



A New Tribalism and a New Republic of the Heart

The next Buddha may very well be a sangha.

—THICH NHAT HANH

I have a profound responsibility to support your transformation, to make sure you are living the most honored, respected, whole life possible. Because if you aren't I cannot. If you aren't it is simply not possible for me to do so. Because we are interconnected. We are One.

—ANGEL KYODO WILLIAMS

What will catalyze our best realistic future? I believe it will in part emerge from self-transforming *communities* of practice. These communities understand practice as not only personal, but interpersonal as well. Our ways of communicating and responding and learning together can become more conscious, generative, and powerful.

I previously introduced the newly emerging field of mutual “we-space” practice. If we attend to the quality of our conscious contact with one another, we begin to talk about *how* we talk, and how we listen—not just

between you and me, of course, but in our families, our communities, and throughout our culture. In my work with groups, I have been exploring new ways of being in conversation that are structured to cultivate depth, intimacy, and tenderness on the one hand, and authenticity, freedom, and ragged truth-telling on the other.

We can draw on a growing body of wisdom emerging from many creative experiments: in generative dialogue, the dynamic facilitation of conversations, cultivating collective states of higher consciousness, and accessing collective wisdom. The arts of dialogue and communication are ancient, but new dynamic experiments have exploded over the last five decades. The “we” is now a whole field, and a hotbed of creativity.

This is a broad cultural phenomenon. All kinds of organizations are experimenting with ways to have more creative and meaningful discussions and productive, enjoyable meetings. Intelligent, vital conversations exercise, challenge, and advance our fullest intelligence, courage, and creativity. They can be tender and bracing, ecstatic and poetic, penetrating and brilliant, powerful and generative. Conversations among mature people presuming responsibility for their own experience are integral to our best futures.

Our intensifying global predicament is making a whole series of collective emergencies highly likely. They will force us into unprecedented levels of cooperation—and communication. I often point out that *interventions* are called for, analogous to an addict’s family sitting him or her down for a life-changing conversation. As a human collective, we are getting a signal that asks us to a “new sobriety” as we rapidly change our lifestyles, our economy, our very ways of being “civilized” human beings. We are beginning to have this intervention conversation among ourselves. Our impulse to deny, avoid, or hide from our predicament is becoming untenable. Some of us are beginning to get real, to speak with one another about the elephant in the room. Out of such conversations will come our process of recovery.

There is no simple formula for entering into consequential conversations about our most pressing shared concerns. But we will have to come to terms with the full complexity of our situation and all its unique

contours, as they appear in ourselves and one another. That's a tall order. And the way we do this will express our character. But it's not like we can choose a "position" for which we might "vote," like a plank in a political platform. We are being drawn into a cultural process—a whole ongoing *conversation*.

The practice of constructive dialogue requires a great deal from each participant. And that takes practice, which is how we develop our capacity. Higher levels of discourse, then, constitute an art worth cultivating—by individuals, and also by groups. It is an emergent but crucial art form, still in its infancy.

Something important is organically emerging now, a discovery of emergent intersubjective possibilities of many kinds. That field is still young, but this practice of conversation that is attentive to the quality of the "we" is a powerful opportunity, pregnant with possibilities. It is especially compelling for practitioners and activists who take their civic responsibilities seriously.

✕WE✕IS THE ONE WE ARE WAITING FOR

In our lifetimes, evolution is becoming conscious of itself. We—together—are coming to a dawning realization that we are coresponsible, in part, for the future of human and biological evolution. The collective behavior of human beings will determine the future of the entire planetary ecosystem. Meanwhile, new insights into human development and communication are opening up means to design interactions that spur individual and collective growth and transformation. A healthier, wiser human culture is the one thing that would most powerfully impact all life on Earth—from the coral reefs off the Australian coast to the giraffes on the African plains to the icefish in Antarctica. This moral responsibility for life is calling us to talk with one another and work together in ways that we never have before.

Almost all of our old ways of being will be inadequate to these new, complex, paradoxical challenges. They will fail and we will try out new ways of being. Some of these efforts will buy us enough time to change

further. That's how evolution has always taken place. But from our perspective we're talking about a life and death struggle and revolutionary changes in our whole way of life. In the process, the nature of friendship will evolve. So will morality, and trust. They will all have to become something more than they've been in the past.

How will that emerge? It is unlikely to come through a top-down grand strategy, and more likely to bubble up organically. Here and there, and in increasingly more and more places, deep friendships, powerful alliances, fuller cooperation, and new levels of community will break new ground, building know-how and new capacities. These pilot projects and cultural experiments might at first seem like exceptional fringe phenomena on the edges of culture. But when the capacities they cultivate become crucial to collective well-being, they will be understood as having been far more central than they appeared.

The survival necessities of human civilization will rule the day. Even though it will thrive temporarily because of its short-term political advantages, autocratic, opportunistic, combative leadership cannot address the actual human challenges of the twenty-first century. This kind of leadership is incapable of the mature, nuanced action-logic that is necessary to wisely navigate these stormy seas. In fact, our challenges will not easily be overcome, even by our best deliberative evidence-based and outcome-oriented rational leadership. Next-level leadership and cooperation will be necessary. Leading-edge organizational development professionals are already experimenting with exciting new practices and processes. Leadership that will actually be adequate to our new life conditions will only emerge from a rich cultural process of multiple experiments in conversation with one another.

Business organizations are pressing the leading edges of such experimentation. But other lessons are being learned in small groups, tribes, and fledgling communities who aspire to work or live cooperatively. They're experimenting with mutuality, coresponsibility, and practice in relationship, functioning as living laboratories for new possibilities in human relating. Some of them transcend and include the "I" to create a self-aware "we" with new potentials for creativity and intelligent action.

Because they are spontaneously emerging “through the cracks,” there is no single focal point where all these diverse communities, practices, theories, and schools for social synergy can all recognize each other and connect. And any of these experiments in culture and conversation might stumble upon important breakthrough discoveries, so no one can claim to understand this whole field. Even so, I will share what I can. I have participated in and led a number of experiments in the integral evolutionary ecosystem where many are in conversation with one another, developing theoretical principles and best practices.

“We-space,” as I mentioned, is a relatively new term, used in the integral evolutionary community to describe an emerging set of practices to catalyze an intersubjective awakening of a higher order intelligence, in which “we is smarter than me.” “Intersubjectivity” refers to our shared interiors, including shared meanings and understandings, but also a shared felt sense of the fields between people when there is any degree of mutual understanding—the “agreement space.” This is an inherent dimension of our being, as old as evolution, and vast in size and scope. It includes all of human culture, especially what is implicit rather than explicit—in other words, everything that “we all just know.” Culture is always dynamic—and lately it has been evolving faster than ever.

Historians still debate whether history is really about impersonal cultural evolution or the leadership of great individuals whose choices shape our collective destiny. It is obvious that during times of rapid change, great men and women sometimes become the focal points for social transformation (even when that transformation is the inevitable product of larger forces). When it was time for colonialism to end in India, Gandhi functioned as an inspiring example of wise moral and political leadership. When it was time for legal institutional racism to end in America, Martin Luther King functioned similarly. When it was time for apartheid to end in South Africa, Nelson Mandela did his great work.

Our current ecological predicament and crisis is much more complex and multidimensional than any of these earlier great cultural transitions. It will require a series of much more fundamental and challenging transformations of human behavior. Those historical examples remain

a source of great lessons and inspiration, but I don't believe our next transformations will hinge on any single individual. Instead, along the lines of Thich Nhat Hanh's dictum that "the next Buddha may very well be a sangha," it seems to me that the cultural renaissance our global crisis requires will probably constellate around some kind of human *collective*.

That points to a profound level of potential significance in our experiments in community. Even our relationships with our families and friends can be among the key "front lines" in the (r)evolutionary transformation our predicament requires. We are perhaps making a bigger difference than we thought when we experiment with listening and hearing one another better, speaking more essentially and effectively, or asking, deepening, and refining questions together and letting them change us.

A NEW GLOBAL TRIBALISM

The family, the band, the clan, the village, the region, the church or temple, the ethnic group, the nation—our groups have always defined us. In-group/out-group dynamics are tattooed onto the neurophysiology underlying human psychology. Nonetheless, we are arriving in a planetary era, facing global challenges we can only solve together, across all boundaries. The nationalist backlash to globalization has demonstrated beyond doubt that our tribes are too central to human identity to be ignored. Tribal identities and boundaries are not rigid; they erode and regenerate and evolve and change over time, but they are intrinsic to us, they are powerful, and they must be honored. We earlier noted that nations and tribes have souls. They also have shadows, karma, archetypes, angels, demons, and heroic qualities. Our tribal souls will only get us through this new crisis if they learn to relate to other tribes in new ways. And the relations of our various tribes (including our new global tribes) will in part write the story of our planetary future.

New dialogic conversational practices may help a new kind of tribal practice to emerge. Community experiments like eco-villages, conscious businesses, and activist collectives require new levels of cooperation—and new levels of friendship. Some of these communities of practice

are profoundly intense and intimate. Some are grounded in a sense of responsibility for addressing our global challenges. Some directly aspire to build a sangha that can help manifest the next Buddha. They have a long way to go before they'll be seen as anything but fringe phenomena in the tribal politics of the larger world, but long before that, their discoveries might have transformative influence on those intra- and inter-tribal dynamics.

Even though these experiments have a world-centric disposition, they can meet ethnic or other local tribes with respect and learn from them. Many will appreciate that most human beings (including themselves) participate in more than one tribe—local and virtual, biological and cultural. And they will learn to recognize and navigate the paradoxes that attend a new age of global tribalism. Instead of a simplistic polarity between globalism and tribalism, they can acknowledge that most current social tensions are between the differing values and interests of particular competing tribes, all across that spectrum.

As we are using the term here, tribes are diverse. On one end of the spectrum are traditional, culturally homogeneous villages, neighborhoods, and townships that hold people's entire lives. Its members belong to only one tribe and one religion. At the other end of the spectrum are post-postmodern communities of practice whose members live all over the world and come together only occasionally, sometimes by voice or video link rather than meeting in person. Its members belong to many tribes. Each extreme, in a very different way, exemplifies wholeness.

The totality of our world can be more fully comprehended by people connected to a multiplicity of communities, engaging multiple languages and practices of discourse and communion. But the simple instinctive forms of ordinary, healthy humanness are more fully and integrally expressed in the life of a *village* sustainably related to the larger web of life. The "archaic revival" and the idealization of indigenous wisdom is resurgent because, in undeniable ways, it relates to humans' only "proven model" of sustainable culture. It seemingly represents the Occam's-razor (simplest and most obvious) solution to all sustainability challenges. A whole new logic is taking people back to the land, away from stores and

commodities and plastic bags and packaging, and into the project of devising and opting for ecologically integrated technologies, and against ecologically harmful choices. But a mass transition to such simplicity seems unlikely. So we look in a different direction, especially because progress into our newly emerging potentials seems so exciting. Maybe our *most* refined capacities, the high flowers and fruits of centuries of exuberant expansion, contain potentials that might seed a new kind of human culture and a new kind of relationship among human tribes.

Let's consider some of these new potentials. Tribe-to-tribe communications are a crucial frontier, as we will explore. These new tribes form and develop and evolve by talking with one another, communicating *internally*. But at some point they will discover how valuable it will be to learn to dialogue with *other* tribes, including some of our many ethnic tribes. Other frontiers involve our racial and ethnic tribal divides, and we will continue to learn to engage ethnic identity issues more frankly and fruitfully. It is crucial to learn to conduct generative conversations that cross boundaries of race and tribe, conversations in which not only are all participants heard, but all learn and change and hear one another.

There are equally significant frontiers *within* tribes. What will happen when white evolutionaries start showing up at white identitarian gatherings, sincerely acknowledging their tribal connection and even brotherhood with their racial cousins? Instead of rejecting and refusing to participate with "racists," they might begin to reknit some deep divisions in the fabric of their broken extended families. That would be a new world.

Another frontier comes from recognizing that most of our "traditional" ethnic tribes are paradoxical, postmodern phenomena; most of their members belong not just to their original ethnic tribe or clan, but also to other social, religious, philosophical, or spiritual tribes, maintaining a kind of multiple citizenship. We will never again be held by a ubiquitous, ancient cultural container that should not be questioned. But we are in the same lifeboat with people who are drawing on their traditions to cope with life's challenges. We must find ways to cooperate and tolerate *and* communicate meaningfully with one another. And so we must listen, and actually connect.

We must also learn how our tribes can engage their struggles safely, fairly, and productively. This conversation is primarily directed to people with “evolutionary” sensibilities, or at least a mind that can engage with integral insights and can see and appreciate and honor the necessity, validity, and unique wisdom and beauty of all our fellow tribes across the spectrum. Together we can observe that the fortunes of all tribes have always risen and fallen, as some grow and some decline, in a process that is natural and evolutionary. We can ask how the relations among our competing tribes and special interests (including what we call “political factions”) might change enough for us to effectively cooperate for our mutual survival and sustainability. But how? So many destructive weapons and powers seem destined to find their way into the hands of irresponsible people, in an open society in which knowledge is free and expanding exponentially. So a key task of evolutionary tribes is to develop ways of being and living together that provide every tribe *most* (or at least enough) of what it needs, even while frustrating some (perhaps much) of what it wants, such that tribes can compete fiercely but nondestructively. This seems almost impossibly idealistic, but it is not optional. A politics that can adjudicate conflicts between groups in ways that strengthen their capacities for ongoing cooperation and tolerance is a critical requisite dimension of ecological sustainability.

Conversations *between* tribes adjudicating the relative power of competing factions are potential flashpoints. That means that our rules of discourse will ultimately have to discourage or disincentivize whatever ulterior motives degrade honest communication. Experiments in intertribal discourse have been evolving, informed by traditional praxes and the fields of mediation and negotiation. They will increasingly be informed by experiments in generative dialogue, we-space, and collective wisdom. Breakthroughs hold the potential, ultimately, to prototype a new kind of human politics. After all, conversations among tribes, in a sense, *are* politics.

People are already spontaneously evolving a new global tribal practice by meeting in camps, seminars, group outings, and online conversations, as well as classes, conferences, and celebrations with international

participants. There is an inherent systemic necessity at work: the urgent need for human maturity to guide our collective decision making. How will these global conversations evolve? One thing is clear: we will need two kinds of conversations. We need open forums that welcome new participants, and draw new people into this practice of conversation. But we will refine our praxis and be personally transformed by deeper, more personal and intimate conversations in closed groups of people we can get to know. These can become communities of practice where we and our tribes can actually evolve.

This teaches many lessons that can be transferred to conversations across tribal boundaries, and especially to our important public conversations. The movement for civil discourse is making a necessary point: Mutual respect and civility are crucial to the synergies that enable us to productively explore serious questions together. It is becoming obvious that important public conversations cannot be fruitfully conducted as “debates.” Their function is to produce good collective choices, which require the capacity to listen, reflect, and be affected by what we hear. But it has to go further. We need conversation partners and facilitators who help keep us oriented to our shared values, so that we can venture together into challenging creative territory. Our conversations are often already educational, and we are learning how to teach one another better and better. But beyond debate and persuasion and instruction is *inquiry*. Among our most crucial conversations will be serious, open-ended inquiries. Productive inquiry rests on knowledge, intelligence, and expertise—in the context of *sincere and explicit care*.

In the next phase of our cultural evolution we will counter the common unconscious human tendency to meet only at the surfaces of our being. It is from the depths that we meet and bond, showing and exercising our values and wisdom, and it is from there that we mature. Depth and seriousness, however, must be balanced by humor—which my first teacher, Adi Da Samraj, usefully defined as “intuitive freedom from the implications of experience” and the basis for “unreasonable happiness” independent of circumstances. Healthy seriousness is not “heavy.” But without a capacity for *humorous* seriousness, the weight of

consequence bears down on us. So let us experiment with conversations that are, at the same time, extremely serious and genuinely humorous—not a mediocre splitting of the difference, but a simultaneously free and responsible intimacy with one another and with the creative potential of the next moment of life and existence.

WHAT IS **WE SPACE**?

Quality conversations have always been central to what it is to be human, from earliest tribal councils to Socrates's dialectics as recounted by Plato. Profound discourse has long inspired action, and community, and deep consideration of who we are. We've seen it among Jewish rabbinical students, among Sufis, from St. Ignatius to the studios and salons of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and since then in our academies, at Quaker meetings and in the transcendentalist and New Thought movements. Communication, inquiry, and group dynamics have been explored in psychology, sociology, philosophy, education, business, and many other fields.

Advances in conversational practice have accelerated ever since physicist David Bohm's creative experiments in dialogue during the 1960s.⁷³ Tremendous passion, experimentation, and creative innovation have been fermenting in the fields of dialogue, team building, group therapy, organizational development, group processes, the arts of hosting and convening, and other practices that consciously cultivate the quality of communication processes. The social potential of generative dialogue and collective intelligence and wisdom have been recognized and championed by Juanita Brown, Meg Wheatley, Tom Atlee, Alan Briskin, Alexander Flor, Jim Rough, and many others. At the leading edges of culture, many experiments are breaking new ground.

Here, I'll share with you the stories of those experiments with which I am most familiar. Every possible human interaction involves a "we," a collective interior dimension that holds shared language, values, beliefs, and energies. But the specific term "we-space" has been used in the integral evolutionary community for the past decade to describe an

emerging phenomenon in which intersubjective possibilities are evoked and explored using practices that cultivate higher shared states.⁷⁴ The aims of these experiments vary. An awakened, enlivened, and perhaps even enlightened quality can emerge not just in the subjective experience of practitioners, but in the “between,” in whatever it is that arises when two or more people meet—the indefinable third presence that is neither my subjective experience nor yours, but is the “we.” The individuals may have strong experiences of nonseparation or deep communion, but what is unique to we-space is a sensed presence of a source of interpersonal intelligence, usually sensed to be wiser than any individual.

Because we live in societies of alienation, people are hungry for the experience of deeper connection, which responds to a whole variety of social needs. So we-space grew rapidly in the integral community and has found a variety of expressions, not all of which have engaged the depth of transpersonal consciousness or the personal and communal transformation that I will be pointing to here. Nor should they—it is not necessary to tackle the problems of the world before we begin healing our disconnection and learning to relate with others in more fulfilling ways.

Current we-space work has two general emphases: (1) practices focused on creating shared experiences of intimacy or other higher intersubjective states and capacities, including direct experience of group fields of intelligence and energy; and (2) practices that are focused on creating innovative, meaningful conversations in which the content of the discourse is the focus, because it advances important insights and new understanding, creative innovation, group cohesion, and/or problem solving.

We can abbreviate this to a primary emphasis on (1) higher states or (2) meaningful content. But in both cases, this work is pioneering new frontiers of intimacy and cocreativity. Both function in important ways to establish a group container for collective transformation.

Shared depth and real meeting in community give participants a collective experience that extends beyond the self’s boundaries, opening up a sense of a mutual participatory arc of growth. It is also easier in groups to relax attachments, to explore and access a variety of new perspectives, and to discover generative ways of thinking, learning, and being together.

The shift “from me to we” makes a move into a level of experience in which we are not radically separate. This collective phenomenon mirrors the integral shift *from thinking “from the parts to the whole” to thinking “from the whole to the parts and back again.”* This is a new social orientation, particularly for postmodern Westerners who take great pride in their individuality.

Integral we-space intends to create conditions where the most conscious and creative intersubjective experiences and learning are possible. The goal is to establish conditions where they can be continually co-generated and coevolved by a whole community of participants. Then wisdom and awakening can be coemergent, arising from a higher we, shared by everyone (“many-to-many”) rather than being transmitted only by one single authority (“one-to-many”).

The highest and most powerful intersubjective states and the most remarkable creative thinking require a great collective investment of time and energy by a whole community. And many things can sabotage the effort. For that reason, some we-space experiments establish ground rules, standards of conduct and participation, shared agreements, and systems of accountability.

It is rare for we-space to achieve its fullest promise, but I believe these practices have the potential to transform spiritual culture. This is especially true because the “we” is wise, free, and postpersonal, and has for many groups offered a new basis for spiritual authority that is not associated with a specific teacher or person.

Social evolution from separation to greater and deeper wholeness is essential to the broader future of civilization. It is already underway, showing itself in small but successful cultural experiments like those I am describing here. Those are most common and most likely in communities of practice, places where subcultural pockets of practice and awakening and intimacy and generosity are naturally appearing. These experiments can serve a critical evolutionary function. Dynamism at the leading edge creates an attractive force that draws others toward new emergent possibilities. When we are making real strides into collective awakening, it will energize even those who are indirectly associated with us.

If something really electric and fantastic is happening, it magnetizes creativity, and a “scene” can breed a whole wave of creativity, as in the “scenius” mentioned in chapter 8. Brian Eno defined it as “the intelligence and the intuition of a whole cultural scene ... the communal form of the concept of the genius.”⁷⁵ Kevin Kelley has pointed out that “scenius can erupt anywhere, and at different scales,” ranging from a corner of a company to an entire region. He cites examples including the Bloomsbury Group, 1920s Paris, Silicon Valley, and even NYC lofts and Burning Man.⁷⁶ I experienced the “scenius” phenomenon directly in the 2000s, when the integral evolutionary movement had come on the scene and the excitement and electricity were birthing dozens of creative projects.

Mathematicians, structural anthropologists, evolutionary psychologists, and other social observers sometimes apply principles of mathematical game theory to social relations. Thinking in these terms, it is obvious that important efficiencies and competitive advantages will likely arrive for members of more highly cooperative groups. If they can sustain a higher level of (in-group) mutual trust and altruism, and they can cooperate for their common good, they often thrive. As a cooperative group they should be able to out-compete isolated individuals, or other organizations less able to trust one another. Game theory also predicts that they will probably need to continue to be wary of out-group adversaries and free-riders. That would imply “in-group altruism” and (as a necessary practical strategy) at least a measure of “out-group wariness.”

This principle is visible in biological and cultural evolution. For example, it was cooperation between early bacteria that created the first nucleated cell structures and made photosynthesis possible. Evolution proceeds by a process of differentiation and reintegration. Human individuals have differentiated to a degree that has become pathological. We are ripe for a new level of reintegration, for arriving together as a cooperative “superorganism.” Evolutionary theory predicts that our next level of cultural evolution will come about through the convergence of what is just emerging in individual practice and the current leading edge of culture. That is a human superorganism. This is often the subjective

experience that arises in we-space practice—the shared field becomes a presence in itself, bigger than any individual and yet including them all. If highly developed individuals with a self-transcending capacity can become friends in new ways—truly coherent and profoundly trustable—their new tribes can be a powerful force for social change. This is one of the ways I currently understand the organic telos of this spontaneous cultural experiment. This is part of what I mean by a new republic of the heart.

By “tribes,” I mean “communities of practice” or sanghas that share key values and practice them moment to moment. These nascent “we tribes” are a new octave of an inherent human experiment, yet in another sense they are nothing new. Communities of inquiry have always powered cultural evolutionary advance. The Rochdale weavers didn’t join the Luddites in machine-breaking; they formed the first Western business co-operative and determined the principles of the whole co-op movement. In every generation, new community experiments break new ground. Experiments in the integral or evolutionary cultural niche, with which I am especially familiar, have mushroomed from a larger social mycelium that has many other expressions, and this larger network is also growing, connecting, and developing a new potential for human culture.⁷⁷

PARADISE MEANS **✕WALLED GARDEN✕**

Paradoxically, in order for a community to forge extraordinary bonds of trust and practice, some structural separation from the outer society is needed. Without such walls around the garden, the whole effort will be diluted and will likely fail. Of course, the ultimate objective is to extend connectedness in every manner possible, but first it has to be incubated within the boundaries of a safe intentional community.

While these new, experimental we tribes are breaking genuinely new ground in important ways, they are still tribes, who must still at times be tribal (in the best, most necessary sense). This new and rare intersubjective development simply cannot survive without a discipline that requires a degree of insulation from disruptive influences, which reflect

the current norm of mistrust and alienation in the larger culture. The most delicate living explorations of human potential are only possible when their membership is restricted to sincere practitioners who can sustain certain intentions and/or commitments. Only in this way can these evolutionary experiments hope to succeed.

So, at first, these experiments in deeper relatedness often begin with enclaves of serious practitioners who come together based on their shared understandings, intentions, responsibilities, and commitments. While they may share an existing practice that the members are already adept in, they also practice opening up beyond the known into something new and emergent. Their success will depend upon one another's presence, openness, awareness, skill, and capacity. Then the "we" can come forward and all participants can experience an exciting, alive territory in which something can begin to happen that has never happened before.

But the we tribes, as they are emerging, are not a new monastic order. They are not interacting inside the walls of a monastery and never seeing anybody outside of it. As serious we-space practitioners, they are going to have allies and collaborators in all the different projects in which they are engaged, so their values and practices will disseminate into culture more broadly. They will want their new ways of being to be increasingly available to others and to ultimately extend to and, hopefully, permeate human culture more generally.

Certain qualities of the collective, and of the members of a we tribe, enable their relationships to be qualitatively different from conventional relationships. First, both individually and collectively, they must have a creative relationship with the unknown (and often unknowable), so that what is presently emerging in the "we" can be a potentially limitless source of awakened energy, intelligence, and guidance. This is what can lift everyone out of the powerful, unthinking automaticity of familiar habit patterns. It takes tremendous energy for a group to become coherent enough to break that momentum. The source of the energy and intelligence for such positive social change can be neither the willpower of separate individuals, which is simply too weak, nor the "group-think" of a cult or mob, which lacks the intelligence to self-correct and evolve.

The energy and wisdom is transmitted by the intersubjective field itself, which then can become a source of spiritual authority.

Actively exercising heart-based feeling-intelligence can enable we tribe members to rediscover and connect with the mystery of existence as a moment-to-moment practice. This can mature to the point where practitioners are able to navigate through life by constantly opening and giving to the source of everything they receive. This is a self-regenerating process that taps into a reservoir of almost limitless inspiration and energy. Importantly, it is both self-renewing and intelligently self-correcting and -evolving. In the past, religious and spiritual groups have sometimes accessed this tremendous energy and inspiration, but it has usually been belief-based, or teacher-based, or ritual-based, or otherwise incapable of ongoing self-correcting evolution and creative emergence. In contrast, we-space practitioners draw strength from conducting heart intelligence and energy, to create an extraordinary, coherent field.

Deepening trust is a key to group coherence. As I have said, commitment to practice makes us individually trustable. This is also true for groups. Exploring and cultivating trust in life (in all its mystery), in oneself, in one another, and in the ineffable intersubjective intelligence at the center of practice can generate the group's resilience. And this also requires the personal virtues of integrity, responsibility, authenticity, and stable commitment, which are the necessary basis for the practical day-to-day trust essential to the work. Such integrity, and the authenticity through which we can be accountable—even when we are not perfect—enable a community to sustain trust over time. But this great project of inner and outer work is always a work in progress, so we must always be willing—individually and together—to embrace practice in the next moment, and the next.

Whereas individual and group competition has always determined evolutionary success, now a new level of collective cooperation (one that doesn't jettison the benefits of competition) will determine our survival. In that effort, individual trustability becomes a powerful advantage. In this space we continually strive for honorable, trusting, mature, heart-based relationships—and when we fall short of that mark (as surely we

will), we immediately and sincerely do our best to restore things. The transformation of culture largely depends upon groups of people becoming trustable and trusting one another and thus becoming coherent and dynamic in ways we have not seen before.

Shifting one's identity from a primary focus on self to a focus that includes the whole—extending to the group, then to the whole inner and outer world—inevitably reveals defensive patterns and protective layers of self-image that get in the way of deep authenticity, openness, and intimacy. Shadow work is key to the healthy development of individuals in a close-knit collective.

All we tribes, to use developmental psychologist Robert Kegan's term, are "deliberately developmental organizations." While perhaps not an organization in the same sense as a business or institution, a we tribe is a collective with an identity, norms, and a purpose that is directed not just toward the good of the whole, but also toward developmental advances in the individuals and the collective itself. Such a we tribe explicitly intends to help cocreate a next stage of culture—a truly integral stage. That includes a practice of noticing how their consciousness and behavior tend to be subject to limiting habits and patterns. What might previously have been resisted, because it is unflattering, is allowed, because it is revelatory and therefore opens up new options. Seeing this, people intentionally and naturally drop these limiting patterns over time. "Making subject object" is Kegan's compact phrase for the maturation involved when one's own previous way of seeing reality is understood and gone beyond—a process similar to the shifts that Piaget mapped in children as they mature into higher orders of mind. Within this we-space there is also an emphasis on liberating the patterns of relating that are the invisible structures of the status quo.

One powerful shared we tribe agreement is that something genuinely novel, vital, and important can happen at any time. This generates a crucial attitude for the most powerful we-space work—an attitude of positive expectancy, curiosity, spontaneity, and attentiveness. Much can happen when this attitude is coupled with a paradoxical combination of (a) deep well-being, rooted in personal maturity and spiritual practice,

and (b) a profound sense of life mission, engendering self-transcending willingness to be of benefit to others, in service to a greater principle.

What will this look like from the outside? It will look like a tacit acknowledgment of our connectedness, as fellow members of the human family. It will take the form of making more-frequent meaningful connections, involving, for example, inviting unintrusive eye contact with strangers in public, and with friends in private. (That simple gesture of eye contact is, in a way, the most basic revolutionary act—to pierce the veil of anonymity that isolates every member of an alienated society.)

Within the tribe, it will be about coming alive in connection, about deepening evolutionary friendships as well as deepening trust, mutual generosity, and altruism. These are all aspects of awakening together in a new we-space, becoming a new kind of tribe.

FORMING YOUR WE TRIBE

Conscious collectives are appearing here and there around the world, because conditions make this a natural emergent possibility. The first metaphorical “living cells” are appearing in the body of a new polity. Since I have participated actively in integral we-spaces in my cultural ecosystem, I have used the examples I know to flesh out this discussion. But we are by no means the only such cells. This “new republic of the heart” is emerging naturally and spontaneously in many people and places. One of the most tangible expressions of it is the “new tribe” movement. Some years back, community leaders Bill Kauth and Zoe Alowan invited a group of friends in Ashland, Oregon, to become a tribe, making an enduring lifelong commitment, almost like a marriage—that they will not move and that they will be tribe to each other. Drawing on Charles Eisenstein’s inspiring writings on relationships and a gift economy, they infuse that work with a powerful spirit. They have embodied it in seminars and a book, *We Need Each Other*,⁷⁸ that can function like a manual for new tribes.

Bill Kauth was one of the founding fathers of the mythopoetic men’s movement (which has raised masculine consciousness in America since

the 1980s) and innumerable men's groups. Their work is already spawning a number of fledgling communities and seems poised to grow. So this is a movement with many "centers."

I mention this example here because it is rooted in successful community-building experiences, and it stands outside the common integral tendency toward elite self-specialness. The next generation of the integral movement is extending itself freely and creatively beyond its former boundaries, surrendering its sense of superiority and defying constraints to express its integrative impulse. In the spirit of radical integral ecology, I see a rich opportunity for cultural renewal in our recombination with communities expressing ecological and ecopsychological depth and health. This stream of original inquiry is producing many flowers and seeds that can cross-pollinate widely.

I expect many experiments will network and knit together, interpenetrating with other communities, physical and virtual, serving the emergence of a heart-based, transformative global human culture. But just as it is easy to speak of wholeness and quite a bit more difficult to *live* from wholeness, it is easy to speak of the "we" but difficult to get beyond the habits of the "me" in our thinking and reflexes. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that this fledgling cultural space is so new that there is no coherent vocabulary or set list of best practices and common understandings that clearly define it. But here I can offer some preliminary suggestions for the practice I know best—starting one's own experiment in integral we-space. The ultimate guide to this is your own deepest knowing; the soft voice that urges us toward truth-telling for the sake of life itself and all we love that seems at risk.

In my own early exploration of the edge and potential of communication, which for me meant a kind of speech that goes beyond "rhetoric,"⁷⁹ I began breaking through the walls of convention by speaking about the wicked problems we are facing and our shared existential "Genjo Koan." Amazingly, simply describing our situation charged the atmosphere, even though at that point I was giving a rather objective, or third-person, presentation of the information, facts, and research that frame my sense of our raw existential predicament.

Then I switched to the first-person subjective mode, in real time, authentically exposing my grief, my cognitive dissonance and insights, and my ongoing relationship to that confrontation and koan—and doing all of this unguardedly and boldly (as per ancient Greek *parrhesia*, or “ragged truth-telling”), but also intimately and tenderly (as per Sufi *sohbet*, or “speaking with the tongue and ear of the heart”). On that basis, with the third step I spoke directly to my conversation partners, in second-person mode, asking how it felt for us to be in this here-and-now together. I made contact with them as deeply and authentically as possible, opening up a space for us to sit together, realizing that our very way of being related to one another might possibly shift in a way that might enable us all to more effectively and holistically respond to our shared existential koan.

I encourage you too: Dare to have a conversation with your smart, sincere, deep friend, in which you say, “I realize that it is possible for our relationship to become even more alive and fruitful, and for us to edge into something new. I greatly value our connection, and I wonder what else might be possible. Where can we go where we haven’t gone before? Where are the limits here?” It can be useful to try the 3-1-2 sequence I observed: first, invoke the third-person objective reality; then speak your first-person experience, including your heartbreak and hope; and, finally, address your conversation partners directly in the second person, to invite them into deeper felt contact and a shared inquiry—and dare to lead by example. When we risk losing the comfort of the familiar to venture into something new with our spouse or with our fellow practitioner, we are right now daring to be the impulse of evolution in relationship.

Beyond that, you can approach a dear friend, partner, or fellow practitioner. Consider the groups and people you know who might be interested in change from the bottom up, starting with liberating their relationships. You can organize a tribe. Even before you are ready to commit to such a project, you can create circumstances in which you experiment more and more deeply. I have experimented and continue to do so—and I know creating a real tribe is not at all easy in our fluid, busy, hyper-mobile culture. This book describes such experiments objectively,

in third-person mode. The work of living it and community-building is appropriately more passionate (first person) and practical (second person). It is how we all can learn to grow in authenticity and integrity.

Bear in mind that the best possible preparation is to apprentice with someone who has been successfully experimenting with integral we-spaces or other forms of healthy community. You are going to have to go to the edge of your own practice, with the help of people further along the path who can help you go beyond it. You need the best companions and guides you can find. To that end, you want to seek out exceptional company, in order to be drawn forward into genuinely new territories of sociocultural synergy. In order to engage the best experiment you can, you are going to need people who understand the practice in the same terms you do, so you can practice together, expand your capacities, and stretch into your highest mutual possibilities, exercising your evolutionary impulse, the eros that drives development.

This is a companion practice to other conversations that embody the spirit of service and agape and care, which sincerely and reverently honor everyone and recognize that we are all equally precious and magnificent manifestations of the Whole. And it is this spirit of humble, selfless service that gives us the moral ground necessary to bless our attempts to sustainably defy cultural gravity.

Each individual is characterized both by unique beauty and peculiar limitations. Everybody is flawed, and also a portal to the conscious mystery of existence. This divine dimension of another person is rarely witnessed, addressed, savored, or empowered. But the practice of doing so opens everyone to the sacredness of the mystery that is living us, and the indefinable “we” that arises between and among us. It offers a powerful metaphor for opening self-focused minds up beyond themselves, to omnidirectional wonder, gratitude, service, and transparency. To see the divine in another person is to catalyze their own recognition and discovery of their own divinity.

This can be an enormously powerful transformational move; actually practiced, it’s both transmissive and invocatory. When we notice this aspect of another being, contempt becomes impossible, however

imperfectly or inconsistently they may embody their sacredness. Then we can actually feel another's divine humanity, not just as some abstract principle—which we could casually grant even to vicious criminals—but as a unique living reality.

Most people view others in ways that reify their limitations as central features of who they are. To behold and participate in the radiance of human connection is a very new cultural mode, still quite rare. For you to see my divine humanity, and thus bring it forth in me—and for me then also equally to be doing that in relation to you—is blissful. When our shared divinity is present as a tacit understanding and an ineffable third presence, the “we” also comes forward, even more sacred and trustable. This is heaven on Earth. All souls thirst for such communion. Even the tentative first expressions of it naturally create amazing fluidity and dynamism.

Such practice evokes our very best. When we join with the divinity of another person, a portal opens to another mysterious, intersubjective intelligence and wisdom that is actually *more* than the sum of the best of each of us. A third, even higher state of being, the “we,” is given space to arrive. When it does, it expresses its own unique flavor and intelligence. The back and forth of listening and sharing becomes like breathing. What is alive, awake, intelligent, and beautiful in us is taken in and appreciated in a moment, but in the next moment it comes forth in the other and is naturally received reciprocally. And in our play, the greater we that holds your “me” and mine keeps blossoming, becoming even more gloriously sacred. It is liberated and empowered to function at a whole new octave. This seems like a valuable way of describing the frontiers of human relating right now. Starting with one, or two, or a few dear friends, you can begin to open up a space of sacredness that, as you develop, can become the foundation for a radically new *we*.

SELF RESPONSIBILITY AND ADEQUACY

Only when every individual is entirely self-responsible can we relate to one another without being burdened by one another. While this may sound harsh, we can't cocreate conscious community with people whose

motivation to “join” is based on a felt need for a parental authority to help them cope with their lives. If I don’t stand in my own autonomy and self-responsibility, then I am useless, because I will just drain you—and the community will in turn become impotent to transform itself and be an effective agent of change.

On the other hand, the requirements of personal responsibility can easily leave us *too* separate, even though we’re all in this together. It’s not as simple as “I have to be responsible for my life and you have to be responsible for yours—and never the twain shall meet.” That is the basis for our common, alienated society. That disposition tends to make it impossible for us to arrive together in a sustainable “we” at all. It doesn’t acknowledge our shared destiny and shared responsibility for our common life.

We are vulnerable and need friends and community. If we go “all in” to explore our responsibility for our world, we do not leave behind our humanity. So, while the higher “we” rests on personal responsibility, it also requires openhearted embrace of one another, including embodied friendship, which includes generous care for one another in our mutual vulnerability.

It is true that, to have any meaningful conversation, we need common ground—a “community of the adequate.” Theoretical physicists can’t discuss their latest discoveries except with people who understand sufficient theoretical physics, rendering them “adequate” to the conversation. But there are many kinds of adequacy—relating not just to mental knowledge and acuity but also to lived experience, existential depth and maturity, psychological balance, spiritual awakening, moral agreement, and wise judgment. What defines adequacy for participation in a higher we-space? What kinds of skills and capacities are necessary?

Generally, participation in a higher “we” requires psychologically healthy individuals who inhabit modern, postmodern, or preferably integral cognition and worldviews. They need to be able to relax and observe the activities and patterns of thought and emotion, and to begin to sense the subtle and transpersonal space between them and another person. There is also the ability to focus and to direct attention. There must be some insight

into one's psychological shadow, and ongoing, sincere inquiry into shadow dynamics. Participants must have some capacity to endure discomfort and delay gratification. They also need enough integrity and courage to let go of the nearly universal need to "look good."

All in all, one has to have enough emotional intelligence, health, and compassion for self and others to be able to hold high levels of cognitive and emotional dissonance while remaining present with and open to others, holding a sense that all is fundamentally good and non-problematic. Over time, one develops the capacity to stably rest one's attention on others and the we field so that one begins to identify more with the emerging process than with one's own mind and feelings. When one develops competence with this, then one can begin to engage with others *from* the whole, the we. From there, one gains access to a new realm of intuition and intelligence fueled by the transparent sacredness alive in "the in-between space" of the we.

SHARED AGREEMENTS

Shared agreements are critical for a we tribe to develop coherence and become a real "community of practice," a microculture. All cultures reflect agreements about the nature of being human, about relationships, and about reality itself, even if they are often unconscious and unwritten. *The first agreement that defines a we tribe is commitment—to one another and to the work itself. The second, equally critical agreement is to a clear shared intention.*

Commitment is essential. The level and nature of participants' commitment is what creates the we-space and also what limits its potential. Commitment affects the field in two primary ways. The first is *coherence*—when there is commitment there is regular attendance, and participants get to know one another. And, like a sports team, they get good at what they are practicing together. A much greater degree of intimacy and coherence follows. This facilitates greater intersubjective depth.

The second is *accountability*. When all participants know they can count on one another—to show up, to practice, to be authentic, to care

about the work, and to do their best to awaken from unconscious patterns—the telos of their shared exploration can gain traction and build momentum. It is good if there is clear visibility, and perhaps consequences when people fail to meet their commitments. However, accountability should be designed to eliminate or at least minimize complications arising from either resistance or attraction to authorities. Both coherence and depth are powerfully magnified by commitment—especially when participants commit to work over a longer time frame of trainings or study, or even to open-ended or lifelong community involvement.

The second domain of agreement aligns participants' intentions. The most powerful and influential single factor that generates and shapes we-space is the stated shared intention with which the work originates. Even that shared intention is only effective to the degree that it is lived and expressed in the intentions and behavior of each individual participant—which is why accountability is so necessary. Most we-space practices begin with explicit or implicit statements of intention, such as “to awaken together” or “to serve the evolution of consciousness and culture.” These largely determine the character and quality of what emerges.

Skeptics might dismiss this as mere suggestibility—a “placebo” effect. And placebo dynamics certainly may apply. Of course, we are talking about subjective and intersubjective experiences, which are not measurable and quantifiable, except indirectly. In the domain of subjective experiences, the most powerful factors are intentions, beliefs, shared agreements, and the subjective states and structures of participants—the context of “set and setting.” It is no wonder that the factors most essential to subjective experiences apply equally, and perhaps even more powerfully, to *intersubjective* we-space experiences and practices.

We tribes sometimes set their intentions on very different values, either explicitly or implicitly. Interestingly, they usually achieve what they most value. Below is a list of some of the primary intended values that integral evolutionary we tribes have embraced:

- Interpersonal intimacy
- Transpersonal soul-level intimacy with Source and one another

- Awakening together in higher states of consciousness—subtle, causal, or nondual
- Opening up higher intuitive faculties, and accessing and sharing new information
- Becoming transparent to and voicing the intelligence of awareness itself, the ground of being
- Becoming transparent to and expressing the emergent aliveness of shared field, moment to moment
- Becoming transparent to and articulating the intelligence of the impulse of evolution itself
- Animating and advancing the evolutionary intention to evolve culture amidst the global crisis
- Becoming a happy, sustainable, and always-growing we tribe with a lasting commitment to one another

Each of these values and potentials can be exciting and inspiring. Each can open vistas and develop capacities of relationship that feel fresh and new, and that resonate with sacredness or wholeness in ways that evoke nothing less than awe. But they do not all have the same destination. The list above reflects a spectrum of intentions that are increasingly ambitious. What is most important to the success of each experiment is not the scale of its ambition but how well we fulfill it. Ideally it is appropriate to our capacities, even while it stretches them.

Each we-space experiment will lead to a unique and unknowable destiny. This is both the challenge and the thrill of this adventure in consciously creating a community of practice, a new microculture.

WE SPACE PRACTICES

We-space is created through present-moment, conscious intersubjective practice, which means paying attention to the quality of the awareness shared among all participants in an intersubjective field. As we've pointed out, when "I" and "you" make contact, there is a third presence

in addition to the two of us, a “something more” that is called into being—“us” or “we”—and it can possess its own intelligence. We-space practices aim first to awaken a conscious “higher we,” and then to be guided by its wisdom. As practice becomes strong, and an awakened we emerges reliably, the group builds upon it and develops further capacities.

As was also noted earlier, some we tribes focus simply on creating powerful, expanded intersubjective *states* and do not focus or depend at all on the content of what is actually spoken. Others focus on cocreative inquiry and intelligent problem solving, and the meaning and content of what is said is of primary importance. But the nearly universal injunction, across all these differences, is to keep redirecting attention to the present moment, and to relate directly, here and now. Participants stay in the present moment while opening and resting as awareness, more and more deeply and spaciously. This injunction applies across the whole spectrum of intentions.

At the most personal and practical level, honestly relating present-moment experience and feelings immediately gives your conversation partners access to your experience. That is the first building block of interpersonal intimacy. Among the simplest of we-space practices is narrating “what I’m feeling [or noticing or experiencing] right now.”

Every we tribe is unique. They can have a spectrum of intentions, which express a variety of higher purposes. Some have been stated as leaning into the future of healthy relationships; the evolution of consciousness and culture; awakening together; emerging from collective trauma; opening to the soul of the world; and evolving consciousness to meet our human challenges. These different purposes frame different qualities of group practice.

What exactly are participants practicing and intending? It varies. In some contexts, participants sense into the felt qualities of the subtle, shared intersubjective field, while in other contexts they will orient toward expressing the intelligence emerging from expanded, shared awareness, or toward very immediate, personal emotional or interpersonal content. Some practices orient away from all content, toward awareness itself, a shared field of spaciousness, consciousness, love, or joy. There can be a

progression, in which participants focus on one orienting principle, and then on another, and another.

Attention almost always shifts from the gross level of sensory experience. It may go directly to the intersubjective field, but often it is first redirected to subtle or causal levels of experience, in ways that are informed by practices of meditation and contemplation. Sometimes the injunction is to relax back into witnessing awareness, becoming attentive to—and as—awareness itself. When this is practiced authentically by a group, consciousness itself can seem to intensify palpably.

Other practices involve opening awareness into subtle information fields containing intuitive information and wisdom that is normally unavailable to mental consciousness. Another widely embraced purpose is to tune in to the universal creative evolutionary impulse as it expresses itself through the subjective experience of the participants. All these higher principles can be directly experienced subjectively when practiced alone by each individual, but when individuals come together and practice them effectively in a group, they show up more powerfully in the collective field, deepen, and self-actualize.

PRINCIPLES OF EVOLUTIONARY DIALOGUE

The we-space work of Thomas Steiner and Elizabeth Debold focuses on meaningful conversations that intend to advance human understanding. Although this work does produce changes in participants' intersubjective states, those state changes are not the focus. Steiner and Debold offer five very practical and effective grounding statements for engaging in what they call "emergent dialogue practice." I have used them with groups myself, and have found them to be extremely powerful.

By emphasizing the dialogic nature of the we-space, they draw attention to the cocreative process between practitioners, which can liberate them from the self-concern and self-consciousness that can inhibit the shift from "I" to "we." They caution that these grounding statements are not meant as rules that group members must follow, but express the qualities of engagement that emerge through an awakened "we."

Steininger and Debold call this work the Emerge Dialogue Process.⁸⁰ They recommend that groups that are experimenting with “we” practice explore these statements one at a time. Each one tends to reveal and hold within it the seeds of the others. Together, they form a holistic perspective that enlivens the space between people.

These five points are quoted here:

1. *Real dialogue arises when we are more interested in what we do not yet know rather than in what we already know.* The position of not knowing and wanting to know creates a space that helps undercut the fixed positions that individuals hold, particularly when the dialogue is about matters that are emotionally significant or have critical implications for the participants. Moreover, listening for what isn’t known places the attention of the group on the living moment and the creative potential within it.
2. *It is easy to be too intellectual or too personal. Dialogue comes alive through our shared interest in what emerges, between us, in our developing understanding and in the field of consciousness.* Being too intellectual means speaking in a way that is disconnected from one’s own human experience. We can engage in highly philosophical matters when each statement arises from a reckoning with what is real or true. Being too personal means being caught in one’s story, which pulls the attention of the group away from creating a shared we-space. Authenticity in this context means that a broader truth shines through the specificity of individual experience. Engaging from such an authenticity creates a currency of aliveness from which develops deeper comprehension and an increasingly palpable field.
3. *Really listening to each other enables us to develop a conversation that builds on each other’s contributions. Really listening allows us to come together in an ever-opening comprehension.* “Really listening” means attending to the field from which the contribution is coming, while suspending one’s usual habits of reaction and judgment. Really listening means not slotting another’s contributions

into one's own preconceived ideas or frameworks. From really listening, responses come into shared consciousness that are unexpected and alive....

4. *Every conversation lives through our active participation. Even when you are not speaking at the moment, stay with the others and be with the conversation. Bring yourself fully in.* This is the most directive of the foundations: dialogue demands engagement. This doesn't mean that every participant must speak; however, each needs to pay attention and give oneself energetically to the whole. Otherwise, the circle can have "dark" spots that affect the creative momentum itself and prevent valuable information and perspectives from entering the dialogue.
5. *Each dialogue finds its true meaning in recognizing itself as part of a larger dialogue.* When a group begins to access the Higher We consciousness field reliably, there is often an exhilaration that can very quickly turn into a group narcissism—the hubris of specialness. The desire to engage in dialogue, the movement toward integration, is an evolutionary movement that is happening across the globe. Searching for new possibilities in the face of the increasingly complex problems we face is simply the work we have to do.⁸¹

These grounding statements for catalyzing emergence in group dialogue are not exclusively applicable to the development of we-space, but are useful for almost any deep conversation. They can also energize meetings, brainstorming, community gatherings, and any other group situation where creativity is called for. The results can be surprising. You begin to see that, whether all participants can see this or not, this we-space work and intersubjective orientation catalyze an intelligence and dynamism that is universal to our humanity.

A special kind of connection becomes possible among serious integral evolutionary we-space practitioners, and it can spread into the whole spectrum of conversations we have with our family and friends and colleagues and churches and organizations—with anyone. Practicing with

a we tribe, and then crossing over into other conversations, we naturally bring the fruit of our practice—more openness, spontaneity, wholeness, receptivity, and emergent intelligence. We become freer in relation to whatever questions are troubling our culture, such as race, religion, the political divide, and our collective predicament and crisis. As we each become more adept at operating from a deeper field of awareness, in contact with our universal humanity, we can engage more readily in the boundary-breaking conversations that are so urgently needed right now.

A NEW REPUBLIC OF THE HEART

Because its center is everywhere and its circumference is nowhere, wholeness cannot be pointed to. It has no particular location, because it is not “other” than anything. But if it is anywhere, it is *here*, at the very center of each “when” and each “where.” The wisdom of the center of the being reflects the character of the whole. And we intuit its intelligence at the heart.

A new tribalism implies not just productive intertribal communications and negotiations, but a web of agreements that can hold tribal life. A republic is a representative democracy, in which constituencies choose representatives who meet together to make governmental decisions. If we are at once global and tribal, then we must learn to make global decisions that account for our tribal natures and needs. This, at least metaphorically, parallels the structure of a republic.

It is important that our best integral intelligence, centered in the heart, is never overpowered by the sophistry of clever debate. The universal impulse of evolution is expressing itself in each of us, in our desires to serve wholeness, health, and well-being. We come to care not just about benefiting ourselves and our families and friends, but about the well-being of the whole human and more-than-human collective. When we understand our whole lives as a field for the practice of wholeness, we awaken to a powerful opportunity for in-the-moment presence, reverence, and learning. In the process we find ourselves belonging to an inherent brother-sisterhood that extends to everyone else, especially those who share these understandings.

But even most people who share none of these transpersonal values still express a baseline of basic goodness in their relations to others. They show courtesy for pedestrians when they drive, and they give directions to strangers. They are kind to animals and avoid stepping on flowers. They want to laugh at a joke. The vast majority of human beings bring generalized goodwill to others and the whole world (allowing for the 0.5 to 3 percent of human beings, including psychopaths, who lack the capacity to feel empathy). That is why so many people believe that “people are basically good.”

Thus, there is a great hidden body of all that is healthy and whole about our connectedness with one another—the “social mycelium” we have described. Let’s not underestimate the potentials of the great underground reservoir of all that is good and healthy in our connectedness to one another.

Our inherent desire to serve wholeness and health in part expresses something deep and transpersonal, our social mycelium. This becomes more fully conscious in practitioners of integral heart intelligence. Thus, although we certainly continue to be citizens of communities, cities, and nations, we also become citizens of something broader and deeper.

This is already occurring. It will be increasingly important for us to recognize ourselves as “citizens” of that deeper connectedness, wholeness, and goodness. When we arrive in a commitment to act in accordance with all in us that is healthy and connected, practicing wholeness as our way of life, we become trustable citizens of what I call a “new republic of the heart.”

That new republic already exists, as our social mycelium, and as our intuition and intuitive attraction toward a still-unmanifest possibility. It is already fully present, but mainly as a potential. It is where we are heading, our telos or omega point. It is like the “strange attractor” that conjures order out of a chaotic open system as it transitions through a bifurcation point into a higher-order state. Even though it is still out of reach, it functions to orient and organize all our values, actions, projects, and plans. Moreover, as an attractor of *the* heart, not just *my* or *your* heart, it reveals a new potential in human relatedness rooted in the deepest truth of our nonseparation. I am also “we,” for real.

We are being attracted to a new *stage* of development—a level of consciousness resonant with the intelligence of the heart. In 1974, when I was living at the ashram of my teacher, Adi Da Samraj, he first described “seven stages of life.” The “fourth stage of life” is said to begin when practice matures in the awakening of what he calls “the psychic heart.” That is the stage when people begin to practice heartfelt awareness of the ultimate Reality and Source-condition and become aware of and able to magnify the current of conscious life-energy. It represents the true beginnings of a spiritual as well as more fully human life—a life of love, humor, spontaneity, and service. People we think of as saints often exude these qualities.

Long before that realization is full, its qualities come into the noosphere and begin to manifest widely. People everywhere are becoming inspired to practice living as love, simply on the basis of an intuition of higher consciousness. To the degree that they do, they reinforce a higher, more coherent “agreement space” at the level of heart intelligence. Analogous to the 10 percent tipping-point principle, a small group of people coherently living as love can hope to affect many people, and ultimately transform society. Many people in all walks of life—individually and in communities of practice—are already beginning to attempt to “live as love.” We are increasingly realizing that trying to live in “the better world our hearts know is possible” makes us brothers and sisters in a new nation—a new republic of the heart.

This new republic is being powered from below, sprouting from the social mycelium, and called from above, by an evolutionary impulse toward conscious wholeness. It is both humble and ambitious, both organic and revolutionary. Insofar as it is revolutionary, it expresses the “radical sobriety” that comes from taking to heart the “intervention” that asks us to turn the corner from addictions to our high-consumption lifestyles. But this seriousness is also profoundly happy, humorous, and loving. It is an action-inquiry that weaponizes love in service of an integral revolution into a new stage of our social life.

We do well to relate to this new republic or “nation” with the humility of a novice approaching a monastery. It is a whole new stage of consciousness, which we have to actually grow into. We rightly understand

that the “nation” to which we owe our highest allegiance is at first subtle, but nonetheless real. We do well to be careful not to dishonor this sacred brother-sisterhood by taking it for granted, disregarding its mystery, losing touch with our reverence, or acting like we can know it or own it. It is only appropriate to modestly and sincerely aspire to become worthy of such citizenship, and to be faithful to that aspiration. We approach the door anticipating a period of preparation and training. And the new republic comes into being invisibly to the degree that we are practicing in this moment. When we are exercising the total intelligence of our being, integrated at the heart, in service of something greater than ourselves, we are opening the door. When we are opening to the wholeness of this moment, in a spirit of humble mutuality and courageous leadership, we are tentatively stepping inside this new republic of the heart. To the extent that we are able to do this with others who are also daring to engage wholeheartedly, we can even begin to sense the fragrance of this new fellowship, this new polity. Through our open-ended commitment to growth, and our authenticity and transparency, the new republic becomes ever more real and tangible, and this tacit reality inspires others.

Our current predicament will, in time, inevitably evoke an entirely new ethos of citizenship and leadership. There is much about human relations we would do well to change. When people cannot trust one another, we waste tremendous resources in protecting ourselves from each other, even those we can trust. Our homes are locked, police patrol our streets, and our computers are equipped with spam filters, security systems, and passwords. Our energy for other, larger challenges and opportunities is handicapped. And meanwhile, living in a society with low levels of mutual trust further taxes us and diminishes our well-being. To recover trust and efficiency seems impossible.

But it can be accomplished, by a multigenerational project of global, whole-system social change, cultural renewal, and individual transformation. Imagine what it will require to upend the psychological and social dynamics that give rise to fraud, corruption, cheating, stealing, and lying.

We are already longing for it. Our hearts yearn for a whole new level of simplicity, trust, and care in our communal relations. Those longings are threaded underground, part of the social mycelium of a new republic of the heart.