

Conclusion

Four Paths, One Happiness—Sustainable Living Today

The search for intimacy and universality at the same time continually forces the human mind to stretch itself in both directions. Although the two realms often appear at odds, the reality is that human beings are forever searching for “universal intimacy”—a total sense of belonging.... (Yet) the empathic predisposition that is built into our biology is not a fail-safe mechanism that allows us to perfect our humanity. Rather it is an opportunity to increasingly bond the human race into a single extended family, but it needs to be continually exercised. Lamentably, the empathic drive is often shunted aside in the heat of the moment when the social forces teeter on the brink of disintegration.

(Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization*¹)

Taming the Hydra: De-Reifying our Blocks to Global Empathy

We began our journey together by reflecting on Freud’s sober vision of the human predicament on the brink of our recent leap to global civilization. Though psychoanalysis grew out of his personal search for an approach to the human mind grounded in modern biology, and flourished in the fertile soil of his clinical work helping individual minds heal, in the end he envisioned his new science as a bridge between the stubborn facts of human nature and the escalating demands on us all to cooperate in ever-expanding social groups. Drawing on the emerging new science of human nature, and the wisdom of psychoanalysts like Freud and Kohut, Jeremy Rifkin offers a hopeful vision of humanity as naturally empathic, calling for a more “empathic” scientific method, a “distributive economics,” and a “biosphere consciousness” to meet our global crisis.

While Freud and his contemporary, Albert Einstein, were most concerned with the ticking time-bomb of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of leaders and societies blind to their death-drive and caught in the grips of a science divorced from ethics, times have changed. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the era of disarmament, the time-bomb seems to have undergone a cancerous mutation and explosion. Now instead of the ghost of mutually assured destruction, we find ourselves embroiled in a Kafkaesque struggle with a many-headed monster we cannot even name. One head of the hydra is the irrationality of our global marketplace, fed by an obsessive cycle of greed and panic. Another head is the dread of global and local terrorism, fed by eruptions of smoldering disempowerment and shame-rage. The third head is terror’s double, the man-made beast of extreme poverty and inequality, fed by a cult of toxic envy and myopic self-involvement. A fourth head is the healthcare crisis, where lifestyle plagues like obesity and preventable world epidemics explode with the bill for our high-tech medicine, fed by mass denial of death and gross negligence in public health and self-care. And last but not least, there’s the fire-breathing head of energy crisis, global warming, and climate change, fed by the ghosts of scarcity thinking, feeding frenzy, and denial of consequences.

Mythology aside, as in medicine, so in our private and public lives, where there seem to be many problems at once, we often find ourselves facing the many heads of one beast, a systemic disease with one root cause. And, as in medicine, before we can even think about the most reasonable treatment, we must arrive at a diagnosis which gives the hydra a name. If we trace the five heads of the beast we face to their roots—greed and fear, shame and rage, envy and pride, panic and denial—we recognize our human demons, the toxic emotions that drive the cycle of stress and trauma. And if we trace those roots deeper still, to the taproot that anchors and feeds them all, the diagnosis of our current condition confirms the Buddha’s. At the origin of our complex crisis today is the taproot of that timeless cycle: the malignant view that we’re all isolated, alien beings at odds with others in a hostile world, a delusion based on identifying and reifying our worst-case memories and instinctive stressreactions as “me, myself, and I.”

If this stubborn delusion in fact is the root of our ills, now as in the axial age of Socrates, Confucius, and

Buddha, when civilization first opened its schools, then the many-headed monster we face may be just a projection of our common self-reifying demon, like the giant cockroach the antihero Gregor Samsa saw in the mirror of Kafka's surreal short story, *Metamorphosis*. This would explain why the problems it feeds seem to escalate all around us, and seem so intimately intertwined, so pervasive, and so inextricable. Locked in place by the armed-and-dangerous nature of the self-protective instinct that anchors it, our compulsive lifestyle of stress and trauma seems as close to us as our own shadow yet as inexorable as our increasing interdependence with others. Of course, as with all diseases, especially the most insidious and intractable, the prognosis depends on our choosing and using the right medicine. When it comes to mastering the self-reifying delusion and self-destructive forces ingrained in our nature by eons of evolution, do we really have choices? And if we do, what are they?

Towards an Empathic, Scientific Curriculum: The Future of Global Civilization

Rifkin's solution is education. Not just more "Enlightenment" education employing the "experience-distant" model of objective observation and disinterested problem-solving, drawn from Newton's mechanics and Darwin's biology. Why not? First of all, because its ethos of detachment, its analytic mindset, and its manipulative methods are all too likely to reinforce the very habits of alienation, cold calculation, and forced control that feed the traumatized child and cornered animal in us all. Second, because an education that promotes disembodied, impersonal knowledge cannot possibly prepare us to develop the self-awareness, empathic sensitivity, and caring responsiveness we need to disarm stress and trauma and to cultivate the adult, empathically engaged side of our nature able to live sustainably with others on an endangered planet.

So instead, citing Kohut and Maslow, Rifkin advocates education employing the "experience-near" model of "empathic-introspective" learning and caring involvement, drawn from the human science of psychotherapy. In fact, he goes so far as to urge us to take up Maslow's challenge: "I wish to raise the more radical question: can *all* the sciences, *all* knowledge be conceptualized as a resultant of loving or caring interrelationship between knower and known?"²

While I happily join Rifkin, Kohut, Maslow, and the chorus of Western voices who've welcomed the new science of human nature and called for an "empathic curriculum" based on current brain science and psychotherapy, I've written this book because their voice is not alone in the world and certainly not the first. Of course, the fact that Buddhist contemplative science anticipated our new empathic vision of science and civilization by thousands of years is fast becoming a commonplace among professionals and the lay public. What most of us do not yet appreciate, though, is just how important that head start may become to our future as individuals and as a global community. Highlighting the time-sensitive nature of our current crisis, Rifkin ends his book with his own challenge: "Can we reach biosphere consciousness and global empathy in time to avert planetary collapse?"³ Heard in light of our growing awareness of how prescient Buddhist psychology was and is, it would only make sense to rephrase his challenge. "Given the pressure on us as individuals and as a species to transform not just our consciousness but our second nature, can we really afford the time it will take to re-invent the wheel of Indic contemplative science and technology?"

Renewing the Nalanda Legacy: No Time to Re-Invent the *Wheel of Time*

Nowhere is this truly global challenge more pointed than when we face the gradual curriculum evolved at Nalanda and preserved in Tibet. What is especially eye-opening, particularly for those already familiar with the benefits of *Hatha* yoga and basic mindfulness, are the comprehensive aim and scope, methodological rigor, pedagogic accessibility, and technical power of the progressive system of contemplative living and learning we've surveyed in this book. We may be aware that Buddhist contemplative science anticipated aspects of modern brain science and that Buddhist psychology overlaps in some ways with our psychotherapy. Yet who among us is prepared to find four such prescient sciences, each with its own aims and methods, nested together into a progressive curriculum geared to lay and professional students seeking a contemplative life in a stress-driven world? I for one was not. And the more I've delved into this system and applied it in my own life and work, the more convinced I've become that this timeless gem of human contemplative science and technology will increasingly be part of the answer to the twenty-first century challenge of humanity's individual and collective self-transformation.

Based on the life-altering power of this complete and rigorous contemplative science and technology, the masters of the Nalanda tradition would strongly challenge Rifkin's unexamined assumption that our empathic

nature “is not a fail-safe mechanism that allows us to perfect our humanity.” In fact, one way to think of the revolutionary thrust of the Nalanda curriculum, in both its engaged and process forms, is that it is a rare system of scientific self-analysis and contemplative self-transformation that allows average humans to tap and refine our social nature into just such a fail-safe, effectively perfecting our special genius for peace and altruism. And this rare ambition and still rarer achievement of human learning is another key reason why this tradition is likely to become increasingly vital to humanity at large in our current crisis.

Seeing through Seeming Obstacles: The Analysis of Cultural Preconceptions

Of course, in surveying this curriculum and trying its insights and arts on for size, we’ve had to touch on various preconceptions that could get in the way of our taking the lifeline it holds out to us. We’ve had to question our disbelief at the very idea that a “homeless community” of monks and nuns, who look to us like Greek philosopher-scientists in sunny togas or our professors in their graduation robes, may know more about how to live happily in a human mind and nervous system than our wisest psychoanalysts or our best high-tech neuroscientists. We’ve had to question the protestations of many of our old school scientists and clinicians who feel a need to protect their disciplines from any association with an ancient scientific tradition that is not just partly spiritual but partly religious. And, on the other hand, we’ve also had to question the objections of scholars and practitioners of various Buddhist or Indic traditions, who feel a need to protect the traditions they know from any association with any modern science or practice that might interpret, apply, or in any way alter them.

In response to these preconceptions and objections, I’ve summarized and referenced some of the mounting body of evidence from our own scientific laboratories supporting the conclusion, however surprising, that Indic contemplative scientists understand and work with the human mind and nervous system in ways that anticipate the latest developments in neuroscience and clinical practice. In addition, we’ve learned enough about Buddhist science and spirituality to know that it does not fit neatly on either side of the science–religion divide which has fragmented the culture of the modern West. In fact, this ancient Indic tradition, like our modern tradition of psychoanalysis, offers a clear middle way or bridge that can help open meaningful dialogue and promise to heal that divide, along with its destructive dissociation of mind from body, knowledge from experience, and technology from motivation and ethics.

Likewise, we’ve learned enough about Buddhist science and civilization to know that it was intentionally left open to interpretation, application, and change, and was meant to be of ongoing practical value to any and all who wished to benefit from Buddha’s healing insights and methods. If Shakyamuni and his heirs shared their teachings freely with any and all who sought their help, then taking this curriculum into our minds and lives cannot be a case of “taking what is not given.” In a very real sense, if we are to truly respect the intention of this rare tradition, we must take care not to impose our Western ideas of intellectual property, cultural specificity, or sacrosanct purity onto Buddhist teaching and practice. As we can see from the openness of scholar-practitioners like the Dalai Lama, the sin we may most need to avoid now is not the sin of creating a genuine post-modern, global Buddhism, but rather the sin of *not* doing so, when humanity so clearly needs it and the continued relevance of Buddhist science and civilization requires it.

Future Shock: The Challenging Vision of the *Wheel of Time* Scientific Tradition

As a final note on preconceptions, the Nalanda tradition is humbling and challenging not just in its prescient curriculum for “biosphere consciousness” and “global empathy,” but in foreseeing by as much as twelve to fifteen centuries the need to embed that curriculum in an open-source matrix of empathic science and global civilization. It is no accident that the title and format of this book reflects the wisdom and blueprint of the *Wheel of Time*, since its vision of a complete, multidisciplinary science of sustainable happiness for all life on earth is the form of choice which the Nalanda tradition evolved to introduce itself to curious members of non-Buddhist cultures schooled in non-Buddhist sciences.

The *Wheel of Time* system of integrating objective physical sciences—physics, astronomy, cosmology, and semiotics—with intersubjective life sciences—physiology, medicine, psychology, ecology, and philosophy—retroactively realizes the visions of Maslow, Kohut, Rifkin, and others in our day. Much as Kohut and Maslow prescribe, this multidisciplinary system weds an objective-analytic method with an introspective-empathic method, marrying both within an overall systems-theory of total interdependence and interpenetration of animate and inanimate, organism and environment, microcosm and macrocosm. More

astonishing still, this tradition had the critical sophistication and wisdom to distinguish these conventional outer and inner sciences, with their ever-progressing, ever-provisional paradigms, from its ultimate, transformational science, whose relatively constant paradigms for adapting our relatively constant natures to civilized life are meant to help scientist-practitioners develop and guide human science and technology over time with sustainable wisdom and timeless art. That transformational science is nothing other than the contemplative science of well-being, altruism, and inspiration we've surveyed in this book, designed to help ordinary humans realize and maintain our fullest and highest potentials for self-knowledge, self-regulation and self-transformation.

Translation and Transplantation: The Nalanda Institute Paradigm

Given the remarkably clear, complete, and integrated template of the *Wheel of Time*, I believe the Nalanda contemplative curriculum only needs to be translated into the language of modern empathic science and transplanted into the soil of our modern institutions of contemplative learning and healing to be fully accessible in our day. This book distills the essentials of such a translation. And it also offers glimpses into the approach I've taken to practical transplantation of its methods into mind/body medicine, public health education, and psychotherapy. The combination of the two—translation and transplantation—make up the working curriculum of the Nalanda Institute for Contemplative Science, the contemplative learning community I, my colleagues, and our students have founded as one paradigm for renewing the Nalanda legacy here and now.

The Holistic Pedagogy of Nalanda: Marrying Objective and Consensual Methods

Perhaps the best way to think of our paradigm for transplanting the Nalanda curriculum and its complex pedagogy of broad outreach and intimate bonds is as a cross between a psychotherapy institute and a progressive, engaged university. I believe this paradigm, modeled on Nalanda and its living Tibetan offshoots, provides an effective institutional base for the new empathic curriculum Rifkin is calling for. This is why I tried to convey the multidisciplinary nature and hybrid structure of the tradition and my work in this book, by including general explanations with guided meditations and references to psychotherapy in each chapter. In what follows, I'll briefly summarize the potential contributions of our transplanted paradigm of the Nalanda curriculum and pedagogy, by touching on the four main practical applications of the core four year program outlined in this book.

The Body Wheel: Sustainable Wellbeing for Individuals

Although the first horizon on the gradual path, the lasting wellbeing that comes of personal self-healing, has received a wealth of attention since the convergence of *Hatha* yoga and simple mindfulness practice with the basic science of stress-reduction, self-healing and the new positive psychology, the Nalanda tradition takes this foundational horizon of contemplative learning two steps further. First, enhancing simple mindfulness with the technique of concentrative quiescence focused on mind, the basic practice I call deep mindfulness helps ground self-healing in a more stable, profound altered state that facilitates equanimity, clarity and letting go. Second, embedding basic yoga and mindfulness in the multidisciplinary matrix of contemplative healing, by linking meditation to cognitive learning and motivational-behavioral change, insures that basic mindfulness will mature into genuine insight meditation, the engine of lasting self-healing and fundamental life change.

Another aspect of the Nalanda tradition's distinctive approach to sustainable well-being involves combining contemplative learning with individual counseling and psychotherapy. Here again, so much has been written about this confluence that it would seem nothing more need be said. Nonetheless, there are several distinctive features to the way we advocate using the modern institution of psychotherapy to support and enrich contemplative learning, in an effort to align the modern practice more closely with the traditional practice of contemplative tutoring and mentoring. First of all, instead of restricting the work to individual therapy sessions, classes in contemplative self-analysis, meditative techniques and ethical motivation and lifestyle provide an economy of scale, while also enhancing the process with active self-healing strategies, including cognitive and behavioral learning and contemplative "homework." Secondly, interpretation and cognitive learning within and between sessions is based not on the insights and methods of modern dynamic or cognitive therapy, but rather on traditional insights and methods specifically meant to support

contemplative healing. Third and finally, our approach involves a direct focus on motivational and behavioral strategies that support contemplative living and learning, and is linked with extended extramural social support for overcoming obsessive-compulsive-addictive habits with the help of meditation and yoga communities, optionally enhanced by twelve step fellowship.

The Speech Wheel: Sustainable Altruism for Lay and Professional Caregivers

The second main application of the Nalanda curriculum involves using the path of social healing through proactive engagement to reduce caregiver stress and burnout, expose and clear traumatic self-habits, and embody the compassionate openness of mature altruism. While this application of Buddhist contemplative science is also familiar by now, from the work of teachers like Sharon Salzberg applying the mindfulness-based art of loving kindness, here too there are distinctive aspects of the Nalanda approach that promise to make it more reproducible and more effective.

As with our first application, building the art of concentrative quiescence into this path works to deepen basic mindfulness practice, grounding the work of radical acceptance and caretaking in a more stable, profound altered state that enhances clarity, resilience and positive affect. In addition, the distinctive practice of combining quiescence with analytic insight extends the reach and scope of self-analysis further still, allowing insight meditation to expose traumatic memories and disarm reactive instincts that distort social challenges, blocking self-efficacy and realistic compassion. Finally, the specific skills and structured practice of mind-clearing—using verbal learning, systematic methods of building compassion, the art of giving and taking on the breath, and practice guidelines to build resilience and discipline—all make step-by-step learning, gradual progress and artful mastery of sustainable altruism more easily and widely reproducible. While starting with the basic ethos of universal benevolence taught in loving-kindness, this tradition challenges us to build on that foundation by committing to awaken and develop our human genius for unconditional compassion, heroic resolve and fully enlightened altruism.

The Mind Wheel: Sustainable Inspiration for Teachers, Leaders, Coaches & Mentors

The third main application of the Nalanda curriculum involves applying the cultural healing arts of role-modeling imagery and sublimation to the work of personifying and sustaining the affirmative vision and pure passion we need to inspire others continually and sustainably. Unlike the prior two applications, this one is not just distinctive but quite unprecedented. While most contemplative traditions emphasize calming practices and some form of disengagement from mundane roles and relationships geared towards peak performance and creativity, the rare tradition of optimal integral process practice aims at tapping and harnessing pure passion in support of congenial ideals, altruistic leadership and inspired creativity. Of course, most roles of conventional authority, professional mastery or secular leadership seem to call for narcissistic traits and obsessive-compulsive “ego” energy, making them seem antithetical to contemplative ideals and practice.

The vast potential of process practice for cultural transformation lies in offering a contemplative alternative to such compulsive agency, insuring transparent, congenial styles of responsiveness, mastery and leadership inspired by the truly altruistic energy of blissful openness. Traditionally, this is framed not just as cultivating an altruistic form of human genius, but specifically as cultivating a heroic form of altruism fully compatible with the peace-making paths of self-healing and social engagement. This unique culture of balanced and engaged leadership, using inspiration and modeling rather than drive and control, is guided by the compound ethos of guarding three commitments—to self-care, altruism and creative process—at once.

The Bliss Wheel: Sustainable Happiness for Individuals, Couples & Families

Ironically, the final application of the Nalanda curriculum is at once the most challenging and the most universal. It involves applying the natural healing arts of sublimation, inspiration, clarity and communion to tap and harness the network of blissful openness at the core of our being, as the natural way to nurture true integrity, intimacy and community in all our lives. Like the work of sustainable leadership, the path of sustainable happiness aims at cultivating a form of self-regulation that can fully tap and embody our native

genius for pure joy and translucency, while staying fully grounded in the paths of personal self-healing, altruistic engagement and inspired leadership. The spirit guiding this level of practice refines the ethos of guarding three commitments at once, holding out the ideal of a natural mastery and spontaneous responsiveness that fully embraces all reality and so rejects nothing and has “nothing to guard.”

In this fourth application, our path comes full circle, back to our intimate personal lives, and their profound yet often invisible interdependence with the well-being and happiness of all those around us. While we moderns tend to think of happiness as a personal matter and individual right, this sage tradition, like its ancient Greek and Chinese counterparts, tends to see happiness as a communal aim and public good. Assuming the insight only recently rediscovered by our new science that human life is inexorably social and interdependent with all nature, the process-oriented teaching tradition sees bliss not as an end in itself but as a potent means to the social end of living well with and for others. This is why it applies to the increasingly pressing need in our high-paced lives for truly satisfying intimacy, seen as the natural source of all community and the wellspring of the loving chemistry of peace, care and joy.

As a final point, I mentioned “individuals” in describing this application, since this profound transformational path is not restricted to people living conventional lay lifestyles as couples with or without children. Given the possibility of practicing this path with the help of virtual intimacy or relying on the whole universe as an intimate partner, the same powerful and transformative system of psychosexual maturity is also accessible to those who choose or find themselves living a single lifestyle. This would include people who’ve never chosen intimacy as a life path or who’ve lost an intimate partner, as well as those who have chosen a celibate life as part of a spiritual vocation. The fact that this system is equally applicable to people in these life circumstances is crucial when we understand the indispensable role of transformative mind/body experiences of intimacy to developing the psychosexual maturity required for healthy, satisfying and effective sublimation.

Through the Time Machine: The Global Transmission of the Nalanda Tradition

Of course, however we engage in transplanting this rare tradition, we must also take equal care in consulting the other side of the equation. To succeed, such work vitally depends on the openness of Buddhist teachers and communities to potential shifts that might be called for in transmitting traditional teaching and practice. Such shifts range from the simple matter of translation terminology to more complex matters like conceptual interpretation and aesthetic-ritual expression, eventually touching on centuries’ old methods of teaching and practice. Given this difficulty, it’s no wonder my scholarly colleagues and fellow Buddhist practitioners are reticent when it comes to the very idea of not just translating the Nalanda tradition but actually *transplanting* it into living theory and practice.

Of course, at the same time, everyone concerned with the faithful translation and preservation of this rare gem of human civilization, when pressed must admit that the chaotic process of culture-to-culture transmission is nothing new to the Nalanda tradition or to Buddhist history in general. In fact, if it weren’t for that process, we would now be left with nothing but a fragmentary 10 or 15 percent of the textual and oral commentary we now associate with Nalanda. And that does not even take into account the jewel network of seemingly infinite lineages of teaching and practicing almost every aspect of its curriculum.

On the other hand, if we do *not* make a serious, concerted, and sensitive attempt to renew that tradition in the course of its global transmission today, it becomes far more likely that this incomparable ancient cultural tradition will decline and disappear, as so many have. This certainly seems to be the thinking of active interpreters and translators from within the tradition, ranging from highly visible figures like His Holiness the Dalai Lama to much younger voices like Mingyur Rinpoche⁴ and Dzogchen Ponlop.⁵ And, as a final note, I must add that it seems highly unrealistic for us to take the transmission of this tradition into Tibet as our only historical paradigm for what lies ahead. Modern Western civilization alone is anything but the relative blank slate Tibetan culture was during that leisurely and fairly systematic process.⁶ While we may want to hold ourselves to the standard of fidelity Tibetan translator-practitioners achieved with their Indian teachers and colleagues, it may be more reasonable to consider the more dynamic, bidirectional paradigm of the Nalanda tradition’s transmission into China.⁷

One thing is decidedly different for both parties to today’s transmission. Whether we sit on the modern Western side of receiving this rare gift to humanity or on the offering side of Tibetans sharing a gift they received from Nalanda’s masters and have carefully nurtured, we are all now very obviously in the same global life-raft. No longer safely hidden in their inaccessible mountain kingdom, Tibetan refugee scholars and masters share with their Western students a deep appreciation for the fierce urgency and awesome complexity

of humanity's current global crisis.

Having been lucky enough to be present at the first *Wheel of Time* initiation given by the His Holiness Dalai Lama in Madison Wisconsin in 1981, it's clear to me how much closer we are to the birth-pains of the global civilization that teaching predicts now, as I hear from those who were lucky enough to attend the most recent *Wheel of Time* in Washington DC. On the other hand, as the *Wheel of Time* foresees, the depth and scope of our budding global empathy and biosphere consciousness has grown by such inconceivable leaps and bounds in these three short decades that it should give us all hope that its optimistic vision will in fact be borne out; that we humans will prove to have the basic genius for enlightened altruism we'll need to make the transition to sustainable happiness together as one adoptive yet all-embracing extended family.

In light of our shared predicament and emerging global consciousness, we must all be ready to look at our own familiar sense of history—past and future—through new eyes. And here is another sense in which we must challenge even the most visionary assessments and projections made by Westerners like Rifkin or Asian masters of the *Wheel of Time*. As world citizens Arnold Toynbee⁸ and William Rieschauer⁹ pointed out decades ago, in order to build towards a global solution for human consciousness on this planet, we must learn to see outside even our most enlightened “unilinear” perspectives. In other words, we must be open to a fresh perspective on history, seen not just through the eyes of our own chosen discipline or civilization, as Rifkin has done, but rather through the eyes of multiple converging disciplines and histories at once.

It is as if we've been accustomed to seeing our world—including its problems and potential solutions—through lenses tinted in just one color. In order for us to be prepared to come together through global empathy, dialogue, and collaboration, we'll effectively have to start seeing our world, problems and solutions in full, rainbow color. Though inexorably limited by its own traditions of history, science, and culture, the *Wheel of Time* sets a standard of global syncretism remarkable in our day, much less for the dawn of the last millennium. Its synthesis of the Eurasian sciences and cultures of its era, like the five-civilization synthesis of Tibet's integrative world medicine, should encourage and inspire us along these lines, much as the first world histories of Toynbee have inspired a new generation of comparative global historians.

In the grips of the multi-headed crisis we face today, when our most cherished values and trusted institutions seem to be part of the problem rather than the solution, it's easy enough for us to give in to cynicism and loose heart. At such times it's often vital and wise to be ready to turn to new sources of hope and direction, however doubtful those sources may seem from our familiar reference frame. Of course, we must look closely and carefully at the latest insights and breakthroughs in science, especially when the new direction they seem to indicate is confirmed and validated by trends converging from many fields at once. Yet it may be even more key to look as far afield as we can, to try to see our predicament from the standpoint of big picture trends and radically different perspectives. This is especially true when we are so close to our cultural blind spots and so embroiled in our own predicament that it's hard for us to see a pattern that points to a new way ahead.

This is one of the main reasons why I believe we must be willing to go to any lengths to compare and contrast the new directions that seem to be emerging from our cutting edge science with insights and methods developed in the face of similarly engulfing crises in other places and at other times in world history. While the depth and scope of comparison that has occupied us in this book—between our new empathic science and the contemplative science of ancient Buddhist civilization—may at times seem a matter of historical curiosity, nothing could be further from the truth. The validation and confirmation of our best diagnosis of the crisis we face in global civilization today by the deeply resonant diagnosis made by the Nalanda scientific tradition ten to fifteen centuries ago on the other side of the world is absolutely indispensable, for several reasons. The first is because clear validation from such a different cultural standpoint, using such distinct scientific methods, provides a more robust cross-check on our bearings than simply internal cross-checks; a validation that is vital because the new clues we're following are still not all totally clear or fully declared. The second is because, if indeed another civilization in a very different place and time found a solution to a similar crisis that we can reasonably apply to ours today, we can draw on precedents that can save us vital time and can also draw much needed courage and conviction from a successful outcome in the past.

However unlikely it may seem that a culture so removed from our cultural legacy and so remote in time could have anticipated the groundbreaking insights that give our best minds hope, our odyssey together has made it abundantly clear that that is exactly what we find in the Nalanda tradition of contemplative science. And if we have any lingering doubts about whether the Nalanda vision of the future challenges we humans face is truly similar to our best vision now, we need only attend closely to the astonishing futurism rolled out in the *Wheel of Time*.

So it is that, believe it or not, we find ourselves in a position not only to validate the analysis Rifkin lays out in his optimistic re-reading of the history of Western civilization, but also to help catapult his initial

prescription—along with those of pioneers like Kohut, Maslow, Diane Fosha, Dan Siegel, Sue Johnson, and Steven Porges—centuries forward towards a complete, multidisciplinary human science and curriculum for contemplative living and learning, a curriculum ready made to help with the most intractable problems we face today.

Of course, we are still at the very beginning of a journey of comparative study, research, and development, a journey that will no doubt spawn many vital new insights, methods, and cross-cultural fields, transforming both our modern culture and the ancient legacy of Nalanda in the process. But as Freud alerted us and Rifkin reminds us, this is not just a journey to assure our personal well-being or to develop our ability to care sustainably for others in an endangered world. It is also an odyssey beyond the limits of our known universe, beyond the furthest reaches of what we consider possible for ourselves, others, and our world. A journey that yields the vision and inspiration we need to help usher in a new era of global civilization, in which the living gems of contemplative living and learning are as close at hand as the latest handheld miracle device, only ready to transform the inner world of our human bodies and minds so that they naturally embody sustainable well-being, altruism, inspiration, and happiness.