

Editorial Introduction to the *IR Special Issue on Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality*

Tom Murray,¹ Bruce Alderman,² and Layman Pascal³ (*special issue editors*)

¹ **Tom Murray** is Chief Visionary and Instigator at Open Way Solutions LLC, which merges technology with integral developmental theory, and is also a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Massachusetts School of Computer Science. He is an Associate Editor at *Integral Review*, is on the editorial review board of the *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, and has published articles on developmental theory and integral theory as they relate to wisdom skills, education, contemplative dialog, leadership, ethics, knowledge building communities, epistemology, and post-metaphysics. See www.tommurray.us

tommurray.us@gmail.com

² **Bruce Alderman**, M.A., is adjunct faculty in the College of Psychology at John F. Kennedy University (JFKU). He received his master's degree in Integral Psychology, with an emphasis on Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, from JFKU in 2005. He currently teaches Paradigms of Consciousness; Fundamentals of Transpersonal Psychology; World Spirituality; Living Systems Theory; Integral Life Practice; Individual Development; and Integral Meditation and Psychospiritual Development. Prior to working at JFKU, he taught and studied abroad in Asia for several years, including teaching courses on creative writing and inquiry at the Rajghat Besant School, a Krishnamurti school in Varanasi, India. He has published essays in the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* and *Consciousness Journal*, as well as in several forthcoming anthologies on Integral philosophy and spirituality. For the past 12 years, he has moderated the Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality forum (IPS); and more recently, he co-founded the Foundation for Integral Religion and Spirituality (FIRS). <https://www.jfku.edu/faculty/bruce-alderman/bladerman@jfku.edu>

³ **Layman Pascal** is a "white indian" whose family has lived for 5 generations among the remote islands of the Pacific Northwest. He also hates biographies & introductions so bear with him – this is difficult! What we have done already is so much less interesting than what we have not yet done, but I digress – He is (or has been) a meditation teacher, yoga instructor, public speaker, nondual theologian, lecturer on integral metaphysics, shamanism advocate, author, artist, bad poet, co-chair of the Foundation for Integral Religion and Spirituality (FIRS), co-editor of the *Integral Review* Special Issue on Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality and strong contributor to IPMS forums, moderator of the Integral Life forum, and creator of such online oddities as: The Christmas Wiki, Pascal's Integral Batcave, the Integral Demonology Forum, the Integral Morality & Ethics Group, the Integral Gender Studies Forum and more. Currently he runs a Nepalese clothing store, cafe & sacred gift shop in Northern Ontario with his wonderful girlfriend while also practicing hypnotherapy and energy acupuncture. Etc.

pretendtomeditate@gmail.com



Issue Contents

1. "Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue" by **Tom Murray, Bruce Alderman, and Layman Pascal** (special issue editors)
2. "Definitions of Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality" (various contributors)
3. "Generative (En)Closures, Bubbles, and Magic Circles: A Chat about Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality and Religion" by **Bruce Alderman** with **Edward Berge** and **Layman Pascal**
4. "Why Metaphysics Matters" by **Bonnitta Roy**
5. "Thus Spake Zarathustra: The First Postmetaphysical Spiritual Hero" by **Layman Pascal**
6. "From capitalism to the collaborative commons" by **Edward Berge**
7. "Nonduality – Non/duality – Many-One Duality" by **Oliver Griebel**
8. "Theses on Any Future Philosophy of Integral Post-Metaphysical Spirituality" by **Michael Schwartz**
9. "Can Anybody Hear?" by **Layman Pascal**
10. "Knowing and Un-knowing Reality: A Beginner's and Expert's Developmental Guide to Post-Metaphysical Thinking" by **Tom Murray**
11. "The Intersection of PatternDynamics and Integral Post-Metaphysical Spirituality: What Brings Us Together?" **David MacLeod** interviews **Tim Winton**
12. "Romancing the Ning" reflections on the online forum, by **Layman Pascal** and **Bruce Alderman**
13. Section: "Deep Dialogue in Social Media Spaces: A Brief Experiment" with essays by **Andrew Venezia** and **Layman Pascal**.
14. Section: "Jordan Peterson's Treatment of Spirituality, Religion, Archetypes, and Metaphysics" (various contributors)
15. Poetry: **Edward Berge, Tim Winton, and Bruce Alderman**
16. Visual art #1. **Dylan Thomas** (with artists statement)
17. Visual art #2. **Layman Pascal** (with notes from **Kathryn Winter**)

Issue Overview

In 2006, Bruce Alderman, who teaches at John F. Kennedy University in the Consciousness and Transformative Studies, Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, and Holistic Counseling Psychology programs, started an online discussion forum titled "Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality: Participatory Spirituality for the 21st Century" (IPS). The official description of the online forum/group begins with an invitation to inquiry:

What paths lie ahead for religion and spirituality in the 21st Century? How might the insights of modernity and post-modernity impact and inform humanity's ancient wisdom traditions? How are we to enact, together, new spiritual visions – independently, or within our respective traditions – that can respond adequately to the challenges of our times? This group is for anyone interested in exploring these questions and tracing out the horizons of an integral post-metaphysical spirituality.

Bruce launched the IPS forum initially in response to Ken Wilber's 2006 publication of *Integral Spirituality*, with the intent of digesting and evaluating this new phase in Wilber's thought

(especially as presented in this text and the Kosmos trilogy excerpts). Members explored the many threads leading through the "post-metaphysical" and "participatory" turns in contemporary philosophy and theology, considering their implications for integral theory and spirituality in general. The group eventually morphed into a semi-formal, peer-to-peer colloquium and site for ongoing scholarly inquiry.

The first incarnation of the forum was on a platform called Zaadz (and later Gaia) from 2006 to 2010. It then moved to the Ning platform in March of 2010, and finally to Facebook in August of 2013, following the births, deaths, and evolution of platforms during the formative years of social media. Bruce had been a well-known and respected scholar within the integral theory community, and was one of the first in that community to realize a vision of experimenting with the then-new social media technology to nurture an intellectual commons that was fresh, semi-formal, even edgy, compared with traditional scholarly venues such as journals, newsletters, and conferences. The forum (or series of forums by the same name) attracted many participants over the years, and includes a variety of discussion threads ranging from deep dives into scholarly topics to playful or irreverent musings and rants, and includes a whole section containing visual and musical art by its participants. In this Special Issue, we aim to shine a light on this important but obscure corner of the social media noosphere, which has been bubbling on the feral fringes of academic scholarship for some time.

The Facebook forum is alive and well to this day *here*, and the Ning forum is archived *here*. The Zaadz forum has been taken down, but many of the key threads from that period have been archived as well. The Ning forum contains almost 800 discussion threads (and an order of magnitude more posts and comments) organized into categories including "Postmetaphysical Visions and Visionaries," "Re-visioning the Great Traditions," "Engagement," "IPS Arts," "Book and Film Club," "IPS Town Hall – For discussion of all things political," and "O'Kenny's Pub (A rustic, slightly seedy little place, named after its dishwasher)". The Ning forum topped out at 168 members, which was apparently the maximum allowed. The Facebook forum is actually a Facebook "group," and does not allow for the type of organization and archival functionality of a true discussion forum, so we cannot give a similar summary of its organization or contents. It does, like all Facebook groups, have a section for Photos and Videos, and one for downloaded files, which contains dozens of essays, musings, and reference materials. The Facebook group clocks in at an impressive 1,960 members as of December 2018.

The original aim of this Special Issue was to curate, synthesize, and/or update material from the forum(s) into a form suitable for an (albeit progressive/innovative) scholarly journal. We invited the forum's primary contributors to submit reflections or updates on the topics they had frequented. But, in keeping with the spirit of the IPS forum, we also wanted to branch playfully away from traditional scholarly journal formats. In addition to scholarly papers, we include artwork and poetry from or inspired by the IPS website. We also sponsored an online dialogue *about* online dialogues that are focused on topics overlapping with IPS – i.e., we gathered a group of experts to inquire into what it might look like to practice some of what our community "preaches" about spirituality and adult development as we use social media technologies such as discussion forums and video conferencing. Included are links to archives of the dialogues, and summary of key points and themes. This issue also includes a compilation of reflections on a controversial public intellectual, Jordan Peterson, whose podcast/YouTube interviews and writing have "gone viral" on the internet

within the last year. Peterson's work covers many subjects, but here we focus on his work related to religion, archetypes, and the spiritual side of human meaning-making, since his approach is arguably post-metaphysical. Because Peterson and the phenomena of his popularity and controversy have been a focus of heated conversations within the "integral diaspora," we thought it appropriate to include this conversation in our IPS issue.

The special issue is co-sponsored by the Foundation for Integral Religion and Spirituality, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to cultivating, curating, and hosting the emergence of integrative spirituality in both academic and social venues. (<http://www.integralreligion.org>).

It should also be noted that prior issues of Integral Review (integral-review.org) include papers related to the theme of IPS. In particular, the August 2018 issue included Zak Stein's "Love in a Time Between Worlds: On the Metamodern 'Return' to a Metaphysics of Eros;" and the March 2014 issue contained Bonnitta Roy's "Born in the Middle: The Soteriological Streams of Integral Theory and Meta-Reality."

As you will see, we have tried to weave various forms of participatory engagement into this issue. In that spirit we invite all readers to post comments and engage in dialogue about this Issue's content. Marco Morelli has graciously created a "channel" for us on the Infinite Conversations discussion forum website. There you will find a topic for each article in this Issue, and a Welcome post showing you how to participate. If this facility is well used, we plan to have discussion spaces for all future issues of Integral Review.

To access this channel, see <http://www.infiniteconversations.com/c/ir>. Anyone can read. To be able to reply to a topic click the "Sign Up" button and register (no anonymous posts!).

Below, we provide an overview of the textual and multimedia cornucopia of creative offerings that awaits the reader/listener/viewer of this special issue of Integral Review.

Papers

This issue contains the following essays and articles:

- **Bruce Alderman's** *Generative (En)closures, Bubbles, and Magic Circles* is a wonderful, updated revisitation of some of the dialogues found in the IPS forum. Bruce has mined the archival threads and fashioned its raw material into a retro-emergent, updated dialogue amongst himself, Layman Pascal, and Edward Berge. The result is a format that allows for a deeply lyrical and imaginative interactive riff, playfully exploring the interweaving/streaming, bubbling/frothing themes within integral postmetaphysical religion and spirituality. Strap on your seatbelt.
- **Bonnitta Roy's** *Why Metaphysics Matters* draws on Whitehead, Gebser, and Hartshorne to argue "why metaphysics matters in our current Metamodern era [of] escalating epistemic complexity," and "how adopting a process metaphysical praxis can help us renew our ways of meeting the complexity of the world."
- **Layman Pascal's** *Thus Spake Zarathustra: The First Postmetaphysical Spiritual Hero* offers a playful portal into Nietzsche's novel and the proto-post-post-modern lessons offered through

its protagonist. Layman's insightful homage, itself poetic and playful, frames the novel as "a developmental teaching which treats meaning as something we grow towards through exercises that unfold and spiritualize the self – practices instead of beliefs, humor instead of idealism, ecology instead of heaven, and the daring to see beyond our conventional metaphysical assumptions."

- **Edward Berge's** essay *From Capitalism to the Collaborative Commons* links spiritual to economic human concerns, and describes "the slow decline and endgame of capitalism while also highlighting the emerging new socioeconomic system of the collaborative commons." It "criticizes the notion of conscious capitalism" and points toward "a more spiritually oriented economic system." The essay synthesizes Edward's contributions to a several-thread-long conversation on anti-capitalism from the IPS forum.
- **Oliver Griebel's** essay *Nonduality – Non/duality – Many-One Duality* explores the range of meanings attributed to "non-duality." He notes that "[E]ven in spiritual post-postmodern, postmetaphysical, integral approaches there is still" significant diversity and controversy "about what the spirit or consciousness of Ultimate Reality is: Is it self-conscious, intentional and caring, about its coherence and beauty, worth and life within? Or is it non-reflexive, transrational, 'empty'?"
- **Michael Schwartz's** *Theses on Any Future Philosophy of Integral Post-Metaphysical Spirituality* offers incisive and considered reflections on the roles that philosophy may play as underlaborer for integral postmetaphysical spirituality; on the scope, promise, and challenges of a postmetaphysical orientation for spiritual practice; on subtle refinements to IPS that an encounter with other postmetaphysical orientations (such as Bhaskar's Critical Realism) might suggest; and on several possible avenues of flight for IPS beyond its dominant Wilberian formulations.
- **Layman Pascal's** second contribution, *Can Anybody Hear?* (the title being a play off the "if a tree falls..." trope), is an attempt to bridge "the semantic gap between Ontology & Epistemology [...and...] provide a metaphysics-of-postmetaphysics" that "unites 'Wilberian' and 'Bhaskarian' types of metatheories." He suggests a reframing of the ontology vs. epistemology dialectic, which too often becomes circular, in terms of "the structure of the Causal and Nondual states – when they are broadened beyond the mentality of meditators, spiritualists, and psychedelic explorers."
- **Tom Murray's** *Knowing and Un-knowing Reality: A Beginner's and Expert's Developmental Guide to Post-Metaphysical Thinking* explores postmetaphysics from several perspectives: developmental, philosophical, historical, phenomenological, and ethical. Murray frames postmetaphysical thinking in terms of the "4th Person Perspective" described in adult developmental theories. This booklet-length text can serve as an extensive overview of postmetaphysical approaches to spirituality and philosophy.

Alternative Formats

This issue of IR includes several alternative contribution formats:

- **Definitions:** Collected definitions/descriptions of Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality: In anticipation of this special issue we put out a call for definitions and short descriptions of IPS, and received a variety of perspectives. We share submissions from **Bruce Alderman, Layman**

- Pascal, Edward Berge, and Joseph Farley.** (Murray's article contains an extensive description).
- **Interview. David MacLeod** organized *The Intersection of PatternDynamics and Integral Post-Metaphysical Spirituality: What Brings Us Together?* an interview/dialogue series with **Tim Winton** on Winton's "PatternDynamics" framework. Links are provided to the three parts of the interview series, audio recordings of 45-60 minutes each, that primarily focus on how PatternDynamics relates to spirituality. Included is a transcript as well as an overview and detailed topic map of the dialogue.
 - **Online forum reflections and curation.** *Romancing the Ning* – **Layman Pascal** and **Bruce Alderman** give us a guided tour of the original the IPS archival material.
 - **Special Section: Videoconference dialogue: Deep Dialogue in Social Media Spaces: A Brief Experiment.** Reflective essays on four videoconference recordings of expert dialogues on the theme of supporting "deep dialogue" in online spaces, with essays by **Andrew Venezia** and **Layman Pascal**. See the description of this project below.
 - **Special Section: Text dialogue on Jordan Peterson's Treatment of Spirituality, Religion, Archetypes, and Metaphysics.** Reflections on the "Jordan Peterson Phenomena" – focused on themes of religion, archetypes, and (post-) metaphysics. See the description of this project below.
 - **Visual art #1. Dylan Thomas**, an artist and denizen of the IPS forum, has submitted a series of his visual works, a reverent meditation upon what seems "inherently transcendent" about Nature's geometrical symmetries – the "sacred in its structural harmony" as "the architecture of a divine craftsman" (quotes are from the accompanying Artist's Essay).
 - **Visual art #2. Layman Pascal** has provided a set of artistic works, some of which were featured within the Arts section of the IPS Ning forum. **Kathryn Winter** has provided some notes sharing her perspective on the series.
 - **Poetry:** In addition to visual art, we received responses to our call for poems related to IPS, from: **Edward Berge, Tim Winton, and Bruce Alderman.**

Special Sections

This issue includes two special sections that take a specifically dialogical collaborative approach to reflective knowledge production.

1. Deep Dialogue in Social Media Spaces: A Brief Experiment

The IPS forum has included a number of experiments with format and facilitation modalities, and those participating in IPS forums were also active in hosting or mediating other online spaces. Within integrally-informed theory and practice communities there is an, at least implicit, invitation to enact one's theory, by either "practicing what one preaches" so to speak, or by using the theory to reflect upon the writing, reading, or dialogue process itself. IPS was thus, in a way, a forerunner in the area of hosting technology-mediated forums that were not only *about* spirituality, consciousness, and philosophy, but self-aware about the ethical and performative questions of *being and acting* spiritually or ethically aware or conscious within the knowledge building process. In light of this, we set out to gather a group of experts in the area of supporting "deep dialogue" in online spaces such as discussion forums and video conferences. The overview contains essays by Andrew Venezia and Layman Pascal.

The participants were: **Bonnitta Roy, Andrew Venezia, Hilary Bradbury, Layman Pascal, Marco Morelli, Heather Fester, Daniel Thorson, Penelope Whitworth, Geoff Fitch, Daniel Görtz, and Tom Murray** (participant-facilitator).

2. Jordan Peterson's Treatment of Spirituality, Religion, Archetypes, and Metaphysics

Jordan Peterson, a recently prominent public intellectual, is known for his writings, recorded lectures, and social media commentaries on a wide variety of topics. He is most cited for his libertarian-leaning views on hot-button social and political issues related to political correctness and identity politics. Less discussed is his body of work on archetypes and the depth psychology of religion, which is mainly focused on Christianity. This is the area that we focus on in this special issue on *Integral Postmetaphysical Spirituality*. Peterson's expertise in archetypal modes of cognition allows for a respectful treatment of, not only "*spiritual*," but centrally "*religious*" metaphysical themes, while still allowing for a *post-metaphysical* attitude.

This Special Issue of Integral Review contains three essays/commentaries on the Jordan Peterson phenomena as it related to postmetaphysical spirituality: by **Brendan LaChance, Andrew Venezia, and Layman Pascal**.

In keeping with the tone of the IPS forum, our goal for the section of this Issue on Jordan Peterson was include a dialogic element, in which each of the authors had an opportunity to comment on the essays of the others. These comments are included.

In keeping with the dialogic nature of the IPS forum, we invited each of the three authors in the Jordan Peterson section to comment on the others' pieces, and to pen a final rejoinder in response to other's comments.

We hope that you enjoy this very full issue – whether by meandering, diving deeply, or consuming it whole. We live in a world struggling to recover from the purported "death of god" produced by the collision of modern rationality with old-time-Religion. This centuries-old tension is reaching its crescendo even as we gaze upon it. This Issue stakes the claim that the overlapping domains of developmental theory, meta-theories like integral theory, and post-metaphysical philosophies, can and should play a large role in this transition. What is at stake is no less that the human soul, regardless of how that is understood. As serious as that sounds, we have included enough magical art, playful philosophy, and tender dialogue to support a deeply soulful inquiry.