



PRAISE FOR *THE TRANSLUCENT REVOLUTION*

“Arjuna has given us the most comprehensive, elegant, and vital guide to the current stage of human transformation that I have read since Marilyn Ferguson’s *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. It is must reading for all of us working toward a more positive future.”

— Barbara Marx Hubbard, author, speaker,
president of The Foundation for Conscious Evolution

“*The Translucent Revolution* is a brilliant and timely missive from an author who is deeply in touch with the pulse and essence of our evolution and our awakening. At a time when nothing but bad news seems to be the tenor of the day, this beautiful message emerges — uplifting, inspiring, and revitalizing the reader with a new seeing of the radical truth of our time. Clearly and precisely written with eye-opening stories and examples, Ardagh leads the reader through a new map of our time and its possibilities and power. He draws on some of the great thinkers and mystics that we share this time with history with and explores distinctions that empower and further clarify who we are and the profound possibility of life. An excellent read and great piece of work.”

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“*The Translucent Revolution* delivers a cumulative punch. It is a rare combination of reason, passion, and spiritual insight. After you put this book down you know that a great shift in consciousness is already underway and that the path to a sane, peaceful, and sustainable future has been seeded in our time. Arjuna Ardagh offers us substantial hope. At a time when the human story has been in a prolonged eclipse, he provides evidence to support a transformation of global society from the inside out.”

— James O’Dea, president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences

“This is a brilliant book — really many books in one. I couldn’t put it down. It is chock full of fascinating information, valuable insights, useful techniques and great wisdom. I would highly recommend this to anyone on a spiritual path. It is both a powerful mirror to our common experience and a handy guidebook for the part of the journey we are all currently on.”

— Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul*® series
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“Translucent Arjuna has penned a luminous contribution to the individual and collective awakening of us all. I heartily recommend this book to anyone seeking inner knowledge, self-realization, and enlightenment.”

— Lama Surya Das, author of *Awakening the Buddha Within*
founder of the Dzogchen Center

“*The Translucent Revolution* is going to have a timely impact on the national conversation, picking up where Paul Ray’s description of the “Cultural Creatives” leaves off. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Cultural Creatives is that they tend to feel that they’re alone, and that society’s dominant institutions not only do not reflect, but are at variance to their most precious values. *The Translucent Revolution* may simultaneously confirm this perception and stimulate the Cultural

Creatives to finally begin connecting with others who share their values, get organized, and work together to create the world they want. It's certainly about time, don't you think?"

— Eric Utne, founder of *Utne* magazine
editor of *Cosmo Doogood's Urban Almanac*

"Not since Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy* has there been such a rich collection of views covering so many dimensions of the unfolding new paradigm on conscious awakening. A most valuable resource for personal and social evolution."

— Peter Russell, author of *From Science to God* and *The Global Brain*

"Engaging, enlightening, and even entertaining, *The Translucent Revolution* is a powerful handbook for the soul. With great clarity and deep heart, Arjuna offers the reader a rich feast of possibility and everyday practices for humanity's greatest quest."

— Mary Manin Morrissey, author of *Building Your Field of Dreams*
founder of the Living Enrichment Center

"Arjuna Ardagh has created an insightful historical document and a festive celebration of inspiration. Ardagh has connected what at first may appear as unrelated ideas and activities into a coherent whole that explains the contemporary phenomenon of the translucent revolution. He frames his perspective clearly and shows how they are manifest in the lives of accessible people. Readers will realize that the transformation of themselves and their world is within their grasp. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to live a more daring and authentic life."

— Joseph L. Subbiondo
president of the California Institute of Integral Studies

"Compelling, compassionate, and clear, *The Translucent Revolution* is a comprehensive exploration of one of the most important and hopeful movements of our time. Arjuna takes us on a journey to the very essence of transformation and healing, and in so doing shines a light through a timeless truth. What we are looking for is what is looking."

— Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks, authors of *Conscious Living* and
Attracting Genuine Love, founders of The Hendricks Institute

the

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TRANSLUCENT REVOLUTION

**How People Just Like You
Are WAKING UP and
CHANGING the World**

ARJUNA ARDAGH



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Novato, California**



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*For my sons, Abhi and Shuba,
and for all the children of this earth,
for they inherit both the fruits of our foolishness
as well as those of our awakening*

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FOREWORD

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 hobble a bright tomorrow. By the end of reading this book you will have, I believe, an undeniable sense of this great 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 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 *non-dual* (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 people's 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. A 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 of *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 were 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 potential, 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, feeling 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 three stages, some used five, others used seven or more. And many different names and terms were also used as researchers looked at different aspects of various stages. Theorists in the book who have presented or utilized stage conceptions include David Deida, Duane Elgin, H. 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 this important discovery. 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 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 experience 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 four stages (egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric, kosmocentric), and the four major states (gross, subtle, causal, nondual). You can have one of those state experiences at each of those stages. That gives us sixteen 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 that 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 one hundred 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 have 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 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 have been no examples found of skipping 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 percent, goes to nearly 40 percent 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).

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. 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 one 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 in the ever-present ocean of I AMness.

INTRODUCTION

Robert had it all: the beach house in Malibu, the latest SUV, designer clothes, the right connections. He also had a small drinking problem, and a few personal difficulties to resolve at home. He had made his money in California real estate, and when the market crashed in the late eighties, so did Robert. He went from a net worth of millions to bankruptcy. He lost the house, many of his friends, and his confidence. By 1992 he was thinking about killing himself.

Late one evening, he was out taking a walk. He stopped and stood motionless, his mood blacker than the night. He had a thought, a simple thought. "I am finished," his mind announced.

He still has trouble explaining what happened next.

"I was overcome by a sense of relief," he reports. "A sudden feeling of inexpressible freedom. I even began to laugh out loud. My body was filled with happiness, as if I was suddenly getting a job I'd been missing. For the first time I was feeling really good for no reason at all. I was totally here, in this moment. I could feel the trees around me, and hear the sounds without having to listen to thoughts telling me things needed to be different in some way. Everything was being experienced, but the 'me' was gone."

He went home and made love with his wife for the first time in seven months.

Later, Robert described his experience to a friend, a student of Eastern philosophies and meditative practices. Robert's epiphany, it seemed, had an obscure Eastern name. But his friend warned him it would pass, that he had tasted a fleeting glimpse of a state only great yogis could attain.

"It didn't pass, though," Robert says today. "I still have ups and downs, of course. Things still come up with my wife. My back still aches when it rains. But this mysterious sense of well-being I found that night, this feeling of lightness for no reason, has stayed with me for more than ten years. I couldn't get rid of it if I tried. In fact, it only seems to grow deeper and deeper. It is not happening to me, it is who I am."

A similar thing happened to Mary, while she was working the early shift at a vegetable-canning factory. Stephan was driving on the freeway, while Jacquelyn's awakening came in a hospital, after she gave birth to her third child. Michael went through a similar shift serving an eighty-seven-month prison sentence in a cell with thirty-two other inmates, and Douglas was hiking in the Himalayas. Some have come to this awakening through contact with a teacher, some from entering the depths of despair and coming out the other side. Some have woken up after years of meditation. For others the awakening has come out of the blue, for no apparent reason at all.

For me, the shift happened in 1991, at six in the morning, in a hotel room in India.

For more than two decades I had been "seeking." Even as a child, I intuitively felt there was more to life than what I saw around me. Growing up in London in the early sixties, I felt restriction and compromise in my mother, my father, my schoolteachers, and my extended family. They seemed to be surviving at life, rather than living it with zest. I knew there was something more than this.

Out of this longing, for what I could not name, I learned meditation at age fourteen. Over the next

twenty years, I became an extremist spiritual seeker. I explored many techniques of meditation, radical therapy, and communal living. I did EST, yoga, primal scream therapy, tantra workshops, tai chi, long meditation retreats. You name it, I dove right in. I even ate tofu. Once.

I'd heard of a little-known teacher in northern India named H. W. L. Poonja. In 1991 I finally succumbed to a tremendous inner pull to visit him. He lived in a modest house on the outskirts of Lucknow. Within a second of entering the room, meeting his eyes, I knew the game was up. He meant business. Rather than teaching me this or that technique, he simply asked me, "Who is the one trying to become free? Who are you really?"

It took me a few days to catch on. I was a tough case. But finally, early one morning, I woke up in my hotel room and I tried to find *me*. For real. For the first time.

There was nothing there.

Where there should be an "I," a solid thing, there was only open space, absolutely at peace, always and eternally free. This was not a change in my condition, but rather a realization of what has always been true. More than illuminated with sudden insight, I was face-to-face with a lifelong, embarrassing oversight. I burst out laughing, right there in the hotel room, and did not stop for twenty minutes. What was seen in that moment has never since been overlooked.

I stayed with Poonjaji for about a year. One day he asked me to go back to the West to be a teacher.

"You must be joking," I replied.

"Yes," he laughed, "the Truth is a great joke, you must go and share it with your friends."

Back in America, it started with me and a few friends meeting in a living room, and before long dozens of people were showing up, five nights a week. Most of the people who attended the gatherings had a glimpse, at least, of awakening in their first or second meeting, similar to what had happened to me in Lucknow. They came back again and again because the realization was not stable and receded in their day-to-day life. They assumed I could help.

Sitting in a room, meditating with people they did not know, or going on a retreat, they would feel a deep sense of oneness. When they returned home to their troubled teenager, they found only separation. In the stillness of meditation everything was clearly perfect, unfolding as it should. That clarity was shattered the moment they opened a letter from the IRS. Work, family, busy schedules, relationships: all seemed to sabotage simplicity. These people longed to embody their awakening more deeply. Although the realization was of oneness, their habits were still loyal to separation. The realization was of limitlessness, but their thoughts were still full of fear and limitation.

Months of teaching turned into years. I traveled to other parts of the United States, and then Europe. The situation was the same everywhere. The realization was incredibly easy; *living it* was the challenge.

When I took a good look at my relationship with my own family, with my friends, and with the earth, I had to admit I also saw a schism between the depth of realization and the quality of my life. I had fallen into the "guru" role out of a randomly bestowed gift of eloquence, a divine joke. Both the certainty of a reality deeper than the mind, and the longing to live it in every possible way, for real, was everywhere in the room when I was teaching, on both sides of the teacher-student dance.

I was fortunate to have many deep and honest friends who also played the role of "spiritual teacher." One was passing through a painful divorce, facing separation from his children. Another, deeply loved by her students, confided that she was lonely and often wondered why it was so hard to find the same depth of love in her personal life. Many struggled with financial issues. The list went on. These teachers were respected, successful, and of immense service to many people. Yet, like the students, they were challenged by the gap between the teaching and its embodiment in their daily

lives.

So here we were, whether we wore a hat marked “teacher” or “student.” The challenge was not so much in tasting enlightenment, but in living it. Faced with this conundrum, most of us turn for help to maps, models, and teachings, often from other peoples, other cultures, and other times. The majority of these maps were created by men and oriented to people who had decided to renounce the affairs of the world. Some of these teachings had been whispered in the desert, others were inscribed in caves by lamplight. Some had been chanted in India, others passed by word of mouth in Jerusalem. Despite their timeless beauty, seldom did they take into account the dramatic changes of lifestyle, the accelerated speed at which we now live.

When the reality of our day-to-day lives does not fit the map of choice, we often feel that something is wrong with us, that something is missing. But we did not have these maps or concepts when we were born. We did not have them when we first felt the inner longing. The maps are all borrowed, all learned. Once we follow them, they become absolutes against which we measure our experience at this moment. The map says an “enlightened” person is free of the world; you reluctantly remember eyeing your neighbor’s fancy new Porsche with relish — you just failed the test. The map tells you that an enlightened person never gets caught up in feelings, especially “negative” ones; you remember the irritation you felt when someone took your parking space — failed again. The map tells you that a liberated person is beyond the desires of the flesh, and, well, let’s face it, you’re failing all day long.

As helpful as these maps and concepts can be, many of us have found that they simply do not fit the actuality of our reality, as it is. Jane, a single mother of two small boys, was looking for guidance from teachings given in India twenty-five hundred years ago. Mark, confronted by his sexual appetites and the wayward lifestyle of a musician on the road, turned to precepts originally given to celibate monks. And Jack, trying to satisfy both shareholders and employees in his role as CEO of a large company, sought inspiration from a yogi who had renounced worldly goods.

As time went by, my casual inquiry with a few friends turned into a full-blown investigation. I began to seek out the leading authorities on spiritual life in our time — people like Eckhart Tolle, Ram Dass, Byron Katie, and Jean Houston — to take a fresh look at our condition together, free from all maps and vantage points. I captured all these dialogues on tape.

The majority of our inherited maps point to some ultimate state of attainment or arrival, called enlightenment, nirvana, liberation, or being born again. And the majority of us, as map readers, have ideas about what all this should look like in practice. I became much more interested in what people were actually experiencing in their lives. What maps were they following? What journey did they feel they were on? Had they reached a significant destination described in any of these maps? Do the variety of maps we refer to even agree about destinations? Are we, as some have suggested, “halfway up the mountain?” Or is it possible that the maps we have been using actually belong to a terrain and a time very different from the one we are now exploring? Maybe we are not climbing a mountain at all, maybe we are exploring a meadow or a forest. Which parts of the old maps turn out to be timeless truths? And what is just the bathwater we can throw out, as we cradle newborn awakening in the moment?

These are the questions I brought to the interviews. The 170 dialogues fill almost 250 cassette tapes; the transcripts comprise more than a million words. By asking the interviewees what they have experienced with their own students, readers, and extended circle of friends, I have also had indirect access to the experiences of millions of people in the United States and Europe. In addition, over the years, I have been able to survey more than thirteen thousand people in workshops, conferences, and festivals in many parts of the world. Finally, with the help of sociologists like Paul Ray and Duane

Elgin, I have studied numerous polls and bodies of research that suggest a radical change in collective consciousness. I left the jury out during this long period of research, preferring to let our current condition speak for itself.

This book is the result. I have made some interesting discoveries, some of which I could have predicted, many of which have surprised me. For example, I had assumed that the current wave of awakening was occurring primarily among those influenced by specific Eastern teachings. How wrong could I be? The more interviews I conducted, the more I found descriptions of the same shift, and the same view, expressed in Twelve-Step recovery groups, in Unity churches, in the martial arts community, and among those interested in mindful parenting. When I pitched the book to my editor, I wondered if she would relate. It turns out that not only had many of the teachers at Spirit Rock, the Buddhist center she visits, been affected by such awakenings, but that her therapist had as well. Even her hairdresser. When Anders Ferguson, a business consultant, told me that he had found such shifts rampant among the top executives at Unilever, I was forced to fully relinquish the idea that any one group had an exclusive here.

I have discovered countless little islands of individuals and communities who are relating to the spiritual life in a totally new way. Many think, as I did, that they are the only ones doing this and don't yet see the vibrant, substantial archipelago created by all these little islands. By paying visits to many of them, I have discovered that this phenomenon is reflected in a greater and greater proportion of the earth's population.

The people described in this book have been transformed in a way that does not neatly fit the maps and models we have inherited. Nor do they appear to be on a trajectory toward anything described by the old maps. Rather than renouncing the world, they are involved, active, and participating. Rather than aspiring to celibacy, they delight in sex more than ever. Rather than conforming to the ways that have been handed down through patriarchy, they embody a radical feminization of the spiritual life. And rather than being holy, pious, or "spiritual" in any external way, their most easily distinguishable quality is a wild sense of humor about themselves and their lives. They are honest, deep, remarkably wise, and at the same time remarkably human and humble about their weaknesses. They are most "shtick-free."

We either need new maps, or no maps at all. And we need a new vocabulary. These people are not "seekers"; they are more interested in the present moment than any future state. They are not "followers"; their spirituality is more grounded in direct experience than in imitation or belief. And they laugh out loud if you call them "enlightened." Rather than claiming attainment, they seem to have stepped off the hamster wheel of needing to attain anything at all.

I call them "translucents." They have been affected so deeply by a moment of radical awakening that their relationship to who they are and what this life is about has been permanently transformed. The process is evolutionary and endless rather than aimed at a fixed point or result. This book explores translucence, and the possibilities it opens. You may already know what I am talking about. Translucents recognize each other, sometimes without needing to say a word. If this sounds new or strange to you, I suspect you will be much more translucent after reading what is reported here.

In this book we will discover what occurs in a moment of radical awakening. We will explore how easy it can be to provoke such an opening, either alone or by sitting with a friend for a few minutes, and absolute allegiance to what is real in this moment. We will find that a glimpse of radical awakening can be the portal into a different way of living day to day: a translucent life. We will investigate the impact of translucence on our feelings, our thoughts and actions, our relating, our sexuality, our parenting, our work, and the way we see our world. Together we will unearth some of the common

spiritual myths about these areas of our lives, many inherited from the old maps. We will discover how people like you and me are transforming these arenas of ordinary life, making every moment an ongoing spiritual practice, with no prescribed goal.

In this book, I present what has emerged as the prevailing translucent view, based on three thousand pages of transcripts from the interviews, as well as surveys of people with whom I have worked. Most were remarkably concordant. Not everything in this book, of course, represents the viewpoint of everyone I interviewed. The overwhelming majority of those interviewed, however, were extraordinarily nondogmatic, humorous, and similar in viewpoint.

These interviews have deeply influenced the book in a number of ways. First, collectively they have shaped it throughout. The result is more an orchestral symphony than a solo performance. The voices have managed to play in almost perfect harmony, without a conductor in sight. I have acted as the recording engineer and have done my best to represent the points at which the overwhelming majority of my interviewees converge. Second, I often include excerpts from the interviews in the text. None of these interviews has been previously published. Of course, the excerpts presented on these pages represent a minute fraction of the enormity of wisdom I received from remarkable people, and I am grateful beyond words to everyone who has given so generously of their time. Whenever I use material drawn from a source other than the interviews, I have added a note, referencing the source. You will find other quotations in sidebars throughout the text. These are also taken verbatim from the interviews.

Finally, this book offers practical tools to help you honestly address how fully you are incorporating translucence into the mundane procession of daily duty. Some of these are designed for you to try out while you are reading the book. They occur primarily in the first two parts of the book and are labeled “Try It Yourself.” If possible, put the book down when you get to one of these and taste the strawberry rather than just reading about it.

Other tools are offered to creatively “nudge” your life into an art form. These “Nudges,” as we will call them, can be practiced alone or with a friend. They occur at the end of every chapter in parts 2 and 3 of the book. Most take fewer than ten minutes. Some are very easy and yield immediate results; others take more time to integrate. They include dissolving separation in relationship, fully opening your body to infinity in sex, transforming the workplace into a spiritual practice, and being an agent of radical awakening in society, as a “spiritual activist.”

When we are willing to take a fresh look, not only at our experiences but also at the teaching against which we measure them, we can feel quite disoriented. We no longer have true north. So let's start with some very basic questions. As human beings, why do we engage in spiritual activity at all? And what is common to all of us, despite the differences of our spiritual backgrounds and beliefs?

Let's begin there.

PART ONE

WHAT IS TRANSLUCENCE?

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