GENERATIVE (EN)CLOSURES, BUBBLES, AND MAGIC CIRCLES:
A Chat about Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality and Religion

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EDWARD BERGE: In the 12 years since you first launched the Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality forum, we've covered quite a lot of territory – too damned much to summarize! But it's safe to say, I think, that it has served as a kind of peer-to-peer colloquium for its core members to explore the nominal themes of the forum, and to follow and develop our own respective threads of interest. One of my abiding concerns over the years, and honestly the only one that still remains vital for me, has been the intersection of IPS with economics and political activism, as I discuss in my essay for this issue. But regarding your own work there, two of the fruits that stand out for me are your concepts of *integral grammatology* and *generative (en)closures*. I'm thinking it would be interesting for this issue to discuss the relationship of these concepts to integral postmetaphysical spirituality, in general, and maybe also to some of the themes that I highlight in my paper.

BRUCE ALDERMAN: Sure, that sounds good. There's a lot there to explore. Since I've given more time, in a couple recent publications, to discussing integral grammatology[4], I'd like to focus for now on the concept of generative (en)closures – particularly in relationship to a postmetaphysical understanding of spirituality and religion. But the integral grammatology lens will provide a good way to approach it, so I'll start there. And since Layman Pascal and I have done some extensive diving into the concept, I'd like to invite him to the conversation as well.

LAYMAN PASCAL: [Steps out from behind a fly agaric mushroom and takes a seat.]

BRUCE: At the 2013 Integral Theory Conference, building on our reflections on the IPS forum over the previous year, I introduced a grammar-based expansion of the Integral model which deploys not only the familiar pronounal lenses (I, We, It, and Its), but also lenses or philosophemes based on other parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. Just as the pronouns in Integral Theory yield a postmetaphysical, perspectivist onto-epistemology, and provide an elegant framework for integrative metatheory, the other parts of speech may serve (and, historically, often have served) similar philosophical functions: supporting substantialist, aspect-oriented, processual, modal, and relational ontologies, respectively, and in some cases giving rise to alternative metatheoretical approaches. I discuss the grammatical philosophemes and their respective philosophical systems in detail in "Sophia Speaks" (Alderman, in press).

For each of these philosophical systems, while a single part of speech often serves as the central organizing principle or lens, the philosophemes related to the other parts of speech tend also to be included, typically in subordinate roles. For instance, in Integral Theory, pronouns are given explicit emphasis, but nounal (structural), verbal (processual), and other philosophemes figure prominently as well. In my "Integral In-dwelling" paper, I argue that one of the most important philosophemes for integral theorizing is, in fact, the preposition. The four-quadrant map speaks to the fundamental *with*-ness, the nonduality or inseparability, of the pronoun-perspectives. The integral instinct is of a deep and irreducible relationality to things; in Jean-Luc Nancy's words, the *being singular plural* or co-essentiality of things.

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[4] See "Sophia Speaks," to be published in 2019 in Dancing with Sophia: Integral Philosophy on the Verge; and "Integral In-dwelling," published in Consciousness journal.

LAYMAN: Yes, I appreciate your emphasis on prepositions. This idea extends my basic assertion in some of my own writings that the common divine element which exceeds and interblends the three primary ontological domains/classes – of the gross, subtle, and causal – is not situated outside them (as would be impossible and nihilistic to conceive) but rather as omni-pervasive functional thresholds within which difference and sameness are simultaneously presented and cancelled. These are prepositional instances. They allow "trans-duality" to be ubiquitous, seemingly absent, oriented (towards something), generative and loving (relational), etc.

In other words, the integrative potential of worldviews is demonstrated only at integration-sites, which are prepositional in nature. Prepositions permit the operation of all other grammatical functions and as such occupy a distinct status relative to the others.

BRUCE: That is the contention of Bruno Latour and Michel Serres as well: prepositions do not mark a separate ontological domain, but rather they pre-position or prepare the position for what is to come. They function, as Michel Serres observes, as angelic mediators, linking subjects with other subjects or objects, dwelling in the thick midst of becoming, tracing relations and forging sites of integration in the teeming flux of things. In this sense, prepositions play a facilitative role akin to mathematical operators, proliferating everywhere, providing points of departure and possibilities for contact and co-generative interaction. At their most refined, they function, perhaps, at what the Kashmiri philosopher Abhinavagupta called the fourth level of language. The third level is pre-articulated language, which is the precondition for conceptuality (*pasyanti*); and the fourth is the most subtle level (*para*, or the goddess of speech, *Paravak*), which is the precondition for all communication and sentience. In a modern framework, we might relate level three, for instance, to the embodied metaphors or image schemas of Lakoff and Johnson; and level four might be related to Roy Bhaskar's formulation of nonduality as the necessary precondition for any communication or contact at all. (Abhinavagupta's claim that "everything has the nature of everything" also seems to be one precursor – among many – to Bhaskar's notion of co-presence, which I explored in depth in "Integral In-dwelling").

EDWARD: As is my wont, I see Abhinavagupta's level four as my gal, *khora*. Such *différance* is an ontic basis where same/differentiation pre-exists, or sets the conditions for, our (or any) categorical perception. *Différance*, as Derrida suggests, is that which pre-positions identity and difference, i.e., the transcendental condition for their manifestation. Connecting this to integral grammatology, the preposition acts like *khora* in that it is that withdrawn core that prepares the space-time for actual occasions and is coterminous with them, a la Whitehead. Hence I'm wondering if prepositions, while parts of language, aren't themselves something pre-linguistic and which tie language back to that basic categorical embodiment via image schemata?

BRUCE: Yes, I see prepositions really as straddling levels three and four, depending on how they are deployed philosophically. But we have gotten pretty thick into the woods so quickly! I'm afraid we're going to lose readers before we even begin. So, dialing back a little, and also re-orienting us back towards the promised discussion of generative (en)closures, I'll just make the following observation.

In "Integral In-dwelling," I named several prepositional constellations as implicit to integral meta-theorizing: with-above-below, for Wilber's early spectrum of consciousness model; with-in-out for his four quadrant map; and several others related to his three heuristic principles for integral methodological pluralism. For the bulk of the paper, I focused on a prepositional constellation I called *with/in*, which names the mutual, concurrent *with*-ness (external proximity) and *in*-ness or *within*-ness (internal relatedness, enfoldment) that marks the nondual in-dwelling or co-presence of things recognized by both Wilber's Integral Theory and Bhaskar's metaReality. I was interested in the promise of this prepositional constellation for forging a generative "integral pluralist" (or Many/One) model of interreligious relations.

For a discussion of generative (en)closures, I'd like to start with a more traditional pairing, the *in-out* relation, and the *between* (boundaries) they establish. Together, in, out, and between constitute what Lakoff and Johnson call a CONTAINER image schema. These are important distinctions for Integral Theory's holons, of course, as the quadrant map makes clear. For religious traditions, they are usually invoked to identify insider/outsider dynamics, with related notions of membership or belonging, protection, orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, sacredness and profanity, etc.[5]

A generative (en)closure is also a kind of container, still trading on the CONTAINER image schema or metaphor, but I hope in our discussion here to highlight a different, more integrally and postmetaphysically resonant set of distinctions, not limited to the traditional ones of membership, orthodoxy, and so on.

LAYMAN: So, to start, Bruce, can you tell us, in a couple short sentences, just what the heck is "generative (en)closure"? Why is this a relevant concept? What is it the opposite of?

BRUCE: Generative (en)closure is a word I came up with several years ago as I was reflecting on the relationship of several different concepts or themes: integral spirituality, participatory enaction, translineage practice, autopoiesis, ontology, epistemology, etc. Depending on the context, I've used it as a synonym for holon (in Integral thought), for object or machine (in Object Oriented Ontology), for body or body-constituting (in Gendlin's work or more generally), for autopoietic system (a la Varela/Maturana or Luhmann), for a tradition or lineage (within religious studies), or for bubble or sphere (a la von Uexküll's biosemiotics or Sloterdijk's spherology). Which means it's either a pretty sloppy and promiscuous word, or a generative word, or both.

The way I spell it, with the parentheses, emphasizes both a verb or process (generative closure) and a noun (what we point to as enacting and embodying such closure).

Time and further discussion will tell if this is a relevant and useful concept for people. With the term, I wanted to highlight the generativity of particulars – whether persons, institutions, or things. For instance, an autopoietic entity in its self-maintaining closure, or a Whiteheadian actual occasion in its concrescence, not only demarcates something

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[5] For a detailed study, see Kim Knott's (2011) "Inside, Outside and the Space in-between: Territories and Boundaries in the Study of Religion."

particular; it generates novelty in its very (en)closure; it *is-and-makes* differences that make a difference. The original context in which I was introducing the term, was as a term for religious institutions or lineages – churches, sanghas, practice lineages, etc – each of which is a site of creative, participatory enactment: each a unique way of engaging with the kosmos, each a unique vehicle for the calling forth and embodiment of spiritual vision and realization. But this is sort of a specialized use, and I intend for it to apply more broadly as well (as a general ontological distinction).

Originally, in my paper, "Opening Space for Trans-lineage Practice," the opposite I set for generative (en)closure was Jean-Luc Nancy's term, *dis/enclosure* – the auto-deconstruction of things. Bubbles pop. And this, too – death, too – is generative. But for our discussion here, we might also consider the notion of *degenerative (en)closures*. We can go into this later, if you'd like.

LAYMAN: Probably people do not get very far into their own integral-like consciousness without having had some glimpses of the universal process by which all things arise, form themselves, distinguish themselves, change, and pass away. Bubbles rise and bubbles burst. But where is there to go onward from that insight?

What kinds of things do you hope a more clear understanding of this ultra-basic process might offer people? What might we gain from looking more closely and precisely at the way entities exist or do not exist?

BRUCE: To speak to the bubble metaphor first: Bubbles are good symbols for the generative (en)closures I am wanting to talk about here, those temples, practice lineages, and traditions that are the sites of our inspired living and transformative engagement. Bubbles exist in suspended flight, in motion and relation, lasting as long as they remain in movement; dying only when they come to rest for too long. Bubbles are obviously transient. They remind us that the traditions we inhabit similarly quiver on the edge of existence, and that our ongoing enjoyment of them is a matter of re-enactment, the serious *lila* of bubble play. Bubbles exist by a kind of closure, and yet in closure they make light uniquely visible; they refract and amplify it. And as Sloterdijk reminds us, a bubble is a structure of inspiration; we breathe it into existence.

Considering the basic ontological utility of the word: I do think it can function something like holon, applying all the way up, and all the way down, to all sorts of "somethings" – here, emphasizing not the whole-part relations of things but the generativity of things at all levels (as "difference engines," to reappropriate a phrase). But for the purposes of our discussion, I have seen especial promise in the concept because it allows me to bring together and interrelate a number of terms that I think are useful for discussions of integral and translineage spirituality: Integral holons, Whiteheadian actual occasions, Sloterdijkian and von Uexküllian bubbles, and Object Oriented Ontology's withdrawing objects, among other things. These terms are not identical and can't be forced together in total identification, which is why I like generative (en)closure: it allows me to bring them near each other, without assuming identity, and to draw insight from each according to the aspect of integral/translineage spirituality that I'm focusing on.

Maybe it would help, early in this discussion, to quote from the paper where I originally introduced the concept, and then we can go from there (wherever this leads). Here's the section of "Opening Space for Translineage Practice" where I introduced it:

"The relation of the term, generative (en)closure, to autopoietic theory should be clear: An autopoietic system, meaning a 'self-making system,' exhibits a definitive closure and circularity in its pattern of organization. While '(en)closure' can be read as a noun, signifying a fixed structure or a static condition, I prefer a more active or processual inflection: enclosure as the 'act of enclosing.' Here, the term is perhaps close to what Eugene Gendlin means by body-constituting, in that both (en)closure and body-constituting are generative. Gendlin (2012) explains,

Body-constituting is a generative body-environment process (without the here-there split)... Everyone agrees that the body is made of environmental stuff, but it was assumed to be separate from the environment, merely perceiving and moving in it. But if we consider the body's formation as a body process, then the body is environmental interaction from the start. The body is identical with its environment in one body-constituting process. (p. 6)

But body-constituting is generative not only in the formation and maintenance of the body; it is active as well in the ongoing differentiation of the environment and the generation of objects. In the process of body-constituting, the body will develop processes that become active only when certain intermittent aspects of the environment are present. When these elements are not present, however, the body nevertheless continues to imply them, and this ongoing implication is generative both of difference within the body and within the environment. As Gendlin (2012) explains:

Certain processes become differentiated; they occur just with certain parts of the environment. This generates specific environmental objects... For example, sugar, water, and light appear and are incorporated only sometimes. Then the body-constituting with these 'objects' becomes separated from the rest of the process (if the organism didn't die in their absence). Then the body has separate processes just for these parts of the environment. The moment they re-appear, just these processes resume. So we call these differentiated parts of the environment 'objects'. But to think this we need to say that when something implied doesn't occur, the body continues to imply it. Until something meets that implying ('carries it forward', we say), the body continues to imply what was implied and didn't occur. If part of what was implied did occur, then only the part that did not occur continues to be implied. This 'reiterated implying' is a basic concept. It explains how objects in the environment become differentiated.[6] (pp. 6-7)

Gendlin's account is thus quite close to what I mean by generative (en)closure: this active enclosure, this enfolding and implication, is generative of other bodies and forms (i.e., enactive, in a single process of body-world flowering or co-constitution). But the term,

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[6] Tom Murray discusses this concept from Roy Bhaskar's perspective, as the realness of negation, in his essay contribution for this issue.

(en)closure, is suggestive of more than just the body, which is why I have introduced the term here. It evokes images of sheltering and sustaining structures – of tabernacles and dwellings and temples.

With Jorge Ferrer, I see the generative (en)closures of our traditions, churches, and lineages, whether singly or multiply held, each as uniquely embodied means of participatory enaction – as creative expressions of our invocational engagement with spiritual power or mystery. With Bruno Latour, I see each generative (en)closure as the rounding of particularity, utterly and liberatingly concrete, both irreducible and always-reducible or -relatable, and I recognize that every difference charges us with an ethical imperative. With Catherine Keller and the polydox theologians, I see in every generative (en)closure of body and tradition the folding and unfolding of the relational *pli*, which situates us in multiplicities, imbricates us in complementarities, and implicates us in the unknowing of our evolutionary becoming. With Jean-Luc Nancy, I see in the generative (en)closure of any particular tradition the singular plural of its being, the "with" that is constitutive of its presence, where its singular presence is always already co-presence, the declaration of the impossibility (and the utter poverty) of the "Only One." And with Wilber, I see generative (en)closure as a holon — already plurisingular, the body of tetra-enaction – which, as a holon, can never be mistaken for a (non-holonic) foundation or ultimate, thus releasing it to the ongoing invitation of the divine's becoming."

LAYMAN: I appreciate your remarks – especially the excerpts from your article. However, I fear in my bones that most integralites are not (and probably for very good reasons) terribly well-versed in concepts like AUTOPOIESIS. You are a madman sword fighting with chandeliers. So much the better.

But when we are explaining ourselves by the use the "*-pli*" of illumination in a Gendlin/Latour context...? Are we safe in the hands of such a driver? Who knows where these kinds of words will lead!

My PBS-award-winning Metaphysics of Adjacency[7] can certainly unfurl to appreciate the way in which you bring together many advanced models of "the basic form of Reality" and let them touch as intimately as possible without ceasing to be importantly different. Now that's adjacency!

[Canned laughter.]

This focus demonstrates the importance of having a (preposition-like) distinction-fusion terminology for the basic existential scaffolding of Being/s.

BRUCE: Yes. The slippery way I use generative (en)closure is prepositional – i.e., a promiscuous angel.

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[7] Layman Pascal introduced his Metaphysics of Adjacency in two threads on the IPS forum: http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-metaphysics-of-adjacency-or-almost-is-good-enough and http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/forum/topics/principles-of-adjacency-draft.

EDWARD: That's my gal, Khora. She's good between the sheets.

LAYMAN: I have a few follow-up questions. How can a super-enclosure form which makes a temple of the whole civilization, the whole planet, the whole species? What is the distinctive logical structure of such a (in my words) natural planetary cathedral?

BRUCE: If we follow Herr Sloterdijk on this, we will see that the theocratic empires attempted to stretch the womb out to the size of the earth, or even bigger, and the poor overtaxed monosphere tore under the strain. If a new planetary cathedral is to be erected, I think it will be foamy and fractal; in our recognition of the unmasterability of enclosures (they withdraw), and our delighting in the endlessly fruitful in-between, I expect a great, foamy structure or composite will disclose itself.

EDWARD: Fractal, yes, if by fractal you mean that each repetition iterates – i.e., while repeating to some degree, each iteration adds something novel and is not quite the same. I often get the feeling that with some complexity-chaos theories a fractal is the *same* repeating pattern ad infinitum, more a formal wish fulfillment of stable, unchanging Form. And like our friends the image schemata, always in media res, this gives pause for "our delighting in the endlessly fruitful in-between," *in-between* itself being one of those prepositional schema.

BRUCE: Agreed. Not just "the same" at different scales.

LAYMAN: Is Sacred Space – like the wavelengths of light – an increase of frequency which creates a modified qualitative space? This is also asking: is there a necessary increase of BEING in sacred enclosure, or is it merely the standard form of human activity? Or both?

BRUCE: I'm tempted to say both. I think there is a sense, which most of us have felt, where a vital generative (en)closure – a powerful practice retreat, a therapeutic encounter, a relationship, etc – seems to greatly amplify qualitative space. I mentioned earlier how bubbles trap and amplify light. A generative (en)closure can be seen as a kind of device for trapping and amplifying light, a space of interfacial energy and intensification. We do this all the time, of course. But sometimes we do it better than others. And sometimes we create spaces which suck the life right out of us, and make our faces go numb. That's what I mean by degenerative (en)closure: the space has soured, and turned deadening.

Regarding a generative or sacred enclosure as just a standard form of human activity: our bodies, for us, are often experienced as quotidian, ordinary. But they are particularly generative (en)closures for the elements they take in, awakening properties and enlisting them in processes that are well beyond what they would have experienced before being absorbed into our constitutions. So there's an ineluctable relativity at play.

In any event, returning to our theme of spiritual or religious generative (en)closures, I conceive of them not only as light-amplifiers, but as magic circles, or rings of invocation – meaning, as sites of participatory engagement or enactment. At the moment, I have the image in my head of a large, cage-like metallophone, which you can strike and bow in

various ways while suspended under the sea. This musical enclosure has the capacity to call whales and other great creatures out of the deep.

EDWARD: Including especially the patron/matron saint of IPS, Cthulhu.

BRUCE: Yes, of course. *Fhtagn!* It is a site for participatory engagement with the *tehom*, the abyss.

LAYMAN: The image of a planetary fractal of self-similar sacred enclosures helping to create a human wisdom-civilization is enchanting and compelling. Moreso once we add in the vision of a xylaphone-like submarine cage sending its evocative ripples out to the denizens of the deep ocean.

BRUCE: As I've mentioned, with generative (en)closure, I wanted to find a word that allowed me to draw close together, and draw upon, multiple ontological models (whether of bubbles, objects, bodies, holons, or autopoietic systems), by emphasizing one feature which I think is common across all of them: the enactive interplay of "closure" and "generativity." In the case of traditions and wisdom cultures, I mean to say that, by enacting a certain membrane, which has the capacity to sensitively resonate and respond in distinctive ways (whether spiritual, therapeutic, relational, or political), we are building submarine instruments of invocation; we are calling to the deep, and to the pregnant between. If we follow Goethe, who says that for each new object we perceive we grow a new organ of perception, then through our enactive invocations we are ultimately birthing new avatars for new modes of Kosmic interface and intercourse.

LAYMAN: The "use" of membranes is certainly what enactive (en)closures bring to our terminology – above and beyond the notion of basic units... even units where substance is understand to be equally a verb and noun.

Like Teihard de Chardin's vision of the divine sphere presencing through all the self-reflective openings in the noosphere, we must be quite saliently alert to the possibility of an emerging overall pattern which appears here, there, there, and there on its way to being everywhere. The somewhat imperial drives of L. Ron Hubbard and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi start to look oddly similar at certain points. Perhaps we see in the historical multiplicity of "theocratic empires" an already fractal proliferation of the same basic pattern of worldcentric enclosure-attempts. But inadequately intelligent, inadequately healthy. Premature.

But what would be adequate to such a task? Can a more fluid and participatory web of self-reflecting sacred cultural enclosures arise more or less spontaneously or only in tandem with a great (or the greatest yet seen) kind of enforcement? A chilling thought. One wonders what the role of the "thought of an acceptable worldcentric enclosure" is in all of this. That classic photo of the Earth from space already sort of ripples through the noosphere, creating a sense of its reflection in many lesser bubbles in the great froth.

To what degree do we need the evocative impression of the "great enclosure" in order to facilitate the fractal proliferation?

BRUCE: Yes, I like that. I think that image of the earth is decisive for our time. It reveals our world as a whole, as a generative (en)closure, as a fragile immunological zone, as a hyperobject which exhibits non-local gravitational influence on all in its vicinity. In the fractal diffusion of sacred enclosures, in all their diversity and richness, I think we also need the ubiquitous reflection of that earth image. The envelope of air and energy which enfolds the hyper-generative (en)closure of the earth both creates a protective immunological zone, a separator or sealant, which has allowed for the intensification of the cosmic "stuff" that has collected here, allowing star dust to evolve eyes to look back at itself; and provides a clear window for admitting light and connecting us to the larger cosmos. And that larger cosmic history must, too, find its reflection in the spreading bubbles of new sacred cultural enclosures.[8]

But this whole earth, as an (en)closure, is not a singular whole; it is singular plural, meaning it is a composite (which is as much *less than* as *more than* its parts). Are you familiar with Latour's "Compositionist Manifesto"? In his discussion of composure and composites, of emergent unities and enacted universalities, that generate new wholes while also retaining the heterogeneity of the parts brought so closely together, I think he gives voice to a sensibility (both prepositional and postmetaphysical) that you might appreciate:

Even though the word "composition" is a bit too long and windy, what is nice is that it underlines that things have to be put together (Latin *componere*) while retaining their heterogeneity. Also, it is connected with composure; it has clear roots in art, painting, music, theater, dance, and thus is associated with choreography and scenography; it is not too far from "compromise" and "compromising," retaining a certain diplomatic and prudential flavor. Speaking of flavor, it carries with it the pungent but ecologically correct smell of "compost," itself due to the active "de-composition" of many invisible agents. ... Above all, a composition can fail and thus retains what is most important in the notion of constructivism (a label which I could have used as well, had it not been already taken by art history). It thus draws attention away from the irrelevant difference between what is constructed and what is not constructed, toward the crucial difference between what is well or badly constructed, well or badly composed. What is to be composed may, at any point, be decomposed.

In other words, compositionism takes up the task of searching for universality but without believing that this universality is already there, waiting to be unveiled and discovered. It is thus as far from relativism (in the papal sense of the word) as it is from universalism (in the modernist meaning of the world—more on this later). From universalism it takes up the task of building a common world; from relativism, the certainty that this common world has to be built from utterly heterogeneous parts that will never make a whole, but at best a fragile, revisable, and diverse composite material (Latour, 2010).

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[8] Vision of such scope, Joel Primack and Andy Fisher (2002) argue, is necessary to begin to "take in" and adequately respond to the crises presently unfolding across the earth-sphere.

I mention him because I think that the image you invoke, not only of the earth, but of the imperial cultural/spiritual movements of the past, is one that also can inform bubble formation: not as a template so much as a kind of historical attractor, an image of longed for composure and adjacency that was immaturely conceived and realized, but which nevertheless can still speak to us as we come to face the demands of our age to think and act with greater care for the nested and imbricated cultures and systems of our globe.

Regarding the possibility of a foamy, fractal diffusion of wisdom culture, this alongsided emergence, one image that comes to mind is that of the parasite. Integral Theory, for instance, is a sort of superbug that (at this point) thrives mostly by attaching itself to all sorts of entities: religion, business, medicine, leadership, etc.

Michel Serres: "The position of a parasite is to be between. That is why it must be said to be a being or a relation. But the attribute of the parasite... is its specificity. It is not just anything that troubles a passing message. It is not just anyone who is invited to someone's table. A given larva develops only in a certain organism and is carried only by a certain vector."

I am not indicting Integral with this image; I think this is actually quite a creative, generative role it plays. In Serres' notion of the parasite, it doesn't just drain from its host; it actually can inspire it to complexify, develop, diversify, etc.

So ... what (parasitic) role can Integral play in relation to the development of various generative (en)closures, fostering an alongsided bubbling up of new forms here, there, and there?

LAYMAN: I am not well-versed in Latour's "Compositionist Manifesto." However, from the snippet you present, it certainly has the hallmarks of the Metaphysics of Adjacency. And you single out a nice passage.

It touches on both the interdependence-of-created-unities-and-heterogenous-parts AND the matter of "composure." Regarding your integral grammatology, my sense is that the higher echelon of these lenses involves both "prepositional" and "adverbial" structures. The latter concerns modalities. Universal human religiosity – adjacency-enabled faith – has a strongly postural element. This is somewhere between (1) the generalized nature of yogic asanas; (2) the theory that smiling makes you happy; and (3) Heidegger's use of comportment to describe the enacted relationship of the Being to his world.

And the "compost" aspect touches on the enfolding of the scruff, the dissociated, the organic-implicit reality into the highest spirituality. This is a tantric characteristic which intuits, I think, something necessary about the emerging planetary aesthetic. Comparing the evolutionary clarity of "in between" to a parasite (Serres) does something comparable. As too does the use of Cthulhu to signify the rising cosmic glory of divinely non-dual multiplicity in a trans-ironic age. There is a qualitative aspect to the parasite and a transitional aspect. Integral, as parasite, in this sense is much like integral as gardener.

EDWARD: At this point, I think it would be helpful to zero in and say a little more about what you guys mean by "integral postmetaphysical spirituality" (or religion). As you know, while I have a Hermetic/Kabbalistic background, I have become more interested these days in our pressing social, economic, and ecological concerns. What could be more spiritual than helping people earn a living wage to feed their families? Than addressing income inequality so that people have a fair shot at creating enough money to meet their basic needs and have some surplus time and energy to devote to needs higher on the hierarchy, like spiritual pursuits? And I don't mean just traditional religion but so-called integral postmetaphysical spirituality (IPS)? It seems most of us that are into such spiritual pursuits are already privileged with enough surplus in the lower levels like survival, membership, individual autonomy and transcendental awareness that we take for granted that most of the population is struggling to eat and pay the rent. If you are the latter you will not focus on much of anything else, let alone IPS.

So, when you talk about religious or spiritual generative (en)closures, what exactly are you talking about? Do you mean traditional religions, like Christianity or Buddhism? Or do you mean something else, something more – inclusive, perhaps, of what Raimon Panikkar calls "sacred secularity"?

BRUCE: Both, I think. I like your take on these terms, Layman. Would you like to take a first shot and then I'll add my thoughts afterwards?

LAYMAN: In very short form, spirituality is a surplus energy or feeling that's produced in the individual through the successful integration of their sub-components. So, let's say left and right brain; let's say heart, mind, and body; let's say unprocessed psychological subpersonalities; let's say masculine and feminine essences – any of these things that could be said to be basic functional units of the individual psyche. When those are brought together and there's a successful integration, you don't just get what you had before, tidied up a little bit. You get this gestalt; you get something more than the sum of its parts, and that is a sort of numinous excess, a kind of glow at any level of individual cognition. You can perceive it as an extra force that permits you to be stylistically sculpted into more of what you hope that you are. So that's spirituality.

Now the same process, applied culturally, is religion. Instead of the subcomponents of the individual personality, you have something like social genres; you have something like art and science, war and politics, peace, mysticism, all the different classes of cultural and social experience that could go on. When those things are integrated, then the coherence, the overtone that's generated among those parts working well as a team, also creates a kind of numinous, experiential excess. And that's perceived as a kind of glow around the historical time period in which it's produced. But it also gives people the sense that spirit is communing not just with individuals but with people in general, with that society or that culture. And out of that also evolves a kind of idiosyncratic style that represents that excess coherence. And so you get the arising of Tibetan Buddhism or the arising of Christianity out of these early social events where people are bringing a whole bunch of areas of their social life together as human beings, and mixing them, blending them, and establishing

something harmonious. And it gives it this tremendous, this extra cultural energy which echoes through the centuries for us.

That's a very tidy way of paralleling the definition between religion and spirituality. And it also allows us to use a definition that's really integral in its scope, which means we can extract it out from its different developmental phases and apply it to all of them. Because the standard type of theological analysis that goes on is very anchored in the Amber definition of religion, which is the idea that there's a big bloc of people; it has a popular name that everyone recognizes; it has some mythic symbolism; it has a set of dogma; people either join it or don't join it; and when they join it, they symbolically articulate their belief statements. That's often counted as if it's religion. But that's essentially, from an integral point of view, *everything* that happens at Amber; that's just the Amber style. And as long as the people at other levels assume that the Amber style counts as religion, then I'm going to have a need to add a second tier level, a sort of meta-theology to look back over all these things.

BRUCE: That's pretty much what Wilber would describe as a level-line fallacy: to conflate religion itself, as a line, with its Amber-level expression. So I think it's really important – and liberating, in a sense – to tease that apart. Often, Wilber, in his own work, does concede to the Amber-level definition of religion; he lets religion be defined by the labels of existing traditions. And that's fine. That's actually one area in which integral meta-theory can play a useful role – engaging with different traditions as they self-define, and working within and among them in different ways. But in liberating the concept of religion from that Amber-level definition, then you can begin to look well outside of those boundaries to discern contemporary expressions of religiosity wherever it might be happening in culture – in modernist or postmodernist settings, for instance, where it may not look like "church" or a "belief cult" at all, but where nevertheless we can make out that glow that you describe, that generation of surplus coherence and numinous excess.

As you know, Wilber has been careful to offer four or five alternative but complementary definitions of spirituality, identifying factors that are broad and general enough to apply across multiple stages of development. But to my knowledge, he has not attempted to define religion in the same way. So I think what you are offering here, these parallel definitions of religion and spirituality, is really useful.

I have an alternate way of thinking about the relationship of spirituality and religion, which I think is complementary to what you are saying. As we've been discussing, a generative (en)closure can be defined as the establishment of a zone of intensity through the enactment of a "membrane" in time or space. On the individual level, through practice routines, ritual behaviors, ascetic retreats, we create the conditions for the amplification of experience, the generation of zones of intensity which push us far from equilibrium, and allow for the development and disclosure of new patterns or ways of being, new forms of perception, new states of consciousness, and new levels of depth and personal integration. That's spirituality, the creation of a generative (en)closure on an individual level. And collectively, through social practices of establishing structure and building coherence, the different ways we have of gathering together, harnessing our energy and creativity into

spheres of mutual illumination and co-inspiration, through tradition, art, discourse, games, rituals, contemplative communities, and so on – the enactment of generative (en)closures intersubjectively or interobjectively, to foster collective well-being and wisdom, is what I would call religion. But of course they aren't entirely distinct or merely parallel movements: religious enclosures can support individual spiritual work, and spiritual work can inspire religious flowering.

These are not exactly the distinctions you are making, but I think the notion of generative (en)closure can apply fairly directly to your model as well: it is the establishment of generative (en)closures at different scales that can foster the inter-blending and generation of "surplus coherence" for individuals and collectives that you describe. The focus here being, postmetaphysically, on *practices*, on modes of participatory enactment.

In my view, a religious generative (en)closure can serve *both* to provide 'hothouse'-like space for cultivating and encouraging the full flowering of individual practitioners, and – in its religious function *per se*, if we use your terms – for performing those creative acts of meshworking and translation to foster inter- or trans-genre alliances and fusions.

EDWARD: This is all good, but we should not forget that generation of this surplus coherence depends, in part, on *material* surplus as well. A collective generative (en)closure may very well be the socioeconomic base.

BRUCE: Agreed; that's part of it. Whether of the dominant culture, or of a subculture that establishes its own means of support.

LAYMAN: My specification of religion as the infrastructure of experiential (and developmental) cultural abundance certainly requires that the economic infrastructure be well-integrated in order to make its responsible contribution. And we cannot ignore either the direct requirements of material resources or the ideological trace that our resource control patterns exert upon the hive-mind latent in all citizens. This latter factor is extremely significant in the production (or failure) of a "religion-izing" cultural field.

Under Amber regimes the form of economics most commonly related with religion echoes the "sovereign taxation" scheme. Tithing by individuals and states toward the universal church organization under the watchful eye of its symbolic, bureaucratic, and theatrical patriarch.

In Orange systems the tendency seems to be toward personal charitable acts as the main form of religionized economics... but that leaves out the well-known Cult of Money epidemic in such systems. And it leaves out the "religious" nature of public education, housing, opportunities, food, etc. There is no cultural flourishing at any level except by the more-than-adequate arrangement of material resource flows.

In general, regardless of the level of social and cognitive capacity, religious economies *ought to* mean those which maximize material surplus, produce more robust health among citizens generally, and have the ideological effect of aligning daily work efforts with a

resilient sense of spontaneously affirmed meaningfulness which connects the culture's formulation of its higher values with the material ground of vital affairs.

BRUCE: The way I'd put it is that we need good-enough material surplus, good-enough support, to foster sustained development individually and culturally. Because it is often the gaps, the failures, in an overall field of good-enough support that quickens consciousness, thwarts stagnation, and spurs incremental and sometimes radical growth.

EDWARD: Ray Harris has noted that what's needed is "to facilitate the ethical redistribution of the surplus to best serve the evolutionary requirements of the whole spectrum." In other words, each social developmental level requires a surplus to evolve to the next level on Maslow's scale. It seems that the socio-economic circumstances of one's life are the prerequisite for even getting into this game of evolution. Hence it is up to those of us with privilege (time and money) to not only work on ourselves and others, but to create a socio-economic system that will provide enough surplus on these lower levels to enact this process. Hence my focus on those who are working towards creating such a system of surplus on the material level.

However it also depends on what kind of generative socioeconomic enclosure we have. Capitalistic utilitarianism applies material excess to individual consumption instead of applying it to higher needs. This in turn has led to a supply side economics that has to create excessive individual consumption, which leads to enormous systemic waste instead of socially applying its excess to those needs. Hence the emerging collaborative commons as a different socioeconomic enclosure that applies excess towards that progression up the developmental scale.

But with most of the surplus captured by government and the upper layers of society, there's a lot of inertia. So as to what can really get big business and government to change, well, the people can. What makes the former inadequate is its investment in the status quo, since they reap the benefits of increased power and money. But when they suck up so much of that that not only is there no surplus for the rest, but woefully inadequate crumbs leftover, then starvation for both food and personal power gets us off of our asses and into the streets. Suppression of potential can lead to its own excess: here, the overflow of rage and frustration. Ironically, it's the very greed of the power brokers that have as usual created such a drastic disparity in wealth distribution that the folk will gather up their pitchforks and retaliate, much like in the story of Frankenstein. Corporate capitalism, including the revolving government door that supports it, are this Frankenstein and their only motivation to change is when we come calling en masse with the pitchforks.

LAYMAN: I have very mixed feelings about this sentiment. It seems, all at once, to be both ideally practical and practically idealistic. Perhaps this double-impression simply results from how starkly it invokes the popular spirit of contemporary "democracy" – in which many obvious liberations and subtle oppressions reside. We have certainly come to expect that informed, mutually-supportive, social action of organized individuals, in defense of their well-being, ought to be the major driver of change. But I also experience a yawing feeling of suspicion when I contemplate it.

Both in "the people" and in corporate and political governing bodies there are many kinds of faulty mechanisms which are constantly contributing to negative results. And structural issues almost never mobilize the people with the urgency to make the changes which would facilitate the capacity of people to cause *benevolent* changes.

Most of us would agree that political and corporate governance should (and can) be patterned for more general benefit by the organized popular response to the corrupting influence of those who benefit from imbalance. But we need a lot more than vocal fervor to amplify, clarify, and edify the power of such movements.

EDWARD: I share your mixed feelings about "the people," for it depends on their center of gravity as to whether their actions are likely to be beneficial or destructive. It is the responsibility of those of us that have the luxury of exploring our higher needs to help frame the issues of our time, to use our skills to motivate those who are struggling and suffering to vote and get active in the political system in order to effect the change we want to see. Only then can we begin the process of moving to a more developed socioeconomic generative enclosure that is beneficial to all.

LAYMAN: Right. How do we rely on the mobilization of the People in way that does not leave us prey to their potential ignorance, gullibility, and capacity to be coerced? What distinguishes mass action from mass reaction and mob action? What kind of generative (en)closure will provide the greatest leverage for effecting the collective actions and the changes we would like to see? These are the kinds of questions that should preoccupy us all.

Getting back to what we were discussing earlier: I'd like to run with this notion of religious bubbles a little bit – see if we can put its feet on the ground.

Generative (en)closures are like assholes – everybody's got one. These "magic bubbles" are ubiquitous and universal. Cells, selves, and groups of all sorts are energetically engaged in establishing themselves as unique fields of relatively amplified coherence. These fields are partially set apart from their surroundings by a permeable membrane of physical acts, subjective impressions, communication systems, and shared spirit.

Yet of all the myriad modes of generative (en)closure we find ourselves especially interested in the "sacred" versions of culture. That means we are primed toward events, spaces, objects, and forms of practice-communities that are conventionally associated with religious traditions.

However we cannot take these traditions at face value. Why not?

BRUCE: I assume because of what we discussed previously: the traditional groupings are, for the most part, groupings based on the Amber definition of religion.

LAYMAN: Right. So what can the notion of a "religious tradition" mean to us? Knowing the incorrigible habits of integralites, we can predict that such traditions must appear,

eventually, as metaphorical zones of heightened cultural coherence which are experienced distinctly through the cognitive apparatus of each major developmental layer of human consciousness.

So let's see how this might look:

AMBER

Conventional popular terminology operates a set of associations which connect these linguistic acts with the mentality of orthodox/supra-tribal/believer-sects. For such people (within us), the production of religious bubbles is normalized into "traditions" which are based upon confessions of membership and the affirmation of standardized nation-like symbolism.

We immediately see that this is the orthodox meaning of famous "traditions" inherited predominantly from nationalistic, racial, sectarian city-state / agricultural-kingdom phases of history... including parts of the world still largely involved in this reality. So Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Shinto, Hinduism, etc., are a vision of generative (en)closures operating at this level and for this type of world.

ORANGE

Modern "enlightenment" mentality typically investigates the abstract mechanism-objects which may appear in the mind under various different names. This extra-cultural consciousness already seriously undermines the conventional assumption of religious bubbles as traditions. It supposes that every individual, regardless of their geographic and ethnocentric origin, is free to select from the big "menu" of normally presumed traditions. And we already begin to require those modifiers such as "seems like" and "almost" (which will become even more necessary at more complex layers) in order to fully clarify the experiential acts which are establishing generative (en)closures of the sacred-group type.

GREEN

Pluralism begins by alternating between realities. It therefore revalues apparent alternatives, folds in the obvious examples of minimized or excluded "others," and quickly moves to begin appreciating the inter-contextual effects operating at the semantic boundaries between interpretations. It proliferates alternatives and meta-models while deconstructing its options into creative sub-components.[9] Here we require quotation marks around the word "tradition" and expect that a variety of Christianities, Buddhisms, Islams, etc., are holding hands with an indefinitely unfolding mixture of neo-archaic, quasi-fictional, or hyper-individualistic attempts to performatively enact a religious bubble. The general ambivalence toward the hegemonic idea of a "tradition" arises quite naturally when our consciousness begins to emphasize background ecosystemic networks and the surprising world of unseen ingredients.

Here the definition of a tradition can only be a kind of game-piece in co-creative exchange. Linguistic habits, divergent states of consciousness, the activation of "neurosomatic brain

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[9] Late Orange/early Green pluralist thought becomes enamored with the possibility of a perennial philosophy.

circuitry," and the rise of the relaxed/sensitized universalist ethos requires that: Traditions are "whatever" WE or THEY say they are. We recognize that traditions are culturally co-created, in other words – but still struggle with clearly seeing our own implicit biases.

TEAL

Integrative approaches to religious bubbles must take over and newly explain the complementary validity of the previous phases. It is no longer good enough to imagine that traditions are anarchic mutual constructs any more than it is acceptable to pretend that popular group-designations represent monolithic "traditions" (or even easily comprehended sets of sub-traditions).

A twin task emerges here. We must enfold and validate the previous layers while also asserting a new coherent scaffolding of organic-functional and trans-structuralist "types" which form the REAL traditions.

Religion here must be a temporalized spectrum of transrational tantric holism dependent upon synchronization, creative appropriation of apparent incommensurability, and advanced dialectical sensibility.

We assume that different modules/lines of development probably form the basis for a categorization of types of religious bubbles – enacted in all quadrants and perceived distinctly at each layer of socio-cognitive reality. These basic types are the valid "traditions" when viewed from this level but they must be held alongside the embrace of non-pathological junior levels as well as held open for any degree of pragmatic usage among people whose temperament or prior-level conditioning leaves them instinctively skewed toward inherited styles.

BRUCE: That's really helpful, Layman. It's a lot to take in at once, but I admire the prodigious amount of deep and often luminous content you can deliver, seemingly always on-tap. What strikes me here is what sets this account apart from previous integral classifications of religious traditions. Ken Wilber and Dustin DiPerna, for example, have offered several different developmental overviews of the major world religions or religious figures: there is an Amber Buddhism, an Orange one, and a Green one; a Purple Jesus, a Red one, and an Orange one. Typically in these surveys, what counts as a religion remains constant throughout, but it gets reinterpreted, re-decorated, at each stage. They do not seem to have stressed that faithfulness to the inherited groupings is often retention of, and faithfulness to, an Amber-level formulation itself.

LAYMAN: Yes. And of course we already talked about that before. So, to recap:

Traditional consciousness presumes a totalized core – or "real nature" – of a religion. Often this is associated with a book-dogma or particular famous passages therein.

Modern consciousness wants to know what these different tradition-machines do for different individuals. It tries to distill the "truths" from whatever stories ensconced them.

Postmodern consciousness wants to include everything and thereby discovers a sliding scale of identities between all the normal and abnormal options. However this sliding scale does not acknowledge the embodied, anchoring parameters which enable it to operate.

When those are enfolded, a new set of structures appears as the justification of previous forms and suddenly we are required to re-group all the groups according to perspectival and enactive ingredients, and ground them in what seems unavoidably true about the human condition (e.g., the interplay of emotion and reason; the neuro-biological mechanics of state experiences, etc.)

EDWARD: What do you mean by a "sliding scale" between alternatives?

LAYMAN: Consider the following two examples:

A cult of Medieval Buddhists practiced meditation in a very interesting fashion. They called upon a compassionate Buddha-of-Light by Name. He had once walked upon the historical earth but now lived in a heavenly afterworld. By getting right with this figure your soul could be reborn in this heaven. Here the grace of illumination is rapidly and easily attained.

Not only does this sound a lot like what we normally mean by "Christianity," it was also noted by Zen Master Hakuin that a profound, insightful, and hard-practicing Name-Praying Buddhist should be considered to be doing Zen.

The Christian monk named Eckhart prayed to the Virgin Mary in a special way. He made his mind still and empty like a virgin's womb so that an all-pervading and nameless wisdom-power would naturally flow in, impregnating him with a new self – a "christ" who would feel, see, and understand via the christ-mind. That sounds a lot like Zen Buddhism.

Very Buddhist Christianity. Very Christian Buddhism.

Our pluralist consciousness learns to situate people on a sliding scale of alternatives between these major blocs. But we must ask whether or not those blocs are sustainable? If these traditions are so various as to include each other in most practical ways then of what use are they as the reference-group at all? Why situate the sliding scale between them? Why not look for a better grouping? Why not look as a zoologist would look – and not as a record-keeper of names would look?

BRUCE: That's a good question. And your final point, about the discovery of the interpenetration of traditions, takes us quite close to an integral model of interreligious relations that I developed elsewhere. It will lead us, really, to a different metaphor altogether: the wild knot, rather than the generative (en)closure. I'll return to this later. To offer my own recap in response to what you've just shared:

A generative (en)closure is formed through the communal establishment of a "membrane" which serves as a protective, unit- or field-defining boundary as well as a means of

interface, for the enactment of a domain of distinctions (i.e., a worldspace). We might pair the word "enclosure," here, with *disclosure*: the magic ring or bubble so established is *invocational*; it discloses certain *beings* and *worlds* (thinking here, for instance, of von Uexküll's semiotic bubbles). And as a "bubble" or "globe" in *Sloterdijk's* sense, it also establishes an immunological zone which, the stronger or more vital it is, the more it enables those within the (en)closure to interact with diverse cosmic beings without risk of compromising their health or integrity. While generative (en)closures are fragile and impermanent compositions, they are also ir/reducible in Latour's sense: not finally reducible to anything else, and yet always (through effort, with some loss, always via some 'transformation') indefinitely reducible or relatable to other things. One way to express this is that the irreducibility of a holon or generative (en)closure is found precisely in its indefinite or inexhaustible reducibility. In Edgar Morin's terms, a generative (en)closure (of the kind we are interested in here, such as religious or spiritual generative (en)closures) is autopoietic or auto-eco-reorganizing – self-producing and deeply participatory, in both embedded and enactive senses. Or we could understand this using Bhaskar's frequently paired terms, *concrete singularity* and *dialectical universality*. Taken together, they suggest that holons or generative (en)closures are not only irreducibly particular (concretely singular), but also intimately enfolded within and co-present to one another (mutually in-dwelling, in potential if not in actuality for any particular being at a given time).

Turning to religion, we might envision 'nominal traditions' as foam-like identity clusters, or cultural-linguistic clusters, which consist of numerous 'religious bubbles' – partly overlapping, contiguous, or connected-at-a-distance – each of which maintains itself through practices and forms of religious speech. If we take the generation of coherence and surplus meaningfulness as at least two characteristics of spiritual and religious activity (and there may be other important ones to consider), we must also recognize that this coherence itself is a multiplicity of 'coherences' – of forms and modes of flowering, integration, becoming-whole – that might be sought and enacted by practitioners belonging to any particular religious bubble. The "dharma" of different bubbles may be to attend to and exercise different lines, in other words, or cultivate different states, privilege different perspectives, seek different levels of maturity and visionary-ethical embrace, etc.

But if we consider that 'nominal traditions' may also include 'bubbles' which no longer function religiously, at least from an integral perspective (meaning, they've become *degenerative*); and also that religious bubbles may form well outside the bounds of the nominal religious traditions; and also that different nominal traditions may include bubbles that are rather structurally and functionally similar to (or homeomorphically equivalent to) religious bubbles outside of their own boundaries, then ... well, this foam is quickly getting out of hand!

Keeping this visualization going, we might imagine injecting medical dyes into this giant foamy mountain, with different colors to indicate the 'territory' claimed by any nominal tradition as well as those religious bubble-territories that lie outside of traditional boundaries. Each of these colored swaths might overlap or intersect at various places of homeomorphic equivalency. If we further imagine that the bubbles can be differentiated

along soteriological, developmental, and other lines – the forms and styles of being they seek, the lines they exercise, the perspectives they privilege – then we might dye the bubbles in additional colors, until they all begin to shine with rainbow iridescence, each bubble reflecting all the other teeming spheres. In this foamy topography, we might still be able to pick out differently hued swaths that correspond roughly to the various traditions and lineages we first marked – different continents, islands, and currents of opacity and radiance in the teeming mound – but at the same time, we will be able to discern entirely different strands and masses of color, new geographies which have little to do with the old circles of belonging. Rising up high enough to capture such a global view will likely impact us the way our first vision of Earth did: we can no longer view or inhabit our 'countries' in quite the same way, if we feel inclined to identify with them at all.

This metaphor suggests rather crudely some beginning anthropological passes through a newly discovered territory: a foamy space of religious bubbles that are both contiguous and mutually reflective or interpenetrating. Prepositionally, this is the *with/in* of co-presence, integral in-dwelling. When we take on the vision of co-presence, we realize that each holon or generative (en)closure ultimately enfolds the totality, or the potential to actualize any aspect of the totality. Traditions remain unique, because each only enacts certain parts of that potential at any time, in its own distinctive ways; and yet each is haunted by all. In "Integral In-dwelling," I introduced the concept of the wild knot to get at this infinite in-folding: in knot theory, a wild knot is a knot that folds infinitely, without final closure. That unfathomable entanglement is what I also try to suggest through this image of bubbles, with their dizzying dye patterns and their Indra's net-like iridescent co-reflection. The spreading, intermixing dye patterns identify those places we have begun to trace out homeomorphic equivalencies across multiple domains, multiple traditions or (en)closures (a task we are likely never to complete).

So I appreciate your additions here, Layman. In my previous writings, I had argued that the concept of co-presence could deliver a fruitful model of interreligious relationship, allowing at once for the singularity and entanglement of traditions. I assumed this orientation could promote greater willingness to learn from other traditions, if we could recognize in them some of our own latent potentials, while being assured that our actualization of the same would still be unique or "faithful" to our own mythos. And I had used my integral grammatology to explore the complementarity of several different integrative models, and to suggest some useful metatheoretical "pivot points" to bring them into closer relation. But I had not yet formally discussed or proposed the tasks you recommend here: questioning and deconstructing our "received" traditions (a kind of exercise in dis/enclosure), and actually tracing out the enactive practices, lines, and other AQAL (or other) factors *across* traditions and stages that might really help to identify altogether different groupings or families of religious bubbles.

LAYMAN: Nicely summarized, Bruce. And yes, that task is still mostly ahead of us.

Once we see "bubbles" (in whatever version) we are already standing well beyond the traditionalist worldspace. Probably beyond the modernist worldspace as well. From this vertiginous height, we peer down tentatively at a seething and remarkable panorama. What

do we see? Delicate but robust entanglements of interpenetrating zones. Each one marked at its edges by an ongoing activity of self-reference, attunement, engagement, assimilation, and self-defense. Atop the central spire of the largest bulge we see the flags we have inherited from the modernists – the great "options" which they have discovered in their exploratory journeys between orthodox cultural modes.

We are delighted, intrigued, and provoked. Perhaps we begin a new round of investigations? Our anthropologists start to dispense with the notion of a single hegemonic interpretation at the "core" of a dogmatic text. We rove about asking all the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews about their experience of their own faith. A great diversity is recorded. Look at all these different types of that one "thing" we are studying... but truly the diversity is excessive! It overwhelms our studies. Our subject of investigation appears where it should not be and vanishes from key areas where we relied on it as a reference. The bubbles proliferate so rapidly we are left with handfuls of sheer fluid... leaking through our fingers.

Vexed, we resolve to climb a little higher and get a "better view." But as our altitude increases the problem only gets worse (although, admittedly, our sense of its "problem-nature" seems to diminish). Now the inherited labels seem arbitrary or misleading as often as useful. They retain no privilege in the categorization of the topology we are inspecting. And yet the result is not a free-for-all. Like men watching the fractals on the surface of a flowing river, we are clearly confronted by recurrent patterns – even by a typology.

As we slowly familiarize ourselves with these previously obscure types of patterns, inventing new terms as we go, there begins to appear an astonishing and imposing vision. These types-of-religion are appearing sometimes near the rituals, practices, and conversations of traditions... sometimes far away... but always in a great mutuality with each other. They are active according to their own natures and from whatever context they emerge from within. Yet they are not independent. From this height it is clear that they are immediately mutually supportive – counterbalancing each other in great variety – and progressively self-similar. Each one that thrives does so by expanding into mutations and assimilations which approximate the expansion patterns of the others. Yes, they are idiosyncratically emerging and diverging, but they are also cooperating with each other and enfolding each other in ways that push them forward toward a seemingly totalized manifestation.

Now we feel that we behold the rise of universal religion – not by the conquest of one nominal tradition nor by their cooperation (although both factors play a subordinate role) – but as a kind of botanical phenomenon operating at a level that more frequently resembles "generic human culture" than "popular notions of religion." And yet its religiousness is amplified, enhanced. It is building a force, and operating through mechanisms, appropriate to the sheer planetary (and perhaps interplanetary) nature of its task.

BRUCE: I'm smiling because those final words would likely be quite disturbing to our brothers and sisters of the "participatory turn." But my sense is that what you are describing is as much *composition* as *disclosure*: a kind of participatory enactment in itself. Something like

Latour's notion of *instauration* comes to mind: the blurring or in/distinction of "discovery" and "invention." We can't quite tell whether what we "find" was already fully there waiting for us, or is something newly summoned, a playful and useful enactment

Is there anything else you wanted to add about religious bubbles?

LAYMAN: Yes, one other piece. In addition to this striated vision of religious bubbles we must be aware that multiple types of bubbles may operate with largely overlapping sets of symbols and referents. This is because the actual activity of generative (en)closing, like the experience of a layer of consciousness, is anchored in the style of the context – the holding – and not exactly the content which is affirmed.

This is especially pertinent when it comes to social discussion. We have to make two critical distinctions: active vs. neutral (or even degenerative), sacred vs. topical.

1. The former implies that any communication (which reinforces a boundary by referencing it) might be vibrating with the freshness of new meaningfulness *or* basically a mechanical reiteration. For example, the perpetuation of the signifier "Christ" may in one utterance operate to help reinforce the vitality of a particular religious bubble, or it may be indifferent to such a function – used without spirit in a manner whose effects are primarily (if not totally) inert relative to the establishment of the membrane around a field of cultural coherence.

The slogan "no one is neutral on a moving train" reminds us that non-progressive or non-resonant embodiments of zone-establishing signifiers quickly move from the status of placeholder to the status of underminer. Not carrying it forward frequently operates as if it were destructive. And yet it may use apparently the same symbols or rituals, etc.

2. Our second distinction requires that we tease apart the production of "talk bubbles" from "religious bubbles." Clearly there may be all kinds of overlap but it is not necessarily the case that a particular generative (en)closure is being established when it seems to be appearing in discussion and shared thinking. People frequently manipulate conversational TOPICS in order to discuss other topics which are urgent, titillating, or nearby.

Just as any critical discussion of a thinker's positions may be quite valid while not actually pertaining to that person's ideas in any legitimate or comprehensive fashion, and just as the shadow of a celebrity can occupy a place in the politics of cyberspace which has little to do with their actual nature or positions (frequently unknown to the people discussing them), we can find this same pattern of "ghosts in the system" in the study of religious bubbles as well.

Therefore, at minimum, we need to make sure that we do not mistake the transactional economy of conversation – whether populist, academic, or apparently "devout" – for the symbolic and cognitive processes which support the establishment of a generative (en)closure of the religious-group type. They may or may not be the same in any given instance. A great deal of hesitation is required in front of apparently obvious topics. Even

those who appear supportive (and are therefore readily embraced and affirmed) may be supporting a phantom that simply bears an identical name in the discourse.

BRUCE: Yes, I think that's important. It can be helpful and clarifying to distinguish "talk bubbles" from "religious bubbles" (here, meaning, not only 'practice' or 'ascetological' or 'anthropotechnical' bubbles, but those bubbles which foster integration and spiritual flowering), since sometimes people may talk in so-called religious words but not in a way that is spiritually generative or religious in the sense we mean here. But granting this, I would not like to suggest that "talk" is merely incidental to religious generative (en)closures, or that "talk"/translation can be cleanly separated from "practice"/transformation. While I think Latour's understanding of religion and spirituality is seriously limited (he seems only to reference conventional Catholicism in his reflections), he makes a distinction between religious and other types of language that is useful here. He says that we make a mistake to treat religious language as if it were similar to the scientific language of reference, whether describing *this* world (which science just gets wrong – the earth is only 6000 years old!), or describing a metaphysical world beyond this physical one. Instead, religious speech delivers "a type of original truth which gives meaning to the predication only if it creates anew the person to which it is addressed" (Latour, 2013). Here, words, concepts, stories, and so on, are not ghostly abstractions 'about' being, but are beings themselves, angels or dakinis themselves: they are part of the assemblage that constitutes a generative (en)closure.

LAYMAN: An important qualification, *si*, *si*. We might put it this way: Symbolic referencing (talk, the assumption of normative categories) and social habits (rituals) can operate as elements of the practice of sustaining a religious bubble, or as elements sustaining alternative "talk bubbles," or neither. Talk is *religious* when it contributes to the production of more "coherence" in the bubble and brings level-appropriate intensified cooperation among contemporary social genres. This is the standard of *religious speech* as distinct from poetic speech, scientific speech, therapeutic speech, etc.

BRUCE: Well put. I would add that symbolic referencing might serve a third function as well: as a corrosive or degenerative element, leading to systemic decay.

Wilber has often distinguished between twin functions of religion: *translation* and *transformation*. But they are neither mutually exclusive nor hermetically sealed. Translative activity can itself be transformative, generative; religious transformation often entails coming to embody the forms for which the translation was a virtual attractor and generative (en)closure; and transformation sometimes results in bubble-rupture or dis/enclosure, necessitating new translations.

EDWARD: I think we shouldn't forget that the IPS forum has been a kind of generative (en)closure. The unlikely juxtaposition of those three words – integral, postmetaphysical, spirituality – has served as a kind of koan-like virtual attractor that has impelled a 12-year journey of exploration, formation, and transformation. For some of us, it has also ripened into a kind of dis/enclosure: I no longer feel compelled by that constellation of words, and

I've moved on to other interests and concerns. But I will always carry the formative traces of our work there.

BRUCE: Well, I am indebted to conversations with you, Layman, and several other core members there for many of my own shifts in thought and perception over the past 12 years. IPS has definitely been a generative (en)closure for me.

EDWARD: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

BRUCE: I think we've covered some good ground. As I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, generative (en)closure is a variation on the CONTAINER image schema that has often been invoked in discussions of religious traditions, but we've introduced a number of related metaphors that helped move us beyond the typical focus on membership, in/out-groups, orthodoxy, and so on. We've discussed generative (en)closure as a cell, an autopoietic body-environment process, a temple, a magic ring or sorcerer's circle, a cage-like metallophone, an amphitheater or other amplifying chamber, an alchemical cauldron, a planetarium (facilitating cosmic vision), and a fragile, all-reflecting bubble or pearl. Ultimately, we imploded it into a black hole-like wild knot (which unleashes a whole zoo of relations).[10]

The immunological function of the generative (en)closure mirrors the protective function of traditional religious containers, but emphasizes the interreligiously significant insight that robust immunity allows for greater, more intimate (if sometimes disorienting) interface with the alien and other. The amplifying quality touches an important theme for postmetaphysical spirituality. As Sloterdijk reminds us, the post-Nietzschean life of practice is marked by vertical tension; there is a transcendent pull that calls us ever towards transformation. A successful generative (en)closure amplifies and sustains this vertical tension. And the reflective bubble and knot images remind us that our sacred containers are both unique and entangled, singular and convergent.

I recognize that we got up to some pretty arcane language games in this discussion, likely not to everyone's taste. I won't bother to thank the two of you for indulging me, because we all have similar linguistic vices. But I hope our readers will be able to extract something useful from our exchange – and that this text might itself serve something like a generative (en)closure, establishing with its particular demands a zone of intensity that fosters fresh insight into the familiar domains of our bodies, relations, routines, and traditions.

LAYMAN: I have a headache... Seriously, thank you, my friends, for the wonderful workout. I'm grateful for you both, and for the perspectival stretching and play the IPS forum has allowed us to get up to for so many years.

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[10] Mark Edwards' (2006) presentation, "An Integral Approach to Relationality," very helpfully outlines some of this "zoo" of relations, and also illuminates the generativity of the interstitial spaces *between* generative (en)closures or bubbles. From the perspective of integral grammatology, his presentation – and his later paper, "Inter-Bridging" – quite fruitfully explore the meta-theoretical space that I describe as "prepositional."

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