

A TRUE STORY. A LIFELONG JOURNEY.
A LIFE OF COHERENCE.

Is There More?

— THE CALL —
AND A FIFTY-YEAR JOURNEY
FROM AWAKENING TO
COHERENCE

“

At eighteen,
I asked,
“Is there more?”
Fifty-one years later,
I’m still discovering
the answer.

”



CONSCIOUSNESS

LEADERSHIP

PLANETARY CITIZENSHIP

HUMAN & MACHINE
INTELLIGENCE

ZEN BENEFIEL

AUTHOR • SPEAKER • SYSTEMS FEELER

BUILDER OF COHERENCE

Is There More?

**The Call and a Fifty-Year
Journey from Awakening
to Coherence**

Dedication

To those who have always sensed there is more—

to those who have questioned where they belong,
experienced what they could not explain,
or carried a quiet knowing for which they had no words.

To those who chose curiosity over certainty,
service over recognition,
and love over separation.

And to every person still listening
for the call within their own life—

May you trust what invites you deeper,
allow the journey to change you,
and discover that perhaps we do not merely
belong somewhere.

**We belong to one another—
and within the whole.**

The journey continues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zen Buck". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zen" and last name "Buck" clearly distinguishable.

Foreword

There are lives that move in straight lines—measured by predictable milestones, conventional career paths, and comfortable certainties. Then there are lives like Zen Benefiel's: lives of profound inquiry, deep apprenticeship, and a relentless commitment to discovering what lies beneath the surface of ordinary reality.

When Zen first asked the question, "*Is there more?*" as an eighteen-year-old pre-med student lying in a college dorm room, he could not have anticipated that the ensuing journey would span five decades, crossing through aerospace manufacturing floors, television studios, construction trailers, corporate boardrooms, and the frontiers of human and machine intelligence. Yet, as you turn these pages, you will discover that his story is not merely a personal memoir of a mystical encounter. It is something much rarer and far more valuable: a masterclass in how an extraordinary awakening is tested, tempered, and ultimately brought into service in an ordinary human life.

We live in an era defined by a profound paradox. Never before has humanity been so technologically interconnected, yet rarely have our organizations, communities, and internal lives suffered from such deep fragmentation. We possess immense computational power, abundant data, and sophisticated systems, yet

we continually stumble over silos, mistrust, competing priorities, and the friction that arises when what we say we value diverges from what we actually do.

In *Is There More?* Zen addresses this very tension. Through decades of real-world application—navigating the complexities of organizational development, facilitating high-stakes construction partnering, and exploring the delicate interplay between human wisdom and artificial intelligence—he traces a single, unifying thread: **How do apparently separate parts recognize their relationship to the whole?**

What makes Zen's perspective so refreshing, and so vital for today's leaders, thinkers, and seekers, is his refusal to hide behind dogma or demand ideological agreement. He demonstrates that genuine coherence is not about achieving uniform sameness or eliminating healthy tension; rather, it is the disciplined practice of remaining in intelligent relationship across differences. He reminds us that true leadership does not begin with grand proclamations of utopia, but with the quiet, demanding work of listening, owning our commitments, and transforming intention into practical behavior.

As someone who has spent a lifetime exploring systems architecture, strategic intelligence, and the vital bridge between human insight and execution, I found myself nodding in recognition throughout these pages. Zen's journey from mystical wonder to practical stewardship

offers a powerful roadmap for anyone seeking to bring greater alignment, clarity, and purpose into their work and their world.

This book does not ask you to adopt a specific worldview or accept unverified metaphysics. Instead, it invites you to look more closely at your own life, to listen to your own deepest questions, and to discover how the extraordinary can quietly hide inside the ordinary.

Read these chapters not just as a reflection on one man's fifty-year journey, but as an invitation to examine your own. You may just find that the answers you have been searching for are already waiting in the spaces where your values meet your daily actions.

— *Farooq Omar*

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THE
CALL

LOOKING BACK AFTER FIFTY YEARS

The awakening lasted a moment.
The calling has lasted a lifetime.



VISION



LEARNER



LEADER



BUILDER



SYSTEMS
THINKER



CREATING A
MAGNIFICENT
FUTURE



WAS SHAPED BY QUESTIONS • & ATTACHMENT TO • CALLING

The Call

Looking Back After Fifty Years

There are moments in life that divide everything into *before* and *after*.

For me, one of those moments came when I was eighteen years old. I had no language for it then, and even after five decades of reflection, I'm not convinced words can fully capture it now.

Over the years, I've described it in different ways—a spiritual awakening, a near-death-like experience, a mystical encounter, an initiation into what I came to understand as a cosmic priesthood. Each description reflects part of the truth as I experienced it, yet none fully contains it. Language has always felt too small for something that altered the course of an ordinary young man's life.

For a long time, I believed the story was about the experience itself.

I no longer think that.

The real story is what happened afterward.

How do you build a life around an event that changes the way you see yourself, humanity, and reality? How do you remain grounded while pursuing questions that many people never ask—or perhaps quietly ask but rarely voice? How do you translate deeply personal experiences into practical service for others?

Those questions have shaped every season of my life.

They led me into classrooms as a teacher, construction sites as a partnering facilitator, boardrooms as an organizational consultant, studios as a podcast host, and eventually to the pages of more than fifty books. They inspired the founding of Planetary Citizens, conversations with remarkable people from around the world through *One World in a New World*, and, most recently, a partnership that helped give rise to the AI Universal Engine™—a framework designed to strengthen human judgment, organizational coherence, and wiser decision-making.

Looking back, I can see a thread that I couldn't recognize while I was living it.

As an orphan adopted into a loving family, I spent much of my early life asking questions about identity, belonging, and purpose. Those questions didn't disappear after the experience that changed my life at

eighteen. If anything, they became more compelling. The experience didn't provide all the answers; it expanded the questions. It invited me into a lifelong apprenticeship of listening, learning, and testing what I believed against the realities of everyday life.

That apprenticeship has been anything but linear.

There have been moments of profound clarity and seasons of deep uncertainty. Times when doors opened effortlessly and times when they closed just as quickly. There were opportunities that exceeded anything I imagined, along with failures that humbled me, misunderstandings that isolated me, and quiet periods when I wondered whether any of it mattered.

Yet through it all, one conviction never left me: our lives are not measured by the extraordinary moments we experience, but by the ordinary choices we make because of them.

That realization changed everything.

Instead of trying to explain what had happened to me, I became more interested in understanding what it was asking of me.

It asked me to listen more deeply than I spoke.

To seek understanding before certainty.

To value coherence over competition.

To recognize that leadership begins with self-awareness.

To discover that genuine transformation is less about accumulating knowledge than aligning one's life with one's deepest values.

Along the way, I discovered that these principles weren't limited to individuals. They applied equally to organizations, communities, and perhaps even to humanity itself. Fragmentation—whether within a person, a leadership team, or a society—creates friction, confusion, and unnecessary suffering.

Coherence, by contrast, allows purpose, relationships, and action to align in ways that release extraordinary potential.

Only recently have I begun to appreciate that this search for coherence has been the consistent thread running through everything I've written, taught, built, and explored. Long before coherence became the title of a book or the foundation for new organizational frameworks, it had quietly become the orientation of my life.

People occasionally ask whether I still think about that experience from my youth.

The answer is yes—but not in the way they might expect.

I no longer spend much time trying to determine exactly what happened.

Was it mystical?

Psychological?

Spiritual?

An encounter with a deeper dimension of consciousness?

Perhaps those questions will always remain open.

Today, I find myself asking a different question:

What kind of life honors an experience that calls you beyond yourself?

That question has proven far more transformative than any explanation I could offer.

This series is my attempt to explore that question honestly.

Not to persuade.

Not to prove.

Not to ask anyone to adopt my worldview.

Simply to reflect on a journey that has unfolded over fifty years—a journey that has led me through wonder, doubt, service, discovery, leadership, loss, gratitude, and an ever-deepening appreciation for the mystery of being alive.

If my reflections encourage you to listen a little more closely to your own life's questions, then they will have served their purpose.

Perhaps we all receive a call of some kind.

Mine happened to arrive in a way I could never have anticipated.

The rest of my life has been learning how to answer it.



Before the Call:

An Orphan's Search for Belonging

*Before the answering, there was a question.
Before the calling, there was a child looking for home.*



A SEARCH FOR HOME



QUESTIONS THAT RISE



LEARNING TO LISTEN



THE ROAD TO BELONG



FROM IDENTITY TO CONNECTION

“ Perhaps we don't exactly belong somewhere. Perhaps we belong to one another... and to this whole world.”

Zina Bennefeld
AUTHOR | 1974-1990 - 1990-1999
BOLDEN OF CONSCIENCE

 THE CALL SERIES
Exploring a lifetime of questions, service, and the journey toward cohesion and planetary citizenship.

 ZENSCAPES - MINDFUL FUTURES | *Enlightening Consciousness. Cultivating Cohesion. Creating a Mindful Future.*

Before the Call

An Orphan's Search for Belonging

Before there was a calling, there was a question.

I was born an orphan and spent the first six weeks of my life in foster care before being adopted into a loving family in rural Indiana. I didn't consciously remember those first weeks, of course. Yet looking back across nearly seven decades, I've often wondered how much our earliest experiences shape us before we have words to describe them.

For the first years of my childhood, the family I knew was simply my family. There was no reason for me to imagine otherwise.

Then, in November 1961, everything changed.

My parents brought home my newly adopted sister and told me that I, too, had been adopted.

I was five years old.

A five-year-old doesn't understand genetics, abandonment, attachment theory, or the complexities that lead parents to place a child for adoption. A child understands something much simpler:

Where did I come from?

And beneath that question lies another:

Where do I belong?

The Question Behind the Question

I was loved. That matters.

My search for belonging wasn't born from an absence of caring in my adoptive family. It came from discovering that there was another part of my story—a beginning I couldn't remember involving people I didn't know.

Somewhere, I had another mother.

Somewhere, I had another father.

For a young mind, that realization opened an enormous space.

Like many children raised in a Christian culture, I had also heard about a Father in heaven. Eventually, childhood logic brought these worlds together in a question that seemed perfectly reasonable to me:

If I have a father and mother in heaven, can I talk to them?

I didn't know then that this simple question would become one of the earliest threads in a lifelong exploration of consciousness, identity, communication, and our relationship with what we cannot see.

I wasn't trying to become spiritual.

I wasn't searching for mystical experiences.

I was a child trying to understand where I came from.

And I began listening.

Discovering an Inner World

Children have extraordinarily rich interior lives. Imagination, intuition, dreams, feelings, memories, and perceptions often coexist without the boundaries adults later construct between what is "real" and what is "imagined."

My inner world became a place of inquiry.

I began experimenting, in the innocent way children do, with the possibility that perhaps communication wasn't limited to the people physically around me.

Could thoughts be heard?

Could questions be answered?

Was anyone listening?

I didn't have sophisticated language for any of this. Terms like consciousness, nonlocality, contemplative practice, transpersonal psychology, or anomalous experience would come decades later.

At the time, there was simply curiosity.

And listening.

That distinction feels important today.

When we look backward, we're tempted to reinterpret childhood through everything we've learned since. Memories acquire labels. Experiences become evidence for theories. Events that were once mysterious are organized into narratives.

But the child experiencing them had none of those frameworks.

He simply wondered.

Belonging to Something Larger

As the years passed, my questions grew with me.

The search for biological origins gradually became something larger:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What does it mean to belong?

Is there some underlying order to life?

Are we isolated individuals moving through an indifferent universe, or participants in something profoundly interconnected?

I didn't know it then, but that movement—from personal belonging toward universal belonging—would eventually become one of the defining patterns of my life.

The orphan's question slowly became the systems feeler's question.

Where do the parts belong within the whole?

Decades later, I would encounter versions of that same question in classrooms, businesses, construction projects, leadership teams, community initiatives, relationships, and organizational systems.

People want to belong.

Teams want to function as wholes.

Organizations struggle when their parts lose connection with their purpose.

Communities fragment when identity becomes stronger than relationship.

Even our relationship with the planet reflects the same challenge: Do we experience ourselves as separate from the living system that sustains us, or as participants within it?

What began as a deeply personal question eventually became a lens through which I viewed much of the world.

The Danger of Looking Back

There's something else I've learned about telling stories like this.

Memory deserves humility.

After fifty or sixty years, it would be easy to draw a perfectly straight line from childhood experiences to everything that followed. Real lives aren't that tidy.

I didn't grow up knowing I would become a teacher, organizational consultant, author, interviewer, advocate for planetary citizenship, or systems feeler.

I certainly didn't imagine that someday I'd be exploring how human wisdom might interact with artificial intelligence.

Those chapters came later.

There were detours, contradictions, mistakes, unexpected opportunities, disappointments, and long stretches where the larger pattern was invisible to me.

Only in retrospect do certain threads become apparent.

Belonging is one of them.

From Identity to Relationship

For much of my younger life, I thought identity was about discovering **who I was**.

Over time, I've come to see identity as something more relational.

We discover ourselves partly through how we relate:

to family,

to community,

to work,

to nature,

to ideas,

to mystery,

and ultimately to one another.

Perhaps belonging isn't something we find once and possess forever.

Perhaps it is something we continually create through relationship.

That realization eventually influenced my understanding of leadership as well.

Organizations often speak about engagement, culture, teamwork, alignment, and purpose as though they are separate management concerns.

I've come to see them as expressions of a more fundamental human question:

Do I belong here, and does what I contribute matter?

When people can answer yes to both, remarkable things become possible.

The Child Still Asking

I sometimes think about that five-year-old boy discovering that his story began somewhere beyond the family he knew.

He couldn't possibly have understood what that revelation would set in motion.

He only knew there was a mystery.

So he asked questions.

And then he listened.

I still recognize him in myself.

The vocabulary has changed. The questions have become more sophisticated. The arenas in which I've explored them have expanded enormously.

But curiosity remains.

So does the willingness to listen.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts my early circumstances gave me: not an answer about where I belonged, but a question spacious enough to accompany me throughout my life.

Eventually, that search would lead to an experience at eighteen that altered everything I thought I understood about myself and reality.

But that story makes little sense without understanding what came before it.

Before the light.

Before the awakening.

Before what I would eventually call *The Call*.

There was simply a boy looking into an enormous universe and wondering:

Where do I belong?

Nearly seventy years later, my answer is very different from the one I was searching for then.

Perhaps we don't merely belong **somewhere**.

Perhaps we belong **to one another—and within the whole**.

And perhaps the search for belonging is one of the ways we begin remembering that.

A MOMENT, A QUESTION, A VOICE OF PURPOSE

THE DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED

An ordinary afternoon becomes
an extraordinary turning point.

“There are you asking
to die for what you
believe in?”

Chris Conners
and colleagues
Chris Conners
and
Yes

“We are connected to these points of consciousness.
Your role is to help facilitate a new order
within your lifetime. It will happen.”

Trust and allow.



1. AN ORDINARY AFTERNOON

Between classes
and study
during a late
afternoon of
reflection.



2. THE QUESTION

A simple question
about what
it means to be
the person you
are.



3. THE TURN

A sign from my
inner world
that says it's time
to go walking
in the unknown.



4. IN THE DARK

Nothing is happening.
I'm anything
but sure.
I'm lost.



5. MYSTIC SPACE

There is
something
different.
I'm not
alone.



6. A TURNING

There is a change.
I'm not
alone.
I'm not
alone.

The Day Everything Changed

Some moments announce themselves as important.

Others begin so ordinarily that only afterward do we recognize the dividing line they created in our lives.

November 11, 1975, began as an ordinary day for me.

I was eighteen years old, at the beginning of my second quarter as a pre-med student, living in the honors dorm. My days revolved around classes, studying, friendships, music, and the expectations that come with preparing for a professional future.

From the outside, my path probably looked fairly conventional.

Inside, another journey had been unfolding for years.

The questions that began in childhood—*Who am I? Where did I come from? Where do I belong?*—had grown with me. What began as an orphan's search for identity was becoming a young man's search for meaning, truth, and the nature of consciousness itself.

I had no idea that an ordinary break between classes and study was about to transform those questions forever.

Just Another Afternoon

There was nothing ceremonial about the setting.

I wasn't at a spiritual retreat.

There was no teacher present.

No candles.

No ritual.

I was lying across the bed in my dorm room listening to Journey's first album.

Music had become a natural doorway into reflection for me. Between the demands of classes and studying, moments like this offered space to simply listen and turn inward.

I slipped into what I would have called a meditative state.

Then I heard the inner voice I'd known since childhood.

"Bruce, are you willing to die for what you believe in?"

There was nothing vague about the question.

It was direct.

And what happened inside me next occurred almost instantaneously.

What Did I Believe In?

Christ Consciousness came to mind first.

Given my upbringing, perhaps that wasn't surprising. Christianity had provided much of the spiritual vocabulary available to me.

Yet when the phrase arose, I noticed something.

It didn't feel wrong.

It simply didn't feel complete.

There was something about *Christ Consciousness* that seemed to point toward what I sensed but didn't quite contain the fullness of it.

Then another phrase came to mind.

Cosmic Consciousness.

Something shifted.

That felt full.

Whole.

It seemed to encompass what I sensed *Christ Consciousness* represented while extending beyond the boundaries of any particular religion, personality, or tradition.

I didn't conduct a theological analysis.

I didn't debate the implications.

I simply felt the difference.

And I answered.

“Yes.”

The Threshold

The response was immediate.

I felt a distinct tug from my solar plexus.

At virtually the same instant, a guitar riff came through the music that sounded to me like the *whoosh* of a jet passing by at breakneck speed.

Physical sensation and sound seemed to converge.

And then—

everything changed.

My awareness seemed to accelerate beyond the ordinary boundaries through which I knew myself.

There was an extraordinary white light.

Not simply light as something I was observing.

The distinction between myself and the light seemed to disappear.

Body, room, bed, college student, name—none of these seemed to be the organizing center of my awareness anymore.

There was an overwhelming sense of expansion.

Unity.

And then stillness.

In the Light

There seemed to be a pause.

I had the unmistakable feeling of being in the presence of an infinite intelligence.

I don't offer that today as a scientific conclusion about what occurred. It is the most accurate way I can describe what the experience felt like from within it.

There was an extraordinary sense that I could ask any question and receive an immediate response.

Given the opportunity to inquire into the mysteries of existence, what did this eighteen-year-old pre-med student ask?

“Is there more?”

Apparently, even infinity wasn't enough for an impetuous teenager.

The question still makes me smile.

Yet the response was immediate.

I felt what seemed like a slight movement.

And the experience changed again.

Points of Light

I found myself in what I can only describe as an indigo space.

Around me were points of light.

I didn't experience them merely as stars or distant objects. There was an immediate knowing—or perception—that these points represented individuated consciousness.

Whether they were embodied or not, I couldn't tell.

I knew that I wasn't in a body, at least not in the ordinary sense in which I understood one.

And yet somehow I had the impression that at least some of these points of consciousness were associated with embodied existence.

It was paradoxical.

As soon as that thought completed itself, the familiar voice returned.

What followed was an explanation of my relationship to these points of consciousness and a role I understood as helping facilitate a new world order within my lifetime.

That phrase requires some context today.

In 1975, I didn't understand “new world order” through the political or conspiratorial meanings the phrase would acquire in later decades. What I understood in the experience was something much simpler and much more hopeful: a different way for humanity to live together—a world characterized by greater awareness, cooperation, harmony, and recognition of our fundamental interconnectedness.

I also experienced an extraordinary assurance that this transformation would occur.

The final words I remember were simple:

“Trust and allow.”

Returning

Then came another *whoosh*.

And I was back.

Dorm room.

Bed.

Music.

Body.

Bruce.

The return seemed instantaneous.

But something else was equally immediate.

I knew—or, more carefully stated from today's perspective, I returned with an absolute conviction—that what we call individual human consciousness was something much larger than our ordinary awareness recognized.

The words that formed in my understanding were:

**We are all cosmic consciousness, condensed into form,
just unaware.**

That realization felt self-evident.

Not a theory.

Not a philosophy I'd reasoned my way toward.

It was simply what I understood upon returning.

**Whether that statement ultimately describes the
nature of consciousness is a question I remain willing
to explore.**

But there is no question that I came back believing it.

And that belief changed the trajectory of my life.

Experience Before Explanation

**This distinction has become increasingly important to
me over the years:**

The experience came first.

The explanations came later.

I wasn't a trained mystic.

I wasn't immersed in esoteric philosophy.

I wasn't attempting to induce an extraordinary state.

I was an eighteen-year-old pre-med student living in an honors dorm who happened to be lying across his bed listening to an album between classes and studying.

Then something happened that none of my available frameworks could adequately explain.

My scientific education was teaching me about the physical organism.

My religious upbringing had given me language for God, Christ, heaven, prayer, and spirit.

Neither seemed large enough to contain what I had experienced.

So I began searching.

Over the decades, I explored religion, mysticism, psychology, philosophy, near-death and anomalous experiences, consciousness studies, systems thinking, ancient wisdom traditions, and scientific perspectives.

Each offered possibilities.

None, for me, completely explained what happened.

**At various times I described it as a spiritual awakening,
an encounter with cosmic consciousness, and
eventually an initiation into what I understood as a
cosmic priesthood.**

Those interpretations mattered deeply to me.

Today, I hold them more lightly.

**Not because the experience has become less
meaningful.**

**Because I've learned to distinguish between what I
experienced and what I believe the experience meant.**

That distinction leaves room for mystery.

It also leaves room for growth.

The World Hadn't Changed

Then came perhaps the most difficult part.

Ordinary life continued.

There were classes.

Books.

Tests.

Meals.

Conversations.

Friends.

Expectations.

Tomorrow arrived.

The world appeared essentially unchanged.

But I wasn't.

How does an eighteen-year-old integrate an experience that seems to have dismantled his previous understanding of reality?

How do you explain it to other people when you barely possess the language to explain it to yourself?

What happens when something feels unquestionably real to you but doesn't fit comfortably within the reality everyone around you appears to share?

Those questions would soon become far more consequential than I could possibly have anticipated.

Experience Is Not Wisdom

It has taken me many years to understand something I consider essential today:

Having an extraordinary experience does not make someone extraordinary.

It doesn't automatically make us enlightened.

It doesn't make us wise.

And it certainly doesn't make our interpretation infallible.

Profound experiences can expand our understanding.

They can also confuse us.

They can deepen humility.

Or inflate the ego.

They can inspire service.

Or tempt us into believing we have been singled out as somehow more important than others.

I've had to wrestle with all of those possibilities.

Especially because my experience seemed to include a role for me in something much larger than myself.

At eighteen, it would have been easy to hear that as a declaration of personal importance.

Fifty years later, I understand it very differently.

If we truly are expressions of something larger—if consciousness and life are fundamentally interconnected—then no one is elevated above the whole.

Responsibility increases.

Specialness decreases.

The question becomes not *Why was I chosen?*

But:

How can I serve?

Reconsidering the “New World”

This has also changed the way I understand what I heard about facilitating a new world order.

As a teenager, I naturally imagined something dramatic.

Transformation.

A different civilization.

Perhaps even something that would become visibly recognizable within my lifetime.

The older I've become, the less interested I am in predicting what such language was supposed to mean.

Maybe transformation doesn't arrive as a single event.

Maybe a “new world” emerges through millions of changes in how people perceive themselves and one another.

Through better leadership.

Healthier organizations.

More conscious relationships.

Greater cooperation.

Responsible technology.

Respect for the planet.

The ability to remain in relationship despite disagreement.

And the gradual recognition that our apparent separateness exists within a much larger interdependence.

Perhaps facilitating a new world isn't about creating one grand transformation.

Perhaps it's about participating responsibly in the one continually trying to emerge.

That interpretation feels far more grounded to me today.

Perhaps the Experience Was Only the Invitation

For years, I thought November 11, 1975, was the initiation.

Today, I'm not so sure.

Perhaps the experience was the invitation.

The real initiation has been everything that followed.

Learning humility.

Learning discernment.

Learning to question my own conclusions.

Learning that certainty can become a prison.

Learning to listen to people whose worldviews differ radically from mine.

Learning that love is considerably easier to proclaim than practice.

Learning that harmony among people and planet requires more than beautiful visions.

Learning that insight without application accomplishes very little.

And learning that coherence isn't something we achieve once.

It's something we practice.

Again and again.

Life Became the Laboratory

The conviction that humanity could live in greater harmony never disappeared.

I simply had to discover what it meant in practical terms.

Life became the laboratory.

Education.

Business.

Leadership.

Organizational development.

Construction partnering.

Community building.

Media.

Writing.

Conversations about consciousness.

Working with people who saw the world very differently from me.

Again and again, I found myself confronting variations of the same question:

How do apparently separate parts recognize their relationship to the whole?

Within a person, we might call it integration.

Within a team, alignment.

Within an organization, coherence.

Within society, cooperation.

Within our relationship with Earth, planetary citizenship.

And now, as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly capable, the question takes another form:

**How do we ensure that greater intelligence is
accompanied by greater wisdom?**

**The eighteen-year-old lying on that dorm-room bed
couldn't have articulated any of those questions.**

But looking backward, I can recognize their seed.

Fifty Years Later

I can tell you what I experienced.

I can tell you what I thought it meant.

I can tell you how my understanding has evolved.

**What I cannot honestly tell you is that I've solved the
mystery.**

And I'm comfortable with that.

Something happened on November 11, 1975.

**It profoundly altered my understanding of myself and
reality.**

**I returned believing that we are expressions of a larger
consciousness, temporarily condensed into individual
form and largely unaware of our deeper nature.**

I returned with the words:

Trust and allow.

And I returned with an impression that my life somehow had something to do with helping humanity recognize a more coherent way of being together.

Fifty years later, I'm less concerned with whether anyone believes the story.

I'm interested in a much more demanding question:

What did I do with it?

Did I become more compassionate?

More curious?

More capable of listening?

More willing to work across differences?

More useful?

More responsible?

Did the experience eventually help me contribute something of value to others?

Those are questions a lifetime can answer far better than any argument about metaphysics.

The Day Everything Changed

Somewhere between classes and studying on an otherwise ordinary November day, an eighteen-year-old pre-med student lay across his dorm-room bed listening to Journey.

A familiar inner voice asked:

“Bruce, are you willing to die for what you believe in?”

Christ Consciousness.

Not quite complete.

Cosmic Consciousness.

Whole.

“Yes.”

A tug from my solar plexus.

A guitar riff like a jet tearing past at breakneck speed.

White light.

Infinite intelligence.

An impetuous question:

“Is there more?”

Indigo.

Points of consciousness.

A message about helping facilitate a different kind of world.

And finally:

“Trust and allow.”

Then—

whoosh.

I was back.

The entire experience may have occupied only moments.

Its integration has taken fifty years.

And perhaps the deepest lesson wasn't contained in anything I saw or heard.

Perhaps it has emerged slowly through the life that followed.

I once thought the extraordinary experience was *The Call*.

Today, I wonder whether the real call began when I returned.

Because visions eventually end.

Life doesn't.

And whatever truth we encounter in extraordinary moments must eventually be tested in the most demanding environment imaginable:

an ordinary human life.

The awakening lasted a moment.

The calling has lasted a lifetime.

LIVING WITH
— THE —
UNEXPLAINABLE

When you return to ordinary life
carrying an experience no one
around you *can understand*.



Living With the Unexplainable

Extraordinary experiences have an inconvenient habit.

They end.

Then you have to get up, walk back into ordinary life, and somehow continue as though the boundaries of your reality haven't just been rearranged.

That may have been the most difficult part of what happened to me at eighteen.

The white light ended.

The indigo space disappeared.

The points of consciousness were gone.

I was back in my honors-dorm room, a pre-med student with classes to attend, assignments to complete, people to talk with, and a future that had seemed relatively straightforward only moments before.

The room looked the same.

I didn't.

How Do You Explain the Inexplicable?

I returned from the experience with an immediate conviction:

We are all cosmic consciousness, condensed into form, just unaware.

Today I can hold that statement as the understanding of an eighteen-year-old emerging from an extraordinary experience.

At the time, there was no such distance.

It wasn't an idea I believed.

It felt like something I **knew**.

That's an important distinction when understanding what happened next.

Imagine suddenly becoming convinced that the fundamental nature of human existence is radically different from what everyone around you appears to assume.

Then imagine being eighteen.

I wanted to talk about it.

Of course I did.

Something extraordinary had happened, and the natural human impulse was to share it.

But where do you begin?

I was listening to Journey between classes...

I heard the inner voice I've known since childhood...

I was asked whether I was willing to die for what I believed...

There was a tug from my solar plexus...

Then white light...

Infinite intelligence...

An indigo space filled with points of consciousness...

Even written fifty years later, the sequence sounds extraordinary.

Coming from an excited eighteen-year-old trying to describe it in real time, I can only imagine how it sounded to others.

Two Realities Collide

This is where perspective becomes important.

From inside my experience, something profound had happened.

From outside it, people were encountering a young man describing realities they could neither see nor verify.

Both perspectives deserve acknowledgment.

I didn't yet possess the maturity to understand how enormous the gap was between them.

When something feels unquestionably real to us, we naturally assume that explaining it clearly enough will help another person understand.

But experience doesn't transfer that easily.

Words aren't experience.

And certainty can sometimes make communication harder rather than easier.

The more intensely I tried to explain what I knew, the stranger I may have appeared to people who didn't share the experience.

I can understand that now.

At eighteen, I couldn't.

When Experience Becomes Diagnosis

Eventually, concern about my state of mind led to psychiatric intervention.

I was hospitalized.

The framework available to those treating me was clinical. My experiences were interpreted through the psychiatric understanding of unusual perceptions, beliefs, and behavior.

Thorazine became part of that experience.

For the young man who believed he had just encountered something sacred and profound, the contrast was almost impossible to comprehend.

I had experienced what felt like an expansion of reality.

The world around me was telling me something might be wrong with my perception of it.

Which interpretation was correct?

At eighteen, I thought I knew.

Today, I'm much more interested in the question itself.

The Problem of Frameworks

Human beings understand unfamiliar experiences through the frameworks available to us.

A physician sees through medicine.

A psychologist through psychology.

A theologian through religion.

A mystic through contemplative tradition.

A neuroscientist through brain function.

A physicist through matter, energy, and information.

Each framework can reveal something.

Each can also obscure something.

In the mid-1970s, there was far less mainstream conversation about near-death experiences, mystical states, spiritual emergencies, meditation-related phenomena, or the broader spectrum of anomalous human experience than there is today.

That doesn't mean every unusual experience should be interpreted spiritually.

Nor does it mean every unusual experience should automatically be reduced to pathology.

It means discernment matters.

And discernment requires something I didn't possess much of at eighteen:

the ability to hold multiple possibilities at once.

The Humility of Not Knowing

For many years, I wanted to know exactly what happened to me.

Was it spiritual?

Psychological?

Neurological?

Transpersonal?

Some interaction among them?

Was consciousness encountering something beyond the brain?

Or had the brain generated an experience so convincing that it permanently altered my understanding of consciousness?

Those are very different explanations.

I've explored them for decades.

What I've discovered is that I don't need to resolve the question completely in order to honor the experience.

That's been liberating.

The younger me wanted certainty.

The older me values inquiry.

I can say:

This is what I experienced.

I can say:

This is what I understood it to mean.

I can say:

This is how it changed my life.

And I can still leave room for:

I don't know exactly what happened.

That isn't weakness.

I've come to see it as intellectual honesty.

Learning When to Speak

There was another lesson waiting for me.

Not every truth we believe we've discovered needs to be announced immediately.

And not everyone needs to understand our experience in order for it to have value.

That took me a long time to learn.

When something changes us profoundly, we often want other people to see what we see.

We explain.

We persuade.

We defend.

Sometimes we push.

Yet the harder we push, the less another person may be able to hear.

Over time, I began learning a different approach.

Listen first.

Understand the other person's framework.

Find common language.

Allow experience to demonstrate itself through behavior rather than proclamation.

That lesson would eventually become enormously important in my work with people and organizations.

The Unexplainable Goes to Work

Life did not allow me to remain forever absorbed in metaphysical questions.

Eventually, there were jobs.

Responsibilities.

Relationships.

Classrooms.

Organizations.

Deadlines.

Conflict.

Budgets.

Teams.

Problems requiring practical solutions.

Something unexpected happened there.

The questions raised by my experience began finding expression in very ordinary circumstances.

If everything is interconnected, what does that mean when a team is fragmented?

If people possess dimensions of themselves we rarely recognize, how should a leader treat them?

If harmony is possible, what actually prevents people from achieving it?

If consciousness affects how we perceive reality, how much organizational conflict begins with competing perceptions rather than objective facts?

If we are part of larger living systems, why do we design organizations as though people are interchangeable parts in machines?

Suddenly, questions that had seemed mystical became remarkably practical.

From Cosmic to Common

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons of my life has been discovering that the profound often hides inside the ordinary.

It's easy to talk about universal consciousness.

It's harder to listen patiently to someone who disagrees with you.

It's easy to proclaim love.

It's harder to practice it when you're angry.

It's easy to imagine planetary harmony.

It's harder to facilitate a room full of people with competing interests and help them find common ground.

It's easy to speak about coherence.

It's harder to become coherent ourselves.

Life kept bringing the cosmic back to the common.

And I'm grateful it did.

Because without grounding, extraordinary experiences can become escape routes from the very human life they're meant to illuminate.

Finding Others

As the decades passed, something else changed.

I discovered that I wasn't alone.

Other people had experienced white light.

Others described leaving ordinary bodily awareness.

Others reported encounters with overwhelming unity, intelligence, presence, or love.

Researchers began documenting near-death and related experiences more systematically.

Consciousness studies expanded.

Meditation entered mainstream research.

Terms such as *mystical experience*, *spiritual emergence*, *nonordinary states of consciousness*, and *transpersonal experience* became part of wider conversations.

None of this proved my interpretation.

But it gave me something I hadn't had at eighteen:

context.

Context can be profoundly healing.

Not because it tells us exactly what happened, but because it lets us recognize that human experience may be wider than the categories we inherited.

Validation Without Certainty

Years later, I would have opportunities to share aspects of my experience in environments where unusual states of consciousness could be discussed openly—including

with people studying near-death and transformative experiences.

Those encounters mattered.

But they didn't give me the final answer I'd once sought.

Instead, they did something better.

They helped me become comfortable with uncertainty.

My experience didn't need to become scientific proof.

It didn't need to become religious doctrine.

And it didn't need to become an identity I carried around as evidence that I was somehow different from everyone else.

It could simply become part of my story.

A consequential part.

But still a part.

Perhaps We're All Translators

Looking back, I sometimes wonder whether much of human conflict comes from confusing our **experience of reality** with **reality itself**.

We all receive information through different histories, cultures, nervous systems, beliefs, education, language, wounds, hopes, and expectations.

Then we translate what we experience.

And sometimes we forget that we're translating.

We think we're simply describing reality.

That insight has profoundly influenced how I approach dialogue today.

The person across from me may be experiencing the same situation through an entirely different interpretive world.

That doesn't automatically make either of us wrong.

It means understanding requires curiosity.

Perhaps one of the most important questions we can ask another person is:

“Help me understand how you're seeing this.”

I wish I'd known that at eighteen.

Living With Mystery

Nearly fifty-one years have passed since that afternoon in the dorm.

The experience remains vivid.

My interpretation continues to evolve.

And the mystery remains.

I'm comfortable with that now.

Mystery no longer feels like a problem requiring a solution.

It feels like an invitation to remain curious.

Perhaps consciousness is far stranger than we currently understand.

Perhaps future science will explain experiences like mine in ways we cannot yet imagine.

Perhaps ancient contemplative traditions understood dimensions of consciousness modern culture temporarily forgot.

Perhaps several explanations will prove partially correct.

I don't know.

What I do know is what the experience asked of me afterward.

Live.

Learn.

Listen.

Serve.

Question.

Love.

Make mistakes.

Correct them.

Try again.

And perhaps most importantly:

Remain teachable.

Living With the Unexplainable

For years, I thought living with the unexplainable meant finding the right explanation.

I don't anymore.

Living with the unexplainable means allowing mystery and reason to occupy the same room.

It means honoring experience without demanding agreement.

It means remaining open without abandoning discernment.

It means recognizing that conviction and humility can coexist.

And it means judging extraordinary experiences less by how extraordinary they sound and more by the human beings we become because of them.

The eighteen-year-old who returned from that experience wanted the world to understand what he had seen.

The man writing this today wants something different.

I want to understand the world more deeply.

Perhaps that's one of the quiet transformations that happens when we live with mystery long enough.

We stop demanding that it give us answers.

And begin allowing it to teach us how to ask better questions.

Maybe the unexplainable isn't asking to be explained at all.

Maybe it's asking us to become more capable of wonder without surrendering wisdom.



When Spiritual Experience Meets Everyday Life

It's relatively easy to feel connected to everything while surrounded by white light.

It's considerably harder when someone cuts you off in traffic.

That may sound flippant, but after nearly fifty-one years of living with an extraordinary experience, I've come to believe it points toward something essential.

Spiritual experience happens in moments.

Spiritual development happens in relationships.

The white light eventually disappears. The meditation ends. The retreat concludes. The inspirational book goes back on the shelf.

Then someone disappoints us.

A boss frustrates us.

A relationship challenges us.

A career doesn't unfold according to plan.

Money becomes tight.

Someone misunderstands our intentions.

We become angry, impatient, frightened, defensive, or exhausted.

And suddenly our most beautiful spiritual ideas have somewhere to go to work.

That is where I've discovered the real journey begins.

What Does Awakening Actually Change?

At eighteen, I emerged from an experience with an overwhelming conviction that humanity was fundamentally interconnected—that what appeared to be separate expressions of consciousness were somehow aspects of something much larger.

It was breathtaking.

It was also considerably easier to experience than to live.

If we are connected, what does that mean when I don't like someone?

If love is fundamental, what does it mean when I'm angry?

If consciousness is larger than the individual, why does my individual ego remain so remarkably persistent?

If humanity is capable of harmony, why can't three people agree on where to have dinner?

These weren't questions I asked immediately.

Life asked them for me.

Again and again.

The Spirituality of Showing Up

Eventually, I discovered that ordinary responsibility can be a remarkably effective spiritual teacher.

Go to work.

Keep your commitments.

Pay your bills.

Raise a family.

Admit when you're wrong.

Listen when you'd rather defend yourself.

Do what you said you would do.

Treat people respectfully when there's nothing to gain from doing so.

None of these sounds particularly mystical.

Perhaps that's the point.

We can have profound experiences and still be unreliable.

We can meditate every morning and remain difficult to work with.

We can speak eloquently about unconditional love while withholding it from the people closest to us.

We can talk about unity consciousness while dividing the world into people who are enlightened and people who aren't.

Eventually, life exposes the distance between what we profess and what we practice.

I've come to see that distance as one of our greatest opportunities for growth.

The Workplace Became a Classroom

My professional life gave me plenty of opportunities to test what I believed.

One of the most formative came during my years in aerospace.

The environment wasn't designed as a spiritual community. We had production requirements, schedules, customers, inventory, personalities, pressure, and problems that needed solving.

There were real consequences when things didn't work.

I found myself responsible for complex workflows involving hundreds of parts and millions of dollars in monthly shipments.

This wasn't meditation.

It was operations.

Yet something became increasingly clear to me.

Behind every process were people.

And behind many process problems were relationship problems.

Communication.

Trust.

Assumptions.

Fear.

Territorial behavior.

People protecting themselves.

People not feeling heard.

People interpreting the same situation through completely different perspectives.

The mystical question I'd carried from eighteen began showing up in an unexpected form:

How do we work together?

Treat People Like People

At one point, an idea that had been forming in me became remarkably simple.

Treat people the way I wanted to be treated.

Hardly revolutionary.

Human beings have been teaching versions of that principle for thousands of years.

But applying it inside an organization was another matter.

What would happen if interpersonal relationships weren't treated as a soft concern separate from performance?

What if how people communicated actually affected quality, productivity, problem-solving, and results?

What if respect wasn't merely a moral preference but an operational advantage?

Those questions eventually contributed to an interpersonal-skills initiative that grew beyond my immediate work area.

I didn't think of it then as applying spiritual principles to business.

I was simply trying to solve problems.

Looking back, I see something else.

The distance between consciousness and organizational life was beginning to disappear.

People Are Not Parts

Traditional organizations have often been designed using mechanical metaphors.

Inputs.

Outputs.

Processes.

Resources.

Human capital.

Efficiency.

The language can be useful, but it can also conceal something obvious:

Organizations are made of living human beings.

People bring histories, hopes, fears, creativity, intuition, relationships, identities, and meaning into the workplace.

You cannot separate those completely from performance.

Years later, this understanding would become central to how I approached organizational development and partnering.

A team isn't merely a collection of roles.

It's a living network of relationships.

When those relationships are coherent, information moves more freely.

Problems surface earlier.

Trust grows.

Decisions improve.

People collaborate.

When relationships fragment, friction appears everywhere.

Meetings.

Emails.

Approvals.

Schedules.

Budgets.

Morale.

Turnover.

The organization's numbers eventually reveal what its relationships have been saying all along.

The Construction Site as Spiritual Practice

Years later, I found myself facilitating partnering sessions for construction projects.

Again, hardly the environment one typically associates with consciousness studies.

Owners.

Contractors.

Engineers.

Architects.

Subcontractors.

Government agencies.

Different responsibilities.

Different incentives.

Different personalities.

Sometimes significant conflict.

Yet the work repeatedly returned to the same challenge:

Can people with competing interests recognize a larger shared purpose?

A successful project required something more than technical competence.

People had to listen.

Clarify expectations.

Surface issues.

Resolve disagreements.

Build trust.

Make commitments.

Hold one another accountable.

In other words, they had to practice relationship.

I began seeing these rooms as laboratories of coherence.

Not because anyone used that word.

Because I could watch the difference between fragmentation and alignment unfold in real time.

Harmony Is Not Agreement

One of the misconceptions I carried when I was younger was that harmony meant everyone getting along.

It doesn't.

Harmony isn't the absence of difference.

Music taught me that long before I understood it intellectually.

Harmony requires different notes.

Human coherence works similarly.

People don't need identical beliefs.

They don't need identical personalities.

They don't need identical perspectives.

In fact, healthy systems require difference.

The question is whether those differences can remain in relationship.

That's much harder than surrounding ourselves with people who already agree with us.

And it's much more useful.

Over time, the vision of “harmony among people and planet” became less utopian for me and much more practical.

Harmony meant learning how to work with difference without turning difference into division.

That's leadership.

That's teamwork.

That's community.

And, increasingly, I think that's one of humanity's most important developmental challenges.

Love Gets Practical

The word *love* can make people uncomfortable in organizational conversations.

We prefer words like respect, engagement, culture, trust, psychological safety, or belonging.

Those words matter.

But underneath many of them is something profoundly simple:

Do I recognize the humanity of the person in front of me?

Love in everyday life isn't necessarily sentimental.

Sometimes love listens.

Sometimes it tells the truth.

Sometimes it establishes a boundary.

Sometimes it holds someone accountable.

Sometimes it admits a mistake.

Sometimes it changes course.

Sometimes it simply asks:

“Help me understand.”

The older I've become, the less interested I am in love as an abstract spiritual concept.

I'm fascinated by love as an operating principle.

What happens when human dignity becomes part of how we design systems?

How does trust affect decision speed?

How does listening affect innovation?

How does belonging affect performance?

How much organizational friction is actually relational friction wearing a business suit?

Those questions are no longer mystical.

They're measurable.

Coherence Became the Bridge

For decades, I searched for language connecting the inner and outer dimensions of human experience.

Eventually, one word kept rising to the surface:

Coherence.

Coherence doesn't require anyone to share my spiritual experiences.

That's one reason the concept became so important to me.

You don't have to believe in cosmic consciousness to recognize when a leadership team is fragmented.

You don't need a mystical worldview to observe that contradictory priorities create organizational friction.

You don't need to meditate to understand that trust affects collaboration.

You don't need to believe humanity is fundamentally interconnected to recognize that decisions made in one part of a system produce consequences elsewhere.

Coherence gave me a bridge.

Between consciousness and behavior.

Between values and decisions.

Between vision and execution.

Between the individual and the organization.

Between what we say matters and what we actually do.

Suddenly, much of what I'd been exploring for decades had practical language.

The Test Is Everyday Life

I've met many people with extraordinary stories.

I've also interviewed people from remarkably different spiritual, scientific, philosophical, and cultural traditions.

The experiences fascinate me.

But increasingly, I'm interested in what happens afterward.

Does awakening make us kinder?

Does insight make us better listeners?

Does expanded consciousness make us more capable of working with people who disagree with us?

Does spiritual practice make us more accountable?

Does our sense of interconnectedness affect how we treat employees, customers, neighbors, strangers, and the planet?

If not, we might reasonably ask what exactly has been transformed.

Perhaps the purpose of awakening isn't to escape ordinary consciousness.

Perhaps it's to bring greater awareness **into ordinary life.**

No More Separation

For much of human history, we've divided life into categories.

Sacred and secular.

Spiritual and material.

Inner and outer.

Work and purpose.

Mind and heart.

Humanity and nature.

Increasingly, I question those divisions.

Perhaps there isn't a spiritual life and a professional life.

There is simply **life**.

The boardroom is as capable of revealing our consciousness as the meditation cushion.

A difficult conversation can teach us as much about ourselves as a mystical experience.

A project team struggling to collaborate may reveal the human condition in miniature.

A budget can expose our values.

A deadline can expose our emotional patterns.

Leadership can expose our ego.

And service can expose whether our ideals have actually become embodied.

The ordinary world isn't where spirituality disappears.

It's where spirituality becomes visible.

When Spiritual Experience Meets Everyday Life

I once thought the extraordinary experience at eighteen was the great revelation of my life.

Today, I'm not so sure.

Perhaps the greater revelation has been discovering how much of the sacred hides inside ordinary human interaction.

A conversation.

A commitment.

A conflict resolved.

A person finally feeling heard.

A team discovering common purpose.

Someone choosing curiosity instead of judgment.

Someone admitting:

"I was wrong."

Someone asking:

"How can I help?"

None of these produces white light.

But they may illuminate the world nevertheless.

The experience at eighteen showed me what felt like an extraordinary unity behind life.

The decades since have asked me to find that unity
within life.

In workplaces.

Relationships.

Organizations.

Communities.

And within myself.

That work is considerably less dramatic.

It is also considerably more demanding.

Perhaps spiritual experience isn't meant to take us away
from ordinary life at all.

Perhaps it sends us back into it—

**more awake, more responsible, and more capable of
recognizing the extraordinary in one another.**



The Long Apprenticeship

There is a peculiar assumption we sometimes make about a calling.

We imagine that once we recognize it, the path becomes clear.

Mine didn't.

If anything, the experience I had at eighteen created more questions than answers. I returned with an extraordinary sense of interconnectedness, a conviction that humanity was capable of greater harmony, and words that would echo through the decades:

Trust and allow.

What I didn't receive was a map.

There was no career plan.

No sequence of steps.

No explanation of how an eighteen-year-old pre-med student was supposed to help facilitate anything resembling a more coherent world.

So I did what most of us do.

I lived.

And gradually, life became the teacher.

The Calling Wasn't a Career

For years, I expected purpose to reveal itself as something identifiable.

A profession.

A mission.

A role.

Something I could point toward and say:

That's why I'm here.

Instead, my life moved through seemingly unrelated worlds.

Business.

Aerospace.

Television.

Education.

Community organizing.

Construction.

Coaching.

Organizational development.

Writing.

Media.

Nonprofit work.

Leadership.

Consciousness studies.

Looking at the individual chapters, the path can appear almost absurdly nonlinear.

Looking backward, I see something different.

The environments changed.

The lesson kept repeating.

How do people learn to work together?

That question was hiding everywhere.

The Factory Floor

One of my most consequential classrooms was aerospace.

There was nothing mystical about it.

We had hundreds of parts moving through complex production systems, millions of dollars in monthly shipments, demanding customers, government requirements, schedules, bottlenecks, personalities, and constant pressure to perform.

Results mattered.

I loved the complexity.

But I began noticing something.

Many problems that appeared technical weren't entirely technical.

Behind late deliveries were conversations that hadn't happened.

Behind process failures were assumptions nobody had challenged.

Behind departmental friction were people protecting territory.

Behind some quality problems were communication problems.

And behind communication problems were human beings who didn't always feel heard, respected, or understood.

The system wasn't separate from the people operating it.

The people **were part of the system.**

That realization sounds obvious now.

At the time, it changed how I approached problems.

A Million-Dollar Lesson

At one point, a breakdown in documentation had interrupted approximately a million dollars a month in government progress payments.

The financial problem was significant.

Yet resolving it wasn't simply a matter of fixing paperwork.

It required understanding how information moved through the organization, who needed what, where responsibility lived, and why the existing system had failed.

The payment stream was restored.

But the larger lesson stayed with me.

Organizations often experience symptoms in one place whose causes live somewhere else.

A financial problem may originate in communication.

A scheduling problem may originate in trust.

A performance problem may originate in unclear expectations.

A people problem may actually be a systems problem.

And a systems problem may be amplified by how people relate to one another.

Years later, I would have more sophisticated language for this.

At the time, I was simply learning to look beneath the symptom.

Treat People the Way You Want to Be Treated

Another lesson emerged from something even simpler.

I began asking what might happen if we treated interpersonal skills as seriously as technical skills.

My premise wasn't complicated:

Treat people the way you want to be treated.

Listen.

Respect people.

Communicate clearly.

Try to understand before reacting.

Recognize that everyone sees the system from a different position.

The effort eventually expanded beyond my immediate department.

Again, I didn't think of this as spiritual work.

I was trying to improve how people worked together.

But the older I became, the more difficult it was to separate the two.

What is respect if not recognizing another person's dignity?

What is listening if not temporarily setting aside our own world to enter someone else's?

What is collaboration if not acknowledging that no individual possesses the entire picture?

The cosmic was becoming remarkably practical.

Then Life Changed the Classroom

My path didn't remain in aerospace.

Eventually, I found myself working in television and media, then education.

Standing in front of students introduced an entirely different dimension of the apprenticeship.

Young people can detect incongruence quickly.

You can tell them to be curious while punishing questions.

You can encourage responsibility while refusing to admit your own mistakes.

You can teach respect without demonstrating it.

But they notice.

Teaching reinforced something life had already begun showing me:

We teach most powerfully through who we are while we're teaching.

The lesson applies far beyond classrooms.

Leaders teach culture the same way.

Parents teach values the same way.

Organizations teach priorities the same way.

What we repeatedly **do** eventually overwhelms what we say.

Building Bridges Among Differences

Community work provided another classroom.

I became involved in efforts that brought together people and organizations concerned with peace, justice, environment, civic life, and humanity's future.

These were people with good intentions.

And they didn't always agree.

That was instructive.

Shared values don't automatically produce shared strategy.

People can want essentially the same outcome and argue passionately about how to achieve it.

Egos still appear.

Territory still matters.

Language divides.

History enters the room.

Good intentions are necessary.

They are not sufficient.

This became another recurring lesson:

Vision without the capacity to collaborate rarely becomes reality.

Perhaps that is why so many beautiful visions remain visions.

Imagining a better world is easier than developing the interpersonal and organizational capacity required to build one.

The Construction Site

Then came one of the most unexpected classrooms of all.

Construction partnering.

For years, I facilitated conversations among owners, contractors, architects, engineers, subcontractors, agencies, and project teams.

These weren't philosophical gatherings.

There were schedules.

Budgets.

Change orders.

Contracts.

Risk.

Deadlines.

Consequences.

And sometimes substantial disagreement.

Yet beneath the technical complexity was the same human challenge I'd encountered elsewhere.

Can people with different responsibilities, pressures, personalities, and interests develop enough trust to solve problems together?

Partnering taught me something important about harmony.

Harmony does not mean eliminating tension.

It means developing the capacity to work **through** tension without destroying relationship.

A successful team doesn't avoid problems.

It creates a way to address them.

That distinction became foundational to how I understood coherence.

Ninety Days at a Time

One practice became especially valuable in that work.

Translate aspiration into action.

Teams could spend hours discussing vision, values, collaboration, and success.

All worthwhile.

But eventually someone had to ask:

What happens Monday morning?

Who owns the next step?

When will it happen?

How will we know it happened?

What obstacle is likely to interfere?

When will we review progress?

This may sound far removed from an experience of cosmic consciousness.

For me, it became inseparable from it.

Because a vision without execution is only imagination.

If we genuinely believe humanity is capable of something better, then eventually we have to become very good at turning intention into behavior.

One commitment.

One owner.

One milestone.

One conversation.

One ninety-day roadmap at a time.

Failure Was Part of the Curriculum

Not every chapter worked.

Not every relationship lasted.

Not every idea found support.

Not every organization changed.

Not every project unfolded as I hoped.

I've misunderstood people.

I've been misunderstood.

I've trusted when greater discernment would have served me better.

I've pushed ideas before others were ready to hear them.

I've sometimes mistaken enthusiasm for alignment.

I've learned that being convinced of the value of something doesn't guarantee anyone else will see it.

And I've discovered repeatedly that good intentions do not protect us from unintended consequences.

Those lessons weren't interruptions in the apprenticeship.

They were the apprenticeship.

Success teaches us what can work.

Failure often teaches us why.

The Danger of the Visionary

People who see possibilities face a particular temptation.

We can become so captivated by what **could be** that we become impatient with what **is**.

I've had to confront that tendency in myself.

Vision can become another form of attachment.

We see a possibility so clearly that we assume others should see it too.

When they don't, we may think they're resistant, unaware, fearful, or simply not ready.

Sometimes that's true.

Sometimes our idea isn't as good as we think it is.

Sometimes our timing is wrong.

Sometimes we're communicating badly.

Sometimes another person sees something we don't.

A genuine visionary must remain capable of being corrected by reality.

That lesson has become increasingly important to me.

Listen to the feedback.

Especially when you don't like it.

Relationships Were the Hardest Classroom

Work provides convenient measures.

Projects finish.

Revenue moves.

Deadlines arrive.

Problems get solved.

Relationships are less accommodating.

They expose us.

Love reveals where our ideals haven't yet become behavior.

Family reveals our impatience.

Conflict reveals our defensiveness.

Partnership reveals our need for control.

Loss reveals our attachment.

Intimacy reveals the distance between who we imagine ourselves to be and how another human being actually experiences us.

No mystical experience exempted me from any of that.

Nor should it have.

If consciousness is fundamentally relational, then relationships may be among our greatest laboratories for understanding it.

Not because relationships are always peaceful.

Because they aren't.

They give us repeated opportunities to become more conscious of ourselves.

The Questions Kept Evolving

The boy asked:

Where do I belong?

The eighteen-year-old asked:

Is there more?

The young adult asked:

What happened to me?

The professional asked:

How do people work together better?

The facilitator asked:

What prevents alignment?

The systems thinker asked:

Where is the friction actually coming from?

And eventually another question emerged:

**How do we create coherence between what we know,
what we value, what we decide, and what we actually
do?**

Different questions.

Same apprenticeship.

The Pattern Became Visible

For much of my life, I couldn't see the coherence of my own path.

The chapters seemed disconnected.

Only later did the pattern become obvious.

I kept being placed in environments where fragmentation needed translation.

Between people.

Between departments.

Between vision and execution.

Between inner experience and outer reality.

Between technical systems and human relationships.

Between competing perspectives.

Between what people intended and what their systems actually produced.

I had spent years trying to understand an experience of unity.

Life kept putting me in places where unity was absent.

Perhaps that wasn't accidental.

Or perhaps it was simply the meaning I eventually learned to make from the life I was given.

Either way, the work became useful.

And usefulness increasingly mattered more to me than explanation.

From Answers to Better Questions

At eighteen, I thought spiritual maturity might mean knowing extraordinary things.

At nearly seventy, I suspect it looks much more ordinary.

Listening before speaking.

Asking before assuming.

Admitting when you're wrong.

Keeping your commitments.

Recognizing patterns without reducing people to them.

Holding vision without losing contact with reality.

Being willing to change your mind.

Treating another person's dignity as seriously as your own.

And continuing to learn long after you've acquired enough experience to pretend you already know.

Perhaps wisdom isn't accumulating answers.

Perhaps it is becoming capable of asking increasingly useful questions.

The Long Apprenticeship

Looking backward, I can see why there was no map.

A map would have defeated the purpose.

I needed the factory floor.

The classroom.

The television studio.

The community meeting.

The construction trailer.

The boardroom.

The difficult relationship.

The failed project.

The successful collaboration.

The person who believed in me.

The person who didn't.

The doors that opened.

And the doors that slammed shut.

Each taught something the white light couldn't.

The experience at eighteen showed me what felt like
the interconnectedness of everything.

Life taught me what interconnectedness **requires**.

Patience.

Discernment.

Responsibility.

Humility.

Listening.

Structure.

Accountability.

Love.

And action.

Perhaps that is why the words I heard at eighteen were not:

Understand and explain.

They were:

Trust and allow.

It took me decades to appreciate the difference.

Trust didn't mean waiting passively for destiny to unfold.

Allow didn't mean surrendering responsibility.

They came to mean something much more demanding:

Stay awake.

Pay attention.

Do the work in front of you.

Learn from what happens.

And remain open enough for life to teach you
something you didn't already believe.

Fifty years ago, I thought I'd undergone an initiation.

Looking back, I think I had merely enrolled.

Life was the curriculum.

Everyone I met was part of the classroom.

And the apprenticeship is still underway.



When the Pattern Becomes Visible

There comes a point in some lives when events that once seemed unrelated begin to look remarkably connected.

Not because the past changes.

Because our perspective does.

For decades, my life looked like a collection of chapters that didn't necessarily belong in the same book.

An adopted child searching for belonging.

An eighteen-year-old pre-med student experiencing something he couldn't explain.

A young man struggling to integrate it.

An aerospace professional solving production and communication problems.

A television host asking people about the world they wanted to create.

A teacher working with young minds.

A community facilitator bringing different voices into the same room.

A construction partnering facilitator helping competing interests find common purpose.

A coach exploring personal transformation.

An author writing about consciousness, leadership, systems, and humanity's future.

For much of the journey, these felt like different lives.

Eventually, I saw the pattern.

They were all asking the same question.

How do the parts recognize their relationship to the whole?

The Orphan's Question Never Disappeared

It began much earlier than I understood.

As a child learning I had been adopted, the question was personal:

Where do I belong?

At eighteen, after an experience that seemed to dissolve the boundaries of individual consciousness, the question expanded:

Where do we belong?

Later, working inside organizations, it became:

How do people belong together?

Then:

How do departments belong within an organization?

How does an organization belong within a community?

How do communities belong within societies?

How does humanity belong within the living system of Earth?

Different scales.

Same question.

What I had interpreted primarily as a spiritual search was also becoming a systems inquiry.

From Belonging to Relationship

Belonging is impossible without relationship.

That seems obvious.

Yet we often organize our lives as though the parts exist independently.

Individuals.

Departments.

Organizations.

Nations.

Disciplines.

Belief systems.

We draw boundaries because boundaries help us understand complexity.

The problem begins when we mistake those boundaries for separation.

An accounting department can be distinguished from operations, but neither succeeds independently of the other.

A leader can be distinguished from a team, but leadership doesn't exist without relationship.

An organization can be distinguished from its market, suppliers, customers, community, and environment, but it cannot function without them.

The same pattern appears everywhere.

Distinct does not mean separate.

That realization became one of the bridges between the experience I'd had at eighteen and the practical world in which I spent my adult life.

The System Was Always Talking

Years of working with organizations taught me something else.

Systems communicate through symptoms.

A missed deadline says something.

Turnover says something.

A recurring argument says something.

A budget overrun says something.

A quality failure says something.

A leadership team revisiting the same decision month after month says something.

We tend to attack the visible problem.

But the visible problem may be several layers removed from its cause.

What appears to be a performance problem may originate in unclear expectations.

What appears to be resistance may originate in lack of trust.

What appears to be a financial problem may begin as an information-flow problem.

What appears to be a people problem may actually be a poorly designed system.

And what appears to be a systems problem may persist because people are protecting assumptions nobody has examined.

The longer I worked with complex organizations, the more familiar this felt.

The parts were revealing something about the whole.

Fragmentation Has a Cost

Eventually, another pattern became impossible to ignore.

Fragmentation creates friction.

When values and behavior conflict, individuals experience internal friction.

When departments pursue competing priorities, organizations experience operational friction.

When leaders say one thing and reward another,
cultures experience relational friction.

When strategy and execution disconnect, businesses
experience financial friction.

When humanity behaves as though it exists
independently of the biosphere, the planet reflects the
consequences.

Different systems.

Same dynamic.

Fragmentation consumes energy.

It requires workarounds.

Extra meetings.

More approvals.

Repeated explanations.

Defensive behavior.

Duplicated effort.

Delayed decisions.

Conflict.

Rework.

Control systems layered upon control systems.

We often accept these as normal costs of complexity.

Sometimes they aren't.

Sometimes they're the price of incoherence.

Then Another Word Became Important

For years, I used words such as harmony, integration, collaboration, alignment, and unity.

Each captured something important.

But eventually one word began connecting them:

Coherence.

In physics, coherence describes relationships among waves.

In biology, coordinated systems allow organisms to function as wholes.

In communication, coherence allows separate ideas to form understandable meaning.

In organizations, I began using the word to describe something similarly practical:

Do the parts work together in a way that supports the whole?

Purpose.

People.

Information.

Relationships.

Decisions.

Processes.

Resources.

Execution.

When these elements reinforce one another, energy moves more effectively through the system.

When they contradict one another, friction increases.

Suddenly, something I'd been exploring inwardly for decades had an outward architecture.

Coherence Isn't Sameness

This distinction matters.

Coherence does not require uniformity.

A symphony isn't coherent because every instrument plays the same note.

A healthy ecosystem doesn't function because every organism performs the same role.

A high-performing team doesn't require everyone to think alike.

Difference is essential.

Coherence emerges when differences become appropriately related.

That changed how I understood harmony, too.

Harmony wasn't a world without disagreement.

It was a world increasingly capable of **working intelligently with difference.**

That's a much more practical aspiration.

And perhaps a much more achievable one.

From Mysticism to Measurement

Something unexpected happened as this pattern became clearer.

The questions became measurable.

Trust sounds intangible until distrust delays decisions.

Alignment sounds abstract until conflicting priorities waste resources.

Communication sounds soft until missing information stops production.

Belonging sounds emotional until disengagement increases turnover.

Coherence sounds philosophical until fragmentation starts appearing on the balance sheet.

The inner and outer worlds weren't as separate as I'd once assumed.

Human experience creates behavior.

Behavior creates patterns.

Patterns create systems.

Systems create outcomes.

And outcomes feed back into human experience.

It's a loop.

Once you see it, organizational life begins looking very different.

The Observer Is Inside the System

There was another lesson, and it was less comfortable.

I wasn't standing outside these systems analyzing them.

I was part of them.

My assumptions affected conversations.

My enthusiasm affected others.

My impatience affected outcomes.

My communication style shaped how people heard me.

My blind spots traveled with me from project to project.

That's true for every leader.

We like to think we're managing the system.

But we're also participating in it.

The CEO is part of the organizational system.

The facilitator is part of the room.

The parent is part of the family dynamic.

The citizen is part of society.

The observer affects what is observed—not necessarily in some exotic quantum sense, but through something much more immediate:

participation.

Our presence changes systems.

So does our absence.

That realization made personal development inseparable from systems development.

Vision Wasn't Enough

Another pattern emerged from decades of working with people who wanted to create something better.

There is no shortage of vision.

People have extraordinary ideas.

Better organizations.

Better communities.

Better technologies.

Better ways of educating.

Better ways of governing.

A more peaceful world.

A sustainable civilization.

The problem often appears between vision and execution.

We can see where we want to go.

We struggle to align the people, decisions, resources, behaviors, and feedback necessary to get there.

I've come to think of this as an execution gap.

Sometimes the grander the vision, the easier it becomes to remain captivated by the destination while overlooking the architecture required to reach it.

Eventually, my attention shifted.

Not away from vision.

Toward the bridge.

How does intention become coherent action?

That question would become increasingly important.

Technology Changed the Scale

Then another development entered the story.

Artificial intelligence.

For someone who had spent decades thinking about consciousness, intelligence, systems, decision-making, and human potential, the emergence of increasingly capable AI raised fascinating questions.

But one stood above the others:

What happens when intelligence becomes abundant but wisdom does not?

Human beings already struggle with alignment.

More information doesn't automatically solve that.

Faster decisions aren't necessarily better decisions.

Greater computational capability doesn't guarantee better judgment.

Technology can amplify coherence.

It can also amplify fragmentation.

The issue isn't simply how intelligent our machines become.

It's whether human beings become sufficiently coherent to use that intelligence wisely.

The old questions had arrived in a new arena.

Two Kinds of Intelligence

This eventually led me into collaboration around a concept that now feels remarkably consistent with the pattern of my life:

AI precision and human wisdom.

Machines can process complexity at scales human beings cannot.

Humans bring context, meaning, ethics, intuition, lived experience, and responsibility that cannot simply be reduced to computation.

Neither replaces the other.

The opportunity lies in relationship.

Again, the pattern.

Distinct.

Not separate.

Different capacities.

Coherent relationship.

What I once experienced as an abstract insight about consciousness had gradually become a practical design principle.

Looking Backward, the Path Looks Straight

It wasn't.

That's one of the dangers of retrospective storytelling.

Once we recognize a pattern, we're tempted to imagine we always knew it was there.

I didn't.

There were years of confusion.

False starts.

Detours.

Failed efforts.

Jobs that seemed unrelated.

Relationships I didn't understand.

Ideas that arrived before I knew what to do with them.

Times when I wondered whether the original experience had meant anything at all.

The pattern only became visible because enough pieces eventually accumulated.

That may be true for many lives.

We judge individual chapters while we're still inside them.

Perhaps some chapters only make sense when placed beside chapters we haven't lived yet.

The Pattern Was Never About Me

This may be the most important realization.

For years, I thought I was trying to understand **my** experience.

Then I thought I was trying to understand **my** purpose.

Eventually, the pronoun became less interesting.

The pattern wasn't about me.

It was about relationship.

How people relate to themselves.

How people relate to one another.

How parts relate within systems.

How organizations relate to purpose.

How humanity relates to technology.

How civilization relates to Earth.

And perhaps, at the deepest level, how consciousness relates to itself through billions of apparently separate lives.

I don't claim to know the answer to that last question.

But I remain fascinated by it.

When the Pattern Becomes Visible

Nearly fifty-one years after lying across a dorm-room bed and asking, *Is there more?*, my answer is very different from what I might have imagined then.

Yes.

There was more.

But much of the “more” wasn't waiting somewhere beyond ordinary life.

It was hidden inside it.

Inside relationships.

Organizations.

Conflict.

Work.

Systems.

Failure.

Love.

Leadership.

Technology.

Service.

The extraordinary experience showed me what felt like unity.

Life showed me fragmentation.

The apprenticeship taught me relationship.

Systems revealed patterns.

And coherence gave me language for bringing them together.

Perhaps this is what happens when a calling matures.

We stop asking:

What am I supposed to do?

And begin asking:

What is life repeatedly showing me?

That's a very different question.

It asks us to pay attention not only to our aspirations but to the recurring patterns running through our experience.

The people we keep encountering.

The problems we repeatedly find ourselves solving.

The questions that refuse to disappear.

The work that continues to feel meaningful even when its form changes.

Sometimes purpose doesn't arrive as an instruction.

Sometimes it becomes visible as a pattern.

And when enough pieces finally come together, we look backward and realize: **The thread was there all along.**

We simply couldn't see the tapestry yet.



Finding Coherence in a Fragmented World

We live in an age of extraordinary connection.

And extraordinary fragmentation.

We can communicate with someone on the other side of the planet in seconds, yet struggle to speak with the person across the table.

We have more information available than any generation in history, yet agreement about what is true can feel increasingly elusive.

Organizations possess sophisticated technologies, enormous stores of data, and highly educated people—yet still suffer from silos, mistrust, delayed decisions, competing priorities, and strategies that fail in execution.

We are connected technologically.

But connection is not coherence.

That distinction has become increasingly important to me.

For much of my life, I searched for ways to understand an experience of profound interconnectedness I had at eighteen.

Eventually, the more practical question became impossible to ignore:

If everything is connected, why are we so fragmented?

Connection Is Already Here

We often speak about creating connection.

Perhaps that's not quite accurate.

Connection already exists.

The employee is connected to the team.

The team is connected to the organization.

The organization is connected to customers, suppliers, communities, markets, and ecosystems.

Our bodies are connected to the biosphere through every breath, drink of water, and meal.

Our economies are connected across continents.

Our technologies have made information networks nearly instantaneous.

Even people in conflict are connected.

In fact, their conflict demonstrates the relationship.

The real challenge isn't connection.

It's the **quality of the relationship among the connected parts.**

That's where coherence enters the conversation.

What Is Coherence?

I use *coherence* in a very practical sense.

Coherence is the condition in which distinct parts remain appropriately related so they can function effectively as a whole.

It doesn't mean sameness.

It doesn't mean agreement.

It doesn't mean eliminating tension.

Think of an orchestra.

Different instruments produce different sounds.

If every musician played the same note, we wouldn't have harmony.

We'd have monotony.

Coherence emerges because difference is organized into relationship.

The musicians listen.

They understand their roles.

They share a composition.

They respond to timing.

They adjust to one another.

Their differences become part of the whole without disappearing into it.

Human systems aren't so different.

Fragmentation Isn't Difference

This distinction matters enormously.

We often treat difference as the problem.

Different political views.

Different personalities.

Different generations.

Different departments.

Different cultures.

Different disciplines.

Different priorities.

But difference isn't necessarily fragmentation.

Fragmentation occurs when the relationships among those differences break down.

Sales and operations should see the organization differently.

Finance and innovation should ask different questions.

A CEO and a frontline employee naturally experience the organization from different positions.

Healthy systems need those differences.

The problem begins when the parts stop exchanging useful information.

When they stop trusting.

When they protect territory.

When assumptions replace conversation.

When winning becomes more important than understanding.

When the success of one part begins damaging the whole.

Difference creates possibility.

Disconnection creates fragmentation.

The Cost of Fragmentation

Fragmentation rarely appears on a financial statement under its own name.

It hides.

In meetings that shouldn't be necessary.

Approvals created because someone once violated trust.

Decisions repeatedly revisited because alignment never existed.

Work duplicated across departments.

Projects delayed because information didn't arrive.

Employees disengaging because leadership says one thing and rewards another.

Strategies failing because the people responsible for execution weren't included in their creation.

Customers receiving inconsistent experiences because internal functions aren't communicating.

People leaving because unresolved friction became easier to escape than repair.

Every fragmented relationship consumes energy.

I've come to think of this as a kind of **fragmentation tax**.

The organization pays it whether anyone names it or not.

So do families.

Communities.

Governments.

And individuals.

We Fragment Internally, Too

Fragmentation isn't only something that happens between people.

It happens within us.

We say family matters most while giving work every available hour.

We value health while repeatedly behaving against it.

We say we want collaboration while needing control.

We value honesty while avoiding difficult conversations.

We say we want peace while rehearsing grievances internally.

That creates friction.

We feel it as tension, stress, indecision, exhaustion, or dissatisfaction.

Something doesn't line up.

This is where coherence becomes personal.

Before we can talk meaningfully about coherent organizations or societies, we eventually encounter the uncomfortable question:

How coherent am I?

Do my actions support what I say matters?

Not perfectly.

None of us achieves that.

But increasingly?

That's a different standard.

Alignment Is Not Coherence

I've learned to distinguish between two related ideas.

Alignment asks: Are we oriented toward the same thing?

Coherence asks: Do our relationships and actions actually support it?

A leadership team can agree on a strategic priority.

That's alignment.

Then finance funds something else.

Operations measures something else.

Compensation rewards something else.

Managers communicate something else.

And employees experience something else entirely.

The organization may be aligned in the conference room and incoherent everywhere else.

This is one reason vision statements alone accomplish so little.

Coherence must travel through the system.

Into decisions.

Incentives.

Information.

Processes.

Relationships.

Resources.

Behavior.

And accountability.

Listen for the Friction

One of the most useful lessons from my years working with organizations is remarkably simple:

Friction is information.

Where does work repeatedly stall?

Where are decisions delayed?

Where does conflict keep returning?

Where are people developing workarounds?

Where does information disappear?

Where do responsibilities overlap?

Where does nobody seem to own the outcome?

Where are good people spending energy protecting themselves instead of solving the problem?

Where does what leadership says differ from what employees experience?

These aren't merely annoyances.

They're signals.

The system is telling us something about itself.

Instead of asking only:

How do we make this problem go away?

We can ask:

What is this problem revealing about the system that produced it?

That question changes everything.

Problems Rarely Stay in Their Departments

This became obvious to me years ago in aerospace.

A financial problem could originate in documentation.

A documentation problem could originate in communication.

A communication problem could originate in unclear responsibility.

An apparent performance issue could be a systems-design problem.

An interpersonal conflict could be exposing competing organizational incentives.

The visible symptom and the underlying cause often lived in different places.

That's why isolated solutions frequently disappoint.

We repair the symptom.

The system recreates it.

Coherence requires seeing relationships rather than merely parts.

The Whole Is Difficult to See From Inside

There's another problem.

Everyone sees only part of the system.

Executives have one view.

Managers another.

Frontline employees another.

Customers another.

Suppliers another.

Finance sees money.

Operations sees flow.

Human resources sees people and policy.

Technology sees architecture and data.

None of those perspectives is the organization.

Each is a window into it.

Yet humans have a remarkable tendency to mistake our window for the entire landscape.

This is why listening across boundaries matters so much.

The information required to understand a complex system is often distributed among the people inside it.

The intelligence already exists.

The challenge is bringing it into relationship.

Trust Changes the Architecture

Trust is often treated as a cultural virtue.

It is.

But trust also has operational consequences.

Where trust is low, systems compensate.

More approvals.

More documentation.

More oversight.

More meetings.

More defensive communication.

More people copied on emails.

More time spent proving that something was done rather than doing it.

Some controls are necessary.

But controls frequently accumulate around failures of trust and are rarely removed afterward.

Eventually the organization forgets why they exist.

Distrust becomes architecture.

And architecture becomes cost.

Coherence doesn't mean blind trust.

It means creating enough transparency, accountability, and relational integrity that trust can be intelligently extended.

Coherence Requires Feedback

Healthy living systems depend upon feedback.

So do healthy organizations.

Yet humans have an interesting relationship with feedback.

We like it when it confirms what we already believe.

We call it resistance when it doesn't.

That is dangerous.

An organization that cannot hear uncomfortable information loses its ability to adapt.

A leader surrounded by agreement becomes increasingly disconnected from reality.

A culture that punishes bad news guarantees that bad news will arrive late.

Coherence requires information to move.

Up.

Down.

Across.

And sometimes directly against what leadership hoped to hear.

The question isn't whether the system produces uncomfortable signals.

It will.

The question is whether we're willing to listen.

Harmony Isn't the Absence of Conflict

My understanding of harmony has changed considerably over the years.

When I was younger, I imagined harmony as people getting along.

Now I see conflict differently.

Conflict is often information too.

It reveals differences in perspective, interests, needs, assumptions, or values.

The goal isn't necessarily to eliminate it.

The goal is to develop the capacity to work through it without destroying relationship.

A coherent team can disagree.

A coherent organization can contain tension.

A coherent society can hold radically different perspectives.

The measure isn't the absence of difference.

It's whether the system can remain in relationship **while processing difference.**

That capacity may be one of the most important skills humanity needs to develop.

The Planet Is a System, Not a Backdrop

Eventually, the pattern expands beyond organizations.

We often speak about humanity and the planet as though they are separate.

They're not.

Every human economy exists inside ecological systems.

Every building comes from planetary materials.

Every technology depends upon resources extracted from Earth.

Every human body is continuously exchanging matter and energy with its environment.

We aren't living *on* a planet in the way furniture sits on a floor.

We are participants in a living planetary system.

That doesn't require a spiritual belief.

It's biology.

It's systems thinking.

The challenge is that our institutions often behave as though the boundary around an organization, industry, or nation is where responsibility ends.

Consequences don't respect those boundaries.

Coherence requires thinking at the scale at which consequences occur.

Technology Amplifies What Already Exists

Artificial intelligence adds another dimension.

We're gaining tools capable of processing information, identifying patterns, generating possibilities, and accelerating decisions at extraordinary speed.

That's powerful.

But technology doesn't automatically create coherence.

It amplifies capability.

If the underlying system is aligned, that can be extraordinary.

If the system is fragmented, technology may simply accelerate fragmentation.

A poorly framed goal optimized efficiently is still a poorly framed goal.

A silo equipped with better intelligence is still a silo.

A leader making bad assumptions faster isn't necessarily improving leadership.

This makes the human challenge even more important.

As intelligence becomes increasingly abundant, our capacity for alignment, discernment, relationship, and wisdom must grow with it.

Coherence Is Not a Destination

There's a temptation to imagine coherence as an ideal state.

Everything aligned.

Everyone communicating.

No friction.

Beautiful.

And probably impossible.

Living systems are dynamic.

People change.

Markets change.

Technology changes.

Leadership changes.

Priorities change.

Unexpected events occur.

Coherence therefore isn't something we achieve and preserve.

It's something we continually **restore**.

Notice the friction.

Listen.

Adjust.

Realign.

Act.

Observe the result.

Learn.

Repeat.

In that sense, coherence is less a destination than a discipline.

Finding Coherence

When I look back at the experience I had at eighteen, I'm struck by the distance between the language I used then and the language I use now.

Then:

Cosmic consciousness.

Today:

Coherent relationship.

I don't see them as opposites.

The first was an experience of what felt like profound unity.

The second emerged from decades of discovering what relationship requires in ordinary life.

Perhaps that's been one of the great lessons of the journey.

It's relatively easy to experience unity in an extraordinary moment.

The challenge is learning to build relationships, teams, organizations, communities, and systems capable of honoring interdependence **without eliminating difference.**

That is where the work lives.

Not in making everyone the same.

Not in convincing everyone to believe what we believe.

Not in creating a world without tension.

But in developing our capacity to remain intelligently related.

To ourselves.

To one another.

To our organizations.

To our technology.

To the planet that makes every human endeavor possible.

The world doesn't suffer from a lack of connection.

We're already connected.

Perhaps what we're experiencing is a crisis in the **quality of those connections.**

And perhaps coherence begins with a deceptively simple question:

What would change if we stopped asking how to make the parts behave—and started asking what the whole needs in order to thrive?

That question has followed me from consciousness to organizations, from personal transformation to systems thinking, and from vision toward practical action.

The world may remain fragmented.

Difference will remain.

Complexity will increase.

But fragmentation doesn't have to be our final condition.

Coherence begins when we recognize that our differences exist within relationship—and start designing our lives and systems accordingly.



SERVICE OVER CERTAINTY

You don't need to believe my experience.
What matters is whether it made me
more capable of *serving*.



HUMILITY
OVER EGO



LISTENING
OVER KNOWING



COMPASSION
OVER JUDGMENT



COLLABORATION
OVER CONTROL



SERVICE
OVER SELF

"The calling
isn't about having
all the answers.
It's about being
part of the
solution."

LESS CERTAINTY. MORE PRESENCE. GREATER IMPACT.

Service Over Certainty

For much of my life, I wanted to understand what happened to me at eighteen.

Today, I find myself asking a different question.

Did it make me more capable of serving?

That question has become far more important than proving whether the white light was mystical, neurological, transpersonal, spiritual, or something for which we simply don't yet have adequate language.

Something happened.

It changed me.

I've spent more than fifty years living with its consequences.

But perhaps the measure of an extraordinary experience isn't how convincingly we can explain it.

Perhaps the measure is what kind of human being we become because of it.

The Seduction of Certainty

Certainty can feel wonderful.

It gives us solid ground.

I know what happened.

I know what it means.

I know what I'm supposed to do.

When an experience feels more real than ordinary reality, that certainty can be especially powerful.

I know.

I've lived it.

I returned from my experience at eighteen with an absolute conviction that we are expressions of a larger consciousness—what I understood then as cosmic consciousness condensed into form, largely unaware of our deeper nature.

I didn't believe it.

I felt I **knew** it.

That's an important distinction.

And it created a challenge that took decades to recognize.

When we know something with absolute certainty,
what room remains for someone who knows something
different?

Experience and Interpretation

One of the most important distinctions I've learned to
make is between **experience and interpretation**.

I can tell you what I experienced.

White light.

An overwhelming sense of intelligence and presence.

An indigo field populated by what I perceived as points
of individuated consciousness.

A familiar inner voice.

The words *trust and allow*.

And the immediate understanding upon returning that
our apparently separate consciousnesses were
expressions of something larger.

Those are elements of my remembered experience.

Then interpretation begins.

Was it God?

Cosmic consciousness?

An altered neurological state?

A mystical experience?

A transpersonal state?

Some interaction among them?

Something else entirely?

At eighteen, I wanted an answer.

Today, I can live with the question.

That isn't because the experience has become less meaningful.

It's because certainty about its explanation is no longer necessary for me to honor what happened.

You Don't Have to Believe Me

This may be one of the most freeing things I've learned to say:

You don't have to believe me.

You don't have to believe my interpretation of consciousness.

You don't have to accept the language I've used over the years to describe initiation.

You don't have to share my understanding of spirituality.

You don't even have to believe that what I experienced represented anything beyond the activity of my own mind.

We can disagree completely about the explanation.

And still meet as human beings.

That realization changed something fundamental in me.

If I need you to validate my experience, our conversation becomes about me.

If I don't, I can become curious about you.

What have you experienced?

What has life taught you?

How do you understand the world?

Where are you struggling?

What matters to you?

How can I help?

The center of gravity moves from certainty toward relationship.

And from relationship toward service.

The Calling Was Never a Crown

An experience that appears to contain a calling can easily become an identity.

I was chosen.

I have a mission.

I know something others don't.

Those thoughts can be intoxicating, particularly when we're young.

I had to grow through them.

Over time, I came to understand the calling differently.

If there was a calling in my experience, it wasn't a crown.

It was a responsibility.

And responsibility doesn't place us above other people.

It places us **in relationship with them.**

The question stopped being:

Why did this happen to me?

And became:

What can I do with the life I've been given?

That is a much harder question.

It doesn't allow us to remain fascinated with our own story.

It sends us back into the world.

Service Is Usually Ordinary

When we're young, service can sound heroic.

Change the world.

Transform humanity.

Build a new civilization.

Create peace.

Those visions can inspire us.

But most service doesn't look like that.

Service looks like listening to someone who needs to be heard.

Helping a team solve a problem.

Teaching someone a skill.

Creating clarity when people are confused.

Bringing people into a conversation who weren't speaking to one another.

Keeping a commitment.

Sharing what you've learned.

Making an introduction.

Resolving a conflict.

Helping people see a possibility they couldn't see before.

Sometimes service is simply doing the next useful thing.

No white light required.

The People in Front of Me

Life repeatedly brought me into environments where people needed to work together.

Business.

Education.

Community initiatives.

Organizational development.

Construction partnering.

Coaching.

Media.

Nonprofit work.

The settings changed.

The human challenge remained remarkably similar.

People wanted to be heard.

They wanted to matter.

They wanted clarity.

They wanted to know what was expected.

They wanted others to keep their commitments.

They wanted their work to mean something.

They wanted conflict resolved without losing dignity.

And they often wanted someone to help them see the situation from a perspective larger than their own.

Gradually, I understood something.

Perhaps facilitating a “new world” didn't require convincing anyone of my understanding of consciousness.

Perhaps it meant helping the people directly in front of me work together a little better.

That was considerably less dramatic.

It was also considerably more useful.

Listening Became More Important Than Explaining

When we believe we've discovered something important, the natural impulse is to explain it.

I spent years doing that.

Eventually, I discovered the extraordinary power of asking questions instead.

What are you seeing?

What am I missing?

What matters most here?

Where are we actually stuck?

What assumption are we making?

What would success look like?

What are you afraid might happen?

What haven't we talked about?

What do you need from me?

Questions create space.

Certainty often fills it.

That doesn't mean we abandon conviction.

It means conviction doesn't have to dominate the room.

The paradox is that the less I needed people to understand my worldview, the more capable I became of understanding theirs.

Humility Is Not Self-Diminishment

For a long time, I misunderstood humility.

I thought it meant making ourselves smaller.

I've come to see it differently.

Humility means recognizing the limits of our perspective.

I can have expertise and still be wrong.

I can have profound experiences and misinterpret them.

I can see patterns others don't see while remaining blind to patterns they see clearly.

I can offer something valuable without possessing the whole answer.

That isn't self-diminishment.

It's accuracy.

And accuracy makes collaboration possible.

The moment I assume I possess the entire truth, everyone else becomes either a follower or an obstacle.

Neither creates healthy relationship.

The Visionary Has to Listen

This lesson has been particularly important because I've spent much of my life thinking about possibilities.

What could humanity become?

What could organizations become?

What could technology enable?

What could happen if people learned to work together more coherently?

Vision matters.

But vision carries a risk.

We can become so enamored with what we see that we stop listening to people who see something else.

Then vision becomes another form of certainty.

I've learned—sometimes painfully—that feedback is part of the visioning process.

The skeptic may see a flaw.

The accountant may see a constraint.

The employee may see what leadership cannot.

The person resisting our idea may be protecting something we've overlooked.

The person who says *no* may occasionally be serving the whole more effectively than the person enthusiastically saying *yes*.

If our vision cannot survive honest feedback, it isn't ready to guide anyone.

Service Requires Discernment

Service doesn't mean saying yes to everything.

It doesn't mean sacrificing ourselves indiscriminately.

It doesn't mean allowing others to misuse our goodwill.

And it doesn't mean confusing helping with rescuing.

I've had to learn those distinctions too.

Sometimes service means stepping forward.

Sometimes it means stepping back.

Sometimes it means offering support.

Sometimes it means allowing someone to solve their own problem.

Sometimes it means collaboration.

Sometimes it means establishing a boundary.

Sometimes the most respectful answer is no.

Love without discernment can become enabling.

Service without boundaries can become depletion.

Compassion doesn't eliminate wisdom.

It requires it.

From Being Right to Being Useful

This may be one of the largest shifts in my life.

When I was younger, I cared deeply about whether people understood what I believed to be true.

Today, I care much more about whether what I bring is useful.

Does it help?

Does it clarify?

Does it reduce unnecessary friction?

Does it improve a relationship?

Does it help someone make a better decision?

Does it help a team move forward?

Does it invite people into greater awareness without demanding they adopt my worldview?

Does it leave the system healthier than I found it?

These are practical questions.

They also feel deeply spiritual to me.

Love Becomes Operational

I've spoken and written about love for many years.

But love can remain sentiment unless it becomes behavior.

In service, love becomes practical.

It listens.

It notices.

It tells the truth respectfully.

It honors dignity.

It creates room for difference.

It accepts accountability.

It challenges when necessary.

It forgives when appropriate.

It asks what the whole requires rather than merely what the individual wants.

This is where spirituality stops being something we discuss and becomes something we practice.

Not perfectly.

Humanly.

Service Doesn't Require Agreement

Our world seems increasingly convinced that cooperation requires ideological agreement.

I don't believe it does.

I've sat in rooms with people who had very different priorities, personalities, beliefs, and interests.

They didn't need to become the same.

They needed to discover what they could accomplish together.

That distinction matters.

Coherence doesn't require conformity.

Service doesn't require conversion.

Peace doesn't require everyone to share a worldview.

We need enough humility to recognize that someone can disagree with us and still contribute something essential.

Perhaps one of the great skills our world needs now is the capacity to remain curious in the presence of difference.

What About the Calling?

Do I still believe the experience at eighteen contained a calling?

Yes.

But I understand that word differently today.

I don't see the calling as a prediction that I must somehow fulfill.

I don't see it as evidence that I possess privileged knowledge.

And I don't see it as a guarantee that my ideas will succeed.

I see it as an orientation.

Toward connection.

Toward harmony.

Toward inquiry.

Toward coherence.

Toward service.

The expression has changed repeatedly.

Perhaps it will continue changing for whatever years remain.

That's okay.

The calling doesn't need to remain frozen in the language of the eighteen-year-old who first encountered it.

It can mature with the person attempting to live it.

Trust and Allow, Revisited

Even the final words of that experience mean something different to me now.

Trust and allow.

At eighteen, I heard assurance.

For years, I interpreted them as guidance.

Today, I hear something else as well.

Don't force.

Don't presume.

Don't demand that reality conform to your expectations.

Participate.

Pay attention.

Respond.

Learn.

Do what you can.

Let other people retain their agency.

Let feedback change you.

Let mystery remain mystery.

And allow outcomes to teach you what conviction alone cannot.

Trust isn't certainty.

Perhaps it's what allows us to live meaningfully **without** certainty.

Service Over Certainty

After more than fifty years, I still don't know exactly what happened on that dorm-room bed.

I know what I experienced.

I know how it felt.

I know what I understood it to mean.

And I know it changed the trajectory of my life.

That's enough.

I don't need to prove cosmic consciousness.

I don't need to convince anyone that the voice I heard came from somewhere beyond me.

I don't need agreement about the nature of reality.

There is more immediate work to do.

People need to understand one another.

Organizations need to become healthier.

Leaders need better ways to make decisions.

Communities need bridges across differences.

Technology needs wisdom alongside intelligence.

Humanity needs to remember that extraordinary diversity does not negate fundamental interdependence.

And each of us has people directly in front of us whom we can treat with greater dignity.

Perhaps that is where the cosmic finally becomes useful.

Not in knowing something extraordinary.

But in becoming more capable of doing something ordinary **with extraordinary care.**

The eighteen-year-old wanted answers.

The older man has questions.

Better questions, I hope.

And one of them has become the measure I return to most often:

Did what I experienced make me more capable of serving?

If the answer is yes, then the experience has value.

If the answer is no, then no amount of certainty about what happened will make it meaningful.

Perhaps that's one of the deepest lessons *The Call* has taught me.

We don't have to know everything to serve something greater than ourselves.

We only have to remain willing to listen, learn, love — and do the next useful thing.



From Personal Transformation to Organizational Transformation

For years, transformation was something I understood personally.

An experience changes us.

A relationship changes us.

A failure changes us.

A realization changes us.

We see ourselves differently, make different choices, and perhaps begin living differently.

Then I spent decades working inside organizations.

Something became increasingly clear:

Organizations transform in much the same way people do.

They encounter pressure.

Their habitual patterns become visible.

They resist uncomfortable information.

They defend familiar identities.

They repeat behaviors long after those behaviors stop serving them.

And, occasionally, they become willing to see themselves differently.

That is where transformation begins.

Not with the strategic plan.

With awareness.

Organizations Are Living Systems

We often talk about organizations as though they were machines.

Structure.

Inputs.

Outputs.

Processes.

Resources.

Controls.

Efficiency.

Those concepts are useful.

But an organization isn't simply a machine.

It is a living human system.

People bring intelligence, emotion, history, relationships, assumptions, aspirations, fears, habits, loyalties, and meaning into work every day.

Those human dimensions don't disappear because we draw an organizational chart.

They become part of how the organization functions.

A process may look perfect on paper and fail because people don't trust one another.

A strategy may be brilliant and stall because departments are protecting competing interests.

A transformation initiative may be well-funded and collapse because employees have lived through five previous initiatives that quietly disappeared.

The system remembers.

Just as people do.

Transformation Begins With Seeing

Personal transformation often begins with an uncomfortable moment of recognition.

I keep doing this.

This isn't working.

Something has to change.

Organizations experience versions of the same moment.

Why do we keep missing this target?

Why does this issue appear every quarter?

Why are our best people leaving?

Why does every decision require another meeting?

Why can't these departments work together?

Why do initiatives start enthusiastically and then disappear?

Why does everyone know what's wrong, yet nothing changes?

Those questions are valuable.

They signal that the organization may finally be ready to see a pattern rather than merely repair another symptom.

Transformation begins when we stop asking:

Who is causing the problem?

and begin asking:

What is the system producing—and why?

Pressure Reveals Pattern

We learn a great deal about ourselves under pressure.

So do organizations.

When things are comfortable, dysfunctional patterns can remain hidden.

Growth exposes them.

A crisis exposes them.

A major customer loss exposes them.

A merger exposes them.

New leadership exposes them.

Rapid technological change exposes them.

Financial pressure exposes them.

Suddenly, workarounds that once seemed manageable become bottlenecks.

Communication gaps become costly.

Unclear authority slows decisions.

Distrust creates layers of control.

Departments optimize their own performance while damaging the whole.

Pressure doesn't necessarily create these problems.

Often, it simply makes them visible.

That's why periods of disruption can become transformational opportunities.

The system is revealing itself.

The question is whether leadership is willing to look.

Awareness Without Action Isn't Transformation

There is another parallel with personal development.

Insight feels productive.

But insight isn't change.

I can recognize that I interrupt people.

That's awareness.

Transformation begins when I learn to listen differently.

An organization can recognize that it has silos.

That's awareness.

Transformation begins when information, incentives, decision rights, behaviors, and accountability actually change.

This distinction is critical.

Organizations spend enormous amounts of time diagnosing themselves.

Surveys.

Assessments.

Consulting reports.

Strategic retreats.

Culture studies.

Employee feedback.

Dashboards.

The diagnosis may be excellent.

Then everyone returns to work.

And the operating system remains unchanged.

Knowing what is wrong is not the same as changing what produces it.

The Execution Gap

This is where I began noticing one of the most persistent organizational problems.

There is often a gap between what an organization **knows** and what it **does**.

Leadership knows communication needs improvement.

Leadership knows departments aren't aligned.

Leadership knows decision-making is too slow.

Leadership knows accountability is inconsistent.

Leadership knows the customer experience is fragmented.

Leadership knows the strategic priorities.

The organization may possess plenty of intelligence.

Yet the same patterns persist.

Why?

Because transformation requires more than information.

It requires architecture.

Who decides?

Who owns the action?

What changes?

When?

What resources are required?

What behavior must stop?

What behavior must begin?

How will progress be measured?

What happens when reality doesn't match the plan?

This is where vision becomes execution.

And where many transformations fail.

People Support What They Help Create

Years of facilitating teams taught me another simple lesson.

People are far more likely to support a change they understand and helped shape.

That doesn't mean every decision requires consensus.

Leadership sometimes has to decide.

But transformation imposed entirely from above often encounters something predictable.

Compliance.

People do what is required.

Sometimes.

For a while.

Transformation requires something deeper.

Participation.

People need to understand not only **what** is changing, but **why**.

They need opportunities to identify what leadership may not see.

They need clarity about their role.

And they need evidence that speaking honestly won't punish them.

The intelligence required for transformation is often already distributed throughout the organization.

The challenge is creating a system capable of hearing it.

The Front Line Knows Things Leadership Doesn't

Every level of an organization has information unavailable to the others.

Executives see markets, capital, strategy, risk, and long-range direction.

Managers see coordination.

Frontline employees see where processes actually break.

Customers see the organization from outside.

Suppliers see another boundary.

No single perspective contains the whole.

Yet organizational hierarchy can accidentally create an information problem.

The higher a leader rises, the easier it becomes for uncomfortable information to be filtered before reaching them.

People learn what leadership wants to hear.

Reports become cleaner.

Problems become softer.

Then reality eventually delivers the unedited version.

Transformation requires shortening that distance.

Not by eliminating hierarchy.

By improving the movement of truth through it.

Culture Is What the System Reinforces

Organizations frequently attempt transformation through values.

Integrity.

Innovation.

Collaboration.

Customer focus.

Respect.

Excellent aspirations.

But employees don't learn culture primarily from posters.

They learn it from consequences.

What gets rewarded?

What gets ignored?

What gets punished?

Who gets promoted?

What behavior does leadership tolerate from high performers?

What happens when someone challenges a senior leader?

Does the organization say it values innovation while punishing failed experiments?

Does it say collaboration while rewarding individual competition?

Does it say people matter while treating employees as disposable when numbers tighten?

Culture is the accumulated evidence people use to determine what the organization **actually values**.

Transformation requires aligning that evidence.

Trust Is Infrastructure

I've come to think of trust as organizational infrastructure.

We notice infrastructure most clearly when it fails.

Low trust creates friction.

People document excessively.

Decisions escalate.

Information is withheld.

Departments protect themselves.

People avoid accountability.

Meetings multiply.

Approvals accumulate.

Innovation slows because failure feels dangerous.

High trust doesn't eliminate controls or accountability.

It changes how much energy the system must spend protecting itself from itself.

That energy can go somewhere else.

Problem-solving.

Innovation.

Customer service.

Learning.

Execution.

Trust may feel relational.

Its consequences are operational.

Leadership Goes First

This may be one of the hardest realities of organizational transformation.

Leadership cannot demand a transformation it is unwilling to model.

If executives want transparency but become defensive when challenged, people notice.

If leaders want accountability but excuse their own missed commitments, people notice.

If leadership wants collaboration while competing internally for influence, people notice.

If executives want innovation but require certainty before approving anything, people notice.

The organization is always watching leadership for evidence of what is safe and what is real.

This is where personal transformation and organizational transformation become inseparable.

Leaders don't simply manage the culture.

They participate in creating it.

The Inner System Walks Into the Boardroom

Every leader brings an inner operating system to work.

Assumptions.

Emotional patterns.

Need for control.

Tolerance for uncertainty.

Relationship with conflict.

Ability to listen.

Sense of identity.

Capacity for self-reflection.

None of these appears on an organizational chart.

All of them affect the organization.

A leader who experiences disagreement as disloyalty creates one kind of system.

A leader who experiences disagreement as useful information creates another.

A leader who needs to be the smartest person in the room creates one culture.

A leader who knows how to draw intelligence from the room creates another.

Personal development isn't separate from organizational performance.

At leadership levels, it becomes organizational architecture.

From Alignment to Coherence

This is where the language of alignment and coherence became increasingly useful to me.

Transformation isn't merely changing parts.

It's changing the relationships among them.

Strategy.

People.

Information.

Processes.

Technology.

Resources.

Decisions.

Culture.

Execution.

These elements interact continuously.

Change one and consequences ripple elsewhere.

Alignment establishes common direction.

Where are we going?

Coherence examines whether the system can actually move there.

Do our structures, relationships, incentives, decisions, and behaviors support the direction we've chosen?

That distinction turns transformation from an initiative into a systems discipline.

Don't Transform What You Haven't Understood

Organizations are understandably attracted to solutions.

New software.

New structure.

New leadership.

New strategy.

New automation.

New AI.

But changing a system before understanding it can simply move the problem.

Automate a broken process and you may produce dysfunction faster.

Reorganize without addressing trust and the same conflicts appear inside new boxes.

Replace a leader without examining the system and the successor may inherit the same behavior.

Technology can amplify capability.

It can also amplify incoherence.

Before investing heavily in transformation, organizations need to understand:

Where is the actual constraint?

What is creating the friction?

Which problem is causal and which is symptomatic?

What happens elsewhere if we change this?

That is why simulation, diagnostics, and systems thinking have become increasingly important to me.

Understand before you intervene.

Human Wisdom and Machine Intelligence

Artificial intelligence now gives organizations extraordinary new capabilities.

We can analyze data at unprecedented scale.

Model scenarios.

Detect patterns.

Automate workflows.

Generate alternatives.

Accelerate decisions.

But AI introduces a paradox.

As computational intelligence becomes more powerful, the quality of human judgment becomes more important—not less.

A system can optimize the wrong objective brilliantly.

It can accelerate a decision built upon poor assumptions.

It can provide precision without wisdom.

The question therefore isn't simply:

How do we use AI?

A better question is:

How do we place machine intelligence and human wisdom into a relationship that improves the whole system?

That is an organizational transformation question.

And a human one.

The Evolution of the Work

Looking backward, I can see why my professional life moved through such varied environments.

Aerospace taught me systems.

Education taught me development.

Community work taught me difference.

Construction partnering taught me alignment.

Coaching taught me the inner system.

Writing forced me to clarify what I thought I knew.

Conversations with people around the world taught me how many legitimate ways there are to interpret human experience.

Organizational work taught me execution.

And emerging artificial intelligence has made the relationship between intelligence, wisdom, alignment, and action more consequential than ever.

What once appeared to be unrelated chapters eventually became a body of inquiry.

How do we help living systems become more coherent?

Transformation Is a Practice

Perhaps the biggest misconception about transformation is that it has an endpoint.

Transformation complete.

Living systems don't work that way.

Markets change.

People change.

Technology changes.

Customers change.

Conditions change.

The organization must continually sense, learn, align, act, and adjust.

Personal transformation works similarly.

We don't become self-aware once.

We discover another layer.

We don't become coherent permanently.

Life changes and asks us to realign.

Transformation therefore isn't an event.

It is a capacity.

The capacity to recognize when existing patterns no longer serve.

The courage to examine them honestly.

The intelligence to understand the system.

The wisdom to choose what should change.

The discipline to translate insight into action.

And the humility to learn from what happens next.

From Personal Transformation to Organizational Transformation

The experience I had at eighteen began as something intensely personal.

For years, I tried to understand what it meant for **me**.

Life gradually expanded the question.

What does transformation mean between two people?

Within a team?

Across departments?

Inside an organization?

Across communities?

Within systems increasingly shaped by technology?

The answer I've arrived at isn't mystical.

It's remarkably practical.

Transformation occurs when awareness changes relationship, relationship changes behavior, behavior

changes systems, and systems produce different outcomes.

That sequence can begin anywhere.

With a leader who listens differently.

A team willing to surface the real issue.

An organization willing to examine its assumptions.

A process redesigned around reality rather than habit.

A decision made with a clearer understanding of consequences.

A technology deployed in service of human purpose rather than simply because it is available.

The transformation of an organization doesn't require everyone to have a spiritual awakening.

It requires enough people to become aware of what the system is actually producing—and courageous enough to change their participation in it.

Perhaps that is where personal and organizational transformation finally meet.

We transform systems by changing relationships.

We change relationships by changing behavior.

And changing behavior eventually brings each of us back to the one part of every system over which we have the greatest immediate influence:

ourselves.

The journey that began for me with an extraordinary experience of interconnectedness eventually led to a very ordinary realization:

If we want different systems, we have to participate differently in creating them.

That is where transformation stops being an aspiration.

And becomes action.



From Calling to Coherence

For much of my life, I thought a calling was something you followed.

Today, I think it's something you learn to embody.

That difference took me nearly fifty-one years to understand.

At eighteen, after an experience that radically altered my perception of consciousness and reality, I returned with what felt like an enormous assignment: somehow participate in creating a more harmonious world.

The words I remembered were simple:

Trust and allow.

The implications seemed anything but simple.

What was I supposed to trust?

What was I supposed to allow?

And how exactly does an eighteen-year-old pre-med student translate an experience of cosmic consciousness into anything remotely useful?

For years, I looked outward for the answer.

Eventually, life turned the question around.

Perhaps the calling wasn't asking me to create something “out there.”

Perhaps it was asking me to become increasingly coherent **in here**—and then learn how coherence might express itself through relationships, work, organizations, and service.

That changed everything.

The Problem With Calling

Calling is a powerful idea.

It's also a dangerous one.

The moment we believe we've been “called,” ego has an opportunity to enter through the side door.

I have a mission.

I know something others don't.

I'm supposed to change the world.

Those ideas can feel noble while quietly separating us from the very people we hope to serve.

I had to wrestle with that.

Especially because my experience at eighteen seemed to include a role for me in facilitating a different kind of world.

For a young person, that can become an enormous identity.

For an older person, it can become an enormous responsibility.

The difference is humility.

A calling doesn't necessarily mean we're special.

Perhaps it means we're accountable.

From Mission to Practice

When I was younger, I imagined transformation on a large scale.

Humanity.

Peace.

Planetary consciousness.

A new world.

Those aspirations haven't disappeared.

But my understanding of how change happens has become considerably more practical.

Humanity doesn't transform independently of humans.

Organizations don't become coherent independently of the people within them.

Communities don't become collaborative because someone writes a compelling vision statement.

Peace isn't created by talking about peace.

Change enters the world through behavior.

A conversation.

A decision.

A commitment.

A process redesigned.

A conflict addressed.

A person listened to.

A promise kept.

A system aligned.

Eventually I realized that the distance between grand vision and meaningful change is filled with very ordinary actions.

That became the bridge from calling to coherence.

What Do I Mean by Coherence?

The word has become central to my work, so it's worth being precise.

I don't use *coherence* to mean agreement.

I don't mean uniformity.

And I certainly don't mean everyone believing the same things.

Coherence means that the parts of a system are appropriately related so they can function together as a whole.

Think of an orchestra.

Different instruments.

Different sounds.

Different roles.

Coherence doesn't require the violin to become the cello.

It requires both to understand the composition, listen to what is happening around them, and contribute appropriately to the whole.

Human systems work similarly.

Within an individual, coherence means our values, thoughts, emotions, decisions, and actions increasingly reinforce one another.

Within a team, it means people can maintain distinct perspectives while aligning around shared purpose.

Within an organization, it means strategy, people, processes, information, decisions, resources, and execution support rather than contradict one another.

Within society, perhaps coherence means learning how difference can exist without automatically becoming division.

That isn't mystical.

It's practical systems design.

Alignment Comes Before Coherence

Another distinction became important.

Alignment and coherence are related, but they aren't identical.

Alignment asks:

Are we oriented toward the same purpose?

Coherence asks:

Do the parts actually work together in support of that purpose?

A leadership team may agree on strategy and still operate incoherently.

Departments may understand the mission and still pursue conflicting incentives.

People may share values and still communicate badly.

A society may agree that peace is desirable and still maintain systems that continuously generate conflict.

This is where beautiful intentions often encounter reality.

Agreement isn't execution.

Vision isn't architecture.

Purpose isn't process.

Values aren't behavior.

Something has to connect them.

The Execution Gap

Over decades of working with people and organizations, I kept encountering the same gap.

People generally know more than they implement.

Organizations frequently possess more intelligence than they effectively use.

Teams often recognize their problems long before they solve them.

Leaders can describe desired culture while participating in behaviors that undermine it.

Strategic plans can be excellent documents and poor operating systems.

I began seeing this as more than a productivity issue.

It was a coherence problem.

The organization knew one thing.

Said another.

Rewarded another.

Measured another.

And did something else.

No wonder friction appeared.

The challenge wasn't always a lack of intelligence.

It was the inability to organize intelligence into coherent action.

Friction Became Information

This changed how I looked at problems.

Instead of seeing friction only as something to eliminate, I began treating it as information.

Where does work repeatedly stall?

Where do decisions get delayed?

Where does conflict recur?

Where are people creating workarounds?

Where does information stop flowing?

Where do incentives contradict stated priorities?

Where does leadership behavior contradict organizational values?

Friction points toward misalignment.

Misalignment points toward relationships within the system that need attention.

Suddenly, problems became diagnostic.

The system was showing us where coherence was missing.

The Inner and Outer System

There was another realization.

Organizations aren't the only systems capable of incoherence.

So are we.

I can say I value listening while waiting impatiently for someone to stop talking.

I can value collaboration while secretly needing my idea to win.

I can speak about trust while attempting to control every outcome.

I can advocate peace while carrying unresolved conflict inside myself.

The outer system often reflects the inner one.

Not perfectly.

But often enough to deserve attention.

This is why personal development and organizational development have never felt entirely separate to me.

A leader brings consciousness into every meeting.

Fear enters the room.

So does confidence.

Curiosity.

Defensiveness.

Humility.

Ego.

Presence.

Organizations don't merely contain processes.

They contain states of being.

Coherence Became the Common Language

This is where decades of seemingly unrelated work began converging.

The questions of consciousness I'd explored since childhood.

The organizational lessons from aerospace.

The relational lessons of teaching.

The civic lessons of community-building.

The practical discipline of construction partnering.

The questions explored through coaching.

The hundreds of conversations about consciousness and transformation.

The writing.

The systems thinking.

Eventually, they stopped looking like separate interests.

They became different expressions of the same inquiry:

How do we move from fragmentation toward coherent relationship?

That question didn't require anyone to share my spiritual worldview.

That mattered.

You don't have to believe my experience at eighteen happened the way I remember it.

You don't need to believe in cosmic consciousness.

You don't need to adopt my metaphysics.

We can still sit together and examine a system.

Where is the friction?

Where is the misalignment?

What are we trying to accomplish?

What prevents us from accomplishing it?

What needs to change?

Who owns the next step?

How will we know whether it worked?

That became liberating.

The experience could remain personal.

The principles could become practical.

Be the Dream

Even the phrase *Be the Dream* changed meaning for me over time.

When I was younger, dreams were visions of possibility.

What might humanity become?

What might organizations become?

What might I become?

Eventually, the phrase became much more demanding.

Don't merely describe the future you want.

Behave in ways consistent with it now.

If you want trust, become trustworthy.

If you want collaboration, learn to collaborate.

If you want people to listen, become a better listener.

If you want peace, examine how you participate in conflict.

If you want coherence, identify where your own words and actions contradict one another.

The dream becomes credible when it becomes behavior.

That is where transformation begins.

From One World to Many Voices

The same pattern appeared through conversations.

For years, I've had the privilege of speaking with people from widely different backgrounds about consciousness, leadership, transformation, spirituality, science, culture, and humanity's future.

Again and again, I noticed something.

People used different language.

Sometimes radically different language.

Yet underneath it were recurring human questions.

Who are we?

Why are we here?

How do we live meaningfully?

How do we work together?

What is consciousness?

What does a better future require of us?

The differences mattered.

But so did the common ground beneath them.

Perhaps coherence begins not when we eliminate different perspectives, but when we become capable of hearing the deeper questions they share.

From Planetary Vision to Planetary Practice

The phrase *planetary citizen* once sounded visionary.

Increasingly, it sounds descriptive.

Every cell in our bodies is sustained by this planet.

Our economies depend upon planetary systems.

Our technologies connect people across national boundaries instantly.

Climate, oceans, ecosystems, trade, information, disease, migration, and conflict ignore many of the borders we've drawn.

We already participate in planetary systems.

The question is whether our consciousness and institutions have caught up with that reality.

Planetary coherence doesn't mean creating one global culture or erasing nations.

It means developing the capacity to understand interdependence at the scale at which our consequences now operate.

Again:

Distinct.

Not separate.

Then Artificial Intelligence Arrived

Artificial intelligence introduced a fascinating new dimension to the question.

For most of human history, intelligence was scarce.

Now we're entering a period in which certain forms of intelligence may become extraordinarily abundant.

We can generate information faster.

Analyze more data.

Model possibilities.

Automate tasks.

Accelerate decisions.

But intelligence alone does not create coherence.

A fragmented organization with better AI may simply become fragmented faster.

A poorly framed objective can be optimized with extraordinary efficiency.

A bad decision made faster is still a bad decision.

This brought me back to a question that feels increasingly important:

What happens when intelligence becomes abundant but alignment remains scarce?

Technology makes the old human challenge more urgent, not less.

Precision and Wisdom

This is one reason I've become fascinated by the relationship between artificial intelligence and human judgment.

Machines and humans bring different capacities.

Computational systems can analyze complexity at speeds and scales impossible for individual human beings.

Humans bring lived experience, meaning, ethics, intuition, values, responsibility, and contextual judgment.

The future doesn't need to be framed as human **versus** machine.

The more interesting question is:

What becomes possible when different forms of intelligence are placed into coherent relationship?

Once again, the pattern returns.

Difference.

Relationship.

Alignment.

Coherence.

The Calling Looks Different Now

At eighteen, I thought I had been shown something about humanity's future.

At nearly seventy, I'm less interested in predicting that future.

I'm interested in helping build the capacity required to navigate it.

That is a significant shift.

A vision can inspire us.

Capacity enables us.

Can we listen across differences?

Can we distinguish information from wisdom?

Can we recognize systemic consequences?

Can we make decisions without losing sight of human dignity?

Can we translate purpose into measurable action?

Can we use increasingly powerful technologies without surrendering responsibility to them?

Can we build organizations capable of learning faster than their problems evolve?

These questions feel like a mature expression of the calling I first interpreted so dramatically at eighteen.

Not:

Change the world.

But:

Help increase our capacity to change wisely.

From Calling to Coherence

Looking backward, I can see a progression I couldn't have designed.

The orphan searched for belonging.

The teenager encountered what felt like cosmic consciousness.

The young man searched for explanations.

The professional discovered systems.

The facilitator discovered relationship.

The coach explored alignment.

The author searched for language.

The interviewer listened to hundreds of perspectives.

The systems feeler discovered coherence.

And now the question is less about what happened to me fifty-one years ago than what all of us are being asked to navigate today.

We possess extraordinary intelligence.

We have extraordinary technology.

We are connected at unprecedented scale.

Yet fragmentation remains one of humanity's greatest challenges.

Perhaps the next stage of our development isn't simply becoming more intelligent.

Perhaps it's becoming more coherent.

Able to align what we know with what we value.

What we value with what we decide.

What we decide with what we do.

And what we do with the consequences we create for one another and the living world we share.

That is where *The Call* has brought me.

Not to certainty.

Not to a final answer.

Not to a claim of special knowledge.

To a practice.

Listen deeply.

See the whole.

Find the friction.

Align around what matters.

Act coherently.

Learn from the result.

Repeat.

Perhaps that's what *trust and allow* eventually became.

Trust the possibility.

Allow reality to teach you.

Then do the work.

The eighteen-year-old wanted to know whether there was more.

After nearly fifty-one years, I think there is.

But the “more” isn't somewhere else.

It's what becomes possible when we learn to bring more of who we are into coherent relationship with

one another, our systems, our technology, and the world we share.

That may be where calling finally becomes coherence.

And perhaps where coherence becomes service.



The Journey Continues

Nearly fifty-one years ago, I was lying across a bed in an honors dorm between classes and study, listening to Journey's first album.

I was eighteen.

A pre-med student.

An adopted child still carrying questions about identity and belonging.

A young man with no idea where life would lead.

Then I heard the inner voice I'd known since childhood:

“Bruce, are you willing to die for what you believe in?”

I answered yes.

What followed changed my understanding of myself and reality.

White light.

An overwhelming sense of infinite intelligence.

An impetuous question:

“Is there more?”

An indigo space.

Points of light I perceived as individuated consciousness.

A message I would spend decades trying to understand.

And finally:

“Trust and allow.”

Then the *whoosh*.

And I was back.

For a long time, I thought that was *The Call*.

Today, I'm not so sure.

Perhaps it was only the beginning.

What I Thought the Journey Would Be

At eighteen, extraordinary experiences invite extraordinary expectations.

I imagined something dramatic.

A mission.

A transformation.

A new world.

Some clear unfolding that would eventually reveal exactly why the experience had happened and what I was supposed to do about it.

Life had other plans.

Instead of giving me a map, it gave me classrooms.

Workplaces.

Relationships.

Organizations.

Successes.

Failures.

Conflict.

Love.

Responsibility.

People I understood.

People I didn't.

Ideas that worked.

Ideas that didn't.

Doors that opened unexpectedly.

Doors that remained firmly closed no matter how hard I pushed.

Looking backward, perhaps that was exactly the education I needed.

The Experience Didn't Give Me the Answers

This may be one of the most important things I can say after more than half a century:

The experience did not give me the answers.

It gave me questions.

What is consciousness?

Who are we beneath the identities we inherit?

What does it mean to belong?

Why do human beings who are fundamentally dependent upon one another create so much division?

How do we remain in relationship across difference?

Why do organizations filled with intelligent people behave incoherently?

How do good intentions become effective action?

What happens when technology becomes more intelligent than the systems using it are wise?

And perhaps the most persistent:

How do we learn to live together?

Those questions have proven far more valuable than certainty ever could.

Some Things I Believe Differently Now

I don't understand my experience at eighteen exactly as I did when I was twenty.

Or thirty.

Or fifty.

That matters.

If an interpretation cannot evolve, it stops being inquiry and becomes doctrine.

I've become much more careful about distinguishing what I **experienced** from what I concluded the experience **meant**.

I've become less interested in proving metaphysical explanations.

Less interested in convincing anyone that my worldview is correct.

Less interested in whether an experience makes someone appear spiritually advanced.

And much more interested in consequences.

Does it increase compassion?

Does it deepen curiosity?

Does it make us better listeners?

Does it increase our ability to work across differences?

Does it help us become more responsible?

Does it make us more useful?

Does it help us love more intelligently?

If not, perhaps our interpretation deserves another look.

Some Things Haven't Changed

Other things have remained remarkably consistent.

I still experience life as deeply interconnected.

I still believe humanity is capable of far greater cooperation than we currently demonstrate.

I still believe our relationship with the planet cannot be separated from our relationship with ourselves.

I still believe human beings possess capacities we have barely begun to understand.

I still believe love matters.

I still believe listening matters.

I still believe our differences can become sources of intelligence rather than reasons for division.

And I remain convinced that good intentions must eventually become coherent action if they are going to matter.

The language has changed.

The conviction to serve hasn't.

From Cosmic to Practical

At eighteen, my vocabulary was cosmic.

Cosmic consciousness.

Infinite intelligence.

A new world.

Today, much of my vocabulary is practical.

Alignment.

Coherence.

Systems.

Relationships.

Decision-making.

Execution.

Feedback.

Responsibility.

At first glance, those worlds might appear unrelated.

To me, they have become inseparable.

What good is an experience of unity if I cannot practice relationship?

What good is a vision of harmony if I cannot navigate disagreement?

What good is consciousness if it doesn't improve our choices?

What good is wisdom if it never reaches action?

The journey has continually brought the extraordinary back into the ordinary.

Perhaps that's where it belonged all along.

The Future Arrived Differently Than I Expected

The world of 2026 would have been nearly unimaginable to the eighteen-year-old lying on that dorm-room bed.

A device in my pocket can connect me instantly with people around the planet.

Humanity has created networks through which ideas can move across continents in seconds.

We have mapped genomes.

Observed distant galaxies.

Connected billions of people.

Built machines capable of generating language, analyzing enormous datasets, detecting patterns, and increasingly participating in decisions once reserved entirely for humans.

Intelligence is changing.

Work is changing.

Organizations are changing.

Our relationship with information is changing.

And the old questions haven't disappeared.

They've become more urgent.

What will we do with all this capability?

Intelligence Is Not Wisdom

Artificial intelligence may become one of the most powerful tools humanity has ever created.

But intelligence and wisdom are not synonymous.

We can optimize the wrong objective.

Automate a broken process.

Accelerate fragmentation.

Scale misinformation.

Make poor decisions faster.

Technology amplifies capacity.

It doesn't automatically provide purpose.

That remains our responsibility.

Perhaps one of the defining questions of the coming decades will be:

Can human wisdom mature quickly enough to remain in meaningful relationship with increasingly powerful machine intelligence?

I don't know the answer.

But I intend to participate in the inquiry.

The New World Looks Different Now

At eighteen, I understood the phrase “new world” dramatically.

Something would change.

Humanity would awaken.

A different civilization would emerge.

Today, I see transformation differently.

A new world isn't something that suddenly replaces the old one.

It emerges inside it.

One person learning to listen differently.

One leader choosing curiosity instead of defensiveness.

One team replacing blame with accountability.

One organization aligning incentives with purpose.

One community learning how to remain in relationship despite disagreement.

One technology designed around human dignity.

One decision that considers consequences beyond the next quarter.

One person choosing service over certainty.

Small changes become patterns.

Patterns become cultures.

Cultures become systems.

Systems shape worlds.

Perhaps the new world has always been emerging this way.

Planetary Citizenship

The older I've become, the less abstract the idea of planetary citizenship feels.

We are already planetary beings.

Every breath participates in a planetary atmosphere.

Every cell in our bodies is constructed from the materials of Earth.

Our economies depend upon global networks.

Our environmental consequences cross national borders.

Our communications systems increasingly connect humanity as a whole.

The question isn't whether we're planetary citizens.

The question is whether we've developed the consciousness necessary to behave like them.

Can we recognize interdependence without eliminating individuality?

Can nations maintain identity while cooperating around shared challenges?

Can organizations prosper without ignoring the systems that make their prosperity possible?

Can humanity become capable of thinking at the scale of its consequences?

Those questions feel like natural descendants of the experience I had at eighteen.

Coherence Is Still a Practice

I don't imagine a coherent world as one in which everyone agrees.

That would neither be possible nor desirable.

Coherence requires difference.

Different people.

Different perspectives.

Different cultures.

Different capacities.

Different ideas.

The question is whether those differences can remain intelligently related.

That's why coherence is not an achievement.

It's a practice.

Listen.

Observe.

Align.

Act.

Receive feedback.

Adjust.

Learn.

Repeat.

Individuals do it.

Relationships do it.

Teams do it.

Organizations do it.

Healthy living systems do it continuously.

Perhaps civilizations must learn to do it too.

The Calling Has Changed

If you had asked the eighteen-year-old me what my calling was, I might have given you a rather dramatic answer.

Ask me today and I'd say something simpler.

Help people see relationships they couldn't see before.

Between ideas.

Between people.

Between decisions and consequences.

Between vision and execution.

Between inner awareness and outer behavior.

Between human wisdom and technological intelligence.

Between ourselves and the living world that sustains us.

Then help turn that awareness into something useful.

A conversation.

A decision.

A plan.

A relationship.

A system.

An action.

That feels like enough.

I Still Don't Know

There is something wonderfully liberating about those words.

I don't know.

I don't know exactly what happened to me in 1975.

I know what I experienced.

I don't know whether consciousness exists independently of the brain.

I remain fascinated by the question.

I don't know whether what I heard about humanity's future was prophecy, psychology, possibility, metaphor, or something else.

I know it shaped my life.

I don't know where artificial intelligence will take us.

I know we need wisdom alongside it.

I don't know whether humanity will achieve the kind of planetary coherence I've imagined for decades.

I know we can become more coherent than we are today.

That's enough uncertainty to keep me curious.

And enough possibility to keep me working.

Trust and Allow

Perhaps I've finally begun to understand those two words.

Not as a promise that everything will happen the way I expect.

It hasn't.

Not as permission to wait for destiny.

That never worked particularly well either.

Instead:

Trust that there is something worth serving.

Allow reality to teach you what that service requires.

Trust the vision without becoming attached to your interpretation of it.

Allow feedback.

Allow failure.

Allow other people to know things you don't.

Allow your understanding to evolve.

Allow the path to look different from the one you imagined.

And keep showing up.

Perhaps that's what those words were asking of me all along.

The Journey Continues

I began this series by looking backward after fifty years.

I wanted to revisit *The Call* without simply repeating the story I'd told when I was younger.

To separate experience from interpretation.

To honor mystery without abandoning discernment.

To acknowledge both the extraordinary and the difficult.

And to ask whether a spiritual experience means anything if it doesn't eventually improve how we live.

What I discovered in revisiting the story surprised me.

The experience at eighteen matters.

But the fifty-one years afterward matter more.

The workplaces.

The relationships.

The mistakes.

The people.

The questions.

The disappointments.

The moments of grace.

The things I built.

The things that failed.

The things I believed and later reconsidered.

The people who challenged me.

The people who trusted me.

The people I learned to trust.

The long apprenticeship was the story.

Perhaps it still is.

And that brings me to you.

Maybe you've never seen white light.

Maybe you've never heard an inner voice.

Maybe nothing in your life resembles my experience.

It doesn't need to.

A calling doesn't have to arrive dramatically.

Sometimes it's simply the question that refuses to leave you alone.

The problem you keep finding yourself drawn toward.

The injustice you cannot ignore.

The people you naturally want to help.

The work that feels meaningful even when it's difficult.

The possibility you continue seeing when others don't.

The pattern that becomes visible only after years of living.

Perhaps the question isn't:

Have I received a calling?

Perhaps it's:

What has my life been repeatedly asking me to notice?

And then:

What am I going to do with what I've noticed?

I was eighteen when I asked:

“Is there more?”

At nearly seventy, my answer is still yes.

There is always more to understand.

More to question.

More to learn.

More to forgive.

More to build.

More to give.

More to become.

More to love.

The destination remains uncertain.

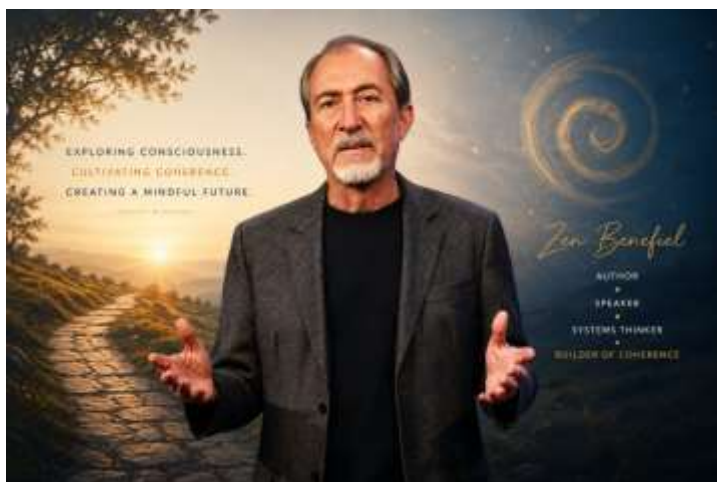
The work remains unfinished.

And perhaps that's exactly as it should be.

Trust and allow.

Then take the next step.

The journey continues.



About Zen Benefiel

Zen Benefiel is an author, speaker, systems feeler, transformational facilitator, and lifelong explorer of consciousness whose work bridges the inner dimensions of human experience with the practical challenges of leadership, organizations, planetary citizenship, and an increasingly intelligent world.

His journey began long before he had language for it. Adopted as an infant and aware from childhood of an unusual inner dialogue, Zen grew up asking fundamental questions about identity, belonging, purpose, and the nature of consciousness. At eighteen, while a pre-med student, an extraordinary experience of interconnected consciousness profoundly altered the direction of his life.

Rather than providing easy answers, the experience initiated what became a decades-long apprenticeship: learning how extraordinary insight might become useful in ordinary life.

From Inner Inquiry to Practical Transformation

That apprenticeship took Zen through aerospace and manufacturing, education, community development, organizational management, construction partnering,

coaching, nonprofit leadership, media, and systems facilitation.

Across remarkably different environments, he encountered a recurring challenge:

Intelligent and well-intentioned people often struggle to translate what they know and value into coherent action.

This observation became central to his life's work.

With an MBA, an MA in Organizational Management, secondary teaching certification, and professional training in coaching, facilitation, and human development, Zen has spent more than three decades helping individuals, teams, and organizations recognize hidden patterns, navigate differences, improve relationships, align around shared purpose, and move from vision toward practical execution.

Be The Dream

Through **Be The Dream**, Zen brings those decades of experience together in work centered on personal, leadership, team, and organizational transformation.

Its underlying premise is deceptively simple: meaningful change requires more than vision. Purpose, people,

relationships, decisions, processes, and actions must become increasingly aligned.

The dream becomes credible when we begin to **live it**.

Planetary Citizens

Zen's lifelong interest in humanity's interconnectedness also finds expression through **Planetary Citizens**, a nonprofit dedicated to awakening the heart of humanity and helping transform good intentions into effective action.

The work expands the question of coherence beyond the individual and organization toward communities, cultures, institutions, and the living planetary systems upon which every human endeavor depends.

Planetary citizenship, in this view, does not erase nations, cultures, or individual identities. It recognizes something increasingly difficult to ignore:

We are distinct, but we are not separate.

One World in a New World

Zen is also the host of **One World in a New World**, a long-form conversation series exploring consciousness, leadership, transformation, spirituality, science, human potential, and humanity's emerging future.

Through hundreds of conversations with people from diverse disciplines, cultures, and life experiences, the series has become a living inquiry into a question that has followed him throughout his life:

How do we become capable of working intelligently together without requiring one another to become the same?

Listening to so many different perspectives has reinforced an important lesson: coherence does not require agreement. It requires developing the capacity to remain in meaningful relationship across difference.

Author and Explorer of Coherence

As an author of more than fifty books and compilations, Zen's writing explores consciousness, systems thinking, leadership, personal and organizational transformation, planetary citizenship, coherence, and the emerging relationship between human and artificial intelligence.

His works include *Planetary Citizens: Awakening the Heart of Humanity*, an exploration of our shared identity, interdependence, and responsibility as members of a planetary community; *Coherence: From Hydrogen to Humanity*, examining coherence across physical, biological, human, and planetary systems; *The*

Aura of Two Minds: Coherent Intelligence; and Coherent Intelligence — A Primer.

He also co-authored *The Velocity Mandate* with **Farooq Omar, Architect of the AI Universal Engine™**, exploring the challenge of converting intelligence, strategy, and technological capability into aligned, timely, and coherent execution.

Together, these works trace an inquiry that has evolved for more than half a century:

How do the parts recognize their relationship to the whole—and then act accordingly?

Co-Architecting the AI Universal Engine™

That inquiry has now entered another frontier.

Zen is **Co-Architect of the AI Universal Engine™ (AIUE)** with Farooq Omar, bringing together Farooq's decades of AI architecture and systems expertise with Zen's experience in organizational transformation, human dynamics, facilitation, consciousness, and coherence.

The collaboration explores a fundamental challenge of the emerging AI era:

What happens when intelligence becomes abundant, but alignment does not?

Unlike probabilistic large language models designed primarily to predict and generate content, the AIUE is conceived as a deterministic decision and transformation architecture designed to expose friction, model consequences, stress-test possibilities, and support coherent execution.

At the center of the work is a principle Zen describes as the **Aura of Two Minds™**:

AI precision + human wisdom.

Machines can process complexity, identify patterns, and model possibilities at scales humans cannot.

Human beings bring meaning, ethics, intuition, lived experience, discernment, responsibility, and wisdom.

The opportunity is not to make one replace the other, but to place their different capabilities into coherent relationship.

One Journey, Many Expressions

Viewed separately, *Be The Dream*, *Planetary Citizens*, *One World in a New World*, Zen's books, and the AI Universal Engine™ might appear to be very different endeavors.

Zen sees them as expressions of the same lifelong inquiry.

Be The Dream explores coherence within individuals, leaders, teams, and organizations.

Planetary Citizens expands that inquiry toward humanity and our relationship with the planet.

One World in a New World creates conversations across different perspectives about consciousness and our collective future.

His writing documents and develops the ideas emerging from that journey.

And **co-architecting the AI Universal Engine™** brings the inquiry into the emerging relationship between human wisdom, machine intelligence, organizational systems, and coherent action.

The scale changes.

The underlying question remains.

The Journey Continues

More than fifty years after the experience that initiated *The Call*, Zen is less interested in convincing others what

that experience meant than in exploring what a lifetime of attempting to live responsibly with it has taught him.

His philosophy has become increasingly practical:

Listen deeply.

See the whole.

Find the friction.

Align around what matters.

Act coherently.

Learn from the result.

And perhaps most importantly:

Remain willing to change what you think you know.

What began as an eighteen-year-old's encounter with what he understood as cosmic consciousness gradually became a lifetime devoted to exploring consciousness in action—in relationships, organizations, communities, technology, and our relationship with the planet itself.

The language has evolved.

The work has matured.

The questions have deepened.

And the calling has become less about certainty than service.

**Exploring consciousness. Cultivating coherence.
Creating a mindful future.**

