

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF SELF AND CULTURE



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INTERVIEW

BY SUZANNE SHEALY AND GEORGE PÓR

SUZANNE SHEALY: CRAIG, YOU HAVE DONE some writing on this topic and have been engaged with it in your own work. What is your understanding of the meaning, or perhaps the meanings, of collective intelligence? Can you briefly say something about the significance of this topic and why it really matters?

Craig Hamilton: I like that you used the word meanings in the plural because there are a lot of different kinds of collective intelligence or forms of collective intelligence or ways that this manifests. There was a book written at one time called *The Wisdom of Crowds**. It showed how if you aggregate the intelligence of a group that the aggregated intelligence will be smarter than any individual in the group. Meaning that, if you're trying to get a group to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar, if you average everyone's guess together, the "group guess" will be more accurate than the guess of any individual in that group.

There are levels of collective intelligence that are very much about finding ways to simply harness

what we might call the ordinary intelligence of a lot of individuals and combine it to try to get better answers to questions. There is a lot going on in collective intelligence as a field. The particular piece of it that I'm interested in... I've even veered away from the term 'collective intelligence' and more and more find myself talking about collective awakening or collective enlightenment because the particular part of it that I'm interested in is really the spiritual dimension of it.

It is what becomes possible for us when we come together in group spiritual practice, with a conscious endeavour to speak together, to engage together from a deeper, higher, wiser dimension of the self. Higher potentials open up through that kind of practice that I find very significant and exciting for our time.

Traditionally, spirituality and religion was focused on the salvation or enlightenment or liberation of the individual. It has been held as an individual matter. Even if individuals came together to meditate or worship, it was still about each individual's personal liberation, enlightenment, salvation or transformation.

History has shown us a lot of enlightened or transformed individuals, but we haven't seen the emergence of enlightened collectives on this planet, of groups of people who are able to come together beyond ego, to come together and function beyond the conditioned habit patterns of human nature. So the question that has compelled me for a long time is, "What would be possible if a group of people could find a way to come together beyond ego, to find a way to come together in an expression of our higher spiritual and evolutionary potential? What might that give rise to? Might that hold significance beyond just a bunch of enlightened or awakened individuals?"

The world doesn't just need more enlightened individuals, more awakened individuals. That would be a good thing. The more enlightened individuals we can have, the more individuals who have access to a deeper source of wisdom and compassion and creativity, great – but if we are really going to evolve as species and find a way to function together that's different than the way we have up until now, collectives are going to have to awaken to higher potentials and learn how to function in deeper and higher ways.

That's ultimately what I would see as the higher potential and significance of these collective awakening practices.

S. S.: How did you come to be so interested in this? How did your own experience get you so interested and so engaged with this work?

C. H.: I, like a lot of us, started out on my spiritual path very much interested in my own enlightenment and liberation and doing a lot of individual spiritual practice. I came to be part of a spiritual community where we were all focused on our individual enlightenment in that sense. And yet at a certain point, we began holding dialogue groups – not because we necessarily knew that there was some higher collective potential waiting for us, but it just seemed natural as a group of people living together doing spiritual practice to come together and talk about it, so we did.

So we came together, and we talked about spiritual principles and teachings. We would come together and talk about our own struggles on the path, our own awakenings and breakthroughs on the path. So, we had aspects that were more focused on the individual and aspects that were more focused on principles and teachings. At some point over the years of dialogue practice in this way, we started to have collective breakthroughs into profound higher states of consciousness, into enlightened consciousness that would happen to a whole group together at the same time.

Now, when I say at the same time, I don't mean there would be one moment where suddenly everybody in the group would go from an unenlightened state into an enlightened state or there would be just a single collective shift. It would tend to happen a little more gradually. A few people would wake up and then a few others would wake up, and pretty soon the whole group would find itself on the other side of this veil, of this barrier, and in this profoundly opened up place.

This just started to happen naturally in our group. And it seemed significant to us for a couple of reasons. One was that what was previously an inner matter – the domain of spiritual experience, which is usually something happening when we are sitting there with our eyes closed or maybe we are sitting with our eyes open but our focus is within; what was previously in inner matter now started to become an outer matter. Spiritual experience and awakening became something that was alive in the conversation between us. It was something that the frontal self was engaged in. Our personality was now engaged in this process of awakening. It was actually happening out here in the collective.

I think the other reason it captured our attention so much was that for all of us it felt like we were

out on the edge of human evolution. It was a sense of new things coming into being between us that perhaps had never happened before, or maybe were happening currently in other places on the planet, but things you couldn't read about in the history books. Things we couldn't find any reference to in the great wisdom traditions of the world: this powerful experience of collective awakening.

And there was also a sense in this that the group would enter into a single higher mind together if you will. There was an experience of a higher being or a higher mind that the group sort of became. We would become one being that had many voices, many faces, but there was one consciousness that was alive between us and that seemed to have a will and agenda of its own that we were all participating in and partaking in.

It didn't delete or do away with our individuality. To the contrary, it amplified the better parts of our selves. In other words, each individual was still very much an individual and perhaps more of an individual because they weren't lost in a stream of conditioned responses from their past. They were being liberated and freed by this group awakening. It seemed to have an accelerating effect on all of the individuals involved, on the evolution and awakening of all the individuals. In a sense, it also became a very powerful form of spiritual practice for the individual to participate in these groups.

That was really what opened the door for me and I began working with a group of people in that context to reverse engineer what was happening in our groups and come up with a set of practices and principles that we could teach to help other people begin to access this field of collective wisdom and awakening in depth. And so we did and started to take it out into the world, to people outside our community and to run experiments where we'd invite in the general public to see if they could have access to it as well. Miraculously, it seemed to work where even if there were just a few of us who had been practicing this, and a large group of say twenty five people who had not practiced it before, there was a way we could seed the group. People would just walk in off the street and have these experiences and say, "I don't know where that came from, what I said tonight. Something came through me. I've never experienced myself this way before."

So we knew we were on to something. We got very excited about it. As you know, I went on to research this field and see where it was happening elsewhere in the world. I wrote an in-depth article about this for *What is Enlightenment* magazine. Then I've gone on in my own teaching work because I left that community

nine years ago and went out and started my own community and began teaching this work. This has been a fundamental part of it the whole time, helping groups learn how to access this depth together.

S. S.: That just sounds like an amazing experience and one that everyone most commonly wouldn't have. But how do you understand the relationship, or the relationships, between individual and collective states of awakening?

C. H.: Very interesting question. So I think there are a couple of ways to look at that. One is that certainly having, I would say having watched people go through a process of spiritual awakening and development in my own teaching work over the years and also having those same individuals be doing a lot of this collective awakening practice that I've been speaking about, it's clear to me that the more evolved, the more developed the individuals are, the greater the potential they have to participate in these collective awakening experiments and practices that we are speaking about.

And we can all see why that would be the case pretty simply because there are a whole set of capacities that one needs to have to be able to be a good – Just like you might say, to be a good meditator, you have to be able to focus your attention to a certain degree. You have to be able to dis-identify with the thoughts that are streaming through your mind so that you're not identified with and just endlessly lost in the stream of thought. We could say there are certain capacities that one's practicing in meditation that you get better and better at. It is really the same with the collective awakening practices. There is a whole host of capacities that one needs to develop to be good at entering into a collective mind, at accessing collective intelligence, at experiencing collective awakening, being able to really do that together. And so you could say that a form of individual development is developing all those capacities that then enable one to really participate at a higher level with a group.

The other interesting side to this, though, is that I have also seen over and over again that individuals who maybe are not all that highly developed can temporarily go into very profound group states of awakening. They can sort of stumble into it because the collective has a momentum to it and a centre of gravity to it that's very powerful. And if an individual steps into that with even a basic, temporary willingness to suspend what they already know and to come into it with a certain innocence and freshness even once, they can sometimes just catch the wind or draft on the peloton of cyclists of that group, they can get carried by the momentum of the group awakening and the group mind and find that they

are having access to things that are really beyond their own level of development.

You could say it is like the individual gets access to the developmental stage in that collective. I don't mean in a permanent sense, but temporarily, if one's willing and able to just be receptive and open and just lean into that inwardly. It's like one gets the benefit of all the awakening and development that is going on in that collective and is happening in that moment. One can really have an experience of being propelled far beyond where one's own spiritual work has taken one. That's another interesting phenomenon in relation to the individual and collective piece.

I guess the last thing I would say though is, in addition to that, the other really interesting thing about this is that doing these collective practices over and over again has a profound impact on the individual's development. This is almost the most mysterious part because it seems that there's something about taking our contemplative practice or spiritual practice out of just our interior subjective domain and bringing it out into conversation, bringing it out into the space between us, bringing it out through our voice, our words, our eyes, our personality in a sense. In other words, allowing ourselves to awaken and to be doing awakening practices while we're fully alive and awake, eyes open and engaged. There is something about that that seems to infuse the whole self with higher consciousness in a way that it sticks!

Over and over again, I have heard this from people, and it has been my own experience, that when one has a powerful experience in a collective dialogue practice, of awakening to this one mind, experience that there's one consciousness that we are all partaking in here that's alive in all of us together; when people have this kind of experience, they'll very often say, "And it was with me all week long. There was not a moment of my week where I was not knowing that higher thing that we were together in, in the group." They will also say, "I could feel the whole group with me all week long even though I didn't see any of them for a week," because often people meet once a week. They will describe this experience of how something happened in that one and a half hours of practice that locked something into their self, into their experience of being alive that now did not go away.

And it holds new capacities, a new relationship to the mind, a new inner freedom, a new access to creativity and wisdom – all of these things that seem to come online because they had this experience in a collective. Whereas people who have profound experiences in meditation rarely report that. Somebody

might go and meditate and say, “Oh, I had a big deep experience of oneness and then I got up off the meditation cushion, and within a few hours it was gone. I don’t know where it went, but I didn’t have any access to it anymore. I guess I need to meditate more to get back to it.”

So there’s a powerful contrast here between what happens in this collective awakening practice and what happens in our interior contemplative practices that I think is really rich and worth a lot of exploration because it has significant implications for human development as a whole – individual and collective. And, George, I’m curious about your experience of that, what you see in that regard because it’s a kind of very unique far out exciting dimension of all this.

George Pór.: I have a living inquiry into the possibility of stabilizing that collective state of consciousness that, Craig, you described as “one mind.” There is an interest in this because we all have some images, some ideas, some kind of epiphany of what it is like in awakened state of being – but we have hardly any notion, any experience of *collective* awakening that goes beyond a satori-like collective high, which is only a momentary experience.

I listened with great interest when I heard you saying that people are reporting that after a high collective state, they are riding on that energy and I can share that I have had the same experience, and sometimes I could ride on that energy even for a few months, but then it went away. For the sake of any kind of coherent collective accomplishment that is making a difference, not only for the participating individuals but for a larger system, it would be lovely if we could find out what it will take to stabilize those states. Any insight on that?

C. H.: Well, I mean, practice, practice, practice, right? I guess maybe there’s a couple of ways to come at that. One is, “What does it take for individuals to stabilize in these things?” We were talking about how an individual participating in a group that is really waking up beyond ego – when that is happening in a group, it can start to stabilize something in the individuals involved. And if the group keeps doing it and keeps practicing it, then there’s a way that the individuals become stronger and stronger. It is like it’s providing the individual with a new sense of identity: “I’m not who I thought I was. I thought I was just this separate individual moving through time and space. Now I’m starting to experience myself as infinite being or as infinite becoming” – because we can have both kinds of group awakenings. We have practices in my work to do both of those things.

If I start to awaken to myself, let’s say as the infinite becoming, as this evolutionary impulse or what I call the evolutionary self. We start to awaken to that together. I start to awaken to that in a group. I think the key here is it’s not just an inner experience I’m having; I’m actually being that person. I’m speaking from there. I am letting it animate me. I am allowing my old small identity to move to the side, and I am awakening to a new enlightened consciousness that is this profound spiritual process of becoming. I am allowing myself to begin to embody that, to identify with that, to own that, to let that infuse my personality completely, to be the voice of wisdom that’s coming out of my mouth. So I’m allowing myself to actually become a different self, and I am identifying with that. I think why that’s powerful as a stabilizing factor in an ongoing way is that now I have a different experience of myself in the world, of myself in relationship. I have a new reference point and it’s beyond memory, it’s beyond the mind. It is like a reference point in the beyond if you will, but it is being brought down. This is what it means to “bring heaven down to Earth.” You’re bringing the divine into manifestation.

I find that that is a very stabilizing practice. Now, of course, when you talk about stabilizing anything, inevitably, the conversation turns back to practice and what are you doing over and over again. So the practice in this case would be doing more of that – all of these collective awakening practices very consistently with the same group, I would say. Obviously, with different groups can be valuable, as well, to mix it up; but also having a stable group that’s going deeper and deeper together, building on what’s come before.

And now the individual starts to really have a very concrete new self-structure that is emerging that is really post – it is really beyond what’s come before. It’s not just the out-flowing of what’s come before. And that starts to become a more interesting self to be than the one I used to be, and so there’s this total shift in orientation that the person can now hold because they have got enough practice standing there together with others. I think that together part provides an immense support for stabilization.

Now if you are talking about, “How does a group become stabilized in a deeper and higher place?” I would say again, it is about consistency in that group’s practice – of really going there again and again. Of course, as we know as spiritual practitioners, going there again and again does not mean trying to get back to any particular state again, but it means doing the practice again. It just means doing the

practice again, and you do it again, and you do it again, and you let the result keep unfolding and evolving and being different each time.

G. P.: That's very inspiring what you are saying. And as I was listening, another question came to my mind: it's about the relationship between a spiritual teacher, a person who is enabling some conditions to emerge, and the *sangha*, the community itself, the inter-subjective field, as a teacher. What do you sense about the relationship between these two kinds of teacher?

C. H.: Well, it is a great inquiry and I will tell you George, I'm on the edge of an experiment with this right now because I have just recently decided to be a bit less directive and a bit less involved in all the things that are going on in the spiritual community that I generated. I feel like there is a level of maturity now among enough of the participants who've been doing the work pretty intensively with me in the last five years that, I'm saying to everybody, "Let's see where you go with this with less input from me." So I will have more information on that a year from now, I think, but to speak to that sense of the kind of dynamic between the teacher as an individual and the teacher as the awakening sangha – ideally, I think ideally – because we are talking about collective intelligence after all, right? – so ideally this is an impersonal process...

Whatever enlightenment is, it's got many dimensions to it. Here we are talking about intelligence, which in an enlightenment context, means we are referring to a deeper kind of knowing, a deeper knowing faculty that becomes available to us when we get out of the way. When we get out of our own way, when we dis-identify with our own mind, when we are able to sit in open innocent interest and meet each moment with that, we find that there's this wisdom faculty or this wisdom capacity that comes through us – and that's the experience – it comes through me.

I don't know where it comes from. It's not my memory, it's not what I learned in school. It's some holistic knowing capacity that starts to get stronger and stronger in the enlightened individual. The same thing happens in a collective. There's a collective wisdom capacity that starts to activate in a group that's able to function in a higher way, in the ways we are describing here.

And if that's for real, meaning that, if the group really is going beyond the ego together, and they really are accessing that collective wisdom capacity, then there is no difference at all between the wisdom of the teacher and the wisdom of the sangha. If they're really doing it, there's no difference because it's one wisdom faculty that's not personal,

and it's not my wisdom. As anybody who's awakened knows, "This isn't me." It's not me in any sense I can own it. It's something that I'm making myself available for, and it's showing up. And so I think you could say that the art of spiritual teaching, as I hold it, is how to empower that in people, their own capacity to access that wisdom faculty. I do feel that doing this together in groups is one of the most profound ways.

The good thing about doing it together of course is that it's no longer just my subjective take on things but we are seeing it together. We are discovering it together, so it's automatically getting validation in a sense of, "Oh, we are all knowing this. We are all accessing this, and therefore we can trust the truth in it more powerfully."

We still can't trust it completely because we have to be good 'post-moderns' and know that we might be in some collective distortion, and we might be falling into error all together and making an assumption that we are seeing truth. We have to always be humble and always question everything, but there is a reliability factor to it that I think is quite significant when it's a collective tapping in.

S. S.: You have spoken about how people can develop capacities for inter-subjective practice that helps groups access collectively awakened states. What are some facilitators of the process? What are some of the practices or skilful means for cultivating this?

C. H.: Well, I will throw out a few, and I will be curious what you have observed in your practice of this and then I'm also curious what George would add, since you are a very active practitioner and scholar of this field.

I come back to some basics when I look at, "Well, what is it that makes this possible?" There is this *willingness to suspend our already knowing mind*, this willingness to set it down. To make it very simple, everybody in this group that's going to have this conversation is not going to reference prior knowing. We are not going to refer to things we knew before that are sitting in our memory, so we're leaving memory out. It doesn't mean memory isn't informing us because of course it is, but we are not resting in memory, we are not resting in the mind. I am not just saying, "Well, I learned something interesting about this three years ago when I had this experience. I read this..." or I'm not quoting other people's knowledge that I've read. We are not bringing in the past; we are not bringing in past knowledge. We are coming into the moment innocent, open, interested; meaning we want to know. "I don't know, but I want to know." So I think one kind of capacity is that kind of Beginner's Mind capacity.

Another one would have to do with where we place our attention, learning how to place our attention. And there are different ways to do that. For instance, there's *learning how to place my attention on the flow of wisdom that's emerging between us*. Because we find in a good dialogue, there's a flow of wisdom. One person says something, and then another person adds to it, and then another person adds to it, and it's flowing on. Learning how to pay attention to the flow, how to listen to the flow – that's another capacity.

I guess this whole attention piece I'm talking about could also be described as a listening capacity. There's really a capacity for a deeper kind of listening that has many dimensions to it. As you know, we have practiced a lot of different kinds of listening over the years in our community, but it's all about learning to listen for different things, *learning to listen for the deeper place that the person is speaking from*. You are listening to the deepest part of the speaker. There's learning to listen into this space between us. There's learning to listen to the emerging flow of wisdom. So there are lots of different listening practices that we cultivate and facilitate.

Then there is the "Where am I speaking from?" part of it and learning. It requires real development in one's self to know the difference between, "I'm just speaking from memory. I'm just wanting to say something I already know" versus, "No, something's coming through me in this moment that I'm going to give voice to," or, "Something's here that I want to give voice to that's fresh:" the fresh arising of wisdom and learning how to know the difference in one's self. "What is me just telling a story about my past? What is me just sharing a problem because I feel disconnected and I've now got some story about that that I'm going to share?" What is the kind of speaking that contributes to this emergent flow of wisdom and developing capacity around that?

So we have talked about the open, innocent interest, the deeper listening, and *speaking from a deeper place*. How about you? What other pieces do you notice are the facilitators or the practices that enable this authenticity?

G. P.: One is definitely *having a shared intention*, something that sets the context because depending on the context, both the process and its fruits can be very different. So where the context is, in terms of developmental stages, I can imagine that a basic tone or the context can be simply a human bond – to get closer, to get more intimate with each other and with the collective space, or it can be for the benefit of the individuals experiencing some kind of collective highs. Even some early psychedelic experiments created context for something like this. And there

is also possibility for a higher level of context where the evolution of consciousness itself is what is at stake: that we recognize that this experiment, this conversation can actually contribute to create new grooves, new cosmic grooves that didn't exist before. So that's an enabler – to have a shared intention.

C. H.: Absolutely. Of course, all of this can also be applied in particular ways. It could be to deepen our understanding of a spiritual truth. We could come together and say, "So what does oneness really mean?" That could be our intention: to penetrate into that experientially so we could know and understand that more deeply in a holistic way. Or it could be that you actually want to solve a problem in life, in the world for real. You're going to set the intention there but then still do all these practices to access some depth. I love the point that the intention helps set the course for the inquiry, and you might get very different results depending on those different intentions.

When you brought up intention, it made me think of a couple other pieces of the practices required here. Another one is that there is really a requirement for everybody to *take full ownership of what's happening in the collective*. We take the posture that: "This group is me and I am going to take responsibility for the whole group going somewhere together." So I'm no longer going to just do my part, I'm going to take ownership of the whole event that happens here, even though there are six of us in this group. I, of course, can't control what comes out of anybody else's mouth, but I'm going to own the group as though it were myself, and I'm going to drive toward a powerful result for this whole."

There's a way this takes us out of the kind of ambivalence we have about really getting too "in there" with each other if you know what I mean. People tend to be a little hands off but there's a way of, if I'm really owning the whole collective, then I'm naturally leaning in, and I'm noticing somebody's being a little quiet, so I'm interested. "Well, what's happening over there for you? I haven't heard from you in a while," and wanting to pull them in. Somebody else is dominating, and I'm wanting to ease them off a little. Somebody else is being too hyper-intellectual and so I'm asking them questions like, "How is this arising in your experience right now?" because I'm trying to draw them into something more present in the moment. I find there's a kind of natural facilitation that occurs when one owns the whole process and doesn't in any way defer responsibility for the outcome to someone else. I'd say that's a powerful practice as well.

G. P.: Right. And when there is more than one person playing in that register of consciousness – of thinking,

sensing, speaking from the group as me, then there is a leap that becomes possible. You said something interesting that struck me. It was just almost like a thrown-away phrase – that one of the contexts can be solving a real world, or addressing a real world.

C. H.: Problem, yes.

G. P.: That is of interest to me because so far we were talking mostly of the left quadrants in Wilber's terms of the integral matrix when we are looking at the interaction of individual and collective consciousness with systems and structures, and the flaws in systems that are causing unnecessary man-made suffering, then it's interesting to envision the possibility of groups that join together in this higher collective consciousness and from that space address issues that cannot be resolved with just ordinary mind. I would love to see and even more to be part of such experiments.

C. H.: Yes, it's a big thing. I'm including talking about great social challenges or even simply challenges in an organization where you have real questions you have to answer on a daily basis. "What should we do? Should we hire this person or not? Should we develop this new program or not?" And so often, when you start to gain access to these deeper wisdom capacities both individually and collectively, you just see the limits of ordinary thinking and ordinary strategizing. It becomes kind of obvious. Well, clearly, if we are going to come to a good answer, if we are going to feel like we have really considered all the possibilities and we have really solved this problem in the best way, we are going to have to learn to listen in a deeper way and sense into the needs of the field. We are going to have to get multiple perspectives on this – you just know: "I need collective wisdom."

It's so funny because in addition to being a teacher and everything else I'm doing, I'm also an organizational leader now because I have started this company that has grown quite large. I have over forty staff members here now. It's funny. I now have a corporation, so I experience the corporate world, so to speak, in my own organization. And the natural tendency of human beings is to assume that individual thinking and decision-making is how things get done. People will pose really big, important questions to me and just want me to answer them. Like, "What should we do? Should we do A, B or C?" They'll give me this question by email as if I'm going to say, "Oh, very big important decision. I know the answer, let's do option B." I can't even think that way. So I'm training all of my staff to say, "Look, I only think collaboratively," I don't even think by myself. Literally, if I'm alone, I wouldn't even call it thinking. I don't

know what I'm doing, but I'm not sitting there solving problems on my own. We need to schedule a meeting and we need to think together and we need to sense together and explore from there.

And more and more people realize that collective intelligence and collaborative intelligence is the way to solve problems. Obviously, it's got its faults too, but if it's properly facilitated and helped, it will. Now the impulse I heard in your voice seemed to be pointing to a very high level of that: of, "Well, what if we could really be taking on major global-scale problems by bringing together people who have the information that would be needed, but then having that whole group suspend their already knowing and go into a facilitated process that's going to bring forth deeper collective wisdom."

G. P.: Yes.

C. H.: I aspire to that too. I am not currently part of that. One of my long-term goals is to create think tanks and things like that, social think tanks that are grappling with big issues from a place of collective wisdom. It's kind of a little beyond my bandwidth at the moment, but a few years down the line I hope to be participating in those things. Let's stay in touch about that.

S. S.: Could I throw in one more question? George, when I was looking at your abstract, one thing that stood out to me was that you spoke about the importance of "an ethical foundation grounded in the common good, as well as an integral evolutionary worldview." Craig, I know that in your courses, you speak a lot to motivation. Is there anything you'd like to say about that, about the way some of your work or some of these practices may help build the context or the motivation, for people to come together to focus on larger issues and problems in a way that could be creative and help move development for the whole.

C. H.: This is a very inspiring and hopeful note to end on because one of the things that these collective awakening practices do is they wake us up out of the dream of narcissism, if you will, or out of the dream of the separate sense of self. And there are many layers of it. We could spend hours talking just about the different kinds of collective awakening experiences. George mentioned the unity consciousness or satori, collective satoris, but there are many different layers of "we" experience. I know we have probably all experienced many different kinds, but even at their most basic, which you could describe as collective sort of higher feeling states where we feel the boundary softening between us, and we start to feel connected. There's just this warm tribal loving connected feeling that many groups have that aren't necessarily awakening in the sense we would mean, but they are having

these deep “we” experiences that are very nurturing and very affirming on a human level.

Even the most basic collective awakenings, like the ones I just described; they have the effect of making me realize that “*It’s not about me.*” and also that “*I’m not alone.*” There’s a softening of the ego boundaries that begins to happen even in the most elemental of group practices when done well. And you start to ladder up from that to really profound states of collective enlightenment or even awakening to the evolutionary impulse as ourselves together, which really are radical departures from ego consciousness that begin to take us to a place where we find it harder and harder to go back to the old egoic self because it feels so small, narrow, limited, partial, unreal.

But all of those, at whichever level we are talking about, they all are beginning to reveal that *there’s a natural deeper and higher motivation that exists in human beings. Its part of our own true nature and it is a care for the greater good. It’s a natural care for the whole.* When I awaken beyond the confines of the separate ego, when I awaken to who and what I really am, I realize, “I’m not Craig, I’m not this guy who was born at a certain time, that’s going to die at a certain time, is going to have these life experiences, accumulate what he accumulates, and whatever.” It’s like, “No, I’m this whole process in motion. I am this whole event of life, of cosmic evolution. That’s really what I am, and that’s what I care about.” My domain of concern now is the whole evolutionary process. When we start to awaken to it, and I feel groups are a powerful way to awaken to that, much more powerful than just individual contemplation which can still end up being quite narcissistic at times. We start to awaken to that, and then there is a natural emergence of, “How do I help this whole process? Where can I be best deployed to contribute to the higher evolution of life, humanity, God?” It starts to get very real and it starts to feel very important. And George spoke to this a few minutes ago. He said groups at a higher level realizing what’s at stake; they realize we can contribute to laying down new grooves in consciousness. We can contribute to bringing the future into being.

And I think that this higher motivation is both what brings us into the groups, and it ultimately is a by-product of the group practice that can basically lay the foundation for a totally different kind of human life. If I am rooted in that, I don’t care about the same things any more. I am not going to spend my time in the ways I used to. I am now going to be caring about my larger contribution to the whole, and, “What’s the greatest leverage I can find and the greatest impact I can have

with the gifts and talents and precious life energy that I’ve got?”

If we can imagine a world populated by people living from that centre, we will solve all of our problems. They are not that vexing. We can do it, but not from the self-centered ego.

S. S.: That’s beautiful, thank you, Craig. This may have taken us full circle.

C. H.: Maybe so. Yes, well, I feel like we are just sitting here having a brief chat on something that I know is incredibly meaningful for all of us. Thank you so much for stepping up and facilitating this, Sue. And I want to say, George, how nice to connect again. It’s been a long time. You and I met way back at the beginning for me when I was just starting to research collective intelligence. We have had various touch points along the way, too, but it is really nice to spend a few minutes together and hear your voice and feel your spirit and where your thinking’s at right now.

G. P.: Yes, I would love to have another opportunity with you to deepen some of our explorations, particularly when you feel that it’s time for you to go deeper in the possibility of the social think tank. That’s something that I have a great passion to explore with you. I also want to say, Suzanne, that I’m just so grateful to you that you drew us together with Craig. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, and I enjoyed every moment of it.



* (Ed’s n. James Surowiecki, (2004). *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations*, (New York: Doubleday).

