a European philosopher who is a student of Integral theory and Unique Self teaching, a close colleague of Gafni, as well who serves as the director of the European branch of Center for Integral Wisdom, later coined the term., see, Pieper, M. *Humanity's Second Shock and Your Unique Self*. (Independent Publishing, 2014). The general idea is not new: humanity has reached a stage of planetary impact and interconnection such that we are entering a new epoch of our species being. This can be found in Marx, Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo, Lewis Mumford, and William Irwin Thompson, among many others. The innovation here is giving the insight a name that relates it historically to the first shock, putting it in the context of Integral Meta-Theory, and inquiring into its implications, especially ethical and political.

collective imagination<sup>7</sup>. Nothing defines our era more than the dawning awareness of the possibility of *the self-inflicted extinction of the human race*.

We suggest that, in fact, the second shock of existence is an important, necessary, and world-historical millstone in the evolution of consciousness and culture. The first shock made us aware that death threatens the meaning of each individual's existence; the second shock teaches that self-inflicted extinction threatens the meaning of the whole species' existence. Just as the first shock was necessary in furthering humanity's mature and complex relation to the universe, so the second shock is necessary as a further impetus toward greater maturity and complexity. However, whereas the first shock served to separate us from nature and each other, the second shock will serve to reunite us with the natural world and weave the diverse strands of our now fragmented global culture into a common humanity.<sup>8</sup> The second shock is awakening us to the patterns that connect all of humanity as part of a common destiny, a destiny intimately tied into the future of the biosphere. The second shock is a deepening of humanity's awareness of its place in the universe; it results in the dawning

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<sup>7</sup>Consider the sheer number of popular movies and books that feature end-of-the-world scenarios. Even cartoons feature characters "saving the world" or even "saving the universe." This was not the case in decades past, when mainstream entertainment did not dwell on zombies, dystopias, pandemics, genocidal AI, climatological chaos, meteorite collisions, and the fulfillment of ancient apocalyptic prophecies of global catastrophe—all actual recent blockbuster movie plots.

<sup>8</sup> In some cases, it is true that the first shock drove a small percentage of humanity to overcome their individual separation, alienation, and suffering through the development of religious and spiritual practices for achieving deeply mystical states of unity, nonduality, or oneness, thus transcending the primordial separation of humans and the rest of reality and overcoming the first shock of existence. This "solution" to the first shock impacted, however, a relatively small number of humans. Not much more than a few percent of the population were ever seriously involved in these practices. Part of the extraordinary nature of the second shock is that, precisely because of its species-wide impact, any successful response to it will reach an inordinately larger number of individuals than ever before in history—potentially saturating humanity's self-understanding in its entirety, and thus reconstituting our "species being."

awareness of our profound ethical obligations as the sole stewards of humanity and the planet.

### *Pessimists, Optimists, Interiors, and Exteriors*

Humanity is now in a situation where we recognize (for the first time, really) that our ability to exploit nature is profoundly *limited*—we have run up against very real physical boundaries to our continued existence. At the same time, in some sectors, there is a dawning realization that we are already in possession of an *unlimited resource*—the power of human creativity and innovation, a realm in which *there is no scarcity*. The tensions between these two realities—dangerous scarcity alongside inspiring plentitude—define our age. It is an age in which heaven competes with hell for a chance to be born. Culturally, this has given us two camps: the pessimists and the optimists, both focused on the state of our *techno-economic-ecological exteriors*.<sup>9</sup> Techno-Optimists see a future in which our current techno-economic systems are salvaged, re-designed, and made increasingly scientific, efficient, and profitable; we will avert ecological

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<sup>9</sup> We will further discuss these two camps—the *techno-economic-ecological optimists* and the *techno-economic-ecological pessimists*. Here it should simply be pointed out that both camps make the same mistake, by focusing primarily on techno-scientific knowledge and physical instantiations thereof. As one noted *techno-economic-ecological optimist* put it: “the most valuable resource we have and that we have ever had is the sum of our human knowledge—our comprehension of how the universe around us functions and how to manipulate it to our ends,” from: Naam, R. *Infinite Resource*. (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2013), vii. Pessimists echo these sentiments, only they express the opposite valuation of human techno-science, suggesting we *don't* understand nature and have miss-stepped in our attempts to control it. Nevertheless, *both camps reduce discussions of human knowledge to discussions of techno-scientific control*. This is precisely the kind of profound and damaging truncation of human being and knowing that needs to be counteracted. There is much more to human knowledge and interiority than techno-science, including the realms of ethics, art, and spirituality. An Integral approach embraces the entirety of human being and knowing, and thus recognizes the possibility for crises and solutions in more domains than just the scientific and technological, see Wilber, K. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

disaster by creating a hyper-scientific, human controlled Heaven on Earth. Pessimists see these very attempts at continued scientific control and economic growth as the problem, sensing that the technologically wrought future they yield will give us more of what we've already had for nearly a century: a techno-economic system that decimates communities and ecosystems, and that will eventually degrade the Earth until the biosphere is simply unable to sustain life. Both pessimists and optimists focus on *external* systems, processes, resources, technologies, and economies. When they speak of crises they refer to broken or scarce *things* (broken ecosystems, unhealthy food, toxic air, failing schools, etc.). When they speak of innovation, they mean the creation of new and better *things* (healthy forests, organic food, new energy technologies, fresh air, good schools, etc). The future is in the balance for both camps, no doubt, and they both set their focus on the impacts of science, with a focus on sustainability and the physical continuity of life as we know it.

What both camps leave out a huge swath of reality, namely, *interiors*. Love, hate, values, worldviews, frameworks of identity, loyalty, commitment and integrity are all expressions of interiority—of consciousness itself. It is for that reason that we take a very different approach when thinking about the current global situation. We focus on *interiors*. Our focus is on moral crises and crises of self-understanding, crises in which hope and faith are the scarce resources; with mindsets, capacities, and worldviews in need of reform and redesign. We see a need for innovations toward new and better action-orienting worldviews, conceptual frameworks, and especially, a re-invention of the human sense of self.



Humans need a new sense of what it means to be human<sup>10</sup>. Of course, we do not deny the crises that afflict the physical systems in which humanity is embedded and upon which humanity depends, neither do we deny the profoundly transformative possibilities that may accompany new technologies. The results of the second shock will impact every species on the planet, and many will not make it through the coming crises. This must be looked at as a scientific problem, as a problem of technology, infrastructures, and carbon emissions, and so on. But *exteriors* are only half the picture.

### *Self-understanding in the Anthropocene*

Our species bears an obligation that is different from all other species; we are faced with a unique task that is tied into our capacity for self-consciousness and self-definition.<sup>11</sup> Our autonomy, issuing from the first shock of existence, has given us the ability to act from an explicit understanding of self and world (as

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<sup>10</sup> For a full elaboration of this idea, see: Gafni & Stein, *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*. Briefly, we suggest that there are several core structures of consciousness that are being enacted as part of a new sense of being human in the wake of the second shock. These are best considered in terms of Unique Self Theory in the context of Integral Meta-Theory. The details of this still emerging worldview and identity structure are beyond the scope of this paper. But see the special issue of the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* (6:1) dedicated to Unique Self Theory. See also, Ganif, M. *You Unique Self*. (Tucson, AZ: Integral Publisher, 2012); Gafni, M. *Radical Kabbalah* (Tucson, AZ: Integral Publisher, 2012). For more resources see also [CenterforIntegralWisdom.com](http://CenterforIntegralWisdom.com) and [UniqueSelf.com](http://UniqueSelf.com).

<sup>11</sup> This is Lewis Mumford's point in the much neglected and proto-integral, *Myth of the Machine*. Mumford suggests that what makes humans different from animals is not that we use tools, or that we use language, or even that we create political structures (all classic definitions stemming from Aristotle). What makes us human, suggests Mumford, is that we have a conception of self. This conception is externalized, in language, ritual, art, story, and eventually reacts back upon its creator. We aim to achieve an image we have set for ourselves, and so we become a *doubly self-fabricating* species: we fabricate an imagined or ideal self, which we then use to guide us in the literal fabrication of our actual, embodied self. The *self-concept* is the catalyst of both individual and cultural evolution. We discuss the role of the self-concept in personal and cultural evolution in *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*.

opposed to acting on instinct, images, and implicit forms of knowledge and skill). Unlike animals, humans act in light of who they think they are. Frameworks of meaning are inescapable as the backdrop against which human agency and action take place. Worldviews are embodied, lived as concrete forms of life. Therefore, the self-understanding of humanity is at the core of what we will do and what we will become. Today, humanity's inability to understand itself is cascading into a planetary phase shift; our identity crisis is coinciding with the climax of the Anthropocene.<sup>12</sup>

Humanity's fate is intertwined with the fate of the planet itself. Our decisions in the next decades will determine the future of the biosphere, the Earth's geological trajectory, and, of course, our survival as a species. This is not some controversial science. Even climate change skeptics have to recognize the power of nuclear weapons to wipe the biosphere from the face of the planet's hard rock mantle. It is also impossible to overlook the sheer scope and impact of massive human infrastructures, such as dams, canals, and highway systems, which impact whole landscapes and ecosystems. The Earth is in our hands, and we not quite prepared for the responsibility. The second shock comes from realizing that it is up to us to assure the continuation of the world. We are existentially intertwined in a common destiny, both as a species and as a biospheric community—a vast web of life now depends on our stewardship.

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<sup>12</sup> Anthropocene (from the Greek roots: *anthropo*, meaning "human" and *-cene* meaning "new"). This term is now being used as a formal unit of geological epoch division, basically suggesting that humanity has so impacted the Earth, that from a strictly scientific position our age constitutes a new geological epoch, a new stage in the history of the planet's basic physical being, especially its atmospheric and chemical composition. The term has deep roots, but was brought to prominence by Paul Crutzen, a Nobel Prize winning atmospheric chemist. The second shock is a cultural corollary of this, our new planet-changing species being.

As the second shock continues to dawn on us and eventually goes viral there will be a sweeping transformation of human cultures and identities. However, unlike the transformations that followed in the wake of the first shock, today's transformations must be undertaken intentionally, reflectively, and with the fate of the world in the balance. One of the great opportunities that has emerged during this time of great crisis is *the opportunity to change the self-understanding of humanity*.<sup>13</sup> This is, of course, the work of each and every person, but philosophers, theologians, scientists, and historians (among others) have unique roles to play in putting their voice into the mix—as one voice among others, but a voice with distinct depth and clarity.

Jürgen Habermas<sup>14</sup> has suggested that for many cultural groups the sciences have supplanted traditional religious forms of life and languages of self-understanding. The physical sciences affect the way we live our lives mainly in the form of technological innovation, as a plethora of inventions, including new cars, computers, and medicines, change our daily routines and our sense of what is possible. Transportation and communication technologies have impacted our basic sense of time and space, resulting in the rapid and jarring processes of “time-space compression” that increasingly characterize post-modernity.<sup>15</sup> Many

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the current opportunities to reformulate the self understanding of the species, see: Stein, Z. “Beyond Humanity and Nature: Reflections on The Emergence and Purposes of MetaTheories.” In Bhaskar, Esbjorn-Hargens, Hedlund-de Witt & Hartwig (Eds.) *Metatheory for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Critical Realism and Integral Theory in Dialogue*. (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Habermas, J. *The Future of Human Nature*. (London: Polity Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> London is simply not as far away from New York as it used to be. Where it used to take a person, commodity, or news headline weeks to get from London to New York, now it happens in hours. Perishable foods are trucked across continents and are easier to find than foods grown in my town; gadgets for my house are shipped across oceans and easier to buy than gadgets produced in my state. Wars on the other side of the globe are streamed into my living room in HD,

of us in the post-industrialized and post-modernized world more or less *expect*—we build our lives around the idea—that we will likely live into our 70s (not our 40s, as it was only a century ago), that we can travel hundreds of miles in a matter of hours (not days, as it was only two centuries), and that we can talk to our friends and family instantaneously from almost anywhere (as opposed to sending letters or simply enduring long periods of silence, as it was only a century ago). Who we think we are, what we believe we are capable of, and our sense of self, have all been fundamentally altered by advances in the physical sciences, especially in the realm of human built technological infrastructures and environments.

The human sciences (psychology, sociology, economics), on the other hand, affect our everyday lives by more directly shaping the very ideas we use to understand ourselves. These sciences tell us stories about what it means to be human and thus explicitly re-shape the action-orienting self-understandings of individuals. Consider the last time that ideas about genetics, evolution, or unconscious motivations factored into your thinking about your own or someone else's behavior. Now contrast this with the last time religious or meta-physical ideas figured in your explanations of self and other. Even if you are a deeply spiritual person, most progressive religious practitioners and adepts have

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but I have a thousand channels, and could just as easily watch a live soccer match in Dubai. Distant friends and family are closer than ever, as are strangers and celebrities, who are never more than a click away from being with me almost anywhere. The list goes on of the ways we are living in a smaller, faster, and more interconnected world than at any time in history. For more on the important idea of "time-space compression" see: Harvey, D. *The Condition of Post-modernity*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1990). In *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*, we discuss the psychological and emotional impacts of the pseudo-omniscience that results from extreme time-space compression, especially from the instantaneous and relentless coverage of the profit-driven news media.

embraced Darwin and Freud.<sup>16</sup> Scientific ideas color our thinking about what it means to be human. Colorful brain scans are featured on magazine covers that declare new “facts” about human nature, such as that we are “built to be selfish” or “wired to fall in love” in the presence of certain pheromones. Every two weeks, it seems, scientists find a genetic marker for something, be it as trivial as shopping addiction or as sinister as criminal behavior. Things that used to be part of our taken-for-granted cultural traditions and community know-how have been split off, objectified, made “scientific,” and are now being sold back to us as “official knowledge”— the science of child raising, the science of sleep, of sex, of productivity at work, of wellness, health, and death. These passing popular science fads betray a deeper uncertainty about who and what we are. What will be the accumulated impacts of this culture based on a transient and scientifically re-explained (and re-explainable) sense of human nature? We face a species-wide identity crisis resulting from the fracturing and disenchantment of our sense of what it means to be human.

Importantly, these cultural trends toward the “scientization” of everything are both good and bad. Science has brought both dignity and disaster. Both the optimists and pessimist are right, although they are also both wrong. But the underlying issue is ignored by both camps is that of our core identity. The point

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<sup>16</sup> Of course, we do not mean to suggest that it is *literally*, or only, Darwin and Freud that are embraced in most non-fundamentalist religious contexts. We are speaking figuratively. The point is simply that advances in the scientific understanding of humanity have impacted many religions and changed the nature of religious belief and faith for huge numbers of people. Outside of very conservative and fundamentalist contexts the question is not whether to embrace science, but how, in what ways, and to what extent. Delineating the line between religious and scientific conceptions of humanity is an essential tension for post-modern religiosity and spirituality. For more on the seemingly intractable “religion vs. science” debate, see: Wilber, K. *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (New York: Random House, 1998).

here is simply that history has brought us to a place where humanity has become confused about its own identity and purpose.<sup>17</sup>

### *Towards an Integral Vision of Humanity's Future*

Make no mistake: this is not an argument against bold hypotheses and good research in the human sciences, nor is it an argument against increasing the overall scientific knowledge possessed by humanity. What Habermas offers, and we echo, is an argument against those forms of *scientism* that aim to systematically contradict deep-seated aspects of the self-understanding of the species. Irresponsible scientific generalizations run the risk of undermining the psychological capacities that enable autonomous ethical agency and human dignity. Suppose a critical mass of humanity becomes scientifically convinced that they are “not wired for obligation,” or a whole generation of adolescents

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<sup>17</sup> To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be said that humanity \*as a whole\* has *never* known its true identity and purpose. This is not something we once knew and have forgotten, or something we lost and must now find. No doubt, certain cultures have previously been *convinced* of a particular identity and purpose for all humans, and there have been visionaries who've offered their stunning guesses at the riddle of our being. The difference now is not ignorance—we've always been ignorant—the difference is that now there is wide spread knowledge of our ignorance and an unprecedented groping toward truly new answers—answers that are post-dogmatic, post-disciplinary/academic, post-conventional, and trans-national/ethnic. These new answers emerge from the integration of the best insights of pre-modern or traditional, modern and post-modern culture. The shared insights of the great ancient wisdom traditions are often referred to as the perennial philosophy. This is critical place from which to begin. However it is insufficient. Taken only by itself it is regressive, failing to account for the evolution of consciousness, which brought us democracy, human rights, ideals of universal love and so much more. We must therefore add to the perennial philosophy the best insight of modernity (science, for example) and the best insight of post-modernity (cultural studies, for example) and then articulate an integral view that transcends and includes all of them. It is also worth noting that it would be a mistake to understand the recent upwelling of fundamentalist religion as a sign to the contrary. This reactive, and often violent, grasping and entrenchment of tradition is driven precisely by the now inescapable and hegemonic force of *alternative stories* about the meaning of humanity. The biggest sacrilege—and what looks to fundamentalist cultures like godlessness—is really the “storylessness” of post-modern culture, which stems in part from its (pseudo)-scientific basis; a non-foundationalist, open-ended, “choose your own adventure” worldview that glibly dismisses ancient traditions by citing the latest scientific headline, and then dismisses that headline when a newer study is released. Neither fundamentalism nor a glib scientism will produce a compelling new story that can guide us in the next stage of our evolution.

comes to instinctively justify themselves with thoughts of “my brain made me do it” or “it’s just in my genes.” Radically counterintuitive, fragmented, and reductionist scientific accounts are *irresponsible* (above and beyond their simply being *false*), especially when the likelihood of their being adopted as an aspect of self-understanding is high and the appropriateness of their serving this function is low.

There is an urgent ethical imperative for *comprehensiveness*, for a larger Integral Meta-Theory, where the sciences are put in context and balanced against non-scientific forms of knowledge, such as ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and therapeutics.<sup>18</sup> Contemporary global crises require problem-focused integrations of diverse and fragmented areas of academic knowledge. No one specialist, citizen group, government department, or laboratory can solve any of the real problems that face us. The knowledge and skill we need requires us to transcend and include the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s disciplinary fragmentation in the structure of 21<sup>st</sup> century post-disciplinary problem-focused think tanks.<sup>19</sup> The institutionalization of Integral action-oriented research is to be guided by the pursuit of innovations for our interiors—revolutions and transformations of

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<sup>18</sup> The idea that there are valid “non-scientific” forms of knowledge is complex. It is elaborated in the discussion of Integral Meta-Theory in *Towards a New Politics of Evolutionary Love*. Let us say here simply that scientific knowledge (especially when deified as *narrowly empirical*, i.e., dealing only with things that can be physically sensed) is only one form of valid knowledge among many. At its most complex, Integral Meta-Theory provides a map of eight families of methods for generating valid knowledge, four of which are “non-scientific” in this narrow sense.

<sup>19</sup> That is, traditional knowledge production in the disciplinary confines of the modern university system is important, and should be advanced. There must, however, be an understanding that these forms of knowledge are *partial by design*. The special sciences and academic specialties are just that, specialized. Given this, there is a great deal of work to be done by *those who specialize as generalists*, or who do the work of post-disciplinary synthesis. See: Stein, Z. “Modeling the Demands of Interdisciplinarity,” *Integral Review* 4 (2008): 92-107. This kind of Integral work is the goal of the think-tank at the Center for Integral Wisdom.

consciousness—that will liberate human potential and result in the emancipation of humanity on a planetary scale.

Let's take stock what has been said so far. We face a species wide identity crisis that is accompanied by the exhaustion of the biosphere's tolerance for industrial infrastructure; an identity crisis accompanies the climax of the Anthropocene. The arguments in these pages amount to this: during remarkable times of transition, such as ours, *we must keep an eye fixed on our interiors*, on our states of our consciousness, communication patterns, intentionality, and expressions of humanity. World saving technologies may come, or they may not. In either case, the world will not be saved if the consciousness wielding these technologies is not evolved enough to make good use of them. The midwives of our future meta-industrial planetary civilization must have a profound sensitivity to the *interiors* of the social forms engendered by their "world saving" technologies, be they biological, computational, or geo-engineered. Human emancipation is different from mere human survival. Survival is a physical precondition for emancipation, which amounts to much more than physical *sustainability*. Emancipation requires social structures that allow individuals the freedom to take up unique, and reflectively chosen life-projects, to express new conceptions of humanity, and to engage in the continuation of traditions essential to their worldviews.

Global emancipation will require a coherent new sense of human identity, dignity, and purpose, consistent with the evolving revelations of science, and yet inclusive of religion and of spiritual experience. But there will be no new "world



saving” dharma, philosophy, or religion immune from the risk of creating unconscionable social forms and identity structures. At this point in the evolution of culture we must not shy away from considerations about the future of global religious and ethical configurations, nor from articulating preferable possibilities for the future of religion and humanistic ethical frameworks.

William James’s dictum about humanity’s need for a moral equivalent to war rings more true now than ever,<sup>20</sup> especially in our age of perpetual wars involving military operations of enormous scope and cost. We recommend in the strongest possible terms that tremendous energy and resources be rechanneled into planning for the vast educational reconfigurations facing humanity in the coming decades. As cultures and personalities continue being fractured and fragmented from the relentless push of *planetization* and the accompanying second shock of existence, it is creating a new, fervent, and widespread need for conversations about our missing common story. The second shock is a profound global meta-narrative that has forced its reality upon humanity; it implicates everyone, and thus brings us all into an unprecedented conversation about our collective identity, our species being. In the throws of planetary crisis, we will begin collectively creating a new sense of what it means to be human. In our fuller presentation of these ideas in the book, *Towards a Politics of Evolutionary Love*, we present some ideas as an offering, a contribution to the evolving conversation about the future of humanity and the nature of the world to come.

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<sup>20</sup>See, Richardson, Robert, D. *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

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