

THE MAGAZINE FOR EVOLUTIONARIESSM



What does the future look like to **you** ?

- **STUART KAUFFMAN:** The Emergentist
- **BARBARA MARX HUBBARD's** evolutionary heroes

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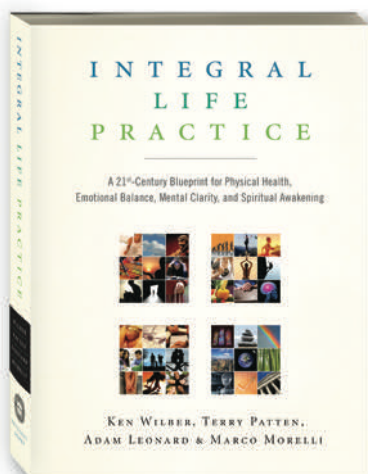
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THE MAGAZINE FOR EVOLUTIONARIESSM

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Awakening the Authentic Self

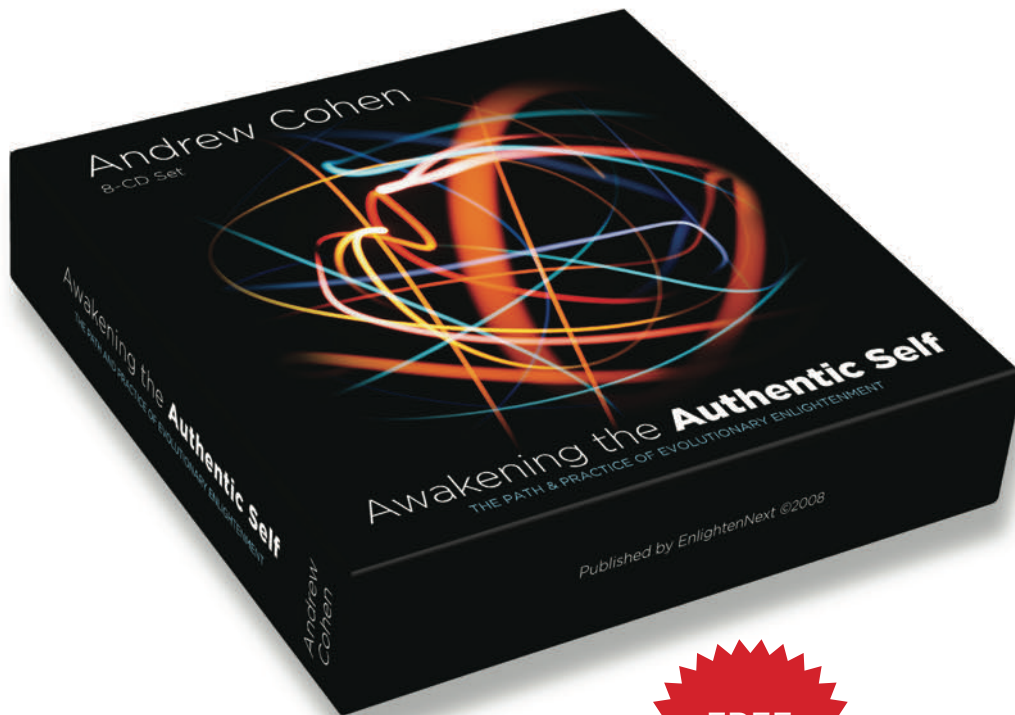
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formerly  enlightenment

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Building the Foundations of a New Worldview

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The Evolutionary Spirituality of John F. Haught

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An Interview with Susan Neiman

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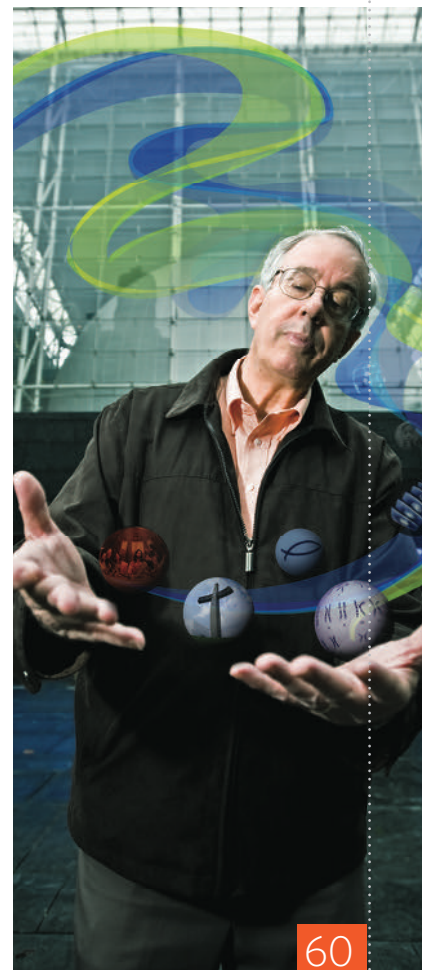
BY ELIZABETH DEBOLD

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An Interview with Arianna Huffington

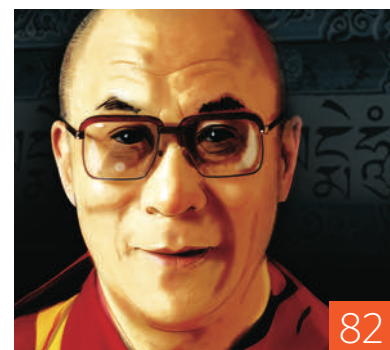
Arianna Huffington, political pundit and editor in chief of the award-winning online newspaper *The Huffington Post*, tells us why she believes that politics, culture, and consciousness itself are evolving in response to a deep yearning for transcendence that she calls “the fourth instinct.”

BY ELIZABETH DEBOLD



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ANDREW COHEN AND KEN WILBER

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Getting to Know the World's Most Popular Spiritual Icon

He shoulders the legacy of the Buddha, the hopes of a nation, and the expectations of the world. But what's it really like to be the Dalai Lama? Here, a BBC journalist provides a candid look at a leader who carries his enormous responsibilities with lightness, humility, and a sweetly roguish sense of humor.

BY JOSHUA DUGDALE

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NEW



ONLINE EXCLUSIVE:

"My Way to Integral Thinking"

In this special online-only feature, one of the world's foremost integral ecologists takes readers on a personal and philosophical exploration of deep ecology, Martin Heidegger, father-son relations, and the quest for a new worldview.

by Michael Zimmerman

enlightennext.org/zimmerman

THEME PAGES

Explore the best of *EnlightenNext* magazine, artfully presented in thematic, easy-to-browse multimedia pages.

- ✦ Sex, Religion, and Spirituality
- ✦ Enlightened Politics
- ✦ Spiral Dynamics
- ✦ The Next Women's Liberation
- ✦ Science, Consciousness, and the Soul
- ✦ Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber . . . and more!

enlightennext.org/themes



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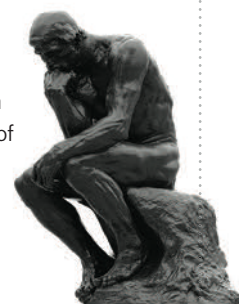
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THINK ABOUT THIS

Expand your mind with thought-provoking insights, quotes, and videos hand-picked by our editors—along with the occasional update about the world of EnlightenNext. Sign up for our weekly email by using the box on the right side of the page at enlightennext.org/magazine.



Coming Soon!

THE HIP & THE HOLY

Stay tuned for the debut of "The Hip & the Holy," the official *EnlightenNext* magazine editors' blog, where you'll be able to leave comments and engage directly with other Evolutionaries about the state of world affairs; read article and interview outtakes from the magazine; see what's planned for upcoming issues; and much more. Coming soon to enlightennext.org/magazine.

EnlightenNext Unbound

Subscribe to *EnlightenNext Unbound*, our premiere multimedia service, to receive exclusive weekly audios, videos, and downloadable MP3s featuring interviews with the leading-edge visionaries, mystics, scientists, philosophers, and activists seen in the pages of *EnlightenNext* magazine.

This issue's featured audios:

"An Integral Approach to Evolution and Enlightenment" with Ken Wilber and Andrew Cohen:

enlightennext.org/gurupandit-live

"Idealism for Grown-Ups" with Susan Neiman:

enlightennext.org/neiman

"The Fourth Instinct" with Arianna Huffington:

enlightennext.org/huffington

"Tales of a Paranormal Life" with Russell Targ:

enlightennext.org/targ

"The Lives of Sri Aurobindo" with Peter Heehs:

enlightennext.org/heehs

"Voices from the Integral Frontier" with Steve McIntosh, Ewan Townhead, Jeff Salzman, and Calvin Phipps:

enlightennext.org/integralemergence

enlightennext.org/unbound

The World of EnlightenNext

EnlightenNext is more than a magazine—it's an organization, a movement, a state of consciousness. It's what happens when the freedom, joy, and liberating clarity of spiritual enlightenment come together with a passionate sense of responsibility for evolution, for what's *next*.

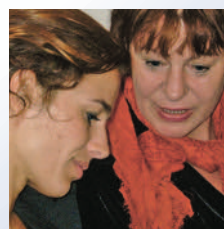
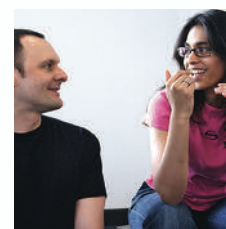
Founded in 1988 by spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, we've been working for more than two decades to generate new currents of inspiration, purpose, and awakened optimism that are fueling a cultural sea change and igniting the creative passion of thousands of Evolutionaries around the world.



→ How can you participate in creating the future? *Become an Evolutionary*

EnlightenNext is the hub of a growing global network of Evolutionaries—thinking people who are looking to the unknown terrain of the future and stepping forward to help define what that future will be. An Evolutionary is someone who is interested in evolution at all levels, all the way from our cosmic origins to the leading edge of cultural development. If you're inspired by life, turned on by what's possible, and want to participate in unleashing the enormous creative potential that exists within us as human beings, then:

- **SIGN UP** at www.enlightennext.org
- **CHECK OUT** our global calendar of educational courses, workshops, lectures, and events.
- **CONNECT** to a thriving network of Evolutionaries and more than ten EnlightenNext centers around the world.
- **LISTEN** to our weekly webcasts with featured guests, including the editors of *EnlightenNext* magazine.
(Thursday evenings in the US, UK, Germany, Netherlands, France, and Denmark)



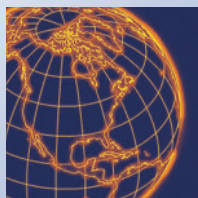
→ Changing the world *from the inside out!*

For most Evolutionaries, it's not enough just to be an activist, and it's not enough just to be a spiritual practitioner either. *We have to be both.* That's why at EnlightenNext, all of our programs and events—including this magazine—are informed by the ceaseless evolutionary interplay between inner and outer, interior and exterior, consciousness and culture.

The rich interface between these two fundamental dimensions of reality is the nexus of creative engagement that is at the heart of everything we do, including a perpetual cycle of evolutionary development that revolves around two major annual events:

The EnlightenNext Conference for Evolutionaries

We invite you to help us inaugurate this landmark international gathering, our first annual conference of thinkers, mystics, idealists, and activists devoted to integral transformation, evolutionary spirituality, and cutting-edge cultural inquiry. Mark your calendars now—more information will follow over the coming months, but you won't want to miss this unique event!



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To find out more, go to: www.EnlightenNext.org

Letters

Send your letters to letters@enlightennext.org or PO Box 2360, Lenox, MA 01240 USA



Issue 41
August-October 2008

BALANCING THE GENDER SCALES

I have just read your latest issue cover to cover. I must admit that when it arrived, I glanced at it and thought, "Ho hum, this might be boring." I stand corrected.

As a female who remembers the particularly tumultuous years in the late 1960s, the whole issue of a new type of masculinity was pretty much in the background for me. Women were fighting, and emerging from, centuries of being held down. It has been a difficult battle which is still not complete.

So I went into this issue with half interest, but I emerged with a perspective that absolutely engaged me. As with most revolutions, the scale is tipped in the direction for which the revolution is being fought. It's almost a given that you have to try to grow the battle beyond what you actually want in order to have the majority of it take hold. This carries its own dangers, in that some areas will tip too far. And this is what I believe we are seeing has happened, based

on the expressions of confusion and pain rendered in the articles.

Maybe instead of trying to become gender neutral, we need to look at how we can coexist as male and female while still remaining free to bring our best strengths forward individually. Trying too hard to force gender neutrality carries a real risk of diminishing the better points of the yin-yang attributes that are inherent in our humanness. Giving male and female freedom to contribute their best without dominating each other in order to rise to the top might perhaps head us in a better direction.

*Suzanne Tate
East Norriton, PA*

IN DEFENSE OF SCANDINAVIA

As a native Norwegian, I was excited to see an article involving Scandinavia in the latest issue of *EnlightenNext*. I am grateful to have been born and raised in a country consisting of individualists with a long tradition of strong independent women (and men). It is understandable that after a period where the pendulum swung toward feminine values (God knows how long it has been swinging the other way globally!), some men are naturally now struggling to find their role in a changing society. This is part of both men's and women's collective journey and evolution.

I must say though that I don't recognize the picture of the "lost look" in men that

Debold paints in her article.

My own brothers seem to have had no problems growing up in modern Norway. In fact, both seem to have taken to it like fish to water, and I am happy to say that between them they have raised six wonderful children and are living in very stable, long-lasting marriages.

When I go home, I keep thinking how lucky the children are to be brought up in such a safe and sound environment. To call Norwegian society a "patriarchy in drag" seems to make an absolute mockery of a country which, according to the UN, is among the best to live in. As Andrew Cohen keeps rightly saying, we are in the process of creating the future, and the Scandinavian model is not a finished product but is still being born. No doubt, the pendulum will keep swinging in the direction it needs to swing in order to find its equilibrium, and I do believe that Norwegian men will find their role in the coming age.

*Hanne Jahr
UK*

THE HORROR OF FLATLAND

We greatly appreciate your recent focus on the issues of gender. These important and contentious issues have been the subject of our study and professional life for over twenty years, mainly in the UK and Scandinavia.

Our own experience of Scandinavian culture is of pretty

flat social gender roles, with a lot of confusion about what it actually means to be a man or a woman, even though many people look to these countries as having a particularly enlightened relationship towards gender and sexuality. From our point of view, the problems that *EnlightenNext* has begun to address are confounded by the frequent confusion of equality with sameness, coupled with the deep post-modern fear of difference. Our inability to escape from these dilemmas has resulted in what Ken Wilber has called the horror of "flatland." You might even say that this predicament is causing more harm than the rigid but shallow patriarchal paradigm we have been trying to escape from.

It is an irony of life that well-wishers often construct the wrong things for all the right reasons. We desperately needed feminism, but we can now probably all agree that it was just the beginning of a further evolutionary move towards learning what it may mean to become fully human men and women.

*Helena Løvendal-Sørensen
and Nick Duffell
Denmark and the UK*

MASTODON MASCULINITY

I read your latest issue from cover to cover and found only one word to describe it: pathetic. If this is conscious evolution, I say pull the plug right now.

How feeble the outcries of the wounded and aimless men

Letters continued on page 106

Editorial

Welcome to *EnlightenNext*, the magazine for Evolutionaries! Who is an Evolutionary? Anybody who's interested in everything about evolution, all the way from our cosmic origins to the leading edge of cultural development. An Evolutionary is someone who is turned on by life and excited by the enormous creative potential that exists within us as human beings.

The evolutionary impulse—the urge to become—is an inherently *spiritual* impulse. I have noticed that whenever an individual or group of individuals awakens to this impulse, in a miraculous way the inner light of consciousness becomes infused with a passion and an optimism about what's possible that is nothing less than life changing.

You might not know it, but what you have in your hands is not just a magazine; *EnlightenNext* is an international organization of individuals who are first and foremost committed to sharing this enlightening perspective and liberating experience. All of the work that we do is dedicated to furthering this cause. In fact, as you read these words, we are busy planning an international conference about the relationship between the evolution of consciousness and culture to be held in 2010. We are also holding our first-ever *EnlightenNext* Being & Becoming twenty-one-day spiritual retreat in Tuscany, Italy, next summer. These retreats help catalyze the kind of awakening that makes evolution mean a lot more than what Darwin had in mind!

All of our loyal readers will know that for the last seventeen years we have been publishing under the banner *What Is Enlightenment?* The reason we decided to change our name to *EnlightenNext* was because we now want the name of our magazine to express what our broader mission has really always been: to energetically inquire into the future of spirituality, culture, morality, philosophy, science, cosmology, and consciousness. We're interested in making the deepest rational sense out of life while remaining true to the most transcendent mystical insights. We're interested in the future and how we can all create it together in the most spiritually enlightened manner.

That's why, for example, in this inaugural issue we're presenting the compelling ideas of philosopher Susan Neiman, who, in the feature "Idealism for Grown-Ups," explains how the political right has usurped the high ground when it comes to the prickly question of what morality is. She calls progressives to embrace a new kind of heroism based on our highest ideals. In "The Interdynamics of Culture and Consciousness," the great American philosopher Ken Wilber, the "pandit," and myself, the "guru," continue our six-year-long in-depth discussion about our favorite topics: What does it mean for enlightenment to evolve? How is the evolution of consciousness directly



related to the evolution of culture? What is integral consciousness? And more . . .

In "A Theologian of Renewal," executive editor Carter Phipps eloquently paints a personal and philosophical portrait of an evolutionary hero of our time—Catholic theologian John Haught. Haught passionately and courageously embraces the great contributions of Western science and has a deep appreciation for the highest mystical dimensions of Christianity, expanding upon the evolutionary insights of the extraordinary twentieth-century Jesuit priest and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In "The Integral Emergence," associate editor Joel Pitney investigates the many groups around the world that have taken up the integral banner. He presents a thoughtful picture of what this new and important emerging worldview is all about and what those individuals who are its leaders are saying about their fledgling movement. We are also pleased to be able to present a unique inside glimpse of the personality of the Tibetan saint the Dalai Lama by filmmaker Joshua Dugdale. While to most the Dalai Lama may seem like a compassionate and dignified yet inscrutable elder statesman, in this moving piece you will see that beneath his monk's mild manner there is a rambunctious provocateur whose sense of humor at times matches his compassion and love for humanity. And in the final article of the features section, trailblazing political pundit Arianna Huffington of *The Huffington Post* points us all to a truth beyond both left and right.

As you can see from the contents of our premier *EnlightenNext* issue, we take the evolution of consciousness and culture very seriously indeed. And for those of us who want to effect real and meaningful change at the leading edge, moving higher and deeper is something we have to engage in together. In order to do so, we must appreciate the inextricable connection between the innermost dimensions of ourselves and the outer world that we ceaselessly create. The more we recognize this connection, the more profound will be our ability to take responsibility for such a lofty aspiration. Join the adventure!

Andrew Cohen
Founder and Editor in Chief

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—BARBARA MARX HUBBARD, author of *Conscious Evolution: Awakening Our Social Potential*

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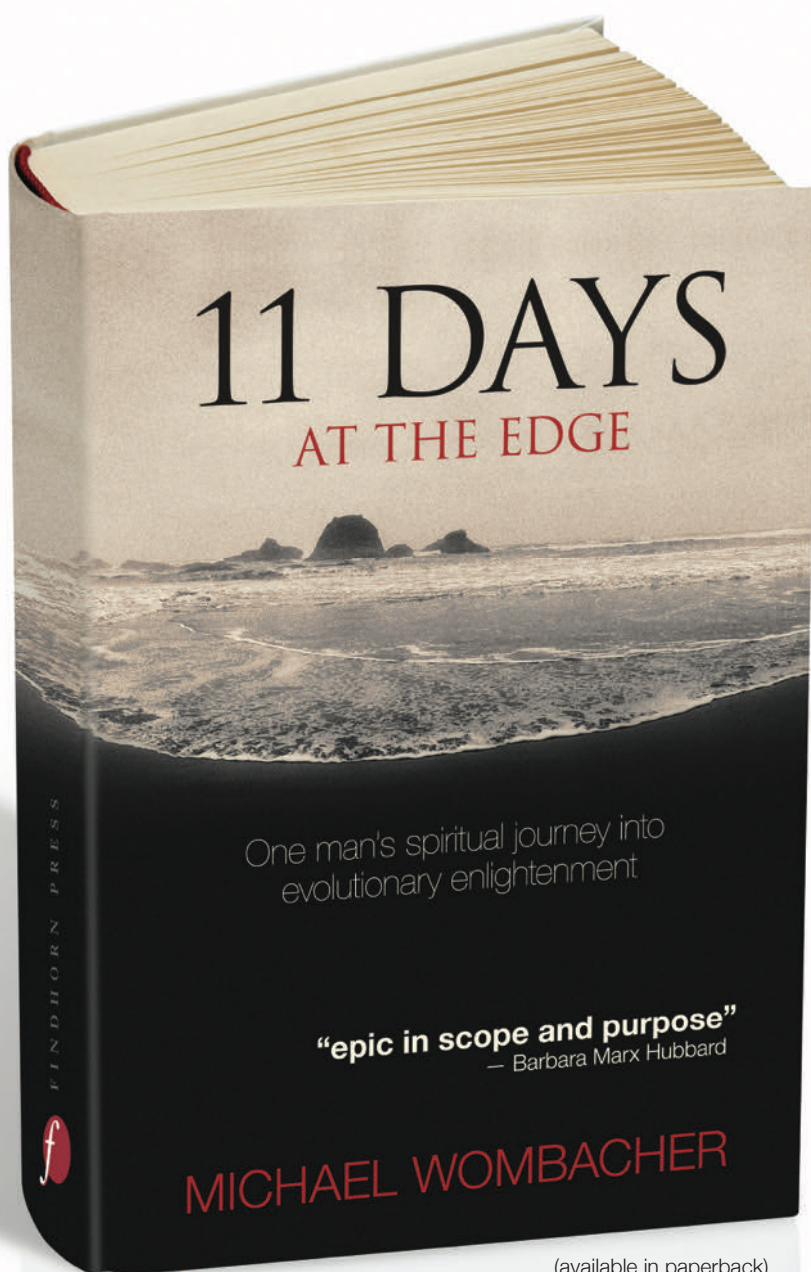
ERVIN LASZLO, author of *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything*

“Wombacher’s engaging account of his spiritual journey with Andrew Cohen is a beautiful and compelling read. His book conveys a palpable sense of the “transmission” that an authentic spiritual teacher can give to his or her students. I highly recommend *11 Days at the Edge* to anyone interested in the work of Andrew Cohen in particular, and evolutionary enlightenment in general.”

STEVE MCINTOSH, author of *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution*

“Michael Wombacher has given us a clear and beautiful story of eleven days spent with Andrew Cohen, an authentic American spiritual master. A delightful introduction to Evolutionary Enlightenment.”

ALLAN COMBS, author of *The Radiance of Being: Understanding the Grand Integral Vision; Living the Integral Life*



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Divine Comedy

Comedians have always been voices for the cultural zeitgeist. Whether it be **Lenny Bruce**'s bohemian critique of conventional society in the sixties or **Jerry Seinfeld**'s hilarious glorification of the superficial in his nineties "show about nothing," comics have an uncanny ability to shed light on the questions, quirks, and contradictions of the age. In recent years, as spiritual and philosophical issues like the creation-versus-evolution debate and the search for the ultimate origins of consciousness are moving more and more into public awareness, a whole variety of professional comics are starting to get serious about some of life's deepest existential questions.

Take, for example, superstar comedian **Jim Carrey**, of *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* fame, a student of contemporary mystic **Eckhart Tolle** who happily spreads the word about "the power of now" to anyone who will listen. Then there's Comedy Central's **Lewis Black**, whose 2008 book, *Me of Little Faith*, catalogues his eclectic spiritual journey and "why it makes [him] laugh." Black's rants include an explanation of why hell must be similar to an airport waiting lounge and why he carries around a fossil to throw at any creationists he happens to meet. Also joining what Black calls the "search for organized religion's funny bone" is HBO's **Bill Maher**, whose new documentary *Religulous* pokes fun at belief in its most peculiar forms (featuring interviews with polygamists, "Ex-Jews for Jesus," and a pair of gay Muslim fundamentalists). Even the great **John Cleese**, who brought us Monty Python and the Ministry of Silly Walks, has taken his search for the meaning of life to new heights. He's a member of the Center for Theory and Research at **Esalen Institute**, the world-famous spiritual mecca, and is currently doing sketches about the funny contradictions inherent in science's search for the infamous "God gene."

So what do these gnostic comedians have to contribute to the quest for ultimate meaning? **Mike Myers**, whose friendship with **Deepak Chopra** helped to inspire his starring role in *The Love Guru*, says that it has to do with the relationship between humor and truth. In the foreword to Chopra's most recent book, *Why Is God Laughing?*, Myers writes, "Comedy equals truth and truth equals spiritual growth. Plainly put, 'ha ha' is related to 'ah ha,' the sound one makes upon the realization of truth." And while these sarcastic sages may not put gurus, preachers, and rabbis out of business any time soon, their witty wisdom is evidence that even the pursuit of higher meaning can, at times, be a laughing matter.



Numbers



Existential Oxymorons

When the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life released its landmark *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* in June, it was overflowing with all kinds of fascinating data. Based on a sample of over 35,000 adults, the

study (at religions.pewforum.org) maps the diversity of Americans' religious beliefs and practices, as well as their social and political views, covering everything from ideas about God and the afterlife to attitudes on abortion, homosexuality, evolution, and the environment. But hidden in this statistical smorgasbord were also a few rather odd numbers. Would you believe it if we told you that:

- + **20%** of atheists actually believe in God?
- + **57%** of evangelicals say that many religions can lead to eternal life?
- + Just **61%** of Hindus in the US believe in reincarnation?
- + Only **62%** of Buddhists in the US believe in nirvana?



Integral City

"When I first explored Google Earth and zoomed out to see the planet from the stratosphere," says *Integral City* author **Marilyn Hamilton**, "I was intrigued that from space our cities look like 'human hives.'" Contemplating how beehives are finely tuned ecosystems

that support the flora and fauna around them gave Hamilton the inspiration to think about cities as hives that could sustain the ecosphere and enhance human development. Both a protégé of Spiral Dynamics founder **Don Beck** and a founding member of Integral Institute, Hamilton brings nearly two decades of her research on urban communities to fruition with the publication of her first book, which provides mayors and community activists with a framework for creating buzzing cities.



Rediscover Your Heart

Rediscover Your Heart tells the story of one man's remarkable conversion from a real estate tycoon to a global humanitarian activist, and it details the lessons he learned along the way about "living an Infinite life." By age twenty-seven, Dutch philanthropist

Fred Matser was already CEO of the largest real estate firm in the Netherlands, but a

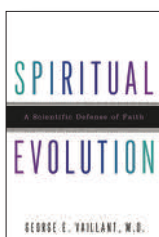
surprising series of paranormal experiences and immersions in cosmic consciousness eventually led him to resign his post and start volunteering for the Red Cross. Twenty-five years later, this unusual businessman has brought new energy to fields as diverse as health care, education, conservation, and peacemaking. "For me," writes **Mikhail Gorbachev**, "Fred represents the emerging global civil society. . . . We need many more people like [him]."



The Really Hard Problem and Spiritual Evolution

In consciousness studies, the "hard problem" refers to that perennial mystery: How does the material brain give rise to conscious awareness? But in Duke University philosopher **Owen J. Flanagan's** latest book, *The Really Hard Problem*, he explains why this question

pales next to a more challenging matter: How can anyone find deep meaning in a strictly material universe? Harvard psychiatrist **George E. Vaillant's** new book, *Spiritual Evolution*, may hold the answer. Although Vaillant is an avowed materialist, he insists that even people like him can happily look to spirituality for a tried-and-true source of meaning in their lives. Granted, Vaillant's premise seems a bit contradictory, but anyone who makes a rigorously argued 200-page case for spirituality being "a positive force in human evolution" is A-OK by us.



On Screen

Surfwise

Have you ever dreamed of leaving mainstream society completely behind for life on the road, a life unchained by expectation, closer to the essence of things? **Dorian "Doc" Paskowitz** did, and at the height of a successful career as a doctor, he gave it all up to embark on an odyssey of simplicity, frugality, freedom, and a daily dose of surfing for himself, his wife, and his nine skinny surf-rat kids. *Surfwise*, a smart new documentary from Magnolia Pictures, tells the story of the Paskowitz family's nomadic existence in a 24-foot camper, sleeping like sardines, eating a clean diet modeled on the nutritional habits of primates, and chasing after the perfect natural high. Their lifestyle was a unique combination of discipline and chaos, and for good and for bad, it brought them what Doc was looking for—both material hardship and spiritual vibrance.



Wilber Watch

Are you living an integral life? Inquiring minds, like **Ken Wilber's**, want to know. Though recognized primarily as a theoretician and as the author of massive volumes outlining his integral philosophy of life, the universe, and everything, Wilber has always insisted that the integral perspective would

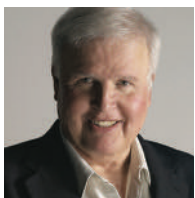
not amount to much if readers didn't strive to embody it in their own lives. Now, with the launch of a major new website and book, Wilber's call for would-be integralists to put theory into practice is blaring forth from all quadrants like never before.

The for-profit branch of Wilber's Integral Institute, *Integral Life*, which is headed up by CEO **Robb Smith**, made its public debut in August with its long-awaited and extensive website, IntegralLife.com. The site includes interactive presentations of integral theory, videos and audios by Wilber and others, and a lively community of like-minded souls compelled to be, as the site's tagline suggests, "free to be fully human."

To aid them in their quest, *Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening* was just published by Integral Books, an imprint of Shambhala. Written by Wilber, **Terry Patten**, **Adam Leonard**, and **Marco Morelli**, this 416-page manual for integral living aspires to be "an integral 'rosetta stone' . . . a means for translating the myriad conversations about practice and growth into a single common language," as coauthor Patten puts it. "I think this makes it a crucial tool," he adds, "for forging deeper alliances among 'evolutionaries' who want to collaborate as we all make our contributions to the Universe Project." Now that's the kind of "common language" we like to hear!



Kudos



To Don Beck, grand master of the **Spiral Dynamics Integral** (SDi) model of cultural evolution (based on the pioneering work of his mentor, the late developmental psychologist **Clare Graves**), for helping the **American Psychological Association** pioneer a new field of psychological research called “large scale psychology” (LSP). Based primarily on SDi and other developmental systems that emphasize the worldviews, values, and motivations of large populations—such as cities, countries, and cultures—LSP will undoubtedly bring a long-overdue level of legitimacy and respect to the work of Beck and other leading integral thinkers, as it begins providing mainstream scientists with powerful new tools to make sense of our world.



To E.O. Wilson, Harvard’s acclaimed evolutionary biologist, for bravely upsetting the neo-Darwinian status quo in the world of evolutionary theory. While reigning theorists such as **Richard Dawkins** hold that evolution is a strictly microscopic affair, geared toward propagating an individual organism’s “selfish genes” at all costs, Wilson begs to differ. Based on new research involving the evolution of ant colonies, Wilson is now convinced that “survival of the fittest” is a law that also applies to entire social groups, thanks to what might be called “cooperation of the fittest.” It’s a view that has gained increasing attention in recent years for helping to explain the development of altruistic and moral behavior in certain species—like human beings—without reducing such acts of kindness to genetic self-interest alone.



On Our Bookshelf

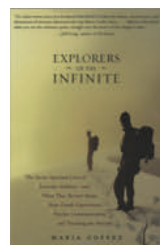


“‘*Si tu tombes, tu meurs*’—if you fall, you die—was the mantra of the late Patrick Vallencant, one of the French pioneers of extreme skiing. In the 1970s he tackled mountain faces in the Alps and South America that were deemed impossible to ski. . . .

His margin of error was zero, and his level of control was, according to one journalist, ‘verging on the supernatural.’

“‘At the beginning of any speed descent,’ writes Vallencant, ‘concentration of incredible intensity fills me . . . the world disappears. . . . To ski a very steep slope is completely beautiful; it is pure, hard, vertical, luminous in a dimension that, by its nature, is foreign to us, yet I become a part of this cosmic dimension. . . . I have the impression, after a descent, of dropping all restraints—my heart is open and free, my head is clear . . . all the beauty of the world is within the mad rhythm of my blood.’ ”

—from *Explorers of the Infinite: The Secret Spiritual Lives of Extreme Athletes* by Maria Coffey



Sites & Blogs



www.arlingtoninstitute.org

The Arlington Institute, founded and directed by futurist John L. Petersen, is a nonprofit think tank dedicated to tracking and predicting significant future trends and events around the world. Be sure to check out their “FUTUREdition” e-newsletter, an excellent resource for the latest news in technology, science, politics, and society at large.



www.intent.com

Founded by media entrepreneur Mallika Chopra, Intent is a new blog community specializing in “personal, social, spiritual, and environmental” concerns. Although the site is just getting started, it already features some lively commentary and discussion, including insightful posts by Rabbi Michael Lerner, Lynne McTaggart, and others.



www.integralpraxis.blogspot.com

Integral Praxis, blog of the Integral Research Group, is your one-stop shop for all the latest news from the emerging integral revolution (see p. 54). The site also hosts a number of original essays and interviews in addition to thought-provoking posts analyzing current events through the clarifying lens of integral theory.



www.chrisjordan.com

Seattle artist Chris Jordan’s latest work seeks to expose the alarming degree of consumption and waste in America. Taking abstract statistics about American society, such as the number of cups used by airlines every day, he translates them into stark digital images that convey the data in a way that numbers alone could never do.

Evolution is something you do.

A life-changing intensive with the founder of *EnlightenNext*

Andrew Cohen

Join spiritual leader and cultural visionary Andrew Cohen

for a pioneering training in the evolution of consciousness. In a spirit of creative investigation with people from many walks of life, you will discover that the experience of enlightened consciousness beyond ego can do a lot more than bring you in touch with the perfect fullness of who you already are. It is the ground for an entirely new life and an entirely new culture based on the *Authentic Self*—the creative impulse behind the whole evolving universe surging forward inside you and transforming the bedrock of your relationships with others.

Evolutionary Enlightenment Retreats

give you the actual experience of evolving consciousness, the tools to translate this experience into significant change, and most importantly, a revolutionary perspective on our untapped potential to develop and uplift consciousness and culture on a scale that can help to shape the future of our world.

What people are saying:

"If you are interested in going from 0 to 90 in thirty seconds, so that you can be a vehicle for the force of evolution to work through, this retreat will start your engine and keep it running."

Alison E.

"There is nothing theoretical about this. Andrew brings participants with him on a fearless exploration of the leading edge of conscious evolution."

George M.

"I have never met anyone who even comes near Andrew's abilities as a teacher, nor have I ever encountered a subject or purpose of greater significance for the time we are living in."

Peter R.



"An extraordinary latent potential for unbridled creative engagement and egoless compassion lies deep within us, waiting to be released into this world. But most of us don't see this, or if we do, we don't realize that it is not going to happen by itself. At this juncture in human history, the evolution of our species requires one thing and one thing only—our conscious, whole-hearted participation. We bear a profound responsibility to be evolutionary pioneers."

Andrew Cohen

The 2009 *Spring Retreat* **Lenox, MA April 1-5**

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Information and registration: 413.637.6000 or 800.376.3210 (US) 020 7288 7000 (UK)

www.andrewcohen.org/retreats



Stuart Kauffman *The Emergentist*

For the past forty years, Stuart Kauffman has been pushing the edge of our understanding of the origins of life and the evolutionary dynamics of the natural world. As one of the world's foremost molecular biologists and complexity theorists, he has achieved widespread acclaim for his research into the mystery of how new levels of order and self-organization spontaneously spring into being out of apparently random systems—a little-understood phenomenon called “emergence.” His latest book is *Reinventing the Sacred*.

How does our scientific understanding of emergence “reinvent the sacred”?

In my book, I try to show that we cannot even pre-state the possible ways the biosphere, economy, or culture will evolve, which means that we can't predict these either. Therefore, no sufficient natural law describes their evolution. If that's true, then this partial lawlessness is a source of radical, emergent creativity in the universe. All living things are children of this creativity, which I consider sacred.

What's the difference between emergence and a creative God?

The traditional theistic or deistic God is an actor or agent. However, we should distinguish, as Harvard theologian Gordon Kaufman does, between the agent creator God and that God's *creativity*. We no longer need the agent God, but we need the creativity. Emergence, or the partially lawless creativity of the evolutionary process, is that creativity, and I believe we can call it a fully natural God.

What causes or drives the process of emergence?

We do not yet know.

Do you consider yourself a materialist?

I remain agnostic until we understand consciousness. I have some modest hope that consciousness is tied to quantum coherence, but it is scientifically improbable at this stage. I find Cartesian dualism, *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, extremely doubtful, so I'm a monist.

Who are your scientific heroes and why?

Newton, Einstein, Darwin. These three minds changed Western science more than any others. Each was an extremely imaginative, intuitive scientist. Each showed that great creativity requires the capacity to hold diverse fragments in mind while seeking a pattern that yields their union.

If you had a time machine and could travel back to any stage in the earth's 4.5-billion-year history, where would you go?

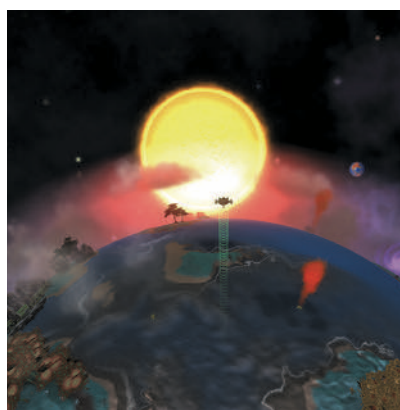
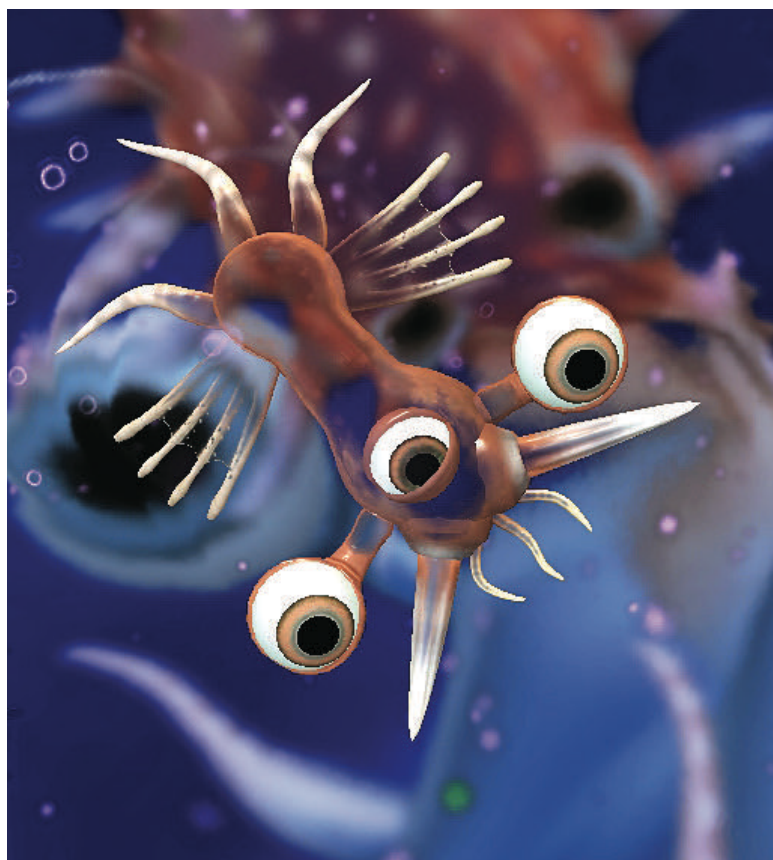
Fourteen thousand years ago to the Cro-Magnon caves of Southern France. If you have seen the flowering of pressure-flaked flint tools and cave paintings, this mid-dawn of humanity and its culture is stunning.

What do you hope the legacy of your work will be?

It is presumptuous to try to answer that, but my hopes would include contributing to the birth of complexity theory, contributing to our understanding of ontogeny and the origin of life, and reinventing the sacred based on the high probability, in my view, that parts of the unfolding of the universe are beyond natural law. If so, reason is an insufficient guide to live our lives. We must use reason, emotion, intuition, imagination, story. We must “live forward into mystery,” as Gordon Kaufman says. We need a new enlightenment, for if this view is true, it shakes 350 years of science since Descartes, Galileo, and Newton. If it's true, what is this new world we live in?

What qualities do you possess as a scientist that you feel have made all the difference in your life and career?

I hope that, like my heroes above, I, too, can hold small and large fragments of an unknown picture in place until it emerges from the not yet seen.



The innovative new video game *Spore* gives players the godlike ability to guide the process of evolution—from multicellular organism (left), to tribal society (top right), to interstellar civilization (bottom right).

Spore: *Playing God with Evolution*

After years of eager anticipation, *Spore*, the latest creation by video game baron Will Wright (and his team at Electronic Arts), finally hit store shelves in September, instantly igniting a passion for evolution in gamers around the globe. Simulating the vast multibillion-year trajectory of life's development—"from cellular pipsqueak to land-walking animal to tribal half-wit to civilised sentient and finally to space-faring ultra-being," as UK reviewer Alec Meer put it best—*Spore* offers an experience like no other, one that actually achieves that rarest of gaming goals: a seamless synthesis of education and fun. But it is the ambiguity regarding what the game is educating players *about* that makes it an intriguing new evolutionary Rorschach test.

In a *New York Times* article written shortly before the game's release, a number of evolutionary biologists voiced mixed opinions of *Spore*. "Playing the game," said University of Chicago professor Neil Shubin, "you can't help but feel amazed how, from a few simple rules and instructions, you can get a complex functioning world with bodies, behaviors and whole ecosystems." But he took issue with the game's most basic theme—the notion that the evolutionary process marches forward in a continuous linear ascent, proceeding from simple sea-dwelling cells to galaxy-spanning civilizations of self-aware beings. Evolution, the article went on to explain, tends to be "more like a tree than a line," meandering in all directions over eons of time, with some branches bending backward and others never bearing any fruit.

The conclusion of Dr. Shubin: "There's no progressive arrow that dominates nature."

Electronic Arts' latest advertising trailer for *Spore*, however, strongly suggests otherwise, placing evolution's vertical directionality firmly in your godlike hands. After a quick view of the game's mind-boggling evolutionary course, a narrator, with quasi-religious gravitas, intones that the small evolving creatures in the game "never realized that all along the way . . . someone was guiding them. And that someone"—dramatic pause—"was you."

It would seem that with *Spore*, evolutionary biologists and religious fundamentalists may both have something to squirm about. Not only does the game allow kids to play God, but it lets them give the evolutionary process a clear direction while doing so, consciously evolving their intelligently designed creatures through increasing orders of complexity and expansions of consciousness.

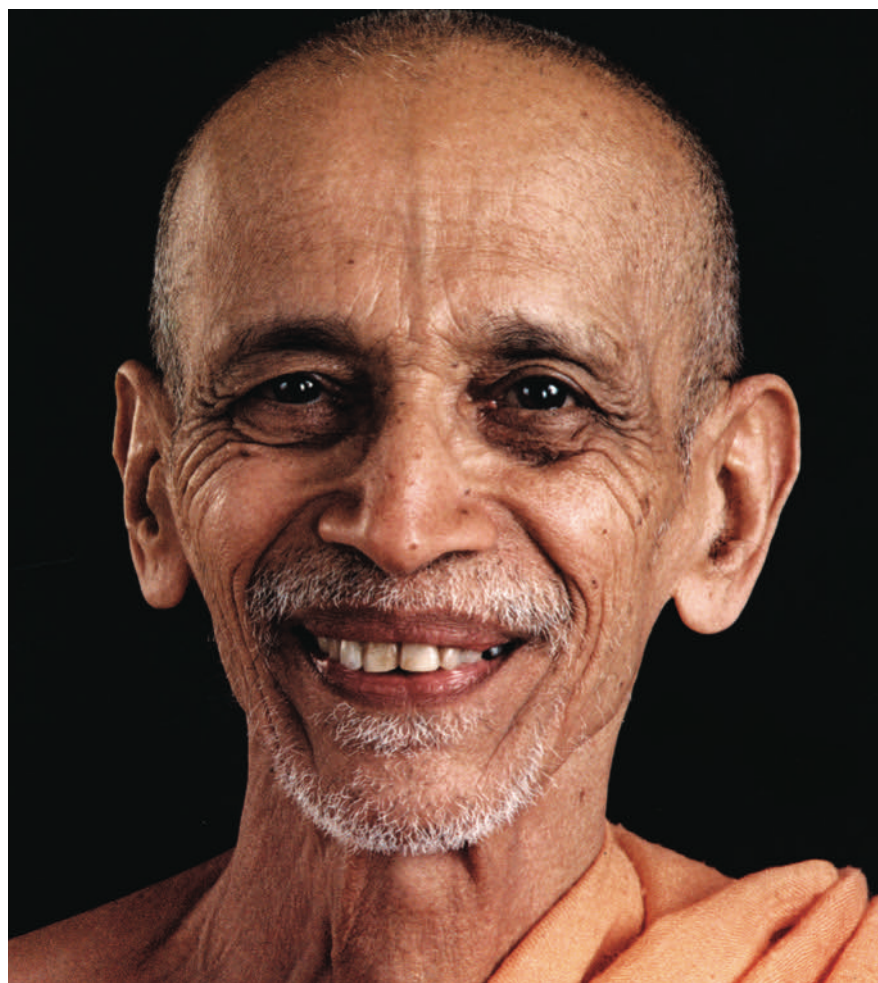
While *Spore*'s ultimate position on the nature of the creative process remains ambiguous, one thing seems clear: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the renowned evolutionary Jesuit priest, would have loved the game.



Remembering Swami Chidananda

September 24, 1916 – August 28, 2008

by Andrew Cohen



THE SAINT AND SPIRITUAL MASTER

H.H. Swami Chidananda Saraswati Maharaj died at age ninety-two this past August. He was the chosen successor to the renowned Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, India, and the president of the Divine Life Society, the worldwide organization founded by Swami Sivananda. Its headquarters is the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, and all spiritual seekers who made their pilgrimage to Mother India in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, and who had any interest in yoga and Vedanta, passed through its hallowed gates.

I saw Swami Chidananda for the first

time around 1978, shortly after I became a dedicated seeker at the age of twenty-two. One of his inspired Western devotees was a meditation partner of mine, and she repeatedly told me about this extraordinary man who was her beloved guru. She said that he was a saint and that I absolutely had to meet him. Months later, the opportunity came when my friend told me he was on tour and would be giving a lecture at a yoga school on Long Island. So I made the pilgrimage with her from Manhattan, where I lived, with much anticipation and excitement. I had never met a saint before. I remember,



In Impersonal Absolute meditation, there is no form, only the visualisation of Parabrahman as a state of light, of existence in infinity, of eternal being, of luminous consciousness, boundless; an ocean of consciousness. A state of impersonal bliss where once and for all you drop all thoughts of name and form and dwell upon the nameless, formless Reality, by affirming it as your true Self, your essential, real Being, which has neither birth nor death.

This is Vedantic meditation upon the Impersonal Absolute. This is not the meditation of devotees, who prefer to keep a dualist consciousness of worshipper and the worshipped, of lover and beloved, adorer and adored object. This is a different type of meditation altogether. It is called the pure Advaitic meditation, and it goes a step beyond the nameless and formless Being, beyond a ray meditating upon the sun. Here, there is no ray, no drop, no individual being, no meditator and meditated object, only One beyond all distinctions. "Aham Brahma Asmi." I am the Supreme Reality. And thus meditating upon oneself as infinite eternal being, one seeks to enter into a consciousness of non-dual, pure identity with the Supreme Being.

*"I and my Father are One."
"Aham Brahma Asmi," "Soham, Sivoham."*

Swami Chidananda

upon seeing him for the first time, being instantly struck by his countenance. Swami Chidananda was a tall man but very thin, almost frighteningly so, with a beautiful face and delicate features. He exuded a natural air of dignity that was commanding and made me sit up straight. He also radiated a rare quality that I had never seen before in any human being—*purity*. In the presence of such a being, one becomes instantly aware of one's own lack of development and of how far there is to go. One understands for the first time what unselfish love, spiritual freedom, and pure motivation look like. He was gentle yet strong, and in every word he spoke and every gesture he made, he seemed to bear witness to the presence of a higher and deeper dimension of reality that he constantly referred to as "the Divine." It was impossible not to take him deadly seriously and difficult not to be deeply moved by his powerful transparency and authenticity. It's only in the presence of such a being that the very notion of shadow, of human darkness, disappears as a reference point, inspiring a quality that is generally unknown in postmodernity—*humility*.

I was fresh on the path and full of energy for spiritual practice, and I'll never forget the effect that the swami's words had on my understanding of the place that meditation should take in one's life. In the talk that day, he made it absolutely clear that when one engages in spiritual practice in earnest, one's entire day revolves not around outer duties and concerns but around the commitment to *interior* development—one's daily effort to become more conscious. First, he quoted Tennyson: "Men may come and men may go, but I'll go on forever." He paused. "Step by step. Step by step." Then to my surprise, he boldly declared, "When someone asks you what you do, you should say," and he raised his voice, "I MEDITATE!" Then lowering his voice to a whisper, he continued, "And . . . I also live." I'll always remember that moment, because it felt as if he was giving me permission to wholeheartedly

give myself to my own growing passion for spiritual enlightenment in a culture that doesn't admit that such a thing really exists. Even though he was never my guru, as a seeker I made the effort to spend time in his company whenever I could. It always had the effect of humbling me deeply and inspiring me to have courage and be willing to take risks in order to make real progress.

In his own life, Swami Chidananda had first been awakened to the spiritual dimension of life when at age nine he read the classic autobiography *In Quest of God* by the revered South Indian *bhakta* Papa Ramdas. He eventually traveled to meet the Great Realizer when he was sixteen. Deeply inspired not only by Ramdas but also by the life stories, philosophies, and living

service and devotion to his guru. He ran a leper colony for many years, among his many other duties, which included traveling constantly throughout India and around the world carrying the message of yoga and Vedanta to the masses. He was loved and revered by millions of people.

I became a spiritual teacher myself in 1986, being initiated by the grace and will of H.W.L. Poonja of Lucknow, the master Advaitin and disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi. But I have also had a very deep and mysterious connection to this illustrious lineage—to Swami Chidananda and to his yogic brother and disciple of Sivananda, the great, irascible, contentious, brilliant, enlightened philosopher-monk Swami Krishnananda. They both have supported

Swami Chidananda was known fondly as the Saint Francis of the Himalayas.

examples of the great enlightened sages Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Swami Sivananda, he was, as a young man, slowly but surely overcome by a desire to renounce the world completely to live the spiritual life. He wrote, "Sometimes I would suddenly wake up from sleep after midnight and find myself shaking with fear with the thought that I may never be able to take to the *Nivritti Marga* or the life of total renunciation." When he was twenty-six, he left home without telling his family that he was not coming back and went on a spiritual pilgrimage for some time before ending up in Brindavan, where he wrote the following letter to Swami Sivananda: "I'm coming to Rishikesh to surrender myself at your feet and to serve you." Some time after his arrival, Sivananda declared to a confidant, "My successor has come."

Swami Chidananda was known fondly as the Saint Francis of the Himalayas, not only because of his love for the revered Christian saint, but also because of his life of selfless

me and my work, not only directly and explicitly, but even more importantly and more mysteriously, in ways that are difficult to describe in words. When I was a young teacher, their presence in my life was one I can only describe as father-like guardian angels. When I received the news of Swami Chidananda's passing, even though it was not unexpected, my soul was shaken. It's in moments like these that one feels one's love for God even more strongly. I remember being surprised at the depth of emotion I felt, but I was even more surprised to recognize that this was the same kind of unique emotion I have felt only in relationship to my own guru and to the soul-bond I have with my own students. In India they say "the Guru is God," and that is because those rare individuals who embody the absolute principle and are able to transmit its living reality to us become, at a soul level, human representatives of the Divine. Swami Chidananda was such a rare being, and his presence will be deeply missed.

Is mainstream media finally getting serious about spirituality?



In the spring of 2008, bestselling *Power of Now* author Eckhart Tolle and television diva Oprah Winfrey conducted a ten-part online webcast devoted to the study of Tolle's latest book, *A New Earth*. The landmark

event was estimated to have attracted as many as twenty million viewers and listeners from around the world. Sponsored by Skype, the makers of Post-it Notes, and the Chevrolet division of General Motors, the event demonstrated a degree of widespread interest in serious spiritual content that is nothing less than remarkable. When an automobile company that is as quintessentially a symbol of mainstream America as Chevrolet sponsors a conversation between a German-born mystic and an African-American talk show host about going beyond ego, one begins to wonder if, indeed, as in Bob Dylan's famous line, *the times they are a-changin'.*

In 1963, when Dylan wrote these enduring lyrics, the country was on the cusp of a major social and cultural transformation that forever altered the way Americans thought about what it means to live in a free country. From feminism to school desegregation, a number of radical crusades were overhauling the concept of liberty. Today, more than forty years later, one could postulate that we are seeing the signs of a similar sea change, albeit of a decidedly subtler nature. In the sixties, the revolution was taking place primarily in the counterculture, among college students and antiwar protesters who were rejecting their parents' values.

Now, judging from the millions of Oprah fans who joined the Eckhart Tolle webcast, the change seems to be taking place *within* the mainstream, not against it. Could it be that we are entering a new period of transformation, one in which we are willing to engage in a deeper, broader conversation about the nature of reality and what matters in life?

Certainly there are other indicators of change in the popular media. Take, for example, the venerable *New York Times*. Over three sequential weeks last May, the newspaper published four prominent articles dealing with spiritually related subjects. Among them was op-ed columnist David Brooks' provocative piece entitled "The Neural Buddhists," in which he stated unequivocally that there has been a shift "away from hard-core materialism" in recent research into the relationship between the brain and the origin of meaning, belief, and consciousness.

Then the story of how Harvard neuroscientist and stroke survivor Jill Bolte Taylor experienced nirvana graced the cover page of a May 2008 *Times* Fashion and Style section, by which time Taylor had already become somewhat of a national celebrity. In February 2008, she gave a presentation at that high-voltage nexus of innovation and creativity, the TED

(Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference in Monterey, California. In March, the video of her talk was posted on TED's website, igniting a digital sensation. By May, as the *Times* story reported, more than two million viewers had watched the video and as many as twenty thousand people per day were continuing to do so. *Time* magazine included Taylor on their list of the one hundred most influential people in 2008, and in mid-May, the written account of Taylor's journey to bliss and back again, *My Stroke of Insight*, was released and quickly shot up to number six on the *Times* bestseller list of nonfiction books.

Mark Tauber, Senior Vice President/Publisher at HarperOne, an imprint of publishing giant HarperCollins, has no doubt that "*The New York Times* is on to something. In the book industry," he told *EnlightenNext* magazine recently, "we're absolutely seeing the spirituality side of things coming back, and we've got the stats to prove it." Media entrepreneur Mallika Chopra concurs. According to her, the media's sensitivity to where the public interest lies, as in the case of Jill Bolte Taylor, is foundational to how the industry works. Chopra, who is the daughter and business partner of the illustrious Deepak Chopra, recently explained to us: "We're seeing a real shift in

mainstream media that I think is coming, frankly, from consumers who are curious, accepting, and open to spiritual content." Thirty years ago when her father first started writing, she notes, "words like consciousness and enlightenment and spirituality were almost 'four-letter words.' Today the media is recognizing that there's a real audience for this material."

Moving beyond print media into film, video, and even live theater, there are more examples of a deepening interest in spirituality and consciousness in contemporary culture. The recent Broadway hit, *Rock 'n' Roll*, by legendary

has often reflected the American *zeitgeist*. . . ." And a Romanian film entitled *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days*, which won awards at the Cannes Film Festival and was on many lists of the top ten movies of 2007, elicited this unusual observation from a *Times* film critic: "The camera . . . expresses consciousness itself."

Not everyone interprets these signs in the same way, however. Jeff Sharlet, a contributing editor at *Harper's* and *Rolling Stone* and an associate research scholar at New York University's Center for Religion and Media, takes a longer view. He sees the current shift in

Or maybe with each new cycle, there is a broadening and deepening of the inquiry inherent in those recurrent spiritual eruptions. For sure, the scope of what is going on today seems unprecedented. Those same baby boomers who inaugurated the cultural revolution of the sixties—some seventy-eight million strong—are continuing to have a significant influence on cultural values. According to Elizabeth Lesser, cofounder of the Omega Institute, a personal-growth mecca in upstate New York, "Democracy and diversity are what define us as Americans, and what we're seeing now is the democratization and popularization of spirituality and consciousness." Yet, she points out, "what was trendsetting for the boomers is now the norm for their children." Mindfulness is starting to be taught in public schools, she reports, and alternative medicine, including meditation and various mind-body modalities, is becoming available in traditional hospitals. "The press is one of the last to catch on."

Steven Vedro, author of *Digital Dharma*, parses it differently. "Consciousness," he suggested to us, "as it percolates through human creativity creates signposts, visible markers in popular culture, at a time when we're finally ready to recognize them." If he's right, then what we're seeing in the media—and, more important, in society at large—may signal a genuine awakening and the desire for a deeper meaning to our lives than our materialistic consumer society can provide. And if that's the case, then Dylan's famous refrain may once again herald an era of exciting, unpredictable change.

"Democracy and diversity are what define us as Americans, and what we're seeing now is the democratization of spirituality and consciousness."

Elizabeth Lesser

Czech-born playwright Tom Stoppard, focused on an eclectic mix of themes, including music, politics, Greek poetry, and conflicting theories of consciousness. Director Francis Ford Coppola of *Apocalypse Now* and *The Godfather* fame has cited Henri Bergson, a French philosopher noted for his original writings on consciousness, creativity, and evolution, as an important influence on his work. And the press release for Coppola's latest film, *Youth Without Youth*, states that "it's fitting that one of America's greatest filmmakers is drawn now, in the opening years of the new millennium, to explore consciousness. Over these past four decades, Coppola's work

reporting on spirituality as part of a historical pattern that has been under way since the end of the nineteenth century, when spiritualism swept the country. Every ten to fifteen years, he says, someone or something comes along that the media gets excited about. Whether it is Norman Vincent Peale declaring the power of positive thinking in the 1950s or Eckhart Tolle extolling the benefits of transcending ego in 2008, the basic message is the same according to Sharlet. "I see a lack of historical perspective in the media," he remarked in a recent *EnlightenNext* interview. "Much of what is being reported as new these days is simply the recycling of old ideas."



Shaping Postbiological Cultural Evolution

Now that supersmart computers are no longer a distant fantasy, how do we keep our transhuman future from becoming a nightmare?

by James N. Gardner

IN THE OPENING CHAPTER OF *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, British intellectual historian Isaiah Berlin famously observed that two factors, above all others, shaped human history in the twentieth century. The first was the flourishing of the natural sciences and technology, which Berlin celebrated as “the greatest success story of our time.” The second factor consisted of “the great ideological storms that have altered the lives of virtually all mankind: the Russian Revolution and its aftermath—totalitarian tyrannies of both right and left and the explosions of nationalism, racism, and, in places, of religious bigotry.”

Both of these great movements began, Berlin reminded us, “with ideas in people’s heads: ideas about what relations between men have been, are, might be and should be.” It was for this reason, Berlin believed, that “we cannot confine our attention to the great impersonal forces, natural and man-made, which act upon us.” Rather, we desperately need to launch a kind of Manhattan Project in cultural anthropology. “The goals and motives that guide human action,” he wrote, “must be looked at in the light of all that we know and understand; their roots and growth, their essence, and above all their validity, must be critically examined with every intellectual resource that we have.”

The urgency of such an effort has grown since *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* was published in 1990, in large part because of the very success of the historical factor Berlin lauded: the exponentially increasing capabilities of science and technology. Many analysts have noted that most of our powerful technologies can be put

to evil as well as beneficial uses. Nuclear science, for example, can light a city with electricity or destroy it with an explosion. Genetic engineering can cure dreadful maladies or create unstoppable plagues.

Some thoughtful observers are beginning to focus on an even more portentous possibility: that we may be approaching a kind of cultural tipping point—what futurist Ray Kurzweil calls a looming singularity—after which human history as we currently know it will be superseded by hypervelocity cultural evolution driven by transhuman computer intelligence. If this prospect is realistic, then a key task may be not only to comprehend the ideas that

are currently driving historical trends (Berlin’s charge to his fellow intellectual historians) but also to attempt to actually shape them so as to ensure that the better angels of our nature prevail in the strange new transhuman cultural environment that may lie just over history’s frontier.

Samuel Butler: Darwin’s Forgotten Contemporary

Just four years after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Samuel Butler, a contemporary of Darwin, offered a prescient insight into the potential of artificial life to supersede the squishy biological processes that constitute the only kind of life with which humanity is familiar. In an 1863 letter entitled “Darwin among the Machines,” Butler offered this startling vision of the future of terrestrial evolution:

What would happen if technology continued to evolve so much more rapidly than the animal and vegetable kingdoms? Would it displace us in the supremacy of earth? Just as the vegetable kingdom was slowly developed from the mineral, and as in like manner the animal supervened upon the vegetable, so now in these last few ages an entirely new kingdom has sprung up, of which we as yet have only seen what will one day be considered



the antediluvian prototypes of the race. . . . We are daily giving [machines] greater power and supplying by all sorts of ingenious contrivances that self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to them what intellect has been to the human race.

Only now, nearly a century and a half after Butler articulated this disconcerting prophecy, are the implications of his revolutionary insights finally beginning to sink in. With the publication of path-breaking books about the future of computer-based artificial intelligence, such as Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity Is Near*, we are witnessing an intellectual awakening that is unique in the history of mankind. A handful of cutting-edge opinion leaders are starting to focus seriously on the possible economic, cultural, and philosophical consequences of what may turn out to be the most profound evolutionary development since the Cambrian explosion: the emergence of a radically new form of life and intelligence on our planet that stands poised to inherit a future that will be shaped by hypervelocity cultural evolution and self-directed intelligent design.

The daunting challenge that humanity faces—let's call it the Butler Challenge in honor of Darwin's forgotten contemporary—is to understand and attempt to shape the powerful,

innate human friendliness into an artificial intelligence, but it is certainly an approach worth pursuing.

An alternative approach may be to design a set of cultural attractors that could conceivably help steer the developmental direction of the future cultural environment in which AI will emerge toward human-friendly sensibilities and outcomes. This would be an exercise in a possible future scientific discipline—what I call *memetic engineering*.

What particular cultural attractor might serve as an appropriate tool for memetic engineers embarking on this daunting endeavor? Perhaps a new cosmology that embraces both human and transhuman artificial intelligence. Indeed, a novel scientific worldview that places life and intelligence at the center of the vast, seemingly impersonal physical processes of the cosmos may conceivably offer the best hope for meeting this challenge.

The essence of this worldview would be the idea that we inhabit a universe custom-made for the purpose of yielding life and ever-ascending intelligence. And that every creature and intelligent entity—great and small, biological and postbiological—plays some indefinable role in an awesome process by which intelligence gains hegemony over inanimate nature. This notion implies that every living thing and postbiological form of intelligence is linked together in a joint endeavor

of vast scope and indefinable duration. We soldier on—bacteria, people, extraterrestrials (if they exist), and hyperintelligent computers—pressing forward, against

Human history as we currently know it may soon be superseded by hypervelocity cultural evolution.

perhaps irresistible, cultural forces that are propelling the biosphere toward a transhuman and postbiological future.

Strategies for Shaping Tomorrow

The California-based Singularity Institute for Artificial Intelligence is one of a handful of think tanks and research centers around the world that have seriously embarked on the study of ways to avoid the emergence of unfriendly artificial intelligence. Outside of this tiny community of dedicated researchers, the topic of prophylaxis against unfriendly AI seems premature at best—why should we worry about the potential appearance of hostile AI when we have not yet succeeded in creating general AI? The short answer from Eliezer Yudkowsky, a leading researcher affiliated with the Singularity Institute, is that if we wait until an AI acquires transhuman intelligence, it will be too late to retrofit that particular AI with human-tolerant sensibilities or instincts.

For Yudkowsky, the key strategy for avoiding an existential catastrophe for humanity is to figure out a way to build an AI that is benignly motivated toward human beings from its inception. No one has the slightest notion of how to program

the implacable foe that is entropy, toward a distant future we can only faintly imagine. But it is together, in a spirit of cooperation and kinship, that we journey toward our distant destination.

This vision—the concept of an intelligent universe populated by a cosmic community encompassing both biological and postbiological forms of intelligence—may turn out to be the key tool with which memetic engineers can build the cultural foundation for a benign cosmic future in which human beings no longer play the dominant role.



Explore the work of complexity theorist James Gardner at enlightennext.org/gardner

James Gardner is the author, most recently, of *The Intelligent Universe: AI, ET, and the Emerging Mind of the Cosmos*. This essay is adapted from a chapter in a forthcoming book to be published by NASA entitled *Cosmos and Culture*.



The Dumbest Generation?

Grappling with Gen Y's peculiar blend of narcissism and idealism

by Tom Huston

EARLIER THIS YEAR A CLOSE friend of mine, eager to expand his cultural horizons, decided to leave the backwoods of Massachusetts and move to Paris. Taking little more than the essentials—his MacBook, his iPod, and a few graphic novels—he managed to find a nice fifth-story apartment soon after his arrival. When I visited him there three months later, I was immediately struck by the view from his balcony. Towering above the rooftops, a monumental bronze statue of a winged golden man stood gleaming in the light of the setting sun. “That’s amazing!” I said, asking him what it was. Briefly glancing up from his computer screen, he replied that he had no idea. He did, however, agree that it looked très cool. (A quick Wikipedia search revealed that it was the 154-foot-high Colonne de Juillet, erected in the center of the square where the infamous Bastille prison once stood.)

Yes, not only is my friend a typical American, but he is also a card-carrying member of a sociocultural demographic that Emory University professor Mark Bauerlein has dubbed “the Dumbest Generation.” Otherwise known as Generation Y, the millennials, or the echo boomers, Generation Dumb consists of anyone born roughly between 1978 and 1996. I wish I could say that I stand free and clear of this Gen-Dumb appellation, but no. I’m also an American, born in 1980, and by all accounts, upon my return to the *EnlightenNext* offices after my weekend jaunt to Paris, I didn’t display much more cultural where-withal than my friend. When some baby-boomer colleagues asked me what I

thought of my first visit to that majestic ancient city where so much of Western history was forged, I apparently spoke on behalf of my entire generation when I answered, quite dumbly, “Uh . . . it was pretty cool.”

Numbering seventy million in the U.S. and due to surpass the boomers in sheer numbers by 2010, Gen Dumb is rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with. And a lot of people are courageously trying. In the past year, on top of countless stories regarding the increased engagement of young people in this year’s presidential campaigns, major media outlets from the *New York Times* to *Newsweek* to *60 Minutes* have

put my generation under the microscope with unprecedented scientific scrutiny. A number of scholarly, stat-packed books have been published as well, and their authors have become the media’s favorite go-to persons to explain to bewildered parents, teachers, and employers what, exactly, is up with us.

Being a concerned member of the generation in question, I’ve been paying close attention to all of this, and I’ve noticed an interesting trend: Observers tend to either love us or hate us. We’re either held aloft as the bright, tech-savvy, shining hope of humanity (see *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* by William Strauss and Neil Howe) or dismissed as hopelessly narcissistic ignoramuses whose every posted YouTube comment should make us all bow our heads in shame (see *Generation Me* by Jean M. Twenge).

I think the truth, as usual, is more complicated than either extreme. We aren’t simply Gen Dumb, and we aren’t the messianic millennials either. We are Gen Y, a genuinely puzzling cultural variable, like Gen X before us, that has yet to be defined.

This overly simplistic love-hate dichotomy first dawned on me last year when I read a column by Thomas Friedman in *The New York Times* titled “The Quiet Americans.” In the piece, Friedman offered one of the most optimistic appraisals of my generation that I’d ever encountered. Describing



us as an impressive and admirably “quiet” generation—due to both our silent determination to not let post-9/11 terrorism fears curtail our sense of freedom and our preference for keyboard-clicking internet activism over more vocal social engagements—Friedman’s paean to the virtuous potential of my peer group left me with strangely mixed feelings. I couldn’t help but be inspired by a member of my parents’ generation looking upon us twentysomethings with such respect and admiration, yet I also knew that Friedman was overlooking a more disturbing part of the picture.

In 2005, Thomas de Zengotita, a professor at New York University and a contributing editor at *Harper’s*, published a book called *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It*. In its pages he exposed, with the eviscerating precision of a cultural neurosurgeon, the morass of ego-massaging media in which all members of postmodern society are helplessly absorbed. And in Gen Y, this state of “mediated” narcissism has reached an all-time high. Alone and adrift in what de Zengotita calls our “psychic saunas” of superficial sensory stimulation, members of my generation lock and load our custom iTunes playlists, craft our Facebook profiles to self-satisfied

end, I could only shake my head at Friedman’s unbridled praise. When he published a follow-up column called “Generation Q” later last year, Friedman toned it down significantly, expressing concern that the “Quiet Americans” were *too* quiet, too detached and lost in cyberspace to have any kind of serious influence on the real world. His suggested solution to this problem, however, was for Gen Y to *go back*, to follow in the footsteps of the boomers’ sixties revolution and take to the streets, march on Washington, and so on. Many of my peers, in fact, have attempted this, aspiring toward boomer-esque idealism or raging against the machine and mimicking Gen-X cynicism. But it always seems strangely unconvincing, a put-on performance of sorts, and I think—in line with de Zengotita—that this is because Gen Y can’t be deeply, genuinely *engaged* with the state of the real world when we’re cruising a thousand feet above it in our custom pimped-out mePods.

And yet there *are* human souls sitting behind those digital consoles, authentic and innocent beings looking out through those defensively ironic eyes. We are more than our narcissistic conditioning, as thick as it may be. When Friedman

looks at Gen Y and says that he is “impressed because they are so much more optimistic and idealistic than they should be,” I do think that the optimism and idealism he sees in us are, at some level, *real*. The way we rallied around the Obama flag this year, excitedly chanting “Yes we can,” is proof enough of that. But I mean it when I say that our brand of narcissism is sophisticated, and I know that our

ability to appear more engaged with the world than we really are runs deep.

I don’t doubt the authenticity of Gen Y’s idealism and inspiration. Yet I do worry that as long as it remains circumscribed by the spheres of our narcissism, its real potential will never be revealed. The question is: Do we have what it takes to burst our bubbles? Can we finally get over ourselves and start *participating* in life so fully, so unreservedly, that we remove any doubt as to where we really stand?

Yes. I think we can.

How can Gen Y be genuinely engaged with the state of the real world when we’re cruising a thousand feet above it in our custom pimped-out mePods?

perfection, and, armed with our gleefully ironic irreverence, bravely venture forth into life within glossy, opaque bubbles that reflect ourselves back *to* ourselves and safely protect us from jarring intrusions from the greater world beyond.

Bauerlein calls us the Dumbest Generation, but I think that we are really the most *sophisticatedly narcissistic* generation. Next to our depth of self-obsession, the boomers’ narcissism, with all its weirdly idealistic naïveté, can’t even compare. And our older Gen-X friends and siblings, with their strange existential angst and cynicism, are clearly living in semitransparent bubbles that permit them to still react to a real world beyond themselves. But Gen-Y narcissism trumps it all. Liberated utterly from the chains of history, with our attention glued to a world of pure virtuality, we seem to be floating freely—within millions of bubbles of self-reflecting opacity—into the stratosphere of the twenty-first century.

Obviously, de Zengotita’s diagnosis of my generation isn’t something to be optimistic about, which is why, in the



To read more Gen-Y commentary from Tom Huston, visit his blog at kosmictom.com

Tom Huston is an editor at *EnlightenNext*, a founding member of Ken Wilber’s Integral Institute, and a student of Andrew Cohen’s teachings of Evolutionary Enlightenment.

The Interdynamics of Culture +





Consciousness

Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber have been holding the “Guru-Pandit” dialogues for more than six years. For this inaugural issue of *EnlightenNext magazine*, they return to some of the foundational principles underlying their many far-ranging conversations. →

COHEN: Today we're going to be talking about our favorite subject: the relationship between the evolution of consciousness and the evolution of culture. This is a topic that you and I have been pursuing from many different angles for the entire time we've been having these dialogues. But the evolution of consciousness is a tricky thing to talk about, because consciousness is a tricky thing to talk about! And the reason for that, as you well know, is that *consciousness is not an object*.

The way most people first discover consciousness is through some form of spiritual experience. I'm talking about the momentous occasion when someone stumbles for the first time upon that miraculous dimension of the self that transcends memory and time, that deepest part of ourselves where there is no cognition, there is only Being. This discovery leaves a permanent mark on our souls. But unless we have this kind of direct experience of what consciousness is—where we recognize that it's not an object and it's not imprisoned by time—it will be very difficult for us to discuss the subject of consciousness, or even use the word, without it inevitably conjuring up an *image* of an object, like a cloud of white mist or something. But if consciousness were a mist, that would mean it is a *thing*, and therefore it couldn't be consciousness!

The discovery of consciousness—and its infinite, timeless, formless, immortal nature—is, of course, what enlightenment has traditionally been based on. But today, what I would like us to talk about is the fascinating and complex and infinitely subtle relationship between this discovery of the mystical nondual ground of consciousness and the evolution of culture itself. When I say "culture," I'm talking about the way we think about and understand our shared experience. Culture is based on shared values. I'm talking about the conceptual and cognitive prism through which we as individuals interpret our shared experience.

You know, you've had an enormous influence on me as a teacher and thinker in this regard. And as my own development has progressed, I've been awakening to something that you have been pointing to for a long time, which is the way our shared values are most often unconsciously shaped by the culture we grew up in. Except for very rare individuals, our values are not consciously created or chosen as a result of deep introspection. Rather, they have been absorbed for the most part through our cultural conditioning. And of course, that's not necessarily bad or wrong. That's just the way it is.

In my work as a spiritual teacher, I've observed an interesting predicament: People can have a powerful awakening



ANDREW COHEN: GURU

[n., Sanskrit]: one who teaches spiritual liberation from his or her own direct experience or realization.

Self-described "idealist with revolutionary inclinations" and widely recognized as a defining voice in the emerging field of evolutionary spirituality, Cohen has developed an original teaching for the twenty-first century which he calls Evolutionary Enlightenment. He is also the founder and editor in chief of *EnlightenNext* magazine.



KEN WILBER: PANDIT

[n., Sanskrit]: a scholar, one who is deeply proficient and immersed in spiritual wisdom.

Self-described "defender of the dharma, an intellectual samurai," Wilber is one of the most highly regarded philosophers alive today, and his work offers a comprehensive and original synthesis of the world's great psychological, philosophical, and spiritual traditions. His books include *A Brief History of Everything* and *Integral Spirituality*.

to what consciousness is, and yet the lens through which they see the world, which is made up of their values, or conditioned convictions in general, is not necessarily impacted by that experience at all. This is something that you and I have spoken quite a bit about in the past. And it seems to me that a process of ongoing discussion, dialogue, introspection, and contemplation needs to be undertaken by many of us in order to bring the light of awareness to this complex and important question. For those of us who are interested in the evolution of consciousness and culture, we *need* to begin to see and understand the culturally created structures that make up our individual and collective selves. We really have to learn how to "unpack" and make conscious what our own values are. It seems that this process is as important a part of spiritual evolution and transformation, individual and collective, as the experience of consciousness itself—maybe even the most important part.

A theme of many of our discussions has been the recognition that the way in which we *interpret* our experience really determines how we value it and how we see it. Individuals from different cultures, backgrounds, and levels of development can have similar experiences but interpret them in completely different ways. And the way that we interpret our experience really does determine the way we see reality, the way we see ourselves, the way we perceive the world, and the way we see the relationship between the self and the universe. In my teaching work, I have been putting more emphasis on the necessity of cultivating our ability to see this for ourselves. In other words, if we want to evolve, we need not only to awaken directly to what consciousness is but also to develop our cognitive capacities so that we'll be able to see our conditioned values as objects in awareness rather than as fixed or inherently real constructions. As you would put it, we need to be able to make subject object.

I'm beginning to see that so much of spiritual development is really about finding ways to creatively compel ourselves, through our own inspired will and intention, to actually evolve. Ideally, I believe, we will get to the point where the experience of enlightenment, which is the direct awakening to consciousness, becomes automatically fused with the experience of a higher level of cognition. Ultimately, it should become one nondual event where these three different aspects of our experience—the Ground of Being, the creative impulse to evolve, and our highly evolved capacity for cognition—all become part of one matrix, one unfolding experience. I'm very much trying to convey this new truly nondual and inherently integral potential to as many people as possible, as well as to illuminate and clarify these subtle and complex relationships and how these different dimensions of the self and the cosmos affect one another.

We are both trying to combine the absolute and the relative, and one of the phrases that we use to cover these two fundamental spaces is "evolutionary enlightenment."

Ken Wilber

Absolute Consciousness AND RELATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

WILBER: Right. Well, I think you've touched on several very important points. I would start by saying that when it comes to consciousness, we can talk about *absolute* consciousness and we can talk about *relative* consciousness.

Spiritual traditions often make a distinction between absolute truth and relative truth, and they certainly do the same thing with consciousness. So absolute consciousness is indeed pure consciousness. It's not a thing; it's not an object; it's not a mist. If you have to think about it at all, it's a vast, open emptiness in which all objects arise. Moment to moment, right now, you're aware of various things going on in the world. You're aware of a table in front of you; you're aware of a telephone; you might be sitting on your porch and looking outside, aware of clouds floating through the sky; you're aware of mountains, streams. All of those are arising in your pure awareness. And enlightenment is the discovery of this pure openness, this pure, radical Ground of Being.

But that's just the absolute component. What have become so important, as we have started to create an East-West integration, are the relative aspects of consciousness. And these relative aspects have to do with how you *interpret* that absolute experience of consciousness. What are the different ways of interpreting spiritual experience? For this we find that there are developmental components, or *stages*, associated with the types of shared values that we have as cultures and with the types of values and worldviews that we hold as individuals as well.

One of the easiest ways to understand these shared interpretations is through the names that were given to them by Jean Gebser, who was a real pioneer in the mid twentieth century in looking at the evolution of these relative structures of consciousness. He called the stages archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, integral, and higher [see diagram on page 45]. So you can have a full-blown *satori*, or consciousness experience, but depending on where you are in this developmental scale, you'll interpret it according to different values. You can interpret it in a magical, or egocentric, fashion: "I and I alone have this pure consciousness." You can interpret it in a mythic,

or traditional, value structure, which is the next major stage, and believe that this experience is given just to one group, one people, or one chosen tribe. You can experience it in a modern, or rational, fashion. You can experience it in a pluralistic, or postmodern, fashion. And you can experience it in an integral, or post-postmodern, fashion. These are all relative aspects of consciousness. And what you and I are particularly looking at is the importance of a full enlightenment being an experience of both absolute *and* relative consciousness.

COHEN: That's right.

WILBER: Both the absolute and relative dimensions bring something to the table. The experience of pure consciousness brings an understanding of radical freedom, openness, timelessness, eternity, and absolute reality, but that has to manifest itself. There's spirit in *action*, and what that looks like depends on how you interpret it in the relative world. Interpreting that experience of consciousness in mythic terms will give you a traditional or even fundamentalist orientation. Interpreting it in modern terms will give you a scientific orientation. Interpreting it in terms of post-modern experience or structure will give you a pluralistic view of reality and of what consciousness is.

Right now, the leading edge of development itself, or the relative unfolding of consciousness, is starting to move from the pluralistic, postmodern stage into integral. That means that all of our values will start to get reshuffled and become more inclusive, more comprehensive, more superholistic. For example, the roles of men and women will start to expand. All the ways that we structure a culture, a society, will fundamentally change. And they will change based on *both* the absolute and the relative aspects of consciousness.

So we really have work to do in two dimensions. In the absolute dimension, we have to work first to discover this already free Self, this open, empty ground of ever-present awareness. Then in the relative dimension, we have to develop from archaic to magic to mythic to rational to pluralistic to integral. Both of these are very important aspects of a truly comprehensive approach to consciousness awakening. What we find, unfortunately, is that there are many teachers and approaches, from the East and the West, that center on just one or the other. What we find in a lot of New Age approaches to spirituality, for example, is just a focus on the now, on absolute consciousness, on the unmanifest, on the pure Ground of Being. And at the same time, in the West especially, what we too often find is just a focus on the relative aspects of reality and of consciousness, just a focus

on evolution and growth and development, without any understanding of the Ground of Being, which is the support of all of that.

So you and I are trying to combine both of those dimensions—the absolute and the relative—and one of the phrases we use to cover these two fundamental spaces is “evolutionary enlightenment.” That means that as spirit manifests, its manifestations evolve, and the very nature of enlightenment itself is going to continue to evolve along with it. We don't want a *static* enlightenment that works just with absolute consciousness, nor do we want a *spiritless* evolution that works just with the evolution of matter and doesn't understand the role of the Ground of Being. We want to have an evolutionary enlightenment—one that understands spirit itself but also understands that spirit is *unfolding* in this world and *as* this world. The world that spirit has created is evolving.

A MYSTERIOUS COMPULSION TO EVOLVE

COHEN: Absolutely. That's a very clear description of the terrain we are both working in.

One other point I'd like to bring out is that when spirit took the leap from formlessness to form, from nothing to something, from being to becoming, it emerged from emptiness as the *creative impulse*—the urge to become, the desire to exist. This creative impulse expresses itself at all levels of the human experience. Any human being can locate it at the lowest level of their being—at the gross physical level—as the sexual impulse, which is really the presence or movement of the big bang as a biological imperative. But at higher levels of being, humans are the only life forms we know of that are compelled to innovate and to create. We can see this especially in individuals who are pioneers in their fields, whether they are great philosophers, musicians, artists, politicians, or poets. Most individuals who are deeply talented are driven by a sense of urgency, an ecstatically urgent sense that “I must bring into life this potential that I see and experience in the depths of my own being. This must come *through* me.” If we get to know them, we will usually find that truly great human beings are driven by a passion that transcends their separate



Jean Gebser

(1905–1973)

An Integral Awakening to the Structures of Consciousness

JEAN GEBSER was many things—poet, linguist, cultural historian, mystic, and philosopher. But this early-twentieth-century Renaissance man may best be known for his singular insight that human consciousness and culture have developed over time through a fluid but hierarchical sequence of stages, or “structures.”

Born in 1905, Gebser was very much at the center of the political, social, and scientific upheaval that characterized the first half of the

last century. He fled his native Germany at age thirty-four to escape the Nazis, fought in the Spanish Civil War, and rubbed shoulders with many of the era’s most revolutionary figures, including Carl Jung, Pablo Picasso, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Werner Heisenberg. But while many of his contemporaries saw the tremendous chaos of the age as a sign of social, political, and moral decline, Gebser recognized the turmoil as paving the way for the birth of a whole new level of human consciousness, which he called “integral.” After years of research, Gebser concluded that this emergence was not the first of its kind and that such “mutations” in the way humanity interprets reality had been occurring throughout history.

In his 1953 opus, *The Ever-Present Origin*, Gebser outlined what he found to be several distinct stages in the unfolding of human culture and consciousness, a categorization that forms the basis of the evolutionary models used by Ken Wilber, Don Beck, Steve McIntosh, and other proponents of integral theory today.

The Structures of Culture & Consciousness



Archaic

(Instinctual)

This stage of consciousness characterizes the earliest human beings. As Gebser describes it, the consciousness of the individual is still barely distinct from its environment. Seen today primarily in newborn infants.



Magic

(Egocentric)

The magic stage emerged with tribal cultures and is seen around the world in nature-based religions and rituals. In this structure, Gebser explains, one’s sense of self is inextricably linked with one’s tribe or clan.



Mythic

(Traditional)

This stage emerged with the great monotheistic religious traditions, and it represents the expansion of the individual’s identity to include an entire nation or belief system. According to Gebser, this is the first time an “awareness of soul” appears within the self.



Mental-Rational

(Modern)

The stage of scientific rationality and reason that rose to prominence during the Western Enlightenment. For the rational human being, says Gebser, “the world which he measures, to which he aspires, is a material world—a world of objects outside of himself.”



Pluralistic

(Postmodern)

Emphasizing multiculturalism and egalitarianism, this stage flowered with the civil rights and environmental movements of the 1960s. Gebser coined the term “aperspectival” to describe the pluralistic self’s ability to see and appreciate multiple perspectives.



Integral

(Post-postmodern)

In the integral stage, which is still just beginning to emerge, human consciousness is for the first time understood to develop through a hierarchical series of distinct structures, and evolution supersedes egalitarianism as the primary value.

Contemporary research, such as the pioneering work of Clare Graves, has revealed that Gebser’s original “integral” structure actually consists of two distinct structures—“pluralistic” and “integral.”

self-sense, even though their separate self-sense might identify with it.

So we can begin to see that there's a relationship between the first cause—the original impulse to become, which we call the big bang—and the human experience of consciousness. First, there's the sexual impulse. Then, there's the compulsion to innovate. And in the way I understand it, the highest expression of this creative impulse is the urge to evolve at the level of consciousness itself, which is really the same thing as the spiritual impulse. For the individual at the postmodern stage, for the person stepping into this integral stage that you were speaking about, this is felt as an internal compulsion that says, "I must become more conscious." It's a felt compulsion toward consciousness. And when I say "compulsion," I don't mean something that the individual feels he or she would *like* to do if he or she had the time. There's a sense that "this *must* happen," almost like a moral obligation: "I must do this; I must become more conscious." I find it interesting that so many of us who come from a secular background, where the religious or spiritual instinct is not something that

the very source. The nature of that drive is also absolute. And that's why it's experienced as a mysterious, impersonal, ecstatic compulsion.

WILBER: Yes. The traditions themselves sort of made a distinction between those two approaches. Some grabbed on to just the absolute, the formless, unmanifest Ground of Being and tried to make the realization of that formlessness, that nirvana, the be all and end all of spiritual practice. Many traditions did that, including Patanjali's yoga and Gautama Buddha's Theravada Buddhism. But as spirit continued to evolve, men and women realized that there was a *fuller* type of spiritual realization, one that included both spirit's unmanifest dimension and its manifest dimension—the developmental, evolving dimension that is active and moving in the world as we know it. Those traditions called themselves nondual, meaning that the absolute and the relative were *not two*, and they declared that in order to have a full realization of spirit, you had to realize this formlessness, this pure unmanifest presence, *and* you had to realize spirit in action

in the manifest world of form. That realization is deeper than just realizing absolute consciousness itself. That realization carries what you're talking about, which is not just a freedom given to me by realizing this absolute

Unless we're able, through very careful, enlightened, and rational thinking, to create new structures in consciousness that can support the emergence of the higher potentials we feel so inspired by, we might just be lost in an experience.

Andrew Cohen

we have been culturally conditioned to feel, nevertheless find ourselves compelled toward consciousness.

So for human beings at the leading edge, the highest and most profound expression of this creative impulse that began with the big bang is the spiritual impulse, or the urge toward consciousness. And that impulse is two things: It's the desire to discover our own ground—the source of our birth and the home from which we all originally came. But it is, simultaneously, the original creative drive *itself*. To put it in theological terms, it's the God-impulse. It's the will to create and the will to evolve. So as you were saying, enlightenment evolves. You were making a distinction between the relative dimension and the absolute dimension. At the level of the spiritual experience, the absolute or nonrelative dimension can be experienced either as this open, empty, timeless ground from whence we all came *or* as this mysterious compulsion to evolve that seems to come from consciousness itself, from

formlessness and not just a type of fullness given to me by realizing the world of form. It is an active, dynamic connecting of the two so that the very experience of spirit is an experience of spirit's own compulsion to *manifest*, spirit's own compulsion to evolve, spirit's own compulsion to develop. That's a deeper, wider, fuller realization than realizing just the Ground of Being or the unmanifest formless state. And that's what you and I are looking at in particular—the continued development of nondual forms of spirituality that are fully connected with the evolutionary impulse.

COHEN: Absolutely. And what's so thrilling is this point where the awakening to this absolute creative compulsion or impulse bumps up against our postmodern predicament. What happens when an awakening individual begins to discover different perspectives and levels of freedom and kinds of insight that completely turn his or her world upside down?

As we get directly in touch with the passion and inspiration and conviction of the evolutionary impulse itself, that impulse has to be filtered through worldviews, values, and perspectives that can make it possible for us to actually move forward together. The impulse itself is the experience of an exhilarating compulsion to evolve, but that exhilaration is just an *experience*. To make that thrilling experience of freedom and exhilaration and confidence and conviction *manifest*, it has to be filtered through our values and perspectives. And the worldviews, values, and perspectives that we have been culturally conditioned by don't usually have room or space for the new kinds of perspectives and insights we begin to experience when we awaken not only to the Ground of Being, but also—and maybe even more importantly—to this driving creative impulse.

That's why I feel the work that you and I and so many others are doing is important. Because unless we're able, through very careful, enlightened, and rational thinking, to create new structures in consciousness that can support the emergence of the higher potentials that we feel so inspired by, we might just be lost in an experience. These new potentials won't be able to manifest themselves as new and higher realities without the evolution of our values and perspectives. I think the work at hand here, as you've been saying, is not only to have the experience of awakening to the absolute nature of consciousness itself—both as the Ground of all Being and as the creative impulse—but to ask questions like, How am I thinking about what it means to be me and what it means to live in this world? What is the world? What is culture? What does it mean to be a man or a woman? What does everything actually mean in light of this experience that I'm having?

THE BIRTH OF AN INTEGRAL CULTURE

WILBER: Definitely. One of the things you have said so often is that the interpretation of a spiritual experience is as important, or more important, than the spiritual experience itself. That sounds kind of shocking at first, but the more you think it through, the more you realize it is exactly right on the money. So for example, somebody at the traditional,

or mythic, stage of development who has an experience of pure consciousness will interpret it very, *very* differently than somebody who is at the pluralistic, postmodern stage of development. Somebody at the traditional, or mythic, stage will interpret it in very concrete, literal terms and also as an experience that is given just to a particular path or mythology or chosen people, whereas somebody who's experiencing the same pure consciousness or ground and is interpreting it from a pluralistic, postmodern, relativistic stage of development will see that it's something that is available to all sentient beings in equal measure.

If we look at the culture wars, for example, they're made up of the three middle stages of development in this value structure—traditional values versus modern values versus postmodern values. But an experience of consciousness *per se*, a *satori* experience, won't necessarily help you choose among those value structures because they are all relative structures and relative interpretations. What you want is to develop to an integral stage of development, because that is the first stage that understands the relative importance of all of the previous stages. Everybody is born at stage one, at the archaic stage, and unfolds or develops from archaic to magic to mythic to rational to pluralistic. All of those are called first tier because they all believe the same thing—that *their* values are the only real or important values in the world. When you make the leap to second tier, however—what Clare Graves called a “momentous leap” of value—then, for the first time, you realize that different people are coming from different stages of development and that all of those previous stages have a role to play. Part of what we want to do in order to construct an enlightened society is not just to get everybody having an experience of pure reality, not just to get everybody living in the power of now, but to find ways to have our culture governed by integral values, values that are truly comprehensive and truly all-embracing.

The integral structure is the value structure that is basically the truest to the real nature of absolute consciousness. So it's only by having both an awakening to the absolute and its creative impulse *and* a development to integral that we get a true understanding of evolutionary enlightenment. With the emergence of the integral stage of development, we can see that the original creative impulse that goes all the way back to the big bang has been present in all of the stages of evolutionary unfolding. That impulse has gone through the entire tree of life and all the way up through human beings, through archaic, magic, mythic, rational, pluralistic, and integral stages and is now finally blossoming in the form of an urgent evolutionary enlightenment unfolding. That is

experienced hand in hand with this Ground of Being, with this motionless, pure, formless emptiness. Only a culture that has an integral compass is going to be able to make room not just for practices that help you to realize absolute consciousness but also for practices that help you to develop through these relative stages of consciousness.

This is so important—not just as a theoretical issue and not just as a practical concern, but because the biggest conflict we’re up against right now, in terms of spiritual understanding, is between the pluralistic stage and the integral stage. The pluralistic stage, although it’s the highest of the first-tier stages, is still a stage that thinks its values are the only true values. The pluralistic stage hates rational values, hates traditional values, and hates archaic values, and yet it claims to be nonmarginalizing, multicultural, sensitive, and all-inclusive. And although it’s attempting to be all of those things, it’s not. It denies hierarchical development; it denies gradations

growth. That, of course, is what integral does. It takes all of that into account.

COHEN: What you’re saying is all too true. One of the very delicate dimensions of all this has to do with the actual process of taking this leap from the pluralistic stage to the integral stage and beyond. How exactly is that step taken? When individuals come on a retreat with me and spend some time in my company, for example, and also begin to see the world through the perspective that I’m sharing, it’s not difficult for them to have a powerful experience at the level of consciousness, and also for their cognition, their way of thinking, to be powerfully affected. I know that in the work you’re doing, the exact same thing happens. An individual awakens to a higher stage and a bigger, deeper, more comprehensive, and more inclusive worldview that is absolutely liberating and inspiring and gives so much confidence. But then the interesting and

important question is: How can they make that new deeper and higher recognition their *own*? There’s a delicate process that happens where individuals can see, recognize, and understand many of the things that we have been speaking about, and yet unless it’s consciously *pursued*, it’s very easy for them to fall back to cognitive structures, values, and perspectives that they were holding, both consciously and unconsciously,

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before they awakened to higher and deeper evolutionary and integral values and perspectives. The most tricky and delicate part of this process is really about learning how to traverse this territory oneself, to make these bold steps forward with one’s own consciousness, with one’s own cognition, with one’s very own soul.

It’s an arduous, and even heroic, endeavor. It’s challenging. We’re talking about individuals making quite significant leaps forward in a very short period of time. And as we know, the whole evolutionary developmental process at the level of culture has sped up dramatically. On one hand, this leap from postmodern pluralism to an integral evolutionary worldview would seem like the obvious next step, but at the same time, in terms of our individual self-structures, it’s an enormous leap to be taken. That is the delicate part of all this, and it’s also very exciting. And what I’ve found is that if we’re trying to create a new consciousness and culture, it’s infinitely easier to do it together with other people who are inspired by the same vision and the same possibilities and potentials as we

Part of what we want to do in order to construct an enlightened society is not just to get everybody living in the power of now, but to find ways to have our culture governed by integral values, values that are truly all-embracing.

of depth and awareness; it denies degrees of unfolding of consciousness from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric to cosmocentric. All of those beliefs are actually hurting an evolutionary enlightenment. They’re actually slowing it down—

COHEN: They inhibit it.

WILBER: Yes. They inhibit an integral evolution. They did *wonderfully* up to their stage, and they were very important in overcoming some of the problems with traditional values and some of the problems with scientific materialism. All of those were handled beautifully by the pluralistic, or postmodern, stage. But now we’re *ready* for the next stage. We’re fighting to get an integral awareness to blossom. One of the things we have to constantly battle against and deal with is the number of people who are having an experience of the absolute but are interpreting it through flatland, pluralistic, postmodern terms because that cripples their further growth, and it also cripples their capacity to integrate all the previous stages of

are. When we're on our own, unless we are firmly established at this new stage, inevitably we're going to fall back. That's our habitual tendency. But when we cultivate relationships with other individuals and other groups of individuals who are sharing these higher values and perspectives and insights, it's through sustaining those relationships that a new world is

It's really unusual for an individual to realize that he or she is literally on the edge of unknown territory.

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literally created. That's when we begin to think together about life and what it means to be a human being in different ways, and then all the issues that we all have to deal with are brought into the light of the new perspective and have to be questioned and scrutinized. That's how these new values are actually cocreated and codeveloped with other people who want to take this next step with us. We really need each other to do this.

U NCHARTED TERRITORY

WILBER: That's exactly right. There are, in a sense, two delicate steps toward a fully integral approach to realization and enlightenment and consciousness. One is getting unstuck from the pluralistic postmodern worldview, getting out of the worldview that denies all ranking systems, hierarchies, and value gradations. This is an enormously difficult thing for individuals at the postmodern stage to do because it seems that they are then judging people in a negative way. But the judging is simply in terms of depth, in terms of degrees of inclusiveness. The postmodernists have thrown out judgments based on *exclusiveness*, which is good, but they have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. They've thrown out the judgments of *inclusiveness* as well. And so they don't have an understanding of how these stages of development are important—and also crucial to their *own* emergence. The pluralistic worldview itself emerged from five or six hierarchical stages, each of which *transcended and included* the previous ones.

The segment of the American population known as the cultural creatives—some twenty percent, or roughly fifty-five million Americans—has basically moved from modern rationalism and scientific materialism to the next stage of pluralism and postmodernism and multiculturalism. But that's a very flatland stage; it's a stage that doesn't have an understanding of discriminating wisdom based on degrees of developmental depth. So the first delicate issue is helping to get people out of that automatic, knee-jerk, postmodern-jargon series of approaches, which is "anything that has any ranking

is wrong." They're overlooking the fact that they have their own ranking; that itself is a very strong ranking. So we can't *avoid* ranking. What we want are rankings that are fair and equitable and open to justice rather than rankings based on race, color, sex, or creed.

So getting caught in the postmodern cultural creative stage is the first delicate step that most people have to get over. The second delicate step is that once you understand the integral stage—once you understand theoretically that it includes all of the previous stages, and makes room for all of their values, realizing that human beings are born at square one and that *everybody* goes through all of these different stages of value growth—then there's the thing you're talking about. Once you understand the importance of both absolute and relative, and the importance of things we call quadrants and levels and lines and states and types, once you get all of that theoretically, then you have to *embody* it, you have to awaken to it, you have to make it a genuine realization in your own being. And that generally takes practice in a spiritual community.

This is one of the reasons we call these dialogues that you and I have been having over the years "The Guru and the Pandit." I have represented the pandit position and raised the theoretical issues and many of the academic issues that need to be raised—hopefully not in a dry, dull sense but in a way that's spiritually alive. I have never stepped into the public role of being a spiritual teacher or a guru. But it *takes* a guru, generally speaking. It takes a spiritual path and some sort of involvement with a spiritual community for people to convert this integral theoretical understanding to an integral, embodied, alive, realized understanding. And that's one of the important things that you're involved in.



Both of these delicate steps are necessary for culture at large to move away from its fragmented and divisive and quarrelsome state, away from the culture wars where we are at each other's throats, with traditional values hating modern values, modern values hating postmodern values, and postmodern values hating all of them. It's important to see that those are three necessary unfolding stages of development

My favorite politically incorrect definition of a pioneer is the guy with all the arrows in his back.

in every human being's growth. And for us to be able to have that kind of harmonious culture, we need both of those steps. We need to move from a fragmented view to an integral view theoretically, and then we have to find ways to embody it, to practice it, and to put it into being.

COHEN: Indeed. And because we are at this very delicate point in our cultural evolution, it seems so urgent that more and more people take these steps more quickly. It's unusual for an individual to realize that he or she is literally on the edge of unknown territory. Most human beings are born and die within a preexistent cultural context that they don't necessarily feel is up to them to define. But at this particular time in history, for these new integral and evolutionary stages, structures, and potentials to emerge, it requires rare and heroic individuals who are willing to bear the emotional, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual overwhelm of realizing that they have to be real pioneers. Where we're going now is uncharted territory. More and more people at this edge are working very hard to lay down these new structures, as you have often said, but the truth is that there's no panel of experts or ascended masters who have already figured this out for us. This is something we're all working through and need to work through together, with other individuals that have that same pioneering spirit and have awakened to the conviction that this needs to happen and we're the ones who have to do it. This adds a certain kind of weight, gravitas, and, of course, excitement and thrill to the endeavor of spiritual transformation and evolution at this particular time.


WILBER: Absolutely! That's one of the things that makes

being on an evolutionary edge so "good news/bad news." On the one hand, it's a pioneering edge; it's being at a place that has more perspectives than previous positions, that sees more and embraces more and understands more. But it's also a situation where, as you say, these things haven't been figured out; they are all being tested as we go along. People are still trying to work *into* what the exact meaning is of a truly evolutionary enlightenment, a truly integral enlightenment. And there's no book that gives us the final answer. It's all being done right now in the hearts and minds of those individuals who are treading the path. That's where the book is being written. And that also means that it

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can be very, very hard on individuals who are moving along this new path.

I think a lot of people look at things like the great notion of evolutionary enlightenment or integral enlightenment and think, "Well, if I'm at an integral stage, everything must be wonderful, everything must be just super-keen." But actually, things can be just horrible, because you're being laid open in a very sensitive way. You are transcending all previous defenses. It can be a situation that's very, very difficult. You are in a position where, as I say, it hurts more, but bothers you less. My favorite politically incorrect definition of a pioneer is the guy with all the arrows in his back. That's what it can feel like when you're pursuing this path. And, as you say, there is no final tribunal, no court of judges or enlightened masters that have gone down this path before. We're all making it up as we go along, but we're grounded in our understanding, in our growth, in our inner development and realization.

That's what makes a careful consideration and discussion with others who are attempting this path so important. Sharing what we've learned and continuing to open up to each other's insights is so very, very critical. Because, as obvious as it sounds to say that we need to include all of the developmental states and stages in a human being if they're going to find their full potential, fewer than one percent of the spiritual teachers in this country are doing it. 



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FEATURE

EMERSON THE INTEGRAL OF SCIENCE

A man in a light blue shirt and dark pants stands on a white cube, looking up at the camera. The background is a complex 3D geometric landscape composed of numerous white and grey cubes of varying sizes, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The word "EMERSON" is written vertically in large white letters, "THE" is in smaller white letters, "INTEGRAL" is in large blue letters, and "OF SCIENCE" is written vertically in large white letters.



In the first decade of the twenty-first century, it's hard to imagine living in a world without democracy and the natural right to live a life of one's own choosing. These fundamental principles of modernity, which flourished in the salons of Paris during the late eighteenth century, have become so ingrained in our individual and collective psyches that we mostly take them for granted. But

Building the Foundations of a New Worldview

BY JOEL PITNEY

the principles of the Enlightenment might never have become manifest were it not for the founding fathers of the United States, who designed the world's first democratic government and self-determined nation with only their philosophical convictions to guide them.

Fast-forward more than two hundred years to the present, where another group of individuals is attempting to incite a new philosophical revolution that has such profound and broad-ranging implications for human life and the world that some observers of cultural evolution are calling it the second Enlightenment. They're talking about the emergence of the integral worldview. And thanks to the work of philosopher Ken Wilber and others, this new perspective is helping hundreds of thousands of people around the world—including the editors of this magazine—to start to see the many dimensions of reality, both inner and outer, as multiple reflections of one unfolding process of cosmic evolution. After decades of relative obscurity, an international movement of integral scholars, practitioners, and activists is now working to give this little-known perspective more legitimacy in the public eye. And through a variety of social networks, websites, centers, academic programs, and conferences, they are attempting to build the cultural foundation for what integral theorist and author Steve McIntosh suggests could ultimately be “a new, historically significant level of human civilization.”

The roots of the integral movement go back more than a century to the theories and visions of various philosophers, mystics, and developmental psychologists, such as Sri Aurobindo, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Jean Gebser. But in the last thirty years, so much more developmental work has come to the fore that we now have a variety of maps and established theories to describe these processes of psychospiritual, cultural, and biological evolution and how they are related. Perhaps the most complete synthesis of this recent work can be found in Wilber's AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels) model, which is based on years of exhaustive research and spiritual inquiry and brings together the many disciplines through which humanity seeks truth—the spiritual traditions, the physical and social sciences, politics, art, ethics, and psychology—into one comprehensive “theory of everything.” But while AQAL and other theoretical frameworks have been important catalysts for the integral movement, it is clear to many

that they are just “maps” and that far more significant than the frameworks themselves is the emerging worldview that they describe. This unifying perspective could not arise at a better time in history, as the complexity of our moral, political, environmental, and spiritual challenges demands a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of reality—one that appreciates the interior dynamics of consciousness and culture that are at play below the surface of every issue.

The attempt to create a cultural movement is not a solitary endeavor. What may be most promising about this new wave of integral activism is that while Wilber continues to remain a central voice, the integral baton is now starting to be carried by a much larger group of people. Jeff Salzman, a Colorado entrepreneur, is one of the new leaders in the movement. In early 2008, he and a small community of integral practitioners transformed a 7,000-square-foot Lutheran church into the Boulder Integral Center as a venue for creating a new culture based on the shared values that are emerging in the integral worldview. Salzman’s group is one among a number of grassroots social networks that

Some observers of cultural evolution are calling it the second Enlightenment.

are popping up in major cities around the world, from Frankfurt and London to Sydney to San Francisco and New York. Many of these groups meet in online discussions or at in-person “meet-ups,” which serve as havens for those who have been turned on to the transformative potential of the integral worldview to develop their understanding with others who share that same intention. Another new face in the integral movement, Ewan Townhead, is the cofounder of Integral Europe, a web-based community that he hopes will be the central hub for organizing groups and activities internationally. As he points out, “If you really are pushing into an integral stage of consciousness but you don’t have the group or *sangha* around you to support that, the culture at large will just drag you back.”

For Salzman’s Boulder group and some of the more active networks around the globe, getting together to talk about integral theory has given way to a natural interest in exploring what it means to actually *live* from this radical new perspective that allows you to see the many dimensions of yourself, culture, and the universe not as separate or fragmented but as interrelated parts of one integrated, evolving whole. As a result, some have established formal organizations and centers to support deeper, more ongoing relationships and practice among their members. In 2007, the Integral Loft was founded in downtown Seattle’s Pioneer Square as a joint venture between the Puget Sound’s leading integral organizations: Pacific Integral, Generating Transformative Change

in Human Systems, Kore Leadership, and the Women’s Integral Leadership Circle. This past summer, the Santa Monica Center for Integral Living opened its doors to serve as the integral hub for the greater Los Angeles area. Even Miami Beach is going integral—Florida style—with the 2005 opening of the Standard Hotel and Center for Integral Living, a destination spa, urban resort, and retreat center whose design was based on integral principles. And in Germany, where the integral movement may be more organized than anywhere else in the world, there is a governing body, the Integral Forum, that publishes a quarterly magazine, hosts an annual conference, and oversees more than twenty different integral salons in cities throughout the German-speaking world.

While exploring what it means to live an integral life is a common goal across these many groups, what that actually looks like in practice is far from defined. At the Boulder Integral Center, they’re doing what Salzman calls “integral R&D.” The goal is to create an atmosphere that supports evolution in all aspects of human life—physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual. To that end, they put on a regular series of workshops, seminars, classes,

and practice groups on everything from meditation and yoga to “shadow work,” group dynamics, and even a seminar on treating drug addiction from an integral perspective. Many of these trainings are focused on individual transformation, but Salzman is most passionate about the new culture that is

developing between members. As he says, “Our real mission is to see what can happen between a long-term group of integral practitioners who are dedicated to transformation at all levels.” But Salzman is the first to acknowledge that getting a group of people to make the kind of commitment required to pioneer a new stage of culture and consciousness together is an enormous task, particularly in our contemporary age of the individual, in which the freedom to do what you want is held paramount. “One of the challenges and opportunities of integral,” he says, “is that so many options are open. That’s the integral orientation toward life. So how we go about creating a committed community with real direction, in this limitless context, is very much the inquiry that we’ve set out to explore.”

One of the biggest questions that the movement as a whole is trying to tackle is how to make this sophisticated perspective accessible to a broader, more mainstream segment of the population. Integral is arising out of the postmodern worldview—sometimes referred to as the green meme*—whose values emerged on the shoulders of the baby-boom generation through the sixties revolution and now dominate the most progressive pockets of culture worldwide. Postmodernism has brought many gifts, including the environmental and civil rights movements and the ability

*Based on a color-coded model of sociocultural evolution called Spiral Dynamics.



to appreciate the value of the diverse cultural perspectives that exist on the planet. But for those who are trying to advance the integral worldview, the target audience is composed of the people who are starting to recognize that, in addition to its positive attributes, postmodernism has some significant failings, including its tolerance for “anything goes” moral relativism, its “give peace a chance” naïveté, its tendency toward fragmentation, and its “me generation” reputation for narcissism and materialism. Figuring out how to reach this audience, which he calls “exit green,” is one of the primary concerns for Robb Smith in his role as CEO of the world’s leading integral think tank, the Integral Institute (founded by Wilber in 1998) and its brand-new for-profit cultural arm, Integral Life. This past August, I-Life launched a website that Smith describes as “a meta-map of the many different methods that people use to develop, with all the services that they would need to do so.” The site offers a combination of social networking, e-learning, multimedia, an integral store, and even web-based personal coaching. Through this combination of educational and developmental tools, Smith is hoping to create “the most accessible package” for people to develop and embody an integral perspective “without having to read five Ken Wilber books.” He also intends to create “an engaging experience that doesn’t make people feel like they’re doing something fringe and that’s as reputable as Starbucks or Apple or Harley-Davidson. That’s what our culture trusts, and that’s what we’re trying to build.”

But there could be a danger in this approach. By trying to make the integral worldview more accessible to a broader population that is steeped in postmodern values, some worry that there

is also a risk of losing what is most compelling about integral itself: the fact that it’s a new and higher worldview that demands the cultivation of a more sophisticated philosophical orientation toward life. As Steve McIntosh, an emerging voice in the integral movement, suggests: “I think that we have to be somewhat stalwart. We can’t water down integral. We can’t make it palatable to postmodern sensibilities, because that would eliminate its very attractiveness. The people we want to attract are those who want something more than the postmodern values that we’re trying to transcend.” In his 1964 book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, media theorist Marshall McLuhan made his famous point that “the medium is the message,” suggesting that *how* we convey meaning may actually be synonymous with or even more important than the message itself. And for the integral movement, which is trying to figure out just exactly how to facilitate real and sustained cultural evolution, communicating the integral worldview in a way that does justice to the truly radical nature of the perspective itself seems to be a significant challenge that it will continue to face.

One of the most promising ways that integral is being conveyed to a broader audience is through the world of academia. According to Dr. Sean Esbjörn-Hargens of John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, California, “The more we can establish the integral model as an academic discipline, the more it can be viewed as legitimate within mainstream culture.” The halls of the academy have long been Western society’s incubator for all forms of knowledge. But these halls have for the most part been closed to integral theory in spite of the fact that many books have been

published on the subject and that the theory itself provides the framework for a truly interdisciplinary academic approach. But Esbjörn-Hargens is trying to change that. In 2006, he partnered with Integral Institute to establish the Integral Theory Department at JFK University and the world's first accredited master's degree program in integral theory. Through the program, Esbjörn-Hargens and his colleagues are trying to test and prove the efficacy of what they call the scholar-practitioner approach to education and research, which gives equal emphasis to both "transformational self-inquiry and intellectually rigorous scholarship." In addition to gaining a theoretical understanding of the dynamics of consciousness and culture that the integral model reveals, students also use spiritual practice and other forms of self-reflection to explore and develop their own interior dimensions. While the fledgling master's program is still quite small (eighty students in this fall's cohort), it is only one of what Esbjörn-Hargens refers to as "the four legs of the integral academic stool." Hargens has also helped start the peer-reviewed *Journal of Integral Theory and*

question "Does Integral = Ken Wilber?" But while a lot of important information was distributed through the many presentations and panels—and a major step was taken toward putting integral theory on the map as a truly legitimate academic discipline—the significance of the conference was much greater. The gathering was a cross section of the integral world itself—a unique blend of spiritual teachers, philosophers, journalists, academics, professionals, and many leaders of the growing integral networks across the globe. For most of these five hundred participants, it was the first time they had been at an event of that magnitude, where everyone shared an interest in the integral perspective. By bringing this global meta-network together, the conference started to give the relatively independent actors in the integral world the kind of confidence and connection that come from recognizing that they are part of something much larger than their individual communities and specific bodies of work.

So the integral emergence is at a significant point in its development: While not yet a mainstream movement, it is no longer limited

to a small handful of pioneering individuals. And while the definition of what this integral future will look like is far from clear, even among those who have started to explore this territory through their own lives, communities, and work, the fact that so many are becoming interested in hashing it out

"We can't water down integral to make it palatable to postmodern sensibilities, because that would eliminate its very attractiveness."

Steve McIntosh

Practice, the Integral Research Center, and a biennial academic conference, all of which serve as forums for a growing number of scholar-practitioners who are applying the integral model to a diverse array of disciplines—ecology, international development, psychology, and spirituality—to compare their findings and start to build an evolving body of integral knowledge.

Of all the new developments in the integral movement thus far, the most significant may be the "Biennial Integral Theory" conference, the first of which was held this past August at JFK University and which Ken Wilber called a "historic and momentous event." This academic conference, which was sold out months in advance and carried a waiting list of more than three hundred people, was officially organized as a showcase for the work being done by the network of integral researchers and practitioners that JFKU has pulled together. A quick flip through the conference brochure revealed a fascinating array of research presentations, including "An Integral Perspective on Climate Change," "Integral Education at the Elementary Levels: Big Philosophy for Little Kids," and "Integral Politics: The Islamic Movement and Political Crisis in Turkey." There were also panels that assembled many of the integral world's leading figures to discuss everything from "Integral Feminism" and "Integral Law" to a roundtable inquiry into the

together is a sign that something important is occurring. As Steve McIntosh noticed on his recent book tour throughout many of the integral world's budding centers, "There is a sense of excitement and vibrancy among the people you meet. And people are showing up in good numbers. It's not yet a popular movement, like you might read about in *Newsweek*. It's not like Eckhart Tolle on *Oprah*. It's more about the quality of the ideas and the commitment of the people than it is about the *number* of people who are interested in it." And for this small but growing group of integralists, just as the founding fathers of America could never have completely foreseen the impact that their revolution would have on the future of humanity, it is likely that the full significance of the philosophical and cultural activism being carried out in the many corners of the integral movement is far beyond what any of its members can grasp or intuit at this early stage. But in spite of this fact, there is a bold sense of pioneering spirit, fueled by conviction in the truth and potential of the integral perspective itself, that is driving the movement forward—often blindly—into a hopeful future. ☐



To listen to a series of in-depth interviews with leading figures in the integral movement, visit enlightennext.org/integralemergence

A Theologian of Renewal



In an age torn apart by the culture wars between science and religion, Catholic theologian John Haught has a better way. Here, *EnlightenNext* offers a glimpse inside the prodigious mind and heart of a man who has looked into the future and seen a new face of God.

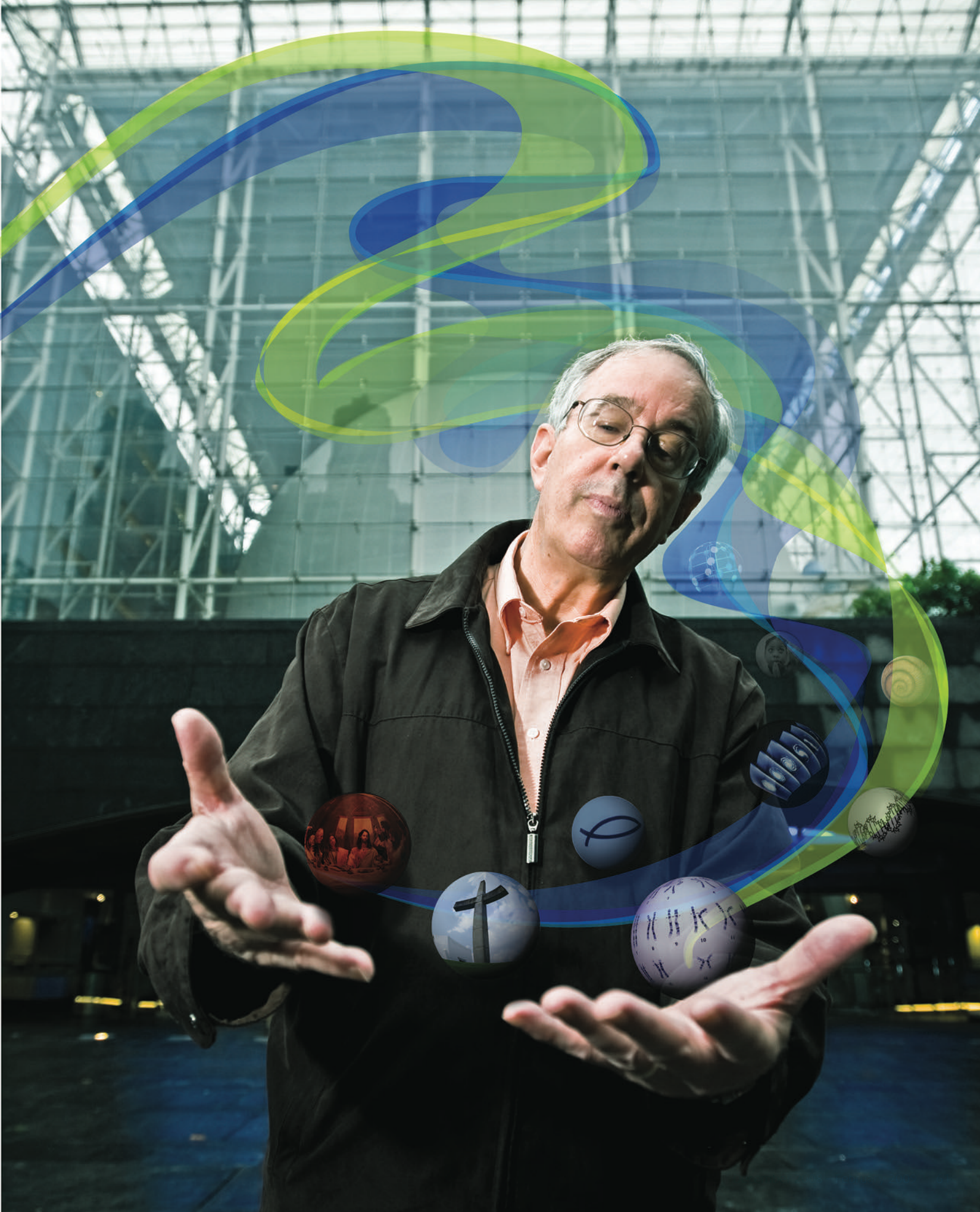
by Carter Phipps

“TURN RIGHT IN FIVE HUNDRED yards.” The words rang out in my car, like the booming, disembodied voice of some divine authority, this one filled with infallible knowledge of all possible future roads that I might ever travel. For a moment I felt like Moses, except that in this case the burning bush was simply my new navigation system, sounding out voice commands, directing my every move through the heavy July traffic on Long Island. I was headed to Sag Harbor, a beautiful old fishing village turned artist colony on the eastern edge of Long Island, to meet with John Haught, a Catholic theologian from Georgetown University. Haught was temporarily staying in a Catholic retreat center on the coast, leading a weeklong course on “The New Cosmic Story.”

Last spring, I had contacted Haught requesting an interview on the subject of his latest book, *God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens*. He agreed, and soon I rang him up and asked my first question. Fifteen minutes later, I stopped him mid-sentence. Now generally, a fifteen-minute answer from an interviewee is not a particularly good sign and precedes a desperate attempt to get the interview back on track. But Haught was different. His words were clear and precise; his command of the subject, profound; and his train of thinking, sensible and deeply rational. And this wasn’t just in regard to atheism, faith, and unbelief. His rich and multilayered responses hinted at

a much deeper and broader theological agenda—to define and articulate a new vision for the religious impulse in the twenty-first century. I had come across Haught’s work before, looked through his books *Deeper Than Darwin* and *God After Darwin*, heard fellow editors refer to his work in positive terms, even watched brief videos of him on science-and-spirit websites. But this was the first time I had actually spoken to the man himself. By the time the interview was finished an hour later, I had come to a resolution—I needed to find out more about what made this unusual theologian tick and why his thoughts about God were so compelling.

On the surface, Haught might appear quite conventional, even traditional—a simple bespectacled academic with a strong interest in the relationship between science and spirit. But appearances can be deceiving. The more I learned, the more I began to understand that Haught’s mainstream credentials were in fact concealing a much more interesting subtext—a more subversive subplot, if you will. Indeed, those of us who have come of age in a Western spiritual climate largely influenced by the influx of Eastern enlightenment traditions sometimes have a harder time recognizing spiritual and religious innovation when it comes clothed in the conventions of our own culture’s faiths. Haught is certainly a Christian, and he easily speaks the language of faith, God, and belief. But he is also emerging as a significant player in a



larger spiritual project, one that transcends and includes any specific tradition. We live in a time when teachers, thinkers, and philosophers are attempting to articulate, understand, and ultimately define a truly post-traditional spiritual worldview that could survive and thrive in a scientific age. In the pages of this magazine, we have called the early fruits of that project “evolutionary spirituality.” Haught calls his offering to that emerging tradition “evolutionary theology.” By whatever name, these new approaches are shaking the pillars of tradition and recontextualizing the way we understand both science and religion.

Seven hundred fifty years ago, Thomas Aquinas penned his masterpiece *Summa Theologica*, combining the philosophy of Aristotle, Augustine, and many of the best Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and even pagan ideas of the time into a grand reinvention of Christian thought. Today we are tasked with a similar need to reinvent our own traditions for a world vastly changed. How was Haught’s evolutionary theology, I wondered, helping to serve that project? Curious to meet the voice on the other end of the phone, I headed east toward Long Island, that summer mecca of sun and sand, searching for answers with only my trusty navigator to guide my way.

“Destination ahead,” the navigator’s voice sounded off as I slowly made my way up the driveway of a beautiful oceanside property that looked as if it had truly been blessed by some divine touch. Haught had invited me to the retreat center for the day, both to watch him teach and in the hope that a relaxed schedule would allow ample time for interview and dialogue. I found him in the main dining room, one man amid a large roomful of nuns—or so I was told. There was not a habit among them, or any obvious signs of their faith. But over the course of the afternoon, I came to understand that these were likely some of the most progressive sisters in the Church—smart, sophisticated, many a professor among them, and all interested in hearing how our changing understanding of the cosmos was reinventing the religion they had dedicated their lives to.

Haught introduced himself and shook my hand—a tall, somewhat gangly man who seemed to combine a professorial seriousness with a grandfatherly sweetness. I liked him immediately, and he ushered me over to a table, where we fell deep into conversation.

“We have plenty of time to talk,” he began. “The next session doesn’t start until mid-afternoon.” Chuckling softly, he added, “That’s a sure sign it’s a Catholic retreat and not a Protestant one. Protestants have that work ethic—they start early and end late. Catholics, well . . . it’s different.”

Haught should definitely know something about Catholics. He was raised in a strong Catholic family in rural Virginia, and at the age of thirteen he headed off to seminary where he spent ten years, dropping out in his early twenties. The year was 1966, Haught was twenty-three, and the priesthood was not for him. But he had undergone an important transformation during his formative time inside the inner sanctums of Christianity. His young religious soul had grown to distrust the strong “otherworldly” emphasis of his tradition as it was then taught and practiced—the notion that our spiritual priorities should be focused not on this world of sin and suffering but on preparing for life in the next world. And simultaneously, he had heard the call of a new religious spirit, a sense of renewal and optimism expressed most strongly in two events. First, the Church itself was undergoing a major transformation as a result of the Second Vatican Council, a gathering of theologians that took place in Rome from 1962 to 1965 to overhaul the tenets and practices of Catholicism in light of the changing realities of modern life. Second, and perhaps most important, Haught was exposed to the words of a deceased religious thinker whose recently published works were stirring up the Catholic hierarchy—Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

“I was in the seminary during the procedures of the Second Vatican Council, and all along we had hints of renewal,” Haught recalled a little later as we sat under the generous shade of a local tree. “But it was still a very otherworldly type of spirituality that was emphasized. I left because I was beginning to become discontented with that, and by that time, I had read the writings of Teilhard de Chardin. Now the teachers themselves couldn’t teach his work in class, but my more forward-looking professors would encourage us to read his ideas. And especially after reading Teilhard, I saw a possibility of another way of looking at things.”

For Haught and other theologians caught up in the spirit of the times, Teilhard’s work represented a break with an older form of Christianity, one in which the context of theology was classical philosophy, largely influenced by Plato. For Plato and much of neo-Platonic thought, the material world was seen as imperfect because it exists in a state of unpredictable

“I didn’t think that I needed to go East to find liberation.”

John Haught



flux and change. It is highly contingent, subject to chance, and essentially unruly, the shadow side of the transcendent order of the “Kosmos.” The idea of becoming, of process, of development, was disparaged in this Platonic outlook as being antithetical to the unchanging order and perfection of God. We should not look to the untrustworthy fickleness of

the world as our model for divine contemplation but upward toward the “fixity of the heavens.” While the ongoing march of knowledge has certainly required a few major upgrades to this ancient model, it was Teilhard, according to Haught, who saw the need for a complete theological overhaul.

“Teilhard was one of the first scientists in the twentieth century to become aware that the universe is a story,” Haught explained to me, his voice rising a little. “It’s not just a place of imperfection, what Galileo called ‘the sink of all dull refuse,’ caricaturing the Platonic view. No, the universe is a place of creativity and becoming, a place of becoming *more*. Teilhard knew astronomy and he knew some physics and he knew the history of science and he knew what the Galilean revolution implied. It meant that we could no longer look spatially somewhere else to find the perfection that we’re looking for. We have to look toward the future. The future became for Teilhard the place where we lift up our eyes and our hearts to have something to aspire to.”

Invigorated by the implications of this new theological mindset, Haught’s own future took a new direction. He headed back to the classroom, back to the religious and philosophical texts that had informed his youth, only this time as a layperson, receiving a doctorate in religious studies and

eventually landing at Georgetown. As the influence of the Second Vatican Council began to wane, and the wave of reformation that characterized the Church for many years began to give way to a wave of retrenchment, Haught worked to develop and expand the theological foundation of a new kind of evolutionary religious orientation. But it was another subject that would come to occupy his attention—science. As a theologian interested in the spiritual implications of evolutionary science, Haught’s work naturally bridged these two often-contentious domains, and he began to worry about the growing influence in the academic world (and by extension the entire society) not of science but of scientific materialism or scientific naturalism—the idea, as he puts it, that deadness is the ultimate origin and destiny of all being. “It’s self-sabotaging for science,” he explains, “especially in a culture like ours where ninety percent of people say that they believe in God.”

Haught’s work eventually connected him to a small but growing network of scholars who are exploring the relationship between science and religion, a network largely nurtured by the funding largess of the late Sir John Templeton. More recently, it has also earned him some fame. In 2005, he stood side by side with scientists and testified at the infamous Dover, Pennsylvania, evolution trial in arguing against teaching intelligent design in schools—claiming that ID was a

Haught began to worry about the growing influence not of science but of scientific materialism—the idea, as he puts it, that deadness is the ultimate origin and destiny of all being.

religious belief system and thus had no place in the classroom. Yet, true to his own convictions, he cautioned against the false hegemony of science as well, telling the jury that materialism is “a belief system, no less a belief system than is intelligent design. And as such, it has absolutely no place in the classroom, and teachers of evolution should not lead their students craftily or explicitly to . . . feel that they have to embrace a materialistic worldview in order to make sense of evolution.”

This balanced perspective, along with his careful scholarship, has also earned Haught the respect of those who draw

quite different conclusions about the metaphysics of evolution. The renowned Darwinian scholar and secular philosopher Michael Ruse, for example, recently referred to Haught as “our most distinguished writer today on the science-religion relationship.” In this respect, Haught is part of a rich tradition, and it is no accident that he cites as his influences not only Teilhard but also individuals such as Alfred North Whitehead, Paul Tillich, and Karl Rahner, all spiritually inspired thinkers who embraced the revelations of science.

As evidenced by this list, Haught’s religious influences are mostly Western. During our conversations, he expressed familiarity with and respect for Eastern spirituality, in particular Buddhism, but even in the heyday of Eastern spiritual experiments in the 1970s, he was never tempted away from the traditions of his youth. “I didn’t think that I needed to go East to find liberation,” he notes. And yet his own theology is so different from that of his upbringing that he can no longer speak about his work with most members of his family. “We get along very well,” he explains, “but I don’t share this with them. Religiously, we’re in two different worlds.”

As we sat and talked under the trees in the hot summer sun at this quiet retreat center, I became more aware of the unusual sense of old and new that Haught seems to embody. In part, it has to do with his upbringing. He was raised, as he describes it, in “several ages of history.” First there was the seminary and what he describes as essentially a “medieval culture,” albeit one that held some interest and excitement for a young boy on the verge of adolescence. Later as a young man, the modern world “got its teeth in me,” and he emerged into adulthood along with an entire generation riding a wave of hope, change, and renewal. While Haught did not participate in the more radical social ex-

periments of the sixties—no drugs, free love, or experimental communes—he considers himself a child of that time and still speaks fondly of that historic moment when culture tried to take hold of its own evolution and “imagine something new.” For him, the revolutions of the sixties have echoes in the New Testament. “In those biblical days, a wave of hope just swept over the ancient world,” he explained to me, “and if we are going to take the New Testament seriously, why shouldn’t we transplant that renewal mentality into our own age? So I’ve tried to remain a man of the late 1960s throughout my life, and that’s the spirit that I bring to my theology as well.”

Man of Science, Man of Faith

SIR JOHN TEMPLETON (1912-2008)

After my morning interview with John Haught in Sag Harbor, I decided to stay for his afternoon lecture at the retreat center entitled "Teilhard's Response to the Cosmic Pessimists." When Haught returned to the main room to begin his presentation, however, something else was on his mind. "I've just been informed that Sir John Templeton has died," Haught began. "Simply put, I would never have had the extraordinary career opportunities that I have been afforded—the chance to write, travel, and develop my work in so many ways—without his generosity. He has done a great deal for me and for the science and spirit field as a whole."

In fact, it would not be too much of a stretch to say that Templeton, a billionaire financier turned philanthropist, almost single-handedly created a new academic field of inquiry, one devoted to exploring the increasingly interesting questions raised by the relationship between science and religion. Indeed, Templeton's largess—the John Templeton Foundation has an enviable endowment of \$1.1 billion and distributes grants amounting to \$70 million annually—has spawned a fertile exchange of ideas among cutting-edge scientists, theologians, philosophers, and academics through large investments in conferences, publications, online activities, and



academic programs dedicated to exploring the changing face of the science and spirit dialogue. While Templeton himself was sometimes a controversial figure—his well-publicized conservative political positions earned him much scorn in progressive circles—he was also directly responsible for some of the most forward-looking thinking and research that are happening in the academic world today. And despite his clear Christian orientation, his interests remained broad: The foundation's motto is "How little we know, how eager to learn," and it has funded work on everything from the origins of biological complexity to foundational concepts in physics and cosmology to research

on the therapeutic power of prayer to the development of a theology of nature, the latter being the area under which Haught has received support.

But perhaps Templeton's most important legacy is the founding of the prestigious Templeton Prize. Now worth \$1.5 million, Templeton designed his award for those individuals who are "affirming life's spiritual dimension" through pushing the limits of insight, knowledge, or humane action. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was the first recipient, and each year the profile of the Templeton Prize seems to grow. Recent recipients have included physicist Paul Davies, cosmologist George Ellis, and philosopher Charles Taylor.

We can only hope that in some not so distant future, humanity will have transcended both the materialism that has so often attended science and the fundamentalism that has so often attended religion. When that day dawns and we are finally able to think of science and religion not as enemies, opposites, or mutually exclusive endeavors but as two rich, complex, and multilayered parts of one larger conversation about the nature of reality, then we will in some small way be indebted to the efforts of this humble, religious man, whose extraordinary capacity for charity helped a thousand scientific and spiritual flowers bloom in a once arid land.

— C.P.

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There is little doubt he has succeeded, and then some. He has earned a reputation as an impeccable scholar, and his work has garnered him the attention of integral philosophers, evolutionary theorists, and independent spiritual thinkers well beyond the boundaries of Christian thought. And yet he has stayed true to his Catholic roots; he lives and works comfortably in the context of that hoary tradition, and he finds his inspiration for a new integration of science and spirit in that most traditional of Christian texts—the Bible.

“The first thing you should think about when you hear the word ‘God’ in the English scriptures is liberation,” Haught declared. “This is how the Israelites came to conceptualize God.” I must have looked surprised or doubtful, because Haught sort of paused, acknowledging my skepticism, and continued: “Not everyone agrees with me, but basically, biblical religion is all about renewal, promise, and liberation, and that seemed to me to be enough of a theological framework on which to plant my interest in evolution as well. I view evolution not just in terms of biology but in

God is the ultimate Rorschach test, and how we interpret him, her, or it says everything about how we ultimately understand life and reality.

terms of the development of the whole universe from the monotony of radiation to the complexity of the human brain and the emergence of civilization and culture. And when you look at it in that sweeping way, you see that the universe is a pretty interesting place, and it’s been interested in bringing about new being, more being, more intense being, from the very beginning.”

Renewal, promise, liberation. Not exactly the primary emphasis of my childhood Sunday school classes. But in Haught’s theological reading of scripture, these words are essential. Indeed, if one rejects the scientific metaphysics that tells us that evolution is empty of meaning, a blind and random affair, one begins, according to Haught, to see hints of a telos or direction in the universe and, in that direction, a promise. It is a promise that what happens in this world has the potential to make a difference not just in the affairs of

society today but in the larger development of consciousness and spirit in the universe itself. For Haught the Christian story is ultimately a story of the future, a subtle spiritual whisper that calls out to us from both the depth of biblical revelation and the heart of the cosmos itself, suggesting that what goes on in this world may be connected in some small way to the evolutionary destiny of the universe.

It didn’t take me very long in the conversation to realize that Haught takes the *theos* part of his theology very seriously. God is important to him, and he uses the term freely, forthrightly even. He expressed his disappointment with other evolutionary philosophers who are willing to talk about the immanent divinity in nature but shy away from talk of God and the transcendence that such a word implies. But he also made it clear several times that there is nothing old-fashioned about what he means when he uses this ancient term.

“In the modern world, we feel the tension between two religious vectors or two poles,” he explained to me. “One is the traditional withdrawal from the world—the desire to

find peace in some Platonic heaven up there or in some sort of mystical present or some eternal now. Then there’s another pole that comes from being part of a modern world in which political and scientific revolutions have taken place. There is beginning to emerge a feeling that this world—I mean the whole universe, both cosmos and culture—is going somewhere. There is a drama that is unfolding before our eyes, and we wonder if we shouldn’t be part of that. Teilhard set out to try to find some resolution between these two poles. He saw that there is communion with God and then

there’s communion with the earth. But there’s also communion with God *through* the earth. He resolved the tension by rediscovering the biblical idea that God is not *up above* but rather *up ahead*. In other words, everything that happens in the universe is anticipatory. The world rests on the future. And one could say that God is the one who has future in His very essence.”

At this point, we were nearing the end of our conversation, and I had one last question, potentially the most delicate and controversial of the day. I knew from Haught’s writings that his understanding of God was nuanced and complex, but I also knew that he had strong feelings about the need to maintain the idea of a *personal* God. Now when you move in progressive spiritual circles heavily influenced by Buddhism, you get used to a certain reticence around that notion, if not downright hostility. Sometimes it’s the patriarchal associations, as in God, the Father;

sometimes it's the anthropomorphism, as in God, the old man in the sky. And sometimes it's simply confusion about how to relate to a phrase so loaded with cultural overlays and subject to misunderstanding. In a sense, God is the ultimate Rorschach test, and how we interpret him, her, or it says everything about how we ultimately understand our experience of life and reality. Of course, a personal God is an essential part of Catholic doctrine, but I still found it difficult to understand what could be gained by holding firm to what seemed like an outdated notion.

"We do tend to be anthropomorphic, and therefore there's always a danger of emphasizing the personality of God to the point of idolatry, if you will, of diminishing the infinity, the transcendence, so as to make it somehow manageable," he acknowledged, pausing for a moment of contemplation before continuing. "Now in our own ordinary experience of the world, the experiences that are most impressive, most challenging, most exciting are of another person, a 'thou,' a subject. So to me, the problem with denying the personality of ultimate reality is that if God is somehow impersonal, nonpersonal, if ultimate reality lacks 'thou-ness,' then it is somehow less intense in *being* than I am. And I wonder if I can surrender the completeness of my being to what I take to be impersonal or nonpersonal. I do believe in the importance of neuter language about God, and this is why I follow theologians who refer to God as mystery. God is depth, the inexhaustible depth dimension. God is infinite beauty. God is infinite goodness. So when I use the term 'personal,' I'm not using it in the anthropomorphic sense of the one-planet deity that our scientific consciousness has outgrown. But if I subtract the mystery of subjectivity from being altogether, I'm left surrendering myself to something that lacks what I consider to be the most impressive type of experience that we can have in our worldly existence, and that's the experience of another person. So God is *at least* personal. God is also more than personal. God is this infinite, inexhaustible depth dimension. And even if this depth expands to the multiverse, and even if I have a vision of reality that includes trillions and trillions of worlds, if at the core of that reality I don't sense the pulse of personality, then in some sense that whole of totality is less intense in being than I am. And I don't believe that."

Later in the day, as I inched my way forward in traffic amid the busy hustle and bustle of summer beachgoers and vacationers on Long Island, I had time to reflect upon my conversations with Haught. It was hard not to be struck by the contemplative atmosphere of the retreat center and the way we spoke so

frankly together about matters of spirit, God, and faith. Haught was everything I thought he would be—a deeply Christian man with an inspired vision of the religious life, and someone who has much to offer the conversation about evolution and spirituality that is taking place largely outside the context of Christianity. He has found a sweet spot in his theology, one that bridges old and new, and he has managed to become both a defender of his own tradition and an advocate of ideas that are far ahead of even its more progressive factions. In Haught one can almost feel the Christian canon undergoing a deep evolution, one that might not become visible in the everyday life of the Church for decades but which will inevitably have a huge impact on its future.

"The world must have a God; but our concept of God must be extended as the dimensions of our world are extended," wrote Teilhard almost a century ago. In the early twentieth century, evolution had changed everything, he noted. And he predicted that only those religions would survive that were willing to develop forms of their traditions that organically embrace the reality of an evolutionary worldview. After my time with Haught, I think I began to better understand the clarity of Teilhard's foresight. Indeed, just as a God that lives in and through nature might have been the most relevant form of divinity to a hunter-gatherer tribe embedded in the cycles of the natural world thousands of years ago, and just as a transcendent God who offers infinite peace, rest, and restoration beyond time and the world might have made perfect sense for the "nasty, brutish, and short" lives of our early Christian forefathers, so, too, does this new conception of God fit hand in glove with the fast-changing, globalizing, rapidly complexifying world of our own time. The consciousness of our age calls out for a God principle that lives not just in the wondrous beauty of nature, or the eternal stillness of the present moment, but in the unknown creative potential that exists in the mysterious space of the future. It is in contemplating such a God that one can begin to intimate Haught's "spirit of renewal." And it is there that we can begin to find the intellectual, moral, and ultimately religious inspiration to embrace the great challenge of an evolutionary worldview—taking the burden of the future on our own shoulders. Perhaps along the way, we might just detect a hint of the same impulse that took a young boy in rural Virginia all the way from the corridors of the medieval world to the edges of the far distant future, sustained by both a radical spirit of renewal and the revealed words of an ancient God. ■





Idealism for grown-ups

An American Philosopher Calls Us
to Embrace a New Heroism

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN NEIMAN
by Elizabeth Debold

The word *philosopher* means “lover of wisdom.” The Greeks who first coined the term really meant and lived it: They were passionate about discovering the truths of human nature, wanting to create a culture that would represent the highest human achievement. That was then. Today, several millennia later, how many of us hear the word *philosopher* and think of love and wisdom? I certainly don’t. With some rare exceptions, the academic study of philosophy seems more about fine-tuning the obscure and arcane rather than exploring significant questions about living our lives. But within a few

moments of meeting Susan Neiman—with her strong handshake, extraordinary alertness, vivaciousness, and passionate responses to my every question—I knew I’d met someone who truly fit the bill. The wide range of her knowledge and interests pours out of her unselfconsciously in a heartfelt torrent. Neiman is doing something rare and gutsy for philosophers these days—she’s asking questions about things that matter to all of us. In her latest book, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, she invites us to think carefully about the divisions that have fractured our culture

so that we can realize the possibility of our moving forward together.

Neiman has an unusual capacity to uncover our differing philosophical assumptions and, simultaneously, our shared humanity. She suspends her own political judgments to get inside the hearts and minds of fundamentalists on the right, and she reveals the deeper longings that not only motivate them but motivate us all. And Neiman shows powerfully how idealism, which is what ignited the Obama campaign, is neither naïve nor empty but may be the deepest and most significant aspect of our humanness. In this period just following the U.S. presidential election, her gripping and trenchant analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of the fundamentalist right and the progressive left provides us with the kind of understanding we need to chart a new and potentially unifying course into the future.

Neiman, needless to say, is not your usual academic—despite her impeccable credentials. After training at

Harvard with John Rawls, one of the leading philosophers of the twentieth century, she taught philosophy at Yale and at Tel Aviv University. These days, she is increasingly stepping outside the academy to play a public role. Currently she is director of the Einstein Forum, an international interdisciplinary public think tank near Berlin. After the success of her previous book, *Evil in Modern Thought*, which was in essence a history of philosophy, her readers asked her to write about good and evil in response to the events of our time. “This,” she comments, “is of course something that a person with formal philosophical training has absolutely no training to do.” But with the election of George W. Bush in 2004, she was “absolutely floored” that many people said they voted for Bush because he represented “moral clarity.” She then felt she had to write about morality for progressives, who, she notes, “have a very hard time talking in moral terms.” She is thrilled at how much Obama has transformed and reinvigorated progressives, and her hope is to provide a philosophically sound basis for progressive idealism that could change the nature of our political and social debates.

In the following interview, which I conducted before the election, Neiman explores how important idealism is to our finding a new kind of heroism that can change the world.



Susan Neiman

ENLIGHTENNEXT: *In your book Moral Clarity, you argue for a new kind of idealism that can guide and inspire us, particularly in the political arena. You call it “grown-up idealism.” What do you mean by that?*

SUSAN NEIMAN: Well, let’s first step back and ask ourselves what we mean when we say, “Be realistic.” It’s an expression people use all the time to point to what it means to be mature. They certainly don’t think that they’re making a metaphysical statement when they say it, but actually they are. What they’re saying is, “What you see is all there is,” which means that there is no sense in trying to live one’s ideals in order to create the world as you think it ought to be. As a matter of fact, the real message of “Be realistic” is “Decrease your expectations; don’t expect much from life.”

Let me illustrate this with a very common example. Young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five get told quite often that this is the best time of their lives. Why do we do that? Almost no one I know would want to be sixteen or twenty-two again. When you are young, you’re always getting this message blasted at you, which makes you feel, “Oh god, what am I doing wrong? All of the grown-ups are telling me that this is the best time of my life, and I’m miserable. I’m trying to figure out who I am. I’m trying to figure out what I want to do with my life. I’m trying to figure out what my strengths and weaknesses are.” This isn’t just anecdotal. There are empirical studies that show that people tend to get happier as they get older. When we tell young people, who tend to be idealistic and want to affect the world, that “this is the best time of your life,” we are preparing them to decrease their expectations of both what they can get from life and what they can give to it. In doing that, we’re telling them to devalue idealism and look at it as a product of being naïve. We’re saying that to grow up means to move from being idealistic to being realistic.

What I call “grown-up idealism,” which you can trace back to eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant, is simply the idea that the claims of reality and the claims of the ideal should be given equal weight. Kant recognized how important ideals are to us—that we are made to create ideals that we cannot completely fulfill and to set out for horizons we know we will not reach. Human beings find their lives to be empty if they’re not always looking toward the horizon. Ideals are like horizons—goals toward which you can move but can never attain. You see, transcendence doesn’t necessarily mean something mystical. It means wanting to go beyond yourself and the world as it’s given to you, which is a very deep human need.



Kant tells us that we have to pay attention both to reality and to the ideal, and that we ignore each at our peril. When we are acting and being in the world, we always need to keep one eye on what *is* and one eye on what *ought to be*—as we perceive it in relation to our ideals. The world being what it is and our being finite, we will never really get to the absolute ideal. But if we keep our eye on both of them and always keep both of them in mind, we can move what *is* closer to what *ought to be*. So being a grown-up is not about abandoning your youthful ideals, which is what we're told all the time. That's what is implied in the admonition to be realistic. Growing up may be about abandoning a youthful belief that one's ideals are very easy to fulfill, but it's certainly also about keeping them in your mind throughout your whole life.

IDEALISM IN POLITICS

EN: *Does idealism have a role to play in politics?*

SN: As long as it's what I'm calling grown-up idealism, yes. Think about where we would be without idealism!

EN: *Where would we be?*

SN: Well, we wouldn't have outlawed public execution by drawing and quartering, for one thing. Banning such torture was one of the great achievements of the eighteenth century. But even some of the major figures of that period, like the French philosopher Voltaire, were not initially sure that this

was the right thing to do. They were outraged by particular instances of torture that they felt were unfair because some innocent had been tortured. But torture was a normal part of the judicial process, and it was a normal part of execution. You see, even someone who was as critical and brilliant as Voltaire wasn't able to step out of the reality he took for granted in his time and say, "No, this is absolutely something that has to be condemned." It took a period of time to work out Western society's position on torture.

Without idealism, we would still have slaves in this country. During the period when we had slavery, many people in the South made what looked like moral arguments to defend it. They would argue that they actually took care of their slaves better than people in the North took care of the people in the factories. And in many instances, that was true. But I think that owning another human being is actually much worse than exploiting them—because slavery is an absolute evil. People in the South had arguments to say that it wasn't, and they appealed to the Greeks. They said, look at the great Greek society. It was a slave society, and it was a flowering of culture.

There was no sense of racial equality at the time of the Civil War. Lincoln did not ever believe, alas, in racial equality. He was a great man, but if you had told Abraham Lincoln that a brilliant African-American man would be quoting him one hundred fifty years after his death in a bid to run for president, he would have shaken his head. He wouldn't have thought it possible. This step forward is the result of ideals.

To move any further in getting rid of the racism that still

plagues us, we have got to acknowledge how far we have come on the backs of this ideal of the fundamental equality of human beings. Without ideals, politics would still be stuck in the Dark Ages.

EN: *So idealism has functioned in politics to move culture forward toward—*

SN: —a greater good, a greater sense of justice, and a greater sense of decency, yes. You know, it's very simple. Most really great ideas are so great that once you get them, they sound rather ordinary, even banal. But Kant's perspective—what I'm calling grown-up idealism—took serious thinking to come up with. It's important to realize that idealism is not a matter of rhetoric. It's not a matter of wishful thinking. It's not a matter of youthful dreams. It's important to recognize that there is hardcore philosophy behind it because there's such a tendency to dismiss idealism as, again, something only a kid who doesn't understand enough about the world would come up with.

Idealism is not a matter of rhetoric. It's not a matter of wishful thinking. It's not a matter of youthful dreams.

If you recall the first debate between Barack Obama and John McCain, McCain said about five times that Obama didn't understand, implying that he was being naïve—that things cannot possibly move forward in a serious way and that it's fuzzy-headed to think that they can. I want to offer people the chance to say, “Actually, you know what? First of all, it's not fuzzy-headed. It's been worked out in the most solid philosophical way possible. And secondly, you guys have a metaphysical viewpoint yourselves. You've got a philosophical viewpoint yourselves that you're not looking at.” You see, to imply that the way things *are* is the way they *have to be* is to be blind to philosophical developments, to be blind to historical developments. People make it sound like common sense, but of course it's not. It conceals a whole set of philosophical views.

EN: *When someone says that reality is simply the way it is and that it is naïve to try to change it, what philosophical assumption is that based on?*

SN: They're talking about a view that you can trace back to seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes: that people are fundamentally in a state of war with each other; that human beings necessarily tend to greed and to a desire for power and self-assertion; and that without a strong authoritarian military force, we are not going to get anywhere. That's a very common conservative view.

However, that makes me think of something else: There are an awful lot of people on both the left and the right who seem to take a perverse pleasure in suggesting that if you're smart, sophisticated, and not naïve, then you'll focus on the worst things about humankind and human history. There's a kind of solace and relief in looking at the worst among us because not too many of us are really awful. If you focus on people who are worse than you are, then you can pat yourself on the back and go home and put your feet up. It's much easier to focus on the worst than to focus on a case like that of Wesley Autry, for example, the New York construction worker who dove into the subway to save the life of a stranger who fell onto the tracks. People were fascinated with his

story—and rightly so. It was a wonderfully heroic act. But ordinary cases of heroism that are smaller than that don't typically get a lot of attention because they make us uncomfortable. They make us feel like there's something that

we could be doing that we aren't. Whereas if we focus just on how bad humankind is, well, then there's not really much we can do about it except watch it go downhill.

Of course, a lot of things *have* gone wrong in human history. I think we've lost certain things that we ought to retain, that we ought to try to rediscover—one of them being a wholehearted confidence in words like *moral* and *noble* and *hero*. I'm far from thinking that every kind of advance is genuine progress, but it's striking how ungrateful we tend to be. We tend to focus on the ways in which we've gotten worse, and we just take for granted the ways in which we've gotten better.

EN: *You're saying that people on both ends of the political spectrum tend toward this kind of bleak realism, this sense that idealism is naïve, and that there's no point in aspiring for change. However, in your book you also say that there is a fundamental difference between the right and the left in terms of moral conviction. You aptly note that the right—particularly the fundamentalist right—is perceived as having moral values*

and ideals, whereas progressives are often seen as lacking in moral backbone.

SN: Yes, fundamentalist Christians and many who join fundamentalist Islamist movements are motivated by moral views. They reject things that I'm assuming you and I also reject in Western secular culture. They don't want their kids to look at Paris Hilton or Britney Spears as role models. They

There's a strong human desire to transcend what is given to us, and Immanuel Kant says that's the only moment in which human beings know their freedom.

see *Sex and the City* or *Beavis and Butt-Head*—a whole host of things aimed at their children—as really quite terrifyingly nihilistic and base. They do not see their own lives as being fulfilled by the ideal of success represented by the slogan “Whoever dies with the most toys wins.” That's not what they think life is about, and when they look at the vast majority of television channels and tabloids and websites, that's what they see as our secular society in the West. What they *don't* see is a robust, loud, wholehearted condemnation from enough progressives. I know there have been examples. All I'm arguing is that there are many decent people out there who have moral concerns, and no one has offered them an alternative. There's a strong feeling that contemporary Western secular culture has not paid attention to moral values—that it has become ironic, suspicious, and skeptical about them and believes that the economic bottom line is the only bottom line. I'm not the only person who's ever made this argument, but I do think that I may be the first person to try to propose an alternative that goes very deep into the heart of modern philosophy.

I don't believe, however, that people on the right generally have true moral clarity. I'd say that they have moral *simplicity*. By and large, they don't form good, complex, solid moral arguments. Take what is called “the right to life.” Millions of people in this country have fastened onto that as what they see as a question of moral clarity. People who hold up what they call the right to life are looking for a moral Archimedean point. They're looking for a place where they can say: “Here I stand. I'm looking for a rock-bottom good action that gives meaning to my life because I don't want my life simply to

consist of bread-and-butter issues.” But they're not asking any of the hard questions about the right to life in any larger sense. What about the rights a baby has to a decent life after it's born? What do you do about collateral damage, which means killing civilians in order to pursue a legitimate war? What do you do about capital punishment?

Nevertheless, those on the right are able to do one thing that progressives are seldom able to do: They can use words like *moral* and *noble* and *hero* without using air quotes and turning them into “moral” and “noble” and “hero.” Philosophers call them scare quotes. A number of things are being said with this: “Don't take me too seriously.” “I mean it a little ironically.” “I'm worried about looking sentimental or sappy or kitschy.”

A HEROISM TO LIVE FOR

EN: *In Moral Clarity, you observe that because progressives themselves have an ironic or skeptical relationship with moral ideals, they don't think that people on the right are truly acting from moral concerns. Can you speak about what you see as the deeper motivation of fundamentalists, both here and abroad?*

SN: Both jihadists and many fundamentalist Christians are motivated by a desire that makes people want to be heroic, to transcend what is base within us, to transcend those desires determined by material things and animalistic impulses. There's a strong human desire to transcend what is given to us, and as Immanuel Kant says, that is the only moment in which human beings know their freedom—the moment when we're actually able to defy our material interests, even to the point of risking our lives. That's the only moment at which we know we're free, because normally we're motivated and pulled by a lot of different claims on us. People often yearn to know that they're acting in a more transcendent, absolutely free, and deeply human moment. They don't see enough opportunities to do that in contemporary secular culture, so they turn to fundamentalist views and now, indeed, to things that go as far as suicide terrorism. Of course, that's a devastating conclusion. But we need to develop new notions of heroism that don't involve the idea that you actually have to die and be a tragic hero in order to express freedom. Right now, that is the model of heroism we have, and it goes back to the ancient Greeks.

EN: So you're saying that an ideal is actually something that you want to live for, but if push comes to shove, then it is something that you would die for.

SN: Yes, but we need to get out of that mode of thinking, actually. We ought to view idealism as something you want to live for, something that you're willing to make sacrifices for, which is harder. You have to take risks and make sacrifices—there's no question about that. Otherwise, you're not doing anything heroic. The model that the only true hero is a tragic hero is actually just another trick to dissuade us from ever taking any risks or doing anything heroic in the first place. If you view people as having to die tragically in order to do something heroic, it lets you off the hook, so we need to get away from that view.

I've been using the phrase "grown-up idealist" for a long time now, but I didn't think I'd ever find a politician who so completely exemplified it the way Barack Obama does.

But I completely understand how people would have such a view. So instead of calling jihadists cowards or fundamentalists idiots, we have to actually look at some of the facts, which are really interesting. All the empirical studies of suicide terrorism show that far from being the dregs of their societies, the people who become suicide terrorists tend to be middle class, educated, from fairly authoritarian homes, and highly idealistic.

I have not spent as much time studying fundamentalist Christians. But the other day I was watching a movie, *Jesus Camp*, with one of my seventeen-year-old twin daughters. My daughter was looking at these kids who were going to this evangelical summer camp and she kept saying, "Aren't they crazy? Aren't they crazy?" I didn't see craziness in the least. In a couple of the characters who were being portrayed there, I saw a deep sense of commitment, of wanting to do good in the world, of wanting a sense of dignity that I would not see in a kid who is obsessed with wanting the latest iPhone.

EN: What you are pointing to as grown-up idealism, then, is just what you are describing—having a foundation of values that one would truly be willing to sacrifice for, risk for, and live for?

SN: Exactly. And I have to say that while I have been using the phrase "grown-up idealist" for a long time now, I did not think I would ever find a politician who so completely exemplified it the way Barack Obama does. He is exactly that—a grown-up idealist. He's got his eye on reality—whether it's using constitutional law or knowing what it's like to be on the South Side of Chicago—but he says that that reality is not the world as it ought to be. I believe that this is what millions of Americans have been inspired by in the last year.

As somebody who grew up in the middle of the civil rights movement in Georgia, I think our having the chance to elect Obama represents the best that America can be. The civil rights movement was the last great historical event that Americans can be unequivocally proud of. We really changed the world, and we did it with comparatively little violence.

There was some violence, but there wasn't civil war, even though there might have been. The civil rights movement was an example of Americans being forced to look at the conflict between our own ideals and the reality that was America. My mother was involved in the campaign

to desegregate the Atlanta public school system, so I really grew up in the thick of this. My kids don't get it. My kids are already living in a better world than I grew up in. I tell them that in our most idealistic, most optimistic days in the 1960s, we could not have imagined being able to elect a black president in our lifetime. It is a sign that although there's still racism and we still need to work on it, in my lifetime the world has gotten better in a really significant way.

Yet there's still a lot of cynicism about that. The book *Stuff White People Like* says that white people like Barack Obama because he makes them feel good about themselves. *Forget it*. He makes *all* of us feel good, and that's right. We're right to feel good! You cannot make progress unless you see some examples of it, unless you believe it is possible. You can't do anything to improve the conditions we have now unless you occasionally see some signs that things have gotten better. And forty-five years after the March on Washington, they have. 🗳️



Listen to the full interview with philosopher Susan Neiman at enlightennext.org/neiman

Seeking Truth Beyond Left & Right

An interview with Arianna Huffington

by Elizabeth Debold

“COURAGE IS KNOWING WHAT NOT TO FEAR,” Arianna Huffington likes to say, attributing the quote to Socrates. To her, that means that we shouldn’t fear other people’s perceptions or disapproval of who we are and what we do. It is a motto that she has obviously lived by; Huffington has steered an iconoclastic course through life that has often puzzled, if not infuriated, those who would pin her down. Her political leanings have swung from Jerry Brown–style California liberalism to Newt Gingrich’s conservative revolution to running for governor of California as an independent to now declaring her position as beyond left, right, or center. It’s not the political label or any labels that have been thrown at her that matter to her—she’s on a mission to bring intelligent debate, truth seeking, and justice into politics. Even in creating *The Huffington Post*, she went up against a naysaying media establishment that ridiculed her and her idea to develop the first internet newspaper. Three years later, the *HuffPo*, as it’s known, gets nearly four million hits per month and has won the Webby Award for Best Political Blog two years running. Huffington has clearly hit her stride. With a penchant for pushing the edge of our thinking, she embodies a restlessness with the status quo of shallow consumerism and a passion to lift our collective aspirations to change the world.

Born in Greece to an intellectually engaged family, Huffington comes naturally by her active interest in deep inquiry. Her mother loved the work of the great sage J. Krishnamurti, and her father’s desire for new journalistic adventures brought the family repeatedly to bankruptcy. At the age of sixteen, Huffington set off to India to study comparative religions at Shantiniketan University, near Calcutta, before heading to Cambridge University in England. At Cambridge, she overcame her heavy Greek accent to become only the third woman, and first foreigner, to be elected president of its prestigious debating society, the Cambridge Union. Her first book, *The Female Woman*, published when she was twenty-three, became an international bestseller and brought her, as she said,

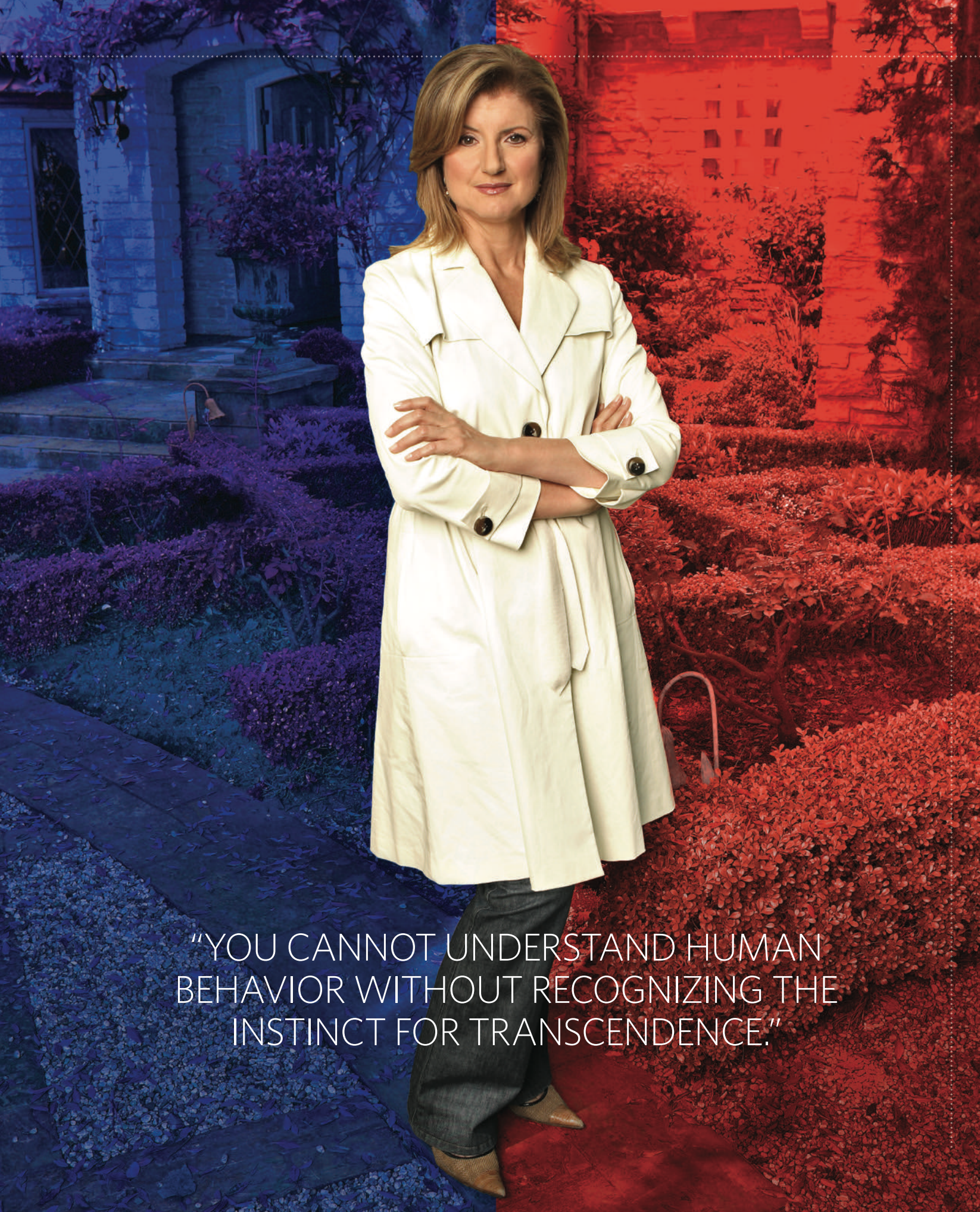
“a lot of the things that I thought would take me a lifetime to achieve, such as financial independence and recognition. It also brought about a midlife crisis in my early twenties and led me to ask, ‘Is that all there is?’ ” That precocious crisis led her to read all of Carl Jung and dive deeply into philosophy, which set her in the pursuit of answers to questions that have guided her over the past thirty years: What is the relationship between politics and our deeper values? How do we have to change to create the world that we long for?

In this *EnlightenNext* interview, Huffington speaks about her understanding of the spiritual life and the importance of truth as a personal and political value.

ENLIGHTENNEXT: In the past twenty or so years, many spiritually minded individuals who have searched for inner truth have often been disaffected by politics, steering away from the political arena for fear that it would compromise their ideals. You, however, have pursued political engagement as part of your spiritual path. Do you see any tension between spiritual idealism and political pragmatism?

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: I have chosen both to be on a spiritual path and to be politically engaged, and I don’t see any tension between the two, provided I remember to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”

There are a lot of religious traditions that require isolating oneself from the world and praying—the monastic traditions. My form of spirituality is not a form of withdrawal but of engagement, personal and collective. For me, engagement in the world is an extension of my spiritual life. And that comes partly from my own Greek tradition. The word *idiot* comes from ancient Greek—an idiot was someone who was not engaged in public life. So there is a deep Greek tradition of engagement. It’s part of what has shaped me.



"YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND HUMAN
BEHAVIOR WITHOUT RECOGNIZING THE
INSTINCT FOR TRANSCENDENCE."

EN: What initially sparked your interest in the spiritual life?

AH: It's hard to know, because I feel that I was born with it. I remember being really young, before kindergarten, and praying to the Virgin Mary in difficult times. As I grew up, I wanted to explore every aspect of spirituality, so I started by reading voraciously, which is usually my first approach to things. Of course at some point that became like trying to find water by reading a water almanac—it doesn't quench your thirst. What became more important was putting these things into practice and practicing them myself. But after reading both the Western and Eastern spiritual literature, I came to believe that the spiritual instinct is in all of us. Whether we call ourselves atheists or believers, we have this in us—I call it the “fourth instinct.”

EN: Can you say more about this fourth instinct?

AH: The idea is that most psychologists and biologists look at human behavior in terms of three instincts: survival, sex, and power. I believe, however, that you cannot understand human behavior without recognizing a fourth one—the instinct for transcendence, the instinct to connect to the part of us that goes beyond our materiality and survives our death, that connects with our soul. That's what explains our search for meaning, whether it drives us to art or to religion or to altruistic behavior that cannot be explained purely in terms of self-interest. Of course, part of the quest for meaning is often to get involved in something that takes us beyond ourselves.

You could say that the fourth instinct drives the evolution of consciousness—and the evolution of consciousness is the foundation of everything. The more each one of us evolves, the greater the impact it has on culture. And at the same time, there are things that can be done culturally that can enhance what is happening at the individual level. While it's not a linear evolution, because we have progressions and regressions, I believe that it is an upward spiral. Ultimately, I'm an optimist.

EN: What is the role of political leaders in catalyzing such change?

AH: Great leaders can inspire that change to begin. Leaders lead either by appealing to the best in us or by appealing to the worst in us. We have both types, as you know. Great leaders appeal to the “better angels of our nature,” as Lincoln called it, and bring people together for great undertakings—whether it is Lincoln ending slavery or F.D.R. and the New Deal or Bobby Kennedy really tapping into people's longing for fundamental change. In his own way, Barack Obama has done that. Or leaders can appeal to our fears the way George W. Bush did. As we've seen, it is all too easy to appeal to our lizard brain and to be a fearmonger!

EN: Susan Neiman, author of *Moral Clarity* and a blogger on *The Huffington Post*, argues that in the past twenty years, the right has given individuals ways to connect with what you call the fourth instinct and progressives haven't. The right offers people moral ideals to which they can aspire, whereas the left offers only material, economic solutions, demonstrating real discomfort even with the word “morality.” Can you comment on this?

AH: First, to be clear, I don't see the world through a right-versus-left prism. The most significant moral challenge facing both progressives and conservatives is to live by the biblical admonition that we shall be judged by what we do for the least among us. There are many progressives, such as the Reverend Jim Wallis, who are framing poverty-fighting in both spiritual and political terms.

In my latest book, *Right Is Wrong*, I make the point that looking at American politics through the right-versus-left prism is obsolete and does not really deepen our understanding of what's happening. One of the most interesting things that has happened in the last few years is that the American public has shifted. What used to be considered left-wing positions—on health care, on bringing the troops home from Iraq, on doing something about global warming, on corporate responsibility—are now solidly mainstream positions. Given that, to continue looking at them through the prism of left versus right is lazy.

EN: Aren't you also challenging us, and the media, to value truth over so-called impartiality?

AH: Well, impartiality and fairness are great values, but I'm pointing to a kind of fake neutrality. It's the idea that somehow you're doing your job as a journalist if you act like Pontius Pilate: “Well, here is Al Gore talking about the dangers of global warming, here is Senator Inhofe talking about how global warming is a fraud, and my job is simply to present those points of view.” That's a fake neutrality that really undermines what I believe is the heart of journalism, which is the pursuit of truth.

And of course, getting closer to the truth has always been a big part of our cultural/spiritual tradition, from the Greeks' “Know thyself,” to Shakespeare's “To thine own self be true.” All those admonitions are really about constantly aspiring to the truth about ourselves, about our lives, and about our world. It's definitely one of the greatest aspirations we can have as we progress through life. 🎧



Listen to our full interview with Arianna Huffington at enlightennext.org/huffington

Dreams of a Mild-Mannered Hero

Getting to know the world's most popular spiritual icon

BY JOSHUA DUGDALE





Nothing had prepared me for the total worship of a living human being that I witnessed the first time I saw the Dalai Lama surrounded by a crowd of Tibetans. He had invited me to film his visit to Bodh Gayā, the place of Buddha's enlightenment

and Buddhism's most holy site, in the northeast Indian state of Bihar. As this beaming, saffron-robed monk shuffled quietly along the road toward the tree under which Buddha Sakyamuni is said to have achieved enlightenment, tens of thousands of people lined the road in various states of devotional delirium. Some had endured arctic temperatures and Chinese snipers to traverse the Himalayas from Tibet. Others had ventured out of rural Himalayan villages in northern India for the first time. Many had saved for years for the two-day train journey from their homes in the south. Old men, wrapped in skins, who had spent their lives herding yaks on the Tibetan plateau cried uncontrollably, overwhelmed at the first sight of a man who to them is a direct reincarnation of God. The crowd, straining every muscle to get a brief touch of his robe and increase their chances of a better rebirth, was violently thrown back by Indian police as the Dalai Lama passed.

It was unlike anything I had experienced before or have since: such extreme fervor of religious devotion for a single man. How, I wondered, could this gentle, mild-mannered monk support such a high level of expectation? "I've never seen anything like this in my life. How do you

deal with it?" I ask. He thinks for a few moments, apparently oblivious to the small riot developing from this brief delay (and much to the aggravation of the Indian police and a wandering cow). "I'm carrying Buddha's message," he finally replies. "People have affinity for Buddha, and therefore they have affinity for me."

The humility was characteristically disarming, a conscientious wearing of the crown combined with heartfelt embracing of what it stands for. But was this level of expectation not onerous to him and surely oppressive at times? Several months earlier, on a sunny afternoon outside his residence in Dharamsala, where the Indian government granted him refuge in 1959, he is giving his usual audience to a stream of Tibetans in an atmosphere that seems to combine tea at Buckingham Palace with a visit to Santa's grotto. Two young parents carry a three-year-old girl, offering her up for the Dalai Lama's blessing. Her arm is broken, and her face is twisted by fear and pain. "Only you can save her, Holiness," they intone, the color bled from usually rosy, windswept faces. A rare frown descends over the Dalai Lama's face. I'm sure I see impatience and annoyance, combined with the headmasterly authority that characterizes his bearing on these occasions.

"Take her to the hospital immediately," he instructs an attendant monk, who spirits them away, their anguished figures replaced immediately by the beaming toothless smile of the next septuagenarian devotee.

The surrealism of the episode sits uncomfortably with the reality that such extreme acts of devotion are underpinned by a widespread belief among Tibetans that the man possesses superhuman powers. He is expected to provide spiritual sustenance to a nation of exiles and lead them back to their homeland, which is currently in the grip of one of the mightiest and most authoritarian regimes on the planet. Without him, the Tibetan cause would be weakened beyond recognition, leaving Tibetans everywhere distraught and despondent about the future. When he says to me that thousands of Chinese and Tibetans will commit suicide when he dies, I ask him how that makes him feel, pushing to breach the stoic façade of this generous, gentle man. Another pause, a mischievous twinkle, the hint of a laugh: "It makes me determined to live."

The good humor, I'm certain, is sweetening the pill—he is a master of the witty but heartfelt riposte. For he knows the enormity of who he is and the difficulty of his position, the seemingly unattainable



nature of the hopes he must shoulder. “People have unrealistic expectations of me,” he concedes to me rather unnecessarily after the broken arm episode. I catch myself speculating about why he is so

normality with which he is treated in the West provides relief from the intensity of devotion showered on him by Tibetans, who regard him as totally superior to themselves, otherworldly, an object of

contributor. Though he asks me to stop filming for rare moments—usually during discussions with Chinese envoys—he generally ignores the camera, apparently oblivious to when we are filming, and allows me to accompany him everywhere. To my great surprise and even greater satisfaction, he seems to warm to my companionship and that of the crew, at times expertly confounding my identity with that of the camera through a plethora of good-humored witty asides, keeping us abreast of what is happening and almost always taking time for my questions.

Sometimes his generosity is uncomfortable. At the same procession in Bodh Gayā, he interrupts the proceedings to give me a condensed history of Buddha’s enlightenment under the bodhi tree. A hundred thousand Tibetans plus a host of Indian dignitaries stare incredulously as I’m treated to a five-minute, one-to-one tutorial on the most basic story in the Buddhist canon. The mantle of intellectual authority conferred on me by my role as a BBC journalist feels distinctly brittle.

The truth is that the Dalai Lama doesn’t really “do” friendship. There is something at his core that prevents his being able to relate on equal footing.

quick to embrace the interminable conveyor belt of Westerners who visit him and for whom he crosses the world addressing legislative assemblies, Buddhist conventions, interdisciplinary science platforms, and interfaith synods. Perhaps the relative

sanctity rather than a peer or friend.

He has certainly embraced me. After the early challenges of getting clearance for the film—this is the only documentary for which he has granted truly unencumbered access—he is an extraordinarily generous

This easy familiarity seems characteristic of his contact with Westerners. While he is careful to preserve his authority in front of Tibetans, carefully respecting the social hierarchy of that society, a striking feature of his contact with Western guests, peers, and friends is a total disregard for rank or social status. This was never more apparent to me than when we first met.

Because my first two written requests to the Dalai Lama's private secretary were rejected, I was nervously posing undercover as Joanna Lumley's cameraman on her visit to Dharamsala with documentary photographer Tom Stoddart. My idea was that the big man had likely not even heard of my request and that face-to-face both he and his rather medieval-like guardians would be persuaded of the benefits of the film. It would replace the reams of homogeneous, formulaic television appearances—noble restatement of nonviolent approach, mischievous giggle, delightful gaze—and the predictable response they uniformly elicit: "What a charming man; truly spiritual presence; what he and his people must have endured!" A sustained fly-on-the-wall picture following him through all areas of his life would provide insight into what he is up against and a glimpse behind the mask—the man going about his business of spiritual leader, politician, international celebrity, and everyday monk.

Besides, even in March 2004, there was a real need for the film. The Chinese strategy of casting him as a separatist radical who is hell-bent on an independent Tibet freed by any means possible, despite appearing to us as extreme propaganda, seems to be filtering into the consciousness of many spectators in the West. Fanned by the disingenuous pronouncements of Rupert Murdoch—who even back in 1989 dubbed the Dalai Lama "a monk who wears Gucci shoes" as Murdoch himself lobbied the Chinese authorities for greater access for his Star TV network in the south of the country—revisionist opinion is questioning his motivation. With this film,

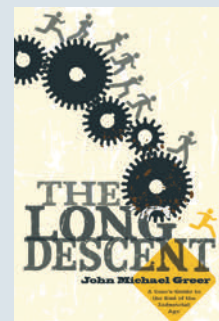
audiences will be able to judge his sincerity for themselves.

I have experienced the ethical challenges of going undercover before. Of my previous films for the BBC, one involved scrutinizing the Los Angeles Police Department in the aftermath of corruption claims, and another involved following criminal gangs in Central and South America. But in this case, and given the rather worthy tone of my pitch, the irony of tricking the Nobel laureate and bodhisattva of compassion with the superficial journalistic wheeze of pretending to be Lumley's cameraman is making me more than a little uncomfortable. But as he walks into the impressively decorated antechamber of his residence in Dharamsala, immediately my nerves evaporate. It's hard to know with someone this famous how much of the magnetism arises from my expectations, but he's irresistible. The enormous smile, bright eyes, and enveloping charisma are undeniable.

I'm immediately struck by how equally he is treating each of us. He is introduced to an internationally feted actress, a photographer who has documented thirty years of the world's conflicts, and a rather ungainly six foot, three inches of faux cameraman. Yet each of us is afforded the same intensity of attention, the same degree of questioning and listening, the same mesmerizing eye contact.

I'm later reminded of his apparent disregard for status when I follow him to a meeting he had with Jack Straw. The then-British foreign secretary is welcoming his guest to his parliamentary office with a rather dry tour of dust-coated portraits of foreign secretaries of yesteryear. Straw is pontificating slightly, not quite rising to the task of keeping his evident pride totally free of pomposity. The Dalai Lama relieves a moment that is veering toward tedium with the suggestion that Straw may be the reincarnation of Charles Fox, the UK's first foreign secretary. The atmosphere is immediately lifted, stuffiness gone, lightness restored. There is something playfully

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I'm prepared to bet that this celibate monk, brought up from age two as the living embodiment of his nation's most precious deity, is the most mischievous, bawdy, and irreverent statesman in the world.

irreverent in his tone, which satirizes Straw's ponderousness under the cloak of parodying the Dalai Lama's own beliefs about reincarnation. Certainly, it's hard to imagine the Pope quipping about immaculate conception with the same mischievous humor. But what strikes me is the Dalai Lama's disregard for occasion and position in favor of moment and humanity.

This playful teasing is a defining feature of the man I got to know over three years of filming. With no intimate knowledge of any others, I'm still prepared to bet that this celibate monk, brought up from age two as the living embodiment of his nation's most precious deity in a royal palace with attendants ministering

to his every whim, is the most mischievous, bawdy, and irreverent statesman in the world. On a trip to Scotland, halfway through addressing a delegation of senior North American statesmen, including Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, he excuses himself to go to the toilet. Knowing full well his radio microphone is still turned on, he treats me to an audio account of his visit before winking in my direction on his way back to the meeting. On a subsequent visit to Dharamsala, I'm partway through what I feel is a fairly testing interview with him, one of our last, when my newly tailored Indian suit splits around the groin. "My word, Josh is very pleased to see me this morning," he ejects

before bursting into a minute or so of hysterical laughter.

Notwithstanding this roguish sense of humor, and while he may find his position as a living god isolating at times, an episode in Dharamsala last autumn left me in no doubt of the core strength of this man's identity and rootedness as a Tibetan. The Dalai Lama was receiving an old member of his exiled government, a man who had contributed greatly to building the government and infrastructure for Tibetans in India. The ex-official has been suffering from cancer for several years and now, knowing that he is soon to die, wants to bid his leader a last good-bye. It is, as you would expect, a very emotional farewell that involves few words but much communication. The old man has tears in his large eyes as he looks up adoringly at his guru and friend. For his part, the Dalai Lama seems, for the first time in our acquaintance, genuinely moved. As he takes his diminutive friend's bald head in his hands in a benevolent embrace, he is giving him instructions on how to die. In a gentle tone he explains how the friend should imagine his Tibetan saint seated on his head, and picture, as he dies, his spirit passing up through the crown of his head to commune with him. He tells him to pray to be reborn close to the Dalai Lama and that he will do the same.

This brief parcel of unselfconscious spiritual instruction was conducted in the glare of about eight spectators and a camera. (The quality of the Dalai Lama's relating, I noticed, was entirely unaffected by the size of his audience.) Their common theology seemed to provide a context and a lexicon for the exchange of feeling that in other religions—or at least in more secular traditions of dying—would have been absent. It facilitated a recognition of the strength of the friendship and a complete understanding of his power to provide reassurance, and it showed that the companionship could be a source of sustenance even in the final moments of life. It

was a gentle, quiet, lingering exchange: two old comrades gently savoring each other's company for the last time. And it provided me with perhaps the only glimpse of the huge well of feeling in the Dalai Lama that years of strict spiritual practice have kept carefully measured.

What I saw that day sticks in my mind in part because it represented a tantalizing glimpse of a depth of feeling that the man is reluctant to share. Throughout the time that I followed him—roughly six months if measured continuously—I sensed a reluctance to open up completely. This limit on how close to him people are allowed to come is something I sense remains a frustration to Westerners who seek a level of personal or professional intimacy with him: supporters of the Tibetan cause, Buddhist students, politicians, actors, and members of the media. Certainly for each of these groups, he has very good reasons for maintaining his distance—the independence of the religious teacher, the balanced diplomacy of the politician. But the truth is that the Dalai Lama doesn't really “do” friendship. There is something at his core, instilled I suspect by the loftiness of his upbringing and the sacredness of his position, that prevents his being able to relate on equal footing. Even his own family maintains a respectful distance. His brother, who shows the most ease and familiarity—and appears periodically in the film combining the roles of trusted adviser and Harlequin trickster, clearly a family trait—maintained throughout, in his movement and addresses to his brother, a notably humble bearing.


One particular moment last year provided me with an insight into what is behind this deep-set emotional independence. On one of my final filming trips to Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama invited me to accompany him on a visit to southern India, which houses the largest population of exiled Tibetans in the country. I explained that I had already been a long

time away from my children and wouldn't be able to travel with him. He seemed genuinely disappointed; it was something he wanted to show me and felt was an important part of his story. This occasioned a rare reflection that crossed the massive cultural divide that separated us as he observed, “On the one hand, you have love, but on the other hand, you have no freedom.”

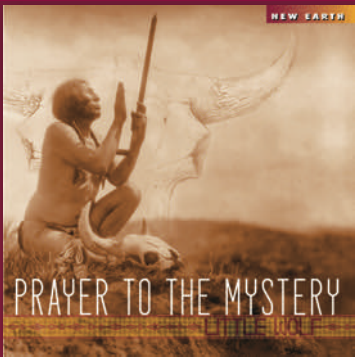
This musing on the difference in our positions was accompanied by the alluring choreography that characterized his moments of reflection: a Yoda-like affectionate grunt, pause, and focused look to the middle distance. But for a moment I was released from the tenacious grip of this glowing charisma. I was not with the leader of the Tibetan people, human deity, international superstar, and the world's leading proponent of nonviolence. This was the monk, his life devoted to prayer, celibacy, and a high degree of social isolation, reflecting on the trade-off. He is also by nature an academic, fiercely intelligent in debate, a passionate student of the endless canon of Buddhist philosophy, and a strict practitioner of meditation, which occupies the first three to four hours of every day. And this is where I think his heart lies, embracing the freedom from family ties to develop the intellectual and emotional wisdom gained from the reflective life. It is through this practice that he sustains the extraordinary energy required to provide spiritual sustenance to Tibetans, Chinese, and Westerners while he battles with an endemically suspicious Chinese regime for a solution to the desperate issue of his country's future.

“In my dreams I am just monk, not Dalai Lama,” he added later, with his signature disregard for the definite article. It didn't surprise me at all. ☐

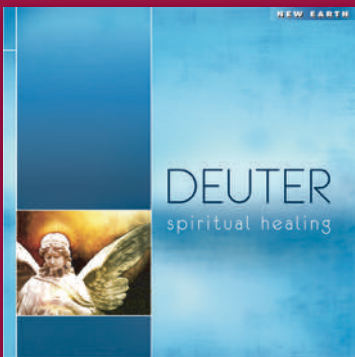
Joshua Dugdale is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and a producer of foreign and current affairs programming at the BBC. His film about the Dalai Lama, *The Unwinking Gaze*, is available on DVD.


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The Lives of Sri Aurobindo by Peter Heehs

(Columbia University Press,
2008, hardcover \$45)

In 1916, Indian poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote of his contemporary Aurobindo Ghose: “He is a great man—one of the greatest we have—and therefore liable to be misunderstood even by his friends.” Tagore was right. The man later known as Sri Aurobindo—a Bengali-born, British-educated scholar, poet, revolutionary, philosopher, spiritual

never gained the recognition he deserves in the West.

Historian Peter Heehs has done the world a great service with the publication this year of a book that may finally make Sri Aurobindo and his work accessible to a broader audience. Appropriately titled *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, this meticulously researched and beautifully written scholarly biography follows its subject through five periods and personas—Son, Scholar, Revolutionary, Yogi and Philosopher, and Guide. While biographies of Aurobindo have been published before, including a short one by Heehs himself, none has ever drawn on such a vast resource of original letters, diaries, and other primary sources. Heehs brings to the task a historian’s sensibility and unparalleled access to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archive, of which he was one of the founders. The result is a rich and fascinating portrait of a spiritual pioneer.

The brief first part of the book describes Aurobindo’s early childhood in India—a

at Cambridge and briefly formed a secret society known as the Lotus and Dagger. Returning to India in his early twenties, he took an administrative job working for a maharajah in the remote province of Baroda. Immediately discovering “a temperamental feeling and preference for all things Indian,” he immersed himself in the history, culture, and spirit of his homeland.

Part three begins with Aurobindo’s return to Calcutta, where he took up a life of political action. During his short but outspoken political career, he was labeled by the British the most dangerous man in India, although his revolutionary weapon was the pen rather than the sword. It was during this period that Aurobindo’s spiritual awakening also began. Heehs traces the inner tensions between his growing yearning for spiritual depth and his commitment to a life of action and engagement. India’s great spiritual traditions, particularly the Vedantic school, tended to equate spiritual attainment with a rejection of worldly concerns and engagement, which were seen as “maya,” or illusion. But Aurobindo, possessed of a rare degree of spiritual independence, had decided quite early in life that many of the great luminaries in India’s spiritual canon had gotten it wrong in concluding that the phenomenal world was unreal. In his own commentary on the Upanishads, he argued that there was no contradiction between the transcendent Absolute, or Brahman, and the palpable, material universe, and therefore there was no conflict between spiritual attainment and political engagement. His attempts at reinterpretation suffered an unexpected experiential setback, however, when he first sought the guidance of a yogi, hoping to

The British labeled Aurobindo the most dangerous man in India.

practitioner, and revered mystic—remained an enigma all his life. And in the decades since his death in 1950, a haze of hagiography, combined with the complexity of much of his own writing, has continued to obscure his greatness for many. Despite being a foundational influence in some of today’s most significant spiritual movements, including the human potential and integral movements, and one of the great forefathers of the emerging field of evolutionary spirituality, Aurobindo has

“life” that lasted only seven years before his Anglophile father sent him to England with two of his brothers to receive a classical education, beginning his second life as a scholar. An outstanding student, Aurobindo won a scholarship to Cambridge. But while he had a great love for English and European literature, he had little love for the British and deeply resented their colonial grip on what he felt was the far superior culture of his birth. He wrote various “revolutionary speeches” while



Books for Evolutionaries

with Barbara Marx Hubbard



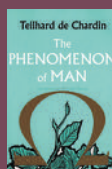
Barbara Marx Hubbard is president of the Foundation for Conscious Evolution.

Q: What three books have most inspired your evolutionary worldview?



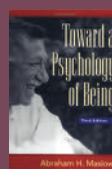
The Life Divine
by Sri Aurobindo

Aurobindo has brilliantly mapped the stages of human evolution as expressions of a supramental "Consciousness Force" leading toward a new human species—the gnostic being, or what I call the universal human.



The Phenomenon of Man
by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

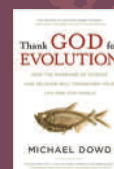
Teilhard saw God in evolution, and he recognized that the direction of evolution leads toward ever-higher consciousness and freedom. Through him I recognized that my own tendency toward a higher level of order was the universe evolving as and through me.



Toward a Psychology of Being
by Abraham H. Maslow

Reading Maslow, I realized that the drive in us for higher values and more growth was not sublimation but was, in fact, the innate drive for self-actualization, vocation, and a life of purpose.

Q: What is the best book you have read this year?



Thank God for Evolution
by Michael Dowd

Dowd synthesizes the scientific understanding of evolution with the Christian faith in God, winning the approval of both Christians and materially based neo-Darwinians—and conscious evolutionaries as well.

"establish a relationship with a personal Godhead and learn to follow its guidance." He got rather more than he was asking for. Plunged within twenty-four hours into "an eternal silence . . . drowning this semblance of a physical world," Aurobindo found himself immersed in "precisely the experience [he] did not want from yoga."

His descriptions of this experience, while powerful, are not unique or even unusual in spiritual literature. What is rare about Aurobindo's spiritual awakening is that it occurred at the height of a fully engaged political career to which he returned shortly after this event. In fact, it was Aurobindo's continuing involvement with the revolutionary movement that led to the next phase in his spiritual development. Jailed for a year as a result of a failed assassination plot involving his younger brother, Aurobindo suddenly found himself with time on his hands to devote to the practice of meditation.

During those months in jail, his initial experience of the unreality of the world now deepened into a recognition of the Divine as being present in the world and in all its manifest objects. As he put it, with characteristically dry humor, "The only result of the unfriendly attention of the British government was that I found God."

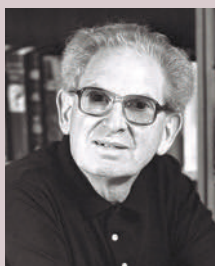
It was a further result of the unfriendly attention of the British government that Aurobindo was eventually forced to take refuge in the French enclave of Pondicherry, beginning his fourth "life" as a full-time yogi and philosopher. Drawing on Aurobindo's own diaries from the time, which were discovered only during the 1970s and later published as *Record of Yoga*, Heehs offers a fascinating glimpse inside the spiritual practice of an extraordinarily dedicated explorer of consciousness. Aurobindo described this time of his life as "a laboratory experiment," and his

diaries are less accounts of his subjective experience and more like a researcher's notes, recording in matter-of-fact language and great detail his successes and failures in the many different aspects of the complex yogic path he had devised for himself. These ranged from more traditional spiritual ideals such as the attainment of knowledge, bliss, and peace, to mental powers such as telepathy, and even to attempts to alter the physical body. Heehs describes how at one point "he had succeeded with some difficulty in changing the form of one of his feet by volition, but the old shape kept returning." Whatever one makes of such claims—and the more grandiose myths that grew around Aurobindo and his enigmatic teaching partner, "the Mother," during the final stage of his life—what shines through Heehs' book is Aurobindo's single-pointed dedication to his own path, a path that

Speaking of Books

with **Russell Targ**, author of *Do You See What I See? Memoirs of a Blind Biker*

Interview by Tom Huston



Russell Targ is a legally blind physicist and cofounder of the Stanford Research Institute's remote viewing program, which was contracted by the CIA and other intelligence agencies to "psychically spy" on the United States' enemies during the Cold War. In his 2008 autobiography, *Do You See What I See?*, Targ

chronicles his paranormal life, which took him from the magic shops and Theosophical Society meetings of New York City as a youth to the laser laboratories of Columbia University and a career as a parapsychology consultant for the world's most powerful military. We asked Targ to share some of the fascinating stories from his book and to tell us what a lifetime of psychic exploration has taught him about the mysterious nature of space and time.



(Hampton Roads, 2008, hardcover \$23.95)

ENLIGHTENNEXT: *What is remote viewing, and how did you apply it in your work with the CIA?*

RUSSELL TARG: Remote viewing is based on the widely accepted physics principle of nonlocality, which says that when elementary particles are born together and then separated, they remain connected. And that connection is independent of space and time. This idea was first enunciated by Schrödinger in the 1920s and has since been demonstrated repeatedly. So remote viewing is a process of moving your awareness out of your physical body and into the spaciousness of this nonlocal dimension, where you can see and describe

what's going on in distant places in the physical world and even what will happen in the future.

During my time at Stanford Research Institute, our remote viewing research was featured in several academic publications, including the prestigious peer-reviewed journal *Nature*. And during our two decades of classified work for the CIA, we used remote viewing to accurately describe things all over the globe, including a Russian weapons factory and a downed Soviet airplane in northern Africa that had codebooks and an atomic bomb on board. We were even able to forecast Chinese nuclear tests three days before they occurred!

EN: *Does the ability to "see" into the future via remote viewing mean that the future is predetermined?*

RT: My opinion is that the future is *kind of* predetermined. For any event that happens, there is a complex series of previous events that cause it to turn out the way it does. So because we live in this continuity of cause and effect, we have a lot less free will than we often think. However, to the extent that you can step out of this stream of causation through

psychic practices or meditation, for example, and gain an objective view on it, you can access information that gives you more choices than you might otherwise have.

You can, for example, make use of precognitive dreams to avoid accidents that are karmically waiting for you. A friend in the CIA had a dream about a plane crash when he was in Detroit. He had flown thousands of times and did not normally worry about crashes. But he had this dream about a particularly horrifying crash, and at the last minute, he uncharacteristically decided to change his plans and didn't get on the flight he was scheduled to take. As he drove away from the airport, he saw the plane crash in a ball of fire behind him—just as he had dreamed. If you believe in karma, this was absolutely a doomed airplane. And there was a series of several events that all lined up to cause the accident. The reason my friend had a scary dream about it was because it was writ large in the psychic space for him, but he was able to access that information and make use of it to save his life. So in answer to your question, although things are largely determined and forecastable, we still have a choice in the matter.



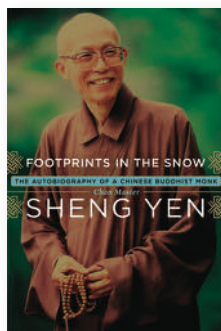
For more from remote-viewing expert Russell Targ, listen to the entire conversation at enlightennext.org/targ

led him into uncharted territories of consciousness.

Heehs has done a masterful job of pulling aside the veils of myth and giving us what must be as close to the real Aurobindo as is possible to get from our twenty-first-century vantage point—the independent young man with a deep love for his country; the reluctant revolutionary thrust into the spotlight of history; the spiritual practitioner digging through “subconscient mud” with a scientist’s dedication; and the erudite scholar with a dry sense of humor and a love of cigars and the occasional glass of wine. Throughout his account, Heehs never strays from the historian’s perspective or lets his imagination fill in the gaps or add inner dimensions to events where no first-hand source remains. The result is that his subject, in the end, still retains a certain impenetrability, which in itself seems fitting for someone who, by all reports, never quite lost the stamp of a British gentleman.

Aurobindo once described his work as an attempt to “feel out for the thought of the future.” *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, besides being a great biography and a fascinating history lesson, is also, and perhaps most importantly, a doorway into his extraordinary spiritual philosophy and vision—a body of work that does indeed, at times, seem more connected to the emerging edge of consciousness and culture today than it does to the time and place in which it was written. Heehs does not reduce the complexity and subtlety of Aurobindo’s thought into convenient sound bites, but offers enough tastes of the beauty and power of his vision to hopefully inspire a new generation of spiritual activists to get more deeply acquainted with the work of one of their greatest forefathers.

Ellen Daly



Footprints In The Snow

The Autobiography of a Chinese Buddhist Monk

by Chan Master Sheng Yen

(Doubleday, 2008, hardcover \$24.95)

Chan Buddhism, the Chinese progenitor of Japanese Zen, thrived for almost fifteen hundred years before the Communist Party decreed the practice of the Buddhism an affront against the state. Now the practice survives primarily outside the Chinese mainland, kept alive by such roving ambassadors as the venerable seventy-eight-year-old Chan master Sheng Yen, whose new autobiography offers a fascinating contemporary look into the heart of this ancient tradition.

Beginning with his childhood as the youngest son of a poor farming family living along the banks of the Yangtze River, Master Sheng Yen tells the story of his life with amusing candor and charm, sharing anecdotes ranging from his persistent inability to watch a herd of goats as a kid (“My family was sure that I was going to be an idiot when I grew up”) to his early forays into writing about spirituality, as a young man in his twenties, under the self-aggrandizing pen name Xing Shi Jiang Jun (“World-Awakening General”). The most compelling tales, however, are those recounting his grueling training under some stereotypically brutal Chan masters.

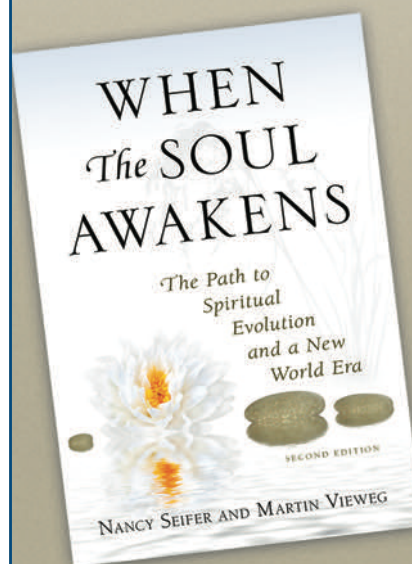
In one episode, which occurred shortly after he became a monk for the second time (following ten years of service in China’s nationalist army), Sheng Yen’s new teacher, Master Dongchu, ordered him to pack up his books and other belongings and move to another room on the opposite

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To learn more about the life of Sri Aurobindo, listen to an interview with biographer Peter Heehs at enlightennext.org/heehs

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side of the monastery. It seemed like a reasonable request, he thought, until his master asked him to do it again the next day . . . and the next, and the day after that. Another time, Dongchu made him travel by bus from town to town in search of replacements for three chipped floor tiles. After spending weeks in pursuit of tiles with a perfectly matching pattern, Sheng Yen pleaded with his master to let him stop the futile search, whereupon Dongchu, laughing uproariously, walked across the room, and produced three matching spare tiles from a storage closet. "This is the way it is in the master-disciple relationship," Sheng Yen observes wryly. "The disciple must do whatever the master asks."

At age thirty, despite having experienced a deep spiritual awakening, Sheng Yen sought to purify himself of residual "karmic obstructions" by secluding himself in solitary retreat on a mountain near Taiwan's Zhaoyuan Monastery. Six years later, after engaging in an impressive daily regimen of meditation and prostrations—in addition to writing three books, growing his own vegetables, learning Japanese, and reading every Buddhist history, biography, and scripture in the monastery's possession—he decided he was finally ready to teach.

Today Master Sheng Yen is head of the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, which maintains major centers of study and practice in Taiwan, Europe, and the United States. Though he says he is aware that he is nearing the end of his life, he continues to teach and travel, committed to spreading the Buddha-dharma around the globe. "I am like a cloud, drifting from place to place," he notes near the end of this simple, intimate, and deeply inspiring book. "I go where I am needed."

Tom Huston



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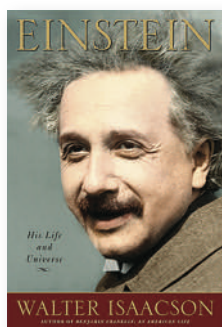
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EINSTEIN His Life and Universe

by Walter Isaacson

(Simon & Schuster, 2008, paperback \$17.95)

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving," wrote Albert Einstein to his son Eduard in 1930. This homegrown adage introduces Walter Isaacson's comprehensive biography, based on Einstein's recently released personal letters, of the man who overturned classical physics and is attributed with ushering in the contemporary era.

"The energy in the mass of one raisin could supply most of New York City's energy needs for a day."

Einstein looms large in popular culture. His benevolent, disheveled image is instantly recognizable, his name is synonymous with genius, and he is automatically linked with perhaps the only mathematical equation to have street recognition. Yet for all of Einstein's fame, most of us struggle to grasp his scientific insights and their historical significance.

Isaacson does an admirable job of addressing this knowledge gap, providing a well-rounded portrait of the man *Time* magazine identified in 2000 as the "Person of the Century." In addition, he offers insights into the man behind the myth. We learn about Einstein's upbringing in a Jewish

family that valued education and was descended from two centuries of tradesmen in the rural villages of southwestern Germany. We find that despite popular lore, the young Einstein was an exceptional student and demonstrated early signs of mathematical precociousness; we also learn that the adult Einstein had a rocky personal life, including strained relationships with his first wife and two sons.

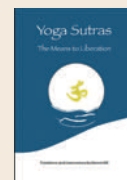
The interweaving of a personal storyline within the grand narrative of Einstein's contribution to our understanding of the cosmos makes for an engaging read. Weighing in at 700 pages, Isaacson's book arrives on the heels of the centennial anniversary of what is described as the "miracle year" of 1905. In one of humanity's great bursts of creative insight, Einstein started physics on the path toward the modern quantum theory in which everything (light and matter) has both wave and particle properties. In that year he also helped prove the physical existence of

atoms, upended the concept of space and time, and showed that mass and energy are interconvertible.

These revelations supplanted Isaac Newton's mechanical view of the universe and laid the foundation for a physics that connects space and time, and matter and energy. Yet despite great attention to chronological, archival, and scientific detail, Isaacson does not fully expand on the historical magnitude of this paradigm shift. Most laypeople, for example, struggle to understand the practical implications of Einstein's insight—summed up in the memorable equation $E=mc^2$ —that mass and energy are different manifestations of



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the same thing.

In a rare and compelling interpretative moment, Isaacson does offer the following: "A tiny amount of matter, if converted completely into energy, has an enormous punch. A kilogram of mass would convert into approximately 25 billion kilowatt hours of electricity. More vividly: The energy in the mass of one raisin could supply most of New York City's energy needs for a day." This illustration reveals the far-reaching implications of the new physics. Furthermore, Einstein's mind-boggling insights into the relationship between space and time, and between energy and matter, opened the door to a new cosmology that we are only beginning to decipher.

Said Einstein in a textbook he coauthored: "A new concept appeared in physics, the most important invention since Newton's time: *the field*. It needed great scientific imagination to realize that it is not the charges nor the particles but the field in the space between the charges and the particles that is essential for the description of physical phenomena." This reflects a new understanding of the material world, with potential implications beyond the scope of physics. If indeed *the field in the space between things* is essential for describing physical phenomena, could this extend to less tangible realms as well, such as social psychology? Might this perspective on fields inform the way we understand human relationships and cultural development? It certainly would not be the first time (or the last) that important advancements in physics reverberate into other intellectual domains.

Positioning Einstein's physics in this context—as an undercurrent at the leading edge of contemporary cultural evolution—may be one of the great challenges and opportunities of our era. Unfortunately, a common and regrettable misconception is that his *relativity* theories describing physics correlate with *relativism* in politics, art, and morality. As Isaacson explains, however, Einstein originally considered

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Mary Ellen Korman

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Foreword by William Patrick Patterson

“I FOUND IT COMPLETELY FASCINATING. I was captivated from the first sentence by substance and style. Ethel Merston was an exceptional individual and it is wonderful that her story has finally been told. An important work, with considerable research.”

—Ram Alexander, editor, *Death Must Die: A Western Woman's Life-long Spiritual Quest with Shree Anandamayee Ma*

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—*The Mountain Path*, The Journal of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

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calling his theory “invariance” (unvarying, constant), and he was later appalled at the conflation of relativity in physics with relativism in the humanities.

If Einstein played any role in advancing relativism, it had less to do with the specifics of his scientific insights and more to do with his contribution to a broader cultural transformation. Says Isaacson: “There are historical moments when an alignment of forces causes a shift in human outlook. It happened to art and philosophy and science at the beginning of the Renaissance, and again at the beginning of the Enlightenment. Now, in the early twentieth century . . . a spontaneous combustion occurred that included the works of Einstein, Picasso, Matisse, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Joyce, Eliot, Proust, Diaghilev, Freud, Wittgenstein, and dozens of other pathbreakers who seemed to break the bonds of classical thinking.”

The resulting fragmentation of authority and knowledge, together with the rise of the new postmodern worldview and its resistance to grand overarching narratives, is an outcome some may associate with Einstein. In both his scientific pursuits and his personal beliefs, however, he was guided by a conviction in transcendent order. “I have no better expression than ‘religious’ for this confidence in the rational nature of reality, and in its being accessible, to some degree, to human reason,” said Einstein.

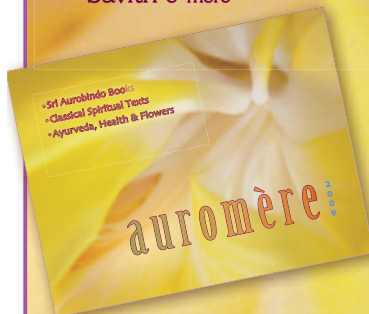
In addition, Einstein did not shy away from discussing interior matters. “A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space,” said Einstein. “He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this person by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

This quote reveals a depth and perspec-

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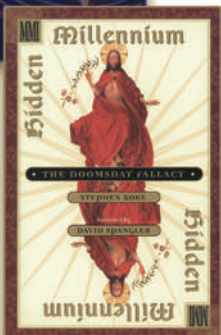
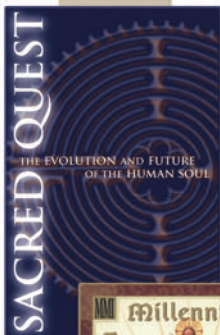
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tive that are surprisingly resonant with the evolutionary spirituality explored in the pages of this magazine. When viewed together with Einstein's historic insights into the structure of the cosmos, which inform contemporary research in physics and other disciplines, it is clear that Einstein is as relevant today as he was a century ago, and we still have much to learn about the universe he discerned.

Theodore Eisenman

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suffering under a mere three decades of gender-bending. I wonder how the manly men so advocated in these pages would fare under 6,000-10,000 years of male privileging and the resultant degradation and psychospiritual dismemberment suffered by women. No wonder *EnlightenNext* is so determined to exorcise the shadow within—the castigated “New Age wimp”—by conjuring up conservative and retrograde images of manliness. For those declaring the liberating effects of conscious evolution, how about waiting at least a few hundred years before declaring this project a castrating failure and harkening back to mastodon masculinity.

Bringing this to a more contemporary point: How unconscionable it is to celebrate a U.S. Marine’s finding of his manhood over the (unmentioned and unmentionable) bodies of dead Iraqis; shame on you. The image above Andrew Cohen’s “A Call to Arms for the Post-modern Male”—raising the male gender flag by GIs on the island of Iwo Jima—provides perhaps the clearest vision of *EnlightenNext*’s concept of twenty-first-century masculinity: militarized empire-building (a Faludi-esque backlash on a global level?). If this is all the cultural “creatives” can come up with, once again we have a failure of imagination and a profound retreat when the gender terrain turns liminal.

Thomas Patrick Donovan
California

WHY CAN’T A MAN BE MORE LIKE A WOMAN?

When I saw the cover of your recent men’s issue, I went right to the nineteen interviews asking women how men should be. I was curious to see where the female leaders of our spiritual world are at, but I was a little surprised at what I found: Almost all of them want men to be women.

How about this: A real man is one who has a rock solid, unshakeable core. He’s able to hold his belief in the face of all opposition until his experience shows him that he needs to change. He can make himself utterly vulnerable to those he cares about because he knows that no matter what happens he cannot really be harmed. He submits fully to a relationship, teacher, teaching, or team, but he will not violate his core values. He steps gladly into uncertainty because he knows that even if he fails he will eventually succeed or he is willing to die trying. He is unafraid to guide, should the situation warrant it. He listens carefully, makes his own evaluation, and then decides. He acts from a place of love, but has no room for compassion—he utterly rejects the notion of suffering and doesn’t coddle people by identifying with theirs.

Ron Blouch
via email



Issue 40
May-July 2008

THE COSMIC BRAIN

I am writing from Lake Alaotra, Madagascar, where I work for the Peace Corps. Your magazine is enjoyed by all of the volunteers here! I’d like to comment on an aspect of the “View from the Center of the Universe” article. Looking at the picture of the cosmic distribution of dark matter on page 67, I can’t help but be reminded of the structure of brain synapses. Perhaps we are glimpsing the brain that the universal consciousness belongs to?

Maybe the collisions and reactions that Primack talks about are actually the normal cellular action of this cosmic brain. So when we look outside at the universe, are we actually looking in?

Ben Nemeth
Madagascar

CASTING ATHEISTS AS VILLAINS

As a philosophical naturalist who let go of God not long after giving up Santa Claus, I was amused by the smug and derogatory tone of your coverage of the New Atheists. Depicting Hitchens, Dawkins, Harris, and Dennett in a police lineup suggests that atheism is a form

of criminality, and even the largely positive commentary on Julia Sweeney had to end with a snarky remark.

The only thing I could find resembling an intelligible counterargument was the suggestion that these contemporary defenders of atheism are using a simplistic conception of God. But most believers define the word “God” the same way the New Atheists do: as the Supreme Being, a “Who” (not a “What”) with infinite power, knowledge, and goodness. Saint Anselm described God as that being than which none greater can even be imagined, and this is the traditional Western concept.

All this raises an interesting line of questions. If you think the standard conception is not right, then why not say that you agree with atheism, given that it is the denial of the existence of God in that traditional sense of the word? Like the New Atheists, you don’t seem to believe in God as an “old man in the sky.” And from there on, the debate seems to be semantic.

Are you trying to hold on to the word “God” by giving it a different definition as an impersonal spiritual force in the universe? Why not look for common ground with some atheists, notably Sam Harris, who seem to give ideas like that some credence? Instead of taking a positive approach on this issue, you appear to be intent on casting atheists as villains.

James Coley
Chapel Hill, NC



Are You Having the Time of Your Life, or Does Time Have You?

by Peter Ragnar

PETER RAGNAR is a natural life scientist, modern-day Taoist wizard, and self-master par excellence. A martial arts practitioner for over fifty years, he is renowned for his teachings on optimal health and longevity. He is the author of twenty books, including *The Art and Science of Physical Invincibility*.

Have you ever noticed how time passes differently under different situations? Whether you're waiting for someone who's late to meet you or spending time with your lover, the minutes tick off exactly the same, but the experience differs drastically. In the first case, the minutes drag on painfully slowly. In the other, time seems to vanish until amazement graces your face at the discovery of how much time has passed.

Lovers live by the beat of their hearts; others live by the tick of their clocks. Falling in love is the healthiest thing you can do. Not only is your physical heart strengthened, but your entire physical body—all the glands, organs, immune system, and so on—is activated to peak performance. Why? Because now you have something so thrilling, so exciting,

believed you were going to live forever, how many frantic activities would you attempt to squeeze into your day? I know, I know . . . you don't believe you're immortal, but just pretend. If you were, how would you structure your life? Differently—much differently—I'd bet.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not against all the labor-saving devices of the high-tech world. I use them very judiciously, however, which affords me a bucolic and peaceful lifestyle. I've got plenty of time for everything, including writing to you in this column, and I don't worry about erectile dysfunction or memory loss or the lack of love in my life. So how do you free up more time so you can do the things that bring you the greatest levels of fulfillment?

First, become acutely aware of how much unnecessary stuff rattles around in your head each moment. Do you know how many logos, advertisements, and commercials your brain is bombarded with each day? As many as five thousand! Yep; it's pretty much like living near an airport and not noticing the jets taking off and landing. The brain's reticular activating system simply shuts them off from our consciousness lest we burn up our neural connections. However, our nervous system nevertheless becomes threadbare. Long-term exposure to high stress levels will not only age you; it will weaken the very bodily systems that keep you alive. Stress-reduction pioneer Dr. Herbert Benson states, "Stress is feeling that your ability to perform is exceeded by the demands you must meet."

Becoming more conscious of all the unnecessary thoughts, ideas, and opinions we hold—including the "borrowed" religious, political, and philosophical viewpoints—and sorting through that mess to find the ones that are honestly our own will free up a lot of time. Whether you believe it or not, thoughts are chemicals. These chemicals can poison you and confuse you, or they can heal you and bless you with euphoria. The more peaceful you feel, the more apt you are to have the time of your life.

While the clock ticks the same for everyone, not everyone is affected the same way. If time has you, then so do high levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which inhibits

Whether you believe it or not, thoughts are chemicals.

so fulfilling, so captivating that suddenly all of life seems worthwhile. In other words, you're living for something beyond yourself. In that self-forgetting state, time is no longer noticed.

If, on the other hand, you live by the tick of the clock, life can be very alarming. You wake with a start and find that too many activities must be squeezed into these segmented blocks of minutes and hours. Sadly, it's the way most of us live in modern society, despite all the high-tech, time-saving conveniences. How ironic! Not only are we more harried and worried, it's as if we've placed our brain in a pressure cooker with the carrots and potatoes and allowed others to turn up the heat. Our technology-induced exhaustion (such as the fatigue you feel when you finally peel your eyes off the computer screen), coupled with time pressure and noise, distorts our time perception, which drags our spirit into despondency. And all of this creates a formidable hardship for your nervous system to cope with.

What we're actually dealing with is something very few of us understand—time perception. Consider this: If you

Continued on page 110

the utilization of blood sugar in the brain's memory center. Not only does your ability to remember diminish greatly, so do your brain cells. Cortisol also breaks down the function of your brain's neurotransmitters, pretty much like downed electric lines in a thunderstorm. Your "biocomputer" doesn't work well during emotional storms either.

Whenever you feel like time has you, and you'd rather be having the time of your life, here are a few things you might want to try. Set aside time to meditate daily. The reason for this is that stress robs your body of oxygen needed by your cells, and that's why your breathing rate increases along with your heightened emotions. Meditation drops your oxygen requirements by up to twenty percent—that's twelve percent more than even a good night's sleep. It also decreases blood lactate levels (increased levels are responsible for anxiety attacks). In addition, I would highly recommend supplementation with melatonin and DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone) and a regular exercise program, because the large amounts of cortisol our adrenal glands produce when we are

under stress also suppress the immune system. Melatonin has been found to arrest this process, DHEA has been shown to actually decrease this debilitating stress hormone, and exercise normalizes and has a calming effect on mental equilibrium.

Even if time seems to stand still, the clock races on. But your physical body will defy aging if you're in love with life. I tend to fall in love with almost everyone I meet, and I make certain to share special quiet moments with my precious sweetheart. Please follow suit. You cannot love too soon, because you never know when it will be too late. So why not slow down, fall in love again, meditate, and discover you're having the time of your life?



Listen to an interview with Peter Ragnar and read a complete collection of his articles on health and nutrition at enlightennext.org/ragnar

Awakening to Evolution continued from page 112

Throughout this whole process, from the beginning of time to the very edge of the future, as the energy and intelligence that has been driving cosmic, planetary, biospheric, animal, human, and cultural evolution, we have been here at every step. What do I mean by that? I mean that as the *evolutionary impulse*, as the initiatory force that is driving the entire creative process, from the innermost dimensions of our human interiors all the way to the farthest reaches of our cosmos, we have always been here.

It was my own gradual discovery of and awakening to this picture of the developmental process as a whole that eventually compelled me to reinterpret and redefine the meaning and significance of spiritual awakening, of enlightenment, for our own time. And this awakening is not merely an ever-growing cognitive appreciation for the miraculous unfolding of the entire evolving cosmos that we are all part and parcel of. I'm speaking about an actual experience *at the level of consciousness itself* of the presence of that same *telos* or felt pull toward the future. I'm convinced that the momentous enlightening

leap that needs to be taken by those of us at the leading edge is the delicate and all-important transition from the mere intellectual and philosophical recognition that our cosmos and culture are evolving to the direct, felt, *living* experience of the energy and intelligence that is driving the entire process, vibrating in one's very own heart and mind. It just makes sense that a spiritual path that would enable us to create the future in our own time would have to be based upon such a revelation.

It is indeed a perpetually enthralling insight that we are, at all levels of our being, products of time and the creative process. But it is literally enlightening when we begin to directly experience that we are truly one with the mind of God—one with the original evolutionary impulse that chose to take that eternal leap from Being to Becoming fourteen billion years ago.



Explore the evolutionary philosophy of spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen through a complete series of articles, audios, and videos at enlightennext.org/cohen

CORRECTION TO ISSUE 40 (MAY-JULY 2008)

In "A View from the Center of the Universe: An interview with Joel R. Primack and Nancy Ellen Abrams," we mis-edited two facts:

On page 65: The first part of the statement "The distance of the oldest stars and therefore their age had been overestimated; it turns out that they are about twelve billion years old, not sixteen billion years as we had thought" should have read "The distance of the oldest stars had been underestimated and therefore their age had been overestimated."

On page 70: The statement "Outside this midrange of size scales, there really is the land of the giants—giants of galaxies and superclusters of galaxies on the cosmic horizon" should have read "Outside this midrange of size scales, there really is the land of the giants—giant galaxies and superclusters of galaxies out to the cosmic horizon."

We regret the errors.

Kosmic Concepts

Things Every Evolutionary Should Know . . .

Charting a new future demands a new vocabulary. Over the years, we've adopted many useful terms into our perpetually evolving *EnlightenNext* lexicon. So we decided to create this section in order to share key concepts that we find illuminating, clarifying, and useful in the quest to define the contours of a new evolutionary worldview.

To kick things off, we thought we'd start with one of the words in this section's title and explain why we often spell it with a "K":

Kos•mic *adj.*

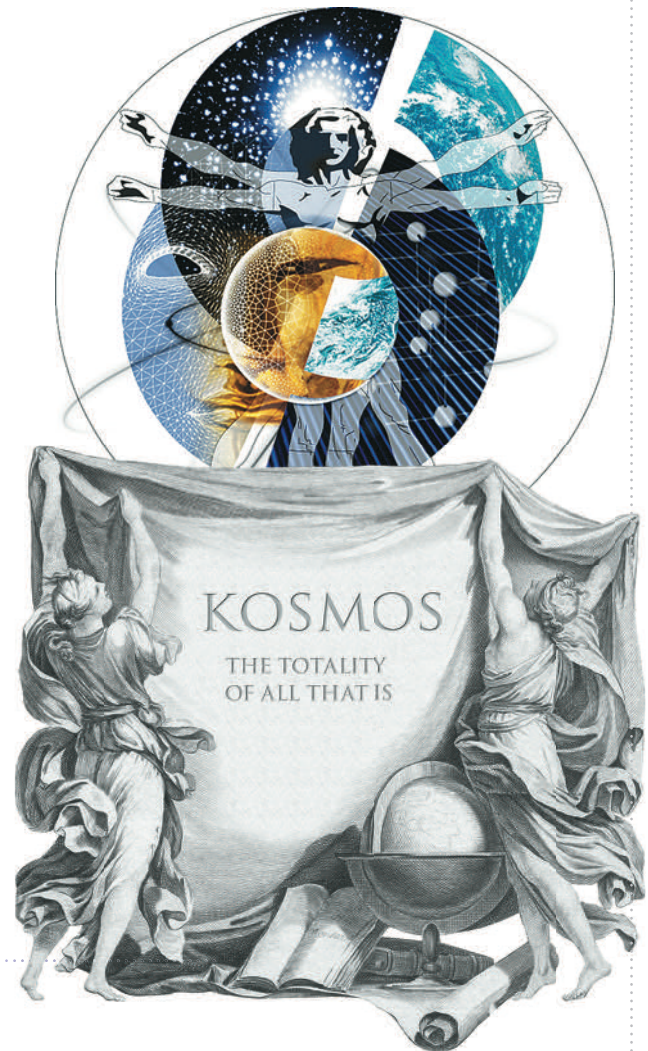
Of or relating to the *Kosmos*—the evolving multidimensional Totality of existence, encompassing not only the physical but also the biological, emotional, mental, psychic, and spiritual domains.

"The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." Thus began the famed astronomer Carl Sagan's majestic PBS television series, *Cosmos*. The epic grandeur of Sagan's *Cosmos*—suffused with "billions upon billions" of planets, stars, and galaxies—was truly awe-inspiring, captivating the imagination of viewers across America when it debuted in the fall of 1980. However, despite the almost sacred reverence for existence that permeated the series, some viewers still took issue with its strictly scientific bias, finding little room for God or

the transcendent in Sagan's naturalistic worldview. "Religion, especially," complained critic John J. O'Connor in his review of *Cosmos* for *The New York Times*, "is characterized as being opposed to enlightened progress."

Fifteen years later, in 1995, the American philosopher Ken Wilber issued an eight-hundred-page response to concerns such as these. Titled *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Wilber's grand tome argued for a more holistic, integral conception of the universe—one that would fully honor the

profound revelations of science and religion alike. He called this new vision "the Kosmos" (retaining the "K" from the Greek). So when we use the term "Kosmos" in this magazine, it's not only to affirm our appreciation for Sagan's extraordinary universe but also to restore the spiritual depth, subjective richness, and transcendent mysticism to reality that the ancient Greek philosophers, who coined the word, duly acknowledged and revered.





Awakening to Evolution

by Andrew Cohen

FOR THOSE OF US LOOKING toward the future who are spiritually inclined, it is often difficult to find a path or practice that makes *deep* sense. What I mean is, it's difficult to find a spiritual path that has a truly contemporary orientation—one that doesn't compel us to embrace ancient belief structures that may no longer be relevant to our time. That is why I believe we need to create a new context for our individual and collective spiritual development, one that is appropriate for our

cultural, and *spiritual* discovery of the last three hundred years: evolution.

Why is that? Because when considering what it would mean to create new structures for individual and collective spiritual development, it's necessary to keep an important fact in mind: Up until very recently in human history, we didn't know that we are all part of a developmental process that had a beginning in time and that *is going somewhere*. Many of us tend to forget that it was only in the twentieth century that we came

of *everything*, could only have been made by a force that was nothing less than Godlike. That impulse, that *evolutionary* impulse, is what I call God. That same impulse is not separate from the most important part of each and every one of us, from our uniquely human drive to create and innovate and, most significantly, from our will to *consciously evolve*.

As that impulse we have all been here, in some shape or form, throughout the mind-opening, awe-inspiring journey of Becoming that has been unfolding since the time process began. We've been together since infinite density emerged from absolute nothingness when the universe was created. We've been together since atoms, which make up the very foundation of all matter, were formed three hundred thousand years later. We were there when those atoms formed gas clouds, which turned into stars, which grouped together as galaxies, each of which eventually produced billions of solar systems filled with small rocky planets, such as our beautiful Earth, which was forged from the remains of generations of dead stars.

We have been here since the first single-celled microorganisms emerged from the primordial soup and throughout the slow flowering of life in all its diversity. We were here when the great dinosaurs ruled the food chain unchallenged, and through their demise. When the first hominids walked on the African savannah, this impulse, which is who we all are, guided each evolutionary step. And since our ancestors appeared on the stage of life just two hundred thousand years ago, that impulse has guided the vast unfolding tapestry of cultural development that brings us to this present moment.

Many of us tend to forget that it was only in the twentieth century that we came upon what's called *deep time*.

twenty-first-century circumstances. The new seeker, the postmodern seeker, is in a unique predicament. But it's a predicament that couldn't be more thrilling, because it is so pregnant with creative potential. By "seeker" I mean the spiritually inspired individual who is awake to what I call the "evolutionary impulse" but who has abandoned traditional approaches because they just don't seem able to meet our contemporary psychological, philosophical, and spiritual needs. I'm speaking about those individuals at the edge who want to catalyze a revolution in consciousness and culture, a revolution that will be able to create dynamic new structures that enable a new future to emerge. I believe such a revolution would have to be based upon the most important scientific, historical,

upon what's called *deep time*—the incomprehensible span of fourteen billion years since the universe burst into being.

I have no doubt that the evolutionary process—from the big bang to the present moment—is not merely a random, meaningless event. If one stands back and takes a good, hard look at the entire sweep of the process, all the way from its earliest beginnings, one can see undeniable direction and even, I dare say, purpose in its majestic unfolding. But who or what initiated that process? What energy or intelligence made the choice to take that first miraculous leap from formlessness to form, from nothing whatsoever to energy and light to matter to life to consciousness to self-reflective awareness? Such an audacious move, that instantaneous leap from nothing to the beginning

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