Being the Change

6

Life as Practice

What we call "mastery" can be defined as that mysterious process through which what is at first difficult or even impossible becomes easy and pleasurable through diligent, patient, long-term practice.

—GEORGE LEONARD, *THE WAY OF AIKIDO*

This is work that is alive, effervescent, free, liberated, gloriously enlightened, true, and great. Do you think it can be attained by people who shut the door and sit quietly with blank minds?

—LIU I-MING, *AWAKENING TO THE TAO*

As long as the sky exists and as long as there are sentient beings, may I remain to help relieve them of all their pain.

—DALAI LAMA XIV, THE BODHISATTVA VOW

Opening up to holistic, evolutionary, integral perspectives illuminates both the external and internal facets of our world, including our multidimensional crises. But, as we've already seen, to actualize these perspectives we need to become responsible for creating our personal and

collective futures—and that goes far beyond merely thinking differently, and far beyond piecemeal involvement in various causes. Evolution into our full human and spiritual potential cannot be separated from creating the conditions that make such evolution possible. And that requires a healthy life-support system—our living planet. Each of these—our evolution and our life-support system—is utterly dependent on the other. Human life is dependent on a healthy planet, and the living Earth now depends on what humans will do.

Knowing how difficult it is to apprehend a hypercomplex reality accurately, and seeing that we have certain limited and deeply habitual ways of thinking and feeling, we can only learn the new requisite skills and ways of being in the same way that anyone—from athletes to artists and musicians to engineers—learns new skills: *through committed practice.* From an integral evolutionary perspective, practice consists of many things, from meditation to physical disciplines to attitudinal choices. And a crucial emerging element of practice is to practice *in community*; in other words, to create a community and extended network of practitioners with similar intentions (regardless of our universal human foibles) who can be mutually supportive—and whose relationships with each other can grow and develop.

Practice in community involves cultivation of higher states and structures of consciousness and awareness, and breaking out of the habits of the "consensus trance." Based on an apprehension of the innate wholeness of reality, an integral framework and understanding is helpful. We can see all points of view and all worldviews in an intuitively accessible holistic context, and thus transcend the reflexive, familiar mindsets that are nearly universal in our public discourse. And practice in community also implies shared values—particularly an appreciation for development on every scale, extending to each of us individually—and a "growth mindset," a sense that we can always learn and change and grow. This means striving for and encouraging as much clarity and excellence and generosity and creativity as we can. And, by intending to live a life of continual growth and transformation, and encouraging that in others, we create conditions for actual cultural advancement.

At the root of all such change is *practice,* both individual and collective. In my passion to get to the essential marrow of transformation, I've directly specialized in teaching practice for many years. The following summary of practice is couched in the terms that relate directly to fulfilling the call of our evolutionary emergency.

Practice is commonly defined as the "repeated exercise or performance of an activity so as to develop greater proficiency or capacity." And, as we've seen, all forms of practice certainly involve these things. But I often find another definition more useful: "Waking up again and again, and choosing to show up in life in alignment with one's highest wholesome intelligence." Practice is what gives us the clarity, presence, intelligence, and empathy necessary to be fully given over to anything we do, including activism.

I was very fortunate that my first teacher, Adi Da Samraj, taught me to relate to *sadhana*—or spiritual practice—as a radical, global, and inclusive affair. I was brought to understand, in my bones, that practice is always immediate. It is about waking more fully into the reality of *this very moment.* Thus it includes not just *what* I am doing, but *how* I am relating to it (and to everything), and *why.* And it depends on my taking responsibility in every moment for serving wholeness, awareness, life, and love.

Of course, such training or teaching is much more the exception than the rule. But at a certain point in the journey of a life, many people begin to realize, at least at some level, that life is a school—or, put another way, a teacher. It keeps delivering the same lessons again and again, in new forms, until we really learn them and move on to *new* lessons and an ever more refined relationship to life.

WHOLENESS AND PRACTICE

In many ways, the early twenty-first century—this moment of crisis and predicament—is a time of fragmentation. It is a time of rapid change and turbulence, in which existing patterns are being disturbed more and more, creating reactions and confusion that result in incoherence

and even corruption in the public sphere, and also in the more intimate sphere of our relations. That calls for us to choose, practice, and embody health, integrity, and wholeness. To stand whole, refusing to believe the reactive mind of separation and fragmentation—that is what's *truly* subversive, in the best sense. It is not only a spiritual act but a revolutionary one.

All conscious beings tend to contract, to recoil, to shut down and close off from the challenges of mortal existence. We reenact our incomplete psychological processes, rooted in causes ranging from trauma, to attachment wounds, to addiction. Contraction is a deep pattern, even in the most well-adjusted individuals. And yet it is possible to observe and recognize the activity of contraction. Based on such recognition, with persistent, sustained practice, it becomes possible to relax the pattern—to open into greater awareness, freedom, courage, and functional capacity.

The knowledge of wholeness is most directly cultivated in meditation. In unitive states of consciousness people have direct intuitive experience of the nonseparate wholeness of all objective and subjective realities, or "awareness itself." These intuitions are much more than a simple cognitive insight. They are experienced energetically, kinesthetically, emotionally, and cognitively. And they can therefore inform people's ways of navigating, behaving, and relating. This often results in a shift of perspective into one in which *life lives us,* rather than the other way around. This depersonalization (recognizing that "I am awareness"), in which awareness is most free, does not produce dissociation, but instead relaxes resistance, completing a circuit back into an intimate, warm, personal, embodied experience of living.

These dynamics of contraction and expansion, of consciousness and unconsciousness, are always at play in life. This is true not just in individuals but in relationships and groups. Tendencies toward fragmentation contend with choices for integration. Tendencies toward disease and death contend with cycles of resurgent vitality and health. Corrupt impulses contend with aspirations to integrity. Courage contends with fear. Humility contends with arrogance. Life wounds us, and the body

naturally heals. The universal principles of wholeness express themselves in every individual life, and in every moment.

The *practice of wholeness* is thus ongoing, and pervades every sphere of our lives. It means intending to enact the health and wholeness of the body, mind, emotions, relations, culture, society, and the entire natural world. It is also about participating consciously and constructively in every dimension of the larger whole. Most important, integral practice expresses what is called an "ontological" stance, or a "way of being"—a core commitment that organizes the whole life. In that fundamental intention, the inner work and the outer work converge. Commitments give rise to actions, which change us, making us more capable of fulfilling our commitments, which deepen and evolve.

What is involved in practicing wholeness? First, it calls on us to recognize, intuitively, the mysterious wholeness that is *already* our condition. On the basis of that understanding, and our natural attraction to greater wholeness, we practice by intending to more and more fully recognize and participate in (and *as*) that wondrous dynamic wholeness.

That which has traditionally been called "ego" or "sin" is the persistent tendency to feel and believe that we are simply separate selves in a dead, mechanical dog-eat-dog world. According to the consensus trance, this is just "the way things are," but this perspective is actually the result of an *activity*: the activity of contraction at the deepest level of our consciousness. It is something we are actively *doing*. It is going on at an extremely subtle level, far below the plane of our awareness. It takes accomplished practitioners decades to develop the mental focus and sensitivity necessary to notice it. But it is not simply "the way things are."

This contraction into separateness shows up on the surface as feelings—fear, sorrow, anger, laziness, dullness, greed, lust, anxiety, depression, and every other "negative" human emotion and limiting belief. Even when practice seems to have vanquished such gross-level expressions of contraction, at the very subtlest level of the being we are still very likely contracting into a subtle mental stance of separation.

Before we can perceive it, though, we can take responsibility for it—at least in principle. Through feedback and intention, we can increasingly

live on the basis of the reality that precedes the self-contraction and transcends it. We can recognize that the self-contraction is *not* our bedrock reality. It is secondary to wholeness, which is inherently happy, graceful, and awake—genuinely free of problem and any sense of lack. *Living on the basis of that wholeness is practice.*

The recognition of wholeness reveals that, in spite of all the threats that we are faced with daily, there is an underlying context of goodness, of being sustained—of what Aldous Huxley referred to as the "fundamental all-rightness" of things. Sometimes an intuition of that goodness comes unbidden as a spiritual experience, and this epiphany draws individuals into a life of practice. But whether it comes early or late in the course of your life of practice, it can eventually produce a powerful emotional "conversion" in an intelligent practitioner.

In the moments when you remember to practice, you are acting based on your awareness that you have (at least at some point in the past) *seen through the illusion* of separation. You have penetrated the veil, and you can imagine and often feel the graceful reality of radical, nonseparate wholeness. This intuition guides your choices. Your heart has opened and you have known yourself to be not separate from all that is whole and holy. A seamless reality prior to self-contraction is the context. You have known yourself to be one with and in love with all existence, one with love itself. This becomes a guiding North Star, vitalizing your deepest emotional health, guiding you through hard times, resonating with your deepest experiences of love—the love you have felt in relation to your family, friends, pets, the whole of humanity, the natural world, and the pulse of life itself.

FROM SEEKER TO PRACTITIONER

People often discover a full spiritual practice after years of seeking. Seekers are looking for something they don't have. On the surface they may feel and act hopeful, but underneath that is a sense of separation and incompleteness. They are seeking to be more whole, healthy, and integrated. They want to be wiser, happier, less stressed, less confused, less inadequate.

The problem is that seeking actively prevents the happiness it imagines. The act of seeking itself presumes an underlying *lack*—or disconnection. There is an assumed problem and an assumed separation from the source of life, which seekers imagine is "elsewhere." When we act on our belief in that lack, we reinforce it. Paradoxically, in order for the objects of seeking to be found, seeking itself must come to an end.

To truly become a practitioner requires a shift in the ground of one's motivation—from a sense of lack to a solid grounding in the underlying reality that makes seeking unnecessary. How does that source condition reveal itself? It might be experienced as a tacit trust in life itself, or in God, or in one's own existence. It might be an intuition of miraculous grace that evokes a state of gratitude for life itself. It can be a very simple and modest "okayness"—a deep acceptance and trust of the way things are.

Once we become grounded in that deeper reality, our motivation is shifted beyond seeking—and practice is no longer about "getting something" or "getting somewhere." It is a matter of acting on the basis of that healthy wholeness or well-being or sacredness we recognize. The practitioner practices by *reenacting* that health and wholeness again and again. Not attempting to seek it, achieve it, or create it—but to *remember* it, to *experience* it, to *participate in* and *enact* it.

The distinction between seeking and practice is profound and essential. And this distinction is more important now than ever. Because the kind of practice I am speaking of—the life of practice that knows and trusts the reality of wholeness, sacredness, or fundamental goodness—expresses and transmits sanity, even amidst insanity. This is exactly what our revolutionary times require. The kind of "seeking" that many well-meaning people have considered to be spiritual practice will not suffice to bring us to the powerful new expressions of purpose, resilience, wisdom, courage, and self-transcending love we're called to.

Paradoxically, to engage in effective change requires a profound trust in what *is*—a deep surrender to a source we cannot name. Such trust is the essence of the true practitioner, and it is what is lacking in the seeker. Recognizing, trusting, and affirming wholeness, sacredness, and goodness tends to beget awakening into reality. It affirms what is so. And the

solidity and unshakability of this stance, this practice "posture," tends to create an experience of resilience and self-trust that is also naturally generative.

And acting in service of something bigger than ourselves tends to generate a deeper and more durable "happiness"—more of an enduring, grounded joy than the fleeting happiness that is a response to circumstances. In a sense, it is "happiness for no reason," rather than the thin cheer that depends upon external causes.

Modern psychological research confirms the ancient lesson that trying to achieve happiness doesn't work. When it comes, happiness is most often caused *indirectly*; it is a byproduct of a life of compassionately caring for others and serving something greater than ourselves. Care for and service to others not only makes us happy; it also requires us to grow—and growth is something else that is self-validating. As we experience the joy of serving others, plus our own growth and development, we become interested in practicing more, in maturing and awakening and serving.

LIFE AS PRACTICE

Even those who devote their life to practice will oscillate in varying degrees between true practice and a falling-back into seeking. But once we are more firmly grounded in our prior state of wholeness, we can return to that state of deep trust and openness ever more frequently. Increasingly, it becomes the constant, deep wellspring of our lives—a continual "ground bass" beneath the ever-changing "melodies" that get played at the surface. That ground bass is our deeper intuition and recognition of what is obvious even if we cannot name it. It is the feeling-intuition of the Whole.

Our lapses thus become shorter in duration. If we "forget," we will remember again. And, however we feel at a given moment—even if we feel terrible; even if we feel nothing at all—our commitment to practice remains unabated. So, whether we have lapsed for a minute, an hour, a week, a month, or several years, we can always begin again now.

It takes more than changing our eating or sleeping or exercise habits for a month to change our bodies or physical health forever. We need to *continuously* eat well and exercise and get restorative sleep to maintain our physical health. Similarly, a glimpse of enlightenment can come in a flash, instantly, but it will not remain stable without a life of practice. Neither can we expect psychological insights, wholesome feelings, or energetic shifts, however profound, to permanently change our emotional patterns.

I remember Michael Murphy and George Leonard describing their tremendous excitement at the early weekend seminars at Esalen, which was a pioneering hub of the 1970s human potential movement. People were having mind-blowing insights. Their hearts opened. They connected with a higher power. Through tears and ecstasy and gratitude, they swore their lives would never be the same.

But then, just a week or so later, those same folks who had sworn their lives would never be the same would fall back pretty much to where they started. The transformations didn't stick. No matter how long the intensive, how seemingly radical the insights, how solid the changes felt, after a few days or weeks or months the effects "wore off." People eventually returned to their habitual patterns.

Murphy and Leonard reached the conclusion that the ancient paths were right: *A whole life of regular, ongoing practice is necessary. There is no "quick fix."* It takes an ongoing transformational *lifestyle* to sustain the fruits of practice.

Neuroscientist Donald Hebb has a famous maxim: "Neurons that fire together wire together."[30] We are always reinforcing the neural circuits associated with what we are doing right now. In other words, whatever way we are being, we're more likely to be that way in the future. *This means we are always practicing something*—whether it be relaxation or tension, acceptance or resistance, compassion or irritability, focus or distractibility.

In that same vein, we are either practicing a static, fragmented consciousness of separation or a dynamic, growing awareness that intuits wholeness and enacts it. We can always ask: Am I practicing separation

and division, or wholeness and interdependence? Am I avoiding relationship with all that is, or moving toward it?

Murphy and Leonard—drawing on an ancient tradition that goes back to ancient Indian philosopher-mystic Patanjali—also noticed something else. *A transformational life of practice must include every dimension of the being.* To be most powerfully transformational, our life of practice cannot be *exclusively* focused on meditative awakening. Or merely on athletic skill, fitness, or somatic health and integration. Or only on our psychological growth and healing. Or exclusively on our relationship to the natural world, or our relationships to other people. Or only focused on our lives as citizen participants in our communities, nation, and world.

Practice catalyzes transformation, and transformation means, literally, a change in form. In individual inner transformation, the form of our self—the interface between our internal experience and our behavior in the world—is what changes. Often this is called "consciousness development," because the fundamental invisible structures of our inner experience and outer perception develop the ability to hold greater complexity and nuance—more wholeness. This "bigger picture" consciousness enables us to maintain awareness and calm in the midst of conflict and confusion, to be free of petty and defensive reactivity, to think creatively "outside the box," and to intuit higher syntheses of the polarities that are pulling us apart. The value of this kind of consciousness and these capacities at this moment in our predicament cannot be overstated. Transformation is a necessity, not a luxury—especially now.

CHOOSING TO PRACTICE IN EVERY MOMENT

We can begin exactly where we are—here, and only here. The beauty of this is that we can *always* begin, now, and again and again, to practice. This is true in every moment. It is a choice we can make in every moment. And to keep making those choices—to aspire and intend to do so, and to stay aware of this process of choosing again and again—is itself a practice. It is *life as practice.*

Through practices that cultivate equanimity, such as meditation, we might begin to find it possible to recognize that we are not a separate body-mind-self experiencing a world "out there." Instead, we might see that we are awareness itself, the still and unmoving witness of all experience. And awareness is witnessing the body, the mind, and the self just as surely as it is witnessing "others" and a world "out there." As awareness we have utter freedom from whatever is arising, and yet we are paradoxically inseparable from it all. Then it becomes possible to go even further and notice that awareness is shining back at us from everyone and everything we behold.

Then we can *rest as awareness.* In any moment in which awareness freely observes our contraction, there is at least a small measure of free uncontracted awareness—and that awareness is wholeness itself. This little bit of free awareness is key to our transformation. The grip of the tendency toward contraction and toward the false sense of separation loosens to some degree.

As practice deepens, attention opens up. We might notice a deep, soulful dimension of ourselves, amidst the animating subtle energetic fields that give rise to experience. We might eventually go so far as to be able to dispassionately observe the continual tendency to contract at all levels of our being. We can notice that we are contracting physically, in our breathing and in our muscular tension patterns. We can see that we are contracting mentally, perhaps becoming the slightest bit dull as if "going on automatic," and reacting to experience rather than proactively choosing how to relate to it. We can notice the momentum of our habits, and even notice that it is possible to choose to interrupt that momentum.

Each moment of life is a creative opportunity. We can choose how we relate to the moment. The practitioner leans into his or her highest possibilities, considering the full depth and breadth of life. How can I be present as love/awareness—how would love be, and what would love do? Where am I placing my attention? How am I compensating? Am I to any degree becoming unconscious or numb? What freedom and joy might I be closing off? How might I be subtly losing touch with my inherent well-being? How can I awaken from and transform reactive

or unconscious patterns? How am I affecting others? How can I be of more benefit? In what ways am I avoiding conscious awareness of, and participation in, the infinitely deep mystery of existence? How can I show up more wholly in each moment of life—and specifically in this next moment?

The momentum of habit will inevitably prevail at times, but that is not best seen as failure; it is simply what we have to work with. The tendency toward contraction doesn't let go easily; it is a stubborn, pervasive habit. Your consciousness, like everyone's, will tend to go into trance, to contract from clarity, to lapse into thinking, to become lazy, to react to perceived slights and discouragements. Conditioned tendencies are strong. But there is no problem in that. It is what it is. We don't have to be held hostage by the self-alienating injunction that we should overcome such tendencies by using superhuman will power. That spiritual attitude (which we can characterize as "hypermasculine") can be replaced by a much more self-accepting (post-hypermasculine) and skillful disposition. It recognizes that it is never too late to notice *this very moment* as my next opportunity to show up fresh and open. I can always practice, always choose.

There is only the now-moment, which is always disappearing. I can either keep letting go and opening to it, or I can try to hold on. I can do my best to forgive and relax and trust and open up to the next new now-moment with an attitude of curiosity and willingness. I can recognize that it is an opportunity for creative engagement. I can realize that all this life is "improv." There is no "right" or "wrong" way to be, and no "right" or "wrong" thing to do. But I can always be "in the now"—or return to the now—by waking up from contracted patterns and opening into living contact with whatever arises in the *next* "now" moment.

Practice involves numerous complementary and synergistic elements. These elements—the inner and the outer, the contemplative and the activist, the practices engaged individually and in community, the physical and the spiritual—are not merely good in themselves; they reinforce one another. The whole spectrum of practices is far greater than the sum of its parts. The interplay of these elements is a virtuous cycle. Simply getting started allows for a certain degree of opening and relaxation,

which makes more opening possible, which begets greater awareness, which allows more love, and on and on. Such positive reinforcement eventually creates an evolutionary momentum in the life of practice. Practice also means *choosing* not to believe the fragmented and separated "consensus trance" version of reality that tends to keep reasserting itself. It means we recognize it as a persistent illusion, and we live on the basis of the deeper wholeness that we know is the real nature of things. This means allowing wholeness, more and more, to inform our perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Wholeness is intuited at the heart. To live on the basis of wholeness, we must be able to recognize and trust that wholeness is our real condition. And this is not a merely cognitive decision; it is a deep knowing of the whole being, felt at the very center of the organism—at the heart.

Science is increasingly confirming that there is something akin to a brain within the human heart. Our heart's deeper intelligence is real—and very important in the context of life as practice, and all the practice that will bring us to our most evolved response to this moment. In the 1990s, I worked closely with researchers at the Institute of HeartMath, where our work measured and validated the fact that the heart is a vital center of intelligence in the human system.

We used to think that neurons were concentrated exclusively in our brain and spinal cord. Now we know that they are also concentrated in our heart and in our gut. The fields of neurocardiology and neurogastroenterology study the interactions of the brain and whole body, with the "second brain" in the heart and the "third brain" in the gut.

In both the heart and gut are extensive masses of neurons that behave similarly to the neurons in the brain. More than one hundred billion nerve cells can be found in the digestive tract (more than in the spinal cord). It may be that unconscious decisions are made by the stomach network, even if they are later claimed by the conscious brain in the head as conscious decisions.

The "brain in the heart" is complex and self-organized. It conducts a continuous two-way dialogue with the brain and the rest of the body, often registering changes *before* the brain in the head. People intuitively recognize its wisdom. As Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote in *The Little Prince,* "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: it is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye."

At HeartMath, we observed that when people intentionally consult their heart's intelligence, it offers calm and unhurried perspectives, even when the thinking mind is agitated, anxious, worried, or defensive.

As I continued my own investigation I noticed something else. Heart intelligence has an *integrative* function. It is interconnected with the intelligences of the head and of the gut. And it is fully capable of intuitively mediating contradictions between them. It naturally integrates the total intelligence of the being. The intelligent integral heart is senior to and wiser than the disconnected brain, and much harder to fool.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin famously wrote, "The day will come when, after harnessing the ether, the winds, the tides, gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And, on that day, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."[31] All this expresses the evolutionary necessity of a revolution of love, but not in the way that is commonly imagined.

Love expresses wholeness, felt and known from the heart. As we have seen, wholeness is the most primary, root quality of existence, and the heart is where wholeness is intuited—and love is its expression. To speak of love is, properly, to speak of this expression. This is a far cry from the love we speak of when we really mean either romantic attachment, enthusiastic liking, or even familial or tribal caring or loyalty.

Again and again, in the course of practice, it is important to recognize that wholeness is more deeply real—more primary—than the fragmentation, division, and separation that the mind tends to cognize. The heart is important because this recognition cannot be merely abstract and mental. Our mental intelligence, centered in the head, and our visceral intelligence, centered in the *hara,* below the navel, must be integrated via our heart intelligence in a recognition of the wholeness that

is the source of sanity, strength, and health. And when we are actually doing that, we become love in action.

THE HOW AND WHAT OF PRACTICE

In the book *Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening,*[32] I and my coauthors Ken Wilber, Adam Leonard, and Marco Morelli pointed to a key paradox.

It is not easy to make our life a practice of wholeness, so that our intuitions and intentions are sourced from that whole. Specific practice commitments are necessary. They are even more powerful if they are consciously held in a larger structure that explicitly intends to help the practitioner bridge from doing a series of discrete independent practices to living a whole life as practice.

Given (a) how diverse and unique human beings are, and (b) how rich the world of practice is, and (c) that everyone is a unique individual, there is no "one size fits all" recommendation for the best specific practices. But that doesn't just leave us with a jumbled chaos of disconnected individual choices. My colleagues and I observed some important principles, so we described a "modular" understanding of practice, and suggested four core modules that almost every life of practice should fruitfully include. They were:

Body practices, including diet, sleep, and many kinds of exercise, from qigong to yoga to strength training.

Mind practices, including reading, study, research, experimentation, calculation, critical analysis, discussion, mental exercises, and growing in our capacity to take more nuanced and self-aware perspectives.

Spiritual practices, especially meditation, and also including practices of loving devotion and prayer, communing with the natural world, and contemplation, including both mystical insight and natural philosophy.

Shadow practices, extending to other emotional work, and also including soul work and somatic work—ultimately embracing the full spectrum of psychotherapeutic healing and health.

At the beginning, when the intuition of wholeness is still growing, it is essential to ground one's life in the tangible specificity of particular practices. We don't want to get lost in the seemingly shapeless profundity of life-as-practice. You can build a life of specific practice commitments first. It is also valuable to do certain practices at certain times of the day and week and year. Such structures of commitment are foundational. Adding structures of accountability (like a checklist, practice partner, or a teacher) can take things even deeper, giving practitioners more transformational traction.

I have taught integral practice for more than a dozen years, and I have seen some interesting patterns:

- The first point was famously summarized by baseball Jedi Yogi Berra: "The most important thing about practice is … doing it." That's for sure. And that is why a focus on specific practice commitments is so essential at the beginning.
- Zen Master Richard Baker Roshi once said "Satori is a happy accident," but practicing diligently "makes us more accident prone." Specific disciplines can get us "in shape" and open up many opportunities for glimpses and insights into that unlimited wholeness.
- The life of practice described here must be lived from the "outside in" as well as "inside out." Our intention is only part of the picture; it's enacted by doing a whole suite of specific practices. And the practices aren't the point; they must become a whole life of practice.

THE FIVE M

In most cases, only after building a foundation of many healthy practices, small and large, does it become possible for the practice of love and wholeness to pervade one's life. Nonetheless, it is helpful from the beginning to have a *holistic context of understanding* that can integrate your relationship to your concrete, time-anchored, specific practice commitments.

As I continued to refine my way of teaching Integral Life Practice, I summarized it in new ways, to provide that context of understanding. I

pointed not to the practices themselves, but to the key ways that people usually relate to practice as they gradually come to pervade our lives. I noticed five broad categories that, like tent stakes, can anchor the transition to an integrated life of practice. I used five words beginning with the letter "M" to name five general orienting principles: Mornings, Moments, Mission, Milestones, and Momentum—the "Five M's."

Mornings. Almost every serious practitioner begins by establishing a daily practice, and mornings are often the best time for this. Every day, I wake up and do some conscious physical movement, which helps me to integrate my gross, subtle, and causal bodies. I notice that I am a consciously embodied being, feelingly in touch with my nervous system, muscles, bones, and breath, which communes with the entire atmosphere. I perform a series of conscious movements that restore energetic balances and help me begin a healthy day. I take care of myself. I do that in a devotional mood, in relationship with the living God, the living Divine. As I experience and breathe in the blessing of being alive, I find myself lit up by gratitude and a desire to be of service.

If my day's obligations permit, I like spending ninety minutes or more each morning moving consciously, meditating, reading, and contemplating. This is what the greatest transformative saints, sages, and prophets have done. It is interesting to note that Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, and Mother Teresa all spent between one and three hours in daily practice before doing anything else. How we begin our day has a great impact on how the whole day unfolds. Whether or not you take this amount of time, and even if your life dictates more of an evening practice, it is wise to do some conscious practice to reset your body-mind as you start your day.

Moments are all we have, since even the past and the future arise for us right *now.* So a primary way we can make all our lives a form of practice is to *bring intention to random moments throughout the day.* In this way, our intentions begin to pervade our whole lives. "Moments practice" means interrupting your unconscious, contracted, habitual way of being—just for a moment. It is good to build the habit of "pressing the refresh button" in small and large ways, for brief moments, many times every day. In just a

moment, or perhaps over a few breaths, a quick practice can shift the state and orientation of your mind, emotions, energy, and behavior. Moments practices can be as mundane as adjusting your posture or as "spiritual" as speaking a mantra as a reminder of your intention to live as love. You can also simply take a deep breath, or a few deep breaths, and you can bring your attention to your heart, and remember the essential goodness of existence. You can take conscious breaks from the computer to stretch. You can remember and connect with your values or goals. You can bring your attention to the grace that supports your existence, feeling gratitude as an explicit intentional focus for a minute or so, until it begins to soften and open your emotions and shift their biochemistry. It is wise to frequently remind yourself of the living whole that is holding you.

You can commit to a certain frequency of a particular Moments practice—e.g., "at least three times a day"—but, as the practice becomes second nature, it is helpful to maximize its frequency, even while keeping these moments spontaneous and not rigidly programmed.

Our **Mission** is profound and fundamental to our whole existence: it is our life purpose, the intention that organizes everything. Clarifying one's life purpose and consciously committing to it is perhaps the most powerful of all practices. But purpose is not a static thing. It evolves across the life cycle. If we decide to put it into words, we may well periodically revise our purpose statement as our understanding and purpose evolve. Consciously inhabiting your purpose implies an ontological shift. "Ontological" means *relating to one's very way of being.* When we stand for something wholeheartedly, our whole way of being becomes congruent with it, and we actually do enact it. Our purpose begins to find ways to organize not just our own lives, but even our opportunities and communities. Eventually it can act in synergy with the purpose of others and the whole. Purpose, fully lived, is both dynamic and contagious. We naturally engage with others and enroll them in our purpose. This is a key way that practice brings awakening consciousness into the lives of others and affects the wider world.

Mission is powerfully bound to the fourth M—**Milestones.** One's mission is global. But one's actions must be concrete and time-specific.

That means that we enact our mission through a series of specific projects. We are always involved in projects, or Milestones—finding an intimate partner, raising a child, creating a home or garden, building a business, writing a book, preparing for a performance or competition, creating a website, seminar, podcast, product, publication—you get the idea. We actualize our purpose, or mission, through a series of specific projects. When we take on a project (1) for the sake of something bigger than ourselves, (2) in partnership with a higher power or source of grace, and (3) with a willingness for the process to teach and transform us, it becomes a very real and powerful practice. It can become a transformative passage, and when you complete the project you will have grown significantly beyond who you were when you began it. Much of the life of practice expresses itself in our Milestone projects. We all do this naturally. You are probably working on several milestones right now.

The fifth M is **Momentum**. By this, I am referring to the many other practices that we perform intentionally—all the practices we listed in the "modules" of Integral Life Practice. We have to keep sharpening the saw. So every day, in addition to our Mornings and our Moments, we practice in nature, at the gym, or in the yoga studio. We do additional specific physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, and social practices. We undertake specific practices across the whole spectrum of our lives, doing *integral cross-training.*

A life of diverse practices will engender healthy synergies. It can free up our energy and attention and break up stuck patterns in many areas of our lives and consciousness, creating transformational momentum. A whole life of integral practice allows our fixed identity and contracted sense of separation to be opened up and transformed by the open awareness we truly are.

INTEGRAL CROSS-TRAINING

"Integral Cross-Training" is the explicit cultivation of growth and development *synergies* among the practices we do in different spheres of our existence. In the book *Integral Life Practice,* my colleagues and I introduced

this concept, noting the "cross-training" synergy that arises between the different modules of practice (physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual) described above. The spiritual practice of meditation can act in synergy with the mental practice of critical analysis, which can in turn synergize with the physical practice of cardio and strength training, just to cite a few examples. Because we are whole and the movement toward wholeness is a drive within nature itself, such cross-training has surprising benefits.

Ken Wilber has often described a beginners' class in mindfulness meditation, in which a subgroup took up weightlifting. Several months later, the meditation teachers were asked to evaluate their students. Interestingly enough, a disproportionate number of those whose meditation had matured most rapidly were students who had also taken up weightlifting. The teachers did not know who had been in that group. These people hadn't meditated any more than the other people. And we all know that most of the skills of weightlifting have nothing to do with mindfulness meditation! And yet they matured more quickly. Why? I suspect that when we liberate energy and attention by practicing excellence and breaking up the stuck patterns in one area of life, we catalyze a holistic state of growth, liberating available resources for transformation in all of our being, sometimes setting up virtuous cycles.

A 2016 research study formally confirmed that multiple transformative practices produce important global effects that are more than the sum of the parts of the isolated interventions.[33] In this study, one group of students did an hour a day of supervised stretching, resistance training, and balance exercises, followed by an hour of training in mindfulness and stress reduction, which included quiet walks and meditation. In the afternoon, they exercised for another ninety minutes. Twice a week they completed two interval-style endurance workouts. They attended lectures about nutrition and sleep and kept daily logs detailing their exercise, diets, sleep patterns, and moods.

Six weeks later, the students retook the original tests. Those in the control group showed no changes. But the ones who had engaged integral cross-training were substantially stronger, fitter, and more flexible;

scored much better on tests of thinking, focus, and working memory; and reported feeling happier and calmer, with higher self-esteem. Their brain scans showed patterns of activity believed to indicate an enhanced ability to stay focused.

The improvements generally exceeded by a large amount what had been seen in many past experiments whose subjects altered only one behavior. The study's authors believed that one kind of change, like starting an exercise regimen, amplifies the effects of another, like taking up meditation. These improvements persisted: another set of tests six weeks after the experiment's end showed that the change-everything students still scored much higher than they originally had on measures of fitness, mood, thinking skills, and well-being, even though none of them were still exercising or meditating as much as they did during the experiment.

This validates a "modular" integral approach to practice. Many traditions (like Patanjali's eight yogas, the emphasis placed on both athletics and study in ancient Greece, and the disciplines of the monks of the Shaolin Temple) suggest an integral approach to practice. An integral practice intentionally combines practices in the domains of body, mind, spirit, shadow, and soul.

Rather than "modular," I prefer the term "spheres" of our lives, because it directs our attention to the different realms of our existence (all of which are transforming) rather than to the "modules" we are working on. While integral practice may begin as a kind of self-improvement project and thus may be thought of in modular fashion, it ultimately becomes a simple, healthy, pleasurable way of life. When we are sustaining practices across the various spheres of our lives, remarkable synergies deepen growth.

Core Modules of Individual Practice

Let us more deeply explore those first four "core modules" of an Integral Life Practice as spheres of our lives, and then continue to a more comprehensive description of the key spheres of such a practice:

Body practices relate primarily to three domains—exercise, diet, and sleep. Physical exercises build muscular strength, cardiovascular aerobic

fitness, and/or neuromuscular conditioning (athletic coordination). Subtle energy practices such as yoga, tai chi, and qigong enhance both physical conditioning and harmonious states of body-mind integration. Body practices are foundational. They powerfully synergize with all other practices, and are essential to enabling us to shine bright with healthy life force.

Mind practices can include reading, educating ourselves, building our mental focus, solving complex problems, taking courses, writing, conducting research, and engaging in critical analysis and intelligent discussions. There are specific mind practices in most skilled professions. Through them, we can sharpen our intellect and learn to take more complex and flexible perspectives that make more nuanced sense of our experience, enabling us to respond more effectively. We also get smart and stay sharp. This includes media literacy and insight into human affairs, which use critical thinking to separate truth from spin. By making good choices about how we direct our attention, absorbing and digesting useful new information, research, and cultural movements, we can also discern the hidden wholeness and meaningful patterns that are otherwise concealed in the information avalanche.

Spiritual practices such as meditation, prayerful communion, and contemplation are the foundation practices for awakening to the radical Unity that is prior to separation and fragmentation. That Unity is a deep Mystery, radically beyond any human perspectives. But human beings cannot help but engage perspectives, so there are three broad categories of spiritual practices, corresponding to the three personal pronouns. In 2006, when Ken Wilber first made this distinction, he called it "the 1-2-3 of God." During this time, I was working closely with him and suggested an alternative name, "the Three Faces of God," which has since been widely adopted. Briefly, the "three faces of God" are first-person ("I"), second-person ("You" or "Thou"), and third-person ("It" or "That").

- In third-person practices, we contemplate "It," the Mystery of existence, sometimes abstractly and philosophically, such as what we are doing now in noticing these distinctions; and sometimes in sensory terms, as we do when contemplating the sensuous beauty of the natural world.

- In first-person practices, awareness relaxes back to its ground or source, and we rest as the open intelligence that simply witnesses all experience, awakening as the Self or "I-Am-ness," free of our stories, released into every new now-moment.
- In second-person spirituality, we recognize that we are social creatures, whose neurology is structured to relate to others. Our spirituality would be impoverished if it didn't engage our relational wiring, so we turn toward the Mystery of existence as our primary Beloved, allowing wonder and gratitude to open our heart and breath to the grace that is our most intimate relation in every moment.

Through such practices, our habit of separation and fragmentation is helped to mature into an ongoing recognition of prior unity and interdependence. This gives rise not only to higher states and stages of consciousness, but also to surprising new levels of trust in life, freedom, courage, creativity, and innovation.

Shadow work involves just one dimension of the **psychosphere.** It is also the domain of emotional and psychological and much subtle energetic practice. Through shadow work, we become more conscious of, and free in relation to, the underlying repression, shame, fear, and compensation that otherwise tend to pattern and sabotage our responses to experience. The psychosphere also includes **soul work,** including the practices of depth psychology, ecopsychology, and earth-based spirituality—and it often integrates that work somatically, yogically, and energetically. Through such practices we deepen and integrate our psyche and deep feeling-life. We also come to know our calling, our unique gifts and contributions, and our life purpose.

We identified these four spheres—Body, Mind, Spiritual, and Shadow work—as the "core modules" of Integral Life Practice as it was presented in the book of that title. But they are all **individual practices,** focused on *my* body, *my* mind, *my* spiritual realization, and *my* psychological integration.

Equally important, and even more ultimately consequential, are ***relational practices,*** or "social praxes," to which we now turn our attention. We cannot address our increasingly urgent large-scale global and social

needs alone, and our spiritual growth can no longer be truly healthy if it cannot help us dynamically participate in a world of relations beyond the boundaries of our personal psyches.

Relational Practices

Our inner transformation, which changes our personal subjective experience (or upper left quadrant in Wilber's matrix), can transform our behavior (or upper right quadrant) and our ways of relating to others, bridging into our *inter*subjective agreements and ethics and interpersonal dynamics, or culture (the lower left quadrant). And a transformation of culture can enact the sorely needed and consequential changes we want to make in our systems and institutions, governmental policies, and financial and economic structures (the lower right quadrant).

There are three obvious major spheres of social praxis: **intimate relationships, work and creative service,** and **civic participation**—the practice of being citizens of our communities and of the world. Each of these spheres differently expresses practice in the lower left quadrant, the "we-space," so that it can bring more love, efficacy/efficiency, and powerful wisdom into life.

Intimate relationships are central, wonderful, and infamously challenging. Nothing is more important to us than love and intimacy, and nothing is more difficult to keep fresh and conscious.

In past centuries, marriage was not expected to fulfill us. It was a legal contract and a necessary social convention, even coexistent with polygamy and prostitution. Today we expect so much more—we want our partner to be our romantic and sexual beloved, our best friend, our comfortable companion, someone who enjoys the same activities and interests and people, a responsible, contributing full partner in all the challenges of our shared life, and our soul mate—and someone who will *keep* sharing our interests and values even as we each change over time. For people to encounter and navigate all the twists and turns and disappointments of life and love as true allies who keep falling in love is a great adventure. And the growth of intimacy can be a profound and unending path of personal and relational growth. But it's not all upside.

None of us are immune to feelings of betrayal. They are present even in the most conscious and loving relationships, where new levels of creative opportunities and challenges emerge. None of us are immune to karma and disappointment. Whether on a physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual level, any measure of "perfection" is set up to fail. But there are pressures in that direction everywhere—on the internet, in advertising, in other media, and among peers. As a result, we become rabid seekers after conditional states of being that are largely unattainable, and we tend to want our chosen intimate "other" to fulfill (or help us fulfill) our impossible expectations. Since life delivers nothing but two-sidedness, it is no wonder that more than half of all marriages end in divorce.

If we are lucky enough to fall in love and commit our lives to another person, we have an amazing possibility. But we must become partners in earning its fruits. The initial surge of special magic, if there was one, will modulate over time, while we are learning to be friends, companions, and partners in life. If we commit to exclusive monogamy and possibly children, opting for "secure psychological attachment" (which is such a major factor for a child's thriving or failure to thrive), all our own childhood attachment wounds will be stimulated. Even secure attachment is touched by at least traces of the more common traumatic patterns—avoidant aloofness, clingy insecurity, inconsistent ambivalence, and often a touch of plain old nasty craziness. Not to mention addiction and depression. The only fruitful response to the challenges of intimacy is to *practice* with these challenges.

Intimate relationships are, for many of us, the primary arena for transformation. An individual can practice on their own in response to the challenges of their relationship, or both partners can agree to practice together. And there are many ways to practice—in fact, any ordinary context can be an arena for practice: compliments, listening, date nights, cheerful alone time, travel, seminars, retreats, social adventures at conferences, explicit couples' counseling, or other conversational and sexual practices. Mature marriages between committed practitioners sometimes find a way to regenerate the in-love spirit of the honeymoon. They can ultimately become a sacred experience of intimacy and common mission

that can be a gift of love not only to each other but to all their relations, unfolding an ongoing revelation, wave after wave, for decades.

Intimate relationships also include our relationships with friends, our children, and our parents and other family members, a place where many of us are learning our deepest lessons. How can we express love and support, and still set some necessary boundaries in order to coexist with people who are sometimes intimate strangers, and at a whole different stage of life? We mature as we sustain and manage and ideally deepen our family ties, friendships, housemate relationships, and neighbor relationships. I won't describe them here in detail, because they take on a much larger range of patterns than intimate sexual relationships. But it is important to more liberally define the domain of "intimate relationships" to include the variety of forms of intimacy people are sharing.

Work and creative service is where we function at our best and earn our living. To do this we must practice everything from time management or electronic and online literacy, to all the specific skills and practices that enable us to foster functional excellence in our roles, and make us good team players and leaders. Organizational psychologists have helped many leading corporations to cultivate a culture of inquiry and growth that can scaffold new levels of excellence. This leads to another order of practice, where the evolutionary purpose, the "wholeness value" of the business itself, is examined and embraced, which allows more enlightened corporations to improve our society.

Civic participation in community is not just mandated by our predicament, but it naturally expresses some of the new capacities we are developing as we evolve spiritually. We are just barely beginning to be able to live our lives as a total field of practice. Our species is learning new, important lessons about our responsibility to come together to care for our human future, even as evolution presents us with new survival challenges. We want to do our part to heal our world and culture. We want to make a positive difference. We are willing to change our behavior to become more involved in politics. This impulse has been awakening for years. It has risen sharply while the severity of the ecological predicament has been becoming visible, and recently was magnified

tremendously worldwide after the shock waves following the U.S. election of 2016. In order for our activism to be truly healthy, responsive, balanced, and stable, it must be undertaken in the holistic context of a whole life of practice. (Hence, this book!)

RELATIONAL WE-SPACE PRACTICES

Our lives are largely tested and fulfilled through our interactions with others. In a time of existential challenge and rapid change, this implies that we are called to new ways of relating. We each have a responsibility to discover and embody deeper and more dynamic interactions, relationships, friendships, families, organizations, communities, alliances, and collectives of all kinds. If our institutions and systems are going to change, it is only going to happen by countless individuals coming together to create a healthier human culture.

It is useful to practice these skills. A whole new category of workshops, seminars, courses, and gatherings specifically focuses on helping us learn to communicate more successfully. Innumerable misunderstandings blight human relationships on every scale, from intimate to global. It has been said that we can best heal (and function beyond) wounds that were inflicted in relationship in the context of relationship itself. Group psychotherapy and encounter groups accomplish something important, and distinct from what takes place in individual psychotherapy. The fields of dialogue, collective intelligence, family therapy, organizational development, group facilitation, and mediation reflect how richly we are learning about how to communicate and relate.

One particular body of interpersonal work pays attention to the quality of the relational field itself. When people make eye contact, they often experience something more than "me" and "you." There is a third presence—the "we"—which is located in the "between," midway between the two pairs of eyes. As people attend to the quality of this third presence, often through structured exercises, the "we-space" itself changes, deepens, and becomes more aware. It is profound and delightful to shift from a subjective to an intersubjective locus of awareness, awake

to the shared field, as an experiential sense of awakened collective awareness becomes fuller and deeper and freer. Practice allows these qualities to come forward. It can even become a new form of spiritual authority (some think the "we" can be an alternative to a human teacher).

It can also become a novel setting for creative philosophical, cultural, organizational, and political conversations that can advance culture directly. Such a field can push the envelope of our capacity to imagine our future—a place to explore the implications of newly emergent perspectives and insights, and to apply them, to give us new ways to address current social, cultural, and political challenges. But what is most significant is that it can reveal what evolution feels like from the inside out.

Over the past twenty years, there has been a slow but surprising development in "we-space" practices. Unlike the group process and therapeutic work that emerged in the 1970s, these explorations are not particularly therapeutic. Instead, groups of human beings are coming together to explore mutual awakening, collective intelligence, and collective wisdom. They draw on what has been learned in the field of dialogue, but the shift from a subjective to an intersubjective orientation distinguishes we-space practices. Some of these experiments have been done in the context of intentional communities; others occur in workshops, courses, retreats, or virtual communities over a period of time.

This new we-space work shifts the foundational assumptions of human relationship and culture from separation ("We are each individuals who seek to find relatedness with one another") to connection ("We are participants in and expressions of a larger field of consciousness, which can uplift us, work through us, and itself evolve"). We-space practices are essentially transpersonal practices of wholeness.

Personal spiritual awakening doesn't have to be private. In fact, if it is exclusively private, it is missing something essential. In general, the less private it is, the more integral it is. The more it is understood as relating to all four quadrants of reality, which includes all other human beings, the more potential spirituality has to transform culture.

RELATIONAL PRACTICES AND ACTIVISM

Relational practices are a field in which we can bridge divisions, preparing the ground for wise collective action. But talk will not, ultimately, be enough. Our most substantial practices are tangible initiatives to support the health of, and help evolve, our social structures, systems, and institutions—the lower right quadrant systems in which we live. These include our ecosystems, political systems, governmental policies, energy and food production, transportation, and waste processing systems. System change, as we will soon see, requires *activist citizenship* of three kinds: *in-the-system* activism, *against-the-system* activism, and *around-the system* activism.

Even when we don't engage outer activities that look like "activism," we all have a contribution to make, and therefore a responsibility. We are each transmitting our inner states, communicating to the larger culture the attitudes and values we are living. Our ways of being are rippling out, influencing others and the world at large. Because the nature of reality is holographic, who I am, who you are, is a reflection of the whole. This is one of the most extraordinary mysteries that science has shown us and that we have yet to internalize and work with.

The consequential and revolutionary potentials of the we-space would begin to be realized if groups of people could learn to sustainably relate to one another on the basis of balanced self-care and altruism, without hemorrhaging energy, and in a way that confers significant selective advantages and mitigates any selective disadvantages. Game theory analysis challenges altruism with the deep riddle, "How can cooperation compete, especially within a larger competitive economic and social and political environment?" Perhaps a new post-conventional level of in-group altruism, combined with appropriately prudent (even wary) goodwill toward out-group members and strangers, provides us with the broad guidelines for a new and positive tribalism. Experiments in this direction reflect a crucial dimension of intersubjective practice.

How might we practice it? We have to discover. But we can see certain principles at work. Any serious experiment along these lines, I believe, must be powered and guided by the integral heart intelligence of the

whole being. Merely mental "head" intelligence alone is inadequate. It has dominated and mediated decision making during the recent modern era. And now it is failing, as legal and communication strategies "game the system," thwarting the exercise of the wisdom of the whole in our collective decision making. The head is too easy to fool and cheat. The heart is a wiser poker player. And we need the street smarts of our hara, or gut intelligence. Our reference point must be an ability to make collective decisions and adjudicate differences governed by a shared perception of the intelligence of the "integral" heart, which integrates and mediates the intelligence of the head and gut.

These subjective changes imply changes in behavior. And it is changes in *actual behavior* that will be consequential for our total predicament. So let's look at a system for practicing the ways of being that enable us to behave in ways appropriate to a new human adulthood.

FOUR WAYS OF BEING A LEADER

In Werner Erhard's and Michael Jensen's recent seminal work on leadership, they identify four "ways of being"[34] as the foundations for successful leadership. These are four broad, subjective choices, commitments, or orientations to living that manifest as a whole range of discrete observable behaviors. These behaviors are necessary to the success of corporate leaders, and they also increase the success of any endeavor, including one's personal life. They are each capacities we can develop across a whole lifetime. I have been teaching several of them for years, using different language. But I think Erhard's and Jensen's synthesis provides us with an excellent framework for integral practice and effective evolutionary activism.

I will describe these four ways of being here, because they so directly and effectively cut away the self-deception that has undermined the health and wholeness of human society as a whole. As Harvard professor Chris Argyris wrote: "Put simply, people consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use, between the way they think they are acting, and the way they really act."[35]

Hypocrisy is a nearly universal human failing. And it is at the root of how we have created our current crises. Penetrating hypocrisy on a social scale requires us to first face and transform it very personally. Erhard and Jensen trenchantly comment, "If you think this does not apply to you, you are fooling yourself about fooling yourself."

They crafted their descriptions of these four essential distinctions with great precision, so I paraphrase liberally from the abovementioned paper in the following descriptions of these four ways of being.

1. The first is **being authentic.** We commonly talk about this as "walking your talk"—behaving consistently with who you hold yourself to be. We all try to do this. But we can also hide from ourselves the fact that we don't—usually because we don't want to look bad, and we are afraid of losing the respect of others. But one cannot *pretend* to be authentic—by definition, that's inauthentic. Paradoxically, the only path to being authentic is to be authentic about your inauthenticities. You must be willing to discover, confront, and tell the truth about where you're falling short—even where you're hiding or pretending. You won't enjoy seeing this. But I have learned that showing my foibles and losing face is not as bad as it seems. It gives me a powerful opportunity to go beyond shame and deceit and realize that I am actually bigger than my weaknesses. It also gives me authentic contact with others. My heart intelligence recognizes that the trade-off is well worth its costs. But this is a continual, lifelong practice, because new inauthenticities crop up every day, new opportunities to choose to be authentic.
2. The second is **presuming to be "at cause" in regard to everything in one's life.** This means that you are willing to view and deal with life from the perspective that you are "at cause" or "fully responsible" for your experience. It is not true that you are the cause of everything in your life. You may even be, in some sense, or in certain respects, a victim. But even when you are responsible for only 1 percent of the causes of a situation,

it is powerful to focus on what you *can* be responsible for. It situates you in relationship to your power rather than your powerlessness. You no longer deal with life from the perspective of a victim, in which you assign cause to the circumstances or to others. This is a stern discipline, but it can produce a dramatic increase in your effectiveness and power. I continue to work with this discipline every day.

3. The third is **being committed to something bigger than oneself.** This is obviously a theme that pervades every chapter of this book. Without the passion that comes from being committed to something bigger than ourselves, we are unlikely to persevere when nothing goes right. This is where the "guts" of leadership come from. When no help is available, how can I find in myself the strength to persevere in the face of impossible, insurmountable hurdles and barriers? If I am truly committed to something bigger than myself, I can reach down inside and find the strength and passion and charisma that are required. I can continue; I can be courageous and creative.

4. The fourth is **being a person of integrity.** This was a huge theme in Erhard's influential work from the 1970s. In this model, integrity is a matter of *one's word* being whole and complete. If we work together, we must be able to rely on one another to do what we say we will do—and when we have said we would do it. As integrity declines, workability declines, and as workability declines, value and performance decline. So optimal performance requires integrity. "Without integrity nothing works."[36]

   If you are not able to always keep your word, you can always honor it. Honoring your word, whenever you will not be keeping it in the time frame you agreed to, requires communication. As soon as you become aware that you will not be able to keep your word on time, you can tell everyone impacted that you will not be keeping your word, but that you will do so in the future, and by when—or that you won't be keeping your word at all, in

which case you can say what you will do to deal with the impact on others of this failure.

Erhard and Jensen admit that no one, themselves included, is completely in a state of integrity. Integrity, they say, is a "mountain with no top," so in their paper they point out that we had better "get used to (and grow to enjoy) climbing." Nevertheless, all failures of integrity result in problems. We fail to perform, miss appointments and deadlines, and disappoint our partners, associates, and friends. And we are impacted by others whose functioning violates integrity. The effects are huge. It is a powerful practice to face and bridge these gaps responsibly.

Integrity is the necessary and sufficient condition for workability, which gives us the opportunity for performance. When you operate in integrity, there are no communication breakdowns. You have cleaned up any mess you have caused for others. Without such breakdowns people can accomplish remarkable things. We are called upon by our current crisis to accomplish great things, so we'll do well to embrace the practice of integrity.

These four ways of being, and the behaviors that flow from them, are an essential dimension of practice. If a new republic of the heart is to come into being, its citizens will need to rely on one another for more than goodwill. We will need to do a great number of things together—effectively. That is a very practical challenge. We will need to be able to rely on each other to stay oriented to higher commitments—not to blow them off when things get tough. We need others to hold us accountable for practicing at all times, even when we fall short. We will also need allies who can start and lead effective, high-functioning organizations.

Thus, these four ways of being represent powerful practical principles we can draw upon as we navigate the process of implementing the practice of wholeness in social terms. They are essential at work and in our projects and organizations—in fact, they are essential in everything we do as activists and as fellow practitioners.

OUR GREAT SHARED WORK TRANSFORMING HUMAN CULTURE

Our future will not be created only by the rich, famous, and powerful. We each have a chance to make a contribution. The responsibility for our planet cannot lie exclusively with people like Barack Obama or Angela Merkel, or Bill Gates or Warren Buffet, or Bono or Angelina Jolie, or Larry Page or Elon Musk. It cannot accrue only to Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama and the saints of all religions. It must reside with every single one of us. We are each more powerful than we tend to imagine, far beyond the narratives that reduce us to being mere consumers or voters or opinion poll numbers.

And yet, it is not easy to work with other human beings. As difficult as our own transformation may be, transforming the ground of human relationship and how we are *with one another* is much more difficult. That is why it is important to embrace shared expectations for how our ideals are expressed in our behavior.

That's on the high end. But as we see all the time in virtual forums, even the best of us find that in virtual space it is remarkably easy to become arrogant, to dehumanize the "other," to flame, to troll, to demonize, to behave antisocially. It is easy for our ways of relating to one another to degrade due to the loss of human contact that is the result of urbanization, mobility, and the breakdown of the family and community. The loss of empathy that comes from this makes trust inappropriate. And mistrust becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In many arenas, human culture has regressed to a level of ethical compromise and noncommunication appropriate only for the least trustable of our fellow humans. We are inadvertently allowing the psychopaths among us to dictate the terms of our relationships to friends and neighbors we haven't met yet, in a mad race to the bottom, far away from our highest (or even our more ordinary) human potentials. And we wonder how we can avoid the hell that is our brutal "lowest common denominator" ways of relating to one another.

It is hard to trust people we don't know, even if most of them have good intentions. And it is effectively impossible to trust people we

cannot see—especially to trust them more than we feel able to trust those we *can* see. But mass communications now enable us to see people all over the world. Because our attention is drawn to the most bizarre, shocking, and horrific news, and because so many human beings are so different from us, and because we do sometimes encounter psychopaths and sociopaths, our bonds of appropriate mutual trust have been rapidly declining. We often feel that we lack a rational basis for trusting others—even the majority who *are* very trustable.

Such a profound cultural shift is a considerable undertaking that must overcome formidable obstacles. But we are hardly impotent. Our individual transformations can synergistically exert disproportionate power—through many avenues, including our at-first seemingly inconsequential efforts—to shift our whole civilizational system. It is true that they can often function in ways that defy what we perceive as logic.

The popularity of ideas like the "tipping point" or the hundredth-monkey stories are not simply tall tales. As already mentioned, Ken Wilber has pointed to the claim, rooted in the historical evidence of the late 1700s and the American Revolution, that when 10 percent of the population grows into a genuinely higher structure of consciousness, the nature of public agreements and power exchanges can be restructured according to a higher set of (postmonarchical, constitutional, democratic, meritocratic, free-enterprise) rules.

On a common-sense level anyone can recognize that there is a greater whole in which we are all participants, and our actions really do matter because they coincide with and affect that whole. A genuine practitioner with a clear, powerful commitment and strong relational capacities can generate synergy with others, especially by enrolling them in a series of shared agreements like the four ways of being described above. Indirectly, individuals can cogenerate enormous impact. A solid higher commitment stands firm and organizes the randomness of events in much the way that an unmoving obelisk (think of the Washington Monument) placed in the middle of a sandstorm would organize the chaotic patterns of the swirling sand. A few extraordinarily committed practitioners can have outsized impact ("the strength of ten thousand men").

History has been swayed more than once by "great awakenings," by spiritual renewals that have also become political movements. Authentic integral practice can thus be the basis for a transformational cultural and political movement. If it makes use of all the principles described here, it can accomplish great things, *while at the same time deeply nurturing the human heart.* This can transform the practice of political activism. If political activism only means going to boring public meetings and venting your anger after having waited a long time for your turn, most people aren't going to want to be involved.

However, if we can come together with one another in a spirit of celebration, care, and intimacy, in which we are energizing and uplifting one another, then political participation can become something of a celebration—of heartfelt fellowship, and a transformative opening into a new possibility. If we can also rely on one another to embrace authenticity, integrity, and responsibility, we can stand up to the tests of time. Thus, practice can enable us to be the beginning of something truly new. Spiritual fellowship can fortify us to do the hard, "thankless" work that may also be necessary (and we can thank each other for doing it too!).

THE POTENTIALS OF PRACTICE

While on the great archetypal journey, the hero usually gets lost—temporarily. And not just once. At those times, we might feel we've failed, even though we've been transformed and uplifted, and are growing. The journey is both empowering and humbling.

The path teaches us to cherish profound values worthy of lasting commitment, worth years and even decades of "delayed gratification." We act on those values and sustain them over time. (And sometimes we don't.) We find ways to practice every day. (And sometimes we lapse.) Slowly but surely, if we return to the work, it uplifts and transforms us, freeing us from unconscious habit patterns and awakening insight, wisdom, and compassion.

We gradually learn to have more fulfilling relationships, live more happily, or better manage our dysphoria, and be more productive and

effective. We feel calmer, saner, healthier, more balanced—and often more inspired, alive, and passionate. If we achieve conventional successes, we see them simply as what they are. And at least for a while, some of us become self-actualized, free, and given over to creative expression of our gifts. We enjoy the wonderful yet temporary fulfillment that life can offer.

Some of us even become "enlightened" in a sense. No one seems to be getting perfected, but *something* keeps happening. We begin to notice that our true identity is consciousness, love, and bliss—an all-encompassing wholeness radiating out of the heart. And yet our friends are suffering, and we see and are part of an endangered world. And, paradoxically, once we have fallen into the wholeness of the heart, even though we are profoundly happy, the sufferings of humanity and nature not only continue to matter—they matter even more than before! Like the great bodhisattvas, today's activist practitioners respond in the fullest way to the suffering of others and of creation, even while being absorbed in and drawing their strength from the awe-inspiring Mystery that suffuses all things.

The path not only has no end—it begins with every new breath. And it is our human condition that the mind tends to drift, numb out, fall asleep. When we tense up into fear and separation, we begin living the small story of the ego.

In this next moment, are we awake enough and willing and courageous enough to become beginners again—and again? Can we open in wonder to the heart of the mystery of existence? Can we awaken from our *ideas* of the mystery to the reality—the living presence of the mystery of this very moment? Once we have opened in astonished wonder, it is all so obvious, and it can seem obvious for a while. At some point we will probably tend to start thinking we now "know" the secret; then, when we're least self-aware, the trance will invisibly creep back.

If we're lucky, we'll keep stirring from that sleep, vaguely noticing that we somehow subtly lost touch with the vivid, tender, glistening aliveness of real awakening. We will realize we've gone on automatic again, and then we'll choose to start anew. The only "final" realization is unconditional willingness to show up fresh and awake in each new moment and to begin the path again, and again, forever.