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EMBODYING EVOLUTIONARY VISION: AN ACTION-BASED EXPERIMENT IN NON-DUAL PERCEPTION

FELICIA A. NORTON
United Nations International School (UNIS), New York, New York, USA

CHARLES H. SMITH
Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, USA

This article suggests that "evolutionary vision," the unifying paradigm of physical, biological, and sociocultural evolution, needs to be fully embodied and deeply experienced in the human being, and that this can be effected by the experience at the heart of the "perennial wisdom tradition,"[1] that is, that of "non-dual perception." The article suggests an "action-based" experiment paralleling the method of a "thought experiment," based on the assumption that one way that one can experience this embodiment is by "trying on" the lens of non-dual perception, as practiced by the many traditions of perennial wisdom.

KEYWORDS: Consciousness, dissipative self-organization, evolutionary vision, hermeneutics of contemplative experience, interconnectedness, non-dual perception, science and spirituality, sociocultural evolution, unity of being.

INTRODUCTION

> Systems act in a cognitive way with or without a brain. Evolution is not the result of one-sided adaptation and a desperate quest for survival, but—far beyond the biological realm—an expression of self-transcendence, the creative reaching out beyond the system's own boundaries. (Jantsch 1981, 3)

The scientist and the spiritual practitioner are often seen to be looking from vastly different perspectives. The Sufi mystic Hazrat Inayat Khan observed that the scientist must start at the bottom of the mountain, and gradually climb up, while the contemplative tends to start at the top and work down. In other words, the scientist tends to begin with a focus on the details of the outer world, and then gradually and systematically accrues the knowledge that yields a sense of the whole. The contemplative, on the other hand, most often starts at the top, with a sense of the whole, and then gradually works "down" into an understanding of

Address correspondence to Felicia Norton, 235 E. 22nd St., #2V, New York, NY 10010, USA. E-mail: felicianorton@gmail.com

particulars. Ultimately—and ideally—the seeming opposite methodologies should yield the same results.

Of course there are many exceptions to this generalization. Among scientists, a number of prominent examples stand out. Among these are Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, self-admitted mystics who allowed their spiritual insights to inform their theories of physics. Another is James Clark Maxwell, pioneer in electromagnetism, who attributed his equations on the intricate relationships of light, electricity, and magnetism to "something greater than myself in me" (Norretranders 1998 6, 276). Similarly, in the spiritual traditions, we can also identify many who sought to bridge science and spirituality. One clear example is the 14th Dalai Lama, the present spiritual and political leader of the four major Tibetan Buddhist lineages. The Dalai Lama has a strong scientific bent, and loves to take things apart—such as watches and automobiles—to see how they work. Convinced that science and the wisdom traditions can inform each other, he has organized a number of conferences on science and contemplative thought to cultivate dialogue between these traditions (see Dalai Lama 2006).

Yet with exceptions noted, there is often tension between these two ways of knowledge: The scientist cannot quite accept the intuitive leap of the spiritual practitioner, and the spiritual practitioner can often see the scientist as too reliant on logic and the need for absolute objectivity and proof. The potential for fruitful integration of the wisdom traditions and science has often been suggested, and is at the basis of some of the writings of de Chardin (1959, 1965) Churchman (1968, 1979), and Jantsch (1980, 1981). The work of Wilbur (1981, 1982) provides perspective on some of the ways of fruitful integration of science and mysticism. Green (2009) suggests ways that art makes possible the difficult integration of the worlds of science and the sacred. And we suggest here that the integration of science and spirituality is now more closely at hand, spearheaded by pioneers in systems theory and evolutionary vision, as explored below. At the same time, we also see that a certain leap in methodology is needed, on the part of both the scientist and the spiritual seeker, in order to attain a most necessary integration.

PROBLEM SITUATION

> Each participant in the drama we call life, is relatively situated within a meaning horizon against which his/her life is acted out. Whatever the level of perceptivity and perspective, the participant will see the world only within the parameters set by this level which, however, he/she takes to be the whole of reality itself. (Jantsch 1981, 274)

Our argument for a shift in methodology begins with a radical and potentially important assertion that came in the thirteenth century by the Sufi philosopher Muhyiuddin Ibn Al Arabi, in his view that "Reality" (in his language, *Haqq*) takes a form that is dependent on the individual's beliefs (see Corbin 1998, 124). We may note that this and related assertions are often cited as the heart of the tolerance "for all beliefs" found in perennial wisdom. If "Reality" may appear in different

ways to different believers, the tenets of many and varied belief systems may all be considered as valid.

However valuable Ibn Arabi's words are in spiritual dialogue, they appear highly problematic to traditional science. They assert that, most simply, unless one could actually suspend belief, every experiment would be potentially biased by the beliefs of all the individuals somehow participating in it. Beliefs would also act as a limit on the parameters within which we could understand phenomena. While we might stretch beyond certain paradigms remaining in certain parameters, any experience or phenomena outside of these parameters could be wholly misperceived or altogether missed. We would be, as C. West Churchman often warned, subject to inevitable deception, unable to see "the Real," living within Plato's Cave and not knowing that we are imprisoned.

While problematic, we also suggest that the assertion of a "Reality shaped by belief" presents us with an opportunity to refine our ways of exploration and research. It allows us to more deeply understand and experience the value of the unifying "evolutionary vision" that emerged through the collective efforts of a number of scientists and philosophers in the past forty years. This vision, which embraces all domains of living systems and consciousness, is both immensely hopeful and yet realistic about the challenges we face.

NON-DUAL PERCEPTION AND EVOLUTIONARY VISION

As described by Erich Jantsch (1981, 1), evolutionary vision depicts life as continually self-renewing, a process of evolutionary building up and breaking down that brings systems toward highly creative and self-transcending states. Rather than emphasizing living systems in a continually desperate quest for survival, it depicts these as filled with potential, and capable of creative acts whereby they may reach out beyond their own boundaries, generate new rhythms and new ways of communication with each other. (Jantsch 1981, 3). Jantsch noted that a unifying paradigm of "evolutionary vision" has its roots in the work of many theorists, including the writings of Jan Smuts (1926) on 'holism," the economic theories of Kenneth Boulding (1978), the systems philosophy of Ervin Laszlo (1972), anthropologists Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979), and Magoroh Maruyama (1976), the biologist Conrad Waddington (1975), the biochemist Ilya Prigogine (1976), and the physicist Herman Haken (1978).

By recognizing that evolutionary vision includes a dimension of self-transcendence, and that this necessarily requires the relaxation of belief systems, the full benefits of this vision seem to require us to expand our own capacity for such vision. In this light, we suggest here that the "non-dual" perspective, attained by perennial wisdom practitioners, allows us an unbiased and expansive "vision of reality" one based upon experience of "Reality as it is" rather than a belief system.

The reason non-dual perception is necessary for this unbiased and expansive vision is that life as a unity is outside of our ordinary, discursive thinking and usual ways of perception, both of which demands subject object relationships. Many testimonies within the perennial tradition assert that the practitioner grasps a vision of unity—that is, sees the inter-connectedness of life embraced by a

greater Reality, only after attaining a non-dual state. While after such experience one may return to or see-saw between non-dual and dualistic perception, the effect of the non-dual experience allows the possibility that one may maintain the more expansive and less biased view. We suggest here that such a view most closely corresponds to (and, in the case of some theorists, is identical to) what is described as evolutionary vision—that is, a vision of unity that embraces physical, psychological, and sociocultural domains of life.

In terms of avenues for research, the experience of the non-dual, demands a radical shift in the ways that we define ourselves. We suggest here that evolutionary vision requires the same shift, seeing that the dichotomous beliefs that separate self and other, nature and culture, mind and matter, are artificial and, at best, relative. While these dichotomies are necessary for our ordinary ways of scientific investigation, they fall short in attempts to embrace a paradigm of unity or to explore the "non-dual" condition. Only by embodying the non-dual state, do we realize ourselves as an evolving unity, a dissipative structure in the continual process of transformation, a microcosm of the evolving "Self" of the cosmos. The words of paleontologist Teiliard de Chardin reflect this deep realization:

> . . . .I allowed my consciousness to sweep back to the farthest limit of my body, to ascertain whether I might not extend outside myself. I stepped down into the most hidden depths of my being, lamp in hand and ears alert to discover whether in the deepest recess of blackness within me, I might not see the glint of waters of the current that flows on, whether I might not hear the murmur of their mysterious waters that rise from the uttermost depths and will burst forth no man knows where. With terror and intoxicating emotion I realized that my own poor trifling existence was one with the immensity of all that is, and all that is in the process of becoming. (1968, 25)

It is obvious from these words that intellectual understanding cannot replace the kind of realization that is described here. Only by our own experience might we be able to adequately evaluate such words as these. We suggest here the very same is true for any claims within the tradition of perennial wisdom, especially the more dramatic assertions such as those which testify of the unity between matter and spirit, between the "ordinary" and the sacred. Only by our experience can we fully know whether "evolutionary vision" extends beyond the realms of theory. By extension, if in fact evolutionary vision is viable, only by our own immersion in this unity of life can we wisely bring forth decisions, plans, and strategies that will be in harmony with the well-being and evolutionary thrust toward a healthier life on this Earth.

BACKDROP FOR A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

> Evolution and evolutionary vision, the dynamics of the universe and of the human mind, appear no longer as separable and somehow interlinked, but as complementary expressions of an underlying dynamic wholeness. (Jantsch 1981, 12)

In 1980, as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Symposium, a group of scientists and systems thinkers, including Elise and Kenneth Boulding, Erich Jantsch, Ilya Prigogine, and Herbert Guenther, presented a range of papers related to the understanding and the cultivation of evolutionary vision. Perhaps first coined by Boulding, *evolutionary vision* describes "a unified view of evolution that encompasses all levels of reality, from the cosmic or physical, through the biological, ecological, and socio-biological to the sociocultural" (Jantsch 1980, v).

In his contribution to the AAAS symposium, Herbert Guenther (Jantsch 1981, 195–208) presented a most radical and thought provoking perspective on humanity's future unfoldment. Guenther's thoughts were representative of his efforts in integrating a sophisticated system of Tibetan thought with an understanding of complex systems, and, particularly, with "dissipative structures."[2] Uncharacteristic of the ways that Buddhist thought is often seen, Guenther demonstrated how this system emphasized the value of creativity and the awakening and application of enlightened consciousness in all domains of the life around us.

Guenther saw the dissipative structure as symbolic but also literal in terms of representing the way that an individual gains wholeness and a corresponding liberation in the domain of consciousness. His explanation helps us see the role of consciousness in perception: In particular, the value of the non-dual form of perception, able to discern something of the overall containing "order" standing behind but also influencing the life around us—apparently close to if not exactly the same as what David Bohm termed an "implicate order" (1980, 179).

According to the Dzogchen tradition as described by Guenther, life takes place within the greater order, an abstract living matrix, permeated with "intelligence, luminosity and openness (or bliss)." Here the universe is continually reborn, emerging anew, moment by moment. However abstract and impersonal, this matrix has qualities we would usually ascribe to a personality: Its nature is sometimes wrathful, sometimes playful, and it seems to be highly experimental, even playful, in bringing forth new creation. From this view, as Jantsch describes, life is a grand "dissipative structure," ever emerging anew in a web of indeterminacy, recognized to be wholly elegant in its pathways of unfoldment.

The Sufi mystical tradition parallels closely this description of "ever recurrent creation," alluding to a Quranic verse (55, 29) "Every moment She/He manifests in a new splendor." In the words of Henry Corbin, "Creation is the pre-eternal and continuous movement by which Being is manifest at every instant in a new cloak (1998, 200). Described by Muhyiuddin Ibn Arabi, recurrent creation is akin to an oscillation between "annihilation and rebirth," wholly outside of the domain of ordinary consciousness. This condition, including both infinitely new "configurations" but also a discontinuity and freedom from past and future, provides ideal conditions for creative unfoldment and possibility (Izutsu 1983, 205–215).

Describing different parameters and time frames but parallel processes of creation and dissolution, Guenther identifies two overall movements within our life. One movement is "down" toward a greater and greater sense of division, separateness, isolation, and habitual ways of being. This is termed in Sanskrit as samsara, which, Guenther notes, translates as "a literally going-round-in-circles."

Contrariwise, the "up" movement is the Universe's self-organization in the direction of increasing order and beauty, a sense of "homecoming." Again the Sanskrit is informative: nirvana literally refers to a "release from frustration." In this context, Guenther highlights the value of seeing the matrix of life's cycles of creation and destruction as processes of dissipative self-organization. Liberation from the otherwise ceaseless cycle of "up-down" activity is possible by virtue of a self-transcending function, emerging from realizing the ever-present and intrinsic "intelligence, luminosity and openness" of existence.

The "self-transcending" function is well accented in Prigogine's descriptions of the dissipative structures. He described these systems as being able to transform to higher levels of functioning by literally "leaning into" states of disequilibrium, and, given the right conditions, transforming into more "elegant" systems, better able to process energy and information. Similarly, Guenther sees that the breaking free from the up–down cycle, comes from a similar action, when one allows the outer structure/status-quo of the system to break down. As in the dissipative structure, sufficient scope, experimentation, connection with the deeper or "implicate" order and a kind of orchestrated movement toward a new and emergent structure must be present. In a language that might bring science and the sacred closer, Guenther observed that dissipative self-organization allows universal intelligence a possibility of a much richer "play." He applies his insights directly to scientific inquiry, using the example of liberation from an old paradigm and the ensuing freedom and new direction that comes by the embrace of a new one.[3] Guenther notes:

> . . . the very possibility of such an activity [i.e., of overcoming lower ordered regimes] is due to the inherent playfulness of an always intelligent universe, and that the progressive realization of this fact constitutes the greatest challenge, adventure and satisfaction of being human. (Guenther 1981, 115)

Guenther's insights here are extremely useful in articulating the goal of actually embodying evolutionary consciousness. Such embodiment must include the dimensions of "samsaric" and "nirvanic" experience, that is, the simultaneous embrace of the deepest suffering and the greatest bliss, within oneself and, as Buddha taught, extending to the "four horizons"—that is, coextensive with the universe as a whole. Such a consciousness—which could hardly appear as "ordinary"—is a starting point for testing out assumptions about non-dual awareness. More properly, we can state a researchable proposition related to such awareness:

> The full grasp of an "evolutionary vision", one that sees no split between the world of nature and human being, or among spiritual, mental and physical realities, is attainable by the embodied experience of "non-dual" awareness. It is characterized by an intuition of the importance of, and the welcoming of, moment to moment experience—recognizing that each seemingly insignificant event is somehow imbued with potential and somehow integral to an overall evolutionary process.

AN EXPERIMENT: SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF UNITY

To proceed with a thought experiment, we could postulate the expected outcomes of adopting the lens of non-dual awareness. What would it really mean to realize "no split" between spiritual and material worlds, or between the sacred and ordinary? To answer this, we might look to some of the very practical teachings found within perennial wisdom. First, what is implied is a possibility of expanded perception, one that, potentially at least, encompasses the whole continuum of matter and mind, from sub-atomic particles to ethereal planes of existence. Such would mean a further direct perception, "with certainty" rather than speculation, of the "Reality" alluded to by the Emerald Tablet, a classic work in spiritual alchemy attributed to the great sage of Egypt, Hermes Trismegistus: "Truth! Certainty! That in which there is no doubt! That which is above is from that which is below and that which is below is from that which above, working the miracles of the one [thing]" (Von Franz 2006, 168).

From this and parallel texts the view is supported that what we see on the surface of life is not a complete picture of Reality, but a mirror image and complement to something far richer and greater. We find allusions to the philosopher's stone and to a spiritual alchemy by which the struggles and sufferings of earthly existence are transformed into worlds of beauty. And we find assertions that even seemingly inorganic substances, such as rocks and minerals, are fully alive and "conscious," at least for those who have the eyes to see this.

Many such allusions are often interpreted as visions either of the afterlife or of a hidden and unattainable utopia. But to the advanced Sufi or Vajrayana Buddhist practitioner, the realization relates directly to *our world*, here and now. Descriptions are of the actual "outer world" as a manifestation of beauty, purity, and infinite possibility. And, to be precise, these visions are not seen to somehow replace the life around us but to coexist with the inevitable suffering and limitation in our world.

How is this vision attained? Meditation is involved, but, in most cases, a student must somehow make a leap of consciousness, learning to see life through the eyes of her or his spiritual guide. In the Sufi tradition, for example, it is said, metaphorically, that the disciple must "put on the sandals of Khidr"[4] in order to know what life is like through the eyes of the individual who lives in a state of "oneness" with Reality. In a similar vein, Sufi teacher Pir Vilayat Khan paraphrases a thought of Plotinus: "in order to see the sun one must have eyes like the sun."[5]

Perhaps for the simplest and most practical expression of such a method, we can turn to the classic text from the Zen tradition, Master Dogen's instructions to a student in the performance of ordinary acts, such as cooking, as if in the consciousness of Buddha: Here is one central instruction:

> Maintain an attitude that tries to build great temples from ordinary greens, that expounds the Buddha dharma through the most trivial activity. It is vital that we clarify and harmonize our life with our work, and not lose sight of either the absolute or the practical . . . .

> Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha. This in turn allows the Buddha to manifest through the leaf. This is a power you cannot grasp with your rational mind. It operates freely, according to the situation, in a most natural way. At the same time, this power functions in our lives to clarify and settle activities and is beneficial to all living things. (Wright 2005, 7–8)

We note here that such an attitude is not simply an exercise is being respectful, nor is it something that could simply be fueled—at least if it is to be extended for a very long time—by an external belief. Rather, it seems to require some evidence, a wisdom gained, even if bit by bit, through actual experience. Rather simply, accepting at least the possibility that every moment and every object is brimming with potential, the practitioner—the "cook" acts in a way to encourage the unfoldment of potential.[6]

This challenge then, as presented by Dogen, is the essence of our thought experiment. It is the suggestion—and tremendous challenge—to simply begin each moment with an attitude of freshness, and of anticipation that something is waiting to be born. It is akin to the description by Ilya Prigogine of the way that a self-organizing system "leans in" to the unknown, to the turbulent, and thereby creates the possibility for emerging anew.

For clarification, as a thought experiment it may well be that it begins with a recognition and admission—that one really see any potential at all in the leaf of cabbage, the spinach green or the difficult challenge one faces in a certain situation. To be an actual experiment, it calls for a suspension of reaction, giving space for something else to emerge, something unknown. As a practice, it means that one expects things surprising, expects potentialities to give birth and expects new horizons to dawn, right in the midst of seemingly ordinary or mundane activity.

DISCUSSION

> Thus, the universe itself, in and as its locally-structured pivotal points (human beings), seems to program itself for playing an ever-oscillating game of interactive dynamics and thereby for creating ever new higher-ordered phenomena. (Jantsch 1981, 203)

> The Way-seeking mind of a tenzo (zen cook) is actualized by rolling up your sleeves. (Wright 2005, 5)

The suggestions from perennial wisdom about a proper attitude with which to meet situations will sound very familiar to anyone familiar with ideas around the "appreciative system," as described by Vickers (1968). The appreciative system has to do with an attitude—and evolves into an actual practice—of study and problem solving that recognizes potential. It emphasizes accenting, and thereby reinforcing, the ideal conditions by which the fullest potential of a given situation or object of study might emerge. In a parallel way, we would suggest that many of the techniques—for problem mapping and holistic problem solving, for idealized

systems design, also involve a very strong accent on a kind of careful attention to potential that is embedded in perennial wisdom.

We would note, furthermore, that there are cases where the kinds of perception we are describing here seem to come without any practice, discipline or the like—simply via raw encounter with the natural world. An excellent example of this has been articulated by Leahy (2010), who documents incidences in which contact with nature—particularly a surprise appearance of a frog, certain birds, or exotic plants, has literally brought a shift in consciousness, described as an "awakening to seeing green." The experience, Leahy notes, somehow imparts meaningfulness, and involves, in each case, a strong sense of a transcendent dimension infusing ordinary experience. Included among Leahy's testimonies are those of natural scientists E. O. Wilson, David Morimoto, writer Vladimir Nabokov, and many others.

And yet, given some corroboration via the identification of appreciative systems and the revelations described by Leahy within nature, perennial wisdom points us toward ways we can more fully embody these "qualities of an enlightened perception" and also promises further qualities of such perception.

First, perennial wisdom accents the fact that the moment—or the situation in time—is not merely appreciated because it has potential, but because it naturally possesses this capacity *and* further qualities. As an expression of enlightened "Mind," it is "open" or spacious, it is brimming with intelligence or "luminosity," and its potential is, ultimately, free or "unimpeded."

The second accent of perennial wisdom is that the characteristics of the enlightened state of mind dawn—and continue to dawn—by virtue of intense and dedicated practice. It is not possible to fully realize the consciousness of the sage in a few moments or few days. In fact, with practice and after what might be an initial euphoria, one finds it seems to become more and more difficult to see through the eyes of enlightened vision in the middle of ordinary and constrained circumstances. An attempt to do so seems to bring the opposite—as deeply rooted and habitual reactions, such as doubt and fear, come to the surface. To attain to results, then, that is, to really see that life is continually brimming with potential requires a sustained effort over years. During this time, moments of clarity, unimpededness, and awakened intelligence do dawn. And, gradually, the sustaining practice, "putting on the shoes" of the guide or teacher, does brings forth many more qualities—patience, gratitude, courage, and a continually dawning wisdom within the confines of everyday situations.

According to perennial wisdom, it is over time and with practice that true spaciousness, luminosity, and unimpededness dawn, and then that these truly permeate one's life on earth. Such an understanding was accented by the Buddha Shakyamuni: After a long and arduous meditation retreat, and after the challenges of those around him to "prove" his enlightenment, he simply touched the Earth, as an act of recognition of life as a precious opportunity. The Buddha's act is closely akin to a statement by an eleventh-century Sufi alchemist, Ibn Umail, who called the Earth "the great peacemaker." Interpreted by Jungian analyst Marie Louise Von Franz, Ibn Umail saw that through our regaining a deep connection to and respect for the Earth and for embodied existence, we could reconcile visible reality with

the powerful forces of the unconscious (Von Franz 2006, 167). This reconciliation would contrast sharply with Jung's own nightmarish visions and the apocalyptic dreams of his patients (Edinger 1984, 28–30), all suggesting that human beings would suffer a tremendous inflation and use their intelligence and technology most unwisely, to their own destruction. This is the same teaching and warning given by the Native American elders, that is, that modern human beings need to regain contact and appreciation for the Earth if they want to regain sanity.

The simple instructions for the cook noted above, that is, by "maintaining an attitude that tries to build great temples from ordinary greens," and by "handling even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha" do not require esoteric explanations. But they are expressions urging us toward embodiment, toward what is sane and "real," toward the protection of our Earth. Somehow, such expressions help us to recognize something beyond appearances—they give us space to recognize the rhythms of samsaric and nirvanic existence, from times of boring repetition to those of liberation and joy. They allow us to realize the sense of "no-split" between spiritual and material, between the most beautiful and the most difficult dimensions of life. By so doing, they allow us to see that "evolutionary vision" is not a theory but a choice: We can choose to cultivate this life as a garden, and that all that we do will somehow have an effect, helping or hindering the flowers and fruit that seek to come forth. We can see that we have a storehouse of perennial wisdom passed on to us, tools to cultivate, to see possibilities within a spacious field, to tap into the expansive and natural intelligence of the Earth and to live with clarity and fuller awareness of the consequences of our actions and decisions. We suggest that even the possibility that this be true warrants our experiments in embodying wisdom.

In closing, we appeal to the true researcher, desiring to explore material or spiritual worlds. We again highlight the particularly awkward problem of researching a problem in a universe in which "Reality appears in the form of our belief." To avoid as much self deception as possible, we suggest that adopting the "non-dual" perspective, embodied and experiential rather than based on a belief, is crucial to attaining an objective, expansive, and unbiased vision of reality. This is the approach to "Reality as it is," the attainment termed in Zen of *magnanimous mind* "... like a mountain, stable and impartial ... tolerant it views all from the broadest perspective" (Wright 2005, 37). For the scientifically oriented, this may bring a greater appreciation of the invisible workings and laws of change at work in the universe. For the one primarily oriented toward the spiritual dimension, it may mean a fuller embrace of the practical dimensions of life, and a tolerance and willingness to work within the imperfections and limitations of earthly existence. For all of us, we speculate this continual movement toward "Reality as it is," will open us more fully to a sacred calling, to our responsibility of preserving and protecting the sacred temple of the Earth.

NOTES

1. Aldous Huxley, drawing on the term coined by Leibniz, defined the perennial wisdom tradition as "a universal metaphysic that recognizes a Divine Reality substantial to the world of things, lives, and

minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, even identical with, Divine Reality; the ethic that places (the human's) final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being" (1945, p. vii).

2. As described in the work of Prigogine and Stengers (1984), dissipative structures are systems able to transform themselves in near-chaos or chaotic regimes, and bring forth a new order by which they would better process and transform energy and information in their environment.

3. For more explorations of "successful" dissipative self-organization, see Jantsch (1980, 83–115).

4. Here Khidr is understood as the archetypal spiritual guide who will lead the student beyond common understanding and perspective in order to grasp an overall "universal" perspective on problem situations. The story of Moses and Khidr illustrates the ways that Moses was continually stretched beyond his interpretations and judgments of events, until which time a broader perspective and understanding was revealed. See Norton and Smith (2009, 10–12).

5. The actual words Plotinus used are more likely closer to "The sensitive eye can never be able to survey, the orb of the sun, unless strongly endued with solar fire, and participating largely of the vivid ray" (see http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Plotinus).

6. The integral connection with potential comes through very clearly in the Tibetan language, where the word used for Buddha, sangye, literally translates as "pure blossoming" or "pure blooming."

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