

October 1, 2001

Dear Children,

I thought of calling you after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but realized our conversation would probably be limited to superficial cliches; it wasn't worth tying up the phone lines just to commiserate with each other. I knew you were capable of handling any of the financial and psychological after-shocks that might disrupt your lives in the next few months.

The week before the attack we'd been preparing to take a five-day trip to Eureka and the Weaverville area to scout out RV Parks on Trinity Lake. We were hoping to find one that appealed to us enough to return to for a week of boating next spring, and were just waiting around for the inland weather to cool down a bit.

After watching the television coverage of the disaster on Tuesday and Wednesday we decided it might be better to go on with our original plans rather than stay home and become obsessed by the news. We left Friday morning. I feel we made the right decision. We were surprised to see that many other retired couples had come to the same conclusion we'd reached. The highways and RV parks were filled with recreation vehicles owned by senior citizens like ourselves who were converting their vacations into opportunities to sort out their priorities after the collapse of so many of our assumptions and expectations. The sudden

realization that the most sophisticated technology of the most powerful nation in the world could fail so disastrously left us all feeling vulnerable and victimized. Once again we've been rudely awakened to the realization that life is transient, never completely satisfying and the only thing we can count on is that life will always be the way it is. If enlightenment is disillusionment, as I believe, then the loss of our illusions on September 11, 2001 could turn out to be the most significant, far-reaching and mind-altering event in the history of the human race. The psychological and spiritual impact was sensed instantaneously by people all over the world who felt Earth's major cultural plates shift dramatically.

The trip didn't open up any future possibilities of boating vacations. Trinity lake is a reservoir so doesn't share the exceptional beauty of Lake Pend Oreille near Sandpoint. The RV parks were dusty and unappealing. The scenic drive over the mountains on highway 299 from Eureka to Redding was lovely and relaxing for me but stressful for Jack who was concerned about pulling the trailer up and down the long, steep grades.

Now that we're back in Crescent City and I'm caught up on my homework I'd like to share a few of the random insights culled from the media and my meditation that may, or many not, be of interest or benefit to you. Searching for meaning buried beneath the shocking images of crumbled concrete, twisted steel and broken

bodies is one way we, who were distant from the center of the horrific reality, can refocus and rededicate our lives.

I've been grateful for many thoughtful observations and anecdotes passed along by news analysts like Peter Jennings and Jeff Greenfield who answered America's call for counselors and therapists. Greenfield pointed out that the surprise attack on New York and Washington D.C. will be the defining moment of this generation of Americans (your children) just as the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor was the defining moment of your parent's generation and the assassination of Kennedy defined your own generation.

It seems to be that my generation and yours had two defining moments. My generation's second was the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima. And the second one of your generation was the day Americans first set foot on the moon. I'm optimistic enough to believe that the second defining moment of your children's generation will be an uplifting one.

How can we take advantage of this opportunity to expand our individual and collective consciousness without getting bogged down by a Muslim crusade against the Christian infidels which would strengthen extreme fundamentalism on both sides? How can we shift toward a consciousness that is more inclusive, more compassionate and more tolerant rather than continue to reaffirm the old dualistic categories of good and evil, right and wrong

and friend and foe that make our enemy and ourselves so self-righteous? How can we fight global terrorism without falling victim to the terrorism of our own thought processes that tend to become dominated by our particular set of beliefs and ideals whenever our ego-image of ourselves and our country feels threatened?

Our outrage against the killing of thousands of innocent American civilians with a clever new weapon of mass destruction must be balanced against the killing of millions of innocent Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But cynicism is not the answer. We can't demonize our government or project our shadow on the enemy. Neutrality is not the answer, either. We can't stand on the sidelines in this war. Becoming a conscientious objector is no solution. Each of us must work on our nation's collective koan with renewed focus and dedication.

If you'll indulge me a little longer I'd like to explore the dilemma from another angle. Whenever we receive an emotional shock such as the death of someone we love, or the loss of our home and all our possessions or a horrific act of human savagery some of our brain cells and synaptic connections are destroyed. Our brains must work overtime to form new pathways and linkages. During this rewiring process our organism, driven by the primal creative force of genetic evolution does a lot of tinkering with the old neural network. It make's a little modification

here, another there. Most turn out to be minor but once in awhile the brain stumbles on a significant mutation that is passed on to the following generations. On September 11th the global shock that changed the world-view of so many human beings weeded out a good number of our comfortable mental habits and created space for new growth and fresh insights. Here's an anecdotal example:

In the week following terrible tuesday I watched an eight-hour series on PBS called "Evolution". One segment showed how "the deadly dance between predator and prey drives evolution." It pointed out that micro-organisms that consume us from the inside out are homo-sapiens only predators. A biologist, whose name I don't recall at the moment, is gaining wide support from scientists in his field with his hypothesis that instead of trying to fight deadly viruses and bacterium (which is a losing battle) we might try domesticating micro-organisms the way our ancestors domesticated the wolf. By breeding out it's deadly traits and replacing these with others that benefit both man and beast early humans began turning wolves into dogs. Developing a symbiotic relationship with our illusive and evolving diseases is a jujitsu technique that could use the strength and weight of our opponent against it.

This new concept, in turn, made a synaptic association in my mind with an idea that has intrigued me for several years.

It's a theory of visionary and futurist Barbara Hubbard who has written many books on the process of what she calls "conscious evolution". This phrase is one of those mind-altering terms that allow us to see a new connection between independent disciplines that have never before been so distinctly named and defined.

Hubbard traces the history of evolution beginning with what cosmologists call the Big Bang that occurred about 17 billion years ago. Then about three-and-a-half billion years ago life forms appeared and evolved unconsciously until the appearance of language in the human species ended this second phase of development. We are entering a third phase now where human beings are conscious of the process--conscious of consciousness, and are capable of co-creating with what we call God, or the Universe. Right now our consciousness is mostly self-centered, which is an advance over animal consciousness, "but what we might call 'cosmic consciousness' or 'universal' or 'Christ consciousness' or 'Buddha mind' which has been templated by great avatars...is cropping up in millions of us without benefit of clergy. It's not a religion. It's the evolution of religion. It's the evolution of the species to become aware of the consciousness that is, and to be able to guide it through intent."

This is the background of Hubbard's theory. Bear with me, I'm trying to lay out ideas from different sources that may help

in our search for meaning behind events that happened on September eleventh. Hubbard talks about Illya Prigogine's theory of "dissipated structures" than won him a Nobel prize in chemistry.

"When a system is in an unstable state--like we are, on the edge of chaos, many, many things are breaking down. The system uses a lot of energy in dealing with its own breakdown, ineffectively. Then there pops up into that system mutations or innovations. And we know today there are literally countless innovations in every field. In a dissipated structure the novel interaction between those innovative elements create, spontaneously, a new pattern, and the system cooperates in its own self-transcendence." [This fits in with the recent findings that evolutionary changes don't proceed slowly and steadily over millions of years but take quantum leaps at certain periods. "And here's what I think the picture might be: that on planet Earth, as more and more things are breaking down, our global economies, our government, our environment, there are more and more little innovations like tiny mammals in the midst of the dinosaurs. The dinosaurs are getting bigger and bigger and worse and worse. But the innovations are becoming more and more activated...And its my faith that a small amount of increased interaction and coherence to the patterns of these innovations...can help the system flip toward the higher order. ...We are finding increased disorder. That's the signal to look

for the jump. Now we hear a lot about quantum jumps. Quantum jumps occur through the interaction of innovating elements in such a manner they form a new whole....So the vision I put forward is not some kind of mystical quantum jump. It comes from synergy among us...It's not idealistic. It's natural.

"You see I think conscious evolution is a natural evolutionary phenomenon. Very much like some people may say the Universe has a tendency to be biotic. It's designed for life. I think the Universe is also designed for conscious beings, capable of conscious evolution and capable of observing the Universe. You see, you and I are the Universe observing Itself."

From the concept of consciously becoming involved in the evolutionary process of micro-biologists, to the notion of becoming involved in the conscious evolution of ourselves, to the theory of dissipated structures, my free-floating brain cells made one more synaptic connection--this time with the Taoist Yin/Yang circle divided by a curving line, one side dark and the other light that represents any kind of dualism (good and evil, male and female, war and peace, ignorance and wisdom, et cetera). As you already know, there is a small light dot in the dark side of the circle and a small dark dot in the light side.

Physicist Fritjof Capra, author of The Tao of Physics and other books that bring science and religion closer together, says, "The two dots in the diagram symbolize the idea that each

time one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself, already, the seed of its opposite." Huston Smith, author of The World's Religions and many other books, points out that "the Chinese say that just gazing on the Yin/Yang symbol will bring you more wisdom than reading a thousand books because it means that good and evil are not as we tend to think of them in our mood swings--opposite to each other; but they are deeply implicated, deeply related."

And so, as our inner vision is temporarily shrouded by an oily black smoke, and the horror of the spectacle that unfolds again and again before us on our television screens, those many acts of heroism and compassion signal us that the human species has just "flipped" toward a higher order. The bright seed in the womb of death and destruction has been fertilized and is already beginning to grow.

"Please be happy. Please live your life. That's an order!" This was a phone message United Airlines passenger Brian Sweeny, 38, left on his wife Julia's answering machine on the morning of September eleventh, two-thousand and one. It's a message you and I would never have heard about if Brian hadn't died at that moment and that place under those circumstances.

"Please be happy." (Not a superficial happiness of self-centered pleasure, but a meaningful happiness of devotion to whatever karmic work life has assigned to us.) "Please live

your life." (Don't cling to your past or fantasize about your future; just live wholeheartedly in the present moment knowing that little cogs in the Wheel of Life are just as important as big ones.) "THAT'S AN ORDER!" (Not just from Brian to Julia, but from that Mysterious Power we call God, or Allah, or Buddha or the Primordial Spirit speaking to each one of us through accidental heroes like Brian Sweeny.) .

*love,
Mom*

P.S. I transcribed a couple of interviews of Barbara Hubbard that aired on the PBS program Thinking Allowed. I sent Annie and Kathy and a couple of my zen friends copies. If you'd like a copy let me know .