

The Omega Point

Artist: Devyani J. Parikh



ARE WE SEEING THE MOVEMENT FROM THE AGE OF INFORMATION TO THE AGE OF WISDOM, ASKS THE AUTHOR, AN EMINENT SCIENTIST AND MYSTIC

by **Peter Russel**

The growth of human information technologies is taking us rapidly toward a time when all human knowledge will be instantly available to anyone on the planet, in any medium. This will be a fully functional global brain in which the information technologies of television, telephone, and WorldWide Web will be seamlessly integrated. The world's audio and video archives will be as easily accessible as text and images are today. Search engines will learn from their interactions with people, becoming increasingly sophisticated in their

responses. We will be linked into an emerging global mind.

At this point, the growth rate of human knowledge will be reaching its own maximum. But knowledge is not the end-point of the evolution of intelligence. Many have pointed to a hierarchy of data, information, knowledge, and wisdom. Information can be defined as the patterns extracted from raw data. Knowledge is the generalisation of information, applying findings to other situations. Wisdom determines how that knowledge is used.

At present, humanity has vast amounts of knowledge, but still very little wisdom. Without developing wisdom, it is most unlikely we will avoid catastrophe. As the inventor-philosopher, Buckminster Fuller repeatedly emphasised, we are facing our final evolutionary exam. Is the human species fit to survive? Can we wake up sufficiently so that we can use our prodigious powers for the good of all, and for that of many generations to come?

A half-awake species

Symbolic language led to another significant step in human intelligence. We used language not only to communicate with each other, but also within our own minds, i.e. verbal thinking. With this power we could reflect upon our experiences and plan our future. In addition, we could reflect upon the fact that we were aware. We became conscious of consciousness itself. We began to wake up to our own inner worlds.

At present however, we are only half-awake to who and what we really are. Becoming aware of our own selves brought with it a sense of an individual “I” observing the world and initiating our actions. But just what is this self? It seems so obvious that it is there, but, as many have discovered, it is hard to define it or pin it down.

When asked “Who are you?” most of us will respond with the various things we identify with – our name, beliefs, occupation, education, roles, gender, social status, personality, interests. We derive a sense of identity from what we have or do in the world, with our history, and our circumstances. But any such derived identity is conditional, and thus forever vulnerable. It is continually at the mercy of circumstances, and before long we need to defend or reassert our fragile sense of self. Our basic survival programming, designed to ensure our physical survival, is usurped for our psychological survival, leading to many unnecessary and often dysfunctional behaviours.

In addition, we are only half-awake to our deeper needs and how to attain them. Most of us would like to avoid pain and suffering,

and find greater peace and happiness, but we believe that how we feel inside depends on external circumstances. This is true in some cases, for example, if we are suffering because we are cold or hungry. But we apply the same thinking to everything else in life. We believe that if we could just get enough of the right things or experiences we would finally be happy. This is the root of human greed, our love of money, our need to control events (and other people); it is the cause of much of our fear and anxiety, we worry whether events are going to be the way we think they should be if we are to be happy. The global crisis we are now facing is, at its root, a crisis of consciousness – a crisis born of the fact that we have prodigious technological powers, but still remain half-awake. We need to awaken to who we are and what we really want.

Prophets of wisdom

Throughout human history there have been individuals who appear to have become fully awake. Although their discoveries have been expressed in different ways, depending on the dominant worldview of their time, the essential message remains remarkably consistent. Aldous Huxley called this the “perennial philosophy,” the timeless wisdom that has been rediscovered again and again through the ages.

The enlightened ones have realised the illusory nature of the concept of a unique individual self. When we examine our experience closely, delving deep into the nature of what we call “I,” we find that there is nothing there – no *thing* that is. This sense of “I-ness” that we all know so well, and which has been with us all our lives, is just our sense of being. It is awareness itself – so familiar, yet completely intangible. Thus, it cannot be “known” in the ordinary sense. Not realising this, we seek to give our sense of self some form, some substance. We dress it up in various psychological clothes – all the things we think we are, or would like to think we are. This is the reverse of the emperor having no clothes. With true self-awareness, one discovers there are lots of clothes, but no emperor inside them.

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Another consistent realisation of the awakened ones is that the essential nature of mind, uncluttered by worry and chatter, is one of deep ease, joy, and love. Not recognising this, most of us look to the world around us to provide us with peace and happiness. But, despite all the messages from marketing and advertising industries, things or events do not bring happiness. On the contrary, our minds are so full of scheming, planning, and worrying whether or not we will get what we think will make us happy, we seldom experience the peace and ease that lie at our core.

When we awaken to our true nature, we are freed from a dependence on the external world both for our sense of self and our inner well-being. We become free to act with more intelligence and compassion, attending to the needs of the situation at hand rather than the needs of the ego. We can access the wisdom that lies deep within us all. This is the next step in evolution of intelligence: the transition from amassing knowledge to developing wisdom.

The dawning of a Wisdom Age

Because each new phase of evolving intelligence takes place in a fraction of the time of the previous phase, we can expect the dawning of a Wisdom Age to take place in years rather than decades. It will be standing on the shoulders of the Information Age.

Never before have we been able to access so much spiritual wisdom. A century ago, the only spiritual tradition available to most people was the one that was indigenous to their own culture. Moreover, with rare exceptions, they did not have the benefit of learning from a truly enlightened being. Today, we can access teachings from many different traditions and cultures, discov-

er their common underlying truths, and translate that perennial philosophy into the language and terms of our own time. Something completely new is emerging: a single spiritual teaching that is a distillation of the world's wisdom traditions. This is coalescing and being disseminated globally through a variety of information technologies: books, tapes, web pages, online forums, and Internet broadcasts.

At the same time, a growing number of people are becoming fully awake, and proving themselves to be excellent teachers. Many are using the Internet to share their wisdom and help awaken others. Instruction in practices that facilitate awakening are appearing online, and could become much more sophisticated. It may even turn out that darshan, the Indian word for a direct transfer of higher consciousness, can be transmitted via the Net.

Awakening is often a sudden event. Once a person is ready – the necessary groundwork done, the circumstances propitious – the shift can happen more or less instantaneously. It's possible that research into the neurological correlates of spiritual awakening will lead us to methods of promoting the process directly. There will likely be other unforeseen discoveries or developments that help us free our minds. Whatever they may be, the more we learn how to facilitate a shift in consciousness, the faster it will happen.

As this becomes a mainstream phenomenon, humanity will relate to the world in wiser, more compassionate ways. Problems would still exist. Global warming would not suddenly cease; pollution would not evaporate; extinct species would not suddenly return. On the other hand, we might then have at our disposal new technologies that could help us solve the problems we have created. We can only guess at the ways in which this marriage of high technology and higher consciousness would play out. We have not been there before.

Beyond wisdom

Would this be the endpoint of our evolu-

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tion? Or would there follow yet another turn of the spiral?

Many of the world's mystical traditions maintain that the liberation of the mind from its attachments is only the first step of inner awakening. More universal experiences of mind, and fundamentally different perspectives of reality, lie beyond.

Advanced adepts claim that the world of matter is not real, and that space and time are not the ultimate reality. Interestingly, this view is in accord with modern physics' explorations into the nature of physical reality. Whenever we try to pin down the essence of matter, it eludes us. It seems nothing is there – that is, nothing of any material substance. Nor are space and time absolutes, as we once thought. They are part of a more fundamental reality, the space-time continuum.

Perhaps those adepts have already discovered the ultimate nature of reality – not through digging deeper into its external forms, but through a penetrating exploration of inner space. If so, our collective destiny may be precisely this freedom from the illusion of materiality, from the illusion that we exist in space and time.

The Omega Point

One person who believed our destiny was indeed a collective spiritual awakening, was the French priest and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Exploring the evolutionary trends towards greater complexity, connectivity, and consciousness, he argued that humanity was moving towards an Omega Point – the final end and goal of evolution.

He believed that the universe had been through several major stages of evolution, starting with what he called "cosmogogenesis," the birth of the "cosmosphere", the Universe. Next was "geogenesis", the birth of the Earth (the geosphere). Following that, "biogenesis", the birth of life (the biosphere). With human beings, there came "noogenesis" and the "noosphere", the sphere of thought. He predicted that the final stage, the one that led to the Omega Point, would be "Christogenesis". This would be the birth of Christ consciousness, not in an individual, but in the collective – the

spiritual birth of humanity as a whole.

Teilhard de Chardin believed this Omega Point would happen thousands of years in the future. Like many others, he did not take into account the implications of ever-accelerating change. In his later years, he commented on the impact of radio and television in bringing humanity together. Technologies like these, he said, were bringing the Omega Point much closer. Just before he died, the first computers were being developed. Perceiving the potential of this new technology, he predicted that they too would bring the Omega Point even closer. If he had lived to see the emergence of the Internet, he would probably have realised that the Omega Point could come very soon indeed.

Breakdown or breakthrough?

When we look at what is happening in the world today, it is understandable that we might scoff at the idea of a collective spiritual breakthrough. The daily news is full of evidence that we are heading ever more rapidly towards breakdown rather than breakthrough.

That is indeed one likely possibility. I do not want to play down the dire urgency of the world situation. If we don't make some radical changes, we are surely headed for disaster of one kind or another.

I also believe that change is possible. If we can develop the wisdom needed to navigate our way through these turbulent times safely, the potentials are staggering and unimaginable in scope. Let's put our hearts and minds to proving that we can pass Buckminster Fuller's final evolutionary exam, and become a truly magnificent species. We are, after all, our only hope. ☺

Peter Russell is a writer and scientist exploring the field of consciousness. He is author of the book, *From Science to God*. He also conducts corporate programmes on self-development and creativity

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Mail us at editor@lifepositive.net



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