

**Session 9 Guide**  
**Deepening Practices and Questions**  
**Chapter 8: Awakening into Evolutionary Activism**

This week focuses on **Chapter 8** of *A New Republic of the Heart*. As always, there are more questions here than you'll have time to discuss, so I suggest you select one or more to deeply discuss, consider and/or journal about.

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This chapter explores in depth some of the features of spiritually-informed whole-system change, especially how it is informed by holistic inner work. It describes some of the multitude of forms that evolutionary activism can take, and looks at specific integral initiatives. It grounds the inner work by showing some of the concrete specific ways it expresses its character *in action*. It is one of the longest chapters in the book, and it contains a wealth of important nuanced distinctions that are worth understanding clearly and discussing in depth.

**Deepening Questions:**

1. Consider the “mycelium” metaphor on page 212. This metaphor implies that there is more going on today than meets the eye of the casual observer.
  - *How might it describe a greater reality in which you are connected to the life-generating processes at work among all human beings? How does that change your relationship to innovators, activists, practitioners, and care-givers?*
  - *In what ways does it stir your skepticism?*
  - *Can you integrate doubt and hope in a way that gives you a basis for acting as though you have greater trust in life and future synergies, so you can maximize your performance and the likelihood of engendering virtuous synchronicities?*
2. The future is so unpredictable and systems are so unstable, that most of our practical projects and initiatives are vulnerable to disruption. This is why the book argues that radical transformational *practice* is crucial (see page 214) — who we are and how we are connected to each other are fundamental expressions of resilient wholeness, and they are likely to survive disruptive events, directly and indirectly. *How do you understand these dynamics? How does that understanding inform your practice? How does it inform your activism? What questions relevant to this are you currently asking?*
3. Considering *practice* as the necessary foundation for activism, please return to and reread “Four Ways of Being a Leader” from Chapter 6 (pages 166-169). This section describes a practice focused strictly on *behavior*, rather than inner transformation. Such practice would hopefully quicken and transform activist projects and organizations. *Do you feel moved to embrace these four ways of*

*being? How do they critique your current ways of being? What capacities do they require you to develop? What demands might they place on others? How might you enroll others in such a practice? How does this sharpen your perception of what it takes to engage effective activism?*

4. This chapter argues that to serve a flourishing future, we must discover positive post-ironic nobility, so we can aspire to “revolutionary” heroism. It rehabilitates and valorizes the archetype of the revolutionary, arguing that the essential health of life and evolution themselves, in a time of fragmentation and crisis, are This book argues (pages 215–18) that the most truly revolutionary thing we can do in our time is to bring wholeness (and healing) into this world of fragmentation. *Consider the reasons why this may be so. What are your doubts and questions about the utility of “revolutionary” framing? How might you have to grow to inhabit that archetype with integrity and dignity?*
5. In the subhead section “The Integral Heart in Action” (p 215-218) the book describes a revolutionary spirit guided by the integrated intelligence of the heart, head and hara and motivated to restore health, wholeness, and integrity amidst a crisis of fragmentation. It means a commitment to what some have called the “inner jihad” against unconsciousness and reactivity, a life of continual growth and practice. So it is a revolution grounded in an intuition of our “prior unity” and expressing empathy, love and trust in being. *To make sure you understand these distinctions clearly, please speak this in your own words. Does this lofty vision seem impractical and idealistic to you? How would you and others have to engage with social change in order to ground it and validate its high ideals?*
6. Three “domains of evolutionary activism” are described here (pages 218–28); they involve working “in the system,” “against the system,” and “around the system.” Although individuals and organizations may choose to work primarily in any one (or two) of these ways, all three are necessary and, ultimately, complementary. *Consider why this is so. What is the unique value and what are the limitations that pertain to each of these three broad general forms of activism? How might they work synergistically?*
7. This chapter argues that in-the-system activism is crucial, and that voting is “a moral obligation,” even in a system that is corrupt and intransigent. (See page 220.) Imagine you’re speaking to someone arguing against this position, for example saying to you  
“Our vote doesn’t count. It’s like thinking the drummer hears you when you yell at him from the nosebleed seats. According to NBC News, only people in a handful of swing states had anything but an infinitesimal chance that their vote would affect the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. You’re almost 100% assured you could switch your vote in every major election throughout your life and the outcome would be the same. So your vote is meaningless. Most folks don’t really think their votes will have an appreciable effect. So why do they vote? They vote to express themselves because the immediate cost of doing so is negligible. They vote in accordance a wished-for state-of-affairs or unrealistic ideal. And they vote in solidarity with those they perceive as their fellows or tribe.”

*Rebut this argument. What is its fatal flaw? Consider our moral obligations to non-US persons. What is the flaw of the often-heard argument that we shouldn't vote for—or support in any way—the “lesser of two evils”?*

8. Four examples of innovative integral initiatives are described on pages 230–41. These are creative initiatives that think and act in multidimensional and/or nonlinear ways. Their beneficial effects operate on at least two or three levels. *Reread them and consider them in more depth. What exciting characteristics are visible these initiatives? Which characteristics are common to them all? What makes these approaches integral and/or evolutionary?*
9. *Why does around-the-system activism always require some participation within the system? Does this kind of participation mean acquiescing to the system's flaws, inefficiencies, and corruption? (See page 241.)*
10. The section, “Integral Politics” (pages 242–246) opens up a vision for a new politics based on envisioning a “Future Left” and “Future Right”. *In what ways are the visions of Ken Wilber, Steve McIntosh and Robb Smith convergent? Divergent? If you have read into Metamodern politics based on the links in last week's email, please identify how those insights inform these debates. What, in your opinion, is the most realistic trajectory toward a regenerative integral politics?*
11. American politics have polarized even further since the writing of the section “The USA's Red/Blue Divide”. *How do recent events affect your perception of this section? How does this section shine a light on recent events? How do recent events call for an updating of this discussion?*
12. The transpartisan movement (pages 250–55) sets an intention to heal the seemingly intractable red/blue (or liberal/conservative) divisions within our culture and political system. It is not yet perceived as consequential in national political discourse. *Why not? Might it be doing good despite this? (e.g., planting seeds for future social transformation)? How might the transpartisan movement might become more effective?*
13. Effective activism draws not only upon conventional expertise but a deeper source, satyagraha, soul-power (as described at the end of chapter 7). *What does that mean to you in the context of discrete action? This chapter suggests we “follow our heartbreak—and our genius—with our friends”. Describe your sense of how this might apply in your case. How might it mobilize and empower your activism, and infuse your life and work with energy and creativity?*

### **Group Practice:**

- 1) Before your meeting begins, choose one or two of the questions above as a focus for your book group meeting.

- 2) Begin the meeting with a reading that evokes a felt sense of contact with the nature of soul work. Choose anything you are drawn to. You can use this section from Chapter 8 (the very last paragraphs from the chapter are also appropriate and quite inspiring):

We 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”).

- 3) Then, take turns sharing your responses to the question. Speak for 5-10 minutes. Then leave time for brief (~1-2 minute) responses, reflections and insights from the other participants. Give the person a chance to complete with his/her own final statement.
- 4) Five to ten minutes before your end time, take turns sharing a “last round” of appreciations and questions you are taking from your meeting.

### **Personal Practice**

1. Act. Engender at least some small increment of objective social change.
  - A. Do something specific and tangible to affect in-the-system political outcomes.
  - B. Do something specific and tangible to engage in around-the-system activism.
  - C. Discuss and explore your choices and learnings with others.
- D. If you live outside the USA and would like to influence US politics (which are in crisis and influence the whole world) even though you can't donate to candidates or parties, you can consider donating to US nonprofit organizations focused on the environment, civil liberties, gun control, indigenous communities, women's rights, racial justice, and/or many other key issues.

If you are in the United States and you have no ready connection to how you can help, consider going to <https://postcardstovoters.org> and register. Or work with another such program, called [Vote Forward](#).

Do you know anyone whose vote might help make a difference but who might NOT vote? Reach out such people. See if you can get them to commit to voting formally on <https://iwillvote.com>. Make a bigger or more regular political donation than you otherwise would. In whatever ways are congruent for you, start doing something, moving your body through time and space, to make a difference to our upcoming midterm elections. This will not only make a difference in the world, it will change your relationship to the larger issues we are discussing.