

Continuing the Journey (after 9/11)

The Second Letter

by Sidra Stone, PhD and Hal Stone, PhD

This is the second letter we sent to our mailing list in 2001. In it we shared some thoughts about 9/11 and its aftermath. After much consideration, and in response to the urging of others, we are posting this letter today because we feel that its message is equally applicable to the current terrorist situation. .

Dear Friends,

First of all, we would like to thank you for your heartfelt response to our first mailing. Your e-mails and letters touched us deeply and we really want you to know this. Many of you requested permission to send our letters to your own friends and colleagues; this is perfectly acceptable to us.

The following letter is quite long. We rarely send out mailings this long, but these are unusual times and unusual times call for unusual actions. We feel that all the information is very important. We are offering it to you in a single document for clarity and comprehensive coverage of our thinking.

After we sent out our first mailing, we flew to Calgary, rented a car, and drove along the Canadian Rockies as far as Jasper. The airport at San Francisco was a changed airport. There were armed National Guardsmen (and Guardswomen) and the line of passengers waiting for security clearance was about a quarter of a mile long. Sidra's nail file was taken from her. Hal had to remove his shoes so that they could be run through the electronic scanner.

Sidra has always been the more adventurous risk-taker in our travels and she wanted to drive through the Canadian Rockies - a trip she remembered vividly from 50 years earlier. Hal was concerned about getting trapped in a snowstorm and not being able to get back in time to do our weekend training in Calgary. It was already Tuesday and the workshop began on Friday night. To help us make our decision about the advisability of this drive, we spoke to the rangers near Lake Louise. They assured us that the highways were open all year and only in January might there be a problem for a day or two.

We made the decision to go, though with some concern, and we had a magnificent trip through what is one of the most beautiful -accessible - mountain ranges on the planet. The world may have changed in these past 50 years, and current events were gathering threatening momentum as we drove this magical highway, but these mountains - blessedly - had remained the same. They provided us with a deep sense of timelessness, continuity, sacred beauty, and peace.

When we hit the turnoff for the Columbia ice fields, it began to rain and there were some light snow flurries. We both began to feel what could diagnostically be described as a mild anxiety state but we continued to drive northward to our destination. As we descended from the summit, the rain and snow flurries disappeared. We finally reached Jasper. The next morning we awoke to the first snowfall of the year and it was seriously snowing. Our self-diagnosis shifted from mild to

moderate anxiety as we pictured a room full of people waiting for us on Friday night while we were stranded someplace in the Rockies.

We will spare you the details, but our story had a happy ending. By noon, the sun was out and, when we hit the pass at the Columbia ice fields, there was considerable snow on the ground but it was already melting and the maintenance trucks had already sanded the roads. We arrived at our destination safely on late Thursday afternoon. We even avoided a negative bonding pattern when we became vulnerable, though it was admittedly a pretty close call.

We don't want you to think that we begin all of our writing with a travelogue of our adventures. We share this because it was on this ride to Jasper - and feeling our own vulnerability -that we began to catalogue the various disowned selves that we felt were being carried by the terrorist groups, the fundamentalists, and by the Muslim community. We spent hours looking at these, and then exploring which contrasting selves were traditional US primary selves.

We found our discussion very valuable to us both. Sidra brought up the idea of the strong family ties and communal feeling that are a foundation of many cultures, including the Muslim and the Latin, noting that both those cultures carry a number of the US's disowned selves. In these cultures, the individual is not seen as existing solo; instead, the individual is always seen in the context of the group. Although we value family ties and teamwork here in the US, our primary selves are more of the independent or individualistic types. We value the Rambos, the Lone Rangers, and the John Waynes. As a culture, our heroes are people who proudly operate alone rather than in the context of a family or a larger group. If they do operate within a group, it is usually as the leader.

Hal's unconscious had an immediate reaction to this part of the discussion. Hal's primary self has always been more introverted and individualistic, and the discussion obviously hit at a rather deep level. That night he had the following dream: "I go to the southern border of the U.S. - next to Mexico - and there are small houses where many Mexican-American families live. I enter one of the houses and there are many people and families. In the middle of the room is a very large bed. Everyone is sitting on the bed talking and just being together. It is a very good feeling. Then the dream shifts and I am in a larger empty room. With me is a young woman who carries something of the spirit of this Mexican community. The room is starting to go down into the earth where we will be exploring the nature of the communal family spirit."

Sidra's unconscious, too, reacted immediately to our discussion. Another disowned self we had talked about was the terrorist as a fighter, as someone who knew how to fight effectively. In contrast, there has been a protected quality to life in the US and most of us, including Sidra, have disowned our own terrorists, our street fighters who know how to fight. Our primary selves are more naïve and carry strong injunctions about never hurting others. We have been taught to "use words rather than fists" and we are accustomed to the protection offered by our most ordinary economic advantages. The 911 attacks took away our customary protections; the old primary selves no longer work the same way in the new world.

That night Sidra had the following dream about incorporating a new set of selves: "I was driving our Buick through a crowd of ordinary looking people. I have no way of knowing who is safe and

who is not. I try to roll up the windows of the car but I can't because there are no longer any window frames. There is no longer a roof either. We are driving our usual car, but we are no longer protected by it. (A perfect picture of the inadequacy of the old primary selves in the new situation.) Suddenly, a street fighter, a funny, irreverent young black man who knows how to take care of himself in this kind of setting, jumps on the front right fender of the car and begins to "ride shotgun". Another friend of his takes up a position at the back of the car. They look at me with amusement; they are laughing at my vulnerability and they want to see what I'll do next. They are not malevolent, just challenging. They are perfectly comfortable in this situation. I know in the dream that I need their protection and I must figure out how to deal with them and maintain control of my car. I know that they will honor me if I respect them and I retain my own sense of irreverence and humor when I am with them." Sidra awoke with a grin, knowing that this irreverent, paradigm-busting, street-fighter carries an energy that we will all need in the times to come.

We were both struck by how quickly our unconscious had responded to our earlier discussion and how quickly these disowned selves made themselves known to us. Once they were introduced to us through our dreams, we knew that we were already beginning the process of working creatively with them. We hope that our discussion of the primary selves of the groups that seem to be "other" will work for you in the same way.

The Disowned Selves

At a time like this it is important to try to see what it is that we disown and what we have attracted to ourselves in the outside world. Just as in our personal relationships, we need this basic information in order to begin the process of separating from primary selves, integrating disowned selves, and started to defuse the bonding patterns.

We were fortunate to have people who were born in five different countries in our last training group here at Thera and, together, we all thought about the question of what selves people from the US tend to disown. Here are some of the ideas that we came up with: We are strong; we disown our vulnerability. We preserve life at any cost, and we disown death. We are independent; we disown our need of others. We are the have's; others are the have-not's. We have been the "good guys," the cowboys in the white hats who rescue others; we disown our instinctual energies, our "bad guys," our terrorists. We are smart, we know all the answers; we don't need others to help us figure things out. We are identified with our minds; others are identified with their souls. We are more likely to be identified with our materialism; others with their idealism. We believe in our individual freedom; we disown our fundamentalists who carry the need for outside regulation of our behavior. We are innocent, eternal optimists; we disown our sense of futility. We are young and self-impressed as a nation; we do not value the wisdom and experience of other, older nations. We know how to give; we do not know how to receive.

We're not going to go into all these selves in detail in this letter. It's long enough as it is, so we've chosen to speak at greater length about just a few of the opposites we've dealt with most frequently during the past years. But we wanted to mention these here because one of them just might spark your own process.

What You Disown, You Marry

History repeats itself. Those who do not learn from it are doomed to repeat it. This is true in interpersonal relationships and it is true in the relationships among nations.

In our attempts to do what we thought was right - or was in our best interests which, by definition, was something we thought was right - the US has chosen partners who carried our disowned selves. Our nation "married" Pinochet, Noriega, Saddam Hussein, the Shah of Iran, and, to our most recent dismay, Osama bin Laden. Let us hope that we exercise a bit more caution with our next partners. We are not political experts and we don't know the answers, but we do urge caution in the new alliances.

Let us learn the lessons of history as individuals, and as a nation. Our basic lesson is that we must learn to move through life embracing opposites. We must become aware of, and then embrace, our disowned selves. And, as in interpersonal relationships, we must remember that just because we disown a self it doesn't mean that we do not have that self somewhere within us. It just means that it is operating unconsciously.

And so it is that our disowned terrorists and fundamentalists operate beyond the boundaries of our awareness and beyond our conscious control. We do not know them and we have not accepted responsibility for them. They are projected upon the "others". And, more often than not, these are the "others" that we marry either literally or in political alliances.

We must recognize and embrace our own fundamentalists and our own terrorists before we can deal effectively with the fundamentalists and terrorists on the outside. We must clearly recognize our contribution to the current situation. However, there is a big difference between guilt and responsibility, and we must not assume total blame for the situation. Just as in relationships between two people, it is all a dance. Both sides contribute to the overall picture. We cannot control what others do, but we do have the ability to work with - and control - ourselves.

We believe that if enough people think, feel, and do their own individual work, this need not go on for decades and that something will shift in a shorter time span. Each of us can try to do our part to defuse polarization by doing our own personal work.

How can we best do this?

Projection: What is it and why is it so important?

At the present time it seems to us of enormous importance for each of us to discover what we have projected onto these "others" and to begin the process of taking back these projections. But, before we go any further, we would like to give you a picture of what we mean when we say "projection." Projection is a particular psychological mechanism in which we literally project our disowned selves out into the world around us, just like a movie projector projects an image onto a screen. Only here, instead of a screen, we project our images upon people or objects in our surroundings. Whatever is unconscious is projected. This is perfectly natural; we all do it and we all will continue to do it. But there is much to learn from it.

Imagine that you are a woman walking past a shop that sells American Indian artifacts. In the window you see a squash blossom necklace. It is obviously very old; you can see the old frayed string at the top where the clasp is. You look at the necklace and you know you must have it. It demands that you buy it. It may be too expensive for you, but this doesn't matter. When you look at it your heart hums and you just know that you would feel wonderful wearing it.

What is it that has happened here? A while earlier you passed a store and saw a diamond necklace but that did nothing for you. If they had given it to you it would have meant very little other than what it would be worth if you sold it. So what is it that makes the old squash blossom necklace irresistible and the diamond necklace, which is far more expensive, just another piece of jewelry?

In such a situation it is always possible that the necklace has an actual energy connected to it, the energy of its owners and the rituals they had attended while wearing it. However, the fact is that the strong response you feel is the result of some group of feelings, values, energetic systems, and selves that are being projected onto it. It is these projections that make that particular necklace irresistible. This is how projection works; it operates automatically and quite unconsciously.

In a way, projection is like a bridge that gets built between your unconscious psyche and a person or an object on the outside. When, instead of a necklace, you project your unconscious images onto another person, your projection acts like a bridge that connects you with that other person. This bridge gives people a way to walk across the space between them, so that they can meet each other. Sometimes these projections are positive - as with the necklace - and sometimes they are negative - as with the people we judge as bad or "other".

Back to the necklace. It may be that you have a disowned or rejected an unconscious spiritual side that is projected onto the necklace. This disowned self was suddenly activated when you looked at the necklace. When we project in this way, we are taken over by the projection and we lose our ability to think objectively about the object. Our projection literally colors how we view the object and determines the value we place upon it. We may buy the necklace even though we cannot afford it, we might pay much more than it is worth, or even run ourselves into debt, just because it - or a similar object - is carrying the magical energy of a disowned self. We do not mean to imply that this projection is negative. It is a perfectly normal and natural psycho-spiritual process. But when operating completely unconsciously, it can be rather expensive in dollars or in psychic pain.

Much of our classic literature and entertainment is based upon the more tragic aspects of projection. Think of the classic stories, like the Blue Angel, in which a very proper man becomes obsessed with a sensual, free spirited woman and is ruined by his uncontrollable infatuation for her. He has projected all of his disowned instinctual energies onto her. He cannot resist her. Then there is the cheerful good girl, like Cathy in Wuthering Heights, who must have her Heathcliff - the man who carries her brooding introversion, her unsociable nature, and her instinctual energies. Think of the story of Lolita, or the more recent movie, American Beauty, where the young girl carries the projections of innocence, an uncorrupted, natural, powerful sexuality, and naïve sentimentality for the older man who cannot accept these in himself, but instead projects all of these disowned selves upon her.

The parts of our psyche that are disowned or unconscious are going to be projected onto some person, some group, or some object in this way. When we become aware of a disowned self, make it conscious and honor it, then automatically that part of our psyche is taken away from the other person or object and becomes available to us.

Following up on our necklace: If you realize that you have disowned your spiritual self and you're projecting it onto the necklace and you do the work of claiming this self, then you have real choice about whether or not to buy the necklace -- and how much to pay for it. Looking at the stories of the proper man: If he integrates his own instinctual energies, not only is he no longer obsessed with the more instinctual woman on the outside, but he now has his own instinctual energies available. When we take back a projection in this way, we get the new energy and the new insights that are part of the new selves we have just integrated.

Equally important is the fact that when we project our disowned selves onto someone, we are literally feeding that person's primary selves. For example, let us say that you see someone as a very negative person, almost devilish. Your primary self is very caring and loving. You project the unloving side of your personality onto this other person and push him or her more deeply into the unloving, uncaring side. The more "good" you get, the more "bad" he or she becomes; and, conversely, the more "bad" he or she is, the more "good" you become to offset this "badness". The polarization between you becomes ever more intense. This is what we mean when we speak of feeding the primary self of the other person with our projections.

Again, when a polarization exists, the two people - or two groups of people - involved are carrying each other's disowned selves. The primary selves of one are the disowned selves of the other and vice versa. Neither is totally right, and neither is totally wrong; each has only a half of the picture. Each has something to teach the other; and each has something to learn from the other.

These ideas, and our following thoughts, are based on the Psychology of Selves. If you are not familiar with our work, what we are saying may not make much sense to you. Rather than go into detail here, we will assume that you are familiar with our work. If not, we suggest that you look at some of the readings on our website or read our basic book, Embracing Our Selves so that what we say will be more meaningful.

The Primary and Disowned Selves: "Them" vs. "Us"

Let us begin by saying that we are not political experts. Neither are we experts on Muslim or Arab culture. The following ideas come from our own personal experiences and those of people we know. We would like to stimulate your own thinking about the contrasting primary selves that are involved in the current challenging times as they are reflected in your life and in the lives of those around you.

It is our hope that this article will encourage a discussion about these disowned selves that can be fruitful to all of us. This integration of the disowned selves is work we can all do. We all know from long experience the paradigm shift that occurs when we separate from a primary self and we honor and embrace the other side. There is a power in this kind of work that can move mountains.

We have decided to use the term "them" rather than anything more specific. When we refer to "them" we are talking about several differing groups that seem to be carrying the disowned selves of the US - the terrorist groups, the fundamentalist groups (not necessarily just Muslim), and the greater Muslim community. We are, of course, aware that these are not always separate entities and that there is much overlap in the current situation. We don't feel that it is appropriate to treat all these groups as a single entity because someone can be a Muslim without being a terrorist, or a terrorist without being a Muslim. Also someone can be a fundamentalist without being either a terrorist or a Muslim.

Let's look at some of the disowned selves we have identified and see the lessons we have been challenged to learn:

Acceptance of Death

vs.

Rejection of Death

We have heard many people ask the question: "How could anyone just want to commit suicide and kill thousands of people in the process?" For the Muslim community there is an afterlife, a life after death. Our understanding of this is that in the afterlife of the Muslim there is heaven and there is hell. By doing good deeds, not only can someone get to Heaven earlier, but that same person has a better chance of not going to hell. To kill people who are infidels or evil doers is a passport to heaven where good things await.

The basic point here is that death is not seen as a negative. It is seen as a part of life - and, in some circumstances, as a positive. It is even something to celebrate. Sidra remembers visiting Morocco many years ago and being surprised at the weekend family picnics in the cemeteries. Whole families were there eating and drinking and playing, having a great time and apparently being together with their departed loved ones.

The primary selves in the West, generally speaking, have become essentially anti-death. We fight death to the bitter end. We hide from it, we fear it, we avoid direct contact with it whenever possible. We rarely celebrate death and it is doubtful that we would ever picnic in a cemetery. Death is often seen as a medical failure. People are kept alive at any cost and without thought of the kind of life they are - or are not -leading. No wonder death has such power over us.

In addition to this, unless they belong to some psycho-spiritual community or ideology that believes in the continuity of the soul, most Westerners have no concept of a life after death. They do not believe in reincarnation. This very short life is all there is and you never get another chance. Without the possibility of a life after death, people are generally much more frightened about the prospect of dying.

If death, on the other hand, is merely a doorway into another realm, possibly a better realm, then death begins to lose its power to create terror in us. If we in the West would expand our vision of death to include the possibility of an afterlife or the continuity of the soul through many lifetimes, then we could separate from the primary self that must face the prospect of death with fear.

Let us now look at the lesson to be learned: Most of us are not eager to die unless our lives are too painful to bear. However, the issue here is not whether or not we want to die, it is our inability, as a culture, to deal with death. How can we make death a more natural part of our lives? How can we make it just another part of the journey?

Fundamentalism

vs.

Personal Freedom/Free Spirit

Fundamentalism refers to any group or religious process that operates out of a strict set of rules about what is right and what is wrong. These rules govern every aspect of behavior. If you follow them carefully, then you are a good person and you will be rewarded; if you do not, then you are a bad person and you will be punished. Your choice is clear; there is only one way to live. This issue of fundamentalism is one that has created a great deal of polarization within the United States. Now it is operating very powerfully on the international scene.

For many years now in our workshops and trainings we have been talking about this issue. We have described fundamentalism as one of the major disowned selves of the consciousness movement. But it is a disowned self of the nation as well. The US - ideologically - is committed to personal freedom and there is a passionate, often judgmental, defense of civil liberties. Much personal freedom has been gained since the 1960's with much effort. This has been a real advance for civil liberties. But, much to the distress of fundamentalists everywhere, the outside repressive controls have not been replaced by any noticeably effective self-regulatory behavior.

This is not just an issue with Muslim fundamentalism. It is an issue in the United States as well, where many of us completely reject fundamentalist thinking. When we disown our fundamentalists so completely, we can't even begin to imagine how deeply offended people are by our popular culture. From their standpoint, their hard-won civil liberties are being abused, and they are being forced to live in a profligate, undisciplined, "anything goes" culture.

As for the consciousness movement, the goal of much psychological work is to achieve personal freedom. Personal freedom is generally defined as being able to live life on your own terms, as being able to do what you want and say what you need to say. Politically, this has played out with particular intensity in the arena of free speech and freedom of expression. This has also played out pretty intensely in regard to sexual freedom. Personal freedom is often associated with sexual freedom, because many people are still in a push off from a system of controls that was very sexually repressive and punitive in the past.

People who are identified with a primary self of personal freedom disown their inner fundamentalists, the part of them that longs for a particular kind of security, for structure, predictability, group consensus, and containment. This self would be only too happy to be told exactly what to do - and how to do it. It would be delighted to follow a set of clear, well-established rules that teach the proper way to live. Then it could feel safe. Our experience in working with consciousness groups of all kinds all over the world is that, as we have mentioned previously, the fundamentalist viewpoint is a classic example of a disowned self in action.

These people who are identified with a primary self of personal freedom have often done much personal work and have taken years to separate from a set of internalized rules that were causing them pain. Their new primary selves of personal freedom (or free spirit) have come at considerable cost and these selves think that fundamentalist rules don't belong in the modern world. The new primary self, the free spirit, sees guilt (particularly sexual guilt) and the need for rules as a disease entity and dismisses this with much judgment.

But there is another way of looking at this guilt, a framework that honors the opposites within each of us. We can see the age-old conflict between two conflicting ideological systems - doing what you want on one side and adhering to the values and rules of the group on the other - playing out within our own psyches. Instead of seeing this within ourselves, we are currently watching this conflict being played out bloodily in the world around us.

When you are unable to stand between opposites, you are unable to feel the feelings of the other person who carries the opposite point of view. It is only by honoring the reality of the fundamentalist psychology in yourself that you can feel the feelings and have compassion for the viewpoint of the fundamentalists in the world around us. For the fundamentalists, it is only by standing between their fundamentalist ideology on the one hand and finding their free spirit or new age ideology on the other side that they can have compassion for people who are identified with being a free spirit.

In these matters your judgments can be your teachers. Judgment generally comes from the primary self. If you find yourself judging someone's fundamentalist beliefs then that lets you know immediately that those beliefs are a disowned self for you.

Now we'll ask the question that always gets raised when we train people in how to work with their judgments. The question usually goes something like this: "Do you mean that if I judge the Taliban for their unconscionable patriarchal treatment of women that they are a disowned self for me? A self that I should think of integrating? No way! Never! Never! Never!"

But we are not asking you to agree with the Taliban. You may continue to disagree with them and to mobilize your forces against them. What we are saying is: When you have this kind of intense and ongoing judgmental reaction, it means that you are still being challenged to find your own inner fundamentalist. Judgment carries with it the emotionality of the sympathetic nervous system. When you feel judgments you can feel it in your body or in your gut. Judgment has a zap to it!

There is a difference between this kind of judgment and making choices with discernment. The ability to discern, to make choices in line with our own beliefs and values is priceless. But judgments are different. Judgments are more passionate than discernments; they carry a visceral and physical component. You feel righteous and completely justified. The others are totally wrong and you are totally right. You cannot even begin to imagine the others' point of view or where it came from and, what's more, you don't even want to. This is the clear sign of a disowned self.

When, as in the case of the Taliban, there are behaviors that you find totally unacceptable, then it's particularly difficult to step back from your judgment and think in terms of disowned selves. But

you may be sure of one thing. For the majority of people in the US, and especially those involved in the psycho-spiritual movement, the Taliban and its fundamentalist approach to life is, in fact, a disowned self.

We have our own particular definition of personal freedom. For us, personal freedom is not doing what you want because always doing what you want is just as one-sided as never doing what you want. For us, personal freedom means having real choice. It means standing between the multitude of opposites that live within each of us and having the ability to choose between these opposites.

This is one of the sets of opposites. On one side of us is the free spirit that wants to live life on its own terms, free to do whatever it wants, however and whenever it wants to. On the other side is the inner fundamentalist that has a clear set of rules and values that must be followed regardless of our personal needs and preferences. Without access to both of these points of view, there is no real choice and there is no real freedom.

We have already made this lesson completely clear. Our violent judgments about the Taliban are a foolproof way of discovering that we are identified with the personal freedom or free spirit self and we are being challenged to integrate our own inner fundamentalists.

Disowned Instinctual Energies

vs..

Love, Love, Love

For those of us who have never experienced pure hatred and violence firsthand, the World Trade Center bombing was incomprehensible. How could someone even conceive of such a thing? How could anyone want to destroy other human beings?

Most of us grow up in family systems and a cultural nexus that makes it difficult for us to remain connected to our instinctual energies. We are far away from our indigenous heritage and most of us have no access to the "street smarts" that people who are less privileged must develop. So the fact is, our instinctual energies are one of the major systems of selves that get disowned.

Disowning our instinctual energies has a number of consequences. First of all, the natural aggression that ought properly to be protecting us by moving forcefully outward into the world is no longer available to us. Instead, what often happens is that this kind of instinctual energy shifts track. Instead of providing us with an inner warrior that will defend us, it ends up as an ally of the inner critic and attacks us. This is one of the reasons that the inner critic is such a powerful self in our culture. For some people, this warrior energy can take the form of a cruel judge direct its attacks or judgments against others.

Even more important, however, is the fact we develop a primary self that is very positive, very caring, very loving, and very spiritual. This primary self enters into a push off on the more aggressive instinctual energies and we become nicer and nicer. The disowned instinctual energies become increasingly "bad" and, at some point, we refer to these buried energies as demonic energies. Demonic energies are simply disowned instinctual energies that have been held down

for so long that they have grown in intensity and have become quite destructive. When this happens, they can break out and cause us to behave in ways that might be very dangerous.

In one of our books we gave an example of a minister in one of our groups who dreamed that "he was trying to wrestle a drunk penis into a cold shower." The penis was obviously not drunk to begin with. It got drunk - or increasingly out of control - in relationship to years of living with a primary self that negated his sexuality. His sexual impulses, which were natural to begin with, became unnatural because of their imprisonment. Now they were strong enough to break through the primary self and they threatened to affect his life in a way that could be very dangerous to him.

We believe it is very important to understand how we who are in the consciousness movement contribute to this problem. What is it that the spiritual community is identified with as a set of primary selves that feeds the disowned instinctual energies and keeps them unconscious? We feel that this is the need to try to be loving and compassionate at all times. What exactly do we mean by this? Who can argue with the need for love and compassion in the world? The problem with these ideas, as is always the case when one works with the Psychology of Selves, is which part of you is doing the loving and which part of you is being compassionate?

The problem develops because if you are taught as a spiritual truth that you should be loving and compassionate then that is what you try to do. When you try to be loving or try to be compassionate, something very negative begins to happen. From your primary selves of spiritual seeker and knower, you begin to stuff your negativity into a box where - just like the minister's sexual impulses - it grows and festers and begins to do its mischief to you and through you.

The spiritual self labels your anger, your aggression, your judgments, your jealousy, your arrogance, and your selfishness as something negative, something to be gotten rid of. We do learn to get rid of them. We gradually learn how to stuff all of this into the "disowned self box" where gradually the snake of our instinctual energies grows larger and larger and takes more and more energy to keep locked up. This takes a huge toll on our bodies and our lives.

We are definitely in favor of using appropriate nutrients to support our immune systems. If you want a different look at the immune system, imagine what happens to each of us as this snake gets larger and larger and we have to use more and more of our strength to keep the lid on the box that contains it. We exhaust ourselves, usually without realizing what we are doing, as we continue to push down the lid of this "disowned self box". It is not just the snake of the instinctual energies that keeps growing. It is all of the disowned selves that keep growing.

In addition to that, we project these disowned instinctual energies - which by now may well have become demonic - onto other people, countries, and groups, and so create an increasing number of enemies outside of ourselves who become locked into the cement of this system of disowned selves.

Many people in this time of crisis have split over the issue of whether or not the U.S. should use military force of any kind. It is easy to jump on one side or the other. What we would ask you to do is to allow your loving, compassionate, peace voice to speak and when that side is through speaking to allow the warrior side to speak and give its viewpoint. What is necessary in these

harrowing times is to find both sides in yourself. They are both there; we can assure you of that. Then, when you make a choice, it has a chance to come from the Aware Ego Process and not from one of the opposites.

Choices made in this way do not produce the same level of polarization in others. Choice cannot exist without opposites. It takes courage to stand between opposites because when you do, the answers just don't come as simply and easily as before. It is the opposite of the six-gun mentality that dominates so much decision-making in the western world.

For us, there is no such thing as a bad energy. All energies have a good side and a bad side. If love is channeled through a controlling mother, then you have a love that controls. If you channel it through a spiritual father, then you control in a different way. In both of these examples, the love goes into the service of power. If you love through an Aware Ego, then you simply love without attachment. If your impulse to kill channels through a power side, then you have a dangerous energy waiting to explode. If you channel your killer energy through the Aware Ego, then you have boundaries, the ability to say no and yes with authority, and a warrior that will protect you when you need protection.

Rather than get rid of a judgment in the service of the spiritual self, why not figure out which primary self is making the judgment? The disowned self is what you are judging; there is a lesson to be learned, and a self to integrate. What happens when you do this? Now you have a chance to stand between two opposites. And do you know what happens when you learn how to do this? Ultimately you no longer judge the "other" because you have now experienced within yourself that behavior - or thought or feeling - that you were judging in the first place.

And, lastly, what happens when the judgment dissipates as a result of this kind of work rather than a result of trying to do away with the judgment as an unacceptable feeling? We hate to say the "c" word because you might misuse it, but the fact is that you become more compassionate in a natural way. You don't have to force anything and you don't have to get rid of anything. That is what we are after. A compassionate and loving primary self that is built upon a garbage dump of our disowned energies does not do us any good and - in fact - just as any other disowned and projected self, it merely feeds the demonic energies outside of ourselves that can terrorize us.

The lesson here has been made clear. Instead of thinking about spiritual teachings, we suggest that you think of psycho-spiritual teachings. In this way you learn to embrace both sides of your nature; you are constantly moving between the psychological/physical/emotional parts of yourself and the spiritual/transpersonal realities in yourself and in the people with whom you work. Interestingly enough, as you learn to embrace the disowned selves that make up your instinctual energies, you will find that you are actually carrying out the wishes of your primary selves in that you are becoming a more compassionate and loving human being as you embrace "all that you are".

Idealism or Life and Meaning Based on God

vs.

Materialism or Life and Meaning Based on Technology and Matter

We are not well informed on the subject of Islamic thinking and we expect that many of you bring a far greater knowledge and a deeper understanding to this area than we do. However, from our admittedly limited perspective, we would like to continue our search for disowned selves. It seems that one of the strong primary selves of the Muslims is an idealistic spiritual self that is fully committed to God and that God - and the ideals of living a godly life - plays an important part in their daily lives. Prayers punctuate the day. Because of the extreme nature of Taliban thinking and acting, it is easy to forget how idealistic and God-oriented the Muslim culture is.

For the average Westerner, the connection to divinity and the attention that we pay to divinity is quite the opposite. As a culture we are more secular and materialistic. Our bottom line concern is usually just that - the bottom line. It's not that we lack ethics, it's just that the business of everyday life and God's eternal kingdom are somehow viewed separately. It is unusual to see a Westerner stopping for prayers in the midst of a workday.

An idealistic and God-based focus in life has been disowned for the majority of people in the US where the emphasis is more secular or materialistic. It requires a level of surrender to God. We strongly suggest that this surrender go hand in hand with a consciousness process. Otherwise, it is too easy to surrender in an unconscious way and end up doing some very nasty things in the name of God - thinking that this is what divinity wants. Just as in a marriage there must be love and surrender to the relationship together with a consciousness process to make it work; so too, with the surrender to God, there must be love and surrender to God together with a consciousness process to make it work.

In the US, as we've suggested, our focus in life is more technological and material. Our focus as a nation is the spread of a market economy and democracy all over the world, not an export of spiritual feelings or religious idealism. Although our ways of going about this have created a fair amount of controversy, we basically want people to be free from want and to have the same economic advantages we have; we leave spiritual concerns to others.

Instead of being linked to God on a daily basis, one might say that we are linked to our things. This has become ever more evident with the increasing technology available to us. Computers and all that goes with them, modern communication technology and its faxes, cell phones, and e-mails, TV's, electronic gadgets of all types, digital cameras, computer games, and much more have increasingly drawn us into their web. Many of us spend enormous amounts of time worrying about our finances, about how best to handle them, and whether or not there will be enough money to take care of us in our old age. We shop; we buy. As a matter of fact, one of our gravest concerns right now is not with our souls, but with the worsening of the economy.

It's interesting to think of bin Laden (as an individual) and his disowned selves in this context. In this area, he clearly carries our disowned self, and he's actually told us how we carry his. He was a son of a prosperous Saudi family. He has disowned his economically privileged background and chosen to live a life according to his own beliefs in God's will, rejecting the material goodies for a more ascetic life. We've often joked about the idea that the best thing you can do to help your primary self is to kill off your disowned selves; well, it's not so funny when you see it happening. He's gone ahead and begun to actually do it. (And we have responded in kind.)

But we must remember that bin Laden - as an individual and not necessarily as the representative of any particular group - is our disowned self in terms of religious surrender and the sacrifice of material comfort. It would be interesting to see his dreams or hear his daydreams. We suspect that he would have dreams of his disowned materialist - he'd see himself shopping at Gucci's or going on all the rides in Disneyland. In contrast, we in the US are dreaming of being chased by the wild animals of our disowned instinctual nature.

Making God an everyday part of life and resting into God is a very powerful idea. Hal does this very well. When things get particularly hair-raising and vulnerability is high, he simply says to God: "Look - this is too much for me. You take over my life and become my administrator right now. You handle the anxiety and I'll do the work. I'll do whatever is necessary and I'll get done whatever it is that you want me to get done. In the meantime, you have to handle what is going on. It's a bit much for me."

This way of relating to divinity is simply one among many different ways of relating to the divine authority and intelligence of the universe. For Hal, this has always worked and he certainly has had to call on God's strength during the current crisis. It is just one example of what a God-based focus in life would look like - a way of living life that the Muslims and many fundamentalists have been carrying in their own ways all along. Certainly the current interest in things spiritual and the spread of our psycho-spiritual communities in the US are a proper movement in this direction.

The Taliban and the Patriarchy

vs.

Democracy and Equal Rights for Everyone (even Women)

This is a complicated area, and we want to put it in the simplest terms. We know that we are generalizing from the individual to the cultural and this is tricky because even if cultures (when looked at collectively) have characteristic primary selves, each person within the culture has his or her own primary selves. Please keep this in mind.

Our primary selves are democratic; we believe in giving everyone the right to contribute to decision-making. Whether or not this is truly followed may be open to question - but our basic belief system is that everyone should be able to vote and should have an equal voice, including women. This is true not only politically, but in our personal lives as well. The classic US primary selves, and those of the consciousness movement, are committed to listening to everyone's input and to respecting a wide range of opinions before coming up with plans that will affect others' lives. Ideally, this system works from the bottom up. The people who are expected to follow the rules, are the ones who have a say in making them.

The patriarchal system is diametrically opposed to this. The Taliban is an extreme version of the patriarchy. It works from the top, down. In this way of thinking, one group - the patriarchy - knows best what is good for the entire group and, from above; it makes the decisions that will

affect others' lives. The Taliban has raised patriarchal thinking to new heights. They know what is best for everyone, they make the rules, and others must obey. Or else!

The other characteristic of the patriarchy is the systematic oppression of women and the devaluation of anything traditionally feminine. The Taliban excels at this. However, it is interesting to note that at least one part of the original intent of the Taliban's early control of women was designed to protect them from the prevailing lawlessness by removing them from the rape and uncontrolled violence that was rampant at that time. This is not unlike the beginnings of the patriarchal system that we inherited. This turned rather quickly into a restrictive set of laws - perhaps unparalleled in history - that have effectively enslaved women, deprived them of all rights, and kept them under complete control with the cruelest of punishments.

In generalizing the possibility of disowned selves from the individual to the culture, we have to be very careful and thoughtful. As we said earlier, not everyone in the culture has the same primary selves. However, we have observed in our clinical work that many women, and men, too, have become so identified with the idea of personal freedom and of a cooperative democratic approach to life, that they have totally disowned their own inner patriarchs. They have rejected any rules of behavior that could sound patriarchal and, in doing so, have polarized intensely against anything even remotely patriarchal.

What we need to look at individually in this matter is whether this is indeed true. What do our own inner patriarchs say? What are the rules or suggestions that they carry regarding our behavior? If we don't feel our own patriarchs inside of us, then we can never fully appreciate what the Taliban is feeling and we cannot deal as effectively with them as we might wish.

We each have in us certain patriarchal ideas. We don't get rid of these ideas by running away from our particular religious faith or the rules of our fathers (and mothers). All of this continues to live inside of us and we must discover it - as we must discover our other disowned selves - so that we can deal with this more consciously. There are many pairs of opposites here. Some of them that occur to us are: patriarch and matriarch; conservative and liberal; autocrat and democrat; fundamentalist and free spirit; and warrior and nurturer.

Your enemies become your brothers or sisters once you have embraced in yourself the selves that you judge so intensely in them. This is not learning to love out of a spiritual identification. This is the organic evolution of love and compassion that emerges slowly as we do our psycho-spiritual work and learn to stand between the myriad of opposites that live within this vast psyche of ours. Hal likes to call this ability to stand between opposites in this way "the technology of sweat". Sidra, with her finer sensibilities, prefers the picture of a hummingbird hovering between opposites.

Honoring Elders

vs.

Worshipping Youth

We are a young country in an old world. It is fairly well accepted that we in the US worship youth and have difficulty with aging. We'll do anything to remain young. We'll exercise, use plastic

surgery, take the right supplements, do yoga, even become conscious, in order to remain forever young. There are thriving industries based upon this worship of youth. As in any primary self, there's a good side to this as well as a bad side, so don't think we're against remaining youthful. But there needs to be balance; there are opposites that are calling out for attention.

As part of this devotion to youth, we have a tendency to disown aging and to devalue our elders. Our emphasis is upon technology and newness - whatever is the newest or the latest is considered the best. People and things get outdated quickly. There is little respect for the wisdom of age. Again, as in all selves, there's a good side to this and a bad side to this. This kind of primary self means that we are not bound by the pronouncements of the elders and we can be open to growth and change. It gives us flexibility and permission to innovate.

We had a personal experience with a Muslim man, a Pakistani investment advisor. It gave us an amazing experience of this cultural difference in primary selves. Sidra had spoken to him over the phone several times and, when he discovered how old we were, he took us on as a personal project. We had never before experienced this concern for elders. It was such a sweet feeling to be treated gently and honored for nothing other than our "advanced" age. He explained to us that in his Muslim culture, age was revered, that the wisdom of the elders was respected, and that all elders were the responsibility of the younger people. And so he was taking care of us.

In contrast to this we've noticed that the responsibility here is usually of the old towards the young. At our age, we see a great deal of this in terms of the advertising that we receive. The emphasis is upon protecting our money for our children. We are told to protect our legacies; to carefully craft our wills and think about our estates. We are offered long-term care insurance so that our children may never have the burden of caring for us.

Our Muslim friend clearly judged what he saw as the uncaring attitude towards the elders in our society and the over-valuing of the young. This is another lesson for us to learn. We are challenged to separate from our primary selves that worship youth and to integrate the part of us that values the gifts that come only with age.

Linkage

There is something new on this planet and it is "energetic linkage". We are linked personally, and we are linked technologically, by unseen energies that travel through the air and across cables. All of us were moved by the responses of individuals and nations to the tragedy of September 11th and to our nation's sudden vulnerability. It was not our personal tragedy; it was shared by much of the world.

Indigenous people, mystics and spiritual teachers have always taught that we are one family. For the first time in history, the rest of us felt this as a tangible reality. The media and the internet linked us instantly so that what happened in New York and Washington was felt all over the world with an immediacy never before experienced. (Our beloved friend, Lydia, awake at 3 AM in Sydney, knew of the World Trade Center disaster before we did and e-mailed her love to us immediately.) People were able to contact their loved ones across continents and seas. And they did.

The oneness of the planet was an unavoidable truth. The love and support could be felt all over the world after September 11th. And so could the hatred and the wish to destroy. Much as our sense of ourselves shifted the first time we saw a picture of the Earth taken from space; the sense of our planet has shifted once more. We are all one. Now the oneness is not observed from the distance of outer space, but it is felt within each of our hearts.

Again, however, there are the opposites. People felt the closeness and oneness both in their love and gratitude towards some and in their judgments and fears of others. We can polarize once again into opposing sets of disowned selves - or we can do our work, take back our projections, and build proper bridges to one another. This is an unprecedented opportunity for a paradigm shift.

The Hope

We are not young and we feel deeply - and gratefully - the richness of our lives and experiences. We remember Pearl Harbor, World War II and the Marshall Plan. And we remember the McCarthy hearings and Viet Nam. We remember Cambodia, Cuba, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Algeria, Iraq, Iran, and more. We remember times when we knew we were heroes and that our country could do no wrong and we remember times - later times - when we knew we were villains and we feared that our country could do no right. These memories - these opposites - are held deep within each of us.

This is a new century and a new millennium. In these past months, those of us here in the US have joined the rest of humanity. We, too, now know what it feels like to be attacked without warning as we go about our daily lives. These are feelings that are all too familiar elsewhere on this planet. Now we, too, are vulnerable in our homeland. Now we, too, are neither heroes nor villains. Instead, we are a very disparate group of vulnerable human beings. And our nation is no longer special, but an ordinary member of the family of nations. We are no longer the Super Power; we no longer have all the answers. Let us hope that we move forward with the appropriate humility and awe, and that we continue to look at the current situation from many viewpoints - including those that differ from our dearly held beliefs - because much is at stake and what we do now has grave consequences.

We do not have the answers but the beauty of this time is that no single group can give us all the answers, just as no primary self can give us all the answers. What we do know is that - just as in our personal lives - the more disparate the selves that are included in any decision, the sounder that decision will be and the less likely we will be to regret it and the less likely we will be to feel the slap coming from the other side. Just now, we desperately need our hearts, our minds, and our spirits united within ourselves, whatever we do. And the more diversity we, as a nation, can access, the better.

This is no longer a good idea, it is an absolute necessity. We need our spiritual selves and our pragmatists; our warriors and our peaceniks; our patriots and those who fear the evils of rampant nationalism; our humanitarians and our Machiavelli's; our lovers of civil liberties and those of us who are willing to sacrifice some portion of these liberties for safety's sake; our planetary citizens

with their world views and our isolationists who see no further than our borders; our historians who remind us what has gone before and our visionaries who can give us pictures of a better future; and more. We need our opposites. What we judge, we have left out of the system. What we have left out of the system can come back to haunt us.

We are basically a nation of optimists. Because we are a young country and have not suffered war with foreigners invading our homeland, we are like children who never suffered abuse at home; we still have a certain innocence, an attitude that we have resources and that we can do it if we can only figure out what "it" is. Let us keep this optimism and add to it a humble awareness of the complexity and awesome gravity of the current situation.

This is a call for each of us to do our own particular work. We see the impact of this inner work as twofold. First, as we do our work and take back our projections, we affect the world around us. The intensity of the polarization between conflicting factions is lessened and the general level of consciousness in the collective is enhanced. Second, as we each do our work, our effectiveness in the world is increased. The more work that we do, the more conscious we are of our own vulnerability and that of others, and the more opposites that we integrate, the more Aware Ego will be available to us. And, as you know, an Aware Ego is an amazingly powerful asset. Whatever it is that you do, you will have more impact if you are standing between opposites. Polarization only alienates and increases conflict. Aware Egos can affect paradigm shifts.

As we continue our own journeys of consciousness, let us trust that the intelligence of the universe will work through each of us and guide us to make our own particular contributions. These will be as different as we are different from one another. Some of our contributions will be more obvious, some will be more subtle.

For those whose work is internal and not easily measured, you may never be directly aware of what it is you've done or whom you've impacted. You might never know who it was you spoke to and to whom they spoke next. Or who just experienced you and went away with a new idea or a new feeling.

Perhaps the most widely read book to come out of World War II was the Diary of Anne Frank. Anne never lived to see that millions of people all over the world were impacted by the years she spent hidden away in an attic in Amsterdam. Yet they were. You may never be aware of the outcome of your own private evolution and you may never know whose life you have touched, but we are all connected now more than ever and whatever you put out in the world has its consequences.

We believe that every bit of consciousness counts. We believe that the impact of an Aware Ego process is powerful and that the gifts it brings are priceless. May we all continue to open to all of our selves, may we savor life each day, and may we keep our songs and our souls alive.

We hope that we have given you something to think about and a direction for you to take at this challenging time. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing many of you in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Again, we are traveling this path together; may all go well with you,

Hal and Sidra
November 2001