horrendous actions. The United States had at that time the goodwill and support of the whole world to draw on. Imagine if we had worked with that support in a peaceful way, used international agencies to track down terrorism but avoided resorting to further violence and loss of innocent civilian lives. It is beyond the scope of possibility for politics today, but the Dalai Lama holds up a torch to show us what is possible when we shift from us-against-them to one big inclusive us.

THE TIPPING POINT

In 1520 everyone believed that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the planets as well as the sun revolved around us. Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish astronomer, was the first person to suggest that the earth was a planet among others, which were all revolving around the sun. His theories were virtually ignored in his lifetime, and his major work was not even published until the year of his death. It took Tycho, Kepler, Galileo, and later Newton to prove that his theory was correct. His was the opening shot in a revolution whose consequences were greater than those of any other intellectual event in our history. Suddenly everything made sense; the motions of the planets, previously seen as random wanderings relative to a still earth, now were seen to be in predictable orbits around the sun. Copernicus’s theory provided a basis for the development of modern science as we know it, and a universe that follows predictable laws rather than the whims of an unseen patriarchal deity.

Galileo was excommunicated from the Catholic Church for siding with Copernicus. The discoveries he made with one of the world’s first telescopes shook every popular paradigm to the core. Yet by 1600, less than sixty years after Copernicus’s death, everyone in the Western world knew that he was right, and we were headlong into the Renaissance. Neither Copernicus nor Galileo had to go door-to-door to persuade everyone that they were right. Although they met with great resistance from the Church and the government,
it only required a very few intelligent people to test their theories, and within a few years one paradigm was completely replaced by another. Despite great resistance from those in power, their view prevailed because it was true, and because it was verifiable by open-minded inquiry.

We are now at the beginning of another paradigm shift, one just as powerful. Copernicus’s theory was about the physical universe and laid the foundation for modern science. The translucent revolution is about human consciousness and could lay the foundation for an evolutionary leap in human life unlike anything we have known. Like the Ptolemaic universe, the Iago trance does not stand up to investigation. In this moment right now, is there any reliable proof that you lack anything? Can you find a problem in this moment, right now, without thinking about how things should be different? The sense of separation, of I and you as distinct, which is at the very basis of the Iago worldview and way of living, does not survive self-inquiry, the simple and innocent search for a thing called “me.” Randomly take any of the preoccupations, desires, and fears of the mind about past and future, and test them to see if they are real, or even realistic. Every one of Iago’s tenets, outlined in chapter 1, collapses in the light of investigation. Yet all the features of a radical awakening, listed in chapter 2, reveal themselves on their own when we pay attention to what is real. Like the behavior of the planets, in the light of inquiry, everything falls into place.

In The Romeo Error, Lyle Watson was the first to suggest that it might take only 1 percent of a population to undergo a shift toward greater coherence for the whole population to shift. More recently, Malcolm Gladwell wrote The Tipping Point, in which he credibly demonstrates how shifts in the collective start with the local. He shows how one man taking a stand against gang violence in New York was pivotal in a dramatic drop in the crime rate of the whole city, and how a few people can start a new fashion for shoes that takes over the country. It only takes a few people, the right people, to transform isolated events into widespread change. Research in marketing trends — for example, in the shift from cassettes to CDs as the preferred media for music
— repeatedly shows small steps of gradual growth building to a “tipping point,” followed by a sudden jump to universal acceptance.

How many people in the United States and the rest of the world have been touched by a radical awakening? In how many of these people has this awakening precipitated a shift toward sustained translucence? And how many will it take for translucence to become the dominant paradigm? Duane Elgin has been researching this question extensively for several decades. He cites a Princeton/Gallup Survey showing an increase from 22 to 33 percent of people reporting they have at some time had “a religious or mystical experience.” Elgin tells me that more recent research, including a poll conducted by the *New York Times*, puts this figure as high as 40 percent.

To measure how many of those have been transformed by such an experience into a sustained trend is more difficult. Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson, in their extensively researched *Cultural Creatives*, suggest that a new paradigm of values is represented by about sixty million people in the United States. In my conversation with Ray, he estimated that about one third of them, or twenty million people, are “in the process of awakening.” Fewer than two million people live in what he calls “significantly reduced-egoic access to the divine or no-self,” which we are calling translucent. He also estimates that there are about the same number in Europe, or about four million combined. Other estimates have been much higher. The writer and teacher Satyam Nadeen, who teaches both in the United States and in Europe, feels that most estimates are unrealistically low because we have ideas about what kinds of people would qualify and tend to look to people with a similar background and belief as our own. Nadeen estimates the number of translu-cents worldwide to be more than fifty million, or almost 1 percent.

While estimates of the numbers vary, I found unanimous agreement among those I spoke with that it would only take a very small percentage of the world’s population to wake up for there to be a global awakening. It is the underlying reality of the translucent view, like that of Copernicus’s
astronomy, that leads many to believe that it would take very few living in this way to tip the global scale. Translucents have reality on their side. Peter Russell sees the global awakening as more of an exponential curve:

The more people clear their consciousness and wake up, the more those people will be affected by the collective awakening. And the more they are open to that, the more it will facilitate their own awakening, and that of others. So it becomes a positive feedback loop. It is like a snowball going down a hill. The more snow it gathers, the bigger it becomes, and the bigger it becomes, the more snow it gathers. And so it keeps going and gets bigger and bigger.

Personal awakening is always happening within the context of the collective; it is spurred on by the collective at the same time that it contributes to it. Barbara Marx Hubbard has been experimenting with collective awakening in Santa Barbara, where she lives. She has brought people together into core groups for several years to explore what she calls the shift from ego to essence:

One of the main results we have discovered about the percentage that would be required to shift consciousness on earth and awaken us is that the first part is the number of individuals that are awake, and the second is how many of them are in resonance with one another, with two or more. We have discovered an enormous potency of resonance resounding, echoing back, and affirming the essential being in each of us.

She encourages people to listen to their “inspiration, their higher voice, to bring our creativity into form through our vocations.” People of similar gifts have formed into co-creative groups, where they “maintain the resonance while doing the work.” Her Foundation for Conscious Evolution therefore puts resonant translucence first, and action and results second. As a result, members of her community have played strong roles in increasing the energy sufficiency and sustainability of Santa Barbara. Others have made political, social, and artistic contributions. Their work may be one of the first
models for an urban translucent community, a foretaste for what is possible for us all.

The Global Brain

There is another unprecedented trend in global consciousness, which alone will have an impact we cannot yet imagine. Less than a hundred years ago it took months to communicate with someone on the other side of the world, and many more months for them to reply. Today you can call any one of about three billion people, half the earth’s population, and speak to them in seconds, usually for a few cents. In 2004 the estimated number of people regularly using the Internet was 940 million, or 14 percent. This has grown from forty million in 1996, and ten million in 1994.37 The world is becoming interconnected much faster than anyone anticipated. In 1994 almost all Internet users were using dial-up modems, which were then offering speeds of about 10 kbps per second. Ten years later, DSL and IDSN connections offer most people about sixty times that speed, 600 kbps or more. We are just now beginning to see installation of fiber-optic cables for home use. An advanced fiber-optic cable today is capable of transmitting 1.2 gigabytes of information in one second (the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, with all its illustrations), and War and Peace on DVD in three. At this rate we will be able to transmit the entire contents of the Library of Congress in less than ten seconds by 2014. And remember, all estimates so far have been very conservative.

What does all this nerd talk have to do with global awakening? Many years ago, Peter Russell postulated the emergence of what he called a “global brain.” Every one of the ten billion cells in the brain has the capacity to connect to every other cell in almost no time. When we combine the rapid increase of Internet connectivity, the speed of connection, and the increase of computer speeds, we can see the real possibility in the next years of this global brain. Russell describes this planetary consciousness as “billions of messages moving backward and forward in an ever-growing

The planetary crisis we’re facing is an awakening signal. If we don’t shift our consciousness to feeling oneness, connectedness, the field, we can destroy ourselves. We are all members of a living body — we are all cells in the planetary system, and whether we know it or not we are being connected rapidly by that system.

— Barbara Marx Hubbard
web of communication, linking the billions of minds of humanity into one single system.”

This is just like what goes on inside your skull all the time. In this way, human beings will go through a shift of identity from being separate autonomous entities to knowing themselves as cells in a bigger organism, parts of a whole humanity. The first pictures of Earth broadcast to us from space, in the 1970s, initiated that awareness of a global identity.

Brain cells also differ from the way human society operates in that they work in synchronicity. Unless someone has brain cancer, cells are working together, not fighting one another. As it stands today, the Internet is primarily a tool for consumerism and escapism. Thirty percent of the money made from Web sites is from pornography. Says Russell: “The values have not changed enough yet. It’s one thing to wire it all up, but another to change what it is used for. For the global brain to really be of service, we need a corresponding awakening of consciousness. The old consciousness coupled with the new technology is headed for disaster.” Conversely, the new technology in the hands of more and more active transluents opens up the possibilities for a global transformation of which we can hardly dream. Let’s examine why.

The Power of Dialogue

It was our ability to communicate that allowed us to move from one paradigm to the next, as each outlived its usefulness. Communication allowed us to evolve together from the hunter-gatherer to the agricultural era (thirty-five thousand years ago), and then again to the industrial era. Today it is communication that will allow us to evolve from the industrial era, which has become as destructive as it was once useful, to the consciousness era, or translucent humanity. Our ability to communicate with every other human being more and more effectively is both the result of the wiring of the global brain and necessary for the cells of that brain to be able to work as one organism without conflict.
Before becoming president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, James O’Dea was director of Amnesty International in Washington, DC, for ten years, and director of Seva, a nonprofit organization dedicated to international health and development, for five. So he knows about bringing disparate parts of the world together. For several years now he has led a series of dialogues called “Compassion and Social Healing.” He has brought together Israelis and Palestinians, environmentalists and corporate CEOs, and blacks and whites in South Africa. Again and again, O’Dea has seen what happens when seeming enemies have the power to experience each other’s points of view.

Gottfried Lief, for example, was a teenager in the Hitler Youth movement in the late 1930s. Carried along by the strong forces gathering at that time, on Kristallnacht he ran through the streets of Berlin smashing windows of Jewish shops and homes. He was caught in what felt like an inescapable momentum, which became one of the most horrendous nightmares of cruelty we have witnessed. Now in his seventies, Lief was brought into one of O’Dea’s dialogues with Mary Rothschild, the only surviving daughter of Holocaust survivors. She lost countless relatives. Lief and Rothschild were drawn together because they shared a desire to heal their relationship to the past. Introducing herself to him as the child of Holocaust victims, she asked him, “Who are you? What did you do?” He replied, “I am Gottfried Lief. I was in the Hitler Youth movement.” And Mary asked, “I don’t care about that; all I need to know in our dialogue is could you, if you had been old enough, could you have been the one to open the gas taps in those camps? Could you have been a mass murderer? Could you have been the one to kill most of my family?”

It was quite a question. Gottfried looked down for a while, then looked back into Mary’s eyes. “I don’t know,” he said. O’Dea comments:

This was a revolutionary moment for Mary. If somebody says to you, “I don’t know, I could have been a mass murderer with others, I could have gotten involved in that level of cruelty,” it pulls your attention, and you realize you are
in the presence of truth speaking. This was her experience. She thought, “Well, wait now, there is truth coming out of the mouth of the perpetrator. It’s a human truth, it is an honesty that I can relate to, and even admire in some ways.”

Gottfried commented on the dialogue: “You are in the abyss of history, as the representative of the perpetrator.” Not only the perpetrators but their children and grandchildren bear this burden. Gottfried then acknowledged that Mary offered a bridge across the abyss, a place where perpetrator and victim meet. And that, I think, is the beginning of a new pattern that says: “We can transform our relationship to the past, we can create bridges over the abyss. We don’t have to continue in those patterns, we can shed them with a greater meaning around our unity, we can heal the wounds of the past that are so deep.”

O’Dea told me many stories of this kind. Laura Jason brought together two groups of women who felt passionately about one side or the other of the pro-life/pro-choice debate. They represented factions that had shown great public animosity toward each other. Jason took them into private dialogue together for about a year. After that year, they held a press conference. They said: “We have not necessarily changed what we believe, but the difference is now we are friends. We would take care of each other’s children. In fact, we do. We have discovered a shared ground of being that is able to contain us, and so our differences become much less potent, less divisive. The expansion of the shared ground of being is what nurtures us and carries us forward.”

South Africa was an important benchmark in our history, because after a period of significant oppression the country’s response was to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Similarly, it took ordinary Israeli and Palestinian citizens to initiate the Geneva talks in 2003. Avoiding politics-as-usual, they said, “Enough. We are ready to move to a new level of humanity.” All the thousands of examples like this, of dialogue replacing conflict, are creating fertile soil for Russell’s global brain to wake up. Each dialogue that brings mutual understanding
creates new cells in the global brain that are able to function in synchronicity rather than conflict. At the same time, the rapid access to news and information from all over the world makes it more and more difficult to turn someone else into the “other.” When you can hear their music, their anger, and their pain, when you can see their children and homes and their blood on television in your living room, you have no choice but to acknowledge their humanity.

**SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE**

All these trends are coming together at an unprecedented speed. Several environmental reports on resource depletion, the disturbance of weather patterns due to global warming, and the melting of the ice caps have targeted the start of the second decade of this century as the time when it will be impossible to overlook the damage already incurred. Based on a continuation of current trends, by 2012 we will also have the kind of communications connectivity in place needed to create Russell’s global brain. Duane Elgin, among many others, estimates that we will see enough translucent people to tip global consciousness into a new paradigm by the beginning of the second decade of this century. And, by coincidence, for the more esoteric in our midst, the Mayan calendar comes to an end in 2012, and Vedic astrology also predicts it as a time of sudden global transformation.

Recently I asked Peter Russell in what direction he felt we were pointing today, and he outlined three possible scenarios. The first he calls total annihilation. In this scenario, it’s already too late. The damage to the environment, the continuing violence fueled by blind fundamentalism, the disparities of our economic system are all so great, and the number and effect of transluents is so small, that we are heading for extinction within our lifetime. He sees this outcome as very unlikely, simply because both the natural world and human beings have built-in mechanisms to keep restoring balance. Still, he asks, were that to be the inevitable conclusion of the trajectory we