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COLLECTIVE SENTIENCE
Calling the Earth to Consciousness

PREFACE

We have all had the experience of being part of something larger than our ordinary selves, and undoubtedly many of us have shared that experience with others. It seems we all seek some form of merger or union with other, often through love or spiritual practice. Imagine being able to create that way of being with others at will, and how that experience might transform the world.

Imagine

Imagine you are in a circle of beloveds gathered in ceremony with a clear shared intention of joining together in a state of transcendent intimacy, not only as a collection of individual psyches, but also as a constellation of merged consciousnesses in which your individual view of the world maintains and at the same time a whole new state of consciousness emerges, a consciousness which is separate from yourself and of which you are nevertheless a part, as are all of your beloveds. As the drum beats, you begin to relax, your breath deepens and you come to presence. You are aware that the others are present in the same way. With a focused yet detached intention of allowing a new field of being to emerge, you notice that a new awareness begins to emerge with its own intelligence much more vast than your own, and with a larger perspective on the world, on life, on existence, on itself/yourself. And you still feel your own sense of self, albeit somewhat less distinct. There is no sense of physical space, at least in an ordinary way.

You realize that your beloveds are also a part of this new awareness - you even recognize them in some new way, wanting to wink at them sharing in the delight of this new way of being. There is a breathtaking sense of union. Because you still sense your own individuality, you experience a new valuing and appreciation of your beloveds and deep gratitude for the gifts that you have all been given, especially this gift of joining. You feel love for the others in a new way, without any doubts or conditions. Somehow, it feels like home.

As you rest in this new, oddly nourishing state, you reflect on your life's condition and that of your beloveds, and you begin to have new insights about old problems seeing relationship and circumstance from a perspective and in ways you never before imagined. Then you realize that these are not just your own thoughts. You notice that there is a new presence, not any individual, but rather a new beingness seemingly with its own uniqueness, its own sense of presence. New thoughts and new ideas arise, seemingly spontaneously, and yet you recognize that they are somehow also your own thoughts and ideas as well.

You are not particularly aware of the passing of time, but at some point you feel an inclination to pull back from the collective - you sense that the others, the other also feel this. As your focus returns from your beloveds to your own uniqueness, you notice that the new presence fades away, as well, and you begin to feel your old self again, but it also feels different. There is a memory, a residue of the joining and a quiet longing to have it back. You notice the others now as individuals and, while the same state of deep, transcendent intimacy is no longer there, there is nevertheless a new quality of regard and appreciation for the others, a new, deeper love for them, and there is a common recognition that things will not be the same ever again. You recognize that something profoundly new has happened that has an evolutionary dimension to it. And you all understand that you can join in this way of being, now at will.

The Persistence of Vision

In his short story, *The Persistence of Vision*, John Varley describes the wanderings of a traveler in the late 20th century after a form of nuclear holocaust. During his travels he happens upon a commune of deaf and blind people who communicate only by touch, yet they are completely self-sufficient and they have no use for the outside world. After blundering about, learning sometimes traumatically about the necessary protocols of living in such a community, the traveler stays on as a welcome guest. Because of the history of the formation of the commune, the deafness and blindness is not congenital and thus the children are not deaf or blind. The traveler is befriended by one of these children, an adolescent girl named Pink, who becomes a mentor of sorts to this new way of being in family. The traveler discovers that the community has its own notions of love and intimacy, and he becomes slowly entrained into a delicious new life. Yet he can't help feeling separate from the community because he is not deaf and blind. Occasionally the traveler encounters the adults in a circle outside the buildings, hands outstretched to each other, but not touching. They stay that way for extended periods of time seemingly in a state of ecstasy. Pink tells the traveler that the deaf and blind community members are ***ing as there are no words to describe the practice. Because Pink is not deaf and blind, she is unable to participate, so she doesn't really know what happens in the experience. After having left the commune for some time, the traveler returns and encounters Pink just as the community members join in one, last, transcendent time of ***ing, and the traveler poignantly discovers Pink's own commitment to join them.

This story is a touching myth that depicts a new, possibly evolutionary way of being together in a state of collective unity consciousness. The story portends a sharing of consciousness beyond individual mind, a consciousness that holds the potential for an emergent quality of self-awareness, the larger mind becoming aware of itself. Experiencing this consciousness does not require that we be deaf and blind. It does, however, require that we first recognize that such a state of being is possible, and that we come together in a new way so that we can participate in our own state of ***ing, and then truly know ourselves for the first time. To overcome the handicap of not being deaf and blind, we must by choice, by intention and attention, wean ourselves from the distractions and limitations of our everyday sensory world, and the habitual cultural imprints that keep us from knowing other ways of being, such that

we can stand in a circle of beloveds with shared intention, stretching out our psychic hands and hearts to each other, bringing each of our unique presences to a constellation of love that allow a field of collective sentience to emerge.

Imagine your own circle of beloveds joining together in this expanded state of being, your extended family, your community. Imagine large numbers of circles around the planet gathering in this way. Imagine being in this way with the Earth, itself. Imagine the possibilities for the evolution of this planet if we could bring the gift of our self-reflective consciousness in this way.

Dialogue

We cannot know the clear direction of our evolution, but we can recognize our potentialities and then pursue them intentionally. For the first time, we may actually have the opportunity to participate consciously in our own evolution through conscious, collective choice. In order to do so, we must have some understanding of what is possible and then come to some consensus as to how we attend to our own lives, and to those of each other, and direct our energies, intentions and creativity in that direction. Our situation is summarized in an excerpt from a series of Dialogue sessions focused on consciousness among a group of people in Boulder, Colorado for whom evolution is of fundamental interest. References to the Dance are to an annual ceremonial encampment on sacred land in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains during the Summer Solstice. It is a time of collective prayer for the planet.

Jude: So Ken, what is it that came before that we are all connected to?

Ken: We seem to be called together because of a convergence of consciousness in a collective form that is beginning to manifest in the ceremonial events that we have had, as well as the dialogue sessions we have held over the past number of years: the Call of *Presence* for the Solstice Dance this past year; Robert's Call of *Allow* several years ago, which began as a collective call; and then this year's Summer Solstice Dance which was essentially a call of Collective Presence. This notion of the collective is beginning to show up in various ways such as the book by Peter Senge, et al, entitled *Presence*, as well as the *What Is Enlightenment* issue [May-July 2004] on collective consciousness.

After the deep, collective experience at last year's Summer Solstice Dance, the convergence became more apparent to me and so I wrote the Call for the Consciousness Dialogue series, of which this is the first session, to explore collective consciousness, and even the prospects of self-aware group consciousness, which I call Reflective Collective Consciousness, or RCC. While a somewhat clinical and theoretical term which may not be totally accurate, it nevertheless is a worthy aspiration to be held as a direction for ritual, ceremony, dialogue, inquiry and practice. Much of my inspiration derives from John

Varley's short story, *The Persistence of Vision*, about a commune of deaf and blind people after a nuclear holocaust, and their practice of ***ing in which they circle without touching and reach a state of being, and then, in the end, ascend much in the same way the society did in the myth of Shambhala. The story leaves many with a sense of wonder and intrigue, and engages one's imagination and even something deeper than that. I regard this story as a very relevant myth for collective consciousness.

So my belief is that collective consciousness is humanity's opportunity for evolution. From my point of view, it is the only realistic direction for humanity - technology really offers no more promise of benefit in the sense of evolution. Our social systems and our religious systems and our cultural systems don't seem very promising in the directions they are going towards, at least as to having a sustainable planet.

For me, this is the opportunity to ask: What is the gift of consciousness? and showing up for that opportunity. So it is my belief that this is a worthy area of exploration and, for me, the most worthy of many possibilities. I am inspired by a shamanic journey I had a number of years ago and that I have shared with many of you. I journeyed to find out what the Earth needs. I was in outer space with my spirit guide looking at the Earth's surface and I began to see small, golden circles, and then more and then rays connecting them, and then the whole planet goes nova. Notwithstanding the potential nuclear implications and interpretations of this vision, I believe the profound significance of this journey is the evolution of Earth Consciousness.

Since I have touched this place of being in some form with each of you, it occurred to me to ask you to come and see if you wanted to explore this, and play in this arena in some fashion. Some approaches could be to dialogue about collective experience, and share how each of us have experienced this. For example, Tom you have spoken of times in groups, particularly sacred circles, when you were speaking words that were not your own and that it felt like you were speaking for something larger than you. I think we have all had similar experiences. In some of my experiences, I felt much bigger than Ken Robinson, and much different in a sense of consciousness than just this habituated mind that filters the world in a certain way. That has been valuable to me and insight has come out of those states.

The 2004 Summer Solstice Dance had so many instances of routine times of the collective emerging in some fashion. And so, aha. With things like the *What is Enlightenment?* issue showing up, there seems to be something like a morphogenetic field emerging, and it feels like we have touched it. We are spiritual elders now, and this is a tremendous opportunity. We are healthy, we

have so much experience, and we know what roads don't lead anywhere for us. There are so many options for exploration of evolution, and this is only one, albeit from my point of view, an important one.

I can't even imagine the collective wisdom of the five people here tonight, let alone that of people who aren't here. And wisdom not particularly as a sum total of the parts. I think there is something larger as we come together. And if there is a state of consciousness that arises out of that, all the better, icing and all that.

Tom: It seems like there always has been collective dreaming or collective enterprise like that among humans, at least I have read about, and in tribal societies it was even more common because they had a common purpose, their survival. Their survival depended upon the women finding the right plants at the right time of year, and the men finding the animals. So there was an encouragement for that. And now, we have become such an individualistic society, we forget that that can happen. And that does probably happen all the time, but we don't recognize it because we are so eager to identify with our own little skin bag. Ah, that came out of me. I would hypothesize that it actually does come out of a collective human experience all the time whatever we do, whatever we are thinking. Here we are in a little constellation right now, and something is coming through this constellation. And, I am not sure it really matters who says it. In this group at least, it doesn't really matter who says it - none of us is really attached to who says it - it's O.K. to just suspend what it is and let whatever dreams through you, just let it be there.

Jude: I like where Tom was going with a more primitive, more indigenous sense of this continual interdependence and I see it over and over in Aikido class that the things I am able to say come out of the field of who is present and what has gone before. The next thing that gets said is just because of who is here and how they are at this moment. This is even in a very formal style of teaching. I don't know if I got it from a Celestial Seasonings tea bag, but it is something like The ears that cause the lips to speak. It seems to be that we're in that quality of interdependence too, that is the heart of the listening that is the heart of the voice that is heard.

Ben: The speaking comes out of the listener.

Jude: They seem to be so co- in their arising, that even in the heart of the

speaker it s hard to cling to the might of the words or even the future of the words which might be impactful or not. I guess that that is what I was thinking at times in Dialogue where I ve wanted to say wait don t suspend it, own it, and let us really cherish it in the sense of yours. Let us coinhabit it with you and honor you in whatever the story is and the power in your life experience that has brought it to fore this moment. Let us join with you. I enjoy what you say, but there is somewhere that I know that the person is so political in the poling sense, but if it is something that constructs our of your mind it is even more delicious to go through the gateway of your personal until it starts to be claimed by all of us.

Ben: But it doesn t get stuck there. In a sense you re using the individual as a gateway into feeling deeper into the collective.

Jude: Yes. I am not thinking it gets stuck. In a continual interdependence. And that somehow we can invoke and even deepen that suspended inspiration together.

Ken: From a systems theory standpoint, what you just said suggests that, without the individual view - a particular orientation to experience - then the collective can t really exist as a collective. In systems theory, a collective of elements constellate in a particular pattern of organization (Capra - *The Web of Life*) and, at some point of criticality, there s a new emergent property that didn t exist before the pattern of relationship was created. And so, in one way of looking at it, the individual minds, the individual views and perspective constellate in such a way to allow the emergent collective. It isn t a question of the individuals dissipating or disappearing. I have noted in various inquiries the almost psychological standpoint of ego, the willingness to step aside, and not disappear, to show up and then to choose - myself, I choose to not not participate, but rather to step aside and allow an emergence of what is there. The decision maker - the I, my viewpoint - participates in that decision and in that way becomes part of that dynamic. So the idea is not to disown myself, not to make myself disappear in this process, but to step aside so that it is not a major part of the dynamic, but it is still here, it s necessarily here. It s part of the driving force, the conduit, the channel.

At a recent workshop where Dr. Edgar Mitchell spoke of a quantum hologram, I asked him a meta view question: Why are we talking about this at all? Why go through all this? In the 1970's Dr. Mitchell sponsored Uri Geller here when he was bending spoons. I asked why Dr. Mitchell needed the model of quantum holograph as he already believed that Geller could bend the spoons psychically. My thinking is that if we can come to a common understanding then

we can have a common intention in a collective way. That's what we are doing here, I think. We are exploring different experiences and aspects of consciousness and collective presence. So at some point, even tonight, we have some commonality of intention which almost part of that stepping aside, that depersonalization.

Jude: Would you say that, as with Edgar Mitchell, you have to believe it to see it.

Ken: Something like that, you'll see it when you believe it.

This excerpted interchange reveals the wonderful richness that is available in a group focused on a particular inquiry, there, collective intelligence, and it demonstrates how the total wisdom of a collective is often more than the sum of its parts. And, while there was no intention of joining together to explore ***ing, the insight that emerged from the collective inquiry illustrates the themes that are explored in more depth in this book. Other excerpts are included at various points in the text to illustrate an idea and to illustrate how an exploration of collective intelligence appropriately includes a collective.

I. INQUIRY - ENGAGING THE MYSTERY

Nothing is harder, yet nothing is more necessary, than to speak of certain things whose existence is neither demonstrable nor probable. The very fact that serious and conscientious men and women treat them as existing things brings them a step closer to existence and to the possibility of being born.

- Hermann Hesse

Science is the art of creating suitable illusions, which the fool enjoys or argues against, but the wise man enjoys for their beauty or ingenuity, without being blind to the fact that they are human veils and curtains concealing the abysmal darkness of the unknowable.

- Carl Jung

As a matter of purely conceptual understanding, consciousness has been and likely will

remain something of a mystery. This is because of the inherently subjective nature of consciousness. But this does not mean that consciousness shouldn't be studied and explored as an intellectual undertaking. To the contrary, it is a basic premise of this book that the fundamental gift of reflective consciousness is the opportunity to participate actively in our own evolution, particularly that evolution of consciousness as the highest order of evolution. This entails the application of intention and attention as a matter of informed choice to focus individual and collective awareness and volition on expansion of the experience of consciousness. This, in turn, requires a broad understanding of the various aspects of consciousness, including those subjective aspects which we experience but may never fully understand.

Science, until very recently, and notwithstanding the development of the field of psychology beginning in the early part of the twentieth century, left matters of consciousness to religion. Most of us do not dwell on our own consciousness reflectively, although we all experience ourselves and the world from a constellation of self-aware aspects of our consciousness such as identity, memory, and fears and expectations of the future. Science dutifully tackled these developments by characterizing and categorizing such aspects of consciousness, initially to address pathologies of consciousness. This brought us basic tenants of psychiatry such as the ego, the id and the superego. However psychology does not pretend to address the nature and genesis of consciousness.

Religion established very elaborate explanations of the basis for consciousness, for the most part attributing its nature to divine origin, postulating the existing of an even higher level of intelligence and consciousness in the form of deities. In good institutional fashion, the religions also developed codes of conduct based on these explanations of conscious existence. Joseph Campbell taught that each of the world's major religious traditions essentially embody the same myth, to wit, the virgin birth of consciousness from inert matter. The mystical traditions of all of these religions delve into the subjective realms of consciousness and the attendant experiential understanding that derives from such experience, but these approaches don't provide a ready conceptual understanding of the nature of consciousness. To the contrary, they celebrate the mystery of consciousness.

Science has finally decided to take another stab at understanding consciousness. In the last ten years or so, researchers have turned to recent developments in fields like neurology such that there is an emerging field loosely known as neuroscience. These explorers seek to explain both the object and subjective dimensions of consciousness and, from the perspective of some, disprove the existence of God. They seek to demonstrate in objective, scientific fashion, the natural development of consciousness from matter which has taken the form of a mammalian brain. Curiously, however, they do not seem to seek to explain the self-reflective nature of consciousness, that is, the ability to understand and experience the understanding that one is conscious and having a conscious experience in that very understanding. Other explorers of consciousness who embrace science, but who also include philosophical and spiritual notions in their quest to understand consciousness, are quite skeptical of the traditional scientific approach.

Indeed, these pioneers question some of the basic tenants of science. They suggest that, because of the fundamental flaws in these assumptions, a purely scientific approach will not lead to the broadest understanding of consciousness that will enable us to consciously evolve. Ironically, these researchers are using new developments in science to demonstrate traditional science's limitations. For example, modern physics postulates that an observer of a phenomenon actually participates in the phenomenon thus inherently tainting the objectivity of the experiment and precluding a truly objective result.

The post-modern researcher would say that the entire universe is inherently subjective and that, until science recognizes and includes this aspect of the conscious, phenomenal world, that consciousness is an inherent quality of all matter, it will not have the necessary framework to increase our understanding of consciousness, and this will limit our capacity to evolve. Such is the basic premise of this book that it can present concepts that have intellectual integrity and, at the same time comport with our subjective experience and knowledge of consciousness. Using such progressive understanding of consciousness, we can make a choice that furthers our evolutionary imperative to join in a larger way of being, of knowing and experiencing the world and each other.

Understanding

A human being is part of the whole, called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences his thoughts and feeling as something separate from the rest -- a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal decisions and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

- Albert Einstein

A basic premise of this book is that a fundamental understanding of the context of consciousness and the potential for evolution of consciousness is necessary in order to create both the opportunity and the possibility of choice, the choice of intention and attention to presence with each other. Without any common understanding, the collective will not be able to constellate in such a way as to create a field of consciousness from which a collective sentience may emerge. Without the context of meaning and understanding, the sensory perceptions have limited significance as experience. As someone once said, you cannot choose beyond your belief.

At this level of evolution, in this logically, technologically dominant culture, disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, scientific theory and cosmology, among others, are important, perhaps necessary, components of the understanding required for us to evolve, to allow us to

recognize the possibilities and the various techniques, prayers, rituals, processes, that can help us configure ourselves in such a way as to enable us to participate in evolution. Thus this book.

Inquiry

This book is primarily about inquiry on the premise that, as Rilke so eloquently wrote, we ask the questions and perhaps we will live into the answers. So this book attempts to pose good questions, penetrating, deep questions, and then suggests various modes and approaches of inquiry, not all of them verbal or conceptual. The hope, and the intent, is that the themes resonate with a number of people who sense that there is more to our collective appearance on this planet than survival. Indeed, the possibilities are almost unimaginable but, thankfully, not quite. And so this is a book about reflection, about asking good questions and then, hopefully, living into the answers as we come awake together.

The subjects of the various chapters are necessarily presented in sequence but, because they interrelated, the sequence could easily vary without losing the context of the discussion. Many subjects present the potential for vast inquiry in their own right and there is no pretense to provide an exhaustive, in depth exploration of each, nor is there any intent to advocate a particular position on any issue. Rather, the discussion is presented so as to provide a common understanding as a beginning point for the adventure. As the discussion progresses, perhaps the details of particular subjects will become less important than the place of understanding at the end.

There is one aspect of consciousness that has a perennial quality: presence. A recurring theme in many spiritual traditions is the importance of being present to what is, and naturally presence will be a recurring theme here as well. In some ways, the concept of presence serves to integrate all of the other aspects of consciousness, and the discussion here presents a congruent theory that hopefully will form the foundation for further inquiry and exploration into collective consciousness.

Relevant to an inquiry into a collective state of being is the consistent focus of religion, psychology and philosophy on the polarity between duality and unity. Joseph Campbell demonstrated how each of the major religious traditions is based upon the same myth, the spontaneous arising of self-reflective consciousness from inert matter, the virgin birth. The necessary consequence of that theme is duality, I and Thou, and the mission of religious practice is the return to the One. Carl Jung described the same dynamic as the primary impetus of love, to merge into unity. In his insightful book *We*, the Jungian scholar Robert Johnson portrays the myth of Tristan and Iseult eloquently as the psychological movement toward unity in romantic love. From a cosmological perspective, the gift of duality is the capacity to actually know love at all, the ability to apprehend, appreciate and value other. In a state of union, that capacity would not exist. Nevertheless, there is an irrepressible urge in we humans to seek unity. The obvious paradox is that the individual might not exist in such a state, thus achieving the equivalent of psychic suicide.

However, there is another approach to an understanding of unity that does not require self-extinction and it is rooted in the common myth of religions. Once reflective consciousness arises with the attendant perspective of duality, there is the equivalent of a psychic entropy such that the quality of duality is not lost upon a return to unity. Rather, there remains a perspective of the self and other so that the state of unity can actually be experienced: both/and. God created man to love God. Upon reaching Heaven, man can only continue to love God if there is a residue of I and Thou.

The same dynamic occurs in a collective state of being where the perspective of the individual psyche exists while, at the same time, a necessary component of the constellation giving rise to emergent collective sentience. Indeed, the coexistence of the individual and the collective reflective intelligence is the defining quality of this state of being.

Participatory Evolution

Rupert Sheldrake, a noted cosmological biologist, posits a collective memory of a species which creates a morphogenetic field, or morphic field for short, in which all members of a species participates, and which informs each member such that things are as they are because they were as they were, in the sense of a habit. Evolution occurs as a change somehow becomes a part of the memory and each member then replicates the new aspect of the species. The notion of a morphic field has taken on a less rigorous use to connote a shift in the way a culture behaves. In this sense, the morphic field of western culture is beginning to exhibit an aspect of reflective collective consciousness.

A number of researchers, cosmologists and writers are now beginning to explore collective states of being. An informative overview of some of these efforts is provided by Craig Hamilton in his excellent article on collective intelligence in the magazine *What Is Enlightenment?* While most of the work described in the article does not focus on the self-reflective aspect of a collective consciousness, it nevertheless provides a foundation for inquiry into this area. From the perspective of a morphic field, the capacity for attaining reflective collective states of being is manifesting as a part of the collective experience of the species. This is, perhaps, symptomatic of the evolutionary imperative of we humans, and perhaps of the entire planet.

Overview

This book has an organized sequence of topics although, because of the interrelationships of all of the concepts, the organization could just as well be different.

In this chapter we have examined the process of inquiry itself and the meta-question as to why inquiry in the first place. Inquiry hopefully leads to understanding, the focus of the second chapter. A premise of this book is that the mind is much more vast than our sense of self. There may be a tendency to dismiss the mind, or at least to try to, in recognizing the insubstantiality of

the self. Ironically, it is the mind that has that recognition. This notion provides the ground for a discussion of the importance of understanding and the perspective or view that derives from an understanding as well as from one's individual consciousness. Understanding informs that part of the self that has the ability to choose, and it nurtures the impulse to evolve. Related to this is a foray into consensus reality which is helpful to engender insight into what we know and what we don't really know. An exploration of values, including money and livelihood, serves to reveal the bases for much of what we take to be truth. This assists in letting go of strong attachments to certain ideas and concepts that may serve to limit an individual's and a group's capacity to merge into a collective.

The substantive discussion in our inquiry begins in the third chapter with notion of evolution and what it means for consciousness to evolve. In Chapter 4 is an exploration of concepts of consciousness. While there are many theories and philosophies of consciousness, this inquiry describes a number of concepts from the perspective of a collective. Included are several forms or states of consciousness such as heart consciousness that are not based primarily on the intellect but about which an intellectual understanding is helpful in order that a collective may come to a consensus about an intention to create a field of collective intelligence.

Acknowledging these other dimensions of consciousness allows the conceptual mind to voluntarily step aside to provide a larger field from which the collective intelligence may emerge into a state of collective consciousness, ultimately with a reflective capacity of its own. Other concepts from seeming unrelated fields are also included such as implicate/explicate orders of reality from David Bohm's work, emergent properties from systems theory, evolutionary memes and tiers from Don Beck's work in *Spiral Dynamics*, attractors from chaos theory and Teilhard de Chardin's work, as well as other ideas from quantum mechanics and holography. Of course the discussion of these complex areas is necessarily brief and are intended only to explain or illustrate a concept or an idea that is supportive of a larger understanding of the state of collective sentience, and to provide seeds for further inquiry and exploration.

In the next portion of the book, the inquiry turns to the components of the process to create a field from which a reflective collective consciousness, or RCC, may emerge. The first of these is addressed in Chapter 6 where the power of consciousness can be focused through intention and the act of will exercised in the expression of choice, the choice to direct one's consciousness to the creation of an emergent field for collective consciousness. This discussion includes the spiritual dimension of consciousness and the incarnate expression of that in the state of love. A fundamental aspect of the lives of all beings is love. There is no theory of love, but it is important to name it and include it as part of this inquiry as it provides the basic ground of intimacy and connectedness that allows both the hearts and the minds of a collective to open so that the individuals can entrain in a state of unity consciousness.

Chapter 8 presents a detailed discussion of a sequence of methods and practices that can be followed that are based upon the premises and understanding derived from the understanding resulting from the inquiry thus far. The intent is to provide a common ground for the

individual consciousnesses that create the field. These practices include process exercises as well as ritual to engage the non-conceptual aspects of the mind, as well as attitudinal compartments to facilitate creation of the emergent field.

Following that discussion is a chapter on Earth consciousness. This is seen as a natural follow-on from the experience of reflective collective consciousness because, in this book at least, the Earth itself in its local and global expression is deemed to be sentient and capable of participating in, or even fostering, a global collective consciousness.

Finally, various aspects of inquiry, ritual and art are identified as portals for entrainment into a collective state of being, and various aspects are discussed in some detail as a prelude to a series of practices which are suggested to help create a field of openness and congruence to allow a collective intelligence emerge and then even to begin to reflect on itself.

Our inquiry ends with a discussion of non-analytic and non-scientific ideas that also inform our understanding, primarily the tradition of myth and the value it has in furthering insight about ourselves and our culture. Also in this section notions of spirituality and cosmology are addressed as the collective experience transcends day to day reality and ordinary consciousness and touches on realms that many would regard as spiritual. Certainly a larger view of the cosmos and our place in it is helpful to the development of a common intention about collective intelligence. The myth of the ancient Tibetan kingdom of Shambhala provides an inspiring vision of what an enlightened society can be. A fundamental aspect of this area is the notion of presence which is emphasized by many traditions and which is presented so well in contemporary fashion by Eckhart Tolle in his book *The Power of Now*. The capacity to become present to oneself and to others in an intentional gathering is a prerequisite to a conscious collective.

Imagine world leaders joining in consciousness and seeing the world in a new way. Imagine the new leadership we could have. Imagine a sentient Earth and our role in calling that Earth to consciousness. Imagine joining consciousness with that Earth. If this were possible, how then shall we live? What a magnificent blessing to have the opportunity to make that choice.

UNDERSTANDING - VIEW

The purpose of life isn't to hold on to everything one has; the purpose of life is to grow in wisdom, and to learn how to love better.

- Rachel Naomi Remen

What is reality but a collective hunch?

- Lily Tomlin

An informed appraisal of life requires a full understanding of life's arena - the universe. . . By deepening our understanding of the true nature of physical reality, we profoundly reconfigure our sense of ourselves and our experience of the universe. . . As we've continued to slowly unmask the cosmos, we've gained the intimacy that comes only from closing in on the clarity of truth.

- Brian Greene
The Fabric of the Cosmos

Before enlightenment, understanding. After enlightenment, understanding?

- Anonymous

Understanding

We all seek wisdom to give meaning to our lives and most of us at some point turn to spirituality for guidance. At the core of any spiritual practice is understanding, understanding of life, identity and relationship. One's experience of profundity, a profound realization is, nevertheless, a realization, something made real to the mind, something recognized. The present moment of consciousness is much more than the mere event of perception or sensation. Understanding is developed through the use of language and concepts which inform that part of our consciousness that gives rise to volition, free will, the capacity to choose apart from physical impulses and instincts. While the mind is sometimes regarded as our own worst enemy, it is at the same time the gateway to liberation as the intermediary between consciousness and the physical world. Thus the quest for spiritual evolution necessarily involves the intellect and ideas and concepts that engender understanding. It is important to have some perspective on our understanding such that it can serve us rather than keep us imprisoned.

The academic disciplines have given names to some of these concepts. Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge; ontology, the nature of existence. By studying such matters and reflecting on the implications of epistemological and ontological insights, we will be better able to approach the choices that we have in our own development and evolution.

One such insight is the longing for unity that we all seem to have. The irrepressible impulse to merge with other, and to know transcendence, is the primary motivation for relationship and spirituality; and there are many paths to that unity. The mystical traditions offer precise practices that purportedly enable one to reach enlightenment even in this lifetime. Spiritual scholars have identified many stages of awareness from ordinary reality to cosmic consciousness although there is little mention of a collective experience in these traditions. No particular import is given to collective intelligence and yet the recognition and cultivation of a

collective state of being may offer a more direct path to spiritual freedom.

A large component of understanding is conceptual, that is our understanding is derived through intellect. The intellect is necessary to inform us that RCC is possible, and even the initial experience of it may be conceptual but this understanding then enables collective awareness to become collectively aware without concept. This is important to comprehend, in part because of the potential for self-deception and ego's clever Zen stealthiness way of coopting even this insight in support of ego. And, in part because of a sense that we are missing something by failing to recognize that intellect/mind is an integral part of this whole process, of using words and concepts, and to fail to acknowledge this is being self-deceptive. For example, when Tolle suggests that we see deeply how the egoic conditioned mind operates, who/what is it that is doing the seeing? If not the intellect, it is at least a part of the larger consciousness that is conditioned or affected by the intellect, at least to the extent necessary to recognize this process.

To ignore this would seem to be just another clever self-deception. Perhaps this is why it was necessary for Tolle to get up off the park bench and begin to understand his experience. So that he could somehow differentiate his mental, intellectual function of his larger awareness.

It is preferable to feel comfortable in engaging the intellect - that is, we don't want to think that we are fooling ourselves, that our minds are cleverly manipulating and deceiving consciousness. It is necessary for the intellect/egoic/conditioned mind to become self-aware of its own co-opting process and allow itself to relax into a larger state of awareness, consciousness which still retains elements on the understanding of the conditioned mind so as to enable Big Mind to be able to discern experience. Joining Heaven and Earth.

So, at the very outset, we must acknowledge that much or even all of this conceptual musing about consciousness and transcendence, and the necessity of the conceptual mind to understand and consent to expansion of consciousness, may merely be a clever and stealthy co-opting of an otherwise legitimate inquiry about evolution and consciousness by my egoic mind.

The concepts presented here do not pretend to provide a short cut to enlightened mind. Rather they seek to call attention to an intermediate stage of evolutionary consciousness that could actually provide individual benefit in the same sense that the traditions offer. As with any foray into spiritual exploration, the path begins with understanding, in particular an understanding of the nature of our own experience, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of existence itself. In the traditions each approach has its own sacred text which allows a practitioner to understand the path to be undertaken, a roadmap if you will, such that the practitioner can make informed choices about the conduct and practice of one's life toward the goal of spiritual development. Paradoxically, while at least many of the eastern traditions teach that mind, conceptual mind from which the ego is born, is the major impediment to spiritual growth, conceptual mind is at the same time the very aspect of our being that allows us to understand and comprehend the path, indeed, to witness our own evolution.

EVOLUTION

It is a basic premise of this book that consciousness provides the opportunity to participate in our own evolution as a species and, necessarily, as part of the planet's evolution. Accepting this premise, a compelling question to live with is then, bounded only by your wildest imagination and then some, what would you choose as a future for our evolution? Such a question brings one's beliefs squarely to the fore and challenges those beliefs in a unique way. For a religious person, the response is likely guided by church dogma and the expectation of a better life after death. The question also highlights the tension between the scientific paradigm which embraces evolution based upon astrophysical and Darwinian principles and some religious beliefs which hold that Biblical scripture postulates a much shorter cosmological and biological history. However, whatever one's belief systems, the question is still relevant. And, because the term "evolution" is so politically charged at the moment, a contextual synonym is "transformation." That is, as an expression of your creative free will, what transformation in human and planetary consciousness would you choose?

From a humanistic psychological view, with no theistic dimension, the choice would likely be based upon ethical and moral principles and the transformation that would embody such notions. For a spiritual person, the prospect of individual spiritual development in accordance with the practices of a particular tradition. A religious person might imagine a world that would get the greatest number of people into heaven, while an atheist would likely choose a transformation that would express the most creative expression of the human species in accordance with ethical precepts. The premise of the question "How shall we live?" is consistent with each of these views because each would acknowledge that we humans, at least, are endowed with the capacity to assert our will freely, whether we do so often or not. And, like it or not, our choices as individuals and as societies, profoundly affect the quality of life on this planet, certainly now but even more so in the future. Even from the perspective of an established religious tradition, God put us on this Earth and gave us free will for a reason. What if the choice was not just heaven or hell after death but also heaven or hell here on Earth? Wouldn't you choose "Heaven on Earth"?

For at least the last several centuries, the western culture has emphasized the individual over the collective, and emerging economic societies such as China and India seem to be patterning themselves after the western model as their economies grow and thrive. Even older spiritual traditions focus on individual development. One would expect that this bias would influence one's response to the question of what to choose for the transformation of our species. For example, both Hindu and Buddhist practices emphasize a personal path of spiritual practice and development with the highest form being some form of unity consciousness with the universe, but not depending at all upon the spiritual progress of anyone else. No philosophical, spiritual or religious tradition seems to even acknowledge, let alone teach, anything about transformation and development at the collective level. Thus there is a curious form of

narcissism here, not in a pejorative sense at all, but rather a preoccupation with the development and transformation of the individual. But if one reflects on this view, what can one do but become the best human being possible, do good in the world, expect others will do the same thing, and then hope that the world will be not just a better place, which it likely would be, but the best? Remember, the question is what would you want for the species and the planet?

Consider also whether self-gratification alone, in whatever form, can ever lead to a truly evolutionary transformation. Query whether any act is truly altruistic? Even Mother Theresa, bless her heart, saw Christ in every person she cared for. Given her values, what else could she have done? Perhaps true altruism derives most genuinely from the collective. If so, this does not mean the obliteration of the individual and a move into a psychic form of socialism. To the contrary, the basic premise of this book is that a fully developed, individuated consciousness is a prerequisite to the creation of a field from which a self reflective collective sentience may emerge. Without the free will, and informed choice to set an intention, the collective mind cannot manifest in this way.

So conscious evolution, transformation, need not be limited by belief systems, nor does it necessarily require a compromise of those beliefs. How then shall we live, and how shall we evolve? What if it is completely up to us? What would you choose?

There may be no answer of which the human mind is capable of comprehending as a next step than striving to manifest collective consciousness in a self-reflective way. Given the state of the planet today, and the conduct of we humans on the planet which continues to caused the planet s condition, and therefore our condition, to deteriorate rapidly.

CONSCIOUSNESS

*God sleeps in the minerals, awakens in plants,
walks in animals and thinks in humans.*

- Sanskrit apothegm

Most of us are aware that we are aware. That is, we know that we are conscious in a way that differentiates us as human beings from other living creatures such as animals to whom we ascribe some level of consciousness but without the depth of interiority that gives birth to reflective consciousness. While more than a few would dispute such an assumption, at least as to some of the cetaceans and the higher apes, whatever one s view, most give little thought to what consciousness actually is, leaving such esoteric inquiries to the philosophers and theologians. Indeed, consciousness is at the core of most religious traditions. Joseph Campbel taught that, historically, the major religions share the same basic myth, the birth of consciousness from inert matter.

Ancient philosophers contemplated the nature of consciousness in such works as [Plato's allegory of The Cave.] In the last century numerous theories of consciousness have been developed to describe the nature and structure of consciousness such as those found in the writings of [Thielehart de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo.] The premise of such theories is to further an understanding of the dynamics of consciousness so that we may live better lives and, perhaps, evolve into better human beings. Yet, while these theories are undoubtedly illuminating and likely further the quest to improve the human condition, a thorough understanding of these theories may not be a prerequisite to evolution in the collective sense. Rather, at least those who are moved to explore consciousness conceptually and experientially possess an intrinsic sense of what consciousness is and what it may become. Thus, the inquiry here presents only an overview of several relevant theories as well as other, more intuitive ways of knowing such as heart consciousness and psychic cognition. This should provide a basic context of understanding that will allow collective consciousness to constellate based upon shared intention and attention.

Such models or structures are clearly not necessary to explore such realms. It is unlikely that a Peruvian shaman has any notion of the various levels or states of consciousness mapped by Gebser, Wilbur or Sri Arubindo. On the other hand it is very likely that the shaman has been tutored by another shaman and likely undergone a rigorous ordeal, intentionally or otherwise, in which the shaman experienced a close encounter with death. The method of learning and the oral tradition of the shaman was appropriate to that culture and to that state of consciousness. In today's post-modern world it is, of course, a different culture and a different state of consciousness, one dominated by the intellect and concepts and informed, in large part, by or through technology. Thus the models are helpful, perhaps even necessary for the post-modern mind to comprehend a path and recognize choices that will allow an expanded state of consciousness to emerge. [Robert Thurman's comments]

REFLECTIVE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS - COLLECTIVE SENTIENCE

At present, people create barriers between each other by their fragmentary thought. Each one operates separately. When these barriers have dissolved, then there arises one mind, where they are all one unit, but each person also retains his or her own individual awareness. That one mind will still exist even when they are separate, and when they come together, it will be as if they hadn't been separated. It's actually a single intelligence that works with people who are moving in relationship with one another. . . . If you had a number of people who really pulled together and worked together in this way, it would be remarkable. They would stand out so much that everyone would know they were different.

The basic premise of this book is that a collective form of consciousness can exhibit self-reflective properties as an emergent property as suggested by the myth portrayed by *The Persistence of Vision*. The idea of collective consciousness is not new depending, of course, on how one defines consciousness. Looking at the self-reflective capacity of human consciousness as an evolution of lower forms of consciousness then, the hive activity of bees and ants certainly qualifies as examples of collective consciousness as does the flocking behavior of birds and the schooling of fish. We humans exhibit our own forms of collective consciousness as spectators at a sporting event or as members of an audience at a musical performance. At a more fundamental level, our very language and speech constitutes a forms of collective consciousness as does our many cultural norms and behaviors. The important distinction is that, even for the human experience of collective consciousness, there is rarely a self-reflective component and almost never a collectively reflective component.

THE CHOICE TO EVOLVE - THE CONTEXT OF INTENTION

Choice. Some act of consciousness at some level of self-aware, reflective consciousness, that is based upon, generally, principles or values, possibly instinct or intuition, at a higher level of consciousness, a knowing perhaps. What is the source of those values? What is the locus of those values, the knowing? In consciousness, for sure, whatever and wherever, that is. Mind? The intellect? What is the locus of view?

RCC PRACTICES

Although somewhat dependent on one s definition of consciousness, collective consciousness undoubtably occurs spontaneously and many times in many ordinary circumstances. Collective intelligence, group mind, tribal wisdom, even consensus, are all forms of shared recognition and awareness. Various expressions of such states are described in the an article by Craig Hamilton in *What Is Enlightenment* [Spring 2004]. [Tart - Trance Consciousness] The forms of this collective knowing will determine the level of forethought and focus necessary to achieve that knowing. For example, a group of individuals could reach a consensus about an issue without requiring a high level of rigor in the process, while a matter of ethical or moral principle may take an extended inquiry and exploration of the group s view of their world. But none of these forms of awareness include a collective self-reflective aspect of the shared consciousness.

To achieve a dimension of reflective collective consciousness (RCC) in group experience likely requires a coherent understanding and focus of the individual consciousnesses

that comprise the group, and an alignment of both the intentions and attentions of those individuals to provide the field in which that consciousness can emerge. To even reach the level of unanimity of purpose requires shared inquiry into concepts of consciousness and experience to provide a common ground from which the field may be created, a map, if you will. Once there is consensus on that realm of experience, the group can participate in processes to entrain the individual consciousnesses with their attendant shared intentions to create the field. This is pretty much unexplored territory, although a few groups have explored various approaches such as those described by Tom Hurley in his article on archetypal practices [cite], and the work of Andrew Cohen's spiritual community in collective intelligence. Certainly ritual is a potent modality of aligning both the conscious and unconscious dimensions of individual minds with shared purpose.

The sequence suggested in this book reflects the varied experiences and practices of a small, largely unorganized community of individuals in Boulder, Colorado, who have explored shamanic and spiritual practices together for over twenty years, and almost always including nature as part of the work. Most of the practices are not original to the group but they do include an evolutionary quality that reflects the years of practice together. The sequence and elements proposed here are surely not the only ones that lend themselves to creating a field for RCC, but it is an informed beginning.

Earlier this exploration emphasized the importance of understanding as the primary means of creating a common ground from which shared intention to experience RCC can develop. It is also the mechanism for identifying the entrainment processes into which the intentions are taken. A powerful modality of inquiry is the Dialogue process developed by David Bohm and the various offshoots of this approach such as _____ and dynamic dialogue. [cites] Dialogue can bring a group to a shared understanding of the psychic realms of consciousness and allow. From this understanding, the group can identify specific intentions, and ways of holding those intentions, in creating a group field.

Non-mystical techniques can provide fertile approaches to a shared understanding. Non-verbal inquiry modalities include visual symbolism, perhaps art inquiry, and sound fields. Also, an attitudinal shift in ordinary reality adopting an approach of living as if we are already in a self-reflective state of collective consciousness may open shared psychic channels conducive to such states. The inclusion of non-human aspects of the world may be an important element of this approach as the human sense of self-identity provides both a blessing and a curse. Regarding the Earth and all of its creatures as sentient, or at least capable of sentience, and including them in some way in the exploration, counteracts that fundamental hubris of we humans and likely makes the experience of RCC possible.

Once a group comes to common understanding and intention, ritual or ceremony can bring the intentions into transcendent realms and to allow the intentions to sink deeper into, and to inform, non-conceptual mind such that the vast resources of that dimension of consciousness can be enlisted. The mythical paradigm offered here is the ***ing process that the deaf and blind

commune members used in *The Persistence of Vision*.

What follows is a more detailed discussion of the elements of RCC Practice, that is practices that provide a means of generating a field of shared consciousness that, because of a shared intention and attention, may give rise to a separate component of that shared consciousness that has its own sense of sentience. RCC Practice is something like an ai kido of the mind, engaging the mind, and then getting it to step aside to allow the unfolding of a greater consciousness.

Process/Sequence

Inquiry
Dialogue
Insight/Understanding
Intention
Integration
Suspension/Allow
Ritual/Ceremony/Practice (***ing)
Art Inquiry
As If
Myth
Love
Hurley s Archetypal Practices

Inquiry

A view is a way of being in the world - a resonant view. Resonant attention - full collective presence. A view arising out of inquiry.

RCC Practice. Inquiry.

Is there an inquiry aspect of constellating RCC? Or at least can inquiry facilitate RCC? That is, by holding some common question and an intention to enable RCC to emerge, to allow, perhaps the state of our RIC inquiry will market make it easier to constellation by creating a common focus and, after practice, perhaps the inquiry component will not be required.

RCC may not be just passive, as a collective presence, but maybe also it is more active, as inquiry. Active RCC. There is no reason that RCC is only a larger state of consciousness; perhaps there can be an active component of it, and intellect. Indeed, in some ways, this may come first, before a reflective before the reflective component. Collective intelligence. Collective wisdom. This is more the focus of the WIE article.

So, a practice of RCC would be a collective focus, and a common inquiry, a common question, can help focus the collective, but there seems to also be necessary a larger context of

acknowledgment of RCC, and intention of RCC, and allowing of RCC, within which the collective inquiry is held.

Paradox as Inquiry

Paradox. A paradox is a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd, but in reality, expresses a possible truth; a self-contradictory and false proposition; a riddle.

Riddle. A riddle is a question or statement so framed as to exercise one's ingenuity in answering it or discerning its meaning.

Ingenuity. Ingenuity is the quality of being cleverly inventive or resourceful.

Ingenious. Being ingenious is characterized by cleverness or originality of invention or construction; clever, inventive or resourceful.

Innovation. Innovation is something new or different which is introduced - introducing new things or methods.

Paradigm An example serving as a model or a pattern.

Beliefs, Values and Paradox

At the cutting edge of western evolutionary thought, at the incipience of a new paradigm, we are faced with the seeming paradox that, from a perspective of deep ecology, we are all interrelated, at least interconnected, and thus we value all life, but we value human life above all other forms of life on the planet, and even above the life of the planet itself. And there are other values incident to human life that are held above other life such as freedom - the freedom to own land and do what we will with it, the freedom to procreate, even at the expense of other human life and even life itself on the planet, the freedom to say what we want, and more.

What are these values and principles? Assuming that there are basic, core values and principles to the human condition, how do I live in accordance with them if others do not? How can I be in a state of grace and know their lack of integrity, and still know and regard that they are valuable human beings with whom I can have an intimate relationship and about whom I can deeply care?

Practice, Process and Paradox

The Paradox of Agreements.

The paradox of the pioneer - the paradigm shifter.

The paradox of community - of love - of union - self/other.

The paradox of being human.

The paradox of belief.

The paradox of spiritual growth.

The conundrum of humanity.

The paradox of time and money.

The paradox of love - self/other.

The paradox of relationship - the paradox of forgiveness.

Transcending the paradox.

Paradox of growth and consciousness.

The conundrum of the collective.

Perhaps paradox. The paradox of love - each is true.

The paradox of individuation.

The paradox of population.

Ritual and Inquiry

Allow

Fundamentally, allow is an act of love.

Actually, that is enough. And yet, there are different aspects of allow, some of them paradoxical, which beg inquiry. The word itself seems contradictory, on the one hand passive, as to not take action, and on the other hand, active, as to affirmatively permit an action.

As a principle of everyday living, allow is about boundaries. Physically and physiologically we are separate from

each other, and from the world, in order that our bodies can remain healthy and free of pathogens. Psychologically we are separate so as to provide protection from psychic pathogens, and to promote individuation that we may maintain the perspective of duality, and thus the ability to know and value that which we are not. If we allow too much, our boundaries are compromised and we suffer harm.

As a spiritual principle, allow is about love and presents great promise - to allow all things in the universe, without attachment, provides for the possibility of freedom, transcendence and even enlightenment. Allow can be a courageous and generous act for the benefit of other, and thus for the evolution of self. The soul yearns to merge with other, and dropping our boundaries allows for union, a larger, natural and spiritual state of being. In this sense, allow can be thought of as a death. A life of spiritual growth is a series of such deaths.

Our evolution necessarily requires that we shed the safe and familiar boundaries of the smaller self. The paradox of allow is that that which we ultimately seek, no boundaries, presents the very real prospect of death. There are things in this world that can hurt us, and we must stay healthy and whole so that we may witness our own evolution. Thus we must cultivate an ability to discern risk in order to survive and evolve. Fear can help us do that. Fear is at once protection, keeping us from harm s way, but it is also limitation, keeping us from becoming larger, from evolving. The gift of fear is choice - conscious choice - the opportunity to choose love. Fear can wake us up to that choice.

The practice of allow, then, is to embrace fear as an ally, and to even embrace death, so that we may choose love consciously, and thus know genuine freedom and transcendence. Allowing fear as a regular practice is, indeed, a daunting prospect, yet ultimately necessary. In this way Allow becomes an act of love, because it is not about self, rather it is about not self.

- Ken Robinson

Living/Being As If

Myth and Inquiry

Standing Aside

Constellation Inquiry

Art and Inquiry

EARTH CONSCIOUSNESS

MYTH AND RCC

The Persistence of Vision

The Myth of Shambhala

New Paradigms - New Myths

The Dream of the Earth
