

Chapter One

The Collective Mind

A new idea is dawning, gathering force in such diverse fields as the arts and sciences, organizational leadership, civic affairs, academia, and athletics. And along with the idea comes a new capacity for human experience that, according to evolutionary biologists, has been simmering under the surface for a million years or so. The idea that is thundering through the boardroom, the basketball court, the classroom, the community forum and symphony hall is known as “collective intelligence,” that the power of *we* is greater than the power of *me*, and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Collective intelligence means many things; there is no single definition that fits the scope of the theme. Among the many dimensions are the art of human association, the power of the group, creative collaboration, synergy and teamwork, the soul of partnership, as well as sources of transpersonal wisdom that lie beyond our conscious awareness. The current research outlined in the book embraces many disciplines and has been successfully implemented into corporate development seminars, academic departments such as the Global Leadership Initiative at MIT, in the arts and entertainment such as the fabled Second City Improvisational group, and even at the United Nations in the UN Global Compact.

We are not alone. Imagine—what may happen in a community forum, a family gathering, a film set, or a business meeting, when individuals can come together and access the combined force of many minds focused in the same direction. Consider the potential of a group intuition which is more embracing and incisive than the insights realized by any one individual. Or imagine participating in the breathtaking synergy of a highly synchronized athletic team where players become parts of a single body devoted to excellence and personal mastery. Visualize a receptive, highly functioning group setting (opposed to the ego-bound and agenda-ridden associations we know all too well) where grace descends in the form of original new ideas and a new creative movement arising from the group itself that is coherent, elegant, and fresh. These conditions can, and I feel must, be integrated into our own lives if we wish to achieve our full potential, realize any degree of psychological wholeness or spiritual awakening, make our genuine contribution, and begin to address the seemingly insoluble problems that we face as a culture.

This book raises many questions: What are the different forms of collective intelligence? How do we access its wisdom in our own lives and professional domains? How may it help us in our own personal development, and what is its potential role in solving the massive social and environmental challenges of the modern world? (I offer no answers, merely) In this book I hope to awaken the potential of and hunger for an expanded intelligence that can help us in numerous and immeasurable ways. Carl Jung wrote in the first third of the twentieth century of the “collective unconscious,” a term most of us are familiar with that refers to the common archetypes of the human experience that lay buried within our unconscious. Current researchers use the term, *collective consciousness*, which implies a common mind that hovers in the atmosphere itself, that comes from the energies

that pass between us and is a larger and more potent form of intelligence than our ordinary rational individual minds.

From the Western traditions, we have learned the lessons of *independence*, of an individual agentic self, whole unto itself, and capable of great individual initiative and achievement. From the Eastern forms of thought, we are now learning the wisdom of *interdependence*, where life is viewed as an integrated whole, where underlying our differences we are all one people, one mind. Both standpoints are exceedingly important, indeed necessary for a full understanding and realization of collective intelligence. Personal initiative and individual achievement is inexorably twined to the collective realizations and interrelationships possible when people deeply come together.

Can we know through direct experience that we are a link in a vast interrelated series of organisms: life, nature, the earth, humanity, as well as transpersonal realms? And are we experientially aware that our human potential embraces a series of enfolded worlds: matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit, each offering its unique wisdom and way of knowing? Many forms of intelligence are available to meet our strivings and aspirations, yet we occupy a relatively small corner of the totality of our being. What I intend to explore through this book is intelligence; not just the systemic reasoning of rationality, but a broad range of possibilities for opening to the myriad forms of the mind, from inner wisdom to collective intelligence, and ranging through successively higher levels of transpersonal realms.

Certain forms of intelligence are found, to a greater or lesser extent depending on our level of evolution, within the field of our conscious awareness: the perceptions of the senses, the wisdom of the heart, the knowing of the mind, and the integrative insight of intuition. Other forms of knowledge may *become conscious*, but their source lies deep within us, such as

the personal and collective unconscious—or beyond us, such as fate, higher will or the divine order of life. Our individual strivings towards consciousness can open the door to forms of wisdom that are discovered through *relatedness*: collective intelligence and transpersonal wisdom.

Philosopher Jacob Needleman articulates what I feel is the central question of this book: “We obviously cannot confront this tangled world alone.... It takes no great insight to realize that we have no choice but to think together, ponder together, in groups and communities. The question is how to do this. How to come together and think and hear each other in order to touch, or be touched by the intelligence we need?”

He goes on to say: “I [believe] that the group is the art form of the future.... In our present culture, as I see it, the main need is for a form that can enable human beings to share their perception and attention and, through that sharing, to become a conduit for the appearance of spiritual intelligence.”

However, what occupies our minds for most of our waking hours? When we sincerely look within, we often find that much of our primary focus is our personal ego and its corresponding hopes, dreams, fears, illusions, and desires. One of the central questions that we must ask is what is the place of the ego in our search for deeper forms of intelligence. When I say ego, I do not mean strictly the conscious mind, as defined by modern psychology. I mean the false image of ourselves that we strive to uphold at all costs, what don Juan teaches Carlos Castaneda is merely a “foreign installation.” The ego does not represent our real selves, rather it serves to buffer us from the seeing the whole truth of our condition, and prevents both joy of consciousness and the sorrow of conscience. Seeing, feeling, and deeply engaging the mysteries of the world brings us closer to the joy of consciousness.

Seeing and feeling the contradictions within ourselves and witnessing those very same contradictions reflected in the world itself brings us closer to the sorrow of conscience. Why does my everyday life, my ego, and my intensely personal conditions occupy such a large portion of my consciousness? Is this healthy, or right? Will it assist in the evolution of the human condition or help solve the many conflicts of the modern world? Will it help save the planet from irreparable harm for the sake of future generations? Will it assist in my own genuine conscious evolution . . . really?

Please, if you will, would you meditate on several indisputable facts with me? Let these facts enter your consciousness for just a moment and simply observe what happens.

- I am one of 6.5 *billion* people that inhabit planet earth. Can we get our minds around that number? What makes me, and my individual ego so important?

- In a mere 100 years, hardly a single one of us will still be here. Most of what I call me, certainly my body, ego, mind, and individual pursuits will have returned to dust.

- The earth and humankind, even those I know and love, will go on without me. Life continues, and the reciprocal exchanges of energy that constitutes the universe that we live in will proceed without me.

- Not a single one of my material possessions, external titles, or outer-world successes will follow me beyond the grave.

- Yet we intuit that individual consciousness is fundamental to the evolution of the cosmos, necessary for both the earth and humankind. Esoteric thought teaches that one truly conscious individual can influence all of humanity. Witness Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, and Mohammed. Thus my evolution is imperative. What we genuinely contribute to the growth of humanity will live on in others as part of the ongoing flow of life.

We may come to the realization that we are part of a vast organism, an evolving stream of consciousness that flows through all living beings, that we may, through our own efforts to be sure, participate in, open to, and know directly. Ironically, the very condition that impedes a genuine realization and growing partnership with this miraculous current of intelligence is the very same condition that holds the potential to further our understanding and possibilities. And that condition is none other than the attitude and dynamic that I call *me*. Our personal willful ego, with its narrow and separatist agenda, is miles away, on a different continent altogether than the search for our genuine individuality and deeper connections. We must find a new model, a new paradigm for the 21st Century, one that equally recognizes the strength of individual aspiration and the necessity of collaboration, cooperation, and collective evolution.

My standpoint, that I will further throughout this book, revolves around seeking balance between the distinctly western model of individual independence and autonomy—which, as outlined in the introduction, has spawned remarkable people and great achievements—and recognizing the attitude prevalent in Eastern thought that seeks to fully engage the web of life and acknowledge our profound interdependence. I will argue that individual realization and collective interdependence go hand in hand, are two poles of the same thing and not mutually exclusive conditions. If we wish to inwardly contact the higher, deeper levels on the great chain of being, it can only proceed through our individual efforts and conscious choices.

In *The Geography of Thought*, Psychologist Richard Nisbett explores the differing worldviews and cognitive processes of Western versus Asian thought using ancient Greece and ancient China as models. He explains: “More than a billion people in the world today

claim intellectual inheritance from ancient Greece. More than two billion are heirs of ancient Chinese traditions of thought.” Western culture found many of its underpinnings in ancient Greece and the foundations of eastern thought may be traced to ancient China. Nisbett distills his argument with the simple claim that the west had Aristotle and the East had Confucius.

He writes about the differences between the individual and the collective. “The Greeks, more than any other ancient peoples, and in fact more than most people on the planet today, had a remarkable sense of personal *agency*—the sense that they were in charge of their own lives and free to act as they chose. ... A strong sense of individual identity accompanied the Greek sense of personal agency.”

“The Chinese counterpart to Greek agency was *harmony*. Every Chinese was first and foremost a member of a collective, or rather of several collectives—the clan, the village, and especially the family. The individual was not, as for the Greeks, an encapsulated unit who maintained a unique identity across social settings.” Further, Chinese thinking sought correspondence with both the social and the natural worlds. “... The Chinese believed that cosmic events such as comets and eclipses could predict important occurrences on earth, such as the birth of conquerors.”

I would argue that both the Western and Eastern standpoints have their strengths and their limitations. In the evolution of today’s thought, with global influences at our fingertips, we must seek an integration of these points of view. We cannot deny the necessity of individual agency as our primary means of growth, but by itself, is it insufficient and limited, lacking in connections to a deeper mind. Problematic of course is the fact that we generally view our individuality through the narrow and distorting lens of the ego. Can we

integrate the reality of a group mind, a collective intelligence that can both inform and deepen our growing individuality? And can our genuine essence, the seeds of our individuality, enlarge the power and potential of the group mind, the collective energies that flow through our world?

Leaving aside for a moment the distinctions between collective and transpersonal stages, let us review the different factors that we call the collective mind. While some of these factors may be self-evident, they bear mentioning to further the development the theme. These factors will be placed in ascending order, from the most fundamental and basic, to the most subtle and refined forces available to our search. All of these factors, I believe, contribute to the synergy of what might be known as the group mind. This book is progressive and will thoroughly examine several of these factors in future chapters. Here I wish merely to set the stage, to survey the forms of collective intelligence that are potentially available to our awareness, through both our intent our receptivity.

The knowledge of a generation or an era

Each country, each era, and each generation has its unique characteristics and forms of intelligence to offer the world, and these gifts are transmitted through works of art, symbols, social structures, and forms of government. Ancient Greece, for example, gave us many things that form part of our collective heritage today: the foundation of our educational system, indeed the very value of education, the form and content of our athletic contests, the importance of dialogue and debate, a pantheon of mythic gods and goddesses that continue to hold resonant meaning for humanity, and as stated above, the great worth of personal agency and a distinctive individuality. Two of the several non-denominational

dictums that form the foundation of the spiritual quest had, if not their origins at least their wider dissemination, in ancient Greece: *Know thyself* and *As above so below*.

One generation adds to the evolving sum of knowledge available to the next. On its most basic level, collective intelligence here constitutes what a society chooses to hand down to future generations through its process of education and conditioning. The attempt by the educational system to transmit the most fundamental discoveries of the human race to its young is a means of engendering a shared common pool of knowledge. It is also an important means of insuring continuity, of not forgetting the seminal discoveries that precede us and, most important, not repeating the mistakes of the past.

The language itself that evolves from a culture holds important keys to understanding the knowledge and intelligence of the group mind. What concepts are elegantly and precisely conveyed through the strengths of a native tongue, and what ideas have no words to adequately and resonantly express their inner meaning? Language evolves as culture evolves; we find new words that match our new understandings and insights.

Cultural and ancestral transmission

I run the risk of over simplifying here, but each culture in the history of the earth holds conventions, beliefs, traditions, and worldviews that create a common ground for those within the culture, and in today's globalization of ideas, contribute (even to outsiders) to humanities evolving store of knowledge. These factors are often internalized through family and community and transmitted, according to the beliefs of many native cultures, through one's very bloodlines. In the Hawaiian culture, for example, native Hawaiians believe that their ancestors live within them, guide their thought, inform their actions, and

offer their collective wisdom to present circumstances. Both Native American and Hawaiian cultures reveal a deep wisdom for a harmonious relationship to the land, the earth.

Humanity lives with the earth in deep harmony, not above it with a sense of manifest agency, an entitlement that allows for the exploitation of its resources or the willful manipulation of its intelligent systems. “I belong to the earth; it does not belong to me.”

Ancestral knowledge, one’s bloodlines, represents an intelligence that is subtle and can only be found in the whispers that speak from deep within. What have my preceding generations of ancestors given me, and where do I locate myself within this progression of generations? What are my possibilities and responsibilities? For example, my grandfather came to this country at the turn of the century to avoid being drafted into the Russian army. He fathered ten children, worked in the steel mills of Eastern Pennsylvania, faced the depression, and lived close to the edge of poverty. His entire existence was concerned with mere *survival*. My father, growing up in that milieu, tried to better himself, became a successful and prominent radiologist, and attempted to give to his wife and children the advantages that he lacked in his own childhood. In other words, his entire life was given over to the *provision* of resources for himself and his family. My generation—my brothers and I—are the first generation in three that has the freedom and potential to actualize ourselves. What a gift—it took two preceding generations to allow us this luxury, this privilege. And I do not treat it lightly; view it as a great responsibility, a debt I must repay through my work and efforts. The flow of life through the generations has its own order, its own intelligent design.

Certain characteristics are imprinted in our bodies. Intelligence lies within our genes.

And the larger question is begged here: what is the soul's memory of its succession of lifetimes and the skills, talents, and challenges we have inherited from our own past? And does this, or how does this, contribute to our intelligence of this lifetime? Do we know our individual purpose? Our karma and our dharma? Do we know our own unique strengths, capabilities, and obstacles? There is a gold mine of fruitful questioning here.

Domains of Knowledge

Within our own personal or professional domains, most of us have developed skills or gleaned knowledge in a specialized area of interest such as medicine or law, business or the arts, or any one of the social or natural sciences—even childrearing. By our mature contributory years, most of us are heir to a growing body of research and knowledge in a particular domain that has been defined and furthered by generations before us. On the one hand, we employ the discoveries of the past, and on the other hand, we contribute our own discoveries to further its development—and eventually become responsible for its transmission to future generations. Whatever is given must be passed on. Knowledge is no exception. This is something many do not consider. We must begin to distribute while we are accumulating. Otherwise, we may suffer deep psychic blockages, and even worse, we are impeding the flow of information and energy that the world needs and without which our domain cannot properly continue.

Over time, the domain assumes a life of its own with its own conditions and evolving intelligence. Through relevant institutions such as professional organizations, the field itself must provide certain conditions for its furtherance and transmission: adequate training for the young, opportunities for communication between its members, conditions for high

performance, and the establishment of standards, practices, and shared ethics. This becomes a group mind, shared by its members, often with its own particular language, subculture, and unique style.

Synergy

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Most often, what we call group mind arises from teamwork, cooperation, and above all, joint dialogue. Shared experiences, common goals, and a willingness to be open to each other's points of view breeds a larger understanding and greater capabilities than we may realize on our own. We could easily argue here that the group itself is smarter than any one individual.

In the fertile environment of dialogue, new insights arise from the center of the circle; in the soul of teamwork, performance is heightened and amplified; and in the spirit of cooperation, a group power and energy is shared by all that transcends the efforts of any one individual. Creativity is enhanced by collaboration. An old-fashioned Amish house-raising, for example, where a house is framed and a basic structure completed in a few days reflects an egoless cooperative task where everyone naturally finds their place and devises a way to contribute to the neighborly goal. In the group arts of theater, dance, music, and film, often improvisation between individuals creates a melody or drama or movement that is magical in its discovery and powerful in its expression.

In a marriage where people have been together for years, husbands and wives often complete each other's thoughts and gracefully anticipate each other's needs. Like any joint venture, a marriage itself is a composite entity, larger than either of the individuals. The unique nature of the composite relationship extends outward and finds its expression in the

resulting family. And the family itself contains a unique personality and well-defined characteristics that deepen our experience of ourselves and help define who we are. Indeed, we could argue that the family unit, either nuclear or extended, is the embryo of society. The work of maintaining relationships within a family, the necessity of shared, open dialogue, and the relationship of the individual to the larger family unit teaches us from an early age the fundamental tools of living in harmony with the society of people that constitute our immediate environment.

Archetypes and the collective unconscious

Here lies the most accessible body of research on collective mind—well known by generations of college-educated individuals. Carl Jung believed, according to Joseph Henderson in *Man and His Symbols*, in the existence of a “collective unconscious”—that is, “the part of the psyche which retains and transmits the common psychological heritage of mankind.” “As Dr. Jung has pointed out..., the human mind has its own history and the psyche retains many traces left from previous stages of its development.”

Certain symbols and myths arise from deep within the unconscious part of our nature and find their expression in dreams, visions, works of art, and indeed in actual physical projections into our external life. These archetypes, or universal symbols and myths, are often, according to Jung, remnants of a collective unconscious. These archetypal symbols and concepts such as the mandala, myths of death and rebirth, and the trickster manifest throughout many cultures worldwide and throughout the history of time. Joseph Campbell, following Jung’s research, believes in the existence of a mono-myth or defining mythologies that are found in most cultures and from all eras. Robert Hopcke writes about the concept of

archetypes expressed in Jung's Collected works: "Because the collective unconscious was the realm of archetypal experience, Jung considered the collective unconscious layer deeper and ultimately more significant than the personal unconscious. To become aware of the figures and movements of the collective unconscious brought one into direct contact with essential human experiences and perceptions, and the collective unconscious was considered by Jung to be the ultimate psychic source of power, wholeness, and inner transformation." Here the collective mind deepens and expands to include the forces and dynamics that are expressed and contained within our common human heritage. Many writers and researchers have observed how these myths and archetypes operate in our lives today and can assist in the growth of our consciousness.

As always, I prefer the phrase "depth consciousness" to the unconscious, and will argue later in the book that the symbols and myths that activate the deeper parts of our minds and feelings evolve over time alongside humanity's growth. Contemporary developments are creating entirely new archetypes, reflecting a symbolic content useful for our inner development, that parallel their practical applications. Computers and space travel, the internet and mobile, wireless technologies provide rich metaphors for awakening our inner potential.

Evolution of species

Howard Bloom eloquently argues in *Global Brain: The Evolution of Mass Mind from the Big Bang to the 21st Century*, "A worldwide neocortex ... is not a gift of the silicon age. It is a phase in the ongoing evolution of a networked global brain which has existed for more than 3 billion years. This planetary mind is neither uniquely human nor a product of technology.

Nor is it a result of reincarnation, or an outgrowth of telepathy. It is a product of evolution and biology. Nature has been far more clever at connectionism than have we. Her mechanisms for information swapping, data processing, and collective creation are more intricate and agile than anything the finest computer theoreticians have yet foreseen.”

The universe, he claims, is made up of “complex adaptive systems”; some are biological like rainforests, others are social, like human economies. And all strive for growth through adaptation. Bloom continues: “We’ve seen how a collective intelligence uses the ground rules of a neural net, (or any complex adaptive system): shuttling resources and influences to those who master problems now at hand; stripping influence, connections, and luxuries from those who cannot seem to understand.”

He makes the point that many of humanities achievements are mirrored in the life form of insects, animals and plants. That we are one mind, and that the group mind is ultimately interspecies in its primal source. He makes the stunning claim, that even in biology: “Attention begets attention”. The leaders and ground-shakers, those who are bold and willing to take risks, are the “lead sheep in the herd of humankind—the eyes, the ears, and shapers of the collective mind. The shift of attention to those on top—whether they be neurons, experts, or empires—is central to the operation of the collective brain. “

“If stars step constantly upward, why should the global interlace of humans, microbes, plants, and animals not move upward steadily as well? The horizons toward which we can soar are within us, anxious to break free, to emerge from our imagining, then to beckon us forward into fresh realities. We have a mission to create, for we are evolution incarnate. We are her self-awareness, her frontal lobes and fingertips. ... We are parts of

something 3.5 billion years old, but pubertal in cosmic time. We are the neurons of the planet's interspecies mind.”

See, the world agrees with me

When don Juan makes a particularly salient point in his conversations with Carlos Castaneda, and at that very moment a crow flies low overhead, he says: “See, the world agrees with me.”

Synchronicity can be defined as an acausal principle of meaningful coincidence. When the world within and the world without come into accord, external signs and omens abound. How does the world know to do that, at exactly this moment?, I often ask. It feels miraculous. A sense of magic permeates the atmosphere. I call this the principle of “right time, right place.”

Through synchronicity, we perceive hints of a larger intelligence at work, a divine fabric of meaningfulness in the universe. Yet it does not, cannot, happen without our effort. As a photographer, for example, synchronicity occurs when I am present and can fit into the flow of time in a harmonious, “right” manner. If I am attentive and aware, something in me knows where to be, and precisely when to find a “decisive moment”. Within us, we have both an inner clock and an inner navigator, if we know how to listen. Recently, I found myself subtly guided to an exact location, with a definitive sense of precisely where to frame the composition, and this framing was opposed to my accumulated skill with photography and the visual language. Yet I listened and made the image. When printed and blended, according to my inner dictates, with another image made in the same way, it revealed a precise symbolic outline of the state of my inner being at the time—a map as it were. I often

ask in wonderment, what in the world knows to lead me to an exact position, and how does world configure itself to reflect what I need to hear and see at this moment? Through these experiences, I am led to the inescapable conclusion that I am not enough, impotent, without the hints of knowing from another order.

Photographer Paul Caponigro writes of this phenomenon: “Of all my photographs, the ones that have the most meaning for me are those that I was moved to make from a certain vantage point, at a certain moment and no other, and for which I did not draw on my abilities to fabricate a picture, composition-wise or other-wise. You might say that I was taken in. Who or what takes one to a vantage point or moves one at a certain moment is a mystery to me. I have always felt after such experiences that there was more than myself involved. It is not chance. It happens often.... I cannot deny or put aside these subtle inner experiences. They are real. I feel and know them to be so. I cannot pass it off as wild imagination or hallucination. It is illusive, but the strength of it makes me yearn for it, as if trying to recall or remember an actual time, or place, or person, long past or forgotten. I hope, sometime in my life to reach the source of it.”

The still, small voice, hints of a larger order

“Sing through me o muse”, begins Homer in *The Odyssey*. Is there a deeper mind available to our efforts? Are there transpersonal forces that need and use us for their expression? We often see things upside-down, believing that creativity has, as its primary function, the goal of self expression. But maybe a larger purpose is at work. Perhaps there are greater, transpersonal forces that use our skills, talents, and tongues to speak through us for the benefit of humanity. Attention begets attention, claims Howard Bloom. Perhaps our

attention functions as a magnet to attract a greater attention and larger voices. If, as many believe, the artist and creative individual functions as an antennae for the race itself, then what is being received and from whom, and for whom?

M. Scott Peck and others report the existence of a still, small voice, unmistakable in its clarity, that grows from within and is of me yet not of me. Peck describes a problem while working on a novel that he could not solve through the normal deliberations of his mind. He reports: “When I was working on something else and my problem was on a back burner ... I heard a still, small voice say, ‘Read the Book of Daniel.’ He did not at the time listen, yet the voice was insistent, returning daily until he actually read the passage. After reading, Peck realized immediately the solution of his problem.

Something in us knows, or is connected to a larger transpersonal intelligence that visits us through the medium of our silence, our receptivity. Christians call this visitation “the holy ghost,” Some believe it is a mythical, magical external force, while others believe that it arises from the depth consciousness. Whatever its source, when this form of knowing announces its appearance, it often speaks with extraordinary authority and clarity, revealing a source of knowledge that far transcends the ordinary mind.

Returning to the questions at the beginning of this chapter, what is so interesting about *me*, the small self, if both evolution, biology, and spiritual consciousness is leading us ever forward as a species, a planet, and a cosmos. The view that intuition or artistic inspiration is meant for oneself alone has gone far out of favor. So much evidence exists to support the contrary view, that we are all in this together and collaborative solutions, collective realizations, with each of us leveraging our individual strengths to speak with a larger voice, is exactly what is needed now.

Sources of Wisdom

Can we fathom the existence of divinatory oracles or etheric libraries containing the entire store of human knowledge, including all individual's past lives and karmic conditions? For my ordinary mind, needless to say, it is quite a stretch. In the Introduction to the *I Ching, the Chinese Book of Changes* often used for divination, Carl Jung writes: "The irrational fullness of life has taught me never to discard anything, even when it goes against all our theories, or otherwise admits of no immediate explanation. It is of course disquieting, and one is not certain whether the compass is pointing true or not; but security, certitude, and peace do not lead to discoveries. ... The less one thinks about the theory of the I Ching, the more soundly one sleeps."

In the Delphic Oracles of ancient Greece, the god Apollo spoke through a medium, named Pythia, or human priestess. For over a thousand years, the oracles offered wisdom, guidance, inspiration, and esoteric enigmas for questioners to contemplate and act upon. The crisp answers of the oracle suggest multiple layers of meaning behind each pronouncement, and, though many of the questioners circumstances are lost to time, may have both symbolic and temporal significance. And historical research does suggest at least some measure of truth and accuracy. Who is speaking here? And from what fountain of knowledge?

Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) was an ordinary Sunday school teacher, photographer and family man with an unusual capacity. He could enter a trance state and access what he called 'the Akashic Records,' an etheric source that contains all human knowledge and a record of all human endeavor. His vast scope of readings ranged from medical questions about

individuals, to predictions of global earth and social changes, to questions of science, religion, history, and education. Over 14,000 of his readings are on file at the Association of Research and Enlightenment in Virginia Beach, and over three hundred books on topics as diverse as medicine, religion, psychology, art, and metaphysics have been published that explore various aspects of his work and readings.

Well ahead of their time in medicine and psychology, prescient in the natural and social sciences, and highly inspirational in regard to the arts and culture, the Cayce readings represent a comprehensive storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. Upon examination, I cannot find any other suitable explanation for his readings than his own claim that he accessed both the individual questioners own subconscious and the Akashic records, the universal database where all things are stored.

Between our individual egos and the Absolute, many layers of subtle reality interpenetrate the universe on a vast ascending chain of being. In esoteric thought, a miracle is viewed as a symbol of freedom, an escape from the lawful manifestations of our own level of being. Thus, a miracle is when the laws of another, higher, level of being operate on a lower level, breaking through the cracks of our, ordinary lives and obstinate surface minds. There can be no question that a higher, transpersonal intelligence can and does make its appearance on our level, deeply informing our minds and infusing our lives with a new clarity and force, revealing our future and illuminating the expansive shape of our human potential.



On October 17, 1989, I attended a gallery opening at The Art Institute of Boston and was speaking with a student about relatively inconsequential classroom matters. Suddenly her knees buckled and her body convulsed with a look of pained horror on her face. She was visibly shaken for about 15 interminably long seconds, but immediately regained her composure and apologized, saying: “ I don’t know what came over me. I feel like something big just happened.” I went home later and turned on the news to discover that her convulsion took place at the exact moment of the California earthquake that resulted in 63 deaths and 3,757 injuries. Her sympathetic reaction coincided exactly with the 15 second duration of the quake that measured 7.1 on the Richter scale.

Embedded in her experience lies certain keys towards understanding group mind. As we explore collective intelligence, I am beginning to see the shape of certain principles that must be kept in mind as a groundwork, a matrix for further exploration.

The Relativity of Time and Space

Her consciousness leapt across space and synchronized with the moment of a disaster happening on the other side of a continent. The insights that derive from the collective mind are often outside the strict boundaries of time and space as we know it. The past, present, and future meld together, and it seems that these sources of knowing stem from a different dimension. Or perhaps on some level of realization, time and space do not exist. Our consciousness can transcend space to sense the state and condition of an intimate companion who may be thousands of miles away— or have a prescient sense of a future event or upcoming circumstances. Or is our consciousness located within a field of being where time and space exist in a different dimension? Scientist Rupert Sheldrake believes that

we are united by the “extended mind,” that our minds literally emanate a force field, and that our energies interweave in “morphic” fields which easily transcend the rational limitations of time and space.

Can we tap into larger currents of thought that exist beyond time and space? Yet even these currents need a means of speaking with us. Paradoxically, the infinite speaks in a voice that we understand, the language of temporality.

Perhaps one key toward understanding these subtle signals and hints from another source can be found in going beyond the phenomenal world. Instead of seeing physical manifestations that exist in time and space, we can strive to regard the world as energies—constantly interpenetrating, interlocking, and interrelating—that can be perceived and influenced through our thought, will, and consciousness. Profound questions are raised here: can fate itself be viewed as a form of collective intelligence? What is the place of free will and self-determination? Is time a line or a circle? Is space three-dimensional or are there other dimensions our evolution will not yet allow us to perceive?

The acausal principle

In my student’s experience, I see no evidence of an ordinary causal relationship between the quake and her convulsions. She had no family in California, and indeed did not personally know a single soul that was impacted by the quake. The physical laws of cause and effect are often transcended in our experiences of collective or transpersonal forces. We need to hold our linear mind in abeyance; we cannot always “figure things out” through mundane logic. Deeper forms of knowing surround us and an implicit order permeates our world, but

on a different level than ordinary thought and beyond the physical laws that govern the universe, as we know them in our current state of evolution.

Jung speaks of the acausal principle: “It seems, indeed, as though time, far from being an abstraction, is a concrete continuum which contains qualities or basic conditions that manifest themselves simultaneously in different places through parallelisms that cannot be explained causally, as for example, in cases of the simultaneous occurrence of identical thoughts, symbols, or psychic states.” In keeping with current research on the nature of the mind, we know that our psychic state can influence, and be influenced by, conditions of the outer world. And we suspect the existence of deeper levels of causality, or perhaps a lawful order arising from a higher, transpersonal realm of which we are not yet aware.

The nature of the mind

In our current Western modality, it is difficult to imagine the mind without thought, or thought without concepts, or concepts without words. My student’s realization was wordless, thoughtless (at first), and without clear conceptual content. The Zen condition of *no-mind* holds the mind as a still, reflecting pool open to realization and deep insight. Different intelligences are located in the centers of our being: the wisdom of the body, the sensitive knowing of the feelings, and the still resonances of the mind. We cannot, and should not, equate the mind solely with ideas and concepts, words and associations.

Throughout this book, I will attend to the entire constitution of the human mind, arguing the body, mind, and feelings have their distinctive roles to play in discovering and awakening intelligence. Indeed, Krishnamurti states unequivocally that “Intelligence comes into being when the mind, the heart, and the body are really harmonious.”

The conditions outlined above that we may call collective intelligence often proceed on a deeper level of the mind that transcends western-based thought. Symbol and metaphor, unexplained gut feelings, and a still inner knowing often characterize the forms of deeper intelligence we seek. Let us learn to suspend ordinary thought and our wide-ranging associations so that something akin to the real mind may make its appearance. If we can hold a place open for insight, without expectation, we may find forms of wordless knowing and subtle realization cross the threshold of our conscious awareness.

Transcending the boundaries of our skin

We are often inclined towards tense boundaries—self and other, black and white, within and without—and do not easily admit to the passage of energies between all living things. Don Juan claimed that a “man of knowledge” sees living things as luminous fibers of light that extend well beyond the vessel of the body, endlessly interpenetrating, interrelating and creating a vast web of life. In the moment of her connection, my student was related to energies and conditions that extended well beyond the boundaries of her skin.

This much we know: life is energy. And our experiences are colored and defined by the nature of the energy that defines the moment. To truly explore collective intelligence, we must alternately locate our attention fully within the body and open to the passage of forces and energies that comprise our world. Paradoxically, the experience of being in the body allows us to fully experience the different qualities of energy that lie both within and without.

Collective intelligence contains deep paradox. Individual *agency*, as defined by the Greeks, our own efforts and strivings, is necessary to achieve *harmony*, the Chinese ideal, where we become related, connected to deeper sources of knowing. And our inward

attention, located within our own physical center, is the very key to transcending the boundaries of our own skin and coming into contact with the vast interdependent energies of life. All of these realms are, indeed, transpersonal, which simply means those realities that include, but go beyond, the individual—wider currents that sweep across the skin-encapsulated ego and touch other beings, touch the cosmos, touch spirit, touch patterns and places kept secret to those who hug the surfaces and surround themselves with themselves.

Ken Wilber writes in his journals *One Taste*: “We are standing now in the open clearing, between two worlds awaiting ... birth. One thing is certain: it will come from the consciousness of men and women who stand open to the transpersonal in their own case, who bring forth from the depths of the heart and spirit, those radiant realities that speak to us in unmistakable terms. ... The deeper the awareness of individuals, the more world spaces they can plumb. “



Questions and Practice

As you read this book, I propose that you share with me the exploration and inquiry into the theme of the collective mind. This is new territory, on the edge of ongoing research being undertaken in art and science, organizational development, transpersonal psychology, civic affairs, and even athletics. Thus, each chapter contains a series of questions and practices to assist our search for greater forms of intelligence.

Where do we begin? What are the primary tools for realizing collective intelligence and transpersonal wisdom? One of the phrases I return to again and again in writing this

book is from the Christian tradition: *Be still and know*. Most researchers in the nature of the mind and awakening intelligence are united in the belief that some form of inner quiet is necessary to hold a space for listening—to others, and to hear the subtle whispers that lie on the edge of conscious awareness as well as the intimations from within stemming from deeper forms of thought. These forms of knowing are carried on the wings of inner silence and arise from a relative wholeness of being, an integration of the functions of body, mind, and feeling. So, will you try with me a simple daily exercise?

Be still. Sit quietly for a period of time daily, maybe only fifteen minutes to begin, a bit longer if you are already familiar with this form of practice. This is not meditation, or prayer, or a form of yoga or breath work. Just sitting quietly. Merely turn your attention within, settling into yourself. Use your mind wisely, try not to get carried away with daydreams, random associations, or focusing on the urgent busyness of the day. The mind can be used as a tool to intentionally focus attention on the self, experiencing the actual sensations of the body and witnessing the ranging thoughts and emotions. Whatever is taking place within, just let it be, do not try to force or change what is taking place in the moment. This practice will be refined as we move through the book; for now, just sit, preferably daily and make note of your experiences.

Another consistent practice that I recommend is writing, keeping a journal where you record your thoughts, observations, questions, experiences, hopes, and aspirations—even your vivid dreams. Do not edit. Do not judge. In your journal, anything goes. Use this as a tool to loosen your mind and ignite your feelings toward a search for creative thought. This activity of keeping a journal is as old as history; Leonardo kept them, photographer

Edward Weston called them his *Daybooks* and Anais Nin unceasingly wrote her legendary diaries. Again, for now just begin writing what strikes your heart and mind, recording your burning questions, and keeping a record of your significant experiences. One of the most important features of moments of awakened wisdom is learning how to find your way back to them. What do they depend on; what encouraged their sudden arising? As the book proceeds, I'll make additional suggestions for interaction with your intelligence through this form of writing.

The central question I wish to raise in this chapter is why should we undertake this study and make such a commitment to the research and examination of collective intelligence? Something from deep within is rumbling through the recesses of my heart and mind—that we need each other. For our own growth and evolution, for facing the problems of the modern world, and for the evolution of human life on this planet, we need to find new ways to think together, be together, and act together. My experiences have shown me in no uncertain terms that when people come together with a common aim or shared purpose, the impossible becomes possible and indeed, even likely.

What purpose might be served through a deeper examination— in your own life and that of others— of collective intelligence? The answer seems obvious. Wars, conflict, damage to the environment, overpopulation, poverty, massive disparities between the wealthy and the poor, dictatorships, natural disasters that cause untold suffering and deaths, the continued lack of freedom and self-determination among some peoples, colonialism, deep racial and ethnic divisions, and many more serious problems plague the modern world. What can any individual do? Most of us feel overwhelmed in the face of these seemingly

insoluble problems. Do we retreat into our ego, and stay chiefly concerned with our own immediate concerns and personal advantage, or is there something more?

Physicist David Bohm, in a seminal book titled *On Dialogue*, which forms a solid piece of the foundation of the efforts in organizational leadership to understand and implement collective intelligence, writes about the nature of thought, and our need to change the ways in which we think: “If you say, ‘This is too big for me,’ in one sense that’s true. In another sense, I say its not. ... The real crisis is not in these events which are confronting us like wars and crime and drugs and economic chaos and pollution; it’s really in the thought which is making it—all the time. Each person can do something about the thought, because he’s in it. ... thought pervades us. It’s similar to a virus—somehow this disease of thought, of knowledge, of information spreading all over the world. The more computers, radio, and television we have, the faster it spreads. So the kind of thought that’s going on all around us begins to take over in every one of us, without our even noticing it. It’s spreading like a virus and each one of us is nourishing that virus.

Do we have a kind of immune system that stops it? The only way to stop it is to recognize it, to acknowledge it, to see what it is. If any one of us starts to look at that, then we are looking at the source of the problem. ... It is that something is going wrong in the whole process of thought, which is collective, which belongs to all of us.

A key assumption that we have to question is that our thought is our own individual thought. Now, to some extent it is. We have some independence. But we must look at it more carefully. ... I’m trying to say that most of our thought in its general form is not individual. It originates in the whole culture and pervades us. We pick it up as children from parents, from friends, from school, from newspapers, from books, and so on. We make a

small change in it ... But still, it all comes from that pool. This deep structure of thought, which is the source, the constant source—timeless—is always there. ... This deep structure of thought is what is common, and that is what we have to get at.”

Now is there a new way to think? When we are inwardly quiet, we can actually bring awareness to our own thought processes. We will see, later in the book, that simple awareness actually changes the chemistry of our thought. For now, can we try merely to suspend our ordinary thought process, and simply enter the body— see what arises from a relatively still body and mind. What forms of intelligence arise: the wisdom of feeling, flashes of intuitive insight, the knowing that comes without words, carried on the wings of inner perception? Of the forms of collective intelligence outlined in this chapter, where do you find correspondence with your direct experience? What conditions brought this intelligence to the surface in the past. Can you experiment with this knowledge of past insights to encourage their continued appearance?