

## Foreword to *The Radiance of Being* by Allan Combs

*The Radiance of Being* is a very exciting book, reflecting a very exciting time in the exploration of consciousness and evolution. As a matter of fact, I would say that, with the possible exception of the rise of the great Idealist movements two centuries ago, today is the most exhilarating and fruitful period of research in consciousness that we have ever seen.

A tall claim? Perhaps. But consider the evidence. One: for the first time in history, we of today have access to virtually all of the world's accumulated information about human consciousness and its potential, taken from sources East and West, North and South, spanning premodern, modern, and postmodern times. Zen Buddhism; shamanism; numerous systems of bodymind disciplines such as yoga, tai chi chuan, and bioenergetics; the great contemplative traditions of Kabbalah, Sufism, Christian mysticism, the Neoplatonic heritage, Vedanta, Neoconfucianism—all of which gave us rather extraordinary maps of human consciousness based on direct meditative experience; right up to today's marvels of scientific research into the more empirical aspects of consciousness, contributed by such breakthrough disciplines as neuroscience, cognitive science, and dynamical systems theory.

Now we may agree or disagree with the findings of some of those disciplines, but the point is that all of that information is available to today's researcher in consciousness and evolution. *This is the first time in the history of the human species that this has happened*, and it signals the possibility of being able to formulate—also for the first time in history—truly comprehensive or all-inclusive or “integral” maps and models of human consciousness and its unfolding. Just as important, it also signals the possibility of developing more integral practices in daily life that will help unfold this potential in a concrete, enduring, realized fashion (as you will see in the subsequent pages).

Two, postmodernism is dead. A long, slow, suffocating death that has left the halls of academia hollow and haunted; nothing has yet stepped in to take the place of deconstructive

postmodernism, and the intellectual vacuum is increasingly felt by all. Of course, there were many important and enduring truths contributed by the various postmodern movements, and the whole point about a more integral or wide-ranging perspective is that these enduring postmodern realizations need to be taken up and included in a more comprehensive approach that embraces the very best of premodern, modern, and postmodern insights.

But these types of all-inclusive “big pictures” were marginalized by extreme postmodernism, which maintained that *all* big pictures oppressed and repressed human beings. The standard postmodern claim was that all such “meta-narratives” privilege a particular and domineering mode of discourse that excludes and subjugates all non-privileged alternatives. But that is exactly the claim of extreme postmodernism that has been thoroughly discredited—first, because it is self-contradictory (postmodernism gives a very big picture about why big pictures are oppressive); and second, because not all big pictures necessarily exclude: in fact, the stated aim of the truly integral approaches is that “everybody is right,” and thus there is a demand to include every known form of experience and potential into vistas broad enough and compassionate enough to make room for all.

In short, the death of deconstructive postmodernism has signaled the rebirth of “big pictures” and “grand visions.” *The Radiance of Being* is about various leading-edge approaches to these grand visions—visions big enough to include the best of premodern, modern, and postmodern insights into consciousness, evolution, and the nature of the human soul and spirit.

Three: the four-centuries-old scientific revolution has resulted, especially in the last few decades, in a staggering and unprecedented amount of information about the biological and neurological foundations of mind and consciousness—information that simply was not available to the great spiritual traditions of premodern times. The trick, of course, would be to find a way to genuinely integrate, or at least make room for, both the insights of the great contemplative traditions and the undeniable truths of modern scientific research. But that

appears to be exactly one of the accomplishments of the “grand visions” that are now emerging around the world (as you will also see in the following pages).

For all of those reasons, I believe that we of today do indeed face an opportunity unique in history: the chance to create maps, models, and practices that embrace the entire sweep of human possibilities. *The Radiance of Being* is a wonderful guide to the very best of these more integral approaches—approaches that cover not just theory but also practice: not merely ways to think about this vast potential, but ways to actualize it, realize it, live it and breathe it as part of one’s own extraordinary birthright, even here and now.

For ultimately, it seems, these big pictures are really pictures of who and what each of us might actually become. These grand visions are fully anchored in the very best of modern scientific research, but they do not stop there: they point even further into the heart and soul and spirit of a radiant universe, a universe that, in the deepest sense, is part and parcel of your very own nature, the discovery of which is surely the supreme adventure.

Shall we begin this unparalleled adventure? The following pages are an exhilarating tour through the grand possibilities of our own being and our own becoming, an adventure that spans the entire spectrum of consciousness from body to mind to soul to spirit, honoring science at every turn yet going beyond it when evidence demands yet further depth, pointing unmistakably to the heart and soul of a humanity destined to awaken.