

Excerpt from an Early Version of the Book
Anatomy of a Smear

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CHAPTER 9 - WEAPONIZING PERSONAL STORY

In most tellings of Marc's story, the events of 2011 are rarely afforded more than just a passing reference. As Ken Wilber said at the time, they involved "so much flame, so little fact" that it seemed easier, if not rather convenient, to pay them the degree of attention that a so-called scandal aptly deserved.

In the early part of 2011, Marc was navigating a mutual, amicable breakup with spiritual writer Mariana Caplan. As one might expect, he then started dating. Within a period of a few months, he was going out two people—Kaela Ryan¹, the editor of a book he was publishing with Sounds True, and Marcy Baruch, a musician whom he met at an event and later employed at the organization that later became the Center for Integral Wisdom.

Ryan and Baruch, both in their mid-forties at the time, were aware that Marc was dating the other—in fact, the three of them hung out together on one occasion. Both as Marc reports and as evidenced in their email exchanges (some of which will be shared later in this book), both women were active and interested parties to what looked like consensual, nonexclusive dating relationships between adults.

Now here's the twist. The scandal that erupted in August of 2011 was not the result complaints made by either of these women. Neither went to the police, nor did they make claims against Marc in the press or any where else. In fact, on the day the so-called scandal went public, neither were at odds with him enough to even end their relationships or cut off contact. This scandal was not generated by the inclinations or actions of new alleged victims. It was collectively created by a small but insidiously persistent faction of the public who had been waiting for the other shoe to drop.

And it is for this reason that the scandal that never was actually became significant, even if that is only apparent in hindsight. It portended the 2016 smear, at least insofar as it was a demonstration of the power of negative meme propagation and the impact that negative memes have interpretations of future events, regardless of fact. It also obliquely lent credibility to 2006 false complaints, by virtue of the fact that it appeared to bolster the veracity of an assumed pattern of behavior. And most importantly, it substantiated the irrepressible influence of third parties as drivers of Marc's story. If the supposed victims did not instigate the scandal, then how did it come to pass?

Her name is Donna Zerner, a former best-friend-with-benefits turned board member of Bayit Chadash who apparently decided on the night the false complaints went public in Israel to dedicate a substantial portion of the subsequent ten years of her life to weaponizing her personal story in order to take Marc down.

¹ Name has been changed

Weaponizing Personal Story

On May 14, 2016 the Portland Story Theater features Zerner delivering a thinly-veiled stand-up comedy story about her relationship with Marc. A few days later, the 15-minute weaponized production was posted on YouTube and subsequently emailed by Dinan to an unknown number of his and Marc's colleagues.²

Before getting into the details of Zerner's story, it's critical to reflect a bit on what it means to weaponize a personal story. To be clear, Zerner's story is not being described as weaponized simply because links to it were sent out by smear organizers. Nor is it weaponized because it expresses negative or unfavorable opinions about Marc. It is weaponized for two reasons. First, because of the degree of untruth and distortion that it contains—much of this we be discussed below. And second, because these distortions were publicly shared as alternative facts, where they were then used—by Zerner and others—to influence people's interpretations toward a less adequate version of the truth.

In a recently-posted series of video responses to Zerner, Marc unpacks the notion of a weaponized story in an alternate but ultimately compatible way.³ He speaks of sacred autobiography, which is the essential feature of the final part of his 2001 book, *Soul Prints*.⁴ Reclaiming your sacred autobiography or your story, according to Marc, is a spiritual imperative. He points out that for millennia, oppressive power structures largely prevented the telling of an average person's story. However, evolutionary progress, along with technological advances such as the Internet, now largely allowed for the bypassing those structures. This has made it easier for anyone to claim, tell, and live their story, but it also involves a hidden liability. It is now just as easy to abuse this form of sacred autobiography. By telling one's story without context and with distorted details, in public no less, your sacred autobiography is degraded. It becomes an ego-driven, weaponized story. Again, whether or not a story is weaponized hinges on the extent of truth it embodies and they type of truth it seeks to propagate.

The Difference Between Truth and Truthfulness

These working definitions necessitate an important question: What actually constitutes truth in situations such as this? If you look to the YouTube comments for guidance—at least half of which applaud Zerner for speaking the truth—you're left with a painfully limited and uncritical perspective on this important but almost universally un-asked question. Zerner's story is truth, simply because it was spoken by an alleged victim. Because she has claimed abuse and is now "breaking the silence" and "reclaiming her power," everything that comes out of her mouth, including the verifiable distortions, are treated as unfalsifiable, objective fact.

To be fair, that is a lazy critique. It points out what is often the case, yet it doesn't offer an explanation as to why it is the case or how it works. The why and how are a bit more complicated and far more alarming. As

² Zerner, D., 2016, *The Shadow Behind the Light*, Urban Tellers, <https://youtu.be/2ENUxb4DcCU>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Marc, M., 2001, *Soul Prints: Your Path to Fulfillment*, Simon and Shuster

introduced in the prologue, an unwavering reliance on victim testimony deeply confounds our search for truth because a few important distinctions are woefully missing. I'll resurface one of these distinctions here. First, there is a critical difference between *her* truth and *the* truth. *Her* truth is subjective. It concerns the truthfulness of claims she makes about her personal feelings, motivations, and the like. *The* truth is objective. It concerns the veracity of observable, verifiable events, however difficult to establish in he-said, she-said stories.

Both types of truth are important, but they are different, particularly in terms of what it takes to establish them. Let's consider a few examples from Zerner's story to illustrate this difference. Early in the story she speaks about the first night that Marc spent at her house. She describes how she was "feeling really undesirable."⁵ This is a claim about subjective truth. Is it valid? That depends on your sense of Zerner's degree of *truthfulness*. This can't be verified with absolute certainty. If you're inclined to feel that Zerner is speaking sincerely, you'll take this subjective claim as valid. Even if you are privy to the many lies and distortions that Zerner has propagated over the years, you're still likely inclined to accept this truth as valid. Lying is often tactical and there's no apparent reason to distort this subjective truth given the context of her story.

She then goes on to make a claim about an objective truth. Marc responded to her sharing by saying "Can I show you how sexy you are?" Is this valid? Did this event actually take place? Typically, a claim of objective truth is validated by concurrent observation. Do all parties report observing the same event. In this instance, the answer is "no" as Marc denies making such a statement.⁶ With two competing takes on an objective event, we'd naturally turn to other parties; did they hear this statement uttered? The preponderance of informed third-party opinion would reveal the degree of validity inherent in this claim. This type of truth-check is often called correspondence. In comparison to *truthfulness*, the truth-check for subjective claims, we might simply call this objective truth-check, *truth*.

The problem, of course, is that no one else was present that night. And, unfortunately, this is the case for most claims to objective truth made by Zerner and Marc's other alleged victims. How then do we establish the veracity of these types of objective truth claims? The simple answer is we can't, at least not conclusively. But, in practice, we often act as if we can or that we have. How does that work? Well, we typically go with the person we like best or feel is most truthful. In this instance, if you think Zerner is bravely breaking her silence, you're inclined to accept her objective claims as valid. The opposite would be the more likely scenario if your experience of Zerner is negative or if your experience of Marc is positive.

The (Truth)fulness Dynamic

The problem here is that none of this—not your feelings about a person, nor your felt sense of a person's degree of truthfulness—constitutes a valid standard for adjudicating objective truth claims. If Trump says one

⁵ Zerner, D., 2016, *The Shadow Behind the Light*, Urban Tellers, <https://youtu.be/2ENUxb4DcCU>

⁶ Marc, M., 2017, *Marc Gafni's Response to Donna 05: Disowning Her Power Part 2: Domination/Submission*, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/06/response-to-donna-05-disowning-her-power-part-2-dominationsubmission/>

million people were present at his inauguration, this is either an alternative fact or a real fact. It is a claim about objective truth, which means that it is only falsifiable by multiple converging counts of the people in attendance. How you feel about Trump should not matter, but, unfortunately, it often does when deciding if such a claim constitutes a real or alternative fact.

Valid standards aside, we often feel as if we are justified in engaging this type of uncritical truth acrobatics. We might say to ourselves that because we experience Zerner as truthfully reporting that she felt undesirable, she is therefore less likely to lie or distort objective events. Again, this just doesn't work, as truthfulness is not the standard by which we can judge objective truth. The issue is painfully compounded when we ground present-day judgements of objective truth on past claims to objective truth that have been long since accepted as true on similar faulty grounds.

This is a permutation of confirmation bias. We are more inclined to accept current truths that appear aligned with what we've already taken as true. If you've already established that Marc is sleazy then of course you'll be more inclined to accept Zerner's sleazy claim that he said "Can I show you how sexy you are?" And, you'll do this despite any number of reasons that might account for why she may have concocted such a claim. For example, her story relies on establishing Marc as sleazy "wisdo-tainment" teacher who "oozes charisma." This type of competing explanation is exactly what the bias in confirmation bias leads you to ignore.

These examples are meant to reveal the different ways that subjective and objective truths are established. They do not aim to evoke a debate on the details of the first night Marc spent at Zerner's home—besides, as both admit, they ended up sleeping together that night; an objective truth that we can accept as valid without much debate or any unneeded, inappropriate acrobatics (no pun intended).

Let's get back to the topic at hand. How does any of this relate to weaponizing a personal story? Earlier we said that a weaponized story requires untruths to be put into the public space. Or, as Marc described it in one of his video responses⁷, a weaponized story is a false self not a Unique Self story. Regardless of which definition you prefer, both hinge on what constitutes untruth. Without disentangling the multiple ways valid truth is established, these definitions are somewhat meaningless, so let's take another pass in light of the preceding discussion.

Throughout Zerner's story she makes numerous subjective (*her* truth) and objective (*the* truth) claims. Naturally, she never distinguishes the two and, unfortunately, most listeners don't either. As a result, *her* truth tempers interpretations of her version of the truth, rendering her version more likely to be accepted as *the* truth, particularly when all of this is filtered through pre-existing and unseen biases and assumptions. A

⁷ Marc, M., 2017, Hidden Motives: Anatomy of a Smear Against Marc Gafni – Donna Zerner, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/06/marc-gafni-responds-to-zerner-false-complaints/>

weaponized story is therefore one which leverages subjective truth to inappropriately influence how objective truth is established.

This move is part of a broader concern—what we might call the *fallacy of sliding truth validation*. The fallacy is committed when we attempt to establish any type of truth using the validation procedures for a different type. It happens in two ways. The first concerns individual truths, as illustrated by what Zerner is doing here. The second concerns collective truths, which we'll see in action in the chapter.

Zerner's story is a weaponized story because she commits this fallacy with individual truths. In one sense, it'd be easy to write Zerner's story off as another alleged victim "breaking her silence" by speaking "the truth" as part of the 2016 smear campaign. This would be inappropriate for two reasons. First, because her Portland Story Theater performance so beautifully illustrates how a story can be weaponized in the manner just described. As such, it provides an ideal opportunity, not to just hold Zerner accountable for these actions, but for each of us to hold ourselves accountable for how we establish objective truths in situations such as this. And, second, even though this is the first time in 10 years that Zerner has taken her weaponized myth-making public, she has been telling the same story in one-on-one encounters for years. In one such instance, which we'll get to shortly, she almost single-handedly tipped off the scandal that never was.

Zerner's Distortions

Next, we'll walk through some of the claims Zerner makes in her 2016 performance. This will help us to get a sense of her story, along with the impact it has had on those who've heard it— an experience that one colleague of Marc's has described as dipping your toe into "a lake of poison." In early 2002, Marc was in Boulder, Colorado giving a lecture on material destined for an upcoming book. Zerner, who was in attendance, described the experience derogatorily in her performance. Marc was "handsome and sexy...for a rabbi," and he was "oozing charisma." He "strut across the stage," "modulat[ing] his voice like an evangelical preacher" as he attempted to "whip [the audience] into a frenzy."⁸ "He was amazing," Zerner reflected with a tone of sarcastic remorse. By her own admission, she was attracted to the very same qualities that she, some fourteen years later, caricatured and derided. By stringing together a list of easy-to-accept subjective truths and compliments (that aren't meant as compliments), she painted a picture of Marc that's decidedly sleazy, making her subsequent claims about Marc's behavior that much easier to accept.

At the event's conclusion, Zerner was introduced to Marc by Reb Zalman, who recommended her as editor for his book *The Mystery of Love*.⁹ Within six months, Zerner had signed on as editor. The book was completed some six months later. Over that time, Marc and Zerner had become friends. Soon after finishing the book, she joined the board of Bayit Chadash and served as a close advisor to Marc. On subsequent trips to

⁸ Zerner, D., 2016, *The Shadow Behind the Light*, Urban Tellers, <https://youtu.be/2ENUxb4DcCU>

⁹ Marc, M., 2003, *The Mystery of Love*, Atria

Boulder, Marc would stay at Zerner's house. On the first of such occasions, as described earlier, they slept together for the first time.

Before we turn to the nature of their sexual relationship, which Marc argues Zerner has terribly distorted, it's critical to discuss what this relationship was (and what it wasn't) in more general terms. To start, Zerner and Marc were just ending long-term relationships, and they were not exclusive. Next, while describing one of their sexual experiences, somewhat accurately, according to Marc, Zerner distorted the context by claiming it was in the Holy of Holies. This is a term from the original Hebrew tradition that refers to the inner sanctum of the temple in Jerusalem. Marc has long since used this term to refer to the sacred place of private study, which is a structure that Zerner never participated in. She co-opted this term, which she knew had sacred roots, and which she never engaged, and used it as one of several explicit lies to propagate the notion that Marc slept with her in the context of a teacher-student relationship.

She doubled down on these distortions by claiming that Marc was "addicted to sex...that was all about humiliation and degradation." She continued: "It was a lot more extreme than I could handle, and sometimes I would try and stop it and say, '[Marc], I actually don't enjoy it when you call me a whore.' And he would say, 'Don't be so unsophisticated. We're in the Holy of Holies here. I'm giving you a transmission from the divine feminine. Now, tell me you're a slut. Say it.'"¹⁰

Marc reflected on this particular story at length in his video responses.¹¹ He revealed a number of details that he's never before spoken about publicly. For him, the details of his sexual relationship with Zerner were appropriately kept private, but in order to disentangle the truths and untruths that Zerner has weaved into her degrading story, he reported having little choice but to explicate the key details that she has changed or omitted.

To start, notice the context in which Zerner relayed this story. It immediately followed the section where she described how she discovered one morning on the Internet that Marc, some 25 years earlier, "had molested teenage girls." She went on to say that she helped defend Marc and the organization from these claims but that she ultimately felt "some twisting in her gut around this." This story is also not entirely true and serves to cover another convenient lie by omission that we'll discuss in a moment. For now, it's her narrative timing that we are taking issue with. Not only did this event happen after the sex story she subsequently introduced, her narrative arrangement not so subtly sought to influence her listener's perception of Marc as a legitimate degrader-humiliator. It's as if she was suggesting that because he molested teenagers (a claim which she implied is true), it's much more believable that he also degraded me.

¹⁰ Zerner, D., 2016, The Shadow Behind the Light, Urban Tellers, <https://youtu.be/2ENUxb4DcCU>

¹¹ Marc, M., 2017, Hidden Motives: Anatomy of a Smear Against Marc Gafni – Donna Zerner, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/06/marc-gafni-responds-to-zerner-false-complaints/>

Next, she manipulates the context of the “say you’re a slut” story with another string of lies that make it seem that all such encounters were non-consensual or forced. According to Marc, Zerner never claimed that the type of sex she described was “too extreme” or that she “didn’t actually enjoy it.”

In fact, and here's the key implicit lie, it was Zerner who introduced Marc to “the taste of sexuality which is domination and submission.”¹² He recounted the day when she first shared with him her “whips, chains, bondage and handcuff” drawer, along with the time that she introduced him to her pornographic preferences, which included a nightly ritual of viewing of BDSM videos where women fainted or were tied up before being taken by their partners.¹³

Did Marc ever say, “Now, tell me you’re a slut?” Absolutely. He admits it publicly, without equivocation or remorse. Importantly, however, it was said in a shared context of mutual domination and submission; a context that Zerner has distorted, denied, and disowned.

To be clear, there is nothing wrong, nothing repugnant, nothing unhealthy with this taste of sexuality, particularly when it's balanced with other forms. This taste is not a legitimate reason to cause someone to feel shame, and, in this respect, Marc reported that he neither feels ashamed of participating in it, nor does he intend to shame Zerner for her participation.

If Zerner is too fearful to own what is a legitimate aspect of her sexuality, that is fine, or at least understandable. What is not fine, however—in fact, what is completely the opposite of fine—is disowning this aspect of her sexuality and then projecting it on to Marc as part of a weaponized story that publicly propagates a lopsided and untrue notion of Marc as dominator and Zerner as a powerless, non-consenting submissive.

Apparently, this is a theme she favors and diligently tries to develop throughout her story. Marc was “living her secret dream,” doing something that she would “never be brave enough to go for” herself. She describes her relationship with Marc as putting her in a “trance,” making her “ungrounded and uncentered,” and as making her brain “very foggy.” She was “weirdly addicted” to the chaos and drama and used it to fill up “the empty spaces places inside of [her].” She “literally felt like [her] life force was being sucked away by an energy vampire.”¹⁴

In my reading, this amounts to a string of potentially legitimate subjective truths, ones which she clearly felt last year but questionably felt some ten years ago. She leveraged these truths to substantiate her recasting of past events and to inappropriately bolster the veracity of the objective claims she makes about Marc's behavior. They were also a way of infantilizing herself, a way of disowning her power and disclaiming responsibility for decisions made both past and present. If Marc was all powerful and she was under his

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Zerner, D., 2016, *The Shadow Behind the Light*, Urban Tellers, <https://youtu.be/2ENUxb4DcCU>

control, she can't be held accountable for her actions or any of the details of their relationship that she hasn't disclosed or has intentionally distorted.

Two additional distortions are relevant here and then we'll start moving on the events of 2011. The first has already been alluded to. Zerner did not find out about the Kabakov and Mitzner stories by randomly cruising the Internet, and according to Marc, he did not "swear on a Bible" that it wasn't true, as Zerner claims.¹⁵ Sometime around 2003, these stories first appeared on a website run by Vicki Polin, who we'll discuss in detail later in this book. Once Marc was alerted to the site, he brought it to the attention of both Zerner and Frazier, and he discussed it with both of them extensively. He outlined the nature of his contact with Kabakov and Mitzner, along with the contexts in which the events had transpired.

He then worked closely with Zerner and Frazier, both board members at the time, to determine an appropriate response. Given Polin's representation of Mitzner, her tendency to hurl wild and unfounded allegations at whomever she felt like targeting (she once told her distribution list that Marc was "a danger to prepubescent boys and girls"), and her connection to Rabbi Blau, Zerner and Frazier advised Marc to refrain from publicly engaging the Mitzner situation. Marc's first inclination was to seek some form of mediated dialogue, but he ultimately consented to stonewalling on the Mitzner story—a mistake which he regrets and later corrected.¹⁶

Zerner left all of these details out of her story, and yet she was directly involved in this decision, making her at least partially responsible for it. Had she brought these details up, she could have easily argued that Marc manipulated her into supporting this course of action. Such a claim would follow naturally from her repeated attempts to portray herself as powerless. But, she leaves it out completely, suggesting to me that she is still fearful of being attacked for her involvement.

Zerner Drops the Mic

A similar fear surfaced explicitly in her final conversation with Marc, which took place in the early morning of May 12, 2006, just hours after the false complaints went live in Israel. She distorted the details of these events as well, leaving out any reference to this call, along with any mention of the entirely normal communications the two exchanged in the days prior to May 11th and the somewhat charged emails exchanged before the end of the month.

In her story, Zerner stated that she got a call from Marc's assistant (Elster) who told her "that several women had started talking and it turns out that [Marc] had been sleeping with and sexually abusing students and women on his staff." She concluded her explanation of the events surrounding the false complaints—and, implicitly, her entire involvement with the Marc situation—by saying that she has finally found her "way

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Marc, M., 2017, *Marc Gafni's Response to Judy – A Distorted Story from Several Decades Ago When Marc Was in His Early 20's*, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/04/marc-gafni-judy-response/>

out” and “cut off all contact with [Marc].” But Zerner wasn’t done with Marc, not in the least—not that night, that month, nor over the subsequent ten years.

Unsurprisingly, she left out many of the details leading up to and out of that night. I have reviewed the extensive email record between Zerner and Marc, including the communications exchanged surrounding this date. Most of it is incredibly boring, consisting of the types emails you’d expect to be exchanged between people working together closely in an organization. In the six days prior to the events on May 11th, she sent him an article about newly ordained female rabbi, she requested items for donation at a fundraiser for a local congregation, and she commented on the “beautiful relationship” Marc was developing with Wilber.

On May 8th, in response to Marc’s comment, “Nice meditation the other day”—“meditation” was their euphemism for phone sex—she replied, “Hmmm....yes indeed. Don’t remind me! It makes me so happy when we’re in a good place with each other!” These lines immediately followed ones where she said she would be hard to reach by phone that night on account of being out with her husband. On May 10th, Marc recalls a phone conversation he had with Zerner on his way to Kennedy airport for his flight back to Israel. According to Marc, she echoed the sentiment from her email on the 8th, “we’ve done so much work for so long and we’re finally at a point—and I’m paraphrasing here—that we’re able to really impact, to really make a difference... which is so beautiful.”¹⁷

None of this is unusual or out of the ordinary. In the vast majority of emails I reviewed, Marc and Zerner were similarly supportive and intimate. However, by the early morning of May 12, 2006, everything had shifted. Zerner, as she put it, had “cut off all contact.” For Marc, it felt like she just dropped out of relationship with little explanation. What caused such a dramatic turn?

In his response to Zerner, Marc offers three potential reasons, each of which involve some type of fear. The first reason is not in the least bit speculative as it came from Zerner herself. Just after Marc left the lawyers office in Tel Aviv, he phoned Zerner, who had already spoken to Elster. Zerner was hysterical on the phone with him. She was afraid she was going to be sued. Because her name was on Marc’s bank accounts and because the police were (supposedly) involved, she was afraid that she would be liable and her trust fund would be at risk. She was gripped by an understandable fear—the type of fear that often results from the unexpected arising of allegations of sexual abuse in an organization; the type of fear that Daphne Patai describes as a sexual hysteria,¹⁸

The second and third reasons involve a bit of speculation on Marc’s part—meaning, they weren’t mentioned by Zerner in this call—but they are rooted in a similar fear. Perhaps, as Marc suggests, Zerner was afraid that

¹⁷ Marc, M., 2017, Hidden Motives: Anatomy of a Smear Against Marc Gafni – Donna Zerner, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/06/marc-gafni-responds-to-zerner-false-complaints/>

¹⁸ Patai, D., 2000, *Heterophobia: Sexual Harassment and the Future of Feminism*, Rowman & Littlefield.

details or her sexual predilections would come to light or that her complicity in the Mitzner stonewalling would open her to attack as a result of the emergence of the false complaints.

While such fears may have believably motivated her on the morning of May 12th—a few hours after everything they’d worked on in Israel began to crumble and when so much was unknown—might they have believably motivated another 10 years of subversive efforts against Marc culminating in her public story? I don’t buy it. It’s been over a decade now and none of these fears have been realized. Ironically, however, the latter two, if anyone actually cares at this point, might actually stand a chance of coming to pass now that Marc was forced to respond, in detail, to Zerner’s weaponized story.

Zerner’s Deeper Motives

Those unlikely potentials aside, how might we account for what motivated Zerner’s May 12th exodus *along with* her actions over the subsequent ten years? Based on a close reading of other details from her story, along with emails sent in the weeks following May 12th, I speculate that a mixture of fear and shame, coupled with direct contact between her and other alleged victims, led her to quickly distort her experience—in 2006—of *her* truth and *the* truth concerning both Marc as a person and their personal and professional relationship.

Let’s walk through this slowly. What indicates this this type distortion? On May 23, Marc replied via email to a request made by Zerner through a third-party that he close down a checking account that bore both of their names. In his reply, he said, “I just looked at the Donna folder on my computer which was active till the day i went back to Israel. it reminded me of many great moments and conversations and of the mistakes as well.” The next day, Zerner replied about numerous items pertaining to accounts and taxes and the like. She also reflected on the lines from above:

These lines feel manipulative to me. You don't have to remind me of the "great moments". Yes, there were some, but much of what appeared great to you was based on me not being truthful about what I was thinking or feeling in those moments, because whenever I tried to express my true feelings you attacked me and made me wrong. So I pretended that all was well when it really wasn't.¹⁹

The tone of this portion of the email, while blunt and described by Zerner as a “rant,” reflects a hint of genuine care—tinged with exasperation and a desire for distance—but nothing resembling the cruelty she musters in her 2016 story. She continues:

I just didn't have the strength to follow my intuition and walk away. I cared about you deeply, I was swept up in the drama of your world, and, like so many of us, I thought I could fix you. I was wrong.

¹⁹ Email communication between Zerner and Marc, May 24, 2006. The complete email is not being reprinted because it mostly contains details about personal financial matters.

*And I am definitely looking carefully at my role in all this, how and why I was willing to give up my power to you. Many valuable lessons indeed.*²⁰

Remember, these lines were written 12 days after she cut-off all contact. In them, at least in my reading, she has not yet removed herself from the situation or the relationships they shared. She acknowledged her role and her mutual responsibility—she was "not being truthful" about her thoughts or feelings; she "didn't have the strength to follow her intuition, she "pretended that all was well when it really wasn't," and importantly, she is "looking carefully at her role in all this." To me, all of this reads as a normal, albeit difficult, separation between two mature adults, the challenge of the surrounding circumstances notwithstanding. To me, it's reminiscent of what Marc often says about being willing to explore and take responsibility for the "hurt caused in the normal arc of human relationship."

Fast forward to the end of her 2016 story and while similar sentiments appear to be present, the tone and context have drastically shifted. She said, "I allowed myself to be used by him...I had ignored my intuition....I had betrayed my own integrity." Then, mere seconds later, she compared Marc to Bill Cosby, a point that didn't even land with her mostly agreeable audience. How do we get from exploring the co-responsibility for hurt caused in the arc of normal adult relationships to the place where her experience (even if her distorted claims are taken as truth) is even remotely comparable to women who were drugged and then assaulted, allegedly or otherwise? This is an unconscionable and frankly pathetic usurping of the experience of actual victims of egregious abuse (whether at the hands of Cosby or anyone else).

Again, Zerner's story contains clues that might guide some additional speculation regarding this question. Immediately after the failed Cosby "joke," she recounted how she found solace in talking to "other women that he'd been involved with." She continued, "At first there was three, then eight. I've eventually talked to 15 women..." Notice here that Zerner didn't explicitly call these women victims, but she painted them in that light. She said many experienced "really severe trauma," and, in a blind reference to our playbook—remember, there is always 15 victims—she not-so-subtly leaned on her Cosby comparison for leverage. She implied that Marc's body count was on par with that of Cosby, someone who any news-consuming listener has been preconditioned to despise.

Let's take Zerner at her word here. She likely did meet with 15 people who had some form of relationship with Marc. Remember, she's been at this project for over ten years. What percent of them had experienced some type of hurt in the normal arc of human relationship? What percent had alleged some form of abuse? She told us that she spoke with Kabakov, Mitzner, and Elster—whose claims are well documented, even if exaggerated or false—but what about the others?

²⁰ Ibid.

More importantly, what percent of the 15 women (or, for that matter, the “well over a dozen more” that she claimed to “know of”) have actually self-identified as victims? And what percent did Zerner either assume were or treat as victims. And, how many of them, in the course of these conversations, cast Zerner herself in the victim role?

While unanswerable, these questions are important to at least consider. Why? Because the fallacy of sliding truth validation is not unique to Zerner's story. It's likely a far more prevalent pattern, one which underlies and influences the discourse surrounding this and related situations. In reference to these meetings, Zerner said “...now we were talking, we were telling the truth...” Whose truth? What truth? What type of truth?

Is it not at least minimally feasible that the very same dynamic was operating in these meetings? Just as Zerner has sought to use *her* truth to influence the way listener's establish *the* truth about Marc, is it not at least possible, that the subjective truths of these other women influenced what Zerner's came to herself accept as valid objective and subjective truths? And, in an intersubjective space where two women are finally, as Zerner suggests, breaking their silence and speaking "the truth," can we entirely rule out that this dynamic did not equally operate in reverse? Perhaps all of them modified their notions of truth, in all its forms, in response to each other's stories. And, perhaps this was all the more likely in the months after Marc was supposedly caught red-handed by the police in Israel.

If this dynamic were indeed operating, it might start to address our earlier question, stated differently: Why is the result of Zerner's “looking carefully at [her] role in all this” (from the May 24th email) so notably one-sided, distorted, and blaming in her 2016 story? It starts to make sense if she ultimately came to believe that she was not a mutual participant in a normal human relationship but instead the victim of abuse.

The fallacy of sliding truth validation is committed when we attempt to establish any type of truth using the validation procedures for a different type. It constitutes a mistake in reasoning, a mistake in how we authenticate truth. It is not the result of some nefarious conspiracy, but it is a natural liability in situations such as Marc's, where objective truth is so desperately wanted but subjective truths are so much easier to come by and validate. This liability is enhanced when conversations between aggrieved parties are not mediated by outside or countervailing perspectives.

Weaponized stories are defined by this fallacy. They evoke and encourage it, increasing its prevalence. And, its prevalence, particularly in our age of alternative facts (death of facts), makes weaponized stories much more effective. Zerner unknowingly plays into this vicious cycle, amplifying the problem, every time she tells her weaponized story. In the closing minute of her performance, she solipsistically affirms that telling her story is a way of taking back the power that she had given away to Marc. Part of taking back this power, in her words, involves the need to “tell the truth.” Not to tell *her* truth, or *her* version of the truth, but to tell *the* truth.

Ironically, what Zerner fails to see here is that there is no power without responsibility. Even as, she attempts to hold Marc accountable for the very same offense, she reclaims her power while disclaiming responsibility for the impact *her* truth has on even reasonable attempts to approximate *the* truth of her relationship to Marc and his situation in general. This is her core transgression, and it stretches back for years. It was not her lies, omissions, or distortions that precipitated the 2011 events, which we turn to next. Each of those were undoubtedly important, but what is most indictable is her insidious ability to manipulate how people perceived their own truth concerning their relationship to Marc.

CHAPTER 10 - SO MUCH FLAME SO LITTLE FACT

Let's get back to the events of late 2011. In the proper chapter, we explained that Marc was dating two women—Kaela Ryan and Marcy Baruch—soon after an amicable breakup with his former partner, Mariana Caplan, earlier that year. The 2001 scandal did not result from claims made against Marc by these women. Unbeknownst to anyone at the time, it was perpetrated by Zerner, who influenced the right person at the right time in order to manufacture a controversy, even when one hadn't naturally emerged.

The controversy was made public by blogger William Harryman, who helped stoke an internet mob who'd just been waiting for Marc to slip up. Remember, in the minds of some at the time, Marc had possibly skirted culpability in Israel. At the time, it was not yet known that complaints had not been registered with the police, and Marc had not yet disclosed many of the details about his time in Israel. Additionally, his re-emergence into the public arena just a few years prior was both unexpected and enraging to many of the same people. And, not only had he started teaching again, he was finding success heading up what became CIW and leading the Integral Spiritual Experience event series, which was two months out from its third public offering when this scandal erupted.

On September 13, 2011, Harryman posted a blog featuring a statement made by Tami Simon, founder of Sounds True and supervisor of Ryan, about why she cancelled the book contract Ryan was working on with Marc. Simon's statement read as follows:

When I first started working with Marc a couple of years ago, Marc and I spoke openly about his history and what he claimed were false accusations against him related to alleged sexual improprieties. Several influential people spoke up in his defense and equally several people warned me not to trust Marc. I came to believe that whatever had happened in the past, Marc was beginning a new chapter in his life. Marc explicitly stated to me that he was not going to be involved in sexual relationships with students, that even if he deemed such relationships to be consensual, he did not believe that engaging in relationships with students would support his efforts to be an effective teacher. In considering publishing Marc's work, the most important thing to me was the actual quality of the written work. When he submitted "Your Unique Self" in its edited form, I appreciated the content and message of the book. The quality of the book combined with the force of his conviction regarding how he would conduct himself as a teacher moving forward convinced me to take a risk on publishing his work.

In the past several weeks, new and incontrovertible information came to light that made me aware that Marc was involved in a sexual relationship with a student and that the relationship was shrouded in secrecy. There was an obvious lack of alignment between Marc's words to me and his actions. I learned about Marc's sexual relationship with a

student from another woman who was having a sexual relationship with Marc. This woman was also asked by Marc to keep her relationship with him a secret. In talking with this woman, I learned how emotionally damaging this secrecy was for her, how it cut her off from emotional support and connection. I also learned quite a bit about how she felt manipulated by Marc, about how often she witnessed Marc telling lies to cover his tracks, and how upset she was to find herself caught in such a web of lies.

Discovering this new information, it became clear to me that it was not in integrity for me personally or for Sounds True as a company to publish Marc's books or to support him as a spiritual teacher in the world. I do not trust Marc Gafni. I do not trust what he says, and I do not trust that he acts in the best interests of his students or his professional alliances.²¹

Simon is well respected in the communities within which Marc taught. Her words carried a great weight here and were largely taken at face value: "I learned about Marc's sexual relationship with a student from another woman who was having a sexual relationship with Marc," and the former relationship "was shrouded in secrecy."

As soon as "Marc is secretly sleeping with students" was published online, he was adjudicated guilty and the victim label was slapped on the two women—Ryan and Baruch, who were at the time unnamed, and who had not identified as such. Even the slightest indication—true or not—that Marc was "at it again" was enough to whip up a bias-fueled interpretation of the supposed facts about the nature of these relationships. A short lived search for truth ended with with forgone conclusion: Marc abuses again.

Harryman, a consummate "fact-based" reporter and self-proclaimed protector of Marc's future victims²², helped to ensure that his reader's reached this conclusion by throwing in a few completely unsubstantiated falsehoods. Both women were in a "power differential to Marc," Baruch was a "student," and Ryan, who was going through marriage counseling at the time, was engaging Marc as her counselor. As we'll see below, none of this was true, but Harryman didn't hesitate to state it as fact, nor did he provide any indication of how he came across such information. Speaking of power differentials, what Simon fails to mention, also as well explore below, is that the women (Ryan) who told her about the other women (Baruch) was in her employ at the time and only told Simon about the relationship out of fear of getting caught sleeping with one the the Sound's True's authors.

The 2011 scandal was effectuated by five dynamics that only appear salient in hindsight. First, Marc enraged Lester and Ingber—who, while we don't have evidence for it, were likely in contact

²¹ Harryman, W., 2011, *BREAKING: Marc Gafni's Sexual Impropriety Re-Emerges - Will Integral Leadership Step Up this Time?*, <http://integral-options.blogspot.com/2011/09/breaking-marc-gafnis-sexual-impropriety.html>

²² Ibid.

with Zerner at the time—by working with Caplan to expose the details of the 2006 false complaints in the epilogue of her book *The Guru Question*.²³ Second, Simon's interpretation of Ryan's relationship with Marc was filtered through a recent first-person telling of Zerner's weaponized story. Third, Marc's relationships with Ryan and Baruch were immediately interpreted as abusive due to a residual misunderstanding of his recent history and an inappropriate application of an unequal power dynamic. Fourth, several of Marc's colleagues at the time leveraged the situation for personal gain, further substantiating the public conclusion that something nefarious was once again afoot. And, fifth the fallacy of sliding truth validation was once again operating, in this instance, however, it was the establishment of collective truth that was most impacted. Each of these dynamics will be discussed in turn.

They Will Attack You

After the events of 2006, Ingber, Lester, and Zerner made quite the habit out of doing whatever they could to subvert Marc's attempts to teach. In one such instance, the Executive Director at Ingber's New York center emailed Deepak Chopra about an event he'd set up with Marc in New York. Chopra forwarded the emails to Marc and Wilber along with a question about how to respond. Wilber's attempts to reassure him failed, and Chopra asked Marc to follow up with his publicist and former CEO Richard Pearl. Kempton and Marc got on the phone with Pearl, who informed them that Chopra needed to back-off from Marc but would still furnish a testimonial for Marc's upcoming book.

In an attempt to explain the situation in Israel and persuade Chopra to reconsider, Marc asked Caplan to send Pearl a pre-publication draft of her epilogue, which was the first detailed attempt to call out the 2006 complaints for what they were—both false and fabricated. According to Marc, Pearl replied that he knew Donna Zerner and that he was good friends with Zerner's friend, Tirza Firestone, a renewal rabbi in Boulder. Pearl elaborated: "Do not publish this. They will attack you." Marc took this as a friendly suggestion and, in May 2011, Caplan went ahead with publication through Sound's True, Simon's company. In hindsight, Marc wonders if Pearl had not sent the draft to Zerner and/or Firestone and was actually reporting back their perspective.

In a private communication with one of her staff members, Simon notes that she was overwhelmed by the intensity on the onslaught she received concerning Marc around the time she published Caplan's book. It's not entirely clear who exactly was in touch with Simon during his time, but it was later confirmed (by Simon, herself, in response to an email sent to her by Kempton) that Zerner ran into Simon at a Boulder supermarket in June 2011. She asked Simon why she published Caplan's book with the epilogue on Marc and demanded a recall. The pair later met and Zerner gave, unbeknownst to her at the time, the most impactful telling of her weaponized story. On August 1st, the events described in Simon's statement to Harryman took

²³ Caplan, M., 2011, *The Guru Question: The Perils and Rewards of Choosing a Spiritual Teacher*, pp. 267-294, Sounds True.

place. Ryan, fearing that Simon would find out she was dating a client, told Simon about her relationship with Marc, along with his relationship with Baruch. Marc and Simon met in person a few days later. According to Marc, Simon laid into him, in public, for 20 minutes straight. He reports having the distinct experience that he was sitting across from Zerner.

He should have taken Pearl at his word. While exposing the details of the 2006 false complaints was essential and required, at least he might have anticipated what he was walking in to—not that night with Simon per se, but throughout 2011, when he was dating two women who were one of separation from Zerner. A cliché as it sounds, this was a perfect storm and Marc was asking for it. In 2008, Ingber, Lester, and others (including Zerner) were likely shocked that Marc had managed to come back from events that took place two years prior.

By 2011, the first two of five dynamics were in well in motion. First, Marc had the gall to tell his story (note that he won no points for bravely speaking his truth) and Caplan had the audacity to write about it. And, second, Zerner was honing her skill at manipulative storytelling. But, had Simon's interpretation of Ryan's admission not been pre-colored by Zerner, we wouldn't be writing this chapter. Now, some have said that had Marc not been dating two people, the events of 2011 would have never come to pass. Fair enough, but who are we to judge? Dating multiple people at the same time, while perhaps not advisable in situations such as Marc's, does not justify the judgment hurled upon these relationships. And, as we'll see next, when the women themselves don't claim abuse, does it make any sense whatsoever that such a claim should be leveled by uninvolved parties?

Ryan

While overlapping for several months, Marc's relationship with Ryan and Baruch unfolded along different trajectories and resulted in notably different outcomes, at least as judged at the time Simon's statement was made public. Despite this, both are routinely referred to as the latest victims of Marc's abuse. We'll look next at both relationships, and, as you've likely come to expect, there is more to the story. What many have come to take as the truth of 2011 is just a partial approximation of a distorted collective truth that is largely out of line with the chain of events that actually took place. We'll start with Ryan and then move on to Baruch.

Ryan first encountered Marc at an event he was teaching at Esalen in late 2010. She reflected on the experience in an email sent over a half year later, "Your greatness announced itself to me the moment I heard you speak . . . I remember feeling a bit like—oh no, am I ready for this? Now I understand why I felt that way. I am ready."

They didn't actually meet for several more months, not until Simon assigned Ryan as editor of Marc's book, *Your Unique Self*, which was targeted for late 2011 release through Sound's True. As is typical in editor-author relationships, they became intellectually close over the early part of 2011. Over the same period of time, Marc had broken up with Caplan and Ryan had separated

from her husband, leaving the door open for their relationship to progress, which it did after a dinner in May. A walk through Boulder culminated in a return to the Sound's True office, where Ryan suggested they make love on her desk. Marc declined, not on account of the riskiness of the encounter, but, he reports, out of a desire to progress at a slower pace. They shared a kiss instead and then began what he describes as a passionate, gentle, and loving relationship.

Their modest start lasted for a few weeks before deepening into a series of risky rendezvous involving sex in bathrooms and hotels. Hearing Marc tell the story, which their emails both corroborate and colorfully illustrate, feels a bit too voyeuristic while also bringing to mind the best experiences I've ever had at the start of a new relationship. In early July, they discussed spending an extended period of time together at beginning of August. They intended to explore the possibility of a making a longer term commitment.

In an email sent on July 8, Ryan reflects on Marc's upcoming trip to Colorado, "...about to seal the deal. Once the deal is sealed, I will have total independence and privacy for the weekend." On the 11th, she lovingly reflected on their relationship (see Exhibit 9) in a way that indicates in no uncertain terms a dynamic of mutuality, one which directly undercuts Harryman's baseless claims that Marc was Ryan's therapist or that they were engaged in a teacher-student relationship. On July 21, the anticipation clearly building, she reflected on how love impacts her:

cannot fucking concentrate today. this is where i get stuck. this is why [her former husband] worked. this is why in my twenties i ran wild in the woods--climbing mountains and rocks all the time. wandering and writing fiction and living in a dreamland. i could not sit still. this is what love does to me. my edge is learning how to channel it. the love is big. feels like this love could build things. but i let it spin me around too much...and also, it feels fucking wonderful. this is what i pray for and to.

Exhibit 9

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: quick ebook thought on Sunday
Date: July 17, 2011 at 8:01:18 AM PDT
To: [REDACTED]

Good morning,

Your greatness announced itself to me the moment I heard you speak at Esalen last October. I remember feeling a bit like--oh no, am I ready for this? Now I understand why I felt that way. I am ready.

Your vulnerability is the way in to knowing each other. I am not frightened of it or of naming it, always with a gentle heart. It is part of your beauty. And I can help you understand it--because it is the doorway to deepening your greatness.

I hope you are getting sleep now--and that you have a wonderful day.

I am looking forward to making love to every inch of your body so very soon.

"To know someone here or there with whom you can feel there is understanding in spite of distances or thoughts unexpressed. That can make life a garden." Goethe

LOVE
Haven

Only July 26th, a series of work-related emails transmute into erotic play. A suggestion on how Marc should optimally engage his Facebook page turns graphically sexual before ending with Ryan saying, "I am so open right now. Honey thru my whole body." Then, a half hour later in another chain of emails, an attempt to coordinate the dates of a New York event, takes a left turn toward love:

Marc: love me honey, I am loving you.

Ryan: I am really feeling you. You are complex. And easy. Both I love. And I am both.

Soon, my softness in all its forms.

Marc: i will make love to you. i will fuck you open to god

Ryan: This is where we take each other to heaven.

Again, the emails capture beautiful exchanges of passion and play, illustrating a powerful budding relationship, which Marc felt had a strong chance of becoming a long term commitment. The feeling was mutual. In anticipation of the impending deepening of their bond during their planned time together in early August, Ryan spoke to two close friends about her relationship with Marc. Both responded positively, according to what Ryan reported to Marc, but they insisted that she tell Simon. Feeling this pressure, Ryan called at the end of July, "We have to tell Tami."

Marc admits that he wasn't eager to tell Simon because she was close with Caplan, who knew Marc was dating but didn't yet know that he was with Ryan. He wasn't concerned that Simon would take issue with Ryan dating a client, but they together recognized the complex position Ryan was in having Simon as her employer. For these reasons, and others that commonly inform such choices during the early parts of dating relationships, the two had agreed to hold their relationship privately. This choice was also mutual. It was not the product of coercion, manipulation, or the swearing of anyone to secrecy, as was often reported. Marc believed that they arrived at the decision together; If their relationship was indeed to take the next step, they would let people know, starting with Simon, later in August.

Unfortunately, within 6 days of these emails, their relationship had come to a crashing halt. Ryan met with Simon on August 1. Simon flipped. Neither Marc nor Ryan knew that Simon had been in contact with Zerner, and neither anticipated Simon's response. Ryan called Marc the next day, confused, crying, and apologetic. She emailed Simon and Marc that same day, suggesting that she Shepard the book, which was almost, complete, through final edits and indexing. Marc boarded a flight to Boulder a few days later, and met with Simon at the dinner described earlier. Channelling Zerner, Simon went ballistic in packed restaurant for nearly 20 minutes. She repeated many of the old canards, verbatim, which is when Marc realized what must have happened. Simon and Zerner had connected. His intuition was largely confirmed when Simon took issue, not with him dating her employee, but with him also dating a student, which is how Ryan described Marc's relationship with Baruch.

For Simon, this ran aground of a promise that Marc had made to her in a meeting from earlier in the year. At that time, they had discussed Marc ending his relationship with Caplan, which Simon supported, along with the conditions Simon had for taking on Marc's book: No more relationships with students; nothing that would bring about another scandal. For Simon, Ryan's characterization of Marc's relationship with Baruch, however imprecise, spoke directly to the allegations from Israel, at least in terms of how Simon had come to interpret them through the warped lens of Zerner's truth telling.

Ryan dropped out of contact for the next few weeks, but her and Marc met up toward the end of August. Ryan wanted to have sex. Apparently, they both thought that the situation would settle down and perhaps they could continue. They were wrong. Within a few weeks, the pressure on Simon had mounted—Harryman, Zerner, and a few other colleagues' of Marc who well meet later, were pressuring her to cut all ties with Marc. She quietly canceled the book contract and released her statement through Harryman's blog in mid-September. At around the same time, Haven reported to Marc that she was fearful of losing her job. She too met with Donna and Baruch (this is discussed below) and was seeing a therapist. The story she held about her relationship with Marc became re-scripted. It aligned with Simon and took on many of the radical elements of Zerner. She kept her job, ceased further contact with Marc, and took on, at least to some degree, the imposed victim label that others assigned to her.

The story Ryan took on in late 2011 has apparently persisted over the last six years. While Ryan has entirely stayed out of the fray concerning Marc, she resurfaced anonymously in an interview reported on by Oppenheimer in a blog follow-up to his Christmas eve article in the Times. Oppenheimer reports that in 2011 Marc was accused "of sleeping with a woman he was counseling, which led her employer, a book publisher, to cancel Marc's book contract."²⁴ He links to Simon's statement but also says "the woman who alleged the affair recently confirmed the story to me." He has the courtesy to include a note that Marc denied to him that he was ever Ryan's counselor, but of course the story persists.

The counselor dynamic, which Ryan apparently corroborates as recently as 2016, is required to scandalize her relationship with Marc, just as the teacher-student dynamic is required to scandalize his relationship with Baruch, which we turn to next. But, before we do, let's take the issue of unequal power a step deeper. While it could be argued that any relationship Marc engages will feature an unequal power dynamic—he is an accomplished teacher and author, after all—this argument is entirely too convenient and is strategically applied. No one says this about his past relationship with Caplan (why, because she is also an author?) or his current partner, Lori Galperin (why, because she has run several successful treatment centers?). Yet, there's little hesitation to apply the abusive power dynamic to Ryan and Baruch (why, because one is an editor

²⁴ Oppenheimer, M., 2016, *Understanding the Marc Gafni Story, Part II*, Tablet, <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/196238/understanding-the-marc-gafni-story-part-ii>

and the other a musician?). Bullshit. This infantilizes both of them, and it denies them the very possibility that they ever showed up powerfully in relationship. It also disregards how they actually showed up in relationship, as judged during the relationship—via the only reliable evidence we have about such interactions, namely, their emails—and not not after the fact, when they were sucked into a frenzy not of their own making.

The easiest way to account for the discrepancy between Caplan/Galperin and Ryan/Baruch is to say that former didn't make claims of abuse against Marc, but the latter did. Not so fast. There's more than just a bit of circular reasoning in that argument. Rather, a more problematic power dynamic than the one that may have existed between these women and Marc is the one that existed between these women and Zerner and the one between Ryan and Simon. These unacknowledged power discrepancies led to the stories of abuse in the first place, so primary fault cannot so easily be backward translated onto the oh-so-powerful Marc and the oh-so-helpless women he dated. This is the third dynamic that led to the scandal that never was.

Baruch

If Ryan wasn't in therapy with Marc, was Baruch a student? According to Marc, the answer is “yes, this was indeed one aspect of their relationship.” The details are not as straightforward as it's typically portrayed in claims made against Marc, so we'll address it from the start. A teacher student relationship, at least as implicated in those claims, implies a relationship characterized by obedience and submission. It implies the manipulation of the power dynamic inherent in an established relational mode to obtain sex. And, it denies two important possibilities. First, that such relationships, in a healthy or functional form, are actually feasible and, second, that the student can actually consent to a relationship with a teacher.

For Marc and Baruch both of these possibilities were realized, at least for a time. This changed, as we'll see below, when others intervened, imposing their moralistic sensibilities about teacher-student relationship, persona agendas, and a confirmation bias fueled false pattern recognition. If you're predisposed to catch Marc once again sleeping with students—whether you're Zerner looking to fuel your next attack, or Simon waiting to see if Marc's gonna break his promise, or just some uninvolved third party seemingly trying to form some kind of conclusive opinion about Marc—the tendency to disregard evidence that doesn't fit your existing beliefs literally creates the pattern that those very same beliefs are grounded on.

Like all false patterns, they rarely fit the evidence. Marc first met Baruch in 2009 at a Unity Church event at which she was singing. They came across each other again at another church event in 2010 and became friendly. He invited her to perform at one of his events later in 2010, and by the end of that year, they began studying sacred texts together. During this time, the two had extended discussions about the nature of their relationship. They discussed how the teacher-student dynamic didn't entail the roles of guru or disciple, and that it didn't preclude alternate modes of relating such as friend and colleague. While these discussions largely took place in

conversation, the essence of them are at least partially reflected in exchanged emails, like the ones shown in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10

On Feb 5, 2011, at 5:55 AM, marc wrote:
hi mb

copying you on a letter i just wrote
from the holy teacher that lives as me
who is my deepest heart
to whom i am responsible
with honor and delight
your beloved friend
in tears for the infinite pain of god
in laughter for what is possible
and for what already is

mg

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: from marc
Date: February 5, 2011 at 1:49:45 PM PST
To: marc [REDACTED]

oh hi, dear friend, mg
wanting to respond to this with so much more than i have time for at the moment...
for now, the Who that is your deepest heart... i am so privileged to know and love
and be loved by
and my love for all, on behalf of all, for the sake of all--is where my deepest thank you and desire comes
from
when you can not find me, look around with me
for that is where i am--checking out other corners of the kosmos
wanting to be sure i am seeing clearly, looking around for thieves and shadows and exquisite rugs that
say "take off your shoes, and walk on me, for i am holy ground" but are just covering up an empty pit with
no water
it is not negotiation i seek, but clarification that all is aligned, that inner and outer foundations are firm
even as they are mystically interwoven, and will not collapse

so that all might be upheld at the table
and drink holy wine together
and so god's eyes might see god's eyes and never regret a moment of not having been god's heart
always
this is not flowery language to me, ever
it is eternity deeply rooted in me and my desire for it never to be occluded as a result of me
and i love you so very much
tears
laughter
and what is
and for how you loved Victoria here, deeply and personally, and for how you understand that this shapes
all of Reality, and is the unfolding of Divinity itself, i give thanks
this is why i love you
nobody does it better
more soon and love
mb

Importantly, Baruch reviewed the material Marc had compiled about the 2006 false complaints in Israel. She also read his 2007, publicly-accessible paper called *Sex, Ethics, and Injury* about the possibility of romantic relationships with students.²⁵ In fact, they had planned to co-author an expanded version of this article grounded in the compatible views of leading feminist writers such as Bell Hooks, Laura Kipnis, and Christina Hoff-Sommers—not to mention a recorded 2011 interview given by Wilber to the Integrales Forum—all of which affirm that this kind of relationship, under the right conditions, can be engaged with full ethical integrity.

It can't be denied that Baruch was informed and cognizant of the relationship she was entering, and that should not be taken away from her. Nor should she be allowed to easily give up that autonomy or in any way disclaim it, which, as we'll see later, she tried to do.

In 2011, even Harryman acknowledges the consensual nature of this relationship, "...the women willingly entered into these relationships - but would they have done so if there was a more public record of Integral leadership exposing his abuses?"²⁶ But, in same same breath, he strips Baruch of capacity for discernment, while denying the very possibility that she was ever informed and autonomous. And, as we'll see later, he was also behind a 2016 attempt to help Baruch recant. It's not really a surprise that the same person who immediately cast her in a victim role, would swoop in five years later to remove from public record any statement demonstrating her autonomy and power. Again, we'll explore this more deeply in a moment.

²⁵ Marc, M., 2016, *Sex Ethics and Injury*, <http://www.marcgafni.com/sex-ethics-and-injury-an-essay-by-marc-gafni/>

²⁶ Harryman, W., 2011, *BREAKING: Marc Gafni's Sexual Impropriety Re-Emerges - Will Integral Leadership Step Up this Time?*, <http://integral-options.blogspot.com/2011/09/breaking-marc-gafnis-sexual-impropriety.html>

All of these conversations took place before Baruch took on an increased role beyond friend and colleague. On February 24th, the multiple modes that came to characterize their relationship were discussed over email (see Exhibit 11). Book projects, website projects, media projects, music, event booking, private study, board member, and toward the end of February, when Marc stayed at Baruch's home while attending a series of meetings in Denver, they added a romantic dimension.

Exhibit 11

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: from marc gafni
Date: February 24, 2011 at 3:15:59 PM PST
To: marc [REDACTED]

On Feb 24, 2011, at 11:10 AM, marc wrote:
fyi add this to our book list

dear one,

i love you very much.

i am counting on you in this great revolution
~You have me 100%! The revolution itself has me 100%!

i want to find the place that serves god, serves the vision, serves the teacher and serves your unique self enlightenment

below is holy of holies

1) teaching - manage that page - Book Marc Gafni for sure - joint teach/ sacred music whenever we can/ marcy kirtan

~ yes, i would like to manage the page.

~ and book you

~ yes on joint teach/sacred music/marcy kirtan

2) vagina dialogues - i need feedback from you/ feels right if you have the skill set {perhaps consult haven} I would like to do it

~ i would too. the book is actually easier than the article. i can't *not* continue.

3) World Spirituality CD /Unique Self and the whole thing - feels right

~ yes, definitely

4) key board member and partner/ travel whenever it works and serves

~ yes, and i want to shoot video. i know i can do this. and i know i can put together artistic, warm, pieces that promote your work. Haven's going to hook me up with someone who i can hire for two hours to show me skills so that i can do it faster.

5) come to san fran and directly partner in building the center - feels good - need to feel into it deeply in holy of holies

~ yes, we'll feel into this

loving you so so much - and holding you in every way

~ loving you so much too

fyi below email from haven - confidential of course - put that with flow on our book list:)

~ i will order. and always hold confidentiality.

love.

If you are tracking the timelines closely, yes, this overlapped with Marc's breakup with Caplan, Complicating this matter, he regrets telling Caplan about Baruch a month or two later and not at

the time. This is the first of three mistakes that Marc regrets in hindsight. This created tension in the relationship between Baruch and Caplan, who was hard on Marc but harder on Baruch. The tension was furthered by the fact that Caplan, along with other colleagues of Marc, felt that Baruch's mental health was unstable. One of them told Marc that Baruch was on some powerful medication. Marc later asked Baruch about this and she told him that she was but that had took herself off them. For Marc, this at least partially explained some difficult to explain conversations and issues related to her ability to deliver on work-related promises. Marc made little issue of this at that time, but it does help to explain some behavior that surfaces after Simon outed their relationship. Independent of any of this, Baruch advocates strongly for herself in regard to the tension with Caplan (see Exhibit 12), demonstrating that she was anything but powerless or unable to advocate for her own needs and perspectives.

Exhibit 12

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Subject: Putting this out there
Date: July 5, 2011 at 12:52:01 AM PDT
To: Marc Gafni [REDACTED]

Mg

At some point, would really like to talk
Not about your safety but mine
At some point can I sit with Mariana?
Need her to hear from ME what I am doing, why I am coming out etc.
I do not like being talked about and misperceived and misidentified without being able to represent myself
at some right moment
And she and I were friends and then suddenly nothing
I don't want to be an object in your all's conversations
Objects are much easier to project on to and scapegoat
And that has been a pattern over my life because I did not voice my own reality
So I will trust in best wisdom path but this has come up a number of times for me and feels important
Just wanted to put it out there
Love
Love
Love

Second, Marc regrets not breaking confidence with Baruch by telling Simon about their relationship when they met in early 2011, prior to them signing the contract for the book. Of course, in hindsight, this appears entirely convenient, as it was on this very issue that Simon hinged her public statement. He was honoring prior agreements he'd made with Baruch, who was sensitive to the possibility that if people knew they were dating, they might have thought that was the reason he originally asked her to perform at his events. But, in so doing, he had responded from a place of fear—fear about past allegations and how they might fuel interpretations of his present relationships. And, in coming from this place, he sold short both himself and Baruch in regard to their mutual understanding about the possibility of multi-modal relationships between teachers and students. In a sense, this is a matter of competing goods. Marc opted to sacrificed a higher good—one which had the potential to impact a large number of people—to protect a lesser good that arguably would have impacted just he and Baruch.

What he wasn't doing, as Simon, Harryman, and others have claimed, was "shrouding a relationship in secrecy." He simply held confidence when he now realizes he should not have. Now, to be clear, this garbage on secrecy was not a dynamic between Baruch and Ryan either. Both knew that Marc was dating the other long before Simon's public statement was made. Their relationships were non-exclusive, and not just for Marc. Baruch was also pursuing other people, which she mentioned in an email sent to Marc on April 27, "...there was a new guy there i was longing to hook up with for all kinds of hot and holy purposes..."

Third, Marc missed some signs and failed to adequately respond to others that may have led him to end things with Baruch long before issues arose. To be fair, many of these signs only appeared significant in hindsight, but nonetheless he regrets not taking a different course. To start, there was evidence early on that Baruch's capacity to balance self care with care for Marc may have been inadequate. On February 27, in response to a discussion of a negative online comment about Marc, Baruch says, "i am taking care of you too. in many ways that you don't even know.... but i do it all the time. and if anyone was mad i would know how to stand for you. better than i do for myself."

Then, there was an issue with both instability and a general inability to deliver on work-related promises. This may or may not have been related to her mental health, but it caused Marc to subtly question one the primary reasons he was drawn to Baruch in the first place, namely the chance to work together on a common vision. Finally, in conversation that took place prior to Simon's statement, Baruch was bothered by her perception that Marc had "moved closer to Ryan than he had to her." In related conversation that took place after the blow-up had worked its way into the public domain, a similar theme emerged, "You chose Ryan over me, but I stood with you." What may have simply been moments of fleeting insecurity, might also have indicated that Baruch was both not okay with not moving toward exclusivity or not okay with the fact that her remaining steadfast hadn't earned her an exclusive commitment. If either of these feelings were more than just partially true, Marc should have steered their relationship in a different direction, particularly come July, when his feelings for Ryan were clearly deepening.

With a day or two of meeting with Simon in early August, Marc called Baruch to update her on the situation. She was furious at Ryan for going to Simon without Marc present and for referring to her a student, in such a way that was so easily degraded. On August 14th, she sent Marc a simple email of support, "much love, friend. much love. always," indicating that, despite the blowup, she was moving closer. And, on September 13, the same day that Harryman published Simon's statement, Baruch sent Kempton and Marc a draft of a public statement she had written and which was later posted on Marc's website.

In this statement, as you can see at the bottom of Exhibit 13, she spoke eloquently about the nature of relationship to Marc. "Let me be very direct: there is no issue here. I am a fully

empowered adult woman who has been working on behalf of what I want to bring into the world. In the natural course of doing so, I have entered into many roles and many natural and responsible ways of relating. One of these included an intimate dynamic with Marc at one point that expressed itself sexually.” She described the relationship much like it has been portrayed here: “I had a relationship with Marc that was beautiful and profoundly mutual....I entered willingly and consciously into a dual relationship. I told Marc that I did not want to engage the relationship unless it was held privately. I entered the relationship after he and his partner had agreed to leave their domestic relationship.” And, she spoke of normal relational hurt, “when you ask was I hurt in my relationship to Marc. Of course I was. And so was he in relationship to me.”

Exhibit 13

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Date: September 13, 2011 11:28:22 AM PDT
To: Sally Kempton [REDACTED] marc Gafni [REDACTED]
Subject: version 2

Sally and Marc,

student here for next hour. please help if possible :) only because time is of essence. Help me tighten-- and also, I want to say something about students who rise in support of the greatness of their teachers, and also, that i hear voices of pain that have been before, and Marc is not easy, but none of us are - and but that doesn't mean anyone gets to crucify anyone. and our worthiness - as students, teachers, people - is in holding oe another to our greatness and sticking to it..

if you can tighten, i know i will be able to then finish and send quickly. LOVE. and if you don't have time, i will still finish and send quickly after student leaves.

love
love
love

Dear X

With deep respect, love, and an open heart, I am writing today to the Integral world. It seems to be as good of a time as any to say "Thank you." What Integral work has opened up in the source code of Consciousness, of Love, of God itself, is worthy of the deepest prayers of thanks and recognition. It was Marc who introduced me to Integral theory woven in with the fabric of his own teaching two years ago at a conference. In the same breath, he spoke of love as being a perception-identification complex, that to love is to see the infinite beauty and dignity and gorgeousness of other. I have heard Marc and Ken in so many exquisite conversations talk about the love that moves the sun and the stars as being the same love that knows our names.

And yes, Oh My God, it is absolutely astonishing. For those of you who don't actually know me, I reference this not because I am a dumb blonde who doesn't know any better, not because I happen to also express readily in the more poetic and mystical realms of understanding, but because my deepest drive and innate intelligences have always leaned toward comprehending all facets of reality and how they interrelate and evolve. I dove into Integral theory work voraciously in the knowing that understanding the map would help me to move with greater efficacy as an agent of healing and transformation in the territory in my own life and in opening up worlds of ultimate and personal meaning in conversations with others.

Over the last year, in all of my working with different spiritual communities as a musical artist, in my own teaching on voice, at every retreat or conference I have assisted Marc in, I have spent an enormous amount of time speaking of Integral understandings; my soul root is deeply connected on the inside of the inside of Marc's teachings, of Sally and Warren's as well. And while mentioning names may be charged with political ramifications in certain circles, I do so to bring honor in a way that also includes the names and greatnesses of all other teachers. I have spoken of many people's work to anyone whose unique orientation I sensed would be served in some way by it. So for the sake of the beautiful, good, and true, I am honored to recognize the depth and vital necessity for an Integral framework. And for every facet of reality, every face and voice that has been given its proper and dignified place at the table through it, I wish to simply say that I give great thanks to all of you.

As a board member of CWS, as a songwriter who will be releasing 15 new songs that weave in Unique Self teachings and Integral perspectives, as a human being who truly understands the necessity of Integral theory as being one of the most vital contributions as an agent of healing and transformation on the planet today and for all time, I deeply wish to be a support in the goodness of Integral legacy. At this moment, I am urgently and poignantly moved by the realization that frameworks matter, because evolving

capacities for complexity, caring, and concern matter. And for the purpose of this post, how we speak of our stories and uphold and treat one another matters.

Because of this, I need to take a stand here. For over a year and a half now, I have been deeply engrained in the literature and discourse of victim and power feminism and in all the very--to me at this point--worn out discussions of teacher-student relationships. What we do to our teachers and to each other, especially in the spiritual world, is horrific. Speaking for myself, let me be very direct: there is no issue here. I am a fully empowered adult woman who has been working on behalf of what I want to bring into the world. In the natural course of doing so, I have entered into many roles and many natural and responsible ways of relating. One of these included an intimate dynamic with Marc at one point that expressed itself sexually. To suggest that this is in any way problematic is simply a degradation of the feminine, and of the masculine too. I had a relationship with Marc that was beautiful and profoundly mutual. Marc is direct, clear, and loving. He is also powerful and complex like most great figures are. There is not a bone in his body which does not deeply honor the feminine. Marc is strategic, but always for the sake of the larger good and not for personal crass ends. This distinction seems to be lost on some. In my work inside the system with him, one of the things I have been deeply moved by is witnessing his loyalty and dedication to the highest good possible for everyone around him. I have watched his eyes light up as he has shared ideas about the ways in which he might stand for a human beings deepest unfolding. He cares about the cab driver in the same passionately intimate sense that that he cares about his lovers, about the dharma or about the evolution of consciousness. And I have watched him follow through on these in ways that demand a level of sacrifice and devotion that are beyond what anyone might imagine.

There is no issue here, and it is truly time for an integral feminine to emerge that does not let itself be hijacked by masculine power games or the feminine refusal to own power. I have no wish to step into the blogosphere. However, if any unfair negative consequences emerge from this matrix, I will view that as a betrayal of the feminine, and will speak out powerfully and in more serious writing against the specific people, men and women willing to manipulate the powerful feminine for their own power ends or to those close their heart when confronted with the authentic complexity of relationship. (I very much hope that does not happen, and that all of this is resolved in a quiet and dignified way. It was quiet and beautifully dignified to begin with.

Before concluding however I want to add several more things that need to at least be mentioned. When you ask was I hurt in my relationship to Marc. Of course I was. And so was he in relationship to me. All relationships have their complexities and hurt in which authentic interpersonal challenges arise. These deserve to be worked out between the parties themselves in a mature and respectful manner, and not in the public domain. But for someone to use the hurt of the relationship to degrade the beauty of what was between us in order to satisfy some fear driven agenda is to desecrate all that I know is holy. In terms of power, I held more power in the relationship than Marc for many reasons including the fact that I am on his board and a funder of his organization.

I entered willingly and consciously into a dual relationship. I told Marc that I did not want to engage the relationship unless it was held privately. I entered the relationship after he and his partner had agreed to leave their domestic relationship. Marc was a gentleman and agreed to hold the relationship privately. That was also his preference. I feel deeply violated and the feminine feels degraded by the masculine - in men and women -that no discuss my private relationship - with know knowledge of it whatsoever in a way that dares to suggest that I was a victim. That is an utter degradation of my power, dignity and feels abusive of the feminine in a profoundly painful manner.

With respect, love, and an open heart,

Marcy Baruch

She also spoke out powerfully against those people who were using the relationships to degrade her and destroy Marc, “But for someone to use the hurt of the relationship to degrade the beauty of what was between us in order to satisfy some fear driven agenda is to desecrate all that I know is holy.” She said that she felt “deeply violated” by people who discussed their relationships with no knowledge of it and “in a way that dares to suggest that I was a victim.”

This was a truly beautiful statement—poignant, direct, and powerful—making what happens next all the more perplexing but sadly familiar.

From August thru November, Baruch moved closer to Marc as their relationship continued. On October 24, she sent him a link to a porn video entitled "outdoor dildo fun." On November 17, she missing communicating with him, "I sent some skype messages and would love to feel you there...I'm writing here to say I am thinking of you in Germany...Love you." But, but not with out struggle. According to Marc, being a part of a public scandal was a lot, potentially too much, for Baruch's system to handle. Her concerns about their relationship, as expressed to Marc directly, began to exaggerate. They met with several therapists, at Baruch's request. But after one session with each, she refused to continue. By January, the fallout of the scandal was hitting her hard. A friend cut off contact on account of Baruch lying about being involved with Marc. On January 6, 2012, Baruch took her frustration out on Marc and Caplan (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14

On Jan 6, 2012, at 3:52 AM, Marcy Baruch wrote:

And by the way, I love you. And I hope you can understand the legitimacy of my pain and perspective.
Love, mb

Begin forwarded message:

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Date: January 6, 2012 4:47:59 AM MST
To: Marc Gafni [REDACTED]
Subject: Marc, please fix this. Fwd: responding

Marc,

On a separate note from the Skype thread, I would like for you to fix this, please. I HAVE DONE EVERYTHING TO PROTECT YOU, AND YOU ARE NOT INTERESTED IN DOING THE SAME BASED ON TERMS THAT BELONG TO ME. I did nothing except live by YOUR TEACHINGS. The so-called Holy of Holies was REAL to ME, and YOU violated it. Please tell Mariana to stop talking with people, who used to be my friends, about me - when I have been asked by you NOT to talk to them. ACCORDING TO YOU, GOSSIP IS TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE TO PUT THEM ON THE OUTSIDE IN ORDER TO MAKE YOURSELF FEEL LIKE YOU ARE ON THE INSIDE. YOU HAVE ASKED ME NOT TO TALK WITH ANYONE, AND I EXPECT HER TO UPHOLD THE SAME STANDARDS. IF YOU DON'T FIX THIS AND HAVE HER APOLOGIZE TO ME AND PROMISE SHE WILL STOP TALKING TO OTHERS, I WILL NO LONGER REFRAIN FROM SPEAKING IN WAYS THAT ARE CONGRUENT WITH MY OWN TRUTH AND EXPERIENCE, AS I SEE FIT. SO MUCH HAS GONE DOWN THAT IS NOT OKAY, AND NOT OKAY WITH ME ON A PERSONAL LEVEL. BUT I WENT WITH IT "FOR THE GREATER GOOD," AT THE EXPENSE OF MY OWN NEEDS.

NO MORE. I AM GETTING SCREWED IN THE PROCESS.

I WANT AN APOLOGY FROM MARIANA TODAY, FRIDAY, FOR THE WAYS IN WHICH SHE HAS DISRESPECTED ME, AND I WANT GENUINE AGREEMENT BETWEEN PEOPLE THAT THEY WILL UPHOLD THE SAME STANDARDS.

I AM TIRED OF HAVING NO VOICE ON MY OWN BEHALF, AND LETTING OTHERS TELL THEIR OWN STORIES THAT PAINT ME IN DISPARAGING WAYS AND VIOLATE THE TRUTH OF WHO I AM.

You - of all people - should understand how this feels, and why it is wrong.

Marcy

Over time, Baruch became the victim she raged against others making her out to be. Exactly one year from the day that she wrote her statement, she sent the following biting and malice-filled email that I won't even attempt to summarize because it speaks for itself (see Exhibit 15). Three years later, almost to the date, she asks to be removed from the CIW email list. Her reason? "I want nothing to do with a child molester. Marc Gafni is a pedophile." Even though she used to sleep with supposed pedophiles—remember, Baruch was fully aware of the past claims made against Marc—she apparently no longer wanted anything to do with them.

Fair enough, but about five months after that, she attempts to rewrite history. She convinced Harryman to send the following email (see Exhibit 16) asking Marc to remove Baruch's statement from his website. Why? Harry claimed that it was because Marc wrote it in her name, or more accurately, because "... she typed while you paced behind her, telling her what to write, apparently frantic." Evidently, Harryman never saw the email shared above (and Baruch must have forgotten about it). As shown earlier in Exhibit 13, Baruch, who was in Denver on September 13, 2011, clearly sent a draft to Marc, who was in California. At Baruch's request, both he and Kempton helped her tighten the statement, but it was written by her. Claims to the contrary are just ludicrous. Given her progression toward vitriol, it's entirely unsurprising that she felt differently about her statement five years on. But, rather than issuing some type of public retraction—something that owns up to a change of heart—she has taken to internet trolling and social media drive-byes, attacking Marc's colleagues, friends, and anyone offers words of support.

Her trolling a persisted unrelated into mid-2017. Her attacks seem more aggressive just as they seem more pathetically desperate. In response to a Facebook post Marc created about a piece of new content, Baruch replied with attacks on Mariana Caplan, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and her own dwindling sense of decency (see Exhibit 17). At least we can give her credit for a semi-creative hashtag, even though its a bit long.

Exhibit 15

From: Marcy Baruch [REDACTED]
Subject: How is it up there in your tree?
Date: September 13, 2012 at 12:25:35 AM PDT
To: Marc Gafni [REDACTED]

Hey Marc,

It's amazing - and not at all surprising - that you have refused to come down from your tree after all that time I gave you. Poor Marc. So stuck in his own tragic pathos. Always the victim in order to avoid taking responsibility. Hey Marc, don't cry more than it hurts. Especially since you made up false stories about false claims. What a liar you are.

It's not too late. You can still take responsibility. But, of course, you won't. That would be too personally and spiritually evolved, wouldn't it. You can't afford to have your narcissistic shell pierced, can you. Oh what a false self you've created. No wonder you can't apologize for anything. You're too infatuated with the image of your own innocence as a way of covering up what you've done. You have egregious things to apologize for, and you know it. That is, if you have a conscience. Good luck with that.

Marcy

Exhibit 16

On 2/6/16 7:19 PM, "William Harryman" <wordpress@marcgafni.com> wrote:

From: William Harryman [redacted]
Subject: Your "Testimonials"

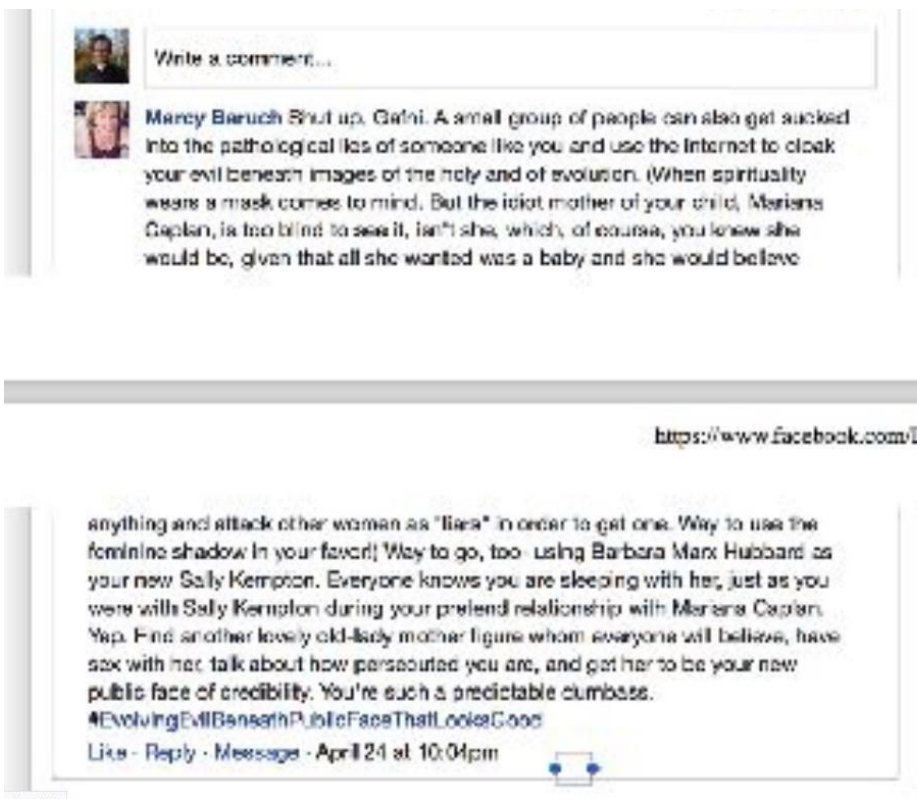
Message Body:
Mr. Gafni,

Please take down the letter you wrote in Marcy's name in 2011 (or more accurately, the letter she typed while you paced behind her, telling her what to write, apparently frantic). She will not contact you because she knows you would only harass and threaten her. I have no such concerns.

Consider this a formal request to remove the letter, as property not rightfully yours to display.

Sincerely,
William Harryman

Exhibit 17



Baruch had officially dropped out of her relationship with Marc by early 2012. After five years, had the seeds of regret grown to the point where attack was her only option? Or, was there something else that might explain how Baruch came to see "the truth." And, by "the truth," if you haven't guessed at this point, we mean Zerner's truth, or more precisely, the truth that Zerner's helped Baruch to adopt.

Soon after Simon's statement went public, and unbeknownst to Marc at the time, Zerner reached out—likely through Simon—to both Ryan and Baruch. Some unknown manner of conversations between the three of them took place. By mid-October, Zerner, seeking to capitalize on the

scandal she tipped off with Zimon, placed a call to Sam Alexander—the board chair of the Center for World Spirituality, an earlier incarnation of CIW—to let him know “the truth” about Marc.²⁷ Alexander arrived at Starbucks in Boulder to find that Zerner was accompanied by Ryan and Baruch, both of whom had brought male friends (as backup?). Alexander reports that Zerner did most of the talking and that he had the distinct experience that Zerner was stirring Ryan and Baruch to action. At the time, Alexander was not informed about Zerner’s relationships with Marc or the role she held in the run up to the 2006 false complaints, nor was he at the time privy to the details of Marc’s relationships with Ryan or Baruch. Everyone told their sorry and Alexander write that he was convinced. So much so, that, with the women’s support, he sought to convene a meeting between Marc, Zerner, Baruch, Ryan, and a therapist who’d guide the discussion. According to Alexander, the women agreed. Zerner, in particular, “said that she did not want to hurt Marc any more than she already had, she insisted she was seeking his healing.”

Alexander then approached Marc, who agreed to the meeting, but who was more than a bit skeptical that the others would bail. Alexander called each of them and each turned him down. “Marc was too smart,” “he had so much sinister power,” and “they wouldn’t be able to speak their truth,” were the reasons they cited. Sounds a lot like Zerner’s 2016 story, huh? This is one of the many instances where she has honed her craft. After recruiting Baruch and Ryan, she then sought to, in Alexander’s words, “co-opt me into their effort to destroy Marc...”²⁸

Had Alexander also been dating Marc, it may have actually worked. I say that only partially tongue-in-cheek. The essence of the third dynamic that led to the scandal that never was finally took hold over this short span of time. This is how Zerner operates. Unable to adequately reconcile residual feelings about her relationship with Marc, she sought out potential allies at the very moment they were experiencing similar strife. She then injected her poison right into the heart of their deepest vulnerabilities, right into the root of their pain. They then found in Zerner, not only a believable (but entirely tactical) empathy, but also a weaponized story that engendered feelings of “yeah, I experienced that too.” Then, to assuage the dissonance and confusion, they re-scripted their experience through the lens of Zerner’s truth. In that instant, all manner of normal regret or remorse about recently past decisions made in regard to their relationships with Marc—decisions that were both empowered and consensual—were wiped away, replaced by a burden that was far easier to bear; the veil of victimhood.

From that place, Zerner had her allies and both Baruch and Ryan had found their abuser, the same man that mere weeks earlier they were both in love with. Baruch said it best in her public statement, “..for someone to use the hurt of the relationship to degrade the beauty of what was

²⁷ Alexander, S., 2017, *Speaking Out For Integrity and Dr. Marc Gafni*, Patheos, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christianityforthesbnc/2017/01/speaking-out-for-integrity-and-dr-marc-gafni-part-i-of-iii/>

²⁸ Ibid.

between us in order to satisfy some fear driven agenda is to desecrate all that I know is holy.” Too bad she didn’t realize that this is exactly what Zerner was preying on.

Screaming the Name of God

And too bad she didn’t recognize that this line almost perfectly characterizes the nature of her betrayal. For, in the end, it was Baruch herself who used the hurt of their relationship to degrade the beauty of what her and Marc shared. I asked Marc to offer some reflections on the nature of betrayal. He responded by recounting a series of reflections he shared with Dalit in 2007, a year after the false complaints. This is when he first contemplated the topic. His insights, which drew from some of his writings in *Mystery of Love*, are even more pertinent now.

I had just finished a walk with Dalit. We were talking about betrayal and what the Talmud calls the desecration of God’s name. We were blown away by the unfolding of revelatory insight. We understood in a new way the tragedy and horror of betrayal, particularly the unique nature of sexual betrayal. In the understanding, there was relief. It is only by turning pain into art. By this, I mean the process of translating a painful experience into understanding and insight that can be shared. By illuminating an aspect of the source code of culture, I find some relief. I see the way that fate might become fortune. I realize that the suffering will be inscribed not only on the lips of God but in the transformed hearts of men and women.

Dalit is wondrous. She had come to live with me for a couple of years after the false complaints. I love Dalit very much, but I am not her man. We dated for a time in Israel, but she wants a very classical monogamous marriage. I want something just as committed but more post-conventional. Dalit thinks marriage is the solution to life’s angst. I think she is partially right. It is in this place between two people that magic and transformation happen. Intimacy is truly the crucible of transformation.

At the time, Karen Rosica, my beyond awesome therapist, had been holding center and helping me to not internalize the insanity on the web. I had to recover my core goodness, but the intensity of the onslaught was overwhelming. They were demonizing me to make sure no one talked to me and found out that the complaints were false and orchestrated. Jacob, my lawyer, did not want me to say anything in public. He said, “give up your reputation, Marc. Protect yourself against the police complaints. That is your only goal and then you can go back and set the record straight and reclaim your reputation. Your good name!”

*My good name. Dalit and I talked about name. The worst sin in Judaism is to desecrate the name of God. The word for it in Hebrew is *Chillul Hashem*. It comes from the prophet Ezekiel and literally means “emptying the name.” It is usually used to refer to stories in which a representative of Judaism acts unethically and therefore desecrates the name God. That is what I was being wrongly accused of.*

*Dalit and I tried to feel deeper into the erotic invitation of the text on *Chillul Hashem*, desecrating God’s name. As I said – the literal translation is to “empty*

the name.” Dalit said to me, “they have “emptied your name. The name Gafni in Israel meant goodness and love and integrity, and now everyone thinks that you were promising marriage to get sex.” We talked and talked and then at the same time something really potent and even more painful, but also powerful, holy, and profound opened up for us.

At the moment of sexual climax, we cry out, Oh God or the name of the other person. The deep gorgeous understanding is that the name of God and the personal name are one. Our name is part of the name of God. That is the knowing of orgasm, when we are on the inside of the inside. Dalit and I--we were once lovers--looked in each other eyes and it was so clear. It is not just that they have gone to destroy my reputation--my good name--but it was so much more than that.

When we betray our lover we are betraying the name of God in an even more profound way. When we experience the holy of holies of orgasm together, we scream the name of God, or we screamed the other's name. They are the same name. We are utterly naked and vulnerable. We fully trust each other. When we scream the name of God in orgasm, we are taking an oath. An oath in Hebrew wisdom is always taken on God's name. The name of God cried out in sexual ecstasy is an oath of loyalty It does not mean that we will stay together forever. It does not mean that we will not make mistakes. We are all imperfect.

At the bare minimum, it does mean that I will not distort my sexual story with you in order to try and destroy your public name which is the name you need to share teaching, to share insight, and to share love, to make a living, to raise your children and everything else. To scream the name of God in sexual ecstasy and then to go to murder the name of your beloved is to desecrate God's name in the most terrible of ways. It is to empty the name.

I now understood what I have experienced over in the course of this story, what I have experienced again here with Kaela and Marcy. The pain can get so intense, the terror becomes so thick, that I feel my life emptying from my body. This is my name being emptied from me. Let me be clear—I do not own anyone. Anyone I am with can be sexual with anyone else they want. You cannot cheat on me, because I do not own you. But do not scream my name, do not let me scream your name—we cannot scream the name of God in unison—and then lie about what happened between us.

This is what Chillul Hashem—the desecration of God's name, the emptying of God's name —actually means. You desecrate God's name by moving to destroy the name of your beloved. This is what Kaela allowed to happen when she shifted her story and allowed it to be used by Tami and others to form the basis of an attack. This is what happened when Marcy turned away from her own desire to not have the hurt in our relationship degrade the beauty of what we shared.

I am relieved by this understanding. It gives me the peace of understanding even if it does not give me the peace that surpasseth understanding. Thank You Dalitie. I bow to you in devotion and scream your name. I now understand why sexual betrayal is so devastating—why it is, in some deep sense, the ultimate betrayal.

Perhaps this is what Judas alludes to when he kisses Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in the book of Mathew. "Do you betray me with a kiss," says Jesus.

Flaming the Fire

Others preyed on the so-called scandal of 2011 as well. They capitalized on this sexual betrayal and, while their motivations publicly appeared more mundane than Zerner's, their actions were just as impactful, constituting the fourth dynamic that led to this scandal. Of the many possible people I could discuss here, I'll only mention one, Robb Smith, CEO of Integral Life, the primary media outlet for Wilber's work, and the company that took over through licensing agreement the primary activities of Integral Institute, the think tank that Wilber founded in 2000.

A bit of background will be helpful here. From 2003 through 2007, I ran event operations for Integral Institute (I-I). At its height, a group of us had created a thriving event business. For a time, it generated a substantial portion of company revenue and led directly to almost 80% of yearly donations. Smith entered the picture in early 2007, after a series of bad management decisions and hefty legal settlements had left I-I in a dire financial position and Wilber looking for a CEO.

Smith's solution was to create Integral Life, a sister for-profit company, to make good on distributing and expanding I-I's intellectual property, which he valued at \$0. After several years of effort, Smith, who had doubled the core staff, shut down the events business, and dumped a ton of personal money into the company, found himself—to put it in words he used at early Integral Theory Conference—"in over his head." Despite his efforts membership was down by over a third, staff were either leaving or getting laid off, and donations had dried up fast. Even Wilber's seminal Integral Spiritual Center (ISC) teacher gatherings, a yearly closed-door event featuring dialogues between over a dozen lineage holders from various traditions—was unable to be repeated due to lack of cash.

Marc, who had taken part in earlier ISC gatherings began conversations with Wilber about revitalizing the events business through a larger, more public iteration of these teacher gatherings called Integral Spiritual Experience (ISE). They soon brought Smith into the conversation and he saw its potential immediately, agreeing to partner with Marc in mid-2008. On November 3, 2008, Robb published a now removed public statement called *Love and Suffering: Dr. Marc Gafni Reemerges*.²⁹ In this post, Smith comments on the 2006 events, "it seems clear that what was previously construed as illegal sexual misconduct was among other things a cauldron of badly handled relationships and communication amongst adults." He then welcomes Marc back to the integral community as a co-leader of the ISE event along with Diane Hamilton and Kempton.

²⁹ Smith, R., 2008, *Love and Suffering: Dr. Marc Gafni Reemerges*, Original link removed. Article can be read here: <http://nhne-pulse.org/rabbi-marc-gafni-sexual-improprieties/> (search for "Robb Smith")

Marc headlined the first two ISE events—which focused on Unique Self and the Future of Love, respectively. Both were a wild success. The events brought together over 400 people each for a practice-focused conference featuring over two dozen teachers from as many traditions. After each event, Smith made behind the scenes move to oust Marc. He started with emails to Ken, which were routinely blocked. “No one should be as close to you as I am,” were a common theme. After the second event, he called for a meeting with Ken and Marc. He then argued his takeover in person. Marc replied bluntly, “if you want Robb to take over the event, I'm out.” Ken backed Marc. The next day, Smith left Marc a wild, loving voicemail, and then he tried to recruit Hamilton against Marc, to no avail. In the run up to the third ISE event, which was scheduled for the end of December 2011 and which again featured Marc as a headliner, Robb got the assistance he needed to make his move.

In August 2011, Ken and Marc sent an email to a hand-selected group of prior I-I donors seeking support for the event. A day later, David Riordan, Smith’s second-in-charge, called an emergency meeting with Ken and Marc. He was furious that Marc would email their donors, and he claimed to be speaking for Smith. He said that he had called Simon—who, remember, had met with Ryan on August 1st—and discussed the new allegations against Marc. Smith followed this up with a call to Marc, “I am going to exercise leadership here,” he extolled, before moving to remove Marc from his leadership role in ISE for “violating our agreements.” He later gained the support of other ISE teachers, including Terry Patten, whose 2016 blog about Marc we’ll discuss later. I suspect Smith also spoke to Simon, who he was in contact with a few years prior, when I worked for him.

In his 2008 statement, Smith’s leadership took the following form: “To be clear, we know it is not our place to judge a very complex set of perspectives, emotions, and intersubjective commitments.” As if the events of 2011 didn’t involve the very same thing. He continued on to cite Father Thomas Keating, who “describes one of the greatest and most miraculous equations ever described: transformation = suffering + love.” He then landed his justification for initially partnering with Marc on ISE, “The greatest value that we at Integral Life hold, and practice, is love.”³⁰

Yet, as soon as the most lucrative and successful event came to pass since the early days at I-I, Smith’s commitment to love had degraded into a power play. He wanted to be closest to Ken, he wanted to call the shots on ISE without the interference of Marc’s co-leadership, and were fooling ourselves if we think money wasn’t also an equal part of the equation. With Marc out of the mix, there was no other organization to split the profit with. Integral life took control of the event, the brand, and claims to all future revenue.

Now, one could say that business is business, and that Smith, like Simon immediately before him, cut ties with Marc to protect his organization. He says as much in a statement published on

³⁰ Ibid.

September 13th (see Exhibit 18), the same day that Simon's statement went public, "I just will not let our organizations be associated with this kind of reckless controversy."³¹

Exhibit 18

Dear friends:

I found out about Bill Harryman's allegations against Marc Gafni about 3 weeks ago. Though I was surprised that, like those of 5 years ago, they involved the intersection of sex and manipulation, at Integral Life we have for the past year been separating our activities from those of Marc. Our separation over the past year obviously did not derive from this recent scandal; long ago it became clear to us that we moved through the world in very different ways. Integral Life and Integral Institute have discontinued support of Center for World Spirituality and almost a year ago we decided to make ISE 3 our last year as a partnership with I-Evolve.

After talking directly to Tami Simon about the recent situation, it was clear to me that Integral Life was a bystander to the recent allegations and couldn't make a preemptive or unilateral statement involving a situation in which we weren't involved. But, as I described to Tami, I am tired of running to the scene of a fire and finding a spiritual teacher holding matches. I will not stand by and let Integral Life's community (and integral theory's reputation in the world) die of smoke inhalation. I just will not let our organizations be associated with this kind of reckless controversy. We aren't big on wielding power unnecessarily but we will keep fire starters away from our home.

In a conversation with Diane Hamilton yesterday she pointed out that perspectives are limitless but that action is singular and concrete. So although the Integral Life team has taken many perspectives on this situation, we stand by our actions. They include the following.

- By mutual agreement with I-Evolve, Integral Life has assumed full control and responsibility for ISE 3 as of last week. We've already established an awesome new event leadership team and will be announcing the new design in coming weeks. (Suffice it to say that everyone on the team is ecstatic that the event will refocus on Ken Wilber's unique architecture of creativity as a living praxis in our lives.)
- We have removed Marc's contributor pages on Integral Life as we prepare to migrate the site to its new design in coming months.
- I have asked that a formal "Policy of Ethics" be put in place for all contributors to Integral Life by end of Q1 2012.

When I wrote on Facebook this morning that I appreciate Bill Harryman's contribution to this community I really meant it. I think Bill is right to call me to account for my rationale of inviting Marc Gafni back into the community 3 years ago. I see his point and believe that I understand it. As of right now I don't hold tightly the idea that it was the right call. But I think it was. Just as the justice system is designed to let ten guilty men go free rather than allow one innocent man go wrongly sentenced, I insist on first-hand experience that I can stand by in my judgment of someone's character. I have it, and have acted on it.

Let's also take a closer look at a number of other things Smith says. To start, he tries to spin his recent moves as not having been derived from "this recent scandal." What he described as decision made over a year earlier, more accurately refers to inclination and intentions, of which I was privy to at the time. The decision itself was made, executed, and announced directly as a result of this so called scandal. I was very close to primary ISE organizers at the time. As one might expect, there were ample internal struggles amongst the leadership team. Chief amongst them were the fact that Wilber repeatedly backed Marc over Smith, and not just in private. On December 27th, Wilber

³¹ Smith, R., 2011, *Where I Stand*, <http://integral-options.blogspot.com/2011/09/robb-smiths-response-to-marc-gafni.html>

published the following statement (see Exhibit 19)—the second of two that he made about the 2011 events—after reviewing the evidence and conversing with multiple parties.³²

Exhibit 19

Ken Wilber Statement on Marc Gafni and the Center for Integral Wisdom

December 27, 2011

The board of directors of the Center for Integral Wisdom recently made a public statement, conveying their support for Marc Gafni as a leader and teacher in the Center.

Earlier, in a post on the Integral Life website, I have commented on the situation that developed several months ago in the blogosphere.

I acknowledged in that post that Marc, like most great spiritual teachers and pundits, has great gifts as well as human complexity. I pointed out that everyone must make up their own mind as to whether they want to work with Marc, or to be his student.

I am writing to share that, for myself, I have made up my mind. I am rejoining the Wisdom Council of the Center for Integral Wisdom, to which I invited many of my colleagues to participate. I look forward to future work with Marc in articulating and evolving the contours of a World Spirituality based on Integral Principles. Some of my reasons for wanting to work with Marc are contained in letters I co-wrote with Sally Kempton in 2008. However, there is one piece I want to add. I am not working with Marc despite this last blogosphere explosion but rather because of his reaction to it.

What impressed me most about Marc's response to this situation is that though he might well have felt justified in feeling angry or hurt about what happened, by and large he focused on asking for all feedback from every possible source on why this happened. He wanted to know, at a deeper level, how he might have contributed to it himself, and what he could do to help remedy the situation and any part he might have played in this. Most astonishingly, for a spiritual teacher, he included in this list—in order to make it truly comprehensive—a search for a great therapist that he might see. He made a serious and widespread search for a therapist, and finally found an incredibly competent and highly respected one—and signed up.

This was not because he necessarily needed therapy, but simply that he told himself he was going to cover every base and make a truly comprehensive and inclusive search for any approach that might help address the situation. He was, in other words, doing whatever necessary to cover any shadow elements, should they be present. I know of extremely few spiritual teachers that would do this—that would be committed enough to their own integrity to include all possible angles, and then genuinely follow through on it. This, to me, is an indication of a genuine spiritual teacher, one dedicated to working on himself no matter how “embarrassing” it might appear to others. On this issue, even his critics will have few if any grounds for complaint at this point. Even they have acknowledged that he is, in many ways, a very gifted spiritual teacher, and this recent move simply makes him an even more gifted teacher, in my opinion. Speaking personally, I feel that any shadow issues that Marc, (like most spiritual teachers), might have are now being actively and genuinely addressed. I repeat that I know very few spiritual teachers who have the guts to do this, and my hat, for one, is off to the gentleman.

This move also gives me confidence that Marc can and will continue to make a good spiritual leader for the Center for Integral Wisdom. Every spiritual teacher, in my opinion, should be doing some sort of shadow work, but Marc is one of the very few whom I know that is actually doing it. This is indeed, in my book at least, very impressive.

So, I hope everybody out there can join me in wishing Marc the very best in this sincere inner work—or, at the least, congratulate him for being determined and integral enough to decide to cover all the bases and then actually do so. In many spiritual traditions, forgiveness is a path to God, and I know Marc has worked hard to forgive any insults—real or imagined—that he recently received, and perhaps it is

³² Wilber, K., 2011, *Ken Wilber Statement on Marc Gafni and the Center for Integral Wisdom*, <http://www.marcgafni.com/resp/ken-wilber-statement-on-marc-gafni-and-the-center-for-world-spirituality/>

appropriate for others also to work to forgive any insults—real or imagined—received from Marc. In this atmosphere of loving-kindness, care, and forgiveness, we can all get back to this incredibly important work of Integral Spirituality.

Ken Wilber
Winter 2011

Compare Smith and Wilber's statements. Their conclusion couldn't be more different, and their disagreement concerning Marc was glaring and public, at least to anyone tracking the numerous statements made at the time. You can take Wilber at his word here or not, the key is that he actually was in relationship to Marc throughout this entire event. Just like many of us, who have stayed in relationship with Marc and who have either spoken to many of his alleged victims or to trusted colleagues who have spoken to them, Wilber was informed and his opinion was considered. He was not responding reactively or protectively like Smith (and Simon).

The remainder of the issues between Marc, Smith, and the ISE leadership team were just normal interpersonal struggles that could have been resolved with effective leadership, especially leadership committed to practicing love as Smith professed in 2008. The 2011 scandal was used as an excuse to sidestep a responsibility to constructively resolve. And, the differing conclusions of Smith and Wilber just accentuated this lapse in responsibility. But ISE was under the control of Integral Life, and Smith owned Integral Life. Marc was a threat and the threat was removed. I guess that one form of leadership.

Back to Smith's statement, let's look at a few more things he says. It seems that we are not the only ones with a penchant for metaphors involving smoke and fire. Smith says he is "tired of running to the scene of a fire and finding a spiritual teacher holding matches," and that he doesn't want the integral edifice to "die of smoke inhalation." So which is it? Was Smith most afraid of the fire or the smoke? He says there was a fire and he implies that Marc was holding the matches, but then he's worried about smoke inhalation. How much smoke does an ember really give off? Well, if you fan it into a fire, I guess it's enough to justify your actions. And, by announcing that Marc was removed from the event and that Integral Life has removed Marc's contributor pages from their site, this is exactly what Smith's did. They were taken by many as a confirmation that something grave had indeed taken place. It still says on Marc's wikipedia entry that Integral Life removed his content because of "new allegations of sexual misconduct."³³

What was the smoke that led Smith to assume fire? He refers to two sources, "Bill Harryman's allegations" and a conversation he had with Simon. That's it. He doesn't even refer to the issue beyond calling it a "controversy." Why? Because there was no issue. Harryman and Simon had accused Marc of sleeping with a student, but, as we have shown, both Ryan and Baruch had not made any claims. When Smith's statement was published, Ryan had dropped off the radar, remorseful for tipping everything off and worried about her job, and Baruch was a few hours from

³³ Marc Gafni, Wikipedia Entry, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marc_Gafni

publishing her own statement defending herself and her relationships with Marc. Smith was encountering smoke, assumed fire, and then failed to recognize that it was actually himself, Simon, and Zerner were the ones who flamed the ember into an actual fire.

Finally, Smith writes that he stands by his 2008 decision to partner with Marc. To me, this is the most baffling. Given his actions, he either doesn't want to admit a mistake or doesn't think he was wrong. He suggests that at the time he was motivated by Blackstone's ratio, it is better than 10 guilty men go free that one innocent man be wrongly convicted. Fair enough. At the time, he had done his due diligence. He had checked facts and discussed the 2006 allegations with people who'd deeply considered the evidence. In 2011, however, motivated by a personal interest to be done with Marc, he denied the potentially innocent man the same due diligence. Wouldn't it have been so much easier to just say he was wrong about Marc in 2008?

This is where Smith is most culpable. And this is where his 2011 statement becomes such a massive hypocrisy in light of what he said in 2008 about love, transformation, and suffering, and in light of what he posted on Facebook on the very same morning:

Today we have been called to listen and can hear wounds calling out for healing. Please don't be afraid. Where our deepest dreams and self-held aspirations meet our most profound yearning for communion lives an awesome opportunity for awakening to our true nature. May all my friends, and any who see me as an enemy, experience the ecstatic embrace of our only one Self. All who weep in sorrow, I stand with you, I gently hold your hand that divine bliss can heal your heavy heart. Where there is suffering let us face it together. Let us be here now. And let us answer the suffering by listening ever more loudly. Let us sing together in joy. Let us infuse our hearts with the joy that fuels compassion. Let us be the only Joy that heals all wounds. Rama bolo, rama bolo, bolo ram.³⁴

As Harryman said in reply, "That's nice, and fluffy, and, well, nice." He was apparently looking for something more aggressively damning of Marc. I am looking for actions more consistent with these sentiments. Let us be here now? Let us listen more loudly? Let us infuse our hearts with the joy that fuels compassion? Or as he said in 2008, let our organizations practice love. For me, such calls for love, joy, and compassion, (1) should not be one-sided, extending to only the "victims," and (2) should involve a responsibility to check facts—something like the efforts Smith engaged in 2008—before taking action. And, no, talking to Simon or reading Harryman's blog, as we've established, does not meet the second standard. Particularly, if the resulting actions involve weeping for the victims while righteously assuming from afar that Marc was "holding the matches."

³⁴ Smith, R., 2011, Facebook post, <http://integral-options.blogspot.com/2011/09/robb-smiths-response-to-march-gafni.html>

Truth Fallacies Redux

In the last chapter, we introduced the fallacy of sliding truth validation, which is committed when we attempt to establish any type of truth using the validation procedures for a different type.

Zerner's attempts to use subjective truth (her truth) to influence how we validate objective truth (the truth) illustrated how the fallacy operates in the individual domain. Here, we explored how one individual's stated truth about how she was feeling influenced how we accepted truth claims about what another individual said or did. In this instance, it was *her* truth versus *the* truth.

The actions of Simon and Smith illustrate how the fallacy operates in the collective domain. Here, we are trying to discern something very different. Ultimately, we want to know if Marc's relationships with Ryan and Baruch were abusive. We want to know what was true for them. Yet we're relying upon the feelings, actions, and perspectives of two other people to establish what was true in relationships between others. It's as if we are blindly and uncritically accepting what Simon and Smith might have called *our* truth to establish *their* truth. *Our* truth is intersubjective, it refers to what Simon and Smith believe to be valid truth. *Their* truth is interobjective, it refers to the factual realities that existed in Marc's relationships. Once again, the former is not a valid way to establish the latter.

Regardless, Simon's cancelling of the book contract and Smith's removal of Marc from ISE and Integral Life's website, along with their justifications of these actions, were taken by many as a sufficient basis to establish the truth about Marc's relationships with two other people. It's as if we have outsourced our truth validation to people we respect as leaders and who we assume have done their due diligence. As it turns out, this was not the case, and our respect is often misguided, if not undeserved in this instance. It's important to point out that neither Simon or Smith actually committed the fallacy. They just increased the likelihood that it would be committed. While they may have been motivated for others to support their conclusions or adopt similar positions, the fallacy was committed by anyone who took what they said as a sound basis for establishing the interobjective truth about Marc's relationships. Again, this is not a nefarious conspiracy. It's an all-to-common mistake in reasoning, a misstep in how we authenticate truth, and responsibility for this fallacy lies with the adjudicator of the truth in question.

This fallacy does not lessen the impact of Simon's, Smith's, (or Zerner's) actions—nor does it let off the hook anyone else who lent their voice to the cause take down Marc on the basis of the opinions of parties not involved in his 2011 relationships. The impact was, in hindsight, actually quite profound. The scandal that never was became a bridging event that connected the events of 2006 with the smear campaign of 2016. We'll mention two events that illustrate how.

In 2013, Marc had a four-hour phone meeting with Elster. This was the first extended contact between the two since before the false complaints were launched in May 2006. For Marc, the aim of the call was to listen closely to Elster and speak his own truth in hopes that they could move

toward some form of resolution. For the first two hours, Kempton was present on the call, and the for second two Galperin was present. Marc challenged Elster directly on the 2006 false complaints, but she side-stepped the core issues by suggesting the details didn't matter because he had repeated the same behavior again in 2011. She followed up the call with an ranting email that essentially accused Marc of masturbating during the call. She claimed he was panting and remembered that "he got off on the pain of others." According to both Kempton and Galperin this claim is false. The only pattern being repeated here was Elster's completely outlandish claims.

This is the first illustration of what we mean by bridging. For many people, including those who were directly involved in past events, the very existence of another scandal, regardless of its nuances, reinforced a false pattern. As a result, any inclination to clear up the details of the 2006 events was rendered less relevant and less interesting. These impacts reach forward in time as well. In 2016, when the old claims about Kabakov and Mitzner were recycled as if something new had happened, they too seemed more believable and less worthy of being engaged critically, simply because the apparent pattern looked like it was being repeated. This bridging effect is so powerful that the fact that the 2016 smear was built upon events that happened 35 years prior didn't even seem to matter. The false pattern of abusive relationships appeared real—starting in 2006, it was if one could expect a scandal about Marc to unfold every five years. Smith said exactly this in a Facebook post in 2016.

The second illustration shows how bridging works in an alternate way. The events of 2011 led some folks who initially supported Marc's claims that the 2006 complaints are indeed false to eventually take part in the 2016 smear. Our case in point here involves author and blogger Joe Perez. Perez describes a positive relationship with Marc from 2011 through 2015. They even spent over a year during that span of time in public collaboration. During that time, he "was on the lookout for signs of duplicity, deception, and potential abuse of myself or any associates." He says he did not find anything that "set off alarm bells."³⁵ Until 2016, that is, when he was inadvertently forwarded an email that contained the summary of an Integral Institute report that I had written and which was being circulated amongst CIW staff and board members.³⁶

This report summary contained a section on 2011. In it, Perez spotted what he initially took as a misleading statement. In his mind, the report denied that Baruch was a student. He righteously assumed his interpretation of was correct, so he leaked the report online and then emailed Marc, Wilber, and Kate Maloney, the co-executive director of CIW, to tell them that the Baruch omission was "intentionally misleading (i.e., lie)."³⁷ He also emailed Marc directly outlining his concerns. Marc replied a day later explaining that this was simply an error and it would be corrected. Marc called me the same day. I updated the report summary and, since it had already

³⁵ Perez, J., 2016, An Apology To Tami Simon, <http://themarkgafniinquiry.com/?p=801>

³⁶ Fuhs, C., 2015, Summation of the 2008 Integral Institute Report, <http://www.whoismarcgafni.com/2016/02/integral-institute-report-marc-gafni-conclusion-summary/>

³⁷ Perez, J., 2016, Emails to Ken Wilber and Marc Gafni

been leaked, I made it publicly available on Marc's site. Perez then published the email he sent Marc, and it was soon re-posted by Smith to a Facebook group that regularly "discussed" Marc. Perez then stepped away from Marc and CIW and went on to publicly denounce Marc in an blog entitled *An Apology as A Former Marc Gafni Defender*³⁸

It's important to know that, by this time, Perez had met with Baruch and apologized to her in person. Just under a year later, this misleading statement had transformed into a pathological and nefarious lie. On March 16, 2017, Perez issued another apology. This time it was written to Tami Simon, and it published both on his personal blog and on the notorious 2016 smear site themarcgafniinquiry.com.³⁹ He reflected on how he felt when initially reading the report summary a year earlier, "[Marc] was perpetrating a brilliant, risky fraud...I couldn't stand for it." However, immediately after he read it, he told Wilber why he leaked the report:

*"My motivations were complex, but my intuition strong. Earlier in the day Robb Smith posted on Facebook that Marc was a "pathological liar", Svengali creating massive delusion, and the "perpetrator of the greatest spiritual fraud that he'd ever seen -- and that the people who supported him belonged in jail". The public was rapidly coalescing against Marc AND everyone who supported him. Basically I felt the rational response to Massive Paranoia was Massive Transparency.*⁴⁰

Fast forward to a year later. Compare this to how Perez describes his interpretation of encountering the error in his apology to Simon:

*"He lied to the document's author about key details, denying for instance that he had been involved with one of his students, even though the fact that she was his student was not in denial at the time. In fact, he made a very public defense of spiritual teachers having relationships with students to the Integrales Forum. Nevertheless, what he previously admitted, he now lied about. Wouldn't he know he would get caught? Not necessarily, if we think through the mind of a pathological liar."*⁴¹

Was it a misleading statement or a bald-faced lie? Perez can't consistently report how he interpreted the error. At first he shared the report to fight Smith's pathological liar claims with transparency. Then, he was attacking Marc as a pathological liar, just as Smith had done. Everything about this is as confusing as Perez is complex and unintentionally bifurcated (read Wilber's foreword to Perez's first book, *Soulfully Gay*, for a sense of this).⁴²

³⁸ Perez, J., 2016, *An Apology as A Former Marc Gafni Defender*, <http://joe-perez.com/archive/2016/04/28/an-apology-as-a-former-marc-gafni-defender/>

³⁹ Perez, J., 2016, *An Apology To Tami Simon*, <http://themarcgafniinquiry.com/?p=801>

⁴⁰ Perez, J., 2016, *Email to Ken Wilber*

⁴¹ Perez, J., 2016, *An Apology To Tami Simon*, <http://themarcgafniinquiry.com/?p=801>

⁴² Perez, J., 2007, *Soulfully Gay*, Integral Books, Boston, MA

Using his own logic (and a little of Occam's razor), his 2017 conclusion makes little sense. What is more likely? Marc is a pathological liar who didn't think he would get caught "lying" about something that both he and Baruch had already publicly admitted? Or Clint inadvertently left out the statement "Baruch was also Marc's student?" A statement that both Marc and Baruch had already publicly admitted and which was already known by every person who I thought would be reading this private, internal report summary. Had I known this summary would have been leaked or if the intention was ever to release it myself, I would have written it for public consumption, and I would have reviewed it to ensure clarity for an expanded audience. The truth of the matter here is that I made a mistake and Perez decided a year later to recast his prior interpretation of an omitted statement as evidence of a pathological lie.

At first, I wanted to assume that Perez needing a smoking gun in order to justify—to himself and maybe to others—why he joined the 2016 smear and why he didn't just apologize to Simon in a personal email. Then, Marc shared a string of emails sent to him by Perez around the time he leaked the report and it became apparent that Perez likely underwent a gradual process of fear turning in to demonization. In the email where Perez pointed out the report error, he says, "...I've got a book coming out in two months. People are unfriending me and openly attacking me too in vicious terms." At first, he was fearful that his involvement in defending Marc would have a negative impact on his book, but, only a few days later, he emails Marc about a "small favor." "There's no one else in the world I have who can help me, he says, "\$5000 will do the trick...please send the money through PayPal...I know you will do this..." Once he removed himself from the fray, if even for only a few days, the fear subsided and small favors felt once again appropriate. Marc didn't give him the money. Two months later, he sends another email reflecting on the 2016 smear and how the "noise seems to have dimmed from a public standpoint." He then asks for a testimonial from an upcoming book. Marc didn't provide one.

We could write off the entire Perez story as simply motivated by fear (or maybe anger stemming for his unrequited defense of Marc), but that would deny the powerful bridging effect that the 2011 scandal had on people's willingness to lend their voices to the 2016 smear. In the first illustration, the creation of a false pattern lessened any future inclination to critically engage past or future allegations. In the second illustration, which takes Perez's story as one example amongst many, we see that personal involvement with the Marc or anyone of the of parties involved in the 2011 events has a related impact. It seems to increase the likelihood that hidden personal motivations (like those of Perez and Smith) override past beliefs and motivate future compensatory and demonizing actions.

This is not to say that people can't be wrong or change their minds about working with Marc. They can and they have. This is not betrayal, in and of itself; what often happens next is what we take issue with. When the reasons for ending a working relationship with Marc stem from a difficulty in reconciling past actions with current positions, people tend to fabricate public explanations that aim to make both past and present actions believable. These explanations tend to

be demonizing, biased, and aggressive. They tend to look outward, attacking the “other” in an attempt to justify their actions. They tend not to look inward, toward more responsible and often simpler explanations for the very same actions. This is what we are holding folks like Perez (and to a large extent Smith and Zerner) to account for. It also brings together both illustrations of the bridging effect. The mere sense of a pattern, however false or difficult to substantiate, lessens the inclination toward personal responsibility and increases the reliance on demonization. And, as we’ll see in the next chapter, this pattern becomes a legitimate trend.