

**“Spiritual Intelligence: What is it? How do we get it?”
October 25, 2009 by Joan Nelson, lay speaker**

Call to Worship:

When Socrates uttered his famous instruction, “Know Thyself,” he was calling the citizens of Athens to study of the interior world of the mind. The Buddha elevated the power of our individual and collective mind into a major world religion. Then came Jesus, and Mohammed whose know-thyself messages got lost in a new focus. NOT on the inner mind, but on a God that was assumed to be outside the self.

***We* are called *today* by the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin whose early 20th century thinking had a lot to do with the evolving spirituality of the early 21st Century. Among other things, Teilhard said, “We are evolution become conscious of itself. We are one, after all, you and I. Together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other.”**

Introduction

Teilhard de Chardin’s evolutionary worldview has shaped much of today’s research into the relationship between matter and consciousness. Not the kind of consciousness you lose when you get hit on the head by a baseball bat. The kind of conscious awareness that you can expand when you do certain kinds of meditation or ingest certain kinds of magic mushrooms.

Boy, have I had my consciousness expanded this week. No baseball bats. No mushrooms. Just a conference. Right here. About a thousand feet from this room, if you go vertically. But that would probably ruin the seat of your pants. So just go out in the parking lot and look at the Marin Convention Center where people are just NOW concluding a 5-day conference on

“Non-duality.” I have capitalized the “N” here, because, if this week is any indication, this movement has all the heft of an official religion. And, yes, some dogma, too. (Scientific dogma.)

As with any religion, some of the folks down there look like nut-cases. Others seem too darn serious. And most are using their religion as a form of therapy. (Don't we all?) This morning, I will separate some of the wheat from the chaff.

First: the word, "Nonduality." Duality would be: Mind/Matter. Self/Other. Bottom line: There is no "I," "me," "mine." There is no self. Self is an illusion. The virtual religion of Nonduality seems to worship the awareness that we are ONE. Not a collection of 1s. We ARE ONE.

A hundred years ago, Teilhard already regarded our collective consciousness as the creator of all things. Today, people who study sub-molecular physics and neuro-science are starting to tell us exactly that. (Bottom line here: What God—itself—is).

Once we "get-it" really get it, then we will have no excuse for refusing to (in Teilhard's words) "unfold —forward and upward"—toward what he called the "Omega Point." His term "Omega Point" is still used to describe a coalescence of consciousness toward which everything is evolving.

You may have heard, the over-used (and trivialized) Teilhard quote: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." If you can fully comprehend this—you can go home now.

And I know you won't go home, because he also said: "He who believes what he can fully comprehend" (is a fool).

No fooling here. This stuff isn't just for visionaries, mystics, and philosophers. It's absolutely crucial: For us, UUs

individually and collectively, to “get-it!” For this, we absolutely must upgrade our Spiritual Intelligence “Quotient.” Or SQ.

For example, at the Nonduality conference, I kept coming across a familiar little poem by William Blake. It’s lovely to think about. But when I start to get it—really get it—I get that magic mushroom feeling: I’ll recite it several times this morning. Let’s see what you “get, now.” (Maybe close your eyes.)

“To see the world in a grain of sand. And heaven in a wild flower. Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour.” (Repeat)

*ANTHEM:

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit Priest. An unlikely Catholic revolutionary. He wanted the world to “get” that we are not just at the cutting edge of a great chain of being. We ARE the cutting edge. He said that we are pushed, from the inside, by a literal impulse to evolve.

He added...and I quote: “Gloriously situated by life at this critical point in the evolution of humankind, we hold Earth’s future in our hands.”

Okay so we hold a grain of sand in one hand and the earth’s future in the other hand. When will we “get-it” that It’s all the same thing!

Most of us, as kids, had our rational, linear intelligence tested by the old Stanford Binet IQ test. It revealed Intelligence as a mathematical “quotient,” which came to mean “score.” If your score was high, you were looked upon favorably. But our culture did a real disservice to countless *extremely* “intelligent” folks whose intelligence was in another area than the one

Stanford and Binet were measuring. Now we are beginning to recognize the other kinds of intelligence.

Daniel Goleman (who recently spoke here, at Dominican University), popularized the importance of “Emotional” Intelligence in a 1995 book. Now we have a proliferation of materials on “Spiritual” Intelligence.

I will give you a practical working definition of Spiritual Intelligence. It’s from Cindy Wigglesworth (great name) who does workshops on Spiritual Leadership in the workplace. I will repeat her definition again, along the way and again at the end of this sermon.

In between, I’m going to take a quantum leap to tell you about the kind of stuff Ms. Wigglesworth had to understand before she came up with her definition: She delved deeply into sub-molecular physics and the growing “religion” known as “Consciousness Studies,” of which Nonduality is a part.

This is not just a new wrinkle. It’s serious. And there’s a sense of urgency here. Because, if your spiritual quotient (SQ) is high, you get a chance to pass the evolution test. We UUs—with our focus on the “interdependent web of all existence.” have already expanded our intellectual *thinking* beyond the limits of many religions. We already have a larger perspective on who we are and why we’re here. Since we’re already half way there, now all we have to do is to expand our intuitive, conscious awareness as well.

Here’s your Definition of Spiritual Intelligence: The capacity to behave with “Compassion” and “Wisdom” while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the circumstances.”

Ms. Wigglesworth says she deliberately uses the words “Compassion” and “Wisdom” as a substitute for the word “Love” so people in the workplace, where she does her trainings, won’t confuse what she means by love with ideas of romance.

How sad: that she has to find synonyms for “love” to define Spiritual Intelligence.

Nevertheless, her phrase, “capacity to behave with ‘Compassion’ and ‘Wisdom,’” is a good reminder for all of us...(regardless of our circumstances.)

According to Teilhard, we are pushed, from the inside, by a literal impulse to evolve into wisdom and compassion. Given the state of the world today, it looks like we must follow that impulse in order not just to evolve, but to survive.

So what stops us from behaving with compassion and wisdom? What stops us from maintaining inner and outer peace? What stops us from following Teilhard’s impulse to evolve?

What stops us is ego: the sense of self as separate from everything else. Nonduality takes off from one of the central tenets of Buddhist teaching: “Anata.” It means “no separate self.” You are spiritually enlightened when you let go of the illusion of your self as separate from the big self that is all of us.

For Teilhard, the danger was egocentrism. Remember, he was forming his ideas as the world was just beginning to “get” that we were in peril due to the ego-driven behavior of Adolph Hitler and his plan to direct the flow of evolution through eugenics and ethnic cleansing.

Today, most of us UUs align with the unaffiliated folks who call themselves, “spiritual but not religious.” Our denomination represents the interface between traditional religion and the “virtual” religion called “Consciousness Studies” that’s flooding the mainstream culture through books, DVDs, CDs, pod-casts, T-shirts... If you haven’t yet heard about “The Secret,” you’d better hurry and catch up. Catching up will be easy because the original product that took off so successfully has spun off more products: “The Secret of Teen Power.” “The Secret Gratitude Book.” “The Secret of Getting Rich” audio book. And the new “Source of the Secret.”

Once you get through the hype, you get a deeper awareness of Teilhard’s sense that we are pushed, from the inside, by that impulse to evolve. In “The Secret,” it’s called the “universal law of attraction,” known to physicists as the law of or cause and effect. “The Secret” features a contemporary prophet named Michael Beckwith. Anyone here go a couple of weeks ago to hear Rev. Beckwith speak on transformation and spiritual liberation at the Veterans Auditorium?

(Yes. At the bottom of our hill. Within 500 feet of us. I think it’s more like 1,000. So my ego is battling with the City of San Rafael about a neighborhood use permit hearing, here, for a once-a-week emergency rotating winter women’s shelter.)

Yes. I admit. I’m stuck in ego. I’ll bet Michael Beckwith wouldn’t get stuck like this. I’ll bet he *practices* what *he* preaches.

He has a huge following in the New Thought movement: Unity, Church of Religious Science, etc.

The New Thought movement—like the UU movement—developed in the US during the late 19th century. With the

transcendentalists: Emerson, Thoreau, and company. New Thought emphasizes metaphysical beliefs about the effects of positive thinking, the law of attraction and healing through creative visualization. It embraces Teilhard's idea that everything originates in the mind.

It works like this: Since God is everywhere, we are all divine. And we all think. The trick is to use our divinity to choose thoughts that will be a force for good.

The highest spiritual principle is to love one another unconditionally. The movement is called "New Thought," because it's about teaching and prayer, including a special kind of prayer sometimes called "treatment." People do treatments for one another. They do it, consciously, with affirmations and other "thought" training techniques. Thus, their mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become their experience in daily living. This includes teaching and healing one another.

"What a great way to build community, and transform change the world!" I said this to a friend the other day. He replied, "What a lot of feel-good hoo-ha."

I don't agree. These groups are synthesizing the ancient wisdom traditions with the social change principles taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Is that, "hoo-ha?"

You can check "consciousness studies" in general at Amazon.com: From Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time," to Eckhart Tolle's "Power of Now," to Andrew Cohen...Ken Wilbur. The list goes on. And on.

Perhaps you've seen the film, "What the Bleep Do We Know?" If not, please do so. Or get the all-new Quantum edition Bleep DVD.

Cruising the media store at this week's Nonduality conference, I couldn't help recalling Norman Vincent Peale's book, "The Power of Positive Thinking." When I was 13, my parents bought a copy and hid it as though it were pornography. For them, self-improvement was only for people who admitted they weren't already perfect. Night before last, Friday, I heard Barbara Ehrenreich (speaking at Dominican University) on her newest book subtitled "how relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America."

I'm beginning to think that "Consciousness Studies" has a geographical headquarters: right here in Marin. (Actually it's partly true. The Institute of Noetic Sciences is literally in your back yard if you live near where Petaluma and Novato meet. Noetics is the study of the mind. Ask me, sometime, to tell you about my experience there as a volunteer in a non-local thought experiment.)

And Marin seems to attract visiting consciousness seekers. After Michael Beckwith at the Veterans' Auditorium came Daniel Goleman (the Emotional Quotient guy). Then Barbara Ehrenreich (the positive thinking undermines America gal). And last Saturday (at the Bioneers convention in Vets. Auditorium) Dr. Andrew Weil.

Weil who has popularized the idea of "integrated medicine," started out researching psychedelics in the late '60s. His college thesis was on the narcotic properties of nutmeg. His first book, "*The Natural Mind*" in 1972 said that "magic mushroom" types of substances raise (or at least alter) our awareness—not by introducing something new, but by allowing us to access the deeper truth that was lost in the conditioning process known as "civilization."

Down there again this week, the Nondualists didn't need drugs. They were in bliss hanging out with other people who

quoted Teilhard and used the language of physics to deepen the meaning of his term “noosphere.” He coined “noosphere” to describe the layer of collective consciousness that surrounds the earth like an invisible envelope. He had to invent a new word to describe something so crucially important for which there were no words. (“Noosphere” came way before anyone imagined words like “Internet,” “World Wide Web.” He also coined the term “Omega Point” to indicate a future convergence of our collective conscious energy.

What does all this have to do with Spiritual Intelligence as defined earlier: “The capacity to behave with “Compassion” and “Wisdom” while maintaining inner and outer Peace, regardless of the circumstances.”

And what would Teilhard think if he were alive to hear the Nondualists trying to prove the existence of his noosphere with words like “quark,” and “quantum leap.”

I wonder what he would think of these folks saying—with evangelical zeal—that his great Omega convergence is coming faster every day.

They do have a growing body of scientific evidence here. Since Wednesday’s pre-conference workshops, physicists, psychologists, and philosophers have been parsing the tiny micro-world of the quantum mechanical theory of consciousness. They want as many people as possible to get-it:

It’s not the individual that has consciousness. It’s consciousness that assumes many forms.

Everything (including thoughts and feelings, not just physical objects)...everything is conscious energy. That’s all there is: A unified field of conscious energy. They use power-point projections of molecules and sub-molecules, showing a

nucleus with rings around it. Looks like an old fashioned phonograph record. Anybody here remember how sometimes the needle would jump from one track to another? A quantum leap is like that. A teeny tiny, itty bitty leaping “quantum” of energy leaps to another track. And you have a whole new symphony.

This quantum leap has become common parlance for any sort of big “leap” or rapid change. The point, often missed, is that it wasn’t a huge leap. It was a teeny tiny little leap that made all the difference in the world.

They want us to “get” that when enough of us shift to the new track, it forms a new “consensus reality” that takes on a life of its own. In this case, there is nothing we can’t do, because there is an intelligent field that responds to human thoughts and feelings.

I walked around from group to group alternately going “Wow! This is exciting!” And a minute later, thinking these were a bunch of jerks debating angels on the heads of pins.

But some of these guys are real scientists at accredited institutions. And they’re walking their talk. Here’s an experiment that’s been replicated many times: They start with a test tube full of genetic material, DNA. They have a volunteer hold it while listening to a story formulated to produce a profound emotion: like joy or rage.

Suppose the feeling is jealousy. Like a sea urchin, paramecium or amoeba, the genetic material in the glass shrinks away from the person, sometimes twisting into a tight little knot. If the feeling is joy, the DNA expands toward the person. Then they put some of the DNA into a second test tube,

and, while the person stays in the first room with half of the DNA, they take the other half into another room.

The original volunteer in the first room feels an emotion. And guess what: When the DNA in the first room shrinks—so does the DNA in the next room. The separated DNA forms into peaks and valleys simultaneously with the original DNA.

There's a buzz at the bottom of our hill...about physics-based claims of spontaneous healing and the power of prayer in long-distance healing. And plans to get a critical mass of people to synchronize their meditation by focusing on peace. Not just holding the notion of peace. Not just petitioning God for Peace. But actually BEING peace. That would change the energy that makes up the collective subconscious. Voila! No more war.

Apparently this was done in some major metropolitan area (I forget which one they said)...Emergency Room visits went down. The crime rate went down. And the stock market went up.

The physicists say that all it would take to create peace would be the square root of 1% of any given population. We have a little over 100. 6 billion people on the planet. So it will only take a little over 8,000 of us to kick start world peace. In Quantum terms, all it would take to create a worldwide spiritual awakening is the faith of that mustard seed that Jesus claimed would move mountains.

Wishful thinking? Naïve superstition? Desperate hope? If you think my tongue is in my cheek, you're right. It is. But I'm NOT trivializing the longing, and the search to understand Consciousness. So if commercialization can get the job done, I guess I should get my ego-driven tongue out of my cheek.

Because whether or not we understand it, we really ARE in some kind of living hologram or living matrix. Everything IS in everything else. We ARE ONE mind! Right now we're stuck in bodies with egos. When we die, we will be free of this limitation. Without ego, we'll still have conscious awareness of being: Pure being. In the non-material world. We'll be like water in a glass. There are no separate drops in the glass. Same goes for the ocean of aliveness that surrounds us now, if only we could get rid of the illusion that we're separate from it.

The Nondualists, with their power point projections of macrocosms in microcosms, are proving Jesus correct in saying that what we do to anyone, we are doing to Jesus, himself.

What an exciting time to be alive! Cosmologists, artists, Buddhists, yogis, and physicists of all ilks are working together to go where none has gone before: To discover the great undivided wholeness and prove—once and for all— that everything you do affects everything else. Lots of folks are waiting for some kind of Second Coming, Armageddon, whatever they want to call it. Perhaps this will be it. The day that scientists actually discover “what the heck “God” is.

Meanwhile, the next time someone asks you, “What IS a Unitarian Universalist, anyway?” You can say, we're Nondualists, of course.

Think about it: Pretty soon, when they put “nondual” in the dictionary, it will probably be defined as “unitary.” Unitary...Nondual...Nondual...Unitary. We're almost there! Now all we spiritual beings need is the human experience of actually seeing the world in a grain of sand and relating to it that way. May it be so.

Hymn #398 To See the World in a Grain of Sand

Benediction

You may be seated. As we enter the annual season of the virus, we will not be holding hands for benedictions for a while. So it's important that we take extra care to link ourselves more deeply in the non-visible dimension. So close your eyes, if you're comfortable doing so. And allow yourself to be conscious of the deep awareness that we—ARE—One.

That we are creating consciousness here and now. Maintain the awareness while I read the closing words from Teilhard de Chardin. And then make that tiny quantum leap into the language of corporate leadership trainings.

Teilhard said, "Love alone can unite living beings so as to complete and fulfill them... for it alone joins them by what is deepest in themselves."

Translated, "Love" is: "The capacity to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the circumstances."

And so let it be.