

## Foreword to *The Translucent Revolution* by Arjuna Ardagh

It's a rather extraordinary, even historical, time we live in, and not just for the perils but the promise. The perils I'm sure you've heard plenty of. This is a book about the promise, or certainly one of the brightest of them: the chance to awaken, to radically awaken, to who and what you really are, beneath the everyday surface chattering mind and the chronic self-contraction that hobbles a brighter tomorrow. By the end of reading this book you will have, I believe, an undeniable sense of this greater awareness—in yourself, in society, in the world at large.

The reason this particular promise is so extraordinary lies in the history of the last three decades, the history of what has come to be known as “the human potential movement.” Starting in the sixties, there was an extraordinary explosion of interest in Eastern religions, meditation, encounter groups, psychedelics, awareness training, est, yoga, New Age this and that, you name it. Some of it was good, some bad, some silly. And, believe me, we all dipped into the silly; I even chronicled it in *Boomeritis*. But out of that extraordinary experimental period—which produced, on the more serious side, both Humanistic Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology—we learned at least three important things about human growth and potentials.

One: There are many different *states of consciousness*. Ordinary states, altered states, stoned states, meditative states, hypnotic states, dream states, shamanic states, formless states, nondual states, hypnogogic states, entrained states, peak experiences, flow states, awakened states—and what all of that taught us was that “there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Different states of consciousness disclose very different worlds, and an exploration of those many worlds of reality began.

Since most states of consciousness and peak experiences are variations on the three or four natural states of waking, dreaming, deep formless sleep, and unity, they were often grouped

into those four general categories and given the names of *gross* (waking), *subtle* (dreaming), *causal* (formless), and *nondual* (unity) states. This book particularly explores variations on a unity state or an awakened state of consciousness—an awakening or peak experience and its dramatic impact on peoples lives, including people like you, as the subtitle has it.

But one thing was certain among those who investigated these issues seriously: the type of world that you perceive depends in large measure on the state of consciousness you are in. Different states not only perceive different worlds, they bring them forth, they co-create them, they have a hand in their very texture. The subject does not just perceive the object, it helps create it. But then, we really knew that since Kant and even before, but never had it been so palpably demonstrated to so many people in so short a time. Serious writers and researchers henceforth could never pretend that there was simply one world lying around and waiting to be perceived. No, my friend, the world that is perceived is a co-creation of your consciousness. Change your consciousness and you change your world.

Two: In addition to *states* of consciousness, there are *stages* of consciousness. What's the difference? States are *temporary*, stages are *permanent*. Okay, but what's a stage? Stages are the way that evolution catapults over chaos and into increasing spheres of organization and inclusion. Simple, typical example: atoms to molecules to cells to organisms. Each of those is a stage, and each stage “transcends and includes” its predecessor, so that evolution is indeed a series of nested spheres or “holons”—wholes that are parts of larger wholes, indefinitely it seems. And thus there is a directionality built into evolution, from atoms to molecules to cells: you never find molecules occurring before atoms, or cells occurring before molecules. There are no known exceptions to this anywhere in the universe, and so “stages” and “evolution” and “growth” appear to be virtually synonymous.

Examples of stages in human growth are too numerous to catalog here. There are stages of psychosexual development, linguistic development, self development, embryology, physiology, neuroanatomy, and... well, the list is endless. But they are all variations on

sequences like letters, words, sentences, paragraphs. Each stage in that sequence again transcends and includes its predecessors in a development that is envelopment; there is thus greater and greater wholeness and inclusion in each stage; and hence, as with natural evolution, there is a directionality inherent in the sequence—you never have words before letters or sentences before words, and there are no known exceptions in any human culture.

What does that have to do with human potentials? Just as it was discovered that there are higher states, it was discovered that there are *higher stages of human development*, stages that went considerably beyond the conventional stages of development thought possible by orthodox psychologists. These higher stages are inherent potentials of all human beings, although not everybody lives up to them.

Abraham Maslow was one of the first great investigators of these higher stages of human potentials, and he found that in addition to the typical, normal stages that humans possess—physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, and self-esteem needs—there are higher stages of self-actualization and self-transcendence needs. He called the latter *being needs*, in contrast to the former *deficiency needs*, because the latter came out of an awareness of superabundance, the former, feelings of lack and deficiency. As with all true stages, they emerged in an order that could not be reversed, and each built upon and included its predecessor.

Let me give one famous example, the stage conception of Carol Gilligan. In her book *In a Different Voice* (and in subsequent works), Gilligan outlined four major stages of female moral development, which she called *selfish*, *care*, *universal care*, and *integrated*. Other words for those stages might be *egocentric*—I care only for myself; *ethnocentric*—I care for my tribe, my country, my nation; *worldcentric*—I care for all human beings, regardless of race, color, sex, or creed; and *kosmocentric*—where I integrate the masculine and feminine in myself, and, I would add, extend care to all sentient beings without exception. Like all stages, the move from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric to kosmocentric is a sequential movement of increasing consciousness, care, and envelopment. As with every other stage sequence we have looked at,

nature indeed builds holons upon holons upon holons... a series of ever-expanding wholeness, consciousness, care, and embrace.

*We just didn't know the embrace could go all the way to infinity.* But that is exactly what the human potential movement discovered: in the farther reaches of human nature, in the realms of the self-transcendence needs, in the deepest reaches of your very own Self and your ever-present I AMness, people reported being one with a Ground of Being, one with Spirit, one with infinity, a radiant riot of the all-encompassing, call it what you will....

And not just as a passing state, but as a permanent trait—a permanent stage of competence acquisition. Not that you always live up to it, but that you always have access to it (which is what makes this an awakened stage and not just an awakened state). This is just like language acquisition or any other stage competence: once you learn language, it means you have permanent access to it, not that you are always talking.

Just as there are many ways to classify states, there are many ways to classify stages. Some researchers used 3 stages, some used 5, others used 7 or more. And many different names and terms were also used as researchers looked at different aspects of various stages. Theorists in this book who have presented or utilized stage conceptions include David Deida, Duane Elgin, H.A. Almaas, Jean Houston, Fred Kofman, Jennifer Garcia, Andrew Cohen, Sofia Diaz, Frances Vaughan, and many others.

But a few very important points: in the modern conception, stages are very fluid and flowing affairs, not stacked on top of each other but enveloping and embracing and flowing into each other. They are often called *waves of consciousness* instead of stages of consciousness to emphasize that important discovery. And another important discovery is that there seems to be no highest stage or wave, it just keeps going and going, holon upon holon in an ever-receding rainbow of wholeness, with no end point, no omega point, only an ever-expanding horizon of consciousness and care, reaching to infinity but never resting in it.

Three: The third major significant item that researchers learned is how states and stages relate to each other. Neither states nor stages alone can account for the evidence. If you look only at the stage conceptions, for example, it appears that you can only have a spiritual experience if you climb through Maslow's stages all the way to the highest, transpersonal, self-transcendence stage, and then you get the prize. But we all know people—often including ourselves—who have had spiritual experiences or peak experiences and we might not be at the top of the pyramid of growth!

But many early theorists mistakenly concluded that therefore there are no stages of growth, so they championed what amounted to nothing but states. Yet it soon became obvious that states alone won't work, because those imply that all you have to do is have some earth-shaking awakening experiences and you will be spiritual, but researchers soon found that virtually anybody can have those peak awakening experiences, even people at the ethnocentric stages, and all it did was make them more ethnocentric. Not good.

But that was the third major discovery, the relation of states and stages: namely, *you can have a profound altered state experience at virtually any stage you are at*. For simplicity's sake, let's use Carol Gilligan's 4 stages (egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric, kosmocentric), and the 4 major states (gross, subtle, causal, nondual). You can have one of those state experiences at each of those stages. That gives us 16 types of experiential possibilities, and research found instances of all of them.

For example, if you are at an ethnocentric stage of development and you have a unity-state peak experience of being one with everything or one with a ground of being, you might interpret that as an experience of oneness with Jesus and conclude that nobody can be saved unless they accept Jesus as their personal savior (hence the 'ethnocentric' nature of the interpretation—you must belong to this one group in order to be saved). But if you are at an egocentric stage and have the same experience, you might believe that you yourself are Jesus Christ. And if you are at a kosmocentric or integral stage and have that nondual peak experience,

you will likely conclude that you and all sentient beings without exception are one with spirit in the timeless here and now.

See how that grid of possibilities works? You can be at virtually any stage of consciousness and have a peak experience of virtually any state of consciousness—and just as important, you will interpret the state according to the stage. That grid is now called the Wilber-Combs Matrix after the two astonishingly bright fellows who independently stumbled upon it. (For stages of development, see *Integral Psychology*, which gives charts of over 100 models East and West; for the Wilber-Combs Matrix, see *The Eye of Spirit*.)

Now, let me try and bring all this together. I earlier pointed out that, in many cases, if people had strong awakening experiences or other strong peak experiences, it often tended to reinforce the stage they were at. For example, I mentioned that somebody at an ethnocentric stage can have an awakening experience and it just makes them more ethnocentric. We all know examples of reborn Christians who have had very powerful state experiences; they glow; they are radiant; they are translucent; and they are fascists. This is because they are still at an ethnocentric stage, and, bless them, think that Jesus is the one and only way.

But research also found a riveting fact: the more you are dunked into altered or nonordinary or meditative states, the more quickly you actually move through any stage sequence that was tested. In other words, if you take up meditation, for example, which *repeatedly* exposes you to awakened states, and then you are given, say, the Loevinger test—a very famous and well-documented test of developmental stages—you will not skip those stages (there has been no examples found of skipped stages, for the same reason that you cannot go from letters to sentences and skip words). *But you will move through those stages at a profoundly accelerated rate.* It's not uncommon to find that the percentage of the population at Loevinger's two highest stages (which are versions of integral), which normally is about 5%, goes to nearly 40% after four years of meditation. No other technique—not psychotherapy, not breath work, not body work, not Jungian analysis, not psychoanalysis, not Gestalt, not anything—has ever proven such an

accelerated rate of development. And, in fact, these kinds of findings have become the basis of integral practice and training ([www.integralinstitute.org](http://www.integralinstitute.org)).

So what does that mean? Very simply, the more you are dunked, or simply nudged, into awakened states, the more translucent you will become. And the book you now hold in your hands is a book about that simple but profound equation.

This is a book about the translucent revolution, a revolution that began in the sixties but has matured into an understanding embodied in the three factors I mentioned, and a book that can indeed change you, and change the world, if seen in the light of those factors. This book does not deal with stages of consciousness, which might seem a deficiency, given the book's claims. But I think that, although the criticism is valid, it is beside the point for what this book is trying to do. Worrying about which stage you might be at in this or that developmental line is not the point. If you choose to grow at all, you must begin to open yourself to wider experiences, deeper truths, higher realizations; and allow yourself—or push yourself, or simply nudge yourself—into wider states of consciousness and attitudes and perspectives and experiences.

What is so richly generous about this book is that each chapter not only describes a different aspect or trait of the translucent revolution and how that directly relates to your own life, it gives a wonderful series of experiential exercises—labeled “nudges”—that can help move you into a more expanded state or attitude, and therefore the cumulative effect of doing these exercises is that, no matter what wave you are at, this might indeed help your own growth and evolution into higher and wider and deeper waves, with each wave becoming not only more whole but more translucent.

Translucent to what? Well, my friend, please read this book and find out, this book of wonder and relish, radiance and release, and you might find your very own self becoming more and more translucent, even as you read. Whereupon, dimly worn on the horizon, shimmering in mists and memories of a Self realized but not yet confessed, find your answer in a release and recognition deeply your own yet shared by all, and in that ever-realized, ever-receding infinity,

you might seize the secret of all three historical factors rolled into one, that you can indeed begin to change the world by changing your deepest consciousness, so that the translucent revolution will reach ignition in the only place it could possibly ever begin: with the one and only Spirit who is reading this page—right here, right now, right you—but a you that goes out of you and into infinity, with a wink wink, nudge nudge, if you get my evolutionary drift, with waves and streams, and waking and dreams, rushing to the ever-present ocean of I AMness.