

The Artist of

POSSIBILITY

BRINGING A NEW PARADIGM TO LIFE

10

Featuring

**THE PROMISE OF
EVOLUTIONARY
SPIRITUALITY**

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVE
MCINTOSH

**DOES SPIRIT
EVOLVE?**

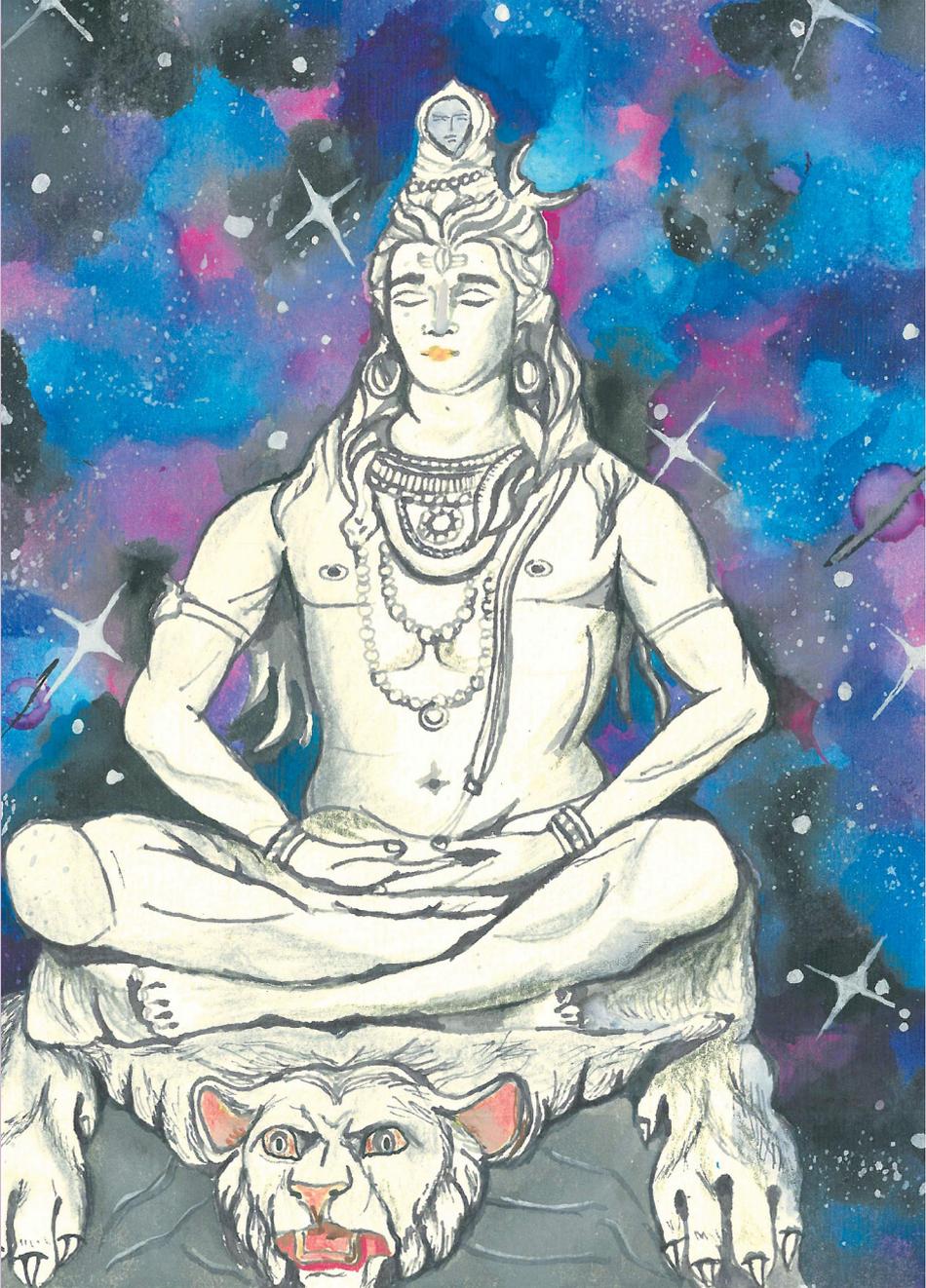
AN INTERVIEW WITH DR ERIC
HOFFMAN

SPIRITUAL EQUITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH TEJAL
TARRO

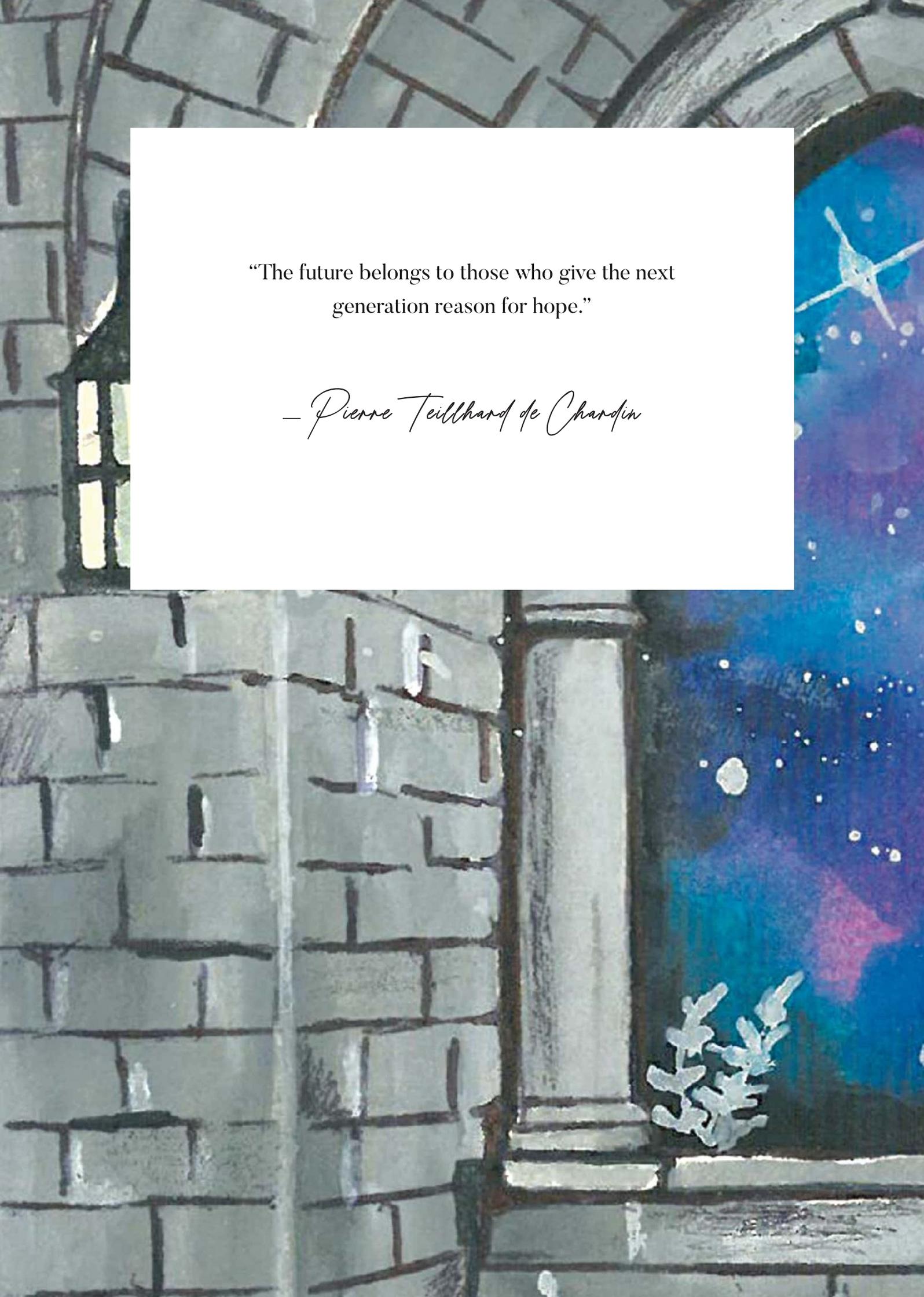
MONK & ROBOT

A BOOK REVIEW BY ROBIN
BECK



ISSUE #10

Visions of the Future & the Evolution of Spirituality

A painting of a stone wall with a window. The wall is made of grey stones with dark mortar. The window is on the right side, showing a night sky with a blue and purple gradient, white stars, and a satellite or space station in the upper right. The overall style is somewhat abstract and textured.

“The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.”

— *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

A Look Inside the *Evolution* Issue

- P. 9-10 THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTIST:
NHIA ALQ
- P. 11-16 THE PROMISE OF
EVOLUTIONARY SPIRITUALITY
An interview with Steve McIntosh, by Jeff Carreira
- P. 17-22 DOES SPIRIT EVOLVE?
A dialog with Dr. Eric Hoffman, by Jeff Carreira
- P. 23-28 SPIRITUAL EQUITY
An interview with Tejal Tarro, by Jeff Carreira
- P. 29-32 MONK & ROBOT:
A PSALM FOR THE WILD-BUILT
A book review by Robin Beck
- P. 33-49 MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS
Constructions, by Deborah Kaplan
Sufi Stories: Holy of Holies, by KD Meyers
Spontaneous Writing Circle entries
By Michelle Babian, Adriana Colotti Comel,
Liz Stone, Nicole Bremness, and Bonnie Winer
- P. 50 MEMBERSHIP & CALLS
FOR SUBMISSION



THE PROMISE OF
EVOLUTIONARY
SPIRITUALITY:
AN INTERVIEW WITH
STEVE MCINTOSH



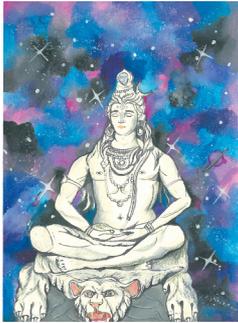
DOES SPIRIT EVOLVE?
A DIALOG WITH
DR. ERIC HOFFMAN



SPIRITUAL EQUITY:
AN INTERVIEW
WITH TEJAL TARRO

Issue

Ten



COVER IMAGE BY

Nbia Alq, 'Cosmic Shiva'

DESIGNED & PUBLISHED BY

Silvia Rodrigues

Ariela Cohen

Robin Beck

Jeff Carreira

The Team

EDITORS

Jeff Carreira

Robin Beck

Ariela Cohen

THE EDITORS CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT:

magazine@emergenceducation.com

Contributors

Deborah Kaplan

KD Meyers

Michelle Babian

Adriana Colotti Comel

Liz Stone

Nicole Bremness

Bonnie Winer



*Cosmic Sunflower by
Nhia Alq*



We are part of an awakening universe and, to participate in the miraculous multi-dimensional awakening of our True Being, we must come together in authentic essence-to-essence, soul-to-soul contact.

— JEFF CARREIRA



A Note from the Editors

We are very pleased to present to you this issue, dedicated to exploring new and better visions of the future and the ways in which spirituality might evolve. The idea that we exist within an evolving universe created a firestorm of debate following the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.

Today, the idea of evolution remains somewhat controversial, although its use in the strictly Darwinian sense - as a mechanism for the evolution of species by natural selection - is widely accepted as a scientific fact. The word evolution is used far beyond this strictly Darwinian sense to encompass many forms of transformative growth, including spiritual growth. It is in this wider sense that we will explore evolution.

What does the knowledge that we are part of an evolving universe mean for our lives, our spiritual potential and the future of humanity? This is the question we are asking. In our search for answers, we had the chance to speak with Steve McIntosh, one of the leaders in the movement of integral philosophy and evolutionary spirituality. We also spoke with Professor Eric Hoffman who has been a leader in the human potential movement for decades. To finish off this exploration, we spoke with

Tejal Tarro, a consultant creating more diverse and inclusive organizations, to explore how greater diversity and inclusion could be brought into the world of alternative spiritual pursuit.

To enrich our inquiry of this issue, our own Robin Beck wrote a powerful review of the book *A Psalm for the Wild Built*, by Becky Chambers. And, once again, we are featuring wonderful contributions from our members.

Our featured artist is Nhia Alq, whose cosmic watercolors can be found throughout the issue.

We are always delighted to present you with each issue of *The Artist of Possibility* and we love to hear your thoughts after you've had a chance to read it.

You can contact the editors [here](#).

Jeff Carneira

EDITOR

Ariela Cohen

EDITOR

Robin Beck

EDITOR

The Artist of

POSSIBILITY

BRINGING A NEW PARADIGM TO LIFE

Emergence Education publishes this online magazine containing articles, interviews, art and poetry that express and explain the emerging possibilities of a new paradigm.

In our pages, you will find information about the ideas, people and perspectives that are catalyzing new ways of seeing, feeling and acting in the world.

Each issue of *The Artist of Possibility*

will include the voices of some of today's most respected paradigm shifting luminaries, as well as contributions offered by our members.



Don't miss our eleventh issue, set to publish on July 15th 2022, where we will be exploring the topic of new religious movements.

The Artist of Possibility is offered free of charge.

Subscribe here to receive your quarterly copy.



OUR FEATURED ARTIST: NHIA ALQ

Nhia Alq is a Filipina artist who trained in the fine arts at The University of Santo Tomas, the largest university in the Philippines. Her series of cosmic watercolors reveal the universal nature that always exists behind all aspects of the familiar world, from the most extraordinary to the seemingly mundane. You can purchase prints of Nhia's art on **the Emergence Education website**.





AN INTERVIEW

The Promise of Evolutionary Spirituality

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVE MCINTOSH

by Jeff Carneira



Steve McIntosh is a leading figure in the integral philosophy movement. He is the author of several books including: Developmental Politics—How America Can Grow into a Better Version of Itself, The Presence of the Infinite, Evolution's Purpose and Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution. All of his work, in different ways, is dedicated to outlining and exploring the promise and potential of an evolutionary worldview. We spoke with Steve for this issue of The Artist of Possibility because we knew he would be able to clearly articulate the concept of evolutionary spirituality and the optimistic vision it holds for our future.

Jeff Carreira: Hello Steve and thank you for speaking with me today. The theme of the issue is "Visions of the Future and the Evolution of Spirituality." I wanted to speak with you because I know that you have been very involved with the discipline known as

evolutionary spirituality. So, I would like to ask you to start today by speaking about what evolutionary spirituality is.

Steve McIntosh: First of all, I want to say that evolutionary spirituality is not a tradition like Buddhism or Christianity. There can be an evolutionary Buddhism or an evolutionary Christianity or an evolutionary Hinduism. When embracing an evolutionary view, there will of course be some doctrines of the pre-existing tradition that need to be altered to accommodate the new worldview.

I would say that, in the most general terms, evolutionary spirituality is an attempt to integrate and harmonize science and spirituality without reducing one or having one be incorporated into the other. Evolutionary spirituality gives us a powerful spiritual truth that is revealed by the story of evolution. This involves attempting to understand what evolution implies about our spiritual practice, our identity, our sense of responsibility to the world. It leads to an increased sense of optimism and creates a context for the cultivation of virtues like hope, faith and love.

Evolutionary Spirituality is at least partially predicated on the idea that the universe, or at least part of it, is good. In spite of all the bad things that happen, if you pull back into a deep time, big picture point of view, it's hard to deny that something valuable is unfolding. The expanded view of an evolutionary time frame allows us to talk about progress, while acknowledging the inevitable outcomes of selfish motivations and violent tendencies that inevitably negatively color much of what happens in human history.

Certainly, the idea of progress deserves to be critiqued, and critiqued continuously, because progress is always partial and can easily be hijacked in dangerous ways.

Any ways that we think of progress toward the good will be partial, which means that our attempts to make things better will always be colored by what was wrong before. In trying to make things better, we can certainly sometimes make things worse. That's why a sense of humility is crucial.

Still, the fact that we live in a universe where there are so many beautiful, true and good things, and we have the opportunity to participate in the creation of more of those beautiful, true, and good things is like a spiritual blessing. When we wake up to the fact that the universe is good, even though bad things happen (threats, tragedies, suffering), our perception of inherent goodness allows us to imagine the more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible.

We don't need to pour acid on our highest aspirations, we just need to be adults and realize that the good is still partial and that it is up to us to bring more goodness into the world. And we can take solace in the fact that, in spite of the negative aspects of the world, the history of the evolving cosmos reveals the workings of a positive creativity.

So, I would say that there is progress that occurs through the process of evolution, but of course, tying the notion of the universe's development to any spiritual conclusions about the purpose of human life must be done

delicately and with a great deal of nuance and self-reflection. We need to be somewhat tentative in our conclusions and maintain a kind of epistemological humility when we attempt to interpret the scientific story of evolution in human terms.

Jeff Carreira: You just mentioned that there can be evolutionary forms of different pre-existing spiritual traditions. Sri Aurobindo, for instance, created an evolutionary form of Hinduism, and the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin did the same for Christianity.

I believe that part of the reason that these evolutionary forms arise is because there is something thrilling and refreshing about evolutionary spirituality and it has to do with the closely associated term of conscious evolution. The idea is that while the evolutionary process begins by progressing blindly through methods of trial and error, once we understand the mechanisms of evolution, we can consciously participate in the process. That brings us back to the idea of creativity and I would love to hear you speak about that.

Steve McIntosh: Conscious evolution tells us that we are agents of our own becoming, and our becoming is tied in with the larger becoming of the universe. In the recognition of this, we can feel a calling to be liberated beyond smaller interests to participate in the process of evolution. Hearing this call gives us a sense of purpose, direction and fulfillment.

Evolutionary spirituality provides a perspective that can help us tap into the larger truths of the universe, the path of

its overall becoming, and the opportunity of our personal fulfillment in terms of offering our unique gifts to the world.

Jeff Carreira: I have a sense that there is something important about the evolutionary view and that it offers something that is critically necessary, especially in this historical moment. I think that is why so many people have gotten excited about it. Can you speak a little to this?

Steve McIntosh: In 2008, after my first book came out, I went on a silent retreat by myself for a week because I felt I was being called to dedicate the rest of my life to something and I wanted to see if I could get some insight as to what it was. What hit me during that week was that our unfolding discovery of what's true about the universe has revealed an important new truth, namely that consciousness and culture co-evolve together.

Human culture and human consciousness are parts of a systematic unfolding that work together to improve the human condition. Of course, as we make improvements to the human condition in some ways, we create new challenges and problems in others. Still, we can recognize that a big part of the meaning of our lives is to work toward greater goodness in a world of trouble and suffering. Our new understanding of the process of evolution supercharges this sense of purpose by revealing its universal scope.

The study of evolution shows us how something more keeps coming from something less, and also why sometimes things go wrong—why there are regressions and stagnations. Being able to see how human history has unfolded can

show us so much about what is possible for the future.

I like to compare the more recent emergence of evolutionary spirituality with the emergence of the new worldview of modernism that arose with the Age of Enlightenment. When we do, we see that the modernist worldview brought with it new powers and capacities for humankind, even though modernity's new truth itself was partial.

Descartes' vision of an objective world, and the subsequent reframing of the universe in objective terms, gave us powerful new ways of unpacking nature's secrets. These were essentially new superpowers that were brought about by the emergence of a new worldview. If we compare that to the current times, we see that as the new evolutionary worldview emerges, it will bring in its own set of superpowers.

The philosophical powers of modernity gave rise to democracy, liberal values, science, technology and modern medicine. Despite the many problems that arose with these innovations, we can see that they have improved the human condition immensely. I think the evolutionary worldview holds a similar promise of new superpowers for the future.

Just as the worldview of modernity has given us new powers over the objective world of things, the emerging evolutionary worldview provides new access to the intersubjective world of human relationships and culture. And this new ability to work with cultural evolution promises to give us similar new powers that can help heal the wounds of history. In the same way that

scientific medicine has improved the world, we are now on the cusp of a new kind of social medicine that can increase both our liberty and our equality like never before.

I think the promise that an evolutionary worldview holds for the improvement of the human condition is immense. It's extremely exciting to think of this new way of thinking gaining traction and becoming an accepted understanding that illuminates the minds of more and more people. I believe we will begin to see the flowering of a major new worldview.

Jeff Carreira: That's beautiful and it's a perfect note to end on.



*Cosmic Window by
Nhia Alq*

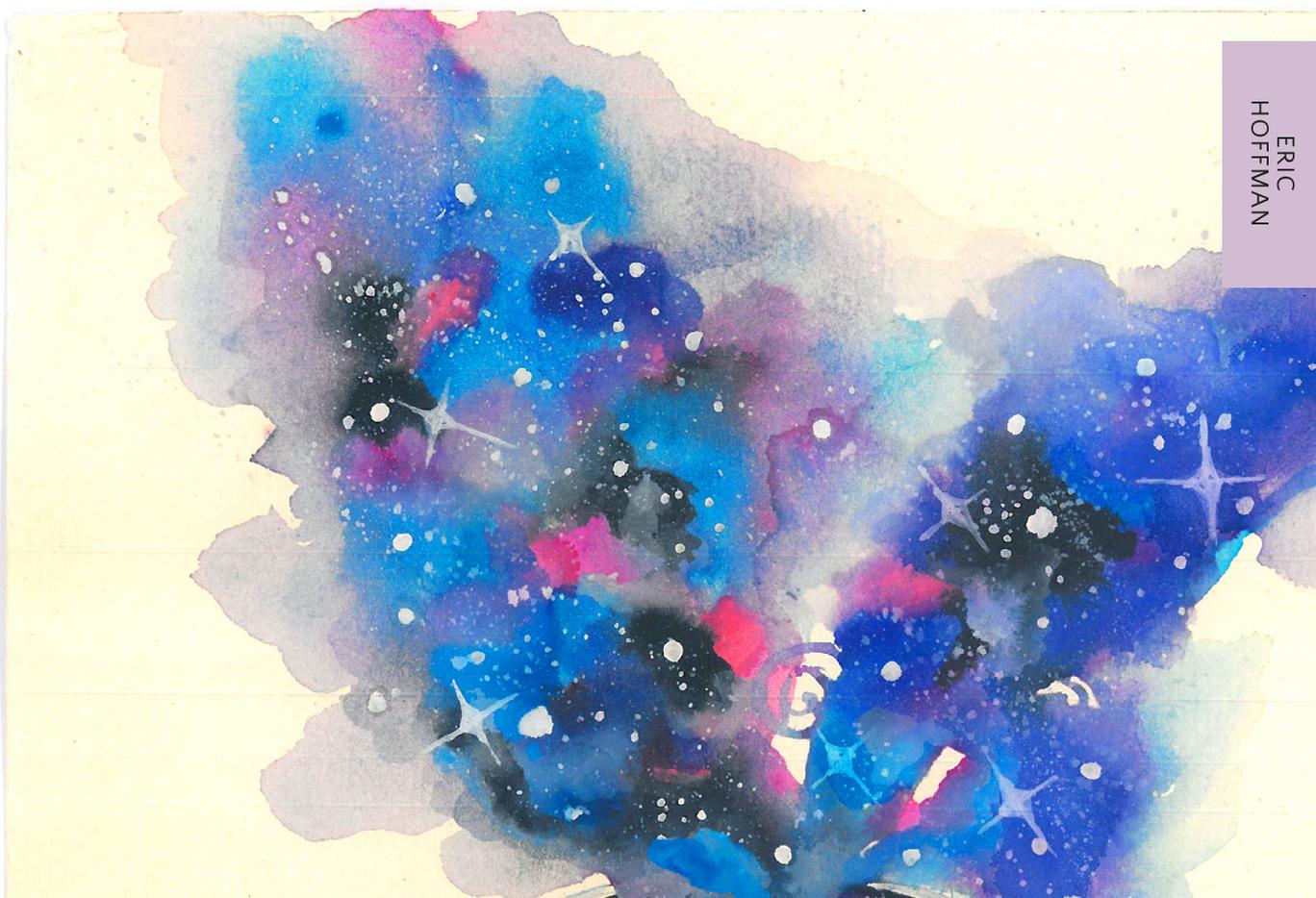


AN INTERVIEW

Does Spirit Evolve?

A DIALOG WITH DR. ERIC HOFFMAN

by Jeff Carneira



Dr. Eric Hoffman teaches philosophy at Saint Joseph's University and sees clients as a philosophical counselor and Gestalt therapist. In addition, for the past three decades, he has been a central leader in an organization that offers weekend human potential workshops called the Essential Experience. We spoke with Eric for this issue because we were aware that he had some interesting critiques to offer about the use of the term evolution in a spiritual context.

Jeff Carreira: Hello Eric and thank you for joining me today. You and I both spend a good deal of time in different worlds. You are a professional academic philosopher and I am a devoted enthusiast, and we have both worked for years in the domain of personal transformation and spiritual growth. I thought a good place to start this conversation would be to ask what you see is the importance of merging these two worlds, perhaps bringing more academic rigor to growth work, and more emotional acceptance to philosophy.

Eric Hoffman: I think the work relating those two worlds is difficult ongoing work. We might never be complete, but it does seem important to recognize that in personal transformation work we often emphasize the body, the heart, and our emotional growth and fear being too much "in our heads" so to speak. So, in that world, there is a tendency to see intellectual work as an impediment. At the same time, in academic philosophical work, there's an inclination to see emotionality as a hindrance and to

value adherence to logic.

There is a kind of mutual mistrust and criticism that exists between these two spheres and it seems important to me to overcome these tendencies in the interest of deeper integrity and the pursuit of unity. What that means is that we recognize the value of clear conceptual work in the process of personal growth, and we also see the value of emotional work in the realm of intellectual pursuit. And again, it's not easy, but it's important.

Jeff Carreira: I suppose ultimately you can't really separate the two. In the world of spiritual growth. For instance, I've had conversations with people who feel that we need to let go of the intellect to do spiritual work. I will sometimes point out that that position is itself an intellectual conclusion. Similarly, a philosopher like William James will point out that most of our philosophical positions are rational attempts to justify what we feel is true. So, in a sense, you can't really separate the mind from the heart, or the feeling sense from the intellectual sense.

Eric Hoffman: I'm totally with you on that. And it's part of the reason why I appreciate philosophies like Existentialism and Pragmatism, and even people like Nietzsche or Marx, and the postmodernists who want to invite us into a more narrative understanding of philosophy rather than a strictly logical one.

Jeff Carreira: Yes, and because I have worked most in the field of spiritual growth, I want to bring the riches of the philosophical tradition into spiritual circles because it's amazing what we miss if we skip over it. When I went back and read Ralph Waldo Emerson, I was amazed at the ideas that he was working with, including his thoughts about the Eastern spiritual ideas that inspired me so much. Emerson was exploring those ideas 200 years ago. Seeing that made me realize that especially those of us who were raised in the West would

benefit tremendously from the riches of the Western philosophical tradition.

Eric Hoffman: I'm with you entirely. And I think connected with that is the question of the individual view of reality versus a more systemic view. Often personal transformation work is very individualistic, sometimes ignoring the larger systems in which individuals exist. We are a part of systems that are larger than us and we need to integrate this fact into our spiritual development. For instance, it seems to me that we need to consider the work being done in social justice as an important part of our spiritual growth and development.

Jeff Carreira: Absolutely. There are questions about social inequality that aren't traditionally considered part of spiritual development, and that leads to a criticism of spiritual work as being all about the individual. It's all about our subjective experience. It's seen as selfish in some circles. This tension has long existed between "spiritual people" and social activists.

I think that is a great context to use as a jumping off point for our conversation about the use of the word evolution in relation to spiritual development. I do use the term evolution in a looser, non-Darwinian sense, in the way Emerson thought about it as well as other prominent figures. For example, Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo wrote extensively about spiritual evolution. I also read a great deal of the American philosopher John Dewey when I was studying education, but only when I went back much later to his work did I discover that he outlined a theory of consciously directed evolution a hundred years ago. In recent decades, Barbara Marx Hubbard and others have popularized the idea of conscious evolution.

There is a long history of the use of the word evolution in a spiritual context and I think, in some ways, that usage is truer to the original meaning of the word, which comes from the Latin

meaning of unfolding a scroll, implying that hidden information gradually becomes visible. Of course, the Darwinian sense of the word dominates discourse today and that has led to some real problems when the word is applied outside of a context of strict natural selection. For a short time, it even legitimized the study of eugenics, the science of controlling human breeding. The American philosophy of Pragmatism was building on Darwin's ideas by trying to create a way of thinking that looked toward the future and progressed toward what works best. It sounds like a good idea until you start to try to define what progress is. Progress for who? Works best for who? Which gets us back to the systemic considerations you brought up earlier.

Eric Hoffman: Leaving Darwin's theory aside for the moment, I would agree that the word just means something like growth and development. To an extent, that is fine when we want to talk about development that takes place during a long period of time over many steps and stages. It seems fair to think of evolution as a particular way of growing and developing that necessitates a number of steps and only takes place at a certain pace. And that meaning is a well-established meaning.

At the same time evolution, in the more clearly defined Darwinian sense, is to some degree a scientifically established fact. And sometimes people use the word evolution in other contexts in order to gain the credibility of this narrower definition. We hope that if we use the word in a more theoretical way, referring to spiritual or cultural evolution, what we are talking about will somehow be seen as an extension of Darwin's theory, when the truth is we are not talking about the same thing.

Jeff Carreira: That's an excellent point. Of course, this extends beyond the term evolution. Science has become the de facto arbiter of truth in the modern era and so it is always tempting to usurp scientific authority in other areas.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, look at how many things are referred to as quantum today.

Jeff Carreira: Exactly. I'm as fascinated by quantum theory as anybody, but with the little knowledge I have of the subject, I can see how many of the ways the word quantum is used don't have anything to do with science. There are some very liberal extensions out there masquerading as truth. And I hear you saying the same about the word evolution.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, there's a way that just using the term evolution seems like an attempt to bestow scientific authority to ideas that are not scientific. I also think that the prevalent use of the word leads to a lot of misunderstanding about Darwin and what science has established. For instance, the way the word evolution is commonly used, it is often thought of as leading to the pinnacle of creation. "Evolutionary progress" implies, as you said earlier, that things that come later are better. Of course, the theory of natural selection doesn't promise progress. It only promises that we will occupy the best ecological niches and adapt to them more completely.

Jeff Carreira: And, again, we are led back to what you said at the beginning about systems. One of the biggest problems with the word evolution is something I have heard described as the *growth to goodness fallacy*, which is the assumption that everything that comes later in an evolutionary process is somehow better than what came before.

Our culture is riddled with this attitude. How often do we hear the phrase "new and improved" for instance? And you see it in spiritual circles where people feel that they're somehow more evolved than others in a way that makes them better.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, and I think that is hard to avoid, even if we don't use the word evolution. For example, in talking to my students recently, we addressed the double standard between men and women. Some people want to quickly claim that we've outgrown that. They see

it as an outdated idea. We are quick to claim that these systemic problems are in the past and that we have evolved beyond them.

Jeff Carreira: Yes, and in those premature declarations we avoid the true complexity of the systems we are a part of.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, and this is especially true in issues around race and indigenous peoples. We sometimes want to forget about history and move on too soon. We want to think that we have evolved beyond that. I think growth is very important and I acknowledge that growth has and is happening, but growth is complex, and we need to acknowledge that and be curious about it and be modest.

Jeff Carreira: We've been outlining many of the problems of using the word evolution, and to be honest, I sometimes avoid using the word myself or at least try to be careful of how I use it, but sometimes it feels like the best word to use because it implies more than growth in the normal sense. There are times when I want to claim a space beyond ordinary growth.

The word evolution implies something more radical than the growth of a fingernail for instance. Our fingernails grow, but they don't change. That's a kind of growth, but when we talk about evolution, we're talking about a transformation, a change in form. So what comes later is somehow not the same as what was there before. I would never say my fingernails evolve. Because they don't change in any underlying way.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, and in the case of an acorn, you might say that it evolves into an Oak tree.

Jeff Carreira: Yes, because it's a much more complicated form of growth than fingernails.

There is another reason that I am sometimes hesitant to use the term

evolution and that is because I feel like the word evolution can be limiting when we use it in a spiritual context.

I think spiritual growth happens in dimensions beyond the three dimensions of our familiar ways of perceiving and I don't know that it happens in accordance with linear time. Spiritual growth, or spiritual evolution as I see it, is more of an expansion of who we are into other dimensions of being.

And I don't believe that growth necessarily adheres to our sense of time in the way that Darwinian evolution is assumed to. My spiritual life has brought me to believe that things are much stranger than that.

Eric Hoffman: Well, it's interesting because that brings us back to the point that you were making a moment ago about evolution involving transformation and a change in kind rather than merely changing quantity. That implies that, in an evolutionary process in this wider sense, a discontinuity of some sort is part of the process.

So, at a certain point there's a change in kind that can't be simply encompassed by the previous types of existence. There's a new species, for example, or some kind of new being. This aspect of evolution was captured in the early evolutionary thinking of people like Hegel and Marx in their notion of dialectical development. What I'm hearing you describing is a depth of discontinuity that goes beyond the idea of merely creating a new synthesis by pulling things together in new ways. Rather, it is an event that is completely discontinuous with what came before.

Jeff Carreira: I realize that we run into many philosophical problems when we speak in terms of total discontinuity, but yes, I feel that in some ways we are talking about a discontinuous leap into something novel.

Of course, I also want to be sure that when I use the phrase "other

dimensions,” that essentially means things that I can’t see or know about beforehand. When we go through a process of spiritual evolution or transformation, we are expanding into more of who we already are, but couldn’t see before.

Eric Hoffman: Yes, it seems important to me that at some point in the process, even if only in retrospect, we can recapture continuity. If what you are saying is that the leap seems discontinuous until we see more of what was already there, I’m willing to go with that possibility. But, if we are suddenly going to find ourselves on the other side of the galaxy tomorrow without any idea of how we got there, that doesn’t sound like evolution to me. It sounds more like magic. Now I’m not against the idea of magic, but I do feel compelled to maintain the integrity of the whole, and that means some sort of continuity inclusive of however many dimensions we ultimately realize.

Jeff Carreira: This is fascinating to me because I’ve had breakthrough experiences that felt more like magic, where something shifted and, suddenly, I was in an inner world that I could not have predicted and couldn’t understand rationally at all. And I guess this brings us back to the point we started with because there is always a part of us that is trying to mitigate between the spiritual aspects of our experience and the concrete elements of it. Mystical experiences are very real, but they often do not fit at all into our conception of reality. I find that I always want to express the truly extraordinary nature of these possibilities without making them seem like fantasy. I am trying to thread a needle between the fantastic and the mundane.

Eric Hoffman: Yes. I think this is the general problem of trying to integrate mysticism into our overall understanding of reality. I know people like Ken Wilber have tried to do this for a long time, but it is a very hard thing to

do - to get things that seem separate to neatly fit into a larger whole.



AN INTERVIEW

Spiritual Equity

AN INTERVIEW WITH TEJAL TARRO

by Jeff Carneira



Tejal Tarro is known as the Co-Creator and Chief Catalyst of Human Transformation at AWE (Advancing Workplace Excellence), an organization dedicated to supporting leaders in the space of diversity and inclusion. Tejal is a practitioner of mindfulness and she has a deep passion and vision for creating equity and access for those who are marginalized in the workplace. We spoke with Tejal for this issue because we wanted to explore how greater diversity and inclusion could be brought to the alternative spiritual world.

Jeff Carreira: Hello Tejal and thank you for speaking with us. Let me start the discussion by saying that, over the last century, the idea that spirituality is something that evolves has become, at least within certain circles, popular. Of course, different people have different ideas about what that means, and in some of the conversations we have had for our issue on the evolution of spirituality, issues of equity and inclusion have been raised that I would like to speak with you about.

You and I have both been involved in alternative forms of spirituality for a long time. That cultural movement in its popular form today largely came out of the

counterculture of the 1960s and then the human potential movement of the 1970s. It grew into the 1980s as the New Age movement and has continued to become more popular in ever new forms since. Today yoga and even meditation have entered mainstream culture and the acceptance and popularity of alternative spiritual forms continues to grow.

What you notice if you look at these worlds is that they do not tend to be culturally diverse and inclusive. By and large, the practitioners are white and of European descent. I had a conversation with a Zen teacher probably twenty years ago and asked him about this. He said at the time that people from disenfranchised subsets of the population are struggling for more basic freedoms, and until those are attained, it will be difficult for them to have the bandwidth for alternative spiritual pursuits.

That was at least twenty years ago and we don't live in the same world. Movements like Me Too, the Black Lives Matter, and the awakening around gender fluidity, to mention just a few, are all challenging the accepted norms of our culture. I know that you are working directly with organizations and individuals around issues of social justice and equity, and I wanted to speak with you to ask you to share the perspective and wisdom you've gained so we can explore how the spiritual world might become more inclusive and reflect a higher level of what we might call spiritual equity.

But before we get into that, maybe you can start by telling our readers a bit about yourself.

Tejal Tarro: To speak about my spiritual life, I was born in the United States during

the 1970s to immigrant parents. So, I have always felt that I existed on the outskirts of accepted norms even while my parents were busy trying to assimilate into those norms. I grew up with Hindu parents, although my father eventually converted to Buddhism, and I grew up in a neighborhood that was almost entirely made up of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. I was the only Indian person there. So, I grew up within this conflict of worldviews. In Indian culture, I grew up within a patriarchal society that told me who could be a guru, who could be a teacher, and where a woman's place was in it all. I struggled with all of these things, and my parents were struggling to find Hinduism in the United States.

I grew up with a longing for spirituality and I didn't quite know how to access it. The Hari Krishnas were popular at the time and I got involved with that because the chanting and connection to Krishna matched my heritage, but it was far outside of the norm and so I kept it private and hidden from public view.

By the time I was in my early twenties, yoga was starting to take root and I was part of a community called Yogaville led by Swami Satchidananda. Things started connecting with me there, even though I still kept those parts of myself hidden and I was still struggling to find a community that I could connect to. I tried lots of things from Unitarian Christian churches, to a Course in Miracles work, and much more.

In terms of my work, I work in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. I work with people from institutions of higher education and other organizations to explore what is getting in the way of

equity and inclusion and belonging.

Jeff Carreira: That's a beautiful introduction and perfect because we're in the beginnings of an expanding cultural awakening that is looking at equity in terms of gender, race, socio-economic circumstances and more. We are seeing more and more clearly how we've been excluding a lot of people, sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, from full participation in the fruits of society. We've created social systems that exclude others and I wanted to ask you what you see of that in the world of alternative spirituality.

Tejal Tarro: I think it starts with the system. Any pattern of interactions between people is a system. That includes families, communities, organizations, and certainly our spiritual communities. In any system, there exists inequity due to a difference in the power dynamics.

We can look at this through a number of different lenses. First there's the power of position. If you're the leader of a spiritual organization or part of a leadership group, you have positional power over deciding what services you provide, when you will do things, and how people gain access to them.

Then there's power inherent in expertise and experience. By having specific knowledge, we gain power, and by power we mean the ability to act and have influence over ourselves and others. In any system, there will be structures and norms in place that make it easier for some people to access and influence and act and make it harder for others.

Jeff Carreira: People involved with alternative forms of spirituality believe that they are important and that they can make a difference. And today it is clear that any vision we have of the future, or the evolution of spirituality, must include greater inclusion and diversity.

Tejal Tarro: Absolutely. I believe that all of us need to be at the table to create real change. And if some people don't have a seat at the table or they don't have access to knowledge or skills, they can't fully share what they have to give.

This is about maximizing our co-creative potential by including all the voices at the table. It is about co-creation and everyone needs to be able to show up as their fullest, best self.

There is one level of addressing social systems change where we look at policies, procedures and resources. We might see that some people don't have economic access, or physical access. And these are all important. But there is another layer of the power dynamics that involves methods of communication and our mental models. If we're really trying to be more inclusive, we have to look at all of those dimensions as well.

In spiritual communities, if people don't find teachers that are like them, they don't have the same access. You and I could be trying to share the same spiritual concept, for instance, but you're using your lived experiences and your vernacular to express it and will reach some people, while I might express it differently based on my lived experiences, and that might connect to somebody different. Having more diversity among those that share the wisdom attracts a more diverse audience as well.

Jeff Carreira: You know, this is a great point because, for myself, I know that initially I was thinking along the lines of inviting more diversity, but I realized that I may not be able to just invite more diversity because some people just can't connect to me. We all connect in different ways with different people. In more recent years, I have become more interested in having this wisdom shared by more people representing more diverse backgrounds. And it feels like that is the only way that true inclusivity can happen.

Tejal Tarro: Yeah, I one hundred percent agree, and you know, I often feel very humbled by recognizing how deeply interwoven I am into the system and the patterns of it, and how much my ability to act and influence is determined by my lived experiences. I'm also beginning to shift how I think by embracing the fact that it doesn't have to be me out there doing all the work. There is so much more power in many voices.

Jeff Carreira: I have something else I would like to ask you. I already noted that the alternative spiritual world is not diverse and historically there are reasons why that is the case. For the past half of a century, there has been great inequity in access to this wisdom and these tools because, for people to be involved in this work, they needed to have disposable income and time and education, etc. So, there is a lack of diversity and the reasons for that are deep and systemic. Sometimes it is hard to know what will really work to change things.

Tejal Tarro: Yes. Absolutely. And it goes back to power. So, yes, there is inequity because some people haven't had the

benefit of having decades to follow and work in these movements. So, we find that there are some groups under-represented. The way we can create equity so more people can rise to leadership in these communities is for those of us who have enjoyed privilege to recognize potential and invest in it. We can teach others while we also learn from them. We can create a mutual learning environment and our learning from each other becomes an investment in a more inclusive future.

Jeff Carreira: I'm feeling very moved because I think I am seeing another dimension of this. It strikes me that we often think about diversity, equity, justice and inclusion in social, political and economic terms. In that way of thinking, we tend to see a disadvantaged group that needs equal access. And of course, that is a part of the truth that cannot be denied.

At the same time, right now I am feeling that there's an awakening of the human soul that needs us to live as one. There is an awakening for all of us that cannot happen until the human family truly recognizes unity. I think that the soul of humanity wants to recreate itself as one.

Tejal Tarro: I love that you said that because something resonated for me in it. In spiritual communities, people will often claim that we're all one, but in some ways, I have sometimes experienced that as spiritual bypassing as it may have allowed for complacency because to truly see others as one, you must truly understand them. It's very easy to say, we're all one. But I think to make that real you have to go through the journey of giving access to others who are truly different. On a human level, we have to

do the work and be intimately together in an inclusive way so that you can come to the deeper realization that we are truly one.

I've been in many spiritual communities where I hear that we're all one, but when I click through the zoom screen and see who is there, I still wonder if I really belong. Until you really get to know the deeper essences of me, you can't claim we're one

Jeff Carreira: That makes sense, and you know, to me, the spiritual quest is all about bringing heaven to Earth. So, in theory, we're all one. And I think in our highest moments, we have that sense of oneness, but until it's manifest here on Earth, it's not ultimately true. It might be true in heaven, but we need to make it true on Earth as well.

Talking to you now, it seems to me that inclusivity must include dismantling the economic, political, and cultural power inequities to open access and influence to everyone, but it also needs to include work at the level of the soul. I'm feeling so inspired by the possibility of creating a different experience of being human together with everyone.

Tejal Tarro: I'm excited too, because this can give many people greater access to spiritual liberation and to co-creative expression, and that will redefine what it means to be human in a much better way.

Jeff Carreira: Yes, and it doesn't just give greater access and influence to other people, because it is all of us that will benefit from this awakening. There is something that is possible for humanity that none of us will have access to until true inclusivity is realized. And this might

be the awakening that's necessary to solve the problems of the world.

Tejal Tarro: Yes. I feel that.

Jeff Carreira: Me too. And it wants to manifest through all of this incredible work that people like you are doing.

Tejal Tarro: I believe that if people can realize equity and inclusivity at a spiritual level, we will be able to find the solutions to problems that so often evade us. I see us creating the practices, policies and economic systems needed to address issues like racial injustice, wealth inequality and climate change. The possibilities make my heart light up.



BOOK REVIEW

A MONK AND
ROBOT BOOK

BECKY CHAMBERS

Monk & Robot

A BOOK REVIEW BY ROBIN BECK



As a genre, science fiction is often misunderstood. Behind the cool gadgets, far-off worlds, and post-apocalyptic sorrows often portrayed, science fiction is always a commentary on the current social paradigm. As author and historian Jill Lepore says, “science fiction is not fundamentally about the future. It really is always about the present or about the past. So to read it as a manifesto for the future is to begin by misreading it.”

Our culture is full of blatant references to a future inspired by the tech from science fiction pioneers. The most current example of this trend is Facebook’s rebranding as Meta, now on a mission to build the “metaverse”. Taken directly from Neal Stephenson’s highly influential *Snow Crash*, the metaverse is an evolution of the internet where access is restricted by a corporate monopoly. To maintain control, the corporate magnates release a hybrid computer / physical virus that causes a player’s brain to shut down. They “crash”, and are no longer able to communicate.

With references to these science fiction tropes so pervasive throughout our culture, it's no wonder that the genre is often ignored or dismissed as too "futuristic" or "irrelevant". Most of us can probably agree that Mark Zuckerberg's dreams for the future are not based around what might be best for society, especially when the "metaverse" is marketed as a vision of the future for connection and communication, and when the technology in *Snow Crash* was so clearly intended as a warning against the social structures that could place control of such technologies in the hands of a company like Facebook.

For forward-thinking and hopeful individuals, aversion to immersing oneself in dark, apocalyptic visions of the future is a valid reason for avoiding science fiction. Where are the visions of a hopeful future we all strive for? Is it necessary to imagine such calamity and self-destruction when we dream about the future?

Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* is a playful and optimistic riff on human potential. Set on a small moon orbiting a far-off planet, the story paints a picture of a lush world that has emerged from the follies of our extractive society into a relationship of balance and harmony with the natural world. Cities, jobs, and technology all exist, but feel as if they are purposefully designed to be in service to the needs of humans. Computers are built to last for decades and be repaired with simple tools, and not intended to distract people from everyday life. Structures utilize renewable energies and materials, and are intentionally built to decay, and be reimagined over time. Humanity prides

itself on living in harmony with nature, and prioritizes questions of meaning and fulfillment over progress and production.

There is a utopian tone to the description of society that can't be missed. Solar panels cover buildings with living roofs, gender and sexual equality are fully realized, and social mobility is as simple as deciding on how an individual wants to use their time. While this future can feel a little too perfect at times, Chambers artfully reminds the reader of humanity's destructive past, and how much social and environmental pain was endured to reach a state of harmony with the natural world. Relics of the factory age dot the landscape, left as toxic, decaying reminders of humanity's dark past. Much of the world has been left to nature, with the domain of human impact restrained to allow for balance to emerge. The presumed extinction of the cricket and the desire to hear its chirp for themselves is what sets the main character's journey in motion.

The storyline follows a young monk named Dex on a quest for personal meaning and purpose. Without the need to define themselves by a job or status, the questions of what it means to live a good life and how to relate to others become the central theme of the book. Dex takes on the role of a Tea Monk, and makes it their purpose to provide comfort and warmth to anyone that needs the company and attention of authenticity to brighten their day. Chambers makes it obvious that even without the pervasive narratives of cultural clash and political upheaval, the everyday struggles people endure would still be present, and are the central theme of lives unmarked by war and trauma.

As we follow Dex on their quest of self-discovery, an unlikely meeting with a robot sets up the philosophical heart of the book. Sometime in the distant past robots became self-aware, and humans gave them the choice of participating in human society as equals, or forming their own. The robots chose to live amongst nature, completely isolated from human contact and interaction for several centuries. In a moment of existential doubt, Dex sets out on a dangerous trek through the wilderness in search of purpose and the elusive sound of crickets, only to encounter Mosschap, a robot who has been tasked with establishing contact with humans again. Mosschap asks a shocked and frightened Dex: "What do you need, and how might I help?"

As a character, Mosschap deepens the sense of discomfort in Dex about their own purpose in life. While the robot accompanies Dex as their guide and protector on their quest for crickets, their shared "humanity" emerges, and it becomes obvious to Dex that consciousness is not solely a human capacity, and doesn't make us special or unique. Mosschap is intrigued and troubled by Dex's lack of self-worth, and goes out of the way to provide comfort and solace to their new friend by sharing their own understanding of life, beauty and experience.

The climax of the book centers around the central theme of meaning and purpose. While Dex is despondent and exhausted, Mosschap asks "What's the purpose of a robot, Sibling Dex? Why do you have to have one in order to feel content?"

Dex responds, "because we're different [from robots]".

"Are you? You're an animal, Sibling Dex. You are not separate or other. You are allowed to just live. That is all most animals do."

"Then how," Dex said, "how does the idea of maybe being meaningless sit well with you?"

Mosschap acknowledges, "because I know that no matter what, I'm wonderful".

In Dex's struggle, I easily found myself. The sense that I'm supposed to be special, and that my life has to mean something has haunted me in fits and spurts throughout my adolescence and adulthood, and is a central pillar of many religious traditions. Challenging us to grow beyond our sense of individuality is provoking, and touches some of the deepest core beliefs of modern Western society. In Chambers' gentle invitation to look beyond our assumed need for privilege and place in the universe, I found existential release, and permission to unburden my soul.

Chambers opens the book by dedicating it to the reader: "For anybody who could use a break". That's the spirit and tone that cradles us as each page is slowly and lovingly turned. You feel held, as if Chambers is touching our hopelessness, and lamenting the loss of the sacred here and now by reaching out to the future, with a whisper that all is not yet lost, and that we may yet find our place in this world.

A Psalm for the Wild-Built is the first book in the Monk & Robot series. I look forward to the second installment in Summer 2022.



MEMBERS'

Contributions

The Artist of Possibility includes contributions from members of **The Mystery School**, an online community of inspired individuals dedicated to spiritual transformation and mutual evolution.

If you'd like to become a member, join here!



Cosmic Coffee by Nhia Alq

CONSTRUCTIONS

by Deborah Kaplan

INTRODUCTION

This creative work is about the symbiotic relationship between trusting in our inner voice (intuition) and our ability to respond to it authentically. I believe this interaction and enactment, over time, directs all life from its natural state - a state of infinite fullness and possibility. Sustaining a fluid receptivity, while catching and responding to what wants to be paid attention to, is and has been an unorthodox and frowned upon (even risky) way to live. Paradoxically, life lived from this fluid unfolding feels deeply right and hopeful. A life emerges in great variety.

This book came to be in a state of fluidity although it felt like a dull panic in a blind search. It is a work that culminated from a 10 month long Philosophy course in creating a new paradigm in culture. It seemed appropriate to create an articulation of what this might look like from 'something new' or 'outside my experience' and unique to this project, into the spirit of future possibilities- new worlds. Yet all my ideas seemed contrived and uninspired- patched together by my mind.

By this point we had come to the last book in our course called 'The Culture of Spontaneity'. A flash of insight appeared after the first few pages. Not only was I reading about a life I had always led but the message of spontaneity and authenticity seemed to be the launching pad into the new paradigm. The final selection pointed to the active direction forward into the next paradigm and as instantly as I saw that I recognized that my life had always been , and ongoingly still, a life of spontaneous insights that occur as choice-less choices. What have I done? What am I doing now?

My articulation project is the life I am already living. So, I looked around and saw the artwork I had done this past year. Its entirely new medium and format emerged from a period of artistic frustration and ultimately a letting go of anything I had ever done or known about art. The process of reviewing art forms and rejecting them, one by one, emptied a space for something new.

An energetic, visceral response to seeing these stencils in my studio generated a flood of connecting ideas that all made a kind of 'sense'. Potential newness, freshness, discovery- a new world. This is where I had been and where I was going. One continual reaction to life. A trust in an inner listening that's more formidable- drowning out a dirge of opinion. Choice-less choices and a freedom to respond spontaneously. '

As I write, this journey continues to want to reach beyond what I am writing. Thank you Jeff, for the momentum you have ignited in us all.







SUFI STORIES
HOLY OF HOLIES

by KD Meyers

A hundred and eight years ago, in the time before popcorn or Cracker Jacks, an exquisitely beautiful and regal woman from Africa appeared and wandered through the gate into the main square of Brazirabad, India. Her name was the Soul of Africa. She was exceptionally tall, and walked with a stately erect and elegant posture. She had countless fine qualities, and, of all her innumerable fine qualities, what stood out the most was the flawless perfection of her skin—infinately dark and pitch black. As I said, she was a beautiful, beautiful woman, with such breathtaking beauty that at times it could be difficult to look at her. And her blackest of black skin shone with such clarity and radiance that, if you were close enough, you could see yourself and others around you reflected in her cheeks like a mirror. In other words, she could show you yourself, as if she was the reflection of yourself.

When people first came in contact with her, they could be frightened of her, but although she had an imposing and regal presence, there was a Love and generosity that radiated from her which was readily available and that everyone could feel. When she spoke everyone listened, as her voice was powerful and booming, and she spoke with purpose. And her laugh, which was like a rich cackle, could be heard blocks away.

And there was something else that was unusual and even more odd about her. Something more striking, if that was even possible. There was something very strange about her dress. What was so peculiar was she wore a garment that was full of holes, and, in what many considered a purely sacrilegious fashion, she called her garment the “Holy of Holies.”

Now this was not a garment with a few holes, and people could not help but notice them. When she first came there were many holes, each about the size of a dime and you couldn't see much through them. But as time went on, that changed. And when people commented on the holes in her dress, she would tell them a story, in bold and irreverent fashion— "The Holy of holies says this. . ." And "the Holy of Holies says that. . ." Although many people were intrigued by her, and others tried to ignore her, all of the pious of Brazirabad were insulted. "How could she call this rag the Holy of Holies—the Holiest thing of Holy things?," they said.

She would come and go from the city, and she would disappear sometimes for weeks at a time, and each time she came back, people would gather and watch in dismay as her garment had more and bigger holes in it. The thing just became fuller and fuller of holes, which actually made it lesser and lesser of anything. And people got afraid, as they didn't know when the "Holy of Holies" was going to show more of her than anyone wanted to see.

As time went on, and people became more aware of her, word began to spread like wildfire across the whole of India about this so called "crazy" woman, and the Holy of Holies. "This woman is insane," people said. And some thought she should be beaten, or stoned. Others believed she should be run out of town. One day even the Grand Brazir of Brazirabad appeared, curious about all the buzz about this woman. When he saw her, he didn't know what to make of her, and he just crossed his arms, put a finger in front of his lips, and shook his head in wonder, and then went away perplexed.

But around this whole thing, there was also a miracle that happened. Even as the holes in the Holy of Holies got bigger and bigger each day—and there were fewer and fewer threads left to cover her, there was nothing that compromised the modesty and integrity of this woman. In fact, her skin shown brighter and brighter, and reflected all the other light off her blackness so brightly that, when you looked at her, all you could see was a black luminous emptiness and a few leftover strands of thread. You see, you could not see the shape of her torso, or her chest, or legs, or even her behind. She was a shimmering luminosity in the outline of a human form with a few strands of straggling threads around her. She was like an exquisite walking and talking black hole.

Week after week, she returned to the square, and fewer and fewer strands of her garment - the Holy of Holies - remained until one day there was only a single thread left, and everyone was afraid of what would be left when that thread was gone.

She left once more, and was gone, but the next week word spread that she was returning to the city, and a huge crowd gathered in the square to gaze at her when she entered the town. They were so curious to see if the final thread disappeared, and what would be revealed when there was nothing left. As she approached the entrance, the gates of the city opened, and the crowd fell silent, with everyone holding their breath in anticipation. And as she appeared through the gate, gasps were heard throughout the crowd.

Don't you see, when there is nothing left to be identified with or hold onto, then the Greater Soul appears. And in that moment, the awesomeness of the Holy of Holies was realized. People were in bliss from the revelation that just occurred and the whole city of Brazirabad disappeared from the face of the Earth in the ecstasy, and blackness, and emptiness of the Holy of Holies.





Entries From

*The Spontaneous
Writing Circle*

A NEW SEASON

Mornings contain the signposts.
 Informing our waiting bodies and souls
 That change is coming.
 The mornings will always foretell
 It is embedded in the very air
 The molecules entering our lungs with each breath.
 Mornings smell different, feel different, enter us differently.
 In the space all around and inside us
 A slightly new and different sun
 Illuminating our day
 Illuminating our way from where we've been
 To what's coming.
 The shift to a new season is barely palpable.
 Then seems to rush, having been impatiently waiting.
 How is it for you when the world suddenly shifts?
 Summer sun is different from autumn sun
 Summer has a feel, and autumn has a feel
 And the change itself from summer to autumn has its own feel.
 Like a great, giant slide, up up up we go....to the crescendo of the season
 And down.
 The great falling down of the leaves and the air and the light
 Season caressing our bodies and souls in a great eternal wave of change.
 What is required to roll with the waves of life itself?
 The ups and downs, always persistent
 Relentlessly inviting my perceptions into greater and greater focus
 Or un-focus.
 As I behold the morning's scent and light
 I feel all of the earth shifting in front of me without my permission
 Or my assistance - Or my beckoning.
 It just does.
 Grateful I am that it does not ask me permission for any of this
 I would die in ecstatic indecision.

By Liz Stone

Each week Monday I look forward to receiving a reminder that the Mystery School Spontaneous Writing Circle is - vibrating me in high frequency. Love is all I need to create anew - a flood of energy that's lit with feeling deciphered in spaces and words in lines and fellow and gallow writers doing the same. What a life. Eh? Joy cometh.

(1) Chattering Mind

November 1, 2021 to February 2, 2022

Arriving and Leaving

Reincarnation versus pounding headaches.
There's no chance becoming enlightened
In December, as sang Frank Sinatra, singing.
Or did I get there today by way of having admired comedy for its ever
buoyancy?
Daily and steadily is my perception of the entrance
Key to the spiritual realm.
I practice in ways as different from one coffee café's brews
Regularly as one or two cups, maybe foamed and cinnamon
sprinkled.
The easiest joys are how and why and when?
And then, this and that and those times whirring
Creating its own whir.
Being inside I arrive at the eternal.
Just as I arrive I leave empty handed
Having had the key for a whirl of peace and joy and inner and outer love.
I arrive once again into the arms of love right here
In memory of the curling take-off
In the presence of lasting send-off
Tethered to the key that hides and reappears endlessly.

(2) Ing

Arriving and Leaving

In a curling take-off
Becoming the spirit realm
Is the presence of a send-off
Tethered is a key
That hides and reappears

by Michelle Babian

Resonating...

Resonating with higher vibrations of the awakened cosmos

Where soft winds of change blow eternally

With the speed of light

We are showered by trillions of stars

As dots of brilliant light coming through us

We merge with awakening consciousness

through eons of time

In the expansiveness of being One with the cosmos

The peace and emptiness of the freedom within

comes from vibrating with higher frequencies of light

Golden glimmering vibrant light

As a pool percolating through multi universes

reaching a blue planet, our temporary home

In resonance we meet through the expansive feeling of a sacred space

shaped as our body of light that materializes as a human being

The expression of the dream of the source of creation

In luminous colored frequencies

In a unique concert of united selves!

Indeed!

by Adriana Colotti Comel

"When I first joined the Spontaneous Circle, I was nervous and often blocked. It was new, scary territory. Today, my experience is one of sheer joy and excitement. I love waiting to see what comes forward. I love waiting to see how I am shifted by the experience of opening up. It is the highlight of my week and I'm excited to venture into new territory by allowing Spirit to move my pen. "

The voice of a Savior

Such mad simplicity
In these words.
How dare it – this massive truth
Be so simple
As to be hidden in plain view.

I want to lose my selfish self.
To live so purely in every moment
To be present to the abiding grace
That lives between everything
Every little thing.
Like air, Grace occupies the space between.
We look through and still not see.

I would like to give up the notion of fear
To live in the purest curiosity
About why I came to this earth
Why I chose.
Why I keep choosing to live.

I would like to practice living without fear.
Agree to live in the blackness some days
And be lost and naked and okay.

I wonder who I would become
If I were choosing.
If I could hear the Savior's voice as my own.

by Liz Stone

The Writing Circle is a “A treasure chest of wonder! Never knowing what will emerge, I delight in the focused energy of the group and the inherent spontaneity. Whether listening to others, pausing for words to waft my way, or writing, I am always inspired being in the Writing Circle. Thanks, Deborah and friends!”

Eternal Now

In the midst of Covid lockdown, someone in our circle read a beautifully descriptive, detailed excerpt from a journal about the author's sighting of tens of thousands of migrating birds along the Oregon coast. As he stood at the ocean edge, noting species and numbers, he flipped his pencil in surrender to the futility of estimating the vast number of birds in sight. We listened to the reading and then each wrote for a few reflective moments, heading in whatever direction inspired us. This was my brief writing:

Flipping a pencil in the air over the number of birds migrating past and nesting in view! How sweet the pencil flip and how majestic the image of ten miles of nestled birds in ocean cliffs. How hopeful and enriched I feel just hearing those words!

Almost at a standstill in wonder. Slowly the pen approaches another word, but cautiously. I'm standing at the water's edge, struck by the beauty of flight and swells of both ocean and birds, though just 'birds' seems diminutive to the sight. 'Winged wonders' more apt.

In the midst of such change and loss and uncertainty, there is still flight - and beauty - and rebirth and renewal. In moments like this, I understand "Hope springs eternal."

by Nicole Bremness

The Writing Circle: "Open-hearted, unexpected, nurturing, arising from listening ... and doing nothing ..."

Thermodynamics

It is said: Energy can't be created or destroyed, only converted, changed from one form to another.

So,

Maybe, if there actually was a Big Bang - one of many, I imagine, again and again - all that burst out of NoThingNess into an expressed SomeThingNess - Is a conversion of some form of energy, always already there - here - before and behind and within the Big Bang.

I often imagine that *Bang* happening because two fields of nothingness rubbed against each other and ignited a happening.

In that story, the Universe we know emerged out of -

Nothing touching Nothing,

Potential touching Potential

Contact, connection, the press of touch so Intense,
Intimate that something burst

Open

Nothingness Unfolding

Breathing itself into existence

A love song,

A fertile birth

A delight

Can we, can I, make space, be open, fluid, boundless enough to be with the layers of experience, layers of being, Kaunas,

From the very small and personal, all the way

Turtle by turtle

Out to the most infinite dance?

And ... crying and laughing, be awed that there is anything at all, by Being Itself ...?

by Bonnie Winer



The *Mystery* School

An online community of inspired individuals dedicated to spiritual transformation and mutual evolution

To become a member, join here!

If you are an enrolled member and would like to submit content to be considered for publication in a future issue of *The Artist of Possibility*, you will find our submission guidelines [here](#).