

SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2015

7:30 am–8:30 am	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:30 am–8:45 am	Welcome and Forum Introduction –William Linton
8:45 am–9:45 am	Explorations into the Body of Consciousness –Charles Raison, M.D.
9:45 am–10:45 am	Conscious Evolution: Our Next Stage –Barbara Marx Hubbard
10:45 am–11:15 am	Break
11:15 am–12:15 pm	Self-Awareness –Peter Russell, M.A., D.C.S.
12:15 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm–2:30 pm	WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN WAKING: The Art of Shaping the Beautiful Question –David Whyte
2:30 pm–3:00 pm	Conversation – Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B. & David Whyte
3:00 pm–3:30 pm	Break
3:30 pm–4:30 pm	Panel Discussion: B. Marx Hubbard, C. Raison, P. Russell & D. Whyte Moderator: Steve Paulson
4:30 pm–6:00 pm	Reception
6:30 pm–8:00 pm	Hosted Dinner Conversations (pre-registration required)

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2015

7:30 am–8:30 am	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:30 am–8:40 am	Day Two Overview –William Linton
8:40 am–8:50 am	Opening Meditation –Louie Schwartzberg & Malynn Utzinger, M.D.
8:50 am–9:50 am	Is There a Neurobiology of Collective Consciousness? –Joy Hirsch, Ph.D.
9:50 am–10:15 am	Break
10:15 am–11:15 am	What Could Be an Awakened Response to Our World? –Vanja Palmers
11:15 am–12:15 pm	Awakening the Sacred Within –Adele Getty
12:15 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm–2:30 pm	Who is Awakening? What Does it Mean to Be Awake? –Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B.
2:30 pm–2:40 pm	Break
2:40 pm–3:40 pm	Panel Discussion: A. Getty, J. Hirsch, V. Palmers & Brother D. Steindl-Rast Moderator: Steve Paulson
3:40 pm–4:00 pm	Closing Meditation –Vanja Palmers
4:00 pm–5:00 pm	Dessert Reception

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Conscious Evolution
THE AWAKENING

International Forum
on Consciousness

May 7–8, 2015

CONSCIOUS EVOLUTION: THE AWAKENING

In a world of tangible atoms, molecules, stars and galaxies, the existence of consciousness is rightly regarded as an outstanding mystery. Indeed, consciousness is the very ground of our being—and yet it cannot be weighed and measured in the conventional sense. Consciousness is also the means by which the universe awakens to its own majesty. Through consciousness, the web of life can know and understand itself and can even begin to guide its own future form.

From all corners of the globe, voices of wisdom and action call for us to shift our consciousness up a notch—to build on the lessons of past and present, and to grow further into new systems, new ways of being that may better allow us to foster a long-term, sustainable relationship with the biosphere and the ever-evolving cosmos. How might we consciously participate in the smallest steps and the largest leaps?

We invite you to join the explorers, co-creators and builders of the next stages of our human being.

Coordinated by the BioPharmaceutical Technology Center Institute and Promega Corporation.

PRESENTERS

Adele Getty *Author of Goddess: Mother of Living Nature and A Sense of the Sacred: Finding Our Spiritual Lives Through Ceremony, Sonoma County, CA*

Joy Hirsch, Ph.D. *Professor of Psychiatry and Neurobiology & Member, Integrated Neuroscience Program, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, CT*

William Linton *President & CEO, Promega Corporation, Madison, WI (Moderator)*

Barbara Marx Hubbard *Futurist, Author and Public Speaker, Foundation for Conscious Evolution, Santa Barbara, CA*

Vanja Palmers *Zen Priest, Switzerland*

Steve Paulson *Executive Producer, To the Best of Our Knowledge, Wisconsin Public Radio and Public Radio International, Madison, WI (Panel Moderator)*

Charles Raison, M.D. *Mike and Mary Sue Shannon Professor of Mind, Body, and Family-Wellbeing, School of Human Ecology; Professor, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI*

Peter Russell, M.A., D.C.S. *Fellow, Institute of Noetic Sciences, World Business Academy and Findhorn Foundation, Sausalito, CA*

Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B. *Benedictine Monk, A Network for Grateful Living, Austria*

David Whyte *Poet, Author, Lecturer, Whidbey Island, WA*

ABSTRACTS

Awakening the Sacred Within

Adele Getty

I will be examining the cross cultural aspects of ceremony, how it functions and the purpose it serves. The focus will be primarily on those cultures that use entheogens in a ceremonial setting and how this might be applicable to the emerging field of psychedelic therapy. We will look at the field of shamanism and how the past has come calling. The question is how can we re-weave the shamanic, animistic and ceremonial thread back into contemporary culture? We are urgently being asked to rethink who we are as human beings.

Since 1859 when Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, science has established humanity as a part of Nature. At the same time humanists have declared we are the crown of creation and that we can transcend this genetic heritage, as if a leaf of a tree can live without its branches and roots. With all that science has given us, we are now quite capable of understanding our embeddedness in Nature, and how desolate and destructive our collective lives can be with no sense of the sacred. It is as if our cultural psyche is revealing itself out of the depths of our past, and a collective dreaming is taking place, a reclaiming of ways of being that have been lost to contemporary culture.

We are longing for connection in the form of kind, loving, family bonds and a supportive sense of community. Ceremony offers a way to move into a state of conscious engagement with the spirit of life. The idea of reintroducing initiatory procedures, and simple but elegant ceremonial symbolism into modern life strikes a chord with most people. Human beings are refreshed by a sense of wonder and any sacred formality that honestly increases meaning and connection in our lives.

Many modern people have broken faith with themselves and with their ancestral heritage as well. Any individual or species that destroys its own habitat or the habitat of another surely brings about its own demise. When cultures reach a breaking point a movement frequently arises up out of the chaos, putting forth a vision of survival and renewal. These human attempts at warding off extinction are known as revitalization movements. These are clearly revitalizing times.

Is There a Neurobiology of Collective Consciousness?

Joy Hirsch, Ph.D.

Although social interaction and direct communication between two interacting individuals, is one of the most fundamental human functions, little is known of the neural systems that drive these connections between individuals. As a neuroscientist, I am interested in understanding the neural events that motivate and operate the experiences of emotional/virtual connections between human beings. Using a novel brain imaging technology that enables the simultaneous acquisition of signals between two

interacting individuals, we are able to acquire neural responses during ecologically valid interactions. We find specific neural synchronies that vary between two interacting brains depending upon the intensity of the interaction. These findings suggest a biological “wireless” network that connects individuals to each other, and suggests a neural affinity for “union”. The discussion of “Conscious Evolution: Our Next Stage” may be advanced by this suggestion and collective experience may be fundamental to our neural biology.

Conscious Evolution: Our Next Stage

Barbara Marx Hubbard

Conscious evolution is the awakening of humanity to our next stage of consciousness. As we know, evolution has been unfolding for billions of years in the greatest mystery story ever imaginable. Yet the creatures who participated in evolution were not aware of evolution. Now, comes a new humanity, who is not only aware of evolution, but aware we are affecting our own evolution by everything that we do, and even more, are becoming aware that we are evolution.

Conscious evolution becomes evolution by choice not chance.

At a spiritual level, conscious evolution awakens us to the awesome reality that the Impulse of Creation is within each of us. We are the story of evolution embodied in every atom, molecule and cell. An evolutionary spirituality arises. We are Eternal, arising from source; we embody the whole process of creation; and we are emerging as an expression of evolution’s drive toward higher consciousness, greater freedom and more complex order.

The Impulse of Creation is embodied within us as our own life purpose, waking us up to become a new human -- a co-creative human.

This incarnation of the Impulse of Evolution within us leads toward the evolution of love itself.

I will explore the spiritual, social and scientific/technological aspects of conscious evolution, as revealed in “The New Story, the New Person, and the New Society.”

Conscious Evolution: Awakening the Power of Our Social Potential has just been revised and republished by New World Library.

What Could Be an Awakened Response to Our World?

Vanja Palmers

Over 2500 years ago, Buddha Shakyamuni, the founder of our tradition, had his great awakening under the Bodhi tree... as have numerous other beings before and after him. From an evolutionary point of view, this is a very short time span and the human hardware has probably not changed too much since then. What has changed dramatically is the world we are awakening into.

For one thing, Buddha shared this planet with less than 200 million other human beings... all of them leading very different lifestyles than the over 7 billion that we share this world with today.

If we aspire to a long term, sustainable relationship with the biosphere and the ever evolving cosmos, we have to wake up to our species consciousness and acknowledge that we display all signs of a cancerous growth on Gaia, our supporting and protecting mother being. If we wake up to the interconnectedness of all things, if we realize that everything we do has an impact on everything else, we’ll quite naturally behave in a more mature, compassionate and wise manner, protecting life in all its myriad forms, supporting (rather than harming) all sentient beings in their struggle through this life and in their quest for happiness... starting with ourselves and expanding our loving care and attention (the universal medicine) until it includes all beings and the whole beautiful world we share with them.

Explorations into the Body of Consciousness

Charles Raison, M.D.

Aristotle thought the brain was an air conditioner, and ancient esoteric Buddhist beliefs place the seat of consciousness in the heart. Nowadays most people in the west would consider these notions odd. We all accept without question that whatever else might be said about consciousness it is mostly about the head. But debates rage on regarding both the relative importance and the ontologic status of the mind vs. the brain in determining the experience of being an aware human being. This talk is built around the premise that our descendants will look at these current debates with the same dismissive eyes with which most of us view prescientific notions of mental causality. This claim is based upon increasing evidence that consciousness—and by extension all human thoughts, feelings and intentional actions—is embodied. Here embodiment means that consciousness arises from multidirectional interactions between the brain/mind, the world and human sensory pathways by which the brain and the world are linked. Said differently, consciousness is possible because much of it is carried by the structure and complexities of factors outside the brain. It is dispersed, distributed and interactive. To establish that these considerations are more than philosophical pleasantries, this talk will demonstrate the power of an embodied perspective by reviewing ways that it has given rise to novel ways of treating depression that may also promote altruism and overall well-being. The talk will conclude with a consideration of how an embodied perspective might cast new light on the mechanisms of action of plant-based/psychedelic medications.

Self-Awareness

Peter Russell, M.A., D.C.S.

Human beings differ from other creatures in our enhanced abilities of thinking, reasoning, imagination, creativity, and our use of tools and technology. We are also self-aware—aware that we are aware. With this has come a sense of a separate self, based on an identification with the body. This leads to an egoic-mode of thinking that can be very useful if our safety or survival is threatened. However, we easily fall into this mode of thinking not because there is anything amiss in the world, but because of some inner need, or some imagined situation in the future.

We’ve become caught in the mind-set that if we are at not peace in ourselves then we need to change the world in some way.

Mystics and spiritual adepts throughout history have recognized that behind all our experience there lies a deeper ever-present sense of I-ness, the knower of all experience. Awakening to this underlying self liberates us from the root cause of much of our suffering, and allows us to return to the natural peace of our true nature.

Who Is Awakening? What Does It Mean to Be Awake?

Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B.

Our goal is spiritual awakening for ourselves and for society as a whole. It is, therefore, of utter importance that we pay wakeful attention to the terms we use in speaking about awakening. We need clear terms for clear thinking, for only clear thinking can lead to a clear path of action. The widespread lack of orientation in our society is largely due to confused terminology and consequently to confused speech. Heidegger taught us to “think along language” as one walks along a well-trodden footpath. Following this approach, we shall examine basic terms like Self, I, and Ego, in order to answer basic questions like: Who does the awakening? or What does it mean to be awake? This might point the way towards a method and practice for spiritual awakening and conscious evolution.

WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN WAKING: The Art of Shaping the Beautiful Question

David Whyte

Human beings cannot quite believe the depth, drama and even the disappearances involved in even the average human life. Each one of us grows almost against our will into a steadily unfolding story where the horizon gets broader and more mysterious, the understanding of loss and mortality more keen, the sense of time more fleeting and the understanding of our own mistakes and omissions more apparent. In the midst of this deepening we have to make a life that makes sense: there is no other life than the one that involves this constant beckoning, this invitation to the fiercer aspects of existence.

Join poet, author and international speaker David Whyte for a look at the fruitful art of first finding, then asking, ever keener and more beautiful questions that help us to re-imagine ourselves, our world and our part in it; questions which work to reshape our identities, helping us to become larger, more generous, and more courageous, equal to the increasingly fierce invitations extended to us as we grow and mature.