

Introduction

The future of the Earth depends on a change of consciousness . . . and the change is bound to come. But it is left to (humans) to decide if they will collaborate for this change or it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances.

—Mirra Alfassa, quoted in Allan Combs,
*Consciousness Explained Better: Toward an Integral
Understanding of the Multifaceted Nature of Consciousness*¹

That humanity has arrived at a crossroads of historical significance by now requires little elaboration. The question is how, or even if, we will navigate our way through this critical juncture.¹ On one hand, issues such as climate change and environmental devastation, widespread poverty and disease, drought and famine, terrorism and increasingly sophisticated means of warfare, economic disparity and instability, along with a broad complex network of sociocultural challenges raise unprecedented questions about the sustainability of civilization as we know it.² On a more optimistic yet scarcely less daunting note, individuals and communities across the globe have unprecedented access to an ever expanding knowledge base that transcends disciplinary, cultural, historical, and geographical boundaries. While often spawning the overwhelming morass of data that exacerbates the alienation and disconnectedness that pervade much of contemporary life, this broad spectrum of resources—were it to be effectively harnessed—might be the source of newfound solutions to the present challenges.

Although some may be inclined to think that the present slate of crises, particularly in regard to global warming and related consequences, has progressed beyond the threshold of reversibility, I have faith in humanity's ability to dig deep into its wellsprings of ingenuity and invoke levels of understanding and action that enable not only survival but entirely new kinds of progress. Almost a half century ago, Buckminster Fuller predicted that *Homo sapiens sapiens* would approach a point at which two

options—as expressed in the title of his book *Utopia or Oblivion*—would be available.³ To encapsulate Fuller’s central premise: There will be no middle ground—the kind of change required for mere survival will be of such scope as to catapult human civilization onto a new evolutionary plateau. Echoing the viewpoints of a growing contingent of more recent thinkers, I believe that at its core this transformation will occur on the level of consciousness, which in this book I approach in terms of the creativity-consciousness relationship.⁴

By creativity I refer to such qualities as inventiveness, interaction, the ability to synthesize new forms of knowledge from diverse sources, and the emergence of an individual voice or style within a discipline. Consciousness pertains to self-awareness, transcendence, realization of wholeness and interconnectedness, noetic experience, and the wide range of feeling and emotion that are thought to distinguish human beings from other species. Expanding upon these working definitions from the standpoint of an emergent worldview called Integral Theory, I will view the two realms as inextricably linked aspects of an unbroken, inner-outer wholeness. “[F]or the first time,” remarks Ken Wilber, commonly regarded as the leading contemporary exponent of integral thought, “the sum total of human knowledge is available to us—the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and reflection of all major human civilizations . . . are open to study by anyone.”⁵ Within this cross-disciplinary expanse, one of the most important contributions of Integral Theory is its capacity to embrace both the timeless insights of “the ancient shamans and sages” as well as the latest “breakthroughs in cognitive neuroscience,”⁶ thereby bridging the interior and exterior realms that are often seen as inherently competing with one another. From this vantage point, we will see creativity as an exterior entryway and consciousness as an interior entryway to this inner-outer totality. This in turn gives rise to a conception of spirituality that, in encompassing this totality, transcends denominational boundaries, manifests in all areas of life, and is entirely compatible with—without, as some insist, being reducible to—science.

I develop two central themes related to the impending creativity-consciousness, integral revolution that tend to elude much of the thinking about this kind of paradigmatic change. One is that it will need to take place within, and be driven by, our educational systems if it is to manifest on any significant scale in society at large. No other public agency has as much contact with as much of the population and thus the capacity to shape thinking and behavior as our schools. Unfortunately, by inhibiting inquiry—both practical and theoretical—into the interior, transcen-

dent dimensions of human nature central to creativity and consciousness development, our educational systems have arguably perpetuated the very paradigm that needs to be transformed. Second is that the arts uniquely embody integral properties and will play a key role in this educational and societal shift. Within the arts, moreover, the creativity-consciousness relationship is uniquely embodied in the improvisation-based musical art form of jazz, pointing to the potential for this idiom to assume leadership in the arts-driven integral revolution.

Why jazz? Why, among the infinite array of musical genres that exist, is jazz a primary candidate for transformational catalyst? What might jazz-driven change look like?

Much of my focus in answering these questions will be on the jazz process scope, although I will also consider the idiom's rich structural aspects as they work in tandem with the process realm. Two aspects of the process realm are key. First is jazz's improvisatory core, which integrates a wide array of other processes—including composition, performance, and various kinds of theoretical analysis—that are also central to creative growth in music and beyond. This improvisation-based creative foundation will be shown to promote penetration beyond the idiom's discipline-specific boundaries and openings to the broader musical landscape, wide-ranging interdisciplinary connections, and innermost dimensions of consciousness that shape creative expression and growth. Whereas much of academic and commercial thinking and practice are bound by a highly fragmented conception of the musical landscape as comprised of innumerable, discrete stylistic compartments, an integral musical perspective views these as inextricably linked areas within a broader whole. The central pulse of the musical world, moreover, resides in the melding of genres, at which point the purpose of engagement in any given area is to realize it not as self-confining destination but self-transcending tributary. Here I am reflecting from a Western vantage point and do not suggest that this syncretic melding that is exemplified in jazz—which has been called the “first world music”⁷—necessarily represents an evolutionary thrust applicable to all musical cultures. Nor is this to suggest that the tributary, once its boundaries are transcended, then discards its unique features—which in the case of jazz include its rich expressive range, collective interactive features, propulsive rhythmic foundations, and other traits that evolved from the idiom's African American roots. Rather, these are “transcended and included,” to invoke a central integral axiom, in the broader musical syncretism.⁸ Jazz's improvisation-based process scope renders it a uniquely powerful tributary that flows not only into the overarching musical

ocean but the broader oceans of creativity and consciousness. A template emerges that can inspire and inform this same self-transcending movement not only in other musical genres but wide-ranging fields in and beyond the arts.

This leads to a second aspect of the jazz process scope. The jazz tradition boasts a long legacy of leading artists, including Alice Coltrane, John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Charles Lloyd, John McLaughlin, Sonny Rollins, Wayne Shorter, and Mary Lou Williams, who engaged with meditation and related methodologies for growth of creativity and consciousness in order to integrate the transcendent experiences glimpsed during their musical excursions more fully into their work and lives. We will see that improvisation and meditation, even if the first occurs in the turbulence of creative activity and the second in silence, share important common features and invite mutual engagement. Meditation, viewed here as an anchor for a broader spectrum of spiritual growth, is thus regarded as an important aspect of the jazz process spectrum, in so doing broadening the integral template the idiom brings to the overall educational and societal evolutionary spectrum.⁹

Preliminary signs of jazz-driven, integral change may already be evident in what is sometimes called the New Jazz Studies. Here fields as diverse as business, education, law, medicine, sociology, and sports have begun to look to the idiom's creative foundations as a guide to greater creativity within their own boundaries. Columbia University, for example, includes jazz in its liberal arts core curriculum to model important sociocultural dynamics that are important aspects of, as Robert O'Meally puts it, "what it means to be educated in today's world."¹⁰ However, in that the New Jazz Studies tends to stop short of the realm of consciousness, I propose the advent of "Integral Jazz Studies," where consciousness shares the stage with creativity, as the next evolutionary wave in this jazz-inspired transformation. Here it should be emphasized that, while implicit in these considerations is the commonly invoked idea of the arts as an enhancement to creativity and performance across disciplines, Integral Jazz Studies does not confine its scope to that relatively small realm of artistic function. Rather, Integral Jazz Studies penetrates to the core of the arts as among the most foundational realms of human endeavor, the importance of which needs to be recognized on its own terms, and not only as embellishment for other areas of life. This is in no way to dismiss the importance of arts-driven creative expansion in all areas of inquiry, but to situate it within a broader transformational mission for the arts—both of which are embodied by jazz.

An additional theme emerges as a by-product of this investigation of jazz's integral features. This has to do with possible shortcomings in integral discourse, where the arts and creativity in general, and music and improvised music in particular, tend to not assume the importance that is implicit in the theory itself. In other words, although the interplay of spirituality, art, and science—long held as the “Big Three” pillars of human endeavor—is a key integral precept, not only do the arts tend to be somewhat subordinate in the ongoing dialogues and publications that comprise the integral conversation, but within the arts, music and particularly improvised music receive scant attention. In exploring jazz as an embodiment of integral principles, not only is this oversight addressed and rectified, but in so doing, new insights may be unearthed that shed light on these patterns and thus contribute significantly to the evolution of integral thought.

In a single stroke, an inquiry into the integral properties of jazz in turn helps restore integral precepts to integral discourse and thereby lays groundwork for delivering the integral vision to a world in urgent need of a blueprint for the future.

A look at the circumstances that led me to the present formulation of these ideas will shed further light on the more in-depth investigation that will unfold throughout the course of the book.

My Story

In 1987, I was appointed to the music faculty at the University of Michigan to establish a program in jazz studies. I came in with bold ambitions: First, I would bring jazz and improvised music to the majority of students and faculty at this top-ranked, largely classical performing arts school, a task that I estimated could be completed in a few years. Colleagues outside of music are often surprised to learn the extent to which the primary creative processes of improvisation and composition are absent from the experience of most students and faculty, with interpretive performance being the primary task of the majority. I was convinced that I could expand this highly specialized orientation fairly quickly, and if this happened at Michigan, the entire field would shift. Once this was accomplished, I would then bring meditation and consciousness studies to the entire campus, which I calculated would take a few more years—at which point I figured I would sail through the tenure process. After all, how could anyone not be excited about these ideas and the benefits to be reaped by students and faculty alike?

It did not take long before I realized that, in fact, there were more than a few who did not share my enthusiasm, and that I would have to significantly revise my timetable. While I managed to make fairly significant inroads on both improvisation- and meditation/consciousness-related fronts, earning tenure along the way, I saw firsthand the glacial pace of change in the academic world, perhaps best expressed in the statement: "It is easier to move a cemetery than change a curriculum."¹¹ As I persisted in my efforts, I realized that it would not be enough to design new educational models, but it was also necessary to catalyze new kinds of thinking and dialogue that would cultivate receptivity to any such practical initiatives. Which, exemplary of the delineative and diagnostic facets of the integral framework, meant the articulation of a clear and compelling vision of a new approach, as well as an analysis of the prevailing model's limiting practices and conceptual underpinnings.

This hit home early on in my teaching of improvisation to classical musicians. Although jazz was central to my job description, I had designed unique approaches to not only jazz improvisation but also stylistically open improvisation that provided classical (and other) musicians "user-friendly" entryways into the process. Instead of imposing external style constraints at the outset, my approach elicits a creative flow from whatever style backgrounds musicians bring to the process. Once that flow is established, multiple parameters of refinement can follow through the introduction of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and other style-specific constraints.¹² In addition to offering coursework of this nature to students, I formed a faculty improvisation ensemble in hopes of providing my classical colleagues with hands-on experience in this historically central approach to music making and, as will be also explored, musical understanding. While students and faculty alike would commonly report some degree of fulfillment even from their initial improvisatory attempts, and furthermore noted positive benefits that transferred to their interpretive performing such as greater freedom, expressivity, and sharper listening skills, I became acutely aware of an important deficiency that needed to be addressed.

This was the view of improvisation, regardless of what it had to offer, as an embellishment to interpretive performance. In other words, even though improvisation was in earlier times central to the classical tradition, and in one form or another has always been the most predominant practice in the musical world at large, academic musical culture has long been grounded in an object-mediated aesthetic that is sadly out of touch with this central facet of musical reality. By object-mediated, I mean

that the basis of musical meaning and worth is the composed-notated composition, not the creative process.¹³ Thus, while the composed work represents the central aesthetic locus, the composition process, as noted earlier, remains relegated to a scant few. Improvisation fares even worse within this orientation, not only excluded from the curriculum with the exception of jazz coursework, but often dismissed as a less evolved sub-species of composition and thus occupying a marginalized status in the aesthetic hierarchy in the field. Therefore, while improvisation might be enjoyable and uphold a kind of therapeutic role for those interpretive performers open to expanding their horizons through this process, the idea of it upholding the transcendent, spiritual function that has long been attributed to the arts, and is central to an integral aesthetics, was and still is quite foreign.¹⁴

Presaging the integral analysis that will begin in part 1, this view of improvisation in musical academe is confined to exteriors and oblivious to the interior richness in this powerful aspect of creative expression. And as elusive as this appreciation of improvisation's transcendent properties might be for interpretive performers when engaging with the process from a stylistically open standpoint, I found the idea that improvisation when situated within a culturally grounded, style-specific context, such as jazz and its African American underpinnings, to be even more remote to their experience. At a moment in history when the need for a cross-cultural awareness has never been more urgent, and when few fields embody this to the extent of music, I was struck by the extent to which an academic discipline could, in deviating from the creative and diverse thrust of the musical world, fall so short in light of these values.

As I will emphasize repeatedly, the problem is *not* the European classical repertory, the greatness of which is beyond the debate. Nor is it the interpretive performance tradition that has stemmed from it. The problem is the extent to which the part has overtaken the whole, where a tiny slice of musical practice has been conflated with the totality and impeded the broader connections to be made to equally great musical regions. While it would be a while before I fully grasped the complicated nature of the reform that would be necessary, two things began to become clear to me early on. First was that the kind of change needed and I believed was possible would be a win-win affair; musical study had everything to gain from diversifying its horizons. Second was that this change would need to involve more than a horizontal expansion of the existing model if the gulf between musical study and the musical world were truly to be bridged; it would need to take on vertical dimensions. In other words,

wedging in electives in improvisation and more diverse kinds of musical engagement atop the reigning foundation, which has characterized much of the reform efforts that have prevailed, would be inadequate.¹⁵ Only through wholesale overhaul of the model from its conceptual, curricular, and cultural foundations on up would the necessary reform take place.

Among the important inroads I made in the conceptual realm include one of the first consciousness-based accounts of improvisation and composition processes to appear in the literature, which is the basis for chapter 6.¹⁶ As John Sloboda, Christopher Small, David Elliott, and others note, musicology—consistent with the object-mediated paradigm—has largely ignored investigation of the creative process and instead has focused on resultant works and related structural and historical concerns. I advanced a model that not only broached the moment-to-moment decision making sequences invoked by improvisers and composers, but revealed the two processes as contrasting pathways to transcendent experience. In the curricular realm, I designed an improvisation-based musicianship course, among the first jazz offerings to be accepted as part of the core curriculum for classical music majors.¹⁷ As an alternative to conventional approaches to music theory and aural skills that focus largely on writing exercises and analysis, my class would cover basic tonal, modal, and rhythmic materials through the hands-on, creative, and integrative approaches that are not only unique to jazz but increasingly emphasized by educational theorists. Written and analytical work would not be supplanted in my approach but rather situated within a broader epistemological scope. Approaching the jazz idiom, moreover, as *writ large* not only would unite a wide swath of processes—including composition, performance, and multiple kinds of theoretical analysis—but yield openings to wide-ranging musical sources from around the globe, including those from the European classical lineage. The design of the class was based in several key principles to an integral approach to music, which harkens back to points made here earlier, that also pose important ramifications for education at large. First is the need to step back from style categories and view the musical landscape, and the skills needed for its navigation, in terms of processes and structures. One then returns to style categories—which I prefer to think of as process-structure regions within a broader process-structure musical wholeness—and seek the richest sources for the skills identified, according to criteria such as hands-on, creative application, integrative learning, and contemporaneous approaches as entryways to tradition. This procedure reveals that a process-structure region called *jazz* looms large as a fertile source for musicianship skills.¹⁸

Again, the point is not to endorse jazz as a self-confining destination but as a self-transcending gateway that connects musicians with the central creative and aesthetic pulse of today's musical world. The fact that, furthermore, the idiom also spawns connections beyond music, including the innermost dimensions of consciousness, would lead to further innovations. Central to these was the integration of meditation and related practices in my classes in order to further expand the tools students could use for not only musical but broader personal development. In 1997, I was a fellow in the first year of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Contemplative Practice Fellowship program,¹⁹ the purpose of which was to promote the use of interior methodologies in college and university classrooms. Having had extensive practical experience in meditation and having made preliminary pedagogical inroads in this area, I used this opportunity to design a course called Creativity and Consciousness. Now meditation would not be ancillary, but rather a primary process in a class devoted to the practical and theoretical study of consciousness. After teaching this class for a few years, a further possibility occurred to me—to create a curriculum that enabled students to gain more significant grounding in the meditation/consciousness studies realm. I drew up a proposal for a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies degree, which would be the first of its kind in or beyond music at a mainstream public institution. As I was about to discover, any resistance that I might have encountered in striving to bring improvisation to the classical musical world would pale compared to what I was about to face.

At first, the proposal met with a kind of curious silence when it first appeared on the curriculum committee agenda. No one really knew what to make of it. Since I had been a member of the committee for several years, I had established fairly good connections and credibility with a number of other members. Most colleagues had come to appreciate me as a consistent generator of new ideas, as long as they remained within limits (e.g., my aforementioned musicianship class aside, outside the core curriculum). But now the bar would be raised because, while the proposed curriculum would not impact the schoolwide core, it introduced components that for many would be unthinkable: meditation practice not only in the classroom but implicit in the name of a degree program.

I managed nonetheless to make a fairly convincing case to the committee, citing the ACLS initiative, the growing body of research into the benefits of meditation practice, and the rich intellectual connections to be drawn from the area of consciousness studies.²⁰ The proposal sailed through by a 12-3 margin. This was an encouraging first step, and I naively

wondered if the next, and more critical hurdle, would be as easily overcome. This would entail the proposal being ratified by the full music faculty, consisting of over a hundred colleagues. Since, generally speaking, proposals that passed the curriculum committee would tend to be rubber stamped by the full faculty, and the period following the initial committee vote was silent, I could not resist getting my hopes up. Several uneventful weeks passed. And then, a few days prior to the big vote, all hell—or perhaps from another vantage point, all heaven—broke loose.

It began with a colleague raising entirely reasonable questions about the validity of students sitting in silence during class time, how meditation might be graded in a credit-bearing academic class, who would be qualified to provide meditation instruction, and precedents for this work at other institutions. I replied to each of these concerns, pointing out that class time spent in group meditation was relatively small (although students would be expected to sustain regular individual practice outside of class), a wide-range of assessment criteria—including the same kinds of reading, writing, and discussion elements found in conventional classes—would factor into grading, that local meditation centers would be among the instructional resources tapped, and the overarching movement afoot to bring this work into the academic sector. I had also formed a cross-campus advisory committee of colleagues interested and experienced in this work who would contribute.

It did not take long, however, for the exchange to escalate in intensity, with a handful of faculty members mounting a sustained attack against the proposal, while a smattering of others expressed support. I was up late most every evening replying to the latest emails that were forwarded to the faculty listserv. I was struck early on by the fact that resistance and support did not break down according to any sort of anticipated party lines. Colleagues from areas generally thought of as more conservative in the field were as likely to express support as resistance, with important advocacy coming from key faculty in the orchestral ranks. One declared that this was a “cutting edge idea at the forefront of educational thought.” In response, someone from another area, evidently concerned about what might seem to be a return to the educational experiments of the 1960s, complained that “this would set the School back 50 years!” While an otherwise perfectly legitimate expression of an individual predilection for keeping education current, that this faculty member’s academic focus was on music of 200 years ago confounded the issue considerably. Not to be outdone, another colleague decried the proposal by proclaiming “one

could accomplish the same thing (as meditation) with Prozac!” further adding to the lively and imaginative nature of the discussion.²¹

Some of the more perplexing remarks aside, a high point in the dialogue came when a highly respected colleague declared to the full faculty that this was one of the very few meaningful dialogues about the educational process that he had experienced in his entire academic career. When the room erupted in applause, not only did I feel encouraged about the prospects for a favorable vote, but by the possibility that I may have made a contribution far more important than the proposal in question by catalyzing penetrating dialogue and thinking in a field in which such has long been absent. Following a protracted debate that riveted the school for a period of weeks, the curriculum passed by close to a two-thirds majority.

In many ways, this book is a commentary on the Jazz and Contemplative Studies curriculum and its broader ramifications since not only would it open up new horizons in my own work and what could be offered to our jazz students, it also provided a template, one with the improvisation-meditation interplay at its core, for crossing the exterior-interior divide that could be applied across fields, and which in my view represents the future of education.

Weaving Tradition-specific and Trans-traditional Threads

It was only in retrospect that a particularly significant ramification extending from the establishment of the Jazz and Contemplative Studies curriculum would come into view. This involves the delicate balance between what might be called *tradition-specific* and *trans-traditional* engagement that is central to both contemporary musical and spiritual life. Just as today’s musicians navigate their ways through an ever-expanding range of influences, practices, and pathways, today’s spiritual landscape presents an equally exciting, if daunting, array of options that the increasing number of individuals who identify as spiritual (whether religious or not) encounter. And just as tradition-specific grounding in music, particularly when it encompasses the process-structure breadth of jazz, can provide a strong foundation that supports trans-traditional musical journeys, tradition-specific spiritual grounding can uphold the same function when it comes to trans-traditional spiritual explorations. By trans-traditional spirituality, a concept about which Robert Forman has elaborated extensively,²² I refer to penetration beyond the boundaries of a traditional spiritual pathway

not only during the moment of spiritual practice but in one's overarching vision, where the totality of practices and knowledge of our time are seen as potential sources of inspiration and guidance. While this orientation may sound exemplary of a contemporary spiritual sensibility, particularly to those within the steadily growing constituency that self-identifies as spiritual-but-not-religious, it is important to recognize both benefits and challenges inherent in it, two of which are common to trans-traditional musical growth.

On one hand, access to diverse spiritual and musical resources may enhance growth simply due to the possibility for engagement with a broader methodological scope. It is also important to recognize that trans-traditional engagement has always been an organic part of musical and spiritual evolution, even when access to diverse sources was far less than it is now. In other words, even the most seemingly intact lineages are the result of contact with and melding of diverse influences. Mozart heard Turkish military music and it influenced his composing and thus European classical music; the confluence of Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism spawned Zen. As advances in travel, information technology, and an increasingly global economy have made boundaries between cultures and knowledge radically more porous in today's world, it would be inevitable that this kind of syncretism accelerate.

The result of which are two significant challenges. The first is likely obvious, having to do with tendencies toward "superficial skimming," where musicians and spiritual aspirants, having access to an unlimited spectrum of options, end up cobbling together a "bit of this and a bit of that," thus compromising the regular practice and focus in a lineage that can be the source of deep grounding. *Many shallow wells*, a Zen proverb reminds us, *do not yield water*. At the same time, the opposite extreme, where seclusion in a particular pathway renders one oblivious to the broader world, can be equally limiting.²³ The plight of many classical musicians, whose process scope is confined to interpretive performance, is a musical case in point, with the many instances of religious fundamentalism revealing a commonly acknowledged parallel in spiritual life. We will see, in fact, that the interior mechanisms of these predilections are remarkably similar.

A second challenge of trans-traditionalism, while arguably the basis for the first, may not be as evident. This has to do with the potentially compromised conceptual scope that frames musical and spiritual journeys. Tradition-specific sources tend to be repositories for more complete

accounts of interior-external wholeness, even if sometimes shrouded in dogmatic misinterpretations, than those that often emerge from trans-traditional engagement. I concur with Wilber and other integralists who contend that, while progress may result from engagement with transformative practices regardless of worldview, when grounded in a comprehensive account of the relationship between individual consciousness and cosmic totality, progress may be optimal.²⁴ Therefore, in the forging of a spiritual-but-not-religious identity, which I regard as an important if partial evolutionary stride, liberation from dogma may also have severed connections with deep principles along these lines that might be unearthed not by retreating from traditional lineages but by penetrating more deeply into them. In music, traditional lineages are where deep processes and structures in the musical world, which will be examined as grounded in transcendent dimensions of consciousness, tend to be housed.²⁵ Jazz's rhythmic and collective improvisatory foundations, and European classical music's repository of composed repertory, are primary examples. I believe an integral musical vision, similar to its spiritual counterpart, has the capacity to retain sight of these and other treasures while at the same time promoting wide-ranging creative confluence. Moreover, it reveals that depth in both realms is mutually dependent; one's apprehension of traditional richness is directly predicated on contemporary vitality and individuation, which is equally enhanced by tradition-specific grounding.

I consider myself deeply fortunate to have had strong tradition-specific and trans-traditional grounding in both my musical and spiritual pursuits. In music, jazz has provided me with a tradition-specific base that has significantly informed, and been informed by, broader improvisatory and compositional excursions and trans-traditional musical studies. My studies in European classical music are also important to this base. In my spiritual journey, I encountered Integral Theory—which is unmatched as a trans-traditional resource—after many years of grounding (which continues to evolve) in a Vedantic meditation lineage taught by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. What has come to be known as Maharishi Vedic Science provides not only an elaborate system of transformational practices, including foundational and advanced meditation methodologies among a wide range of psychosomatic modalities, but a conceptual framework that presents among the most extraordinary accounts of cosmic wholeness and interconnectedness that I have encountered. At the core of this framework is Maharishi's commentary on the Rig Veda called the *Apaurusheya Bhāshya*, from which extend extraordinary insights into

the role of human creativity and consciousness in fathoming that reality.²⁶ Grounding in this tradition-specific vision has been key to my gaining fluency with the trans-traditional, integral vision, and in certain instances to my ability to critically examine and recommend modifications to it.

Conceptual and Practical Ramifications

To gain a brief look at both conceptual and practical ramifications of this grounding:

Among the most important aspects of the integral vision is its acknowledgment of the nondual relationship between human consciousness and the cosmic wholeness. The Sanskrit term *advaita* translates as “not two,” meaning that there is no separation between individual and universe in the broader scheme of reality. Just as a wave is a localized manifestation of the ocean, individual consciousness is similarly inseparable from the cosmic intelligence that gives rise to the entire creation. *Yoga*, while often reduced to physical postures, refers to the union of wave with its eternal source, or personal self and transcendent Self. While nonduality in one form or another is central to most of the world’s wisdom traditions, the Vedantic lineage of India may provide among the most expansive and intricate accounts of it. In his chronicling of the strong influence of Vedanta on American culture, Phillip Goldberg suggests that it is because of the nondual foundations of this lineage, an idea common to highly diverse traditions, that it elicits ecumenical embrace.²⁷ When Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was deeply impacted by his study of Vedanta, states “the currents of the Universal Being run through me; I am part or particle of God,” he could be speaking from most any spiritual or religious perspective.²⁸ In no way is this to succumb to a naïve perennialism that overlooks significant differences between religions, but rather to identify a unifying precept in which, exemplifying an integral perspective, difference is situated within an overarching wholeness of nondual consciousness.

Unfortunately, the nondual premise is not nearly as prevalent as it might be in much integral discourse—the day-to-day conversations and publications that fall under the heading “integral.”²⁹ I believe this reflects an imbalance in the trans-traditional/tradition-specific interaction, with greater emphasis on the first at the expense of the second, which again is consistent with the spiritual-but-not-religious movement in contemporary society. Let us examine a particularly promising practical application, one that is intimately linked with jazz, that extends from the nonduality

premise to illustrate its importance in the broader educational and societal transformation.

Central here is the idea of intersubjective or collective consciousness. Jazz musicians commonly report a melding of artists, listeners, and environment in peak, improvisatory performances, as if they become “one mind,” or a single creative organism that is unified by a common creative, or spiritual, thrust. Meditators commonly report experiences along similar lines, where group practice tends to elicit deeper experiences than those invoked in individual practice. An emergent body of research on collective meditation may provide empirical support for this. Among the most compelling studies involves a project convened in a large urban area involving 4,000 meditators from across the nation and world who gathered for a two-month period in the heat of the summer, when crime is at its peak, with the prediction being that a group this size would enliven coherence and harmony in the environment resulting in decreased crime. With the cooperation of public officials, several parameters of quality of life were measured during the length of the program, showing that not only reduced crime, but significantly reduced accidents and illness occurred during this period. When the program ended, and practitioners returned to their homes, the results lingered slightly, and then the numbers returned to normal.³⁰

That this and other studies, including several that suggest collective meditation may quell fighting in war-torn regions, have been published in a number of peer-reviewed journals suggests strongly that the phenomenon warrants serious consideration for further research and application.³¹ The basic theoretical premise is that consciousness, contrary to a materialist perspective, is not localized within the individual psychophysiology but in fact is a collective, intersubjective phenomenon, and that enlivenment of this intersubjective field can radiate positive effects in the environment. Some have even postulated that this could emerge as a possible antidote to terrorism, and in chapter 12 even more far-reaching ramifications will be considered.³²

Although there is no denying the provocative nature of this idea, it is difficult to imagine a clearer example of the role of “anomalies”—findings or possibilities that defy accepted premises—which Thomas Kuhn identifies as catalyzing the paradigm shifts that have been central to “scientific revolutions.”³³ In one discovery after another, receptivity to anomalous possibilities by one or a few innovators—as opposed to kneejerk resistance by the majority—has been seen as key to progress. This receptivity, and thus potential for innovation, tends to be weak and needs to be enlivened

in education and society if the full potential of human creativity and consciousness is to be harnessed. Here a continuum might be noted that illustrates the intimate connection between conceptual framework and practical exploration and application.

From the conventional scientific materialist standpoint that is prevalent in the academic world, the idea of collective consciousness is completely anomalous; an untenured assistant professor or doctoral student would be wise to keep quiet about any interest in this area. From the standpoint of prevailing integral discourse, where general receptivity to intersubjectivity is found, the idea of harnessing its practical ramifications remains nonetheless peripheral; mention is scarce, for example, of group meditation studies even if overall interest in meditation is widespread.³⁴ From an integral perspective that is grounded in the nondual relationship between individual consciousness and cosmic wholeness, receptivity to this possibility increases dramatically, because now a conceptual backdrop of sufficient scope is in place that not only easily accommodates the idea of collective mind, but is also able to view it as *both* an emergent property of individual consciousness and, more significantly, a more foundational stratum of cosmic wholeness from which individual consciousness differentiates. Here it is noteworthy, then, that the aforementioned collective meditation projects are not only grounded in the practical methodologies brought to light by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, but in the conceptual account of nondual wholeness he has articulated that illuminates this among other practical applications that might be possible.

The point is not to endorse a particular meditative pathway or philosophy but rather to underscore important principles that will undergo elaboration throughout the book. Foremost among them is that overarching worldview directly shapes where we look for solutions to problems and avenues for progress, and also what doors remain habitually closed to further exploration. I view the meditation/intersubjective consciousness relationship as among the most promising and exciting ideas of our time, but unless the conceptual backdrop against which conventional and non-conventional ideas alike are considered expands beyond what generally prevails, this and other possibilities will not receive adequate attention. In chapter 4, intersubjective consciousness will be considered as one among roughly 10 consciousness-related phenomena that have been subjected to rigorous scientific study and issue near fatal challenges to materialism while strongly compatible with the integral nondual vision. Unfortunately, the academic world tends to be hostile to anomalous findings or ideas, and this research therefore minimally informs higher education discourse.

Were the academic world a site where the most penetrating thinking and dialogue about the broader purposes of education and human potential prevailed, in essence an environment predicated on critical investigation of worldviews—including its own—I believe much greater receptivity to these and other challenging possibilities would be found. Here an axiom might be stipulated as a guide: The more expansive the inquiry into the farthest reaches of human nature and reality, the broader the spectrum of practical exploration that might ensue.

Ultimate Reality and Meaning as Gateway for Nondual Discourse

The Society for the Study of Human Ideas on Ultimate Reality and Meaning, or URAM for short, has been formed to promote this wide-ranging inquiry.³⁵ By providing a forum for open exploration of the biggest questions of human and cosmic existence, URAM invites individuals to come together from widely varying perspectives and, much like jazz's relationship with the broader musical world, transcend their respective entryways and realize the enlivened meaning, sense of purpose, and understandings that stem from this quest. The realization of spirituality and science, long at odds with one another, as self-transcending entryways that unite in a common wholeness is among the important manifestations that might stem from URAM inquiry, particularly when conducted from an integral perspective. The possibility of an intersubjective consciousness, dimensions of individual consciousness that transcend the physical body, capacities for remote cognition, and the many other phenomena that—sometimes classified under the heading “psi”—have been studied and pose strong ramifications for scientific and spiritual understanding alike might shift from anomaly to avenue for progress.

Humanity has reached a juncture where solutions to the unprecedented challenges it faces will only come from full-out investigation of the farthest dimensions of human nature and creative and spiritual potential. URAM inquiry may thus be considered as important to sustainability and progress as the multitude of environmental, economic, and sociocultural interventions that are also essential.

To be sure, not all readers will be inclined toward URAM inquiry, with detractors found even within the integral community. Integral theorist Steve MacIntosh, for example, is explicit in his convictions that the biggest questions about ultimate reality should be relegated to the con-

finer of religion, with Integral Theory instead concerning itself with philosophy.³⁶ Not only—the thinking goes—does this broader inquiry invite dogmatic interpretations, examples of which one does not have to look far to find, presumed limitations in the capacity of human consciousness to fathom the deepest mysteries of human existence and cosmic reality may suggest that time and energy are more fruitfully invested elsewhere.

With the greatest respect for these concerns, I believe they reflect a limited vision and that the way forward is not to evade URAM inquiry but to embrace it as fully as possible. For one thing, even if this kind of investigation risks dogmatic interpretations, the decision to impose boundaries on what ought and what ought not comprise integral (or any kind of) exploration is rooted in its own metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality and human consciousness. To deny URAM inquiry may be to supplant a familiar dogmatic risk (e.g., fundamentalist religion) with one whose myopic tendencies may remain hidden but no less problematic. We will shortly consider the materialist science worldview as an example. Many in the liberal population, including those of the spiritual-but-not-religious persuasion, find exceedingly difficult the idea that science may be prone to a fundamentalism that is not only as rigid as that found in religion, but possibly as detrimental to the future of our world. An integral perspective reveals that extremism is possible in all fields, and ways this extremism may be rectified. An integrally informed approach to URAM reveals the solution to religious and scientific extremism not, as some would have it (particularly in regard to religion), to pull back from the respective domains but to deepen engagement in them in order that self-confining understanding opens up to self-transcending synthesis.

And, to address the second concern, even if there are limits to human understanding about the ultimate nature of reality, few would deny that humanity has likely not come close to any such threshold, and that with each increment of new understanding may extend insights and solutions important to sustainability. An example of which was considered a moment ago involving practical potentialities resulting from a newfound understanding of intersubjective consciousness.

Moreover, URAM inquiry need not be regarded as an attempt to delineate a single, static account that is to hold from here to eternity, but rather as an ongoing process of constructing provisional theoretical platforms that are subject to ongoing critical scrutiny and from which future exploration might follow. And if, indeed, human consciousness is inextricably linked to the cosmic wholeness, a tradition-specific precept that is also trans-traditionally compatible, as well as remarkably com-

patible with the expanded vision of science that the integral framework invites, then URAM inquiry inspired by this age-old precept is neither frivolous or useless but in fact a direct manifestation of the intrinsic urge in the human psyche to fathom its deepest and most expansive nature. To ignore, or worse, inhibit this inquiry—which it must be emphasized must entail both practice and study—may be tantamount to repressing the most foundational aspect of what it is to be human.

A New Kind of Jazz-inspired Swinging

Inasmuch as the degree of critical self-reflection possible is directly predicated on process breadth, the jazz-inspired integral framework may be among the most viable platforms for investigation of the biggest questions regarding human potential and reality—at a time when the need for such is unprecedented. Combining rigorous attention to technical and analytical detail, robust creative engagement through a rich, multilineal process scope, and deep penetration to the innermost dimensions of consciousness that is accessed through both parts-to-whole, improvisation-based and whole-to-parts, meditation-driven engagement, jazz enables a kind of *swinging* between scientific, artistic, and spiritual realms that charts the educational and societal terrain of the twenty-first century. This swinging not only delineates the outer boundaries of an expanded scope of human experience and growth, it also delineates within those boundaries a highly differentiated tapestry that renders the paradigm optimally transformative, inclusive, and self-critical. It provides awareness a powerful conduit through which it may flow and integrate rich strata of experiences, influences, and knowledge, in a single stroke not only accessing an unprecedented range of possibilities for growth, but also examining those possibilities from a wide-angle lens that is also uniquely capable of critically examining itself. The delineative scope of the model is matched by powerful diagnostic tools. Previously rejected anomalous ideas and possibilities—once relegated to the outermost fringes, if not altogether banished, of an impoverished collective imagination—may now assume center stage and be subject to close consideration as potential avenues to progress. Language-bound categorical attachments, including to jazz itself and the litany of other labels that compartmentalize the musical world, and those such as *science*, *spirituality*, and *religion* that uphold a broader compartmentalization, are dissolved, with the regions within wholeness they designated recognized as self-transcending gateways rather than self-confining destinations.

When this paradigm moves from music to the overall educational enterprise, it may then be transmitted to society at large, at which point the heightened moment-to-moment creative decision making processes of the adept jazz improviser in a trio or quartet format may come to characterize the creative decision making activities of the seven-plus-billion-member planetary improvising ensemble called Humanity.

Overview of the Book

Part 1 provides both a comprehensive introduction to the basic premises and tools of Integral Theory and a preliminary look at how they are illuminated from a jazz-inspired integral perspective. Chapter 1 introduces the Four Quadrants map of cosmic wholeness and corresponding levels, lines, stages, states, and types that are central to the theory. Chapter 2 explores improvisation as a parts-to-whole vehicle for all-quadrants integration. Chapter 3 explores meditation as a complementary whole-to-parts pathway toward the same goal. Chapter 4 considers the evolutionary dynamics by which individuals and systems achieve this integration over time, with special focus on conventional patterns in education and musical study that will need to be addressed if these areas are to uphold important roles in the broader integral revolution.

Part 2 undertakes a more comprehensive integral reading of jazz by examining it in terms of the processes, structures, and evolutionary considerations broached in part 1. Chapter 5 begins with a look at tendencies in academic jazz studies, which in inhibiting creative exploration—patterns that are directly inherited from the just-considered conventional musical study and education at large—deviates from the integral thrust of the jazz tradition in important ways. Chapter 6 probes the inner mechanics of the improvisation and composition processes that are core jazz, revealing each as contrasting, culturally mediated pathways to transcendent experience that are rooted in different models of temporal conception. Here we come to the processual core of Afrological and Eurological musical-cultural frameworks. The interactive dimensions of collective improvisatory creativity, drawing upon the principle of intersubjective consciousness, are examined in chapter 7, further underscoring the Afrological aesthetic. Chapter 8 turns to the issue of style development, revealing the evolution of the personal voice and collective style periods to be rooted in the same mechanics—the merging of first-person transcendent impulses, second-person sociocultural influences, and third-

person exterior grounding. These considerations come together in chapter 9, where an integral reading of jazz sheds new light on the idiom's emergence as a powerfully syncretic force in the musical world, setting the stage for a closer look at how its self-transcending features may also impact the broader educational and societal landscapes.

Part 3 deals with paradigmatic change. Chapter 10 explores what an integral school of music would look like, one that harnesses the self-transcending capacities and not only bridges the gulf between musical study and the musical world, but provides a template for integral inroads beyond music. Chapter 11 goes into the particularly elusive nature of paradigmatic change in overall academe, providing a framework called Deep Inquiry that aims to catalyze an entirely new conversation and receptivity to integral principles. Chapter 12 moves from education to the planetary ramifications of these ideas, where a continuum of jazz-driven anomaly centering is considered that lays groundwork for a post-integral understanding of the musical world and human creativity and consciousness.