

Michael: Ken, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us in this conversation series, *The Future is Calling Us to Greatness*.

Ken: Excellent. My pleasure. I am delighted to be a part of the terrific group of people that you are having this conversation with. It's a good topic and a good item to be discussing.

Michael: Great, thanks. I was looking forward to this call ever since we met together a few months ago and this whole theme, *The Future is Calling Us to Greatness* is one that I am finding, when I talk to both religious leaders and philosophers, scientists and people involved in peak oil and climate change, the whole range of some scary stuff that we're looking at, both currently and in the coming decades. How to stay inspired and how to stay in action in the face of that?

Ken: Right.

Michael: Before we go into that topic, I don't want to assume that everybody who is watching or listening to this will know who you are and what you are best known for, so could you please introduce yourself and say what it is that you are particularly passionate about or are known for?

Ken: Let me do that by starting to address the question.

Michael: Sounds great.

Ken: I'll give exactly an indication of the way I would approach this question is one of the things that I've become a little bit known for. I would start by saying that one of the things that we've learned over the past couple of decades is that when we talk about change, human fundamental change, and this is what we are talking about in terms of how humans are going to need the future and the call of the greatness is that there are two very different types of change that human beings can get involved in.

Both of them are important but they are very different and they are not very often recognized. One of those, we could just call horizontal change. That's where on whatever level of development you are at or stage of growth you are at or wherever it is that on that level you simply learn a new skill, you learn a new aptitude or you change course.

If you have religious beliefs, maybe you'll change belief possibly from an old mythical literal attitude to a new evolutionary attitude or you might change your attitude from anger and resentment to love and forgiveness, or

so on. All of these are learning new skills, learning new aptitudes and in changing your behavior in that fashion.

The other type of change is a vertical change and it's simply changing levels of consciousness altogether, entirely. This is to a new level of complexity, a new level of consciousness, a complete shift in the fundamental way that you are looking at the world to a fundamentally and entirely new way of looking at the world.

As soon as we notice that type of change, one of the big breakthroughs in the last couple of decades is to notice that there are fundamentally two different sources of those vertical changes. These have been central to the way humans are viewed as having major changes.

These two approaches are the two central approaches to human vertical change that humans have adapted all through the entire history, but the thing is they are actually quite different and they are referring to what turned out to be very different developmental options that humans have.

One path is called waking up and one path is called growing up. Now, waking up, you find in virtually all the world's great meditative or contemplative traditions. It's typically just that, it's the path of waking up, reaching an enlightenment or an awakening, a god consciousness or Christ consciousness, or Buddha nature.

It means going from a small finite separate self-sense called the ego to one's true self which is one with spirit. Sufis call it the supreme identity and that's maintained to be moved from relative truth to ultimate truth, from a finite circumstance to infinite realization and if you look at the various schools of meditation and contemplation, contemplative prayer, East and West, you find that they all give about four or five major stages of that growth.

Evelyn Underhill for example in her classic book, *Mysticism*, after revealing all Western mystics maintain that all of them went through about four stages. One was starting with purgation into an illumination, then into an infinite dark night and then into a final unity.

If you look at Eastern traditions, they have the same essentially four basic stages that are generally known as the gross state to the subtle state, to the causal state to non-dual unity. So that's one form of vertical change that you can make and it is quite profound, of course and individuals that have had an enlightenment experience or an awakening experience, and this can

sometimes happen in near-death experiences and so on, it profoundly changes them and irrevocably.

What we've also found is that there is another type of vertical change, because this is also a change in consciousness, a change in levels that goes through stages but it's very different from waking up. Waking up has to do with first-person states of awareness.

The things that are awareness that they are obvious when you experience them, you are directly aware of them. You can introspect and see them. If you have an experience of universal love and bliss and so on, you know it, you are directly aware of it.

You can look at Saint-Theresa's seven interior castles, which is her version of these four, five meditative stages. You know when you are in each one, it's completely obvious.

Now with this other type of development which is referred to growing up, these levels and these stages can't be seen by introspecting. These are much more like the rules of grammar. Everybody brought up in a particular language speaking culture grows up speaking the language pretty accurately.

They will put subjects and verbs together accurately, they will use adjectives and adverbs correctly and so on, and others follow the rules of grammar of that language and they follow them pretty accurately but if you ask any of them to write down what those rules of grammar are, none of them can do it.

Michael: Exactly.

Ken: They are actually following rules but they have no idea they are doing it or what they are. That's what these developmental stages of growing up and they are stages that all human beings go through. We have research on this universally and well over 40 different cultures have been checked and we find the same six to eight basic stages of growing up.

One version of them, Jean Gebser gave and there are dozens of different names for these, and this is just one version. The names are fairly simple and it gives an idea of what the world looks like at these different stages, but he called them archaic to magic, to mythic, to rational, to pluralistic, to integral.

Those are stages each of them has a different worldview, a different type of morals, a different sense of identity and each of them tends to be an expansion of personal identity. Archaic and magic is egocentric, the person is just identified with themselves, and then mythic becomes ethnocentric. They expand their identity from the self to a group or a number of groups, to the clan, the tribe, the nation, a political party, a religion and so on.

It is one group versus other groups. So it's a very strong sort of us versus them and tends to believe in chosen people versus infidels or non-believers and so on, and then rational is a shift from ethnocentric to world centric. Here, we find a fundamental solidarity with all humans regardless of race, color, sex or creed and that of course became more common with the Western enlightenment and the shift from you had to be a part of a particular religion in order to get saved to just as a human being you had certain universal rights.

Universal rights of men and women came on board. We started in the 100-year period of the beginning of the Western enlightenment slavery was outlawed from every rational industry country on the face of the planet, first time that happened in history so it has a broader stretch of morals and this is the basis of modernity in the modern world and rise of the rational science and so on.

Then pluralistic was the rise of post-modernity. This happened particularly starting in the 60s, with the student riots that involved the civil rights movement and an emphasis on environmentalism and the rise of feminism and essentially all the marginalized groups, the whole notion of oppression, exclusion and so on came into view and became a real issue.

The downside of post-modern pluralism is that every culture was maintained to be fundamentally separate and different, and incommensurable. So there were no longer any universal truths, what is true for you is true for you, what's true for me is true for me and that can't be challenged and so they could see all of these wonderful differences in humans but they couldn't see any of the commonalities.

That comes online with the next stage called integral. Clare Graves who was a pioneering developmentalist called this a monumental leap in meaning because it was a leap to a level where all the previous levels maintained that they had the only truth and reality in existence. All the other levels were wrong, infantile, confused and loopy but all of a sudden in integral, there was an understanding that all of the previous worldviews had some sort of significance, they were for some reason.

For the first time in human history really, we had a value set that was inclusive of all other value sets and he called it a monumental leap in meaning because it was the first genuinely inclusive or comprehensive stage of development that humans had ever seen.

Now, you can be in any one of those six or seven major stages of growing and go through any stages of waking up which you'll interpret it according to the stage that you are at. You can be a mythic and have a mythic literal understanding and yet go all the way to identity or union of the soul and god.

You will interpret it in terms of the mythic structure that you are at. If you are in pluralistic stage, you can go to the same thing and have a waking up experience, but you will interpret that in pluralistic value structure, and so on.

So what we have here, these two forms of growth and development by the way, we find the waking up in virtually every major meditative and contemplative tradition the world over and again, we find a great deal of similarity in the stages, and the reason that the mystics of all the world's religions tend to understand each other even though the outward mythic forms of their religions are incompatible and quite different.

None of the meditative systems are aware of these hidden grammar stages and so that's how you can this. There was a book called *Zen at War*, for example, which was from very famous, well-known, highly respected Zen masters, clearly enlightened, in the process of waking up that were at a mythic ethnocentric level of development and they were advocating war and in that sense murder in a very ethnocentric orientation and it was really shocking in some ways.

Michael: Sure.

Ken: Of course, a lot of Western Buddhists were very upset by it because they didn't realize that this was possible, but it is possible. On the other hand, virtually all of the modern Western developmental models that deal with those stages of growing up, none of them were aware of enlightenment, awakening or anything like that, because they just deal with these hidden grammar stages, they don't look at the stages of waking up.

In order to see those stages, you have to do those voluntarily. You have to take up a practice of mindfulness, contemplative prayer or gnosis or

something that will help people move through these stages of consciousness because they are not something that people normally grow through.

You have to take it up as a voluntary practice of contemplation or meditation. You have to do it three, four, five or ten years and it takes a lot of work. So if you are a typical Western psychologist and you are out researching stages of developments and all that you are going to find very few people that are at an enlightened or awakened or so on stage of development, so it's not going to show up in your data. You just get these other stages there.

So we have these two major types of growth, they have never been done together, never been brought together so that you'll have a person develop two integral levels of growing up while experiencing non-dual unity consciousness of waking up or enlightenment, or awakening, and that's it. That is a quick summary.

Michael: First of all that was awesome because I was going to ask you to give a sort of integral thinking and that was fabulous. However, my experience of your work from a couple of decades now is precisely that, bringing these two traditions, these two modalities together and helping a wide range of people, East and West, grow in both ways, grow in terms of growing up but also continue to...

Ken: Wake up.

Michael: Yeah, exactly, to wake up. I am wondering, your thinking – even if it's referred to in terms of early Ken Wilber and so on, could you say just a little bit about how your own thinking around this has evolved over the last 25 years or so?

Ken: Sure. I started out and I was always told by my family that I was going to be a doctor, go to Duke University. My mom was from the South and very Southern and dad was from the North, very Yankee. I did. I went to Duke in the medical program and as soon as I got there, I knew that that's not what I wanted to do because it wasn't creative enough.

I shifted to a different school and went through a graduate program of biochemistry. That wasn't doing it either, so I started studying East-West studies. This was during the 60s and so you would read Krishnamurti and Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki and all of those original great pioneers, and that started getting me really fired up.

The more I got into that though the more irritated I became because there turned out to be about five or six different schools of therapy, using therapy in the broadest sense of what people do to make them happy, and so this included everything from Gestalt therapy to Zen Buddhism, but people like Freud said make the ego stronger, people like Zen said get rid of the ego. Others talked about social and cultural factors that needed to be handled. Others talked deep ecology.

So, I went from being simply unhappy to being unhappy and confused. I figured to get from unhappy to happy, I had to get from confused to unconfused first. I spent most of my time in graduate school not doing what I was supposed to be doing, which was research on [indiscernible 19:19] and spending all my time reading the Upanishads and the Gnostic gospels and Gestalt therapy, Freud and all that stuff.

When I was 23, I came up with a way that actually all of these schools could fit together and it was a simple notion that there was a spectrum of consciousness made of a lot of different colors, a lot of different bands, a lot of different sections and that each of these different schools were dealing with a different color. They were accurate when they were dealing with their own color but they didn't handle the other colors very well at all.

If you put them all together, it came out pretty good. So that was my first book and it was called *Spectrum of Consciousness*. I was 23 and it propelled me into a semi-famous status quickly. I kept expanding on that general impulse, which was every time I'd go into a field I would generally have the feeling that not that one of these schools was right and all of the others were wrong but somehow all of them were partially right. All of them had something to bring to the picture.

The question wasn't which of these schools was right and which was wrong but how can a universe be created such that all of them can be partially right? What picture would hold that? So that just kept expanding. I went from doing *Spectrum of Consciousness* into a book on anthropology, then one on developmental psychology, then one on sociology, then one on world religions. So I just kept expanding the framework until after about 20 to 25 years I had what was called an AQAL frame-working. AQAL, which was short for All Quadrants, All Levels, All Lines, All States and All Types.

We just went through a brief outline of levels and states and there is also quadrants, types, developmental lines or multiple intelligences, and so this became a framework that you could literally go into any field you wanted

to and turn it into a more comprehensive and inclusive field by starting to fill in the boxes that the field itself was leaving out.

In the professional journal in the field called *The Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, they now publish articles in over 57 different disciplines, all reinterpreted using this more comprehensive framework, and so it's actually become moderately well-known.

There are a lot of people worldwide that are aware of it and many that are using it and so we are starting to see a fair amount of work being done and with more comprehensive and inclusive models. So that has been very gratifying and the people that are doing it are certainly pleased with the result and happy to find something that speaks a little bit more to the forms and the comprehensiveness of their heart and so that continuing growth I think has been the biggest types of changes that I've gone through.

I am 65 now, so from basically 25 to 65, I've been doing this for 40 years now, which is weird, I don't feel that old at all.

Michael: It's interesting and I am glad that you went through that history because I think I began reading you in 84 or 85, somewhere in there and I've read maybe eight to ten of your books.

What I find so helpful about your model or evolving models, but really the AQAL model is that it holds more knowledge than practically any other model that I've ever experienced, that is it helped me to hold a variety of East and West approaches to knowledge, to insight, to growth, culturally and individually.

As you said, finding a way to see the value in a multiplicity of approaches by holding one of this four-quadrant AQAL model. It's interesting, while you were sharing I am glad you brought up Jean Gebser's *The Ever-present Origin* because I sometimes say that the three books that I found to be the three of the most important and most difficult books I've ever read.

One of them is the *Ever-present Origin* by Gebser. Another is Gregory Bates and *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* and then Terry Deacon's more recent book, *Incomplete Nature*. Those three books I think took more effort to read than anything I've ever read in my life and yet and even I found *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality* easy compared to those three.

Ken: Yes. *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality* is a big book, it's an 850-page book but I think it's written in incredibly clear fashion. People really seem to enjoy

that part of it and they thought it was easy. It just went on for a long time.

Michael: It's just a door stopper when you look at it.

Ken: Yes, exactly.

Michael: The book that I still to this day, even though it's a little outdated but not much, the book that I often will recommend for people who have not encountered you before and however they come to learn of your work I suggest as a good introduction is that little volume on *Theory of Everything*.

Ken: Yes. What was Shambhala Random House decided ten or 15 years ago that they wanted to bring out my completed works for some reason. It made me think instantly that somebody heard I was going to die because it just hadn't happened before that they had published somebody's complete works while they are still alive.

I was only 45 or something, so I went ahead and we did that. We brought eight volumes and two or three books in each volume, and so I wrote introductions for those volumes. Those turned out to be really pretty good, so I just threw all eight of those introductions together and that's what the *Theory of Everything* is.

Michael: I also found it to be the best little short introduction to spiral dynamics.

Ken: Yes, it covers the stuff.

Michael: Even the first chapter on spiral dynamics, to this day, anybody who wants to learn about that, I say read the first chapter of Ken Wilber's book.

Ken, I am wondering if we could begin to deal with this question of past is rooting for us and the future is calling us to greatness. What is it that inspires you to wake up on any given day or any given week and to do the work that you do without being overwhelmed by some of these large challenges on the horizon?

Ken: It's certainly an issue and one of the things that makes it even more fascinating than it already is, we are facing so many issues now from so many different directions and it's a tossup between the issues that are really astonishing and amazing, sort of good news discoveries and we are undergoing major revolutions in a half dozen different fields.

In reality, you see a revolution in one field about every 20 or 30 years. We've got a half dozen of them going all at once. There are revolutions in the worldwide marketing and business practices with computer transfers and stuff like that. There is revolutions going on in terms of robotics and artificial intelligence. Those are just getting really spooky, advanced, it certainly is.

Of course, past the point the amount of information stored in computers now exceeds the amount of information in human brains where we are coming to singularity and that looks to be outrageous.

There is all of these new breakthroughs and discoveries in brain functioning and neuroplasticity of the brain and that has enormous number of implications.

Then there are of course these interior revolutions where if we are looking at the stages of growing up, virtually all of the great pioneering developmentalists had seen just this very faint evidence of emergence of a new type of stage and so often they would describe it as two different tiers and a tier in developmental studies isn't itself a separate stage, it's just the way stages are conventionally grouped because they have a lot of things in common.

Then all of sudden, at the next stage something really different comes into existence so then they will group those together as being a second tier, a third tier and so on. That's what we are seeing is that virtually all of the stages are leading up, and more of these today have been called either deficiency needs by people like Maslow or first tier like Graves' spiral dynamics and then starting today, they saw evidence of what Maslow called being needs and Graves saw it as second tier and called that monumental leap of meaning.

The point is that these stages are starting to emerge and there is less than five percent of the population worldwide at these stages now, but it was only about one percent two decades ago so this is really the leading edge of evolution and it's a type of stage that we haven't ever seen before.

I was briefly stating, it is often called integral or [indiscernible 30:51] **integrally perceptible**. Jane Loevinger called it integrated. It seems to be a common word and the reason is that the characteristics of that stage, unlike every previous stage or should I say each previous stage thinks that its truth and values are the only real truth and values there are.

Mythic religious thinks that it's got the only approach to truth, the rational scientific thinks it's got the only approach to truth, post-modern pluralistic thinks that all knowledge is socially constructed and so science is no more real than poetry and they are the only ones that know that. The post-modernists, they are the ones who get it right. It's crazy.

Integral stage thinks all of them have some degree of truth and that they are there for some reason and they are, if nothing else, they are all stages in human growth and development. No matter how high a society is everybody is still born at square one. Everybody is born an archaic and from ages 1 to 3, they are at magic. From 3 to 12, they are mythic and then at 12, rational can emerge, and then at early adulthood, pluralistic can emerge.

What we are seeing with this new stage of development, this integral or integrated or systemic stage of development is the possibility of a world that genuinely is inclusive.

Now, we just haven't seen anything like that in history. We have no idea how to build a society that would do that. We have no idea what's going to be involved but it certainly seems monumentally significant.

Michael: I think it is and my way of describing, whenever I am doing a program and I cover some of integral or spiral dynamics or Clare Graves stuff, my simple way of describing it is that the first tier or pre-integral, each stage is grounded in a sense that I am right, you are wrong and or we are right and you are wrong.

Ken: Exactly.

Michael: Or everybody ought to think like us. In integral or second tier, it's more coming from a place that our differences are not a problem to be solved. Our differences are a solution to our problems.

Ken: Exactly.

Michael: It's almost like the more the better, the same as in the eco system. The diversity of species in a bio region is one of the things that leads to the health of that bio region and I think the same is true with consciousness, just as long as we don't kill each other over our differences.

Ken: Exactly. I tend to say that no mind is capable of being one hundred percent wrong. Nobody is smart enough to be wrong all the time.

Michael: I love that line, exactly. One of the books that I found, because you were talking about these breakthroughs in all these different areas and a book that I just read last year, it was fortunately also available in audiobook, recorded by the author, so I was able to read the book and listen along as he was doing it himself is Al Gore's book, *The Future*. I thought it was excellent.

Ken: Yes and given the fact that there is the possibility, even though it is only about five percent now and by the way, that's one of the things that makes these a little bit more granular and detailed about mental models, they are a bit more useful than the spade of books that we've seen over the last decade or two, starting with the *Aquarian Conspiracy* and *The Greening of America* and *The Turning Point* and all of that, they basically say that the world is undergoing a massive change and they all have these two columns.

One is the old paradigm and it's always Newtonian Cartesian, mechanistic, deterministic, egocentric, etc. and then there is the next column is the new paradigm and it's all based on quantum mechanics or the modern physics and it's interconnected, interwoven and holistic and oneness, and all of that and that we are in the process of going from this old paradigm to this new paradigm.

That is just a phenomenally crude way to look at it. There is actually these six, seven or eight stages and human all start at stage one, and so we still have a percentage of population that is at magic. We have a percentage of the population of about 25 – 30 percent at mythic and the real fundamentalist believers are fundamentally at that stage. Then close to 50 percent of the population is at rational, scientific, modern stages of development and about 25 percent at pluralistic, post-modern. Then about 5 percent at integral.

That still lets us see that there is a transformation occurring. Each stage is more conscious, each stage is more complex. Each stage has a greater capacity for love and this was really in Carol Gilligan's studies on female moral development that found that they go through four major stages.

Stage one, she called selfish. The woman cares only for herself. That's egocentric. Stage two, she called care, because a woman can extend care from herself to a group and that's of course ethnocentric. Stage three, she called universal care and that's when a woman extends care from a group to all groups, all humans, regardless of race, color, sex or creed. That is world-centric and then her fourth stage was integrated, which is the women

and men both integrate the contrasexual attitudes.

Men integrate masculine and feminine and females integrate masculine and feminine and that's the beginning of our cosmo-centric.

Those are all occurring, but then in addition to that we still have this process of waking up and virtually no Western proponents, except of course the ones that are truly spiritual and then mystically spiritual are even aware of the fact that not only do we have these growing up stages, there are stages of waking up and these are profound. These are moving from universally maintained to be a movement from relative finite reality to ultimate infinite reality and that human beings have that capacity.

They have a capacity of their humanity to intersect divinity and the supreme identity, and that is an awakening that is truly likened to awakening from a dream state. Our relative conventional finite world is so paltry compared to this awakened, enlightened, liberated state.

Those haven't been factored into the picture hardly at all and when they are, unfortunately it is often by people that also are just at a mythic stage of growing up.

So they are introducing it in a framework that you know the problems with it. You used to be a fundamentalist, it's 2,000 years old. They thought the earth was flat when it was written, it poetic, wonderfully in certain ways, a certain kind of night knowledge, not so great on day knowledge and so what we really want to do is be able to top off both of these developmental sequences and come from an integral level of interpretation of a non-dual unity consciousness.

That would be a staggering orientation and they are there for us. Those calls to future greatness in both of those sequences are there. They are realities. They are waiting for us to pick those up. That's just astonishing.

At the same time, in the other hand, we have almost these problems that catastrophes. We have global warming. We have global epidemics. We have global financial market meltdowns. We have global terrorism. We have global breakup and regression from world-centric modes back to ethno-centric warlords. The entire Mid-East is nothing but separate warlords at each other's throats.

Eastern countries from Japan to Korea, to Vietnam, to China, 1990, they imported ten percent of the world's arms. Today, 40 percent and they are all

at each other's throats.

We have global problems and global means just that. They can't be solved by one nation.

Michael: Exactly. I am reminded of my dear friend Tom Atley. He's got this wonderful quote. He says, "When people ask me how I think we are doing as a species, it occurs to me that it seems that things are getting better and better and worse and worse, faster and faster."

Ken: That's exactly it. It's a horse race.

Michael: Yes.

Ken: I am in that classic Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I am this way and Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, I am that way and Sunday, I can't make up my mind.

Michael: I sometimes say the same thing in terms of the Conservatives who trash Liberals and Liberals who trash Conservatives, neither one of them get evolution because evolution, if it's anything, is a spiral dance between the conserving element of society and our own personalities, and the liberal progressive element, and both are necessary.

I sometimes say the same thing, on Monday, Wednesday, Friday I am Conservative, on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday I am Liberal and I flip a coin on Sunday.

Ken: Yeah, absolutely but I think that is one of the telling factors about the future that it's just dramatically different than it's ever been. Whenever human beings face the future in the past, there are a lot of things that they have in common.

There is one thing they never had, they never had a future that was global on both sides. These positive things that are happening to us are happening globally and the negative potential catastrophes that are happening are also happening globally.

That means, for example, if we take global warming, 50 years ago, if a nation had a problem it could generally take steps and it would cure that problem or ameliorate it. Today, all of our problems are untouchable by individual nations.

United States could lower its carbon emission to zero and it wouldn't slow global warming tenth of a degree. Every nation on the planet has to get involved in this or it's not going to happen and the same is true of global markets and global monetary transfer, it's certainly true of global epidemics, global terrorism. There is nothing a nation can do about any of that.

So we are really running up against the whole inadequacy of a nation state in terms of what's happening and that means slowly, some sort of world federation is going to be forming, and of course we are stumbling towards that in a lot of different ways and all of these are radically new.

There is just nothing in present or in history to give us an indication of how to do any of these things.

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Ken: That's what is so wild about it.

Michael: I know. One of the things that I have been doing a lot lately is what I sometimes say evangelizing big history, taking the history of everyone and everything and helping people experience that in a sacred or inspiring and meaningful way and one of the patterns that I find most helpful, actually two of them, one is that chaos, breakdowns, destruction keeps catalyzing creative transformation.

It may be the single most important thing is chaos and breakdown, so that gives me some hope but also that we keep finding ways of broadening our circles of care, cooperation and commitment, and compassion. Of course now, not only do we need to cooperate but TV, internet, Twitter and Facebook, these things are actually helping to expand our circles of compassion to include not just other humans but even other species, and I find that to be hopeful.

Ken: That's one of the things that interestingly, both of the upper limits of both of these growth sequences have those types of qualities and characteristics. They are both essentially global oriented, globally directed and so as people continue to move towards those, they continue to be drawn towards more interconnected, interrelated, mutually compassionate and caring, mutually loving and again, this is also something that's really new.

In all of our past, it was very much – as you were saying earlier – us versus them and the big choice in your life was to choose the right us because if it

goes down, you are going with it, so make sure you are on the right side.

Something like these Crusades, what are you going to be? Are you going to be a Christian or are you going to be a Muslim? Choose carefully.

Now, it's not that. Now, the choice is how to be inclusive versus how not to be and that's what people find that they are faced with and incredibly, they push down the barriers of us versus them to an us without a them. That's radically new and it's a type of identity that human beings have never been asked to grow into. They've been asked not to, actually.

Now though, it's an entirely new ground, an entirely new area and field and so I think one of the things that is noticeable is just all of the people that we know and certainly all the organizations that you look at that are in various ways, in lots of different ways talking about the same kind of fundamental issues about wait a minute, we are growing. The planet is changing, our political systems are changing, our markets are changing. Our medical care is changing and actually how we choose is going to have a big hand at what actually happens tomorrow.

Michael: Yes.

Ken: Humans didn't think this way very much throughout most of history but we are co-creating, co-evolving the future and we are in some ways directly responsible for the evolutionary unfolding that we get tomorrow.

Michael: Yes.

Ken: In the past, it was you got what your genes got you and that was that. It was common in a particular culture that you were born in a particular shack. If you were born in the place that your parents were born, you lived there, you worked the fields there and you died there, you had your kids there. They grew up there and for hundreds of years.

Now, it's just a completely new world with new rules and the rules themselves are being written as we go forward and we are the ones that are writing them.

Michael: Amen. It is so interesting, this time that we live in. One of the things that came to mind as you were talking about the path of waking up and the path of growing up, my own experience over the last 30 years or so has been in some ways and I didn't have the language like that, but in some ways, almost those two strands in a DNA like spiral where I've emphasized one

more than the other in different times in my life.

Obviously, I am most grounded in the Christian tradition but I have also done a weeklong retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh and engaged in a lot of Buddhist meditation, but also meditation in a more Christian mystic tradition and I've come to define meditation as paying attention at the speed of life.

I find it to be a useful way because I found that as I've also grown in terms of the growing up, expanding my worldview, expanding my circle of compassion and also expanding from just a horizontal ecological understanding of reality to a deep time, evolutionary or big history understanding.

I came in the back door to this understanding and I don't call it enlightenment because that's not been part of the main course of my tradition but nonetheless, it's been now a decade and a half or close two decades since I habitually have the awareness that thou art that.

I don't lose the awareness that I am the universe become conscious of itself, that I am nature uncovering its own nature, that I am a cell in the body of this divine whatever you want to call reality, the ultimate reality and that my role is to help awaken others or help others grow, and they are not the same thing but they are both part of the same process, if that makes sense. It's just an incredible time in life.

Ken: Right. That's the extraordinary thing about today's world and about the real ways that we have that you are perfectly aware of and have written on but the real ways we have today of interweaving also science and a genuine spirituality that there is very little about real science – not the scientism or scientific materialism – both of which by the way are not scientific but most practicing scientists fall into those philosophies as default.

Science knows it can't prove god but it also knows it can't disprove god. They keep assuming that they have and they haven't and the proof of god lies in different directions. It's also a science of the interiors and you also have certain experiments you have to do and if you do those experiments you get data and that data has to be confirmed with a community of people who have done the experiment and gotten the data.

The experiment is generally some form of meditation and the data is some form of metanoia or Christ consciousness or satori or awakening, or whatever you want to call it and then that is generally checked with a

community of those who have done that to make sure they are not just hallucinating or making something up or just having an egocentric inflation or what not.

So there is a proof of god's existence and you can take 95 percent of people with scientific PhDs and if they have a satori experience or a metanoia experience or Christ consciousness experience, just like that neurosurgeon from Harvard recently did, and claimed it was the most real experience that he'd ever had his entire life and of course he knows what science is, he is an MD at Harvard but this was more real.

This spiritual realization more real than all of the science that he knew and so there is a proof of god's existence, but the traditions generally make a distinction between ultimate truth and relative truth, and they are both important. So seeing water as composed of two hydrogen and one oxygen atom is relatively true. Ultimately, water is made of spirit, it's a manifestation of ultimate godhead, ultimate reality and both of those are real.

Then what you see in terms of ultimate reality and its manifestation of the world, instead of that six-day poetic version of it, it really unfolds into the same story but over 14 billion years of a lot more detailed understanding and evolution becomes spirit's actual mechanism of manifesting this relative world. It is spirit in action.

Those become completely compatible approaches and actually need each other because one is going to supply the relative details, like this is how you do a kidney transplant or this is what you have to do when working on molecular formulas if you want to put a man on the moon, or what not. You can't do that with a bible or a sutra, or the Koran or anything. It's just a different field.

Putting together these ultimate truths with these relative truths gives you an overall comprehensive access to the most amount of reality that we can possibly be aware of but it's to the point now that anything less than that is broken. It's just fragmented and partial and torn, and tortured. We just can't do that anymore, we know too much to go back.

We know it because we have all of world's cultures available to us and when you put all of those together, you get at the very least two truths and they are both important.

Michael: It's interesting, just recently I've created something. I see the two biggest

expressions of my creativity in the last decade. One being my book, *Thank God for Evolution* and the other is a five-part video series that I've just uploaded to You Tube just three weeks ago called *God in Big History*.

One of the things I am trying to do is say that any god that can be believed in or not believed isn't god. In other words, god can't possibly be less than a personal face, a sacred name for what is fundamentally undeniably inescapably real and any god that is less than that doesn't deserve the name god in any case. That's sort of a bridge-building perspective and only time will tell how this god in big history approach will be received.

So far, so good but...

Ken: That's the thing that comes with this whole understanding of two truths because the traditional, worldwide mystical understanding anyway is that when you have a metanoia and Christianity by the way is full of that, particularly in the first 300 years and the gnostic gospels have also made it a lot clearer but the notion is that there is a deep turning about in consciousness from the mere relative world, which seemed by itself as universally taken to be a world of illusion.

It's only because when you actually have a waking up experience or an enlightenment experience or a metanoia experience that such a fundamentally real reality becomes apparent that it is clear that's what god is, because that's an experience that's infinitely more real than anything in the mere relative or finite world.

Michael: Yeah.

Ken: Then it's understood that this finite world is a direct expression, it's an outpouring and overflowing of spirit and so under those circumstances then it starts to share in the reality of this undeniable spirit experience we have, this waking up experience and that it's so profoundly real that you can't possibly doubt it, and that's what god is.

It's putting both of these together that we get this overall picture, and then god and big data, god and big history go together because all of big history is god's manifestation. It would be actually what Whitehead called part of god's consequent nature and in addition to that, there is god primordial nature, which is for us the primordial, formless ground of all being and then as it manifests, it manifests in particular evolutionarily unfolding bits of things, processes, people, animals and so on.

The sum totality of all of those is manifest spirit or spirit in action and that's all contained in what Whitehead called the consequent nature of god, because evolution is actually the way spirit is creating these things. So, if you take that classic great chain of being, which in the Christian tradition could be said to go from matter to living body to mind, to soul and to spirit.

That was as Lovejoy's really classic book called *The Great Chain of Being* pointed out, that great chain of being was by far the most commonly held worldview of what he called the greatest member of speculative minds East and West, and it's very true.

Then what happened though is starting right with the modern era, that great chain which was a static vertical series of levels was turned on its side and pushed all the way back to the Big Bang, where there was just the lowest level of matter and then it unfolded over 14 billion years, the great chain unfolded. It wasn't given all that was in the beginning or in six days.

First, there was just material things. After several million years, living bodies emerged. Then after several billion years, minds emerged and we are right at the point now where souls are starting to emerge, and of course somebody like Teilhard de Chardin is on the way to spiritual Omega emergence.

Whether that happens or whether it simply continues unfolding indefinitely remains to be seen but this whole notion that these things are somehow fitting together, that spirit is the ultimate ground of all things and then all things that are manifesting and evolving belong in a comprehensive togetherness I think is absolutely obvious.

Michael: Amen. I just want to ask a practical question, which is when you speak to young people, let's say somebody in their late teens or early 20s who is just freaked out about the world, what would you say in terms of a way to encourage them, to support them, to invite them to find a place where their joys and the world's needs intersect? How do you speak to young people who are aware of many of the big challenges but don't quite know how to be or think, or feel their way through to inspired action?

Ken: I think that one of the things that we have to deal with in these circumstances, which is that we are facing these global issues and they are truly issues that are of global stretch. That can be intimidating because it doesn't seem that there is any particular thing that you can do that's going to have an impact on something that big.

If you actually look at how development occurs and you look at morphogenesis in biology, for example, you study an embryo growth and development, it becomes really clear and Waddington was the guy that invented the term morphogenetic field, which Rupert Sheldrake has done a lot of work with but he created morphogenetic field because the actual development, the pattern that all embryos went through were coded nowhere in any individual cell.

The overall form of the embryo was growing towards the morphogenetic field that was controlling it couldn't be reduced or found in any individual component of that embryo but it was this overall field that was controlling it.

So you take the head of a tadpole and the tail of a tadpole, cut them off, put the head where the tail and the tail where the head was, and the tail will grow into a new head and the head will grow into a new tail. It's like, wow, just their location in the overall pattern is part of the determinant of their form.

Where is that form stored? Take Perkin Synthesis. When different labs around the world first tried to synthesize protein and it's got hundreds of different molecules, that protein can literally fold into over several thousand different ways when it's created and yet, as soon as it's created in one laboratory anywhere in the world and it folds into one given pattern, all the proteins synthesized in all the other laboratories around the world fold into the same pattern. So where is that form stored?

The actual form of development is stored someplace in this great form storehouse but it's a real place and as form is stored there, that form reaches a kind of a certain weight at certain point and it reaches right down and helps control the manifest, conventional, finite world.

Any individual's form, any thoughts that you are having now, the behaviors and the actions that you are taking are being stored in the big form storehouse somewhere and so you are actually having a direct impact on the manifestation of the future form of evolution itself and reality itself.

So it is not true that you are not having an impact or can't have an impact, you are having an impact because the very form of the thoughts that you are having now and the very types of ideas, the drives and the values that you hold are stored in that great form storehouse.

You are plugged into something that's happening whether you realize it or

not and so within all of that, you still have to find your own particular heart's desire because even though there is this whole global thing that's happening, it is the sum total of a whole bunch of individuals contributing their own particular desires and so the more clearly you can discover your own then the better you are going to be able to impact this overall global phenomenon.

Michael: Amen. One of the exercises along those lines that I've often invited audiences to do is to take a piece of paper, draw a line down the middle and then on one side list all the things that light them up, give them joy, turn them on and that sort of thing and the things that they are good at, and at the top of that list to put My Great Joy, and then on the other side, list of all the places where you are aware of in your community or in the world, where you feel the world's needs, not just what you intellectually know about what's needed but where do you feel it?

Where do you get angry, frustrated and especially, where do you feel compassion? Where does your heart just break over something that's happening in your community and in the world? At the top of that list, you put the World's Great Needs As I Feel Them, so you've got two lists.

Then I say, just pay attention to your heart. You are trying to play mix and match, but let your heart guide you. Where are the intersections between what lights you up, what gives you joy and what gives you energy and what the world's needs or your community's needs as you feel them?

Those places of intersection, where your joy and the world's needs intersect, that's your calling. That's your mission and that's your vocation, at least at this time.

It's one of the things that I draw on and it's somewhat different. I actually love what you have been just saying about because I didn't think about bringing in the whole morphogenetic thing, but one of the things I've been talking about in terms of the whole butterfly's wings in Hong Kong affects the weather in New York, I said it's not just your good works.

Imagine that you positively impact only three people. You will actually have positive impact on hundreds, maybe thousands of people. Let's just pretend it's only three people and each of them goes on to significantly impact only three people but one of them goes on to impact 30 million people that wouldn't have been impacted had you not made your little difference with these three people over here.

Then I'll often stop and I'll say, the good news, what I call grace is that it's not just your good works. Haven't there been people that have made profound positive difference in your life because of their lousy example? They were just a real jerk and you made some positive choice and then everybody laughs, and I say now do you honestly think that you haven't been blessing others in the same way?

That's why I find when I speak with young people, I just encourage them to follow those places where their joy and the world's needs intersect and trust that whatever difference they make, it may make a difference in somebody else and somebody else, and then ripple out in ways that are completely unbelievable.

Ken: Exactly, and I think that plugging individual feelings into world feeling is a great way to do it. A man you can define as cosmopolitan, which is a world citizen basically, is when anybody anywhere suffers I suffer and it was that solidarity feeling that brings one into a cosmopolitan space, into this global encompassing world-centric space where my own particular drives, desires, joys and so on are directly interfacing with this entire planet and what's happening on it and in any number of ways that we can influence that, influence three people, influence 30,000 direct morphogenetic fields, the point is we truly are interwoven with everything that's going on and we can make a difference literally by getting out of bed and what you do in the next ten, fifteen minutes.

Michael: Amen. Ken, just beginning to wind down here. I've got to ask you this question that Connie has asked me ask everybody.

Ken: Sure.

Michael: It's just a little of the wall but it's fun.

Ken: Okay.

Michael: Which is, if you could have a dinner or a beer or lunch or whatever, but if you could just spend time over a meal or something like that with any three people in human history or it could even be a dinner party where all four of you, these three people and you are all together but who would those three people be and why would you invite them?

Ken: Probably – and I mean there is so many and I spend so much time studying so many of the world's cultures and I have so many heroes in so many different places, but I would probably say representing Eastern traditions,

somebody like Shankara, a great, in a sense almost founder of Vedanta, Hinduism.

Then for a Western, I would go with somebody like [indiscernible 68:35]. He really is the fountain of all neo-platonic Gnosticism in the West and even Bertrand Russell, when he was talking about philosophers, the good, the true and the beautiful, and he said that the good belonged to Spinoza, he was the most ethical philosopher you could think of and the true, he never said but presumably that belonged to Bertrand himself but the beautiful he gave to [indiscernible 69:05] and he said, "It's just the most beautiful system I've ever seen," and it was really astonishing.

Then the other one, just to get on the conventional side of the street, there is a biography of this guy and I read the preface of the gentleman who wrote it and he said, "There are times when you come across somebody that is so much of a genius that is just beyond your capacity to describe how extraordinary a genius this person was, simply off the scales in every direction," and he was talking about Isaac Newton.

So, even though obviously not too many people are fond of Newton's actual worldviews right now, although of course he stimulated virtually the free modern science that came to the more advanced worldview that it has today and so they are all beholding to him, but just to interact with somebody who had that degree of genius I think would just be a very interesting event.

Of course, he was also an alchemist in magic and all sorts of things. It was said that he was not the first great scientist but the last great mystic, but I think that would be an interesting dinner party.

Michael: I think so. Connie and I are just now re-watching Neil De Grasse Tyson's redo of *Cosmos* and I actually really enjoy the way he dealt with Isaac Newton.

Ken: Yes. We actually had a discussion about that and one of the things that I spotted on that particular series was again how much Neil was really in servitude of scientific materialism, because what he in a sense did was he went all the way back to the comets and how all the cultures around the world saw them as disasters and he played it out that that was pattern recognition but it was what he called false pattern recognition.

Then on we go to history and history until we get to Isaac Newton. Now, everything up to Newton was still false pattern recognition, human beings

were not in touch with any sort of truth at all. They were only in touch with falsehood --

Michael: I've got a different read. We can have an entire conversation just on this.

Ken: Yes, but that's what he said, but when we get to Newton all of a sudden, Newton gets it right and so he presents the Newtonian view as being right on the money, for the first time, right --

Michael: With respects to comets, specifically. I don't think he was speaking beyond that.

Ken: He gave no limitations on Newton. He talked about his views of gravity and how they united the previous Galileo and Kepler views, which they did actually at that time, but now of course, several hundred years later, Newton's actual views are looked at as false pattern recognition.

Nobody looks at gravity as action and the distance, it's the result of the curvature in space time and so Newton was also caught in false pattern recognition and this is what you get when you look at developmental studies is every stage of development sees a different world and it sees the previous world more clearly than the previous world saw.

As Hagel put it, "Every stage is adequate, every higher stage is more adequate," or we can say, every stage is true for the conditions at that stage. It has its true versus false understandings and those relatively correct, given the data they have. Then each higher stage is more true but it's always going to be that way.

If we look on the things that we believe today and we look at how people will view them 500 years from now, virtually everything we believe in now will be part of false pattern recognition. Ninety-six percent of the world is dark matter. We have no bloody idea what that is and Neil says, "We know exactly what comets are and exactly where they come from."

We know nothing about where they actually come from. Ninety-six percent of them is dark matter. Explain that.

Michael: I was having a similar conversation just yesterday on some discussion forum where there a number of people coming from a more humanist, atheist, skeptic free thinker perspective and they were thrashing conservative religion and I said before those of us who embrace an evidential worldview go about thrashing earlier religious or spiritual

worldviews, we might do well to take an evolutionary, ecological and evidential approach to religions themselves.

If you don't understand the evolutionary significance of religion, you are not going to be able to critique it in any accurate way whatsoever.

Ken: Right. Exactly.

Michael: Ken, I am so delighted. We can just go on and on but unfortunately you've got another commitment. If somebody wants to learn more of your work, obviously there is such a broad body but is there a website or a particular book, or anything, if somebody wanted to get more into your work or find out what your current stuff is, where would I send them?

Ken: In terms of books, people can start with *The Theory of Everything* and then there is a simple introductory book called *The Integral Vision*. Then a couple of different websites. Probably the one that is most active right now is IntegralLife.com and I carry weekly discussions or dialogs with various well-known experts of various fields on integral approach to various things, and people can find those there.

Then once they pick up any one of those books, they will find a list of some 25 other books they can pick up in any order they want.

Michael: That's great. Ken, thank you so much for this conversation and for your just amazing integrative work in the world, and I know you've had your health challenges. I just wish you many more years of good health, clear thinking and good writing.

Ken: Bless you my friend. I am a big fan of your work as well and as you know, this is a delight all around, and give Connie a big hug for me.

Michael: I definitely will.

Ken: Thanks, buddy.

Michael: Bye-bye.