

In academia, this pluralistic relativism is the dominant stance. As Colin McGuinn summarizes it: “According to this conception, human reason is inherently local, culture-relative, rooted in the variable facts of human nature and history, a matter of divergent ‘practices’ and ‘forms of life’ and ‘frames of reference’ and ‘conceptual schemes.’ There are no norms of reasoning that transcend what is accepted by a society or an epoch, no objective justifications for belief that everyone must respect on pain of cognitive malfunction. To be valid is to be taken to be valid, and different people can have legitimately different patterns of taking. In the end, the only justifications for belief have the form ‘justified for me.’”¹⁵ As Clare Graves put it, “This system sees the world relativistically. Thinking shows an almost radical, almost compulsive emphasis on seeing everything from a relativistic, subjective frame of reference.”

The point is perhaps obvious: because pluralistic relativism has such an intensely subjectivistic stance, it is especially prey to narcissism. And exactly that is the crux of the problem: *pluralism becomes a supermagnet for narcissism*. Pluralism becomes an unwitting home for the Culture of Narcissism, and narcissism is the great destroyer of any integral culture in general and a T.O.E. in particular (because narcissism refuses to step outside of its own subjective orbit and hence it cannot allow truths other than its own). Thus, on our list of obstacles to a genuine Theory of Everything, we might list the Culture of Narcissism.

And this is where boomeritis enters the picture.

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Boomeritis

Bore: a person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me.

—AMBROSE BIERCE

THE DICTIONARY DEFINITION of *narcissism* is “excessive interest in one’s own self, importance, abilities, etc.; egocentrism.” Yet narcissism is not simply the overvaluing of the self and its abilities, but a concomitant undervaluing of others and their contributions. It is not simply possessing a large amount of self-esteem; it is the simultaneous devaluation of others that is crucial. The inner state of narcissism, clinicians tell us, is often that of an empty or fragmented self, attempting to fill the void with an egocentric grasping that inflates the self while deflating others. The emotional mood is, “Nobody tells me what to do!”

Most psychologists agree that, although there are many ways to look at narcissism (and many different types of narcissism), it is, in general, a normal trait of childhood that is ideally outgrown, at least to a significant degree. Development, in fact, can be defined as a *successive decrease in egocentrism*. The young infant is largely wrapped up in its own world, oblivious to much of its surroundings and most human interactions.¹ As its consciousness increasingly grows in strength and capacity, it can become aware of itself, and of others, and eventually put itself in others’ shoes and thus develop care, compassion, and a generous integral embrace—none of which it is born with.

DEVELOPMENT AS DECLINING EGOCENTRISM

As Harvard developmental psychologist Howard Gardner reminds us,

The young child is totally egocentric—meaning not that he thinks selfishly only about himself, but to the contrary, that he is incapable of thinking about himself. The egocentric child is unable to differentiate himself from the rest of the world; he has not separated himself out from others or from objects. Thus he feels that others share his pain or his pleasure, that his mumbblings will inevitably be understood, that his perspective is shared by all persons, that even animals and plants partake of his consciousness. In playing hide-and-seek he will “hide” in broad view of other persons, because his egocentrism prevents him from recognizing that others are aware of his location. The whole course of human development can be viewed as a continuing decline in egocentrism.²

Thus development, for the most part, involves *decreasing* narcissism and *increasing* consciousness, or the ability to take other people, places, and things into account and thus increasingly extend care to each. Carol Gilligan found, for example, that female moral development tends to go through three general stages, which she calls *selfish*, *care*, and *universal care*. In each of these stages, the circle of care and compassion expands and egocentrism declines. At first, the young girl cares mostly for herself; then she can care for others as well (such as her family and friends); and finally, she can extend her concern and well wishes to humanity as a whole (and thus move toward an integral embrace). Each higher stage does not mean that you stop caring for yourself, only that you include more and more others for whom you also evidence a genuine concern and compassion.

Incidentally, males go through the same three general stages, although, according to Gilligan, they usually emphasize rights and justice more than care and relationship. Gilligan believes that after the third stage, in both sexes, there can be an *integration* of the contrasexual attitude, so that at the universal-integral stage, both men and women integrate the male and female voices in themselves to a large degree, thus uniting justice and compassion. This integral embrace is a type of culmination of the third general stage of uni-

versal care (I will correlate this with other conceptions, such as Spiral Dynamics, in a moment).

Those three general stages are quite common for most forms of development. They are known by many names, such as pre-conventional, conventional, and postconventional; or egocentric, sociocentric, and worldcentric; or “me,” “us” and “all of us.”

The selfish stage is often called *preconventional*, because the infant and young child have not yet learned conventional rules and roles; they have not yet been socialized. They cannot yet take the role of others and thus begin to develop genuine care and compassion. They therefore remain egocentric, selfish, narcissistic, and so on. This does *not* mean that young children have no feelings for others, nor does it mean they are altogether amoral. It simply means that, *compared with subsequent development*, their feelings and morals are still heavily centered on their own impulses, physiological needs, and instinctual discharges. (Although some Romantic theorists believe that the infant exists in a state of nondual freedom and original goodness, what baby is truly free? At most, it appears that the infantile state is one of potentiality and openness, not an actual presence of freedom, since any state dominated by impulses, hunger, tension, and discharge cannot be truly free. In any event, studies consistently show that the infant cannot take the role of other, and thus it is not capable of genuine compassion, care, or love.)³

Starting around age 6 or 7, a profound shift in consciousness occurs. The child can begin to take the role of other. For example: say you have a book whose front cover is blue and whose back cover is orange. Show the book, front and back, to a five-year-old child. Then hold the book between you and the child. You are looking at the orange cover and the child is looking at blue. Ask the child what color he is seeing, and he will correctly say blue. Ask the child what color *you* are seeing, and he will say blue. A seven-year-old will say orange.

In other words, the five-year-old cannot put himself in your shoes and take your point of view. He does not have the cognitive capacity to step out of his own skin and inhabit yours for a while. And therefore he will never really understand your perspective, will never really understand you; there will never be a *mutual* recognition. Nor can he therefore truly, genuinely, care for your point of view (however much he may emotionally love you). But all of that begins to change with the emergence of the capacity to take the role of others,

which is why Gilligan calls this stage the shift from *selfish* to *care*.

The care stage, which generally lasts from age 7 to adolescence, is known as *conventional*, *conformist*, *ethnocentric*, or *sociocentric*—and it means just that, centered on the group (family, peers, tribe, nation). The young child steps out of his or her own limited perspective and begins to share the views and perspectives of others—so much so, that the child is often *trapped* in the views of others: hence, conformist. This stage is often called “good boy, nice girl,” “my country right or wrong,” and so on, reflecting the intense conformity, peer pressure, and group dominance that usually accompanies this general period. Although the individual at this stage can to some degree step aside from her own perspective, she cannot easily step aside from the group’s. She has moved from “me” to “us”—a great decline in egocentrism—but there she is stuck, “my country right or wrong.”

All of which begins to change in adolescence, with the emergence of *postconventional* and *worldcentric* awareness (Gilligan’s *universal care*). This is yet another major decline in egocentrism, because this time one’s peer group is subjected to scrutiny. What is right and fair, not just for me or my tribe or my nation, but for all peoples, regardless of race, religion, sex, or creed? The adolescent can become a fiery idealist, ablaze with all the possibilities, a crusader for justice, a revolutionary out to rock the world. Of course, some of this is just an explosion of hormones, frenzied at best. But a good part of it is the emergence of the stage of universal care, justice, and fairness. And, in fact, this is simply the beginning of the possibility of developing a truly integral embrace.

THE SPIRAL OF COMPASSION

These three general stages—egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric—are of course just a simple summary of the many unfolding waves of consciousness, but already you can start to see that development, as Gardner said, is indeed a decline in egocentrism. Each developmental wave is a *decrease* in narcissism and an *increase* in consciousness (or an increase in the capacity to take deeper and wider perspectives into account).

There are, of course, more complex models with more stages. In chapter 1 we gave an example of this developmental unfolding using

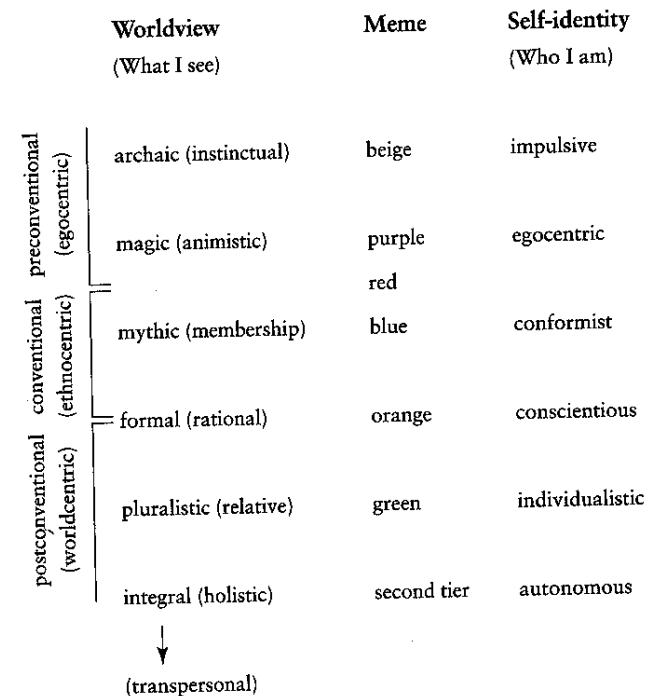


Figure 2-1. Worldviews and Selfhood

Spiral Dynamics and its eight waves of development. (See fig. 2-1 for the following correlations.) In Spiral Dynamics, the preconventional stages are beige (archaic-instinctual), purple (magical-animistic), and red (egocentric). Although red is called “egocentric,” the first two stages are even more egocentric (there is a steady decline in narcissism at each and every stage); it is just that red marks the culmination of the highly egocentric and preconventional realms and is now able to act this out forcefully. At the next stage (blue, conformist rule), the narcissism is dispersed into the *group*—not me, but my country, can do no wrong! This conventional/conformist stance lasts into orange (egoic-rational), which marks the beginning of the postconventional stages (green, yellow, and turquoise). These postconventional stages (especially orange and green) are marked by an intense scrutiny of the myths, conformist values, and ethnocentric biases that almost always inhabit the preconventional and conventional stages.

In short, as development moves from preconventional to conven-

tional to postconventional (or from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric), the amount of narcissism and egocentrism slowly but surely decreases. Instead of treating the world (and others) as an extension of the self, the mature adult of postconventional awareness meets the world on its own terms, as an individuated self in a community of other individuated selves operating by mutual recognition and respect. The spiral of development is a spiral of compassion, expanding from me, to us, to all of us: there standing open to an integral embrace.

I hasten to add that this does not mean that development is nothing but sweetness and light, a series of wonderful promotions on a linear ladder of progress. For each stage of development brings not only new capacities but the possibility of new disasters; not just novel potentials but novel pathologies; new strengths, new diseases. In evolution at large, new emergent systems always face new problems: dogs get cancer, atoms don't. Annoyingly, there is a price to be paid for each increase in consciousness, and this "dialectic of progress" (good news, bad news) needs always to be remembered. Still, the point for now is that each unfolding wave of consciousness brings at least the possibility for a greater expanse of care, compassion, justice, and mercy, on the way to an integral embrace.

FIGHT THE SYSTEM!

One source of narcissism, then, is simply the failure to grow and evolve. Particularly in the difficult growth from egocentric to socio-centric, aspects of awareness that refuse this transition can remain "stuck" in the egocentric realms, with a difficulty adapting to the *rules* and *roles* of society. Of course, some of those rules and roles might be unworthy of respect; they might be in dire need of criticism and rejection. But that *postconventional* attitude—which inspects, reflects on, and criticizes the norms of society—can only be attained by first passing through the conventional stages, because the competences gained at those stages are necessary prerequisites for postconventional consciousness. In other words, somebody who fails to make it up to the conventional stages will mount, not a postconventional critique of society, but a pre-conventional rebellion. The core of narcissism that "Nobody tells me what to do!" is heavily present in the pre-conventional waves.

The boomers, critics agree, have been a notoriously rebellious generation. Some of that rebellion, no doubt, has come from postconventional individuals sincerely interested in reforming those aspects of society that are unfair, unjust, or immoral. But just as surely—and we have much empirical evidence for this—an alarmingly large chunk of that rebellious attitude has come from pre-conventional impulses that are having a great deal of difficulty making it up to conventional realities. The standard shouts of the sixties—from "Fight the system!" to "Question all authority!"—can come from pre-conventional just as easily as from postconventional; and evidence suggests that it was the former more often than the latter.

The classic case study is the Berkeley student protests of the late sixties (protesting especially the Vietnam war). The students claimed, in one voice, that they were acting from a position of higher morals. But when given actual tests of moral development, the vast majority scored at *pre-conventional*, not postconventional, levels.⁴ (There were few conventional/conformist types, because, by definition, they are not very rebellious.) Of course, the postconventional and worldcentric morality of the minority of protestors is to be applauded (not necessarily their beliefs, but the fact that they arrived at them through highly developed moral reasoning). But just as surely, the pre-conventional egocentrism of the majority of protestors must likewise be acknowledged.

The most fascinating item about such empirical studies is something that is often seen with "pre" and "post" situations—namely, both pre-X and post-X are non-X (for example, both pre-conventional and postconventional are nonconventional, or outside the conventional norms and rules), and thus they are often confused. In such situations, "pre" and "post" will often use the *same rhetoric and the same ideology*, but in fact they are actually separated by an enormous gulf of growth and development. In the Berkeley protests, virtually all of the students *claimed* they were acting from universal moral principles (e.g., "The war in Vietnam violates universal human rights, and therefore, as a moral being, I refuse to fight in that war"). But tests showed unequivocally that only a minority were acting from postconventional moral principles; the majority were acting from pre-conventional egocentric drives: "*Nobody tells me what to do! So take your war and shove it.*"

It appears that in this case very high-minded moral ideals were used to support what were in fact much lower-minded impulses. It is

the strange superficial similarity of “pre” and “post” stages of development that would allow this subterfuge—that would allow, in other words, preconventional narcissism to inhabit the halls of what was loudly claimed to be postconventional idealism. This confusion of preconventional and postconventional, because both are nonconventional, is called the “pre/post fallacy,” and it appears that at least some of boomer idealism must be interpreted, or reinterpreted, in this harsher light.

This is a crucial point, because it alerts us to the fact that, no matter how high-minded, idealistic, or altruistic a cause might appear—from ecology to cultural diversity to world peace—the simple mouthing of intense support for that cause is not enough to determine why, in fact, that cause is being embraced. Too many social commentators have simply assumed, for example, that if the boomers were calling for “harmony, love, mutual respect, and multiculturalism,” the boomers were themselves moving in that idealistic, nonegocentric direction. However, as we will see, in many cases not only were the boomers not moving in that direction in terms of their own inner growth, they were loudly embracing a nonegocentric perspective largely to conceal their own egocentric stance.

None of which is to say that all boomers were caught in such. Only that there has often been a strange mixture of postconventional ideas inhabited by preconventional motives, a strange mixture we are calling “boomeritis.”

GROWTH HIERARCHIES VERSUS DOMINATOR HIERARCHIES

Pluralism, egalitarianism, and multiculturalism, at their best, all stem from a very high developmental stance—the green meme—and from that stance of pluralistic fairness and concern, the green meme attempts to treat all other memes with equal care and compassion, a truly noble intent.⁵ But because it embraces an intense egalitarianism, it fails to see that *its own stance*—which is the first stance that is even capable of egalitarianism—is a fairly rare, elite stance (somewhere around 10 percent of the world’s population, as we saw). Worse, the green meme then *aggressively denies* the stages that *produced* the green meme in the first place, because it wishes to view all memes equally and not make any ranking judgments. But green egalitarian-

ism is the product, we have seen, of at least six major stages of development, stages that it then turns around and aggressively denies in the name of egalitarianism!

Much of this pluralistic confusion stems from a misunderstanding of *hierarchy* and its place in natural growth and development. Notice how each of the memes views the notion of hierarchy. Purple (magic) recognizes few hierarchies, largely because, as we will see, it is preformal and preconventional. Red (egocentric power) recognizes hierarchies of brute force (the basis of feudal empires). Blue (mythic order) has numerous and very rigid social hierarchies, such as the hereditary caste system, the hierarchies of the medieval Church, and the intense social stratification of feudal empires and early nations. Orange (individual achievement) decisively erodes blue hierarchies in the name of individual freedom and equal opportunity (orange hierarchies are quite distinct from blue hierarchies in that heredity and privilege yield to meritocracy and excellence).

By the time we get to green, however, the sensitive self begins a concerted attack on, and condemnation of, virtually all types of hierarchies, simply because they have indeed often been involved in horrible social oppression. An aggressive antihierarchy stance is usually an unmistakable hallmark of the green meme.

But with the emergence of second tier, *hierarchies again return*, this time in a softer, nested fashion. These nested hierarchies are often called *growth hierarchies*, such as the hierarchy atoms to molecules to cells to organisms to ecosystems to biosphere to universe.⁶ Each of those units, no matter how “lowly,” is *absolutely crucial* for the entire sequence: destroy all atoms and you simultaneously destroy all molecules, cells, ecosystems, and so on. At the same time, each senior wave enfolds or envelopes its predecessors—ecosystems contain organisms which contain cells which contain molecules—a development that is envelopment. And thus each wave becomes more inclusive, more embracing, more integral—and less marginalizing, less exclusionary, less oppressive. (Each successive wave “transcends and includes”—transcends its own narrowness to include others.) The developmental Spiral itself is a nested hierarchy or growth hierarchy, as are most natural growth processes. And, indeed, Beck and Cowan point out that nested hierarchies are a hallmark of second-tier thinking.

Riane Eisler, author of *The Chalice and the Blade*, calls attention to this important distinction by referring to “dominator hierarchies”

and “actualization hierarchies.” The former are the rigid social hierarchies that are instruments of oppression, and the latter are the growth hierarchies that are actually necessary for the self-actualization of individuals and cultures (and virtually all biological systems as well). Whereas dominator hierarchies are the means of oppression, actualization hierarchies are the means of growth. It is the growth hierarchies that bring together previously isolated and fragmented elements. Isolated atoms are brought together into molecules; isolated molecules are brought together into cells; isolated cells into organisms; organisms into ecosystems; ecosystems into biosphere, and so on. In short, growth hierarchies convert heaps into wholes, fragments into integration, alienation into cooperation.

And, Spiral Dynamics adds, *all of this becomes increasingly conscious at second tier*. Second-tier integral awareness understands the nested hierarchy of growth. Thus, if we react negatively to *all* hierarchies, not only will we honorably fight the injustices of dominator hierarchies, we will very probably prevent ourselves from developing to the integral second tier. As we will see, the green meme, effectively challenging the absolutisms, universals, and dominator hierarchies of blue and orange, then mistook all hierarchies as being of the same order, and because it then denied all hierarchies, this firmly locked it into first-tier thinking.

(The same thing happens with both “universals” and “metanarratives.” They are absent in the preconventional waves; exist in rigid and oppressive ways at blue; are attacked and deconstructed at green; then return in a softer, nested fashion at all second-tier integral waves. Whenever you hear an attack on metanarratives and universals, you are almost always in the presence of a green meme.)

BOOMERITIS

The point is simply that the very high developmental stance of green pluralism—the product of at least six major stages of hierarchical transformation—turns around and denies all hierarchies, *denies the very path that produced its own noble stance*. It consequently extends an egalitarian embrace to every stance, no matter how shallow or narcissistic. The more egalitarianism is implemented, the more it invites, indeed encourages, the Culture of Narcissism. And the Culture of Narcissism is the antithesis of the integral culture.

(We saw that narcissism, at its core, is a demand that “Nobody tells me what to do!” Narcissism will therefore not acknowledge anything universal, because that places various demands and duties on narcissism that it will strenuously try to deconstruct, because “nobody tells me what to do.” This egocentric stance can easily be propped up and supported with the tenets of pluralistic relativism.)

In short, the rather high developmental wave of pluralism becomes a supermagnet for the rather low state of emotional narcissism. Which brings us to boomeritis.

Boomeritis is that strange mixture of very high cognitive capacity (the green meme and noble pluralism) infected with rather low emotional narcissism—exactly the mixture that has been noted by so many social critics. In other words, the very high developmental meme of pluralism becomes a shelter and a haven for a *reactivation* of some of the lower and intensely egocentric memes (e.g., purple and red). In green’s noble attempt to move beyond conformist rules (many of which are indeed unfair and marginalizing), and in its genuine desire to deconstruct a rigid rationality (much of which can be repressive and stultifying)—in short, in green’s admirable attempt to go *postconventional*—it has often inadvertently embraced anything nonconventional, and this includes much that is frankly *preconventional*, regressive, and narcissistic.

This strange mixture of very high postconventional memes with preconventional narcissistic memes is boomeritis. A typical result is that the sensitive self, honestly trying to help, excitedly exaggerates its own significance. It will possess the new paradigm, which heralds the greatest transformation in the history of the world; it will completely revolutionize society as we know it; it will revision everything that came before it; it will save the planet and save Gaia and save the Goddess; it will be the most extraordinary. . . .

Well, and off we go on some of the negative aspects of the last three decades of boomer cultural studies. This is exactly why observers on the scene have reported, as we saw with Lentricchia, that “it is impossible, this much is clear, to exaggerate the heroic self-inflation of academic literary and cultural criticism.” Once again, that is not the whole story, or even the most important part of the story, of the boomers. But it appears to be an unmistakable flavor. Boomeritis has significantly tilted and prejudiced academic studies; it is behind much of the culture wars; it haunts almost every corner of the New Age; it drives many of the games of deconstruction and

identity politics; it authors new paradigms daily. Virtually no topic, no matter how innocent, has escaped a reworking at its hands, as I attempt to document at length in *Boomeritis*.

Since, in normal development, green pluralism eventually gives way to second-tier consciousness and an integral embrace, why did this generation become so stuck at the green meme?—at pluralistic relativism, extreme egalitarianism, antihierarchy furies, deconstructive postmodernism, fragmenting pluralism, I do my thing and you do yours and to hell with integral anything? One of the central reasons appears to be that the intense subjectivism of the green meme was a prime magnet and refuge for the narcissism that, for whatever reasons, many social critics have found prevalent in the Me generation. It appears that boomeritis intensifies a *fixation* to the green meme, making it almost impossible to let go of. Because narcissism finds such a happy home in pluralism, both get stuck with each other. This combination of high pluralism and low narcissism is boomeritis, and it follows that boomeritis is one of the primary roadblocks to an integral embrace.

THE MANY GIFTS OF GREEN

Boomeritis is still one of the single greatest barriers to an integral unfolding, I believe. But the truly important point is not what has gone wrong with green, but what can go right. *For it is from the large fund of green memes that the second tier emerges.*⁷ It is from the pluralistic perspectives freed by green that integrative and holistic networks are built.

That fact is worth emphasizing. Development tends to proceed by differentiation and integration (e.g., a single-cell *zygote differentiates* into two cells, then four cells, then sixteen, then thirty-two . . . , while at the same time these differentiated cells are *integrated* into coherent tissues, organs, and systems). The green meme heroically manages to differentiate the often rigid, abstract, universal formalism of the previous rational wave (formal operational, egoic-rational, orange meme). Green therefore discloses, not a rational uniformitarianism that tends to ignore and marginalize anything not of its ilk, but a beautiful tapestry of multiple contexts, richly different cultural textures, pluralistic perceptions, and individual differences, and it becomes sensitive (the sensitive self!) to all of those often unheard

voices. We have seen that every meme makes an invaluable contribution to the health of the overall spiral, and this pluralistic sensitivity is the one of the great gifts of green.

Once those wonderful differentiations are made, they can then be brought together into even deeper and wider contexts that disclose a truly holistic and integral world: the leap to second-tier consciousness can occur—but only because of the work that the green meme has accomplished. There is first differentiation, then integration. Second tier completes the task begun by green, and this allows us to move from pluralistic relativism to universal integralism (e.g., mature vision-logic, Gebser's integral-aperspectival, Loevinger's integrated stage, etc.). That is what I mean when I say that the green meme frees the pluralistic perspectives that second tier will integrate.

In short, since green is the conclusion of first-tier thinking, it prepares the leap to second tier. But in order to move into second-tier constructions, the fixation to pluralistic relativism and the green meme in general needs to be relaxed. Its accomplishments will be fully included and carried forward. But its attachment to its own stance needs to be eased, and it is precisely boomeritis (or a narcissistic attachment to the intense subjectivism of the relativistic stance) that makes such a letting-go quite difficult. By highlighting our fixation to the green meme, I believe that we can begin more readily to transcend and include its wonderful accomplishments in an even more generous embrace.

BEYOND PLURALISM

But why is boomeritis one of greatest obstacles to the emergence of an integral vision? What about the rigid conformity of mythic-membership (blue)? What about the often nasty materialism of egoic-rationality (orange)? What about the horrible economic conditions of many third-world countries? What about. . . .

Yes, all of that is true. But, as we were saying, it is only *from* the stage of pluralism (green) that integralism can emerge (holistic second tier). Of course, *all* of the pre-green memes also “prevent” the emergence of an integral view. My point—and the only reason I am “picking on” boomers—is that this generation (and Graves's research confirmed this) is the first to significantly evolve to the green wave in large numbers, and thus this is the first major genera-

tion that has a real chance to significantly move forward into a mature second-tier consciousness—and to use that consciousness to organize social institutions in a truly integral fashion.

But it has not yet done so to full effect, because it has not yet gone post-green to any significant degree (as we saw, less than 2 percent are post-green). *But it still might do so*; and since it is only from green that it can do so, the boomers are still poised for a possible leap into the hyperspace of second-tier consciousness. That would indeed be a great and historic transformation, one that would have a profound effect on society as we know it. And that is not a grandiose boomeritis claim; it is backed by substantial evidence, particularly from social and psychological developmental studies.

THE INTEGRAL CULTURE

Sociologist Paul Ray has recently found that a new cultural segment, whose members he calls “the cultural creatives,” now make up an astonishing 24 percent of the adult American population (or around 44 million people). In order to distinguish them from the previous cultural movements of *traditionalism* and *modernism*, Ray calls this group the *integral culture*. Exactly how “integral” this group is remains to be seen; but I believe Ray’s figures indeed represent a series of very real currents. The traditionalists are grounded in pre-modern mythic values (blue); the modernists, in rational-industrial values (orange); and the cultural creatives, in postformal/postmodern values (green). Those three movements constitute exactly what we would expect from our survey of the development and evolution of consciousness (preformal mythic to formal rational to early postformal).

But a few more points stand out. What Ray calls the integral culture is not integral as I am using the term; it is not grounded in universal integralism, mature vision-logic, or second-tier consciousness. Rather, as Ray’s survey results suggest, the majority of cultural creatives are basically *activating the green meme*, as their values clearly indicate: strongly antihierarchical; concerned with dialogue; embracing a flatland holism (“holistic everything,” as Ray puts it, except that all genuine holism involves nested hierarchy, or holarchy, and the cultural creatives eschew holarchy, so their holism is usually an amalgam of monological wholeness claims, such as offered by

physics or systems theory); suspicious of conventional forms of most everything; admirably sensitive to the marginalization of minorities; committed to pluralistic values and subjectivistic warrants; and possessing a largely translative, not transformative, spirituality.⁸ As Don Beck himself points out, using substantial research, “Ray’s ‘integral culture’ is essentially the green meme. There are few if any indications of yellow or turquoise memes; in other words, there are few second-tier memes in most of the cultural creatives.”⁹

Further empirical research strongly supports this interpretation. Ray claims that 24 percent of Americans are cultural creatives in an integral culture. I believe he has accurately measured something, but it is actually the fact that most cultural creatives, to use Jane Loevinger and Susanne Cook-Greuter’s terms, are at the *individualistic* stage (green), not the *autonomous* or *integrated* stages (yellow and turquoise). Research shows that, indeed, less than 2 percent of Americans are at the autonomous or integrated stage (this also fits very closely with Beck’s research—less than 2 percent at second tier—as well as with that of most other developmentalists). In short, the cultural creatives, most of whom are boomers, are not truly integral, but are basically activating the green meme.¹⁰

In fact, since it is the green meme that, if not let go of, is what immediately prevents the emergence of second-tier integration, what Paul Ray calls the “integral culture” is actually what is *preventing* the integral culture.

Almost any way we slice the data, the “integral culture” is not that integral.

But it can be. And that is the crucial point. As the cultural creatives move into the second half of life, this is exactly the time that a further transformation of consciousness, from green into mature second-tier awareness, can most easily occur. As I will later suggest, this transformation into second-tier integral consciousness (and higher, into genuinely transpersonal waves) can most readily be effected by *integral transformative practice*. The only reason I am talking about “boomeritis” is with the hope that, by discussing some of the obstacles to this further transformation, it might more readily occur.

These obstacles are not found exclusively in boomers or in Americans. Pluralistic relativism is a universally available wave of consciousness unfolding, and it has its own perils and stick-points, of which intense subjectivism, magnet for narcissism, is a major one. Thus “boomeritis” is by no means confined to boomers, but

can afflict anybody poised for the leap into second-tier consciousness, itself the great gateway to more enduring spiritual and transpersonal awareness.

We can now turn to that more integral vision.