SYNTHESIS: WHAT VISIONS AND ACTIONS WILL CATALYZE THE EMERGENCE OF A CULTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

On Friday, June 4th, Michael Beckwith guided us through a visioning process during which we considered the following questions within the greater context of our conversations up to this point:

Question: What are the emerging principles of evolving global awareness?

Question: What are models, metaphors and methodologies for awakening in our fields?

Question: What do we hold as the essential elements of the needed synthesis?

Question: Is there a social and mystical technology of synthesis?

Question: What is my commitment to this work?

Question: What shall we do—in action?

In response, the group synthesized its visions of some universal principles, guiding insights, practices, commitments and technologies that will catalyze the emergence of a culture of consciousness. Not ironically, when looking for a framework into which I might embed our collective wisdom, I found that the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddhist tradition worked quite well.

Since many of our insights easily cross categories, please feel free to edit and rearrange my structural choices as a way of engaging in our continuing dialogue!

It would be very interesting if those among us with knowledge of parallel systems in Christianity, Islam, New Thought, Sufism, Judaism, Native American, Bahai’I, scientific, economic and other traditions and disciplines would care to submit them into dialogue with reference to the notes from our visioning process. Synthesis benefits from articulating “precise universalities.”
The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path describes the way to the end of suffering, as it was laid out by Siddhartha Gautama. It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding the truth about all things. Together with the Four Noble Truths it constitutes the gist of Buddhism. Great emphasis is put on the practical aspect, because it is only through practice that one can attain a higher level of existence and finally reach Nirvana. The eight aspects of the path are not to be understood as a sequence of single steps, instead they are highly interdependent principles that have to be seen in relationship with each other.

Wisdom

1. Right View

Right view is the beginning and the end of the path, it simply means to see and to understand things as they really are and to realize the Four Noble Truth. As such, right view is the cognitive aspect of wisdom. It means to see things through, to grasp the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas, and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning. Right view is not necessarily an intellectual capacity, just as wisdom is not just a matter of intelligence. Instead, right view is attained, sustained, and enhanced through all capacities of mind.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES

- To reconnect individuals to our innate nature
- "There is nothing quite so painful as a broken heart. But a broken heart is an open heart. If you can learn to live with an open heart gentle transformations begin to occur."
- To be conscious at every moment of our inner identity of lovingkindness, and by this become known to friend and foe alike
- Enable methods to synthesize thought and action and bring the balance to the center of our work.
- Change the story in wherein Science has been elevated to the Priesthood. Revisit the truth of our observations of the natural world in order to create a more accurate and hopeful scientific story that integrates phenomenology with spirit in sustainable abundance.

2. Right Intention

While right view refers to the cognitive aspect of wisdom, right intention refers to the volitional aspect, i.e. the kind of mental energy that controls our actions. Right intention can be described best as commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement. Foremost is the intention of harmlessness, meaning not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES

- To spread goodwill,
- To struggle nonviolently for nonviolence
• Acknowledge that things are “not right”
• The principles of evolving awareness:
  - To embrace Precise Simplicity (specify means and methods..)
  - To be Non-judgmental
  - To be Truly Universal
  - To embody our Collective Interdependence

Ethical Conduct

3. Right Speech
Right speech is the first principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path. Ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to moral discipline, which supports the other principles of the path. This aspect is not self-sufficient, however, essential, because mental purification can only be achieved through the cultivation of ethical conduct. The importance of speech in the context of Buddhist ethics is obvious: words can break or save lives, make enemies or friends, start war or create peace.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES
• Those in power must be told the truth in a way that will be heard.
• In order to acknowledge what is wrong, we must find our holy “No” to injustice. Emphasizing only affirmation precludes the necessity in these hard times for sacred negation in engaging complex and intractable injustice. Synthesis must be preceded by proper differentiation of Yes/No/ and a Third Side.
• To voice clearly: Yes/ No / Wait a minute!

4. Right Action
The second ethical principle, right action, involves the body as natural means of expression, as it refers to deeds that involve manifestation through actions. Unwholesome actions lead to unsound states of mind, while wholesome actions lead to sound states of mind. Positively formulated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the others, and to keep relationships harmless to others.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES
• Make a commitment to change
• To anchor the notion of our shared destiny, with emphasis on human dignity, and empathy for the plight of the impoverished in order to ease it
• Action motivated by need to prove our own existence is not enough.
• Principles of evolving awareness are to be found in Dr. M.L. King’s definition of the “beloved community.”
• Methodologies of awakening begin with education, ethics and spirituality of the inner person.
• Help our children understand the true meaning of Power beyond hierarchy, class distinctions, and domination of the overpowered above the dispossessed and disenfranchised.
5. **Right Livelihood**
Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully. Furthermore any other occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action should be avoided.

**COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES**

- To give and receive with authenticity
- Knowing when to stop “business as usual” because we are not applying our efforts to the right business for cultural change
- Ask the Gandhian question: “Will it benefit the weakest and poorest among us?”
- Models and methodologies of evolving awareness:
  - To live the experience that matter and non-matter are one
  - To recognize the fundamentals of spiritual capital and bring them into our economic thinking and government policies
- Infuse *meme* of interdependence into the value system of our economics so that spiritual riches are prized over the material.

**Mental Development**

6. **Right Effort**
Right effort can be seen as a prerequisite for the other principles of the path. Without effort, which is in itself an act of will, nothing can be achieved, whereas misguided effort distracts the mind from its task, and confusion will be the consequence. Mental energy is the force behind right effort. The same type of energy that fuels desire, envy, aggression, and violence can on the other side fuel self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness.

**COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES**

- To promote education, interest and respect
- To respect, protect and awaken all life
- To base every interaction on Right Relationship; to develop technologies to evolve social and emotional learning
- Any social and mystical technology of synthesis must “back away” from the external to internal process; turn to cultivation of neglected internal technologies such as character, virtue, truth-telling, courage, compassion.

7. **Right Mindfulness**
Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness. Usually, the cognitive process begins with an impression induced by perception, or by a thought, but then it does not stay with the mere impression. Instead, we almost always conceptualize sense impressions and thoughts immediately. We interpret them and set them in relation to other thoughts and experiences, which naturally go beyond the facticity of the original impression. The mind then posits concepts, joins concepts into constructs, and weaves those constructs into complex interpretative schemes. All this happens only half consciously, and as a result we often see things obscured. Right mindfulness is anchored in clear perception and it penetrates impressions without getting carried.
away. Right mindfulness enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualization in a way that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES

- Think as “we” instead of “me.” How do we live as one humanity, and how far are we, indeed, from actualizing this vision?
- To be open to the Now—leaving behind the certainty of what we already know.
- Technologies: Synthesis arises when belief systems are annihilated in that they are lenses distorting reality. Meditation can facilitate the power of our commitment to this work.

8. Right Concentration
The eighth principle of the path, right concentration, refers to the development of a mental force that occurs in natural consciousness, although at a relatively low level of intensity, namely concentration. Concentration in this context is described as one-pointedness of mind, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed toward a unified goal.

COMMENTS FROM THE SYNTHESIS DIALOGUES

- Hold awareness that ignorance generates ignorance and wisdom procreates wisdom
- Thousands of people come together in prayer and meditation as a “technology” to effect change. Humanity seen as a psychosphere will allow the noblest in us to emerge, regardless of geography.