

Session 5 Transcript^[1]_[SEP]
Chapter Four: The Evolutionary Perspective
A New Republic of the Heart: A Guide To “Being the Change” For Real, with
Terry Patten

This is a very juicy and enlivening consideration if we really take it to heart. A lot of the work here is taking very profound and paradoxical ideas, philosophical and spiritual insights, and understanding them as a challenge to our very way of being; and allowing ourselves to feel and draw and soften and open and allow another richer, truer way of understanding reality; and to arrive for us as an embodied experience. So I'm particularly excited by the evolutionary impulse as a deepening of what we engaged in our last session on wholeness.

I'd like to begin with one of my favorite poems. It's one you may have heard before, by Jennifer Welwood. It's called “Unconditional”:

"Willing to experience aloneness,
I discover connection everywhere;
Turning to face my fear,
I meet the warrior who lives within;
Opening to my loss,
I gain the embrace of the universe;
Surrendering into emptiness,
I find fullness without end.

Each condition I flee from pursues me,
Each condition I welcome transforms me
And becomes itself transformed
Into its radiant jewel-like essence.
I bow to the one who has made it so,
Who has crafted this Master Game;
To play it is purest delight;
To honor its form – true devotion."

I really love this poem because it so elegantly and accurately evokes the quality of wholeness that really is our context and experience, the paradoxical nature of wholeness as we participate in embodied human living in relation to this greater wholeness.

I'm going to invite you to drop in, and let's see if we can arrive in wholeness so fully that we touch into the very impulse of evolution, so please straighten your spine. Find your way to a comfortable seated position. Take a few deep breaths and settle. Let your attention soften and deepen, as you breathe out especially, relaxing more and more fully into the simplicity of sitting. The paradox that in some sense sitting allows you to simply be awareness, and also that we arrive there often by staying very, very closely to our sensory experience, our embodied sensory moment to moment experience. So returning now and now to feeling and observing every micro moment of every part of every breath.

Feeling the breath in the nose, in the throat, in the chest, in the belly, even in the shoulders and back. Arriving again and again, more and more, completely here and now, and resting as the open intelligence in which all experience always arises. Allowing yourself to recognize that every bit of our experience is consciousness itself. These are impressions within the field of awareness. Even our aches and pains, even our most physical experience, even our cognitions of places and travel and all these things that seem to be so much bigger than us, it's all permutations of our sensory, intuitive, mental, emotional, spiritual experience, and all of it arises in awareness.

And there's a quality to awareness, a quality of utter simplicity, of deep okay-ness. The great awakens all say that if we rest most deeply into awareness as awareness, the quality is of bliss and love, love-bliss. What might first just be sensed as an okay-ness has such profound depth that it is delicious beyond limit, and if you really radically let go into this as this, there's a radical liberation. We may realize we're never in the dilemma we had conceived ourselves to be. Could never be. And there is a temptation to simply go into this radically subjective freedom, but if we trust this liberation and this okay-ness completely, we can go all the way through this liberation from embodied experience as an individual mortal body-mind into our deepest identity as the open intelligence in which all our experience as a person, individual and mortal, rises and falls. And we can feel that sense of liberation without needing to in any way disconnect.

Then we notice that this utter peace, this utter move-less stillness of the witnessing awareness, the feeling witness, without trying, without dilemma, without needing, spontaneously tends to more articulation, more individuation, more consciousness, more complexity, more connectivity, more integration, more cooperation. Effortlessly, these other ways that wholeness spontaneously moves when we're feeling the deepest well-being, freed of any anxious motives. We don't need to escape into mind. We can turn directly toward our life, this moment, the formed condition, the apparent dilemmas of life and death, of sickness and old age, of suffering, of trouble, so to speak. There is no troubling us. We are free to be here as this process of processes. And our well-being makes us a presence of wholeness, of possibility, of creativity, of the creative advance into novelty, as Whitehead put it. The impulse of evolution, that desire to be of benefit, that impulse toward more wholeness, aliveness, goodness, truth, beauty, health, coherence, integrity. It's just how it is to be, to simply be.

Thank you. This moment is infinitely deep in a couple of different ways. On the move-less unmanifest side of the street there's infinite death, and here in this embodied dualistic conditional side of the street there is this way that we become the very presence of that which made it so. That if you leave hydrogen and helium alone long enough, they eventually write symphonies, build cathedrals, put telescopes into orbit, and wonder about the meaning of it all. They also fall in love, and through our own experience can fall in love with everything we see, with each micro moment of this infinitely deep now moment. And this infinite potential of evolution, that which could give birth through evolutionary emergence to life from dead matter, to consciousness and culture from seemingly vegetative life, is right here, right now as you and me. And maybe able now in new ways, as us, to create new miracles, and we can be more or less in touch with this ever present dynamic potential. How cool is that?

I would like to begin. I think it's dynamic and fun if we can begin with a live interaction, so I hope somebody will, in a spirit of generosity, lean forward to be of service to everyone here by offering yourself forward in dialog with me. So I hope you'll consider raising your hand and while you do, there are a few more things I want to say. One of them is that part of what this being in touch with the impulse of evolution, as the impulse of evolution, is this curious unreasonable optimism that enters the picture. You have the courage to face the darkness, but you also have a feeling sense for the fact that

this is not a dead karmic process. This is a living engagement and lots can happen, and that feels so different, so much more enlivening and exciting.

Well, I see that Grant has raised his hand. Thank you, Grant. Hi.

Grant: Thanks, Terry. Hi, everyone. Well, thank you so much for that opening, Terry. I'm just swimming in the sweetness of it. I wanted to offer a kind of paradoxical dynamic that I felt in your opening meditation, which is this notion of activism versus a more passive stance, and the fact that our interiors, by what we put our attention on, is in a sense a really bold form of activism. You've said it many times before, but our contracted state isn't just something that happens to us, but it's something that we do again and again. I was just reminded in your opening how something as subtle as making the choice in each moment to expand, move back towards wholeness, is how we can participate in the evolutionary unfolding moment by moment and be a stand.

And something as seemingly minor as that is so fundamental and such a blessing, to know that to be of service can be that close to how we want to show up in the next moment, and how we can choose to relax that tension, to relax that contraction and move back. So this gulf between what some would call the contemplative side versus the active side really kind of marry and resolve themselves in how we decide to show up in each moment. And at the root of every activist impulse is primarily to open up our consciousness, to expand into that greater wholeness that we can participate in as the agents, as the eyes of evolution itself. I just feel really grateful for that opening and for a reminder that it is a choice, and how we show up is a big part of and fundamental to all the other things we do under the rubric of activism. So, thank you.

Terry: Wow. Thank you. You've worked with me before and you know how much I do emphasize choice. It seems useful to present something else in this moment that adds a nuance to that distinction, which is that sometimes I make the distinction that in a way our most healthy choices aren't even really choices. They're recognitions. That there doesn't have to be a me who is choosing in the sense of an "efforting" at all. There really only needs to be a recognition of what is more true, more whole, more fully expressive of the very nature of reality, and of course that's where we're attracted. So the very persistent tendency not just to contract but to contract in a way that makes it all about me, and whether I'm going to practice or not, succeed or fail, pass the test or fail the test, it's good to breathe that out and just let that truest dimension of the heart's intelligence recognize what is so. And therein lies all the healthy choices we could ever need to make, and yet I use the word "choice."

I mean, you're not bringing in a word I don't like. It's a word I do, because there is a sense in which everything other than the utter relaxed awake condition in which there is that profound recognition is something we're doing in this self-contracted way. And there has to be a kind of humility at the level of that self-contraction that is willing for it to relax, and in that sense the word "choice" is kind of an inescapable part of the dynamic, despite the fact that in a way it's just allowing what is to be. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Eric, I see you've raised your hand too. We are now in the Me Too era, and we in the Me Too era have to notice that women frequently hesitate more than men to speak up. We're outgrowing some of those patterns and hearing from a couple of guys, and me being a guy, I want to invite the voice of feminine dispositions into the space too. Go ahead, Eric.

Eric: Hi. This chapter and this material is like candy to me. I love the evolutionary impulse as thread that is spirally stitching together relative and absolute. So I tend to see myself when I contemplate this or try to come with practices working with this, to wind up falling on the absolute. I mean, even if it's Brian Swimme's Beads, where you go from the Big Bang to plasma, to the first molecules, to the first stars, it goes really big, and if you switch it around and go inward, to the smallest God particle that the Super Collider can smash apart, and smaller than that, you get to the same sort of absolute area. So the only way to work with it is to, for me, is to drop down into some kind of a pre-modern visualization of something that I can work with or work towards in my activism as something simple that I can grab as a deity.

Or like Jeff Salzman says, when he's working out, he pretends that he's pumping a village well to bring water to people and that makes his personal workout practice into a spiritual practice. So there's that, and just a riff on what you said earlier about the Me Too. On this Supreme Court thing, I keep wondering, if you've got these Conservative healthy judges who are healthy blue. And they've got reasonable rational, super-rational minds, and I'm thinking of Clarence Thomas here. Somebody has got to pop green and become a post-modern foo-foo believer on the Supreme Court. If development is happening at all, why wouldn't it happen to people at that last part of life. I think we've got pieces for change when I look at the world and the evolutionary perspective. I'm often hopeful, but it's hard to push into that, so if you can riff on that.

Terry: Oh, wow. You know, that's something I can riff on at great length, and I think I don't want to hijack this particular lesson in that direction in great length, but I can say in a brief way right now I think you're exactly putting your finger on something. I think that there's an opportunity right now. Integral Theory argues that there's a permanent polarity between left and right, and that there are healthy functions that Conservatives demand Liberalism bring to any social order. There's a tremendous pathology that's taken over the Republican-Trump party in this time, and it isn't bringing out the best in anybody. But there are people who are more developed, there is a natural aristocracy of wisdom, who have more Conservative and more Liberal dispositions.

And we're coming to a moment where relatively, in some place, in some arenas, very few individuals have an opportunity to play an out-sized heroic cultural role. If Conservatives can recognize that the pathology is on the right, right now, ask for a very powerful repudiation, a swing to the left, which can take the form of blocking the Supreme Court nominee, though not so much on the basis of what he did on high school. On the basis of the current lying that we seem to see. He evidently lied about his involvement in some things when he was confirmed, 12 or 13 years ago. He seems to obviously be dissembling about his past now. And just that action of lying is, in my view, disqualifying. And I understand a mature Conservative who might not want to make everybody's high school misbehavior stir up the game every time they do anything for the rest of their lives; but still the insistence of lying right now and covering up lies in the past might be a basis for them saying, "Wait a second. My loyalty to truth, my loyalty to the country, my loyalty to health is greater than my loyalty to my faction."

I think that it is a relatively small number of people, something like a handful of people in each precinct who are Conservative in their disposition but who recognize this pathology dynamic. If enough people make that decision, we have this huge landslide which might bring both houses of Congress over to Democratic control. So I think that this is a moment in which feminine leadership is crucial, but it's also important for there to be men and even white men who say, "Wait a second" to the reactive right-wing. Perceiving that the left is creating a hierarchy with white men at the bottom, there are people on the right who are reasserting a hierarchy with white men at the top. But they don't represent you or me,

and there is an opportunity for us to kind of, in a more noble or heroic way, reclaim the moral center by speaking up:

"You don't speak for all of us, white men. We have a different disposition here. We want partnership with women. We want partnership with people of color. You are screwing up our future prospects, in fact. As a white man who cares about the lot of white men, I don't want you representing us, because you're painting a target on your back. You're creating an imbalance that's going to have to be correct in a way that'll disadvantage all of us." Speaking for white men and caring not just about white men, but also caring about white men, we are here for something different. Those are thoughts that have been in the forefront for me lately given our current events, and thanks for giving me an opportunity to share them. Yeah, great. Thanks.

I think Therese has raised her hand.

Therese: Yes. Hi, Terry. What you raised in the meditation is really exactly why I felt the need and I felt compelled to sign up for your course, this whole question about what are the spiritual competencies we need to develop at this time so that we can support what you were referring to as the impulse of evolution? So there's this question of choice and our intention and what we pay attention to, but it seems to me this is really the edge that I've been really dancing with, if you will, is this question.

I was at the Celebrate Life Festival in Omega and Thomas Hübl also talked about this at one point during the week. I don't know who it was that made this point, but it was correlated to what's possible even in Stage 4 cancer patients, the idea of a spontaneous remission, the possibility of miracle even at the edge, which is where we're at. This is really the piece that speaks so deeply to me, is like how do we hold a seat at the table for what is not yet imagined, not yet known, something truly innovative?

Terry: Yes. I think it's our practice. That in a way what we are doing in all of our practices, which we're about to get into in just a couple of sessions, we in a sense get out of the way so that the evolutionary impulse has a clear channel, a vehicle through which it can move into the world through us. And even ultimately, not just through us individually, but through our relatedness to one another, through the we, so I'm resonating completely with everything you just said. Thank you.

Therese: Yeah, yeah. The resonance field, the possibility of the resonance field and how we can amplify possibility. It just seems like this, I can't quite put my finger on it, but just marinating in this question of what are can in a clear way work on our shadow material, deepen our capacity to be clear vessels for the transmission of whatever needs to come through. But still, it just feels like there's something else. I don't know what that is, but that there's still something else that is needed and some kind of what I would call spiritual capacity. I'm dangling the question out there in case others have some thoughts about that.

Terry: It's important to let go of the separated mind that thinks about the problem, imagines that if I can get together this and this and this element, then I have the critical mass that solves that thing. In fact, this evolutionary view breaks the spell of solidity. It wakes us up to the fact that I'm not a noun and I'm a verb, and that everything is a process. I'm a process made up of countless processes in play with other greater processes; and the intelligence of this system resides in every cell of my being and it also resides in the collective of which I'm a part, and certain aspects of it are alive here as me in my own unique way. And as I open out and allow that deeper spiritual nature and intelligence to be present, through and as

me, most completely, evolution has a vehicle through which miracles of evolutionary emergence can come into being.

And in a way my deepest practice is just to keep getting out of the way. That has many, many unique expressions, which I hope we'll be getting into a good deal more detail. I hope you will catch up on the readings, because where we're going the chapters get longer. This is the last super short chapter in part one, and there's really a lot of to be gained from combining yourself in a deep way with the chapters to come. There's this odd play between intellectually grasping a whole lot of very specific distinctions and being sharp in our discernment; and then just letting go of mind and allowing ourselves to be continuous with the life energy through which the conscious light that is being all things can be all that it can be, through us more fully as we get out of the way. Thanks so much, Therese. Alisa.

Alisa: Hello, Terry. Hello, everybody. You've talked a lot about evolution, and I ask the question, where does the sacred divine or universal intelligence fit in? And I got it in the meditation, that really consciousness is the divine intelligence that's moving through all life and creating life, so thank you. I think I'm pretty settled on that one. Would you agree? Are we speaking the same language now?

Terry: For sure. I mean, and it's also true that all the words we have for the divine are the fingers that point at the moon, and the living presence of God. This is the thing that our atheistic versions of spirituality tend not to be able to appreciate and benefit from, which is that in deep spiritual practice God is alive, a living force. For one thing, we're in love with God and we're seeing God in the form of everything, and God has a way of making use of us and uplifting us and finding God's way into the world through us. When we say the evolutionary impulse, we're turning it into something abstract and something like a force of physics, like gravity or something, like the evolutionary impulse or gravity or whatever, whereas the word "God" has a connotation that is more juicy and it has more to do with love.

One of the things that I sometimes bring forward as we really deepen in our spiritual practice, it's so juicy, it's like a love relationship with God in which we're making love all the time. We're having great sex, in a sense. Like the way your whole body feels different when you're in love and you're having an incredible love affair, and you're making new discoveries in the bedroom every night or something. You know, that feeling of that aliveness in our relationship with the divine is a possibility. In this particular formulation of things, I'm not emphasizing that. There are many different frames of meaning that we need to activate in order for this to come alive.

While the perspective I'm activating here is not about that so much, it isn't deleted from my understanding either. It's only a different way of looking at it, because what we recognize is every perspective is both true and partial. That's a big lesson in next week's chapter on the Integral disposition. What that means is wherever you stand, you're able to see some things about reality especially well and other things about reality are going to tend to fade from view. So in any moment, when you think, "Oh, I've got it now" ... you know, I don't think we ever stand in a place where we have it all. To some degree it's only in our surrender, our in-love-ness, our sense of astonished wonder, our complete transparency to divine awareness and divine love that we're sort of in the neighborhood.

But even there we need to have a kind of humility, because the embodied, human body-mind in space and time is never going to reflect the totality of all existence. The very center of the way the un-manifest and the manifest are paradoxically one and the same at all times, in motion, are in ways incomprehensible. I have a deep background in devotional spirituality, in the process of sadhana [spiritual practice], and I have had spiritual experiences where I have felt like I became a woman, and I

was being taken by my lover and penetrated and pervaded by divine light. It's about as close as I've gotten to being undifferentiatedly the divine. There's always a distortion in anything we can encapsulate in language. We're in the presence of that which is beyond words and beyond perspective.

Alisa: Yeah, and unfortunately so many of the words for what we might call the sacred have so much dogma attached to them that you can't get away from the chatter. That brings me to what I really ask you about now. I love how you talked about evolution in terms of time and how it's speeded up since the beginning of time. Evolutionary changes which may have taken 100,000 years, we're practically in nanoseconds now with the evolution of things. Things are changing. I don't know if anybody else has said that, but it's brilliant, because I've been feeling for years that time is speeding up. Things are speeding up so much and there's so much chatter with the speeding up that I don't know that we can function without practice. And it seems like the practice has been getting more and more intentional, more and more focused. Because everything is evolving faster, perhaps, and there's so much chatter with it, to get away from that you have to come into that pulse of intelligence. The pulse of the evolutionary flow of consciousness. Yes?

Terry: Yes. In a way becoming transparent to that deeper level of our being, which is God, and there are so many different ways for that to happen. Sometimes it's kind of like a pure awareness dharma. Sometimes it's a love dharma at the heart. The nature of the un-manifest absolute is so paradoxically everything at once that it has so many facets that we can be drawn beyond ourselves in multiple ways. That's why an Integral view is necessary now. We really have to have that in order to be sane because the world we live in has so much complexity, paradox, ambiguity, chaotic dynamics. It's really quite something. Thank you.

[Terry now asks the group to break up in practice groups or dyads of three. The directions for the dyads were as follows:

- 1) Each person introduces themselves (1 minute each)
- 2) Each person speaks as "awareness itself", speaking as the one who is the witness of your identity or thoughts arrive (3 minutes each)
- 3) Each person speaks as "the impulse of evolution itself", like a lens through which a deeper dimension of your own being can come forward (3 minutes each)]

Okay. Well, where are we next? Let us take some of the people who raised their hands and hear from you. Hi, Aneka.

Aneka: Hey. I wanted to ask you that when I'm just being me out there in the world and just going out into the day and going through all the contractions that my world has, is there some little cue that I can be giving myself to bring me back and relax and be? We've all said this before, when it's quiet, when I'm just outside with myself or with the dog or walking, I can get to that point. I can recognize the wholeness pretty easily, but it's so hard to get there from a contraction, because it's habitual to just stay in it and try to work it and figure it out.

Terry: Yeah. Well, you can't, really. In a way we have to have had some anchor, some moment of liberation, whether it was on LSD or whether it was in a meditation hall or whether it was falling in love with a person, or having a profound relationship with a blessed spiritual teacher and feeling that kind of spiritual love affair. You have to have some sort of intuitive knowing. Some part of our heart has to

know. The truest, most real, the real truth of this moment, deeper than my contraction is something full and beautiful. That recognition is something we can return to.

For me, the thing I do just spontaneously, and you may do it already because it's so universal, is what I call heart breathing, is to just take a breath in the midst of life experience, to the heart and from the heart, including the whole body. And let the disposition of the heart kind of blush open through the entire feeling body. Very often the way it's going to have to begin is with a little bit of self-compassion, because if you're feeling contracted, some part of yourself is mad at some other part of yourself and you feel like you're screwing up. And you've got to cut yourself some slack and forgive yourself, just to shift that. As you do that, then there's also going to be some room. If you've forgiven yourself, you can begin to see the sometimes even ugly qualities in other people, the contracted qualities in other people. A lot of it is actually quite forgivable and lovable. Some of it is a lot harder to forgive and love.

But something in the heart knows that. There's a simple saying from Neem Karoli Baba, who was Ram Dass's guru, the old man in the blanket from Be Here Now: "Never put anyone out of your heart." So there can be a kind of way that you're in touch with this dimension of being that is not subject to the rise and fall of experience and the contractive identification with what is at risk and all of that. And there can be a little bit of dropping from that concentration. Fear tends to attenuate your attention and draw you up into the mind.

Different moments require a different thing. You know, one moment what may be necessary, especially necessary may be for you to be in beginner's mind and just be open. In another moment what may be appropriate is for you to be humble and willing to learn. Notice that every moment is an opportunity for practice and learning, that life is a school, that kind of an attitude. Another moment it may be a matter of real discernment. Maybe sometimes you have to stand up fiercely to defend somebody. You have to have courage. Maybe what you're asking for is courage. Maybe it's asking for creativity. Each moment has its own unique imprint. There's not a formula, but when you're connected to that foundation of heart intelligence, and this is something we'll get into a lot more, Chapter Six, it's a real theme, so we'll be returning to it a lot. I hope that's helpful.

Aneka: Very much so, and that was what I got from your answer to Therese, was the practice. I just started my practice last summer with you, and it has started. I can feel the difference, but I think I have to just keep practicing more and more, and that'll help me just be quicker. I can reach that.

Terry: And forgive yourself for being where you are in this process. Keep forgiving yourself. There's something perfect about this. Nobody else had to deal with the peculiar mix of karmas and challenges and traumas, and who knows what all, that you have, and you are transforming that karma. It has its own organic speed, and there can't be a problem with it.

Aneka: Okay. I get it.

Terry: In fact, there's something uniquely beautiful and noble and divine about it, and the more you're trusting the process of your life, the more of you will have permission to show up with clarity.

Aneka: Okay. Thank you.

Terry: Yeah, thank you. Okay, we've got some more hands up. Laura, hi.

Laura: Hi. I think that this evolutionary impulse has lived in me a very long time in the form of, "Who am I? What is my purpose?" And as I'd stand at the threshold of manifesting any of that, it's just all seems so very, very big and choice, as opposed to recognition, was overwhelming. This recognition piece is really helpful to me, because there's not a right or wrong, really. It's an unveiling, and I think for me the pathway has been accompanied in going forth beyond the threshold by two pieces. Recognizing and honoring what I have to offer, specifically what my loves are and what I want to care for; and trusting that, and then being willing to go forth and either succeed and fail. To be willing to make a mistake. To be able to just step forth anyway, because there's just no more time to wait on the threshold.

Terry: Yeah. Beautiful. I love hearing you say that, Laura. I celebrate you. I celebrate us. I celebrate the impersonal clarity, intelligence, and love that are manifest in those confessions that you're just spontaneously giving voice to. Aho.

Laura: Thank you. Thank you for providing this forum. It's really a gift, and talking with everybody in these groups, it's really an energetic kind of connection that's been missing from me, and I just thank everybody.

Terry: Wow. Thank you. Well, I see that there are a couple of hands up. I'm sorry, I can't get to you now, but we are pretty close to the end of the time and I haven't really introduced the next chapter, which needs an introduction, so please give me your attention here for chapter going to the Integral Revolution. It's a long chapter, and it's intellectually dense. It is simple feeling intuition of something, wonder and care and appreciation. It's the foundation for what we're getting into, but now we're going to slice and dice things in a much more rigorous way, and we're definitely going to be using our more academic discriminative mind, and I think in a fruitful way.

Many of you may already be students of Integral Theory, in which case I hope you'll read this chapter for the ways in which it reflects, I think, some refinements. Especially what I have to say about Radical Integral Ecology isn't really part of the standard conversation that you'll hear among Integral thinkers, but I think it's important. And if you're new to Integral Theory, please do what you can to understand this. Just read it slow. You may want to read it a couple of times. Certainly listening to it as well as reading it can be helpful. This is probably the most abstract intellectually dense of all the chapters.

And yet I think that if you download it and really combine yourself with it, you'll find that it'll give you a view through which aspects of the world around you will kind of pop into visibility. The way that if you view one of those 3D posters and you get your eyes de-focused perfectly, and then suddenly this 3D image of jumps into view, these integral distinctions can function that way for you. So I hope you'll consider really making use of this chapter. I'm excited to get into it, and I've loved spending this time with you.