I, We, All: Intersubjectivity and We Space, Post-Metaphysics, and Human Becoming

An Integral Research Project

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I hold to the presupposition that our loss of the sense of aesthetic unity was, quite simply, an epistemological mistake. I believe that that mistake may be more serious than all of the minor insanities that characterized those older epistemologies that agreed upon the fundamental unity.

**Gregory Bateson**

I can think of no criteria of truth in science that do not apply with equal force to art.

**Herbert Read**

The Beginning of Love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of themselves we find in them.

**Thomas Merton**

The new leadership concept for the new world will entail that of distributed, shared, omnicentric-acentric leadership in contradistinction to the old model based on the concentric and hierarchical mindset. The question to ask is not primarily “who is our leader?” but “am I going to be one of the leaders in the new, emergent network of leadership?” It is the leadership without followership wherein every leader pursues his or her evolutionary passion and creative vision in dynamic unity and alignment inside the intersubjective field of consciousness-in-evolution.

**Yasuhiko Genku Kimura**

The fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life, then, is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in.

**Northrup Frye**

History has not reached a stagnant end, nor is it triumphantly marching towards the radiant future. It is being catapulted into an unknown adventure.

**Edgar Morin**

*Humanity is in a moment of evolutionary inflection.* We face rapid and disorienting change to the very foundations of our civilization and societies, with too many contributing variables for anyone to account for. There are no certainties, other than the radical differences among our infinitely possible outcomes. We have so far been unable even to agree on what the potentials and problems of the moment are, let alone how to address them. This multiplies chaos by chaos.

We are being called to adapt as a whole world that does not yet exist. We must give birth to this world, and each of our unique contributions is needed to do so. Having never faced an undertaking of such magnitude we are most urgently called to adapt our ways of communicating and organizing, our ways of being with one another. As we do, we are becoming aware of this process as it is undergoing to an unprecedented extent, waking up with wonder and curiosity in the slightest exchange, finding in our own day’s relationships the miraculous universe entire.

Following an explosive age of personal and cultural exploration and expression, we have much to say to each other and no way to say it. The postmodern cultural revolutions of the latter half of the twentieth century invited previously unexplored and unacknowledged terrains of human individuality and culture to speak and be heard, a brilliant plurality of perspectives and voices we are still only opening up to. The concomitant irony of postmodern life is that in the emphasis on valuing otherness, diversity, individual voices, and repressed cultural perspectives, we find ourselves in a rich sea within which we often feel more alone and isolated than ever. It is as if in recognizing the inviolability and irreducibility of each of our own selves and stories, personal and cultural, we have lost touch with how to communicate through commonality. Our old rules of engagement no longer valid, we have yet to forge the agreements, capacities, and practices that can allow for a truly global cultural expression of the synergistic potential of our human voices.

In the interim, between the ecstatic deaths of the old ways and that which is so new we have no name for it, we have seen emerge a closely related family of global crises that we can only address in a meaningful way together. Any one of them: debt, education, economic, agricultural, energy, environmental, water, soil, health, hunger, refugee, climate, politics, poverty; is enough taken by itself to destabilize civilization to the point of ruin. Yet in this overwhelm we can see perhaps the opportunity: none of us knows where we are headed, but we do not want to go there. It is no longer a question of individual liberation, or the emancipation of one group of people, or even a whole country or class: the dissolution of our crises awaits the birth of a way of being with each other that is not in the first place reducible to us versus them. As these crises affect and involve every person on the planet, so must we each participate wholly in the world that is possible.

In the last ten years, a number of practices have arisen that address this need for a different way of being together, and in the past few years a handful has become popular in Integral/Evolutionary circles under the generic name “We Space.”[[1]](#footnote--1) I use this term to refer to a progression of practices and ways of being together that have as their common root heightened attention on the relational space itself, and not only the individual participants in relation.[[2]](#footnote-0) It was my basic hypothesis in starting this project that We Space is a response to the pressure of our existential crises and the social milieu they arise from, and that they have a profound potential and purpose at this moment in our humanity. Wanting to test my intuitions, I underwent a nearly two-year journey talking, studying, writing, practicing, and training in these practices. I asked myself how and why We Space has emerged, what the familial threads between these different practices was, and whether I could make any distinctions or theoretical findings that might help advance the field.

This paper is an account of the results of the formal research undertaken in these two years. Footnotes support the main text in helping to unpack certain terms as they come up. I am additionally adding several appendices as supporting material, some as background for the research, and some as theoretical background. Of the latter, Appendix A contains an overview of the psychological theory I am implicitly working with, and what I mean by subtle, and metaphysical boundaries. Appendix B contains some practical examples of the activity of We Spaces. Appendix C contains a discussion and exploration of subtle, causal, awakeness, and view or vantage point. Appendix D contains examples of We Space practices, and Appendices E through H contain data and other elements of the research. I am intending to offer an articulation of what is happening in We Space practices, broaden interest in them, offer several important distinctions of different kinds of practice space, and additionally help articulate a worldview that is emerging from these practice spaces.

Through my research in the last two years, I have come to the conclusion that We Space has the potential to play a foundational role in the possible creation and nurturing of a culture in which the “free development and flourishing of each unique human being is understood to be the condition, as it is also the consequence, of the free development and flourishing of all” (Bhaskar. 2012, p 8). For this to be possible (and it is possible!), individually, we must grow up: we must leave behind the substitute gratifications that dull our lives and harm ourselves, our fellow humans, and our planet, and take on the unique responsibility of this moment. We Space provides a catalytic environment to come face to face with that within us that resists growth and change, and the support to embrace this and mature. For it to be possible, we must find a way of coming together in community without compromising our uniquenesses. We Space provides this as well: the practice space of full autonomous participation in deep community. For this to be possible, we must learn how to tap the source of deep wisdom and intelligence present in the sum of humanity, and We Space is the practice of tapping into this source. For this to be possible, a critical mass of us must begin to live out new ways of being as the world together. We Space is the formal practice of these new ways of being.

This paper is also an invitation to read with the light of your own relationships, and what you desire from them. It is an invitation to feel into the deep crises we are in as a humanity, and the world that you want to live in, wished you had been brought up in, and would like your grandchildren to thrive within. It is an invitation to notice when you feel like you need someone else to be other than they are for you to feel like you can be who you are. It is an invitation to check where you are engaged passionately in your life, and where you feel dead. Most of all, it is an invitation to join in the passionate creation of a world we can all celebrate.

None of this is primarily about a particular destination, some previously or externally defined goal: it is about *how* to travel, and how to discover together where we would like to go. While the methods that lead us into this world may not come directly from any of the practices I have trained in, observed, or whose facilitators I have interviewed for this project, I do believe that something like the principles, dynamics, and trajectories that are emerging from these experiments will be crucial elements of whether and however we bring about a thriving global humanity. The following is an account of how I have come to believe this. May it facilitate the emergence of a more beautiful, good, and truthful world in our Heart.

**Methods**

*Methodology: Introduction*

“*What is We Space, and why is it appearing now?*” is the central question that has led me to this project. Due to the complexity of the proposed object of research, I have used the framework of Integral Research, as elucidated by Ken Wilber and Sean Esbjörn-Hargens (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2006, Esbjörn-Hargens & Wilber, 2006). Integral Research allows and asks the researcher to approach the object of research from several different perspectives, helping to bring into clarity objects of research that are complex, and that are entangled in the relationships between the three major perspectives we take on reality and their different criteria for validity: the first, second, and third person, or I, We, and It. Integral Research posits eight methodological families, eight irreducible ways of conducting research, which cover these three major perspectives. For a research program to be Integral in the most basic way, it must employ methods that inquire into these three fundamental perspectives. Crucial for current research on consciousness and spirituality, the framework integrates these methodological families in a way that “avoids postulating the existence of pre-existing ontological structures” (Esbjörn-Hargens & Wilber, 2006, p. 524). The inference is that most research does assume some underlying metaphysical ground, some way of definitively answering the question ‘what is real?’ and is uncritical about that assumption. Differentiating methodological approaches from the underlying assumptions about reality that they may have developed out of, Integral Research allows us to bring together a multiplicity of methods in the investigation of phenomena without reducing any of the fundamental person perspectives to another. This is a constructive approach, one that recognizes that we are not only shedding light on reality with our research, we are creating and constructing reality through our research. This is a central feature of post-metaphysics.

Vipassana Esbjörn-Hargens’ Intuitive Inquiry (Esbjörn-Hargens & Anderson, 2006) is a secondary, but heavy, influence on how I have conducted my interviews and oriented to the material. Intuitive Inquiry aims to “bridge the gap between art and science” (p. 303), and “invite[s] the research project to transform not only [the researcher’s] understanding of the topic, but their own lives” (p. 303). For the smaller scope of this Master’s thesis, I have reduced Intuitive Inquiry to its essentials, but as my topic is highly personal, involves in-depth interviews, and is calling forth the central element of moment-to-moment creativity, I have found its basic orientation to research invaluable.

In all, I have formally used three foundational methodological families, one each from the first-, second- and third-person perspectives. I conducted first-person research through *psychometric analysis*, taking a developmental test to disclose my level of epistemological/psychological complexity as a self. This helps to address the central first-person question: *How does the developmental maturity of my self-sense influence how I make meaning about We Space?* For the second-person method, I have conducted ten *in-depth interviews* with people skilled in facilitating different We Space practices, to help answer the question *How do people experienced in We Space think about it?* For the third person, I have conducted two forced and multiple-choice surveys, one of people who have participated in We Space practices, and one of people who have not, to compare relational experiences in the two groups, and to test several hypotheses about the nature of We Space practice, to help address the question *Does We Space practice affect our relationships, and how we show up in our lives?*

*Second-Person Methodology: Intuitive Inquiry, In-Depth Interviews*

I begin my exploration with the second-person methods rather than the first, as is customary, because the in-depth interviews provide the bulk of the content of the project, and it is through the voices of my interviewees that I am primarily giving life to the emerging worldview brought about by We Space practices. As We Space is a fundamentally second person phenomenon, this is only appropriate. If each of our experiences are immutable and in some sense inaccessible to the other, the process of mutual inquiry nonetheless allows the emergence of the ‘shared-object,’ something dynamic and always changing, and not necessarily accessible to either participant alone. This process of mutually creative discovery central to We Space was in a real way exemplified by these interviews, though the inquiry focused on the third-person object rather than the second-person space directly. Each interview followed an unfolding, not even so much like the gardening of a flower as the creation, over time, of an entire strain of flowers, each generation slightly new and surprising. What emerges as data from the interviews is then a collage of a series of snapshots, quick and delicate understandings of a precious happening.

Between January 2012 and March 2012, I interviewed ten people who are experienced in facilitating We Space practices.[[3]](#footnote-1) To prepare, for a month I undertook an embodied reading of two texts about intersubjectivity daily (Gunnlaugson, 2012, and Irigary, 2002). After centering myself, I read one text, alternating days, keeping an open notebook and a pen nearby. I wrote down words as they came to me in flashes, insights, themes, questions, anything that came to my mind as significant for this question of what We Space is. After reading, I would sit quietly again, letting my mind settle, and record any new significant flashes. After a month, I had a whole mess to sift through. Rather than try and organize any of this, I simply looked over each page, and wrote out a set of twenty-one ‘lenses,’ understandings and assumptions that I had about We Space.[[4]](#footnote-2) Working with these lenses, I came up with ten questions to guide the interviews and test my assumptions.[[5]](#footnote-3) I contacted each of the interviewees by email, explaining my research project, and asked for an hour-long interview. For the interviews, I recorded each Skype call on my computer with a program called Garage Band, and transcribed them between April of 2012 and May of 2013. In May of 2013 I coded the interviews as follows: I first read through each interview. I then returned to the first interview, and marked off passages that were ‘meaning-constitutive,’ by which I mean any word, phrase, or sentence, which reflected somehow on the question *What is We Space?* I did this for three interviews, and then went through the first one, coming up with themes for each of the marked passages, and then taking the Google Document file and cutting-and-pasting it into a file with the themes, making a large list. Each theme represents a partial answer to the question *What is We Space?* I went through the following two interviews and added their content to the list, editing themes as I went along to expand and clarify, and often adding new themes. At this point, I did something I call “rhizomatic mind-mapping.” I took each of the themes and wrote them out on a large sheet of paper, drawing (literally) connections and relationships between them. Beginning to be able to discern holarchical relationships between the themes, which themes were most ‘central,’ and which ‘peripheral.’ I placed this sheet next to a blank piece of paper, and began to order the themes in a way that would naturally tell a story as a response to the question. Following this, I revised the themes as necessary, and returned to code each of the remaining seven interviews, editing the themes as I went along as above. Taking the contents of all of the interviews and inserting them in their proper places gave me a document of 208 pages, which constitutes the data for this phase of research. [[6]](#footnote-4) If a theme was the result of only one interview, I excluded it. Significantly, this only happened with two themes, and they were easily folded into other themes with slight editing. In the results section, I have built a descriptive thread out of this data to help explicate and address what We Space is.

*First-Person Methodology: Intuitive Inquiry, Psychometric Analysis*

First-Person methodologies allow the researcher to disclose himself, helping to situate research in the worldview of the researcher. The two primary methods that I have chosen here, *Intuitive Inquiry* and *Psychometric Analysis* do this in two different ways. The first-person aspect of *Intuitive Inquiry* asks for a disclosure of assumptions, as well as allowing for tracking growth that may have happened during research. *Psychometric Analysis*, particularly when using vertical assessments of psychological development as I am doing here, help to bracket and situate the approach, worldviews, and claims of the researcher.

For the first-person aspect of *Intuitive Inquiry,* I have taken the preliminary lenses that comprise Appendix E, and re-visited them on May 31st, 2013, towards the end of my research. In the intervening year and a half since I first came up with the lenses, I have participated in dozens upon dozens of We Space practices, formal and informal, I have formally interviewed ten people who guide We Space, I have had a hundred conversations with people engaged with We Space practices, and I have read pages upon pages of material related to We Space. Before re-visiting my lenses, I set a period of time aside to generate new lenses, drawing from all I had learned in the past eighteen months to come up with a new list. Then, I compared the old list to the new one, bit-by-bit, holding the old lenses up to my current embodied experience and asking whether or not they still fit, and whether they were represented in my new lenses. The new list and the old list represent the data for this phase.

For *Psychometric Analysis,* I have had conducted a third-person assessment of my own vertical development through the metric of the Sentence Completion Test (SCTi-MAP), developed by Susanne Cook-Greuter and based off of the work of Jane Loevinger (WUSCT). I have also conducted a first-person embodied and reflective reading of two papers that use the developmental scale measured by the SCTi, Cook-Greuter (2007), and Terri O’Fallon (2010). I took the SCTi-MAP in late November of 2011, and had it scored by Elliott Ingersoll in early December 2011, receiving the results on December 7th, 2011. I received a scoring chart as data, which is summed as a single number indicating my general developmental level on the Self-Sense line. To aid in the analysis of my results, I have also been undergoing a process of embodied reading and reflection, which has been ongoing and informal for the last four years, including discussions around my results with several members of the amorphous Integral community, and which I have done formally during May of 2013. For this embodied reading and reflection, I have taken my SCTi score, and read through the aforementioned Cook-Greuter and O’Fallon articles, focusing on the resonance that I felt with their descriptions at the stage indicated by my score, as well as those stages proximately above and below my score. I marked down relevant passages in my notebook, and will be discussing them below in the research data and discussion sections.

*Third-Person Methodology: Forced Choice and Multiple Choice Survey*

After using my own first-person experience to come up with an intuitive sense of what is happening with We Space, and after having these assumptions checked with practitioners in the field, I took the data and created a survey as a way of checking my results. On June 4th, 2013 I sent two separate surveys out to around 100 people total, asking them to pass it along if they liked, and also posting them to Facebook. One survey was for people who have participated in We Space practices before, and one survey was for people who had not. The responses are the data of this phase of research.

I was hoping to be able to glean two main things. First, in asking participants what their experiences of practices were, through questions like, “In practicing We Space practices, I have felt a… greater/deeper sense of presence,” I was hoping to get some suggestive responses indicating that practitioners of We Space practices had experiences that were in line with what I had experienced, and what my interviewers thought was occurring during the practices. Secondly, I was hoping to tease apart the differences in how participants experience relating, and how people unfamiliar with We Space practice experience relating.

**Second-Person Results and Discussion: What is We Space?**

What is We Space? What came out of the interviews and the coding process was distinctively non-linear, non-representational, and non-dialectical: more a song than a report. We Space is not naturally an object of consciousness—at least in our culture at this moment in time—and making it an object of research brings with it certain difficulties. And yet, as interpersonal experiences,[[7]](#footnote-5) they are obvious, radiant. As such, I am presenting something of a narrative here, and am avowedly a storyteller. I am not fictionalizing: the following themes and understandings emerged from the research, and I was careful to stay close to the data. But just like a description of ice cream does not give the listener the actual taste of ice cream, We Space is a story that only makes sense in We Space, where it does not need telling.

The presentation unfolds then as a symphony. Quotes given for themes will often contain much more than the meaning that is being unpacked at the moment, and the conclusion sheds new light on what is being revealed through each section. I only occasionally connect explicitly one theme to another, as they return to each other in the quotes and conclusion. There are other ways to communicate, other essential elements of a We Space or of forming one that may have been distilled from the interviews, other ways of seeing, and it is for this that the disclosure of the first person methods are crucial in situating the researcher-storyteller.

Because of this, I have chosen *not* to organize the themes I have coded in an exactly hierarchical manner. Following the rhizomatic method explained above, I have come up with eight major themes, and have organized them narratively for presentation. I start by establishing that there is something going on called We Space, and proceed to show that there are actually multiple things going on under the name “We Space.” Each major theme is presented in italics without indentation at the beginning of a section, and further text does not follow on the same line. Minor themes follow, also italicized, but indented as part of a paragraph. First, I will unpack the two major themes without fleshing out related themes, as every following theme relies on the understandings revealed by these. Following this, I will present three major themes that help to map three transcending-and-including layers of We Space practice. I tie these into the major states of *subtle, causal, and non-dual,* using the term ‘awakening’ for non-dual.[[8]](#footnote-6) Subtle We Space operates on the inter- and intra-personal subtle boundaries that make up our personalities.[[9]](#footnote-7) Causal We Space brings forth and operates on the field of shared awareness. Awakened We Space refers to the emergence of a shared self-aware and self-reflexive interpersonal mind. I present these major themes along with supporting themes that help explicate the different practices and experiences of these spaces, and features of practice that apply especially to that arena of practice. Following this, I present the proceeding major theme, that We Space is a state that reveals a distinct evolutionary worldview and a way-of-being that appears to have the potential of developing into a stable stage. After having traced the arc of We Space practice with these major themes, I will present around a dozen supporting themes that help to explicate features and injunctions of We Space practice present through subtle, causal, and awakened We Spaces, and evolutionary being-in-the-world. Following this, I will present one final major theme, that We Space practice seems to be a possible method of interaction for practice groups in different traditions, that it contains the injunctions not only for coming together in groups, but across and between groups. Finally, I will conclude the section reflectively, asking what is presented by the data as a whole, and what view is emerging from these practices.

**We Space Is**

*We Space is a distinct and newly emergent intersubjective state with great potential for addressing our human crises at this moment in time.*

We Space is a distinct experience*.* Without a clear idea of just what it is, We Space is *something*. It stands out as an experience, and my interviewees often used words like “explosive,” to describe its emergence, or would say that the Space “landed” on the participants. “It was something that was way more powerful than...being with a guru, where you’re getting zapped and taken to places” (PA). “We have to rewrite the mathematics[[10]](#footnote-8) as soon as we enter We Space because there’s some exponential stuff that happens that is completely profound” (SM). Jeff Carreira gave perhaps the clearest expression to this while talking about facilitating We Spaces:

If I just keep calm, and keep responding to what’s most authentic, eventually the rocket’s energy will be greater than the energy of gravity and it will take off and eventually it does, without fail, if you don’t panic it takes off, and what’s interesting at that point is...everyone, including me, moves into a different consciousness.

While my interviewees discussed different kinds of We Spaces, or placed emphasis on certain practices or requirements for We Spaces, they each spoke through this underlying assumption that We Spaces were something distinct, a phenomenon of whatever sort. This is perhaps obvious, but it also allows us to begin to delineate qualities of We Space and distinguish between them, and to discern what we mean by We Space, and what we do not. The rest of this section deals with more of these underlying and foundational assumptions: interpretations of We Space that were part of each interview before any interviews even took place.

We Space describes a state of consciousness. “When we were working out and inquiring into and exploring... a state would emerge for an hour here two hours there sometimes” (MM). “We used to get like zombies, seriously the kinds of states that we used to get into...we were whacked out seriously, and so when you get deep into a certain state and you dial down the social concern...the body will do all kinds of funny things” (OG).

We Space is fundamentally an intersubjective state of consciousness*.* “You can’t practice [this] on your own, you need others to do this” (MW). As obvious as this seems, it is not that We Space can only happen with others, although that is true. It is that We Space is an intersubjective *state*, in the way analogous to how *déjà-vu* is a subjective state.

We Space is a state of consciousness different from both personal spiritual practice, and normal day-to-day intersubjectivity.**“**A lot of spiritual context is more about the practice or about what you’re doing relative to the practice or that...but all of that’s happening outside of our We Space” (GF). While all of my interviewees talked about the importance of having a personal practice as a prerequisite for We Space practices, or at the least beside them, most were similarly clear that the capacity for a profound subjective state and a profound intersubjective state are not always strongly linked. People with little meditative experience can thrive in certain We Space practices, and people with great meditative achievement are not necessarily skilled intersubjectively.

Similarly, We Space is not just any intersubjective occasion, and not every intersubjective occasion is appropriate for We Space. “Most of [the world] is still built on modern structures...people always say, ‘how do I take this out into my life, how do I do this while buying groceries?’ Well you can’t, you can’t do this with people who aren’t interested!” (MW).[[11]](#footnote-9)

There is a We Space that’s quite trivial and shallow and everyday, and not engaged with or imbued with presence, [but] that very conventional level of We Space doesn’t really necessarily speak to what we’re talking about... it’s not a space that people are accustomed to accessing publicly, relationally with others… [it’s] a different mode of being and relating and that’s not something that just comes instantly, right? (OG).

It is perhaps not so far outside the realm of our everyday experiences to suggest that We Space is a state of consciousness, or that We Space is fundamentally intersubjective, but We Space describes an *intersubjective state*, and this can be difficult to understand without the experience, as we have very little cultural fluency with intersubjective states, even those that are fairly common like attachment between a mother and baby.

We Space is emergent, in two different ways. First, as states of intersubjective consciousness, they emerge from certain conditions, but are not reducible to those conditions. “We Spaces are fully and only participatory, with all of the members completely involved, so no matter what kind of facilitation we have, the experience of an emergent We can only happen to the degree that everybody becomes the facilitator of the We” (DD). “When there’s this depth of presence inquiry, people being fully there and not so self concerned I find that We presence can land with a lot of grace, it can kind of hover in and out” (MM). Secondly, We Spaces are *new*. “That’s all emergent—we’re just discovering what this stuff is now” (GF). One interviewee thought that there might potentially have been other times in human history that we held awakened We Spaces, but even so, as far as we know this is the first time in human history that this is happening, and it is happening in different groups, and all over the world. Each interview held the sense of a radical inquiry, and a provisional and experimental nature to all that was being said. The way Thomas Hübl talks about We consciousness emerging now in groups is exemplary:

I believe that it will happen in the way that small groups, here and there around the planet, will practice this, will make these appearances, and... it will only last a little bit...it will disintegrate again and it will arise again, because it’s not stable yet, it will arise for moments, for hours, for days, and then it will not be seen again, but at

a certain stage it will create a kind of coherent net and then there’s a kind of possibility that the leading edge of development will become a kind of more sustainable state that will start creating structures, because if it [i.e. the state of an awakened We]  is too short we will not create structures.

We Space is potentially very significant, personally and socially*.* One element to the interviews that only struck me in reflection was the amount of passion that ran through them. I say ‘only in reflection’ because it seemed so natural. My early experiences with intersubjective awareness were some of the most eye opening of my entire life. The potential for We Space experiences to entirely change one’s life is high, and nearly every one of my interviewees described some first experience that echoes through their lives years later, often setting them on a path they still walk today. Dustin DiPerna says it most plainly, “I’d love to tell you about the first experience that I had of a We Space, because it was life-changing.” As Olen Gunnlaugson says in a statement that resonates strongly with my own experience:

There’s something about this work that, one more generally or more broadly begins to reconfigure how we are, and how we show up in our experience, and for people who’ve gone into that, it can be quite, quite foundational in that it really can reconfigure our ontological sense of being, our sense of who we are, and how we’re thinking, and...we can carry that into listening and carry that into speaking, and into

our way of relating... there has been something very intrinsically valuable [about We Space]... it awakens certain states or qualities of being that are really attractive and feel really significant.

But as many interviewees stressed, what an individual gains from working with these Spaces is almost a by-product. Their real promise lies in the potential for a radically different way of relating, one that may help us address the crises of our age. Here is the end of the Hübl quote from above:

We will also be able to create structures to support new ways of being together, ways of teaching, ways of therapy healing that will not be anymore individual so strongly, so [as] we develop new things out of this new level of development, I believe we will also find out answers to questions like global warming, global poverty, because the intelligence will be there that we cannot imagine yet.

Or in the words of Miriam Martineau:

Can the We become the leader, the voice of the We? That doesn’t mean that specific individuals won’t be in a leadership role, but if the collective is looking for answers or insight into some of the huge challenges we’re facing as a planet, as a whole humanity...our greatest hope is to speak something out of the We’s presence.

We Spaces are potentially life changing, and potentially world changing.

**Multiple We Spaces**

*We Spaces differ based on who is participating in a We Space, what the intent, goal, or object of the Space is, and the practices that bring a We Space about.*

I started this research with a sense that We Space was something, but quickly realized that We Space is many things.[[12]](#footnote-10) Indeed, the focus from the beginning of the research was, and in the rest of this paper is, in sifting through the nuances of what is singular among all of these varied practices, and what the differences between the practices, and the states that they bring about, are.

We Spaces are multiple*.*Terry Patten says this plainly:

I’d suspect that there’s a spectrum of different locations in the possibilities of We Space, that you’re not really dealing with a single phenomenon here, and that there are these spaces which are different potent catalysts for a We Space, that the presence of the We Space that Craig Hamilton has catalyzed is different than the We Spaces that Olen Gunnlaugson has facilitated, or the we space that Thomas Hübl catalyzes.

We Spaces reflect the inner capacities of their participants*.*Geoff Fitch:

I think one of the things that happens in We Spaces is that we begin to enact the potentials of our own inner capacities together, so a We Space [is always] functioning at the level of its participants, you know we’re enacting the potentials of our inner capacities… if you want to [bring in] the developmental spectrum you can say, “yeah all the way up and all the way down there [are] different We Spaces.”

Therefore,some We Spaces cannot be brought about by certain participants.As Miriam Martineau says, “I find [discernment] necessary [in] who makes up a circle because there are definitely certain capacities, you know these are maturities within us to even do this kind work and if you’re not there yet you’re not there yet.”

We Spaces differ based perhaps primarily on the psychological maturity of the participants, with a crucial fulcrum point being ego-awareness. In fact, many of my interviewees only used the term ‘We Space’ to denote Spaces that occurred beyond ego-transcendence, and this was originally how I preferred to use the term as well. “A certain degree of transcendence of one’s separate self, seems to be a necessity. If one doesn’t have that stabilized at least one has access to that. That seems to be necessary” (DD). In Cook-Greuter’s terms, a few interviewees even located a stage at which We Space becomes a possibility: Individualist. “We wouldn’t refer to collectives that come together at [Achiever] as We Space, would we? Right…”(GF). “Another vertical development is [a participant would be] at least at an Individualist stage…I think prior to that there’s too much of a sense of conforming happening…you need to be holding an anchor of autonomy, before going into the community” (DD). Miriam Martineau spells this out further:

A requirement is that you have been on the path of self-awareness self-knowledge for quite a while and specifically ego awareness and have a capacity for deep listening…because this is something I find really fascinating about this We Space were talking about and in my experience it hinges upon, it’s dependent upon a certain percentage of people in a collective coming from their essential core Self, like, Self with a big S, so it’s actually like…there’s an evolutionary requirement in there.

It is entirely possible to have a We Space with people of varying developmental capabilities. I have expressed this up to this point as if We Spaces were necessarily always horizontal, but this is an artifact of explanation and introduction. In a very real way there are multiply infinite numbers of possible We Spaces, and each of them have a unique quality, dynamic, and degree of self-reflexivity. Continuing, I will primarily write with an eye on two different dynamics. The first is that there are certain capacities of individuals that are necessary for certain We Spaces, which is to say that it is necessary for each individual to be exhibiting these capacities in order to bring about the corresponding intersubjective field phenomenon. These capacities can be both thought of as developmental, or structure based, which has been the focus of this paragraph and in which case an individual would have access to them in any relational encounter, and as state, or skill, or context-based, where an individual can be thought of as practicing a particular skill, entering a specific state, or working in a given context, and which I will begin discussing in the next paragraph. The second dynamic is that there is field effect, where people of different skills and capacities can come together to hold a heterogeneous We Space, both providing for a supporting and challenging ‘upward pull’ from the most matured and skilled participants on the capacities of others, and co-creating the holding space, agreements, injunctions, and cultural fabric held by and supporting a transpersonal culture. I have found in practice and in the interviews several important developmental benchmarks that correspond roughly to interpersonal capacities of different self-senses on the Cook-Greuter scale. It has however not been the focus of this research to correlate We Space to personal development, but to do the opposite. Seeing a spectrum and a trajectory of We Space, I am attempting an articulation of that spectrum, using the lenses of vertical psychological development and horizontal state-stage development to help understand it.[[13]](#footnote-11) One further note on vertical development: it does not appear that developmental maturity in a line measuring first-person structures means that one automatically has mastery over the interpersonal capacities that are possible at that level of maturity. Development opens possibilities, but does not determine them. We Spaces are practice-spaces, and the capacities that are potential must still be enacted in the course of relating, and have to be learned: they do not exist coeval with developmental maturity.[[14]](#footnote-12) The relationships between states, structures, and the worlds enacted by/from/within them is messy cutting-edge research of its own, and is beyond the purview of this paper. Said differently, while certain developmental performances are fundamentally *about* interpersonality.[[15]](#footnote-13) it seems that on the whole certain developmental achievements are necessary, but not sufficient, for bringing about the pattern of interpersonality possible from such maturity.

While We Spaces differ based on the vertical capacities of the participants, they also differ based upon the states that are elicited, and the state-stage capacity of their participants. Developmental achievements are necessary, but not sufficient, with the caveat that in certain practice contexts, a state might arise that brings participants to the requisite capacity. The clearest example of this that came out in the interviews is in the difference between a We Space that includes only or primarily “awakened” participants,[[16]](#footnote-14) and one that does not. “When the people involved didn’t have a degree of awakening, we couldn’t access this [interpersonal state,]” (DD). The state DiPerna is describing is one that “starts with individual awakening as the foundation, and then focuses on the emergence of an awakened We, or an awakened I of the We, so it creates literally a new being that’s conscious… an entity in the middle of us.” What is true here in terms of an awakened We seems to me to be true generally, though this demarcation is the strongest. Before an “I of the We” arises, it is possible to have several participants holding an open space of shared awareness, with other participants unawares, but the effect of the overall field is exponentially stronger with each member that is self-reflexively participating in this shared awareness, and its effects on the others in the circle is stronger as well. However, an “I of the We” is nearly impossible to bring about without the full participation of each member in this awake and self-reflexively aware intersubjective state.

If you have enough people who have the capacity to listen to what’s emerging and to point to it and build upon it it’s possible to have some people in the circle who are not quite there yet and they can just kind of be drawn along but [not] if the percentages are off, if you’ve got say 10 individuals not really there (MM).

There’s a major difference between having a degree of witnessing, which allows one to have a deep spaciousness, and to feel interconnected into a we, and having a fully trans-dual vantage point, that integrates duality and non-duality, that fully allows one to become all form, and in that sense, the We Space that can arise from the second of those, from the trans-dual, is one that’s immediately focused on application in the world, and problem solving outside of the experience itself (DD).

We Spaces also differ based on the intent of the group, or the goals and objects of the practice Space. Again, DiPerna provides a cogent example of how We Spaces can differ in intent:

If we’re doing We Space technologies, because we’re trying to develop some distance from our cultural ego, and we want to do some cultural shadow, shadow work, then developing We Space for that particular purpose is fine, people don’t have to be awake. If we’re doing intersubjective We Spaces to build community and to create greater coherence between individuals, We Spaces are great. But if we’re doing an awakening intersubjective field whose purpose is kind of

moving to the I of the We, then I think awakening is critical as a foundation.

**Subtle We Space**

*We Space entails a set of practices that operate on our subtle and psychological boundaries, making transparent our self-identifications and reality-locations*.[[17]](#footnote-15)

Thomas Hübl gives a good explanation of what is meant by “subtle” here:

Subtle is actually everything that is arising within me as consciousness, thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, information that comes from the outside, everything that fills my universe of experience is also a subtle entity, subtle information and so we learn to actually look at the things that we normally won’t give any attention to because it’s subtle, the word subtle already says it, it’s not so obvious like the table that’s standing in the room, but this doesn’t mean that it’s less real.

We Space operates on the subtle by bringing its contents into an interpersonal field of awareness, helping to make them empty.[[18]](#footnote-16) Thus, We Space practices that operate on subtle boundaries are also in an important way *causal* practices*.* As we widen our span and scope of attention to include all of the subtle information available to us, we are increasing our awareness (*causal*) of subtle objects of awareness (*subtle*).[[19]](#footnote-17) *All* We Spaces are, in a way, causal practices, making empty subtle boundaries in preparation for the shared field of causal awareness, and the awakened We. The distinction between subtle and causal helps to describe the shift that occurs when individual and group attention shifts from the contents to the field of consciousness, but in practice this is a fluid spectrum, while any We Space practice exists within a ‘holding space’ of awareness. The subtle aspects of We Space practice are transcended and included in the causal. For a practitioner unaware of the causal field, the experience is mostly personal developmental and shadow work, as well as the subtle community work of shared growth and intimacy. For a practitioner aware of the causal field, subtle personal work will still occur, and can become much more intense. Nonetheless, the focus of the practice is more likely to be on shared awareness. As the field becomes more and more interpersonally transparent, a function both of the ratio of participants who are aware of the causal field, and individual intrapersonal transparency, the practice further strengthens the field of presence and shared awareness, until the emergence of an awakened group mind, the most significant inflection point on this spectrum.

When you’re more identified with the subtle self it’s necessary to marginalize a lot of [your] experience, to have a persona, something you identify with and something that you don’t identify with… As you begin to identify with something deeper than that [i.e. the causal field of awareness] then you’re much more open to all of your own subtle experience (GF).

This is not necessarily a graceful transition:

It’s not uncommon for people [who are transitioning into a causal-identification] to say holy shit, I’m such a dick, I should just go into therapy and not talk to people…I’m kind of joking, but I do hear people say this kind of stuff: they want to withdraw from the community, they don’t know what to make of all of this stuff that’s coming up, sometimes its shadow material sometimes it’s psychic experiences there’s all kinds of stuff that you now have awareness for, and it can seem overwhelming at times like it doesn’t have anywhere to go. [They’re] really just dropping into a more integrated place, and in doing that there’s more of reality that’s there and that you’re aware of, and it’s part of the experience that isn’t an exalted, angels sing [kind of thing], it’s more like, “{somewhat embarrassed} oh, that, you know…” (GF).

*We Space has a great potential for healing and nourishing the individual psyche*. Depending on ‘where’ my interviewees worked along this spectrum, they put a slightly different emphasis on the importance of healing that can take place in We Space. For some, it was a preliminary by-product of We Space, for some, it was necessary to enter a We Space as a fundamentally whole individual,[[20]](#footnote-18) and for some, it was a central potential of We Space. However, each of the interviewees recognized the healing, individual and collective, that is happening in these spaces. Hand in hand with this healing is a deep sense of being *nourished* in coming into contact with a genuinely loving space.

It’s like you become more of who you always were. A piece of you that was latent, that was unused gets to come online and it’s like it was cramped and neglected and blood begins to flow through it and it’s like ‘oh thank god,’ and that feeling is part of the joy of this exploration that we do (TP).

It is not just nourishing in the short-term, or on the scale of one practice session: the work itself is sustaining, receiving the energy put into it and giving more back.

Actually if I look closer it’s like, no this work has been life sustaining for me and it has the break built into it…so I haven’t needed so much downtime…it’s like dying and coming home…driving me to want to evolve and grow new distinctions and understandings and realizations. [I’m] being fed by how much the work gives life to the people who get into it. It’s been so life-giving for me personally (OG).

The interviewees talked about two distinct but closely related kinds of healing/nourishing experiences. The first is of the kind in Terry Patten’s quote above: it is like we discover a dimension of ourselves that has always been present, but inactive. As if discovering something that has always been present by its lack, coming into contact with We Space both opens a dimension of intersubjectivity and allows us to explore it, and can bring us into contact with our own latent potentials for development. The second kind of healing is akin to therapy: as we enter into community and relationship consciously, the boundaries within and between us that choke the natural flow of life’s energy can be rearranged, opening wounds to love and compassion, and allowing us to enter into relationship more consciously, maturing out of the interpersonal patterns and roles we may be stuck within.

It’s something to practice and what we do in our individual lives can feed into it and then my sense is also that the actual movement of coming together and being in the presence of the greater We can quicken an individual’s evolution, so it’s not just the individual has to evolve [to participate]… but that there is a pulling back from the We Space to each individual and I think that’s something that really is new and it’s not just all up to each of us and I think that’s partly also an extremely healing realization because it’s not just this long lonely journey (MM).

*We Space surfaces Shadow material and helps integrate it.* Hübl seems to articulate most clearly how We Space relates to Shadow work and how Shadow work is developmental and evolutionary.

If I do this in a group…there are a lot of practices to help intensify how we meet, how we will learn to see each other’s shadow places [where we] can collect energy and intelligence that [we] need as a fuel to move forward, because stuck energy is energy that is sucking my awareness back to the past, so when my past is constantly appearing in the world, so when I see constantly other past movies over the main movie, and I don’t know why or how to separate them [from the present] because I will have past fears, past aggression, past whatever, past projections on the…main reality that is actually happening right now, and this will make me…contract when I need to be open or not to see the potential of different situations, will not let me see different possibilities that are there that I simply will not see because I am filtering them…I need to learn to look through my own filters in order to see reality more clearly and create intensity, so when a group of people commits to do that, and…when we do that we will call the ones who are collapsing into themselves when they do it, so you can’t escape anymore the space, we induce a lot of engagement and participation and awareness, in a group of people so that awareness... so that more shadow material from the past will come up which is good because we learn to integrate it…if there is unconscious stuff, it can only be unconscious because nobody sees it. But if we start seeing it then it’s no longer unconscious.

**The Interpersonal Causal Field**

*We Space enacts an interpersonal field of awareness.* The *interpersonal* nature of this field is fundamentally different than a first-person apprehension of the causal.[[21]](#footnote-19) While entering and exploring the causal field is greatly facilitated by being able to recognize causal awareness oneself, “we do a hell of a lot of practice…to be rooted in the ground of being [causal awareness]…the degree to which you have access to that dimension is going to greatly increase your ability to do this with other people” (MW), something fundamentally different occurs when multiple people engage with each other rooted in this space:

We’re all actually in the moment aware that we’re awareness, that the phenomenon that our own awareness is aware of is just arising in our awareness, and the experience of that awareness is universal enough [in the group] to experience it as shared awareness, so you’re all aware of awareness and it’s just arising, and it’s …happening in a context of a collective (GF).

The second point is that there are certain field effects, and that those effects have an influence on the space of relating even if not every participant is aware of them.[[22]](#footnote-20) The field has an influence on everyone.

You can have a circle where people are almost like groping around trying to get to the deeper space and give rise to a presence amidst every one that’s greater than the sum total of everyone gathered but it’s a bit of a stumbling bumbling kind of thing, and if just one person drops--I feel it is a dropping down--drops down into that solid authentic place and speaks from it, if no one hears it it’s not gonna help necessarily and it will have been one good kind of step but as soon as--and I’ve seen this in other circles, as soon as there’s one other person in the circle it’s almost a psychic tuning fork where the tuning fork is working at the same frequency and they hear it and then they build upon what was spoken and that could even simply be echoing it or repeating it or in this particular experience I’ve had of it just being built upon that can then *often draw the whole rest of the circle along* (MM). [Emphasis mine.]

*The causal field is a space of love and compassion.* While many of the themes were implied, this one seems to have been almost entirely assumed to be so, running through the interviews as the fabric of the weave rather than the color. I interpret this through an understanding of love and compassion *as* awareness (McNay, 2012). It is underneath why bringing stuck and constricting patterns of being into contact deeply with one’s own, or another’s awareness[[23]](#footnote-21) can feel so healing and liberating. Allowing that love and compassion to shine through the quotes in this paper, I will simply introduce the theme with: “it needs to awaken in the heart” (OG).

*We Space is a space of presence.* This is a correlate to the above.[[24]](#footnote-22) “There is a We Space that’s quite trivial and shallow and everyday, and not engaged with or imbued with presence” (OG). “When there’s this depth of presence inquiry, people being fully there, not so self concerned, I find that that We presence can land with a lot of grace” (MM).

*Causal realization reveals the interpenetration and mutual emptiness of foundational boundaries and the mental/interpretive categories that result, such as I/We, Inner/Outer, Doing/Being, etc.* This is true of the causal in general whether or not one is practicing We Space, and every interview I conducted focused on at least one of these ‘foundational boundaries.’ Just as personalities interacting with personalities in a holding space of love and inquiry leads to the emergence and emptiness of personal boundaries in a more intense and obvious way, so does the realization of the interpersonal field of causal awareness bring into awareness the foundational boundaries of which our personal boundaries are the uniquely arranged patternings. To be sure, this distinction between personal arrangements of foundational boundaries and those boundaries themselves are not clean.

That tension of I and we allows you to step deeper into that paradox, that there is an apparent, solid, conflict between I and We, and that begins to open up We Spaces that aren’t just conforming We Spaces, where people can show up much more individually, but also, not just individually, we’re also finding that connection, so that sort of collective individuality is sort of a hallmark of [We Space]…

Not surprisingly, this boundary between I/We showed up the most frequently in the interviews, often as the pair autonomy/community.

Autonomy and community…are generally thought to be two opposite states of consciousness, the more autonomous you are the more differentiated you are from others, the more communion the more merged you are, so in this particular thing [an initial experience of We Space] those two became one (MW).

The co-presence of Being and Doing was another common theme:

You’re actually out doing something in the world, so we spaces are also do spaces… and then…when you begin to see that you’ve constructed [what you take to be real], that you’re making a story up, you also begin to see that the story that you made up about your relationship to a collective is also made up, that the whole dynamic tension between I and we is made up (GF).

Similarly, We Spaces are impersonal practices, and yet people feel *more* like themselves while practicing: it is not a collective that asks for, or even tolerates, conformity.

The beauty of what happens then is that the uniqueness of each individual shines so much more brightly. It’s really [a] collective space that is post-individuation not pre-individuation, that’s really important. I think some people are worried about it thinking that it could be a regression to pre-individuation and I feel like who you truly are, your essential self…that sense of being expresses itself in the world comes more fully alive than ever before, and at the same time though because it’s not your egoic self, it’s not this sort of armored big separate sense of self, it’s semi-permeable and so you can be completely present to what is emerging amongst everyone and with everyone else in the space (MM).

Non-exclusion and discernment, a pair we will look at later, similarly dissolve into each other: “it’s elitist on the one hand [not everyone can fully participate in a We Space, and there’s a developmental correlation to this] but on the other hand it’s open to everyone [there’s no discrimination based on sex or race, e.g.]” (MW). While paradox was often raised during the discussions, I prefer not to think of the co-presence of autonomy and community, for example, as a paradox. While this is a legitimate way of understanding a polarity,[[25]](#footnote-23) it is a way of understanding that emerges fundamentally from the assumption/mis-location of reality in foundational boundaries between opposites like autonomy and community. They are mutually creative, mutually empty, and radiant with each other in every iteration. Even distinguishing giving and receiving, opposites that seem to refer clearly to concrete actions, can be revealed as empty. In We Space, it is not even simply that I need someone to receive if I am to give (an early understanding of non-duality), but that the giving and receiving of love, for example, is a single motion, simultaneous and not simply bi-directional.

The mutual emptiness of Inner/Outer was also a common thread of the interviews, though it showed up in more subtle ways.

There’s a skill to non-separation that needs to be learned and practiced, And the essence of it is … there’s a tendency, when things are hard, to do that kind of emotional shuffle where you somehow emotionally and psychologically remove yourself from the inside [of the group, or go ‘collect yourself], which is amazing because it has nothing to do with reality actually, because you can’t really get out from the inside, you’re just pretending to get out.

Likewise, the discovery that awareness exists ‘outside’ of oneself, and not simply inside of oneself where we all experience it can be a profound discovery of We Space practitioners, and one that leads to the emptiness of the interior/exterior boundary, as one experiences awareness shining through these fundamental boundaries.

*Causal We Space is transpersonal*. We Space is not only inter-personal, but also *trans-*personal, with the double-sided meaning of individual transcendence of the subtle-psychological self, and of transcending the separateness of individuals in a field.

What we train now is actually that we learn in a way how to transcend partly this separate body of two entities into a new common space that we both realize in the best way in a group--not just one in a group, the group realizes, this is a group realization, and we all know that we are equally space and structure, we are equally the space between us, as awareness, and we are also the people and the human structures, the personality, whatever, is happening in this space, but because I’m not so identified only with my perspective, with my reality, with my personality, and you are not so identified with yours, something new can happen between us… there is suddenly something new emerging, that we can see only when it’s emerging (TH).

*We Space is a perspectival practice that is inherently post-metaphysical,[[26]](#footnote-24) and post-abstract.* This is a densely packed theme, and I will unfold it in a few layers. First, We Space is a perspectival practice. By ‘perspectival practice,’ I mean to point out two related things: that in the subtle realm of personality, We Space involves exploring one’s own perspectives, freeing latent perspectives and unacknowledged metaphysically held, identity-constitutive boundaries, and taking to heart others’ perspectives. In doing so, we come to fuller senses of self. The second is closely tied into what I mean by post-metaphysical. When everything is empty Spirit, reality appears through taking perspectives, and allowing those perspectives to bring about a worldview.[[27]](#footnote-25) “What started to emerge was a deep sense of devotion, we all entered into a space of totally utter devotion to the divine, each holding the divine in a first person realization [i.e., an experience of divinity as one’s self], and a second person realization [i.e., an experience of relationship with divinity]” (DD). The co-presence of the first- and second-perspectives is an example of the last theme: the mutual emptiness of foundational perspective sets, but the *importance* of the different arenas of experience disclosed by the different perspectives is what I mean by ‘perspectival’ in the causal sense.[[28]](#footnote-26) Different injunctions lead to different perspectives, and each discloses a new reality, and reality anew. To hold foundational first and second person perspectives simultaneously is an advanced perspectival practice.

In this sense is We Space also post-metaphysical: it relies on *injunctions*, on *practice*. While I had an idea of this before I conducted the interviews, I was surprised by how often the theme came up, and the importance on the guidelines of the space.

[I facilitate conversations] in a very structured way, and … because there is no question as to who’s going to speak next, and there’s fairly strict instructions about how long everyone is supposed to speak… I’m not thinking about when am I going to speak next, I have specific instructions not to think about what I’m going to speak next but to try and be really present and available to be a field of listening that really draws forth the deepest sharing from the other person, and by arriving more and more deeply into that process over and over time, I can of course become more intimate (TP).

“I recognized that none of that [an emergence of an awakened We] would have happened without the very strict rules that were imposed, and people who were much more experienced than you who would course correct” (MW). When I asked Patricia Albere, in the pre-interview chat about what was coming up, about the techniques she used, she had the following revealing statement: “practices and techniques are so not what I’m after, maybe it’s a masculine and female thing. I feel like the masculine is always like well how do we do this and how do we do it repeatedly?” This is rather the *opposite* of what is meant by practice here, though. We Space practice is not about hewing to a pre-defined *goal,* but about the *injunction*, and the space that the injunction enacts. In another case of mutual emptiness of foundational opposites, when direction (goal-setting) and inquiry (the openness to receive results of an injunction) are not in conflict, the result is a constantly re-iterating experiment, whose guidelines are always changing according to the agreement of the group.[[29]](#footnote-27)

While there might not be a pre-defined goal, per se, We Space is a practice of group intention, another thread that appeared in every interview.

The seed that I tend to use is intention... if you start by putting everyone’s attention on their shared intention, however small it may seem, one way that I have come to see the development of a We Space is that it’s a process of clarifying the shared intention…everyone puts their attention on their shared intention and they say well actually, our intention was deeper than that (JC).

That’s a story that I just told you about collective development and what it means, and you can tell people that story and you can even excite them but in terms of doing real We Space work, you can’t just give people that story and that’s it, you really have to start with the actual shared intention that exists in the room, no matter how meager it may seem, it has to be real, and then you have to help people enter into the consciousness the conscious recognition of shared intention, and then you have to be very attuned in guiding people in following that wherever it wants to take you (JC).

The above quote transitions into another feature of this practice and the Space, and what post-metaphysical means: it is post-abstract, something fundamentally experiential, not reducible to representational, or dialectical thought. It is necessarily tangible, fueled by what is authentically present.

The injunction not to speak intellectually but to speak from your own experience [is important]… to not come from a place where you already know something, that’s probably one of the most challenging things, because if you’re a smart guy... to maintain a position of not already knowing, it doesn’t mean that you don’t know things, but you come from a posture of not already knowing, and wanting to know, there’s a kind of tension between those two, and one thing that would mean and this is where trust and vulnerability come in is whatever thought comes into your mind that you know is an opinion you’ve already formed, you just drop it. You don’t utter it, you don’t speak it, if you’ve thought about this and you’ve already come to this conclusion, you just don’t speak it….You want to come from the fresh edge of discovery, you want to be right at the edge where you don’t already know and you want to be intuitive and you want to listen, [for] what’s new and fresh in yourself and that’s an excruciating place to be because the ego wants to have something clever to say to add to the conversation (MW).

We Space, like any meditation practice, is not to be found in abstract thoughts, in thoughts that come out of the past, or that are embedded in our subtle projections of meaning making. This extends to the discourse around We Space as well. “When something becomes reified [about] We Space and people have assumptions about what it is, they can become drunk on the discourse really quickly and not really be necessarily accessing what the referent is pointing towards or evoking“ (OG). This was much of the original motivation for this project: I had an experience of We Space, and was curious about it, and heard the term We Space used a lot in a way that almost cheapened the experience that I had had. While I am obviously here using representational thought to discuss We Space, I am hoping by this project to contribute several important distinctions, rather than simply add to the noise around We Space.

Tangibility, or the use of what is authentically present in the moment, is the fuel for We Space in community as well, especially when there is conflict.

One thing that I had noticed many times when we did sacred circles between ‘92 and 2002 was the incredible efficiency and swiftness of healing that takes place in the interpersonal realm. We actually used those sacred circles as a place where we would bring up the bumpy moments of living together. Someone was feeling challenged by someone else’s behavior or what ever it might have been we would actually use the sacred circle for that kind of communication and it was really quite remarkable how the intention of first of all listening deeply and when something wasn’t clear to simply inquire more would facilitate a resolution and an understanding and mutual understanding that sometimes would take a lot less time and a lot less words than when you try to do that in a usual conflict resolution kind of mode. There was that place of healing that made it actually extremely practical (MM).

When we are ‘triggered,’ caught in spaces of personal reactivity, presencing the whole seems like exactly the wrong thing to do, but eventually these moments become in a very literal way the fuel of our connection and togetherness.[[30]](#footnote-28) These senses of being post-abstract, and tangible, are enfolded in the notion of post-metaphysics.

*We Spaces rely upon a fundamentally second-person orientation of respect for the other’s subjectivity where the other is not reduced to a third-person object, and can build upon this to present a new perspective from the relationship itself.* [[31]](#footnote-29)Patricia Albere:

If I focus more then on the depth of connection between you and I and then we let the evolutionary impulse move between us and show us, in any moment, what is the appropriate creativity and love, what is it that’s supposed to emerge between us in any moment…you have to let go of your agenda, you have to let go of how you see people as an object, as a function of something. That whole object relations thing breaks down…you know we don’t even realize how much we see each other as a something.

This is another seemingly obvious feature of We Space practice. It is not *only* that it is second personal, however. As the second-person perspective, relationality takes different forms up and down the spectrum of human development. We Space requires attention to the second person in a way that is new in the relative history of humankind. I am not engaging the other as a cloaked ‘third-person object,’ one that only exists in its effects on me and my life,[[32]](#footnote-30) nor am I projecting myself into the other’s subjectivity with empathy. I am not even relating to you as an irreducible other into whose being I must inquire. In not assuming that I know anything about the other’s interior, I must surface my assumptions and inquire. It is not “you are angry!” But “you seem angry, are you?” Other modes of relating do not disappear, of course: they are important, and the last especially is itself a true developmental achievement that is necessary for the flourishing of a We Space. But We Space and the second person way-of-being that it opens towards are fundamentally about taking a perspective from inside the relationship itself. When I touch you, something arises between us that is not present in our individualities. As a ‘member’ of this occasion, I can take its (our) perspective, while never encompassing yours.

**Awakened We Spaces**

*Out of the field of causal awareness an awake and ontologically unique interpersonal ‘shared mind’ can arise that is dependent upon each but not reducible to any of the participants.* As this is the most incredible aspect of We Space, I will first let the interviewees speak for themselves.

To the degree to which we surrendered our individual agency, we could then open up into being centered as this new entity that was created from the We, and look from the collective We field, this collective We being that we created, we could actually look from that perspective. So it was as is if the [cultural field] had its own sense of I. It didn’t have its own dominant monad of course, so the I of this being didn’t control all of us, however, the degree to which we all surrendered our will to it, it in fact did have its own I, [and] because we all tapped into its I as part of our I, [we] could operate from it (DD).

When everyone was in [this state of interpersonal awakening], something happened that really went through the roof. It wasn’t just one more person, it was a total phase shift into a collective We Space in which what we experienced is hard to describe, but essentially it was knowing that everyone was speaking from the same mind. That there was a single, that we had in some way at some level of consciousness tapped into a mind or a source of intelligence that was not individual, that transcended and included all of the individuals, and what you found was that it was obvious that what it was that was speaking through each individual was the same thing,…you literally felt like you had become the thoughts, that each person speaking was another thought of a single mind, that was emerging at the edge of the evolutionary process, that had now been activated enough that it could start to enquire into how it could evolve further (JC).

And you realize that the content of what you had been talking about really wasn’t the point at all. The content was a vehicle for coming together, but the exact nature of the discussion and what you were talking about wasn’t really the point. There were probably 100 different contents that you could have been discussing, and if you did it with the same tenacity of continuing to follow what was authentically shared, you get to that take-off point, and then once you get to that takeoff point usually an entirely different discussion wants to be had than what you started with…The We Space is clever so it often uses bits and pieces form the preliminary discussion and weaves it into the post discussion, but it’s clear that it has its own agenda (JC).

It’s literally a new kind of consciousness that emerges as the result of the many coming together, almost like it’s its own entity. There’s a third force in the room that at the same time is just itself, and it’s almost like god is coming into reality through a matrix held open by a group of individuals, and now looking at that reality through and with and as that group of individuals and realizing like, right, I have all these brains and hearts and all this life experience that I can use (WM).

It’s like the sound barrier, [when] you break through the sound barrier, if the airplane goes slower, then it will be below the sound barrier, and in a way it’s similar with what I experience in groups, that there are actually jumps, psychic jumps that arise when the intensity the clarity the intention the participation, the ability to relate and the transpersonal insight becomes bigger, they grow, then there is a jump when a group suddenly has a new level of intelligence that wasn’t there before (TH).

While I have come to see the preliminary stages of We Space as having an extraordinarily important role in the creation of this awakened We, there is a clear inflection point between a causal space of shared awareness, and the emergence of this We being.

*Awakened We Space is evolutionarily significant, and both fundamentally service- and future-oriented.[[33]](#footnote-31) “*The [Awakened] We Space...is one that’s immediately focused on application in the world, and problem solving… the motivation from a place that’s trans-dual is immediately service to the world” (DD). “[There are] two parts: it’s one thing to go to the bottom of the U [i.e. to enter the space of shared self-reflexive awareness,] but you have to come back up and be of service to the world” (OG).

As you evolve as an individual you get to a place where it’s a dead-end. There’s a dead end to personal evolution. In your personal evolution you stumble upon the collective, you stumble upon the fact that you’re on this journey with many, many souls, and the fact that there’s a project that’s far beyond your own personal enlightenment and your own personal liberation (SM).

This seems akin to me to the Bodhisattva vow in Buddhist practice. The space of service to all beings flows from the awakened mind; it is its natural orientation to other. In an awakened We Space, in a We Space that is defined not by we/they, the orientation is towards service as well. This service is not something separate from the We Space itself: an orientation of service is co-extensive with an awakened We Space.

This sense of service is closely linked into world-making, and the possibilities of our human future.

[In group practice, creating a field of integration and intensity] we will also [find] the gate to the future[[34]](#footnote-32), the future potential of us as a group, of us as a state, of us as an institution, of us as a human being. This is where all the genius information comes from, all the genius imprints of people before their time they come from this place, they come from the future, from a more conscious place than what we see now…I need to be able to open a gate through not-knowing, a gate to the future…there is a terminology that says when you stop being motivated by the past, and by the outer knowings of the world, [you become motivated by] the inner connection, the connection to this higher intelligence or this inner guidance or your inner…[which is] actually just a future pool…if you hear this louder than the noise around you then this starts motivating you …you are no longer coming with your main motivation from the past, and re-creating past patterns, but you are actually coming from the future, establishing innovation in the circle of influence that you are working in…We need more and more people that…have this turning movement in their motivation, because once the past is not my main motivation…I will bring much more innovation into relationships, into working places, into different fields of human endeavors…this will be the constant update to society and I believe that this will be the only sustainable society, sustainable in the sense that every time that the structure is built, and it has fulfilled it’s purpose it can be let go of and we can create a new structure that is more functional (TH).

The experience of Awakened We Space brings about this sense of revelation, the orientation of experience towards being of service to the future unfolding of human consciousness and potential. “The process was…revelatory. We all immediately saw it as the future of humanity, that we would all learn how to function, like how to link up like a cloud, we could all link up into this new type of We clouding, together, to solve problems as collectives, instead of just as individuals or in some kind of collaborative holistic way” (DD).

The reason why it touches so much with the future, for one thing the future is always already here …and it is really knocking, it’s knocking for us to awaken to what’s our human potential, and our human potential involves giving a voice to something that’s way beyond any of us, and starting to feel that which is beyond any of us have a voice, have a body, have a the ability to affect third dimensional reality- there’s a descent of something that wants to become physical (SM).

It is as if our collective future is reaching in through these experiences to get us to lay the practical tracks for that very future. Whether in this more mystical sense experienced during an awakened We, or simply in the more personal practices of We Space, there is the sense that this way of relating is in our future, that what is now being practiced by groups in pockets of our culture is spreading to become a way of being present with relationship.

There’s a sense of being called. there’s a sense of the future that actually is pulling [me]… beyond my own personal evolution, and my sense of that is that the future is just grabbing you by the neck and saying you know, if we we’re presented with such a slate of challenges as a human family and if you look at all of them individually to contemplate and if you look at them together they’re dizzyingly difficult to contemplate, and there’s a sense that my sense of what this space is telling us is there is a way through this, there is a way that we can navigate the times that we’re living in, but that way involves us, we have to come together, it’s about breaking through this pattern of personal evolution to collective evolution, and in order to do that we’ve got to begin to give place to something which is beyond ourselves (SM).

*Awakened We Space is a sacred experience.* What is revealed in We Space is often a way of thinking about the sacred that is quite different than our conventional notions, even those on the leading edge of mainstream thought. An entire thesis could have been written about this emerging spirituality, but I will here only briefly explicate what I mean here, and what I think my interviewees meant, in invoking the sacred. In personal We Space practices, there is the sense that we come in to touch with something inherently invaluable in meeting another person in a transparent way. There is a depth of living that we have seen as being nourishing and healing, and truly profound. This was my introduction to these practices, in the sense of “Holy Cow, that’s a real person across from me. I’ve heard of these but I’ve never seen one!” In the causal space of shared awareness, distinctions between what is sacred and what is not, what is spirit and what is not, are breaking down, or have broken down entirely. There is no metaphysical other-god, rather the sacred is extended from the sense of preciousness of human connection, to the sense of preciousness of life itself, extending into the pasts we have come from, and the future we are walking into. In awakened We Space, reality itself is revealed as being sacred, alive, and conscious. There is nothing other than spirit, and there never has been, in a great dance with itself, present in every simple moment of life. “This is sacred work” (MM).

**Evolutionary Being-in-the-World-with-Other[[35]](#footnote-33)**

*The state of We Space points towards a possible acquired stage of cultural development.* This has implications for personal ways-of-being:

There’s something about this work that, one more generally or more broadly begins to reconfigure how we are, and how we show up in our experience, and for people who’ve gone into that, it can be quite, quite foundational in that it really can reconfigure our ontological sense of being- our sense of how we are, and how we’re thinking and…we can carry that into listening, and carry that into speaking, and into our way of relating (OG).

It also has implications for our ways of being-together:

It’s a matter of speeding up human intelligence in this collective space, and I believe that it will happen in the way that small groups, here and there around the planet, will practice, this will make these appearances, and…it will only last a little bit, but it will make a probability… it [i.e. awakened We Space] will disintegrate again and it will arise again, because it’s not stable yet. It will arise for moments, for hours, for days, and then it will not be seen again, but at a certain stage it will create a kind of coherent net and then there’s a kind of possibility that the leading edge of development will become a kind of more sustainable state that will start creating structures… to support new ways of being together, ways of teaching, ways of therapy, healing that will not be anymore individualistic so strongly (TH).

Hübl goes on to tie together many of the themes that run through the interviews: the difficulty of the work, the emergence of a way-of-being that is constantly re-iterating itself, the necessity of a stillness/silence based practice, and the habits, or patterns of subtle boundaries, that we draw around our experience:

There is something in meditation that I can tap into deeper, the states, but I also can in a way put myself into the next level of evolution, I believe that life creates habits, habits tend to stick, so if I get stuck I am constantly updating my life as I get stuck, there is a constant development as a flow… a continuous updating and dis-identification with the old structure, and opening myself to the new, and so and so this I call the competence of movement and the other one is the competency of stillness…[and we contribute our] participation and energy into this experiment in order to let a new level arise, and by the time it will become more and more stable as something that will emerge spontaneously, and I think [in] the first groups doing this…it will seem like work, but the purpose of this is to make yourself ready, to jump… We want to establish a way of living, which I believe we are in the conscious development [of, where] we develop and evolve effortlessly (TH).

Michael Wombacher similarly talks about the possibilities for a way of living stemming from these practices: “what kind of values would start to emerge between the people that decided to hold this [awake Space] open together… what kind of culture would emerge if we would decide that this is what we’re giving our lives to?”

Often when it really lands, people want to experience it for ten minutes and then that’s enough…you have to say let’s stay with it, let’s stay with it this is good, let’s not try to separate ourselves form the experience, because people feel so full in the experience you know that it’s almost like an orgasm that just keeps on going and at one point you say okay I’m done. That’s the tendency of the individual, and we have to be familiar with that energy and the profundity of it and realize that this is the next stage in our human family, this is the next normal, and it’s not even the end, this is just the next normal and then beyond that there’s something even more profound that’s awaiting, so let’s stop seeing this as something that we just touch into once in a while. It’s actually something that we’re called to embody and be 24/7, it’s really it’s our next stage of evolution, we’ve pushed the edge of individual evolution…and we’re popping into this new collective (SM).

**Features, Descriptions, and Injunctions for We Space**

*We Spaces relies on ‘container-setting:’ the establishment of an environment of earnestness, trust, sincerity, intimacy, and vulnerability between participants.* Our boundaries are who we are, or at least whom we identify ourselves as. For us to become more fully ourselves and transcend those boundaries, for us to engage each other in intimacy and authenticity[[36]](#footnote-34) through those boundaries, we must have a deep trust in the others in the room. “You have this extraordinary sense of having so much trust in the room, you have a sense of being more authentically your self than you ever have been because you’re not protecting anything, all your guard is down, the barriers are down, you’re very open” (MW). “It’s really, really vital that we build community, and we build a sense of trust, and that can only be done over time. That type of container is invaluable” (DD).

*Personal familiarity and affinity, a sense of community, helps the work ‘go deep.’* This is closely related to the above. In the short term, you need trust in the room to practice We Space. In the long term, the more familiar you are with those you are working with, the deeper you can go together. “I need a practice that helps me with this, which is…to have a community that is a support field for this practice, and a way of living our life so that we learn to listen to the spaciousness inside while we walk our path” (TH). A community can act as a powerful and supportive holding space:

You can see what happened… to someone that was going through something very profound in their life and had some major breakthrough…there was a community that at the very least was aware of and holding something that was beyond themselves…working together to hold that, and you can see [that] person going through a whole lifetime of pain and suffering, and forgiveness of self and others,

and so many elements of self being healed through others, and you can see how powerful it can be, when people come together and start to really hold that space (SM).

Part of the reason why community can be so powerful is that it can be so *difficult*:

It’s hard…when it gets more intensified. I’ve had people that are leaders, that are awesome people, and their egos get challenged in a certain way, and they’re like, “well... I don’t think so!” …The space of the connection and the relatedness is not as important as their agenda, and they’re going to go off and do their agenda…[being in a committed community] can be like being married to all of these people, and it can be brutal, because people are so crazy sometimes, but that’s the excitement…I know how to inspire people in a couple of days, you know, that’s not hard, you can have an amazing space, like having a fantastic weekend with someone you just met, that’s different than years of really allowing this to deepen more and more and explode (PA).

*We Space relies on the full participation and responsibility of each participant.* DiPerna had the following reply when I asked him how he facilitated We Spaces: “I don’t believe We Spaces can be facilitated!...We spaces are fully and only participatory, with all of the members completely involved, so no matter what kind of facilitation we have, the experience of emergent we can only happen to the degree that everybody becomes the facilitator.” Just as a conversation is richer with all participants fully involved, so is a We Space richer when all participants are ‘showing up,’ fully giving their attention and presence to the group’s practice. “I don’t think any of us really exactly knew what we were trying to achieve, but we were all giving an extraordinary amount of energy to making something happen” (JC). “For it to be optimal I think it asks people to give their best” (OG). Miss-steps are a part of the process: “it’s okay to make mistakes at the discernment process…we’re learning” (MM), though they can be difficult to deal with: “…your ego just has to kind of deal with it… it’s an impersonal event, and we’re all just learning by our own mistakes, by other’s mistakes, and there has to be a whole lot of humility on your part and a willingness to take care of the screaming of your own ego at various points…” (MW). It is only when everyone takes full responsibility as being the author of the space that We Space really clicks, and this can be a very unfamiliar way of being interpersonally:

At first when people come into GTC [Generating Transformative Change] they’re like, “where’s the holding space…tell me what to do and how to go deep, where are the exercises?” And they find that they’re not there, because what we’re really doing is having people pay attention to the collective, to the [structures of] We Space themselves, and to take hold of that and form that themselves, and so at first it feels like there’s no holding, but we’re actually holding that, we’re beginning just to look at what’s present as a We Space (GF).

A We Space is composed of *every*one that is practicing at the moment, and calls forth everyone’s responsibility to author the Space. In the subtle work, showing up fully might mean making huge mistakes that allow one to see themselves in a different light, or it might mean speaking up when one’s natural inclination is to stay quiet. In the causal work, one gives their all moment-to-moment, and the fullness of the individual can shine through empty personal boundaries. For an awakened We to emerge, each participant must be present in such an intense way.

*We Space involves following the energy and intensity in the relational space between individual participants.* Another clear thread of agreement among all of my interviewees was the heightened energy and intensity of We Space practice. “The more energy you put into it, the more you get out, the more you want to put into it” (JC). “It’s difficult to convey the ecstasy, the intensity, the radical, and I do mean radical impersonality, of that experience” (MW). This intensity and energy come from the synergy of people coming together and giving the space their all, and is both a facilitator and a product of releasing our habits of being and relating:

When I say intensity I mean we have the tendency to contract back into this separate sense of self, and what we do now in the group is we say okay, let’s intensify how we relate to each other, let’s intensify the presence, the clarity, let’s intensify the participation, let’s intensify the awareness and let’s intensify the love and compassion and so when I take these ingredients and I say okay

when we come together, we are really here, we will all call each other on everything that we pick up, we will look at the small details of life because they tell us a lot (TH).

Additionally, it is not just that by giving energy, one receives more energy personally, as with Carreira’s quote above: an important practice and element of We Space is to ‘follow the energy,’ the let the energy of the moment continue to deepen. Two quotes from Wombacher help to illustrate this:

In terms of following where the conversation is, you want to just listen for what’s higher and deeper, higher and deeper, that’s where you want to put your attention, and you have to keep putting it there and intuitively from the deepest dimension of your own self follow that.

The other thing is if you speak, if someone else has spoken, you know so often in conversation we just wait to make our point, we wait for an opening to make our point- but you can’t do that. If you respond you have to do so from what the person immediately before you just said from the immediacy of your own experience, and from the position of not already knowing but wanting to know, that’s very different from wanting to make a point. And again you start to appreciate how difficult this is and how much ego is involved in all of this…you have to be willing to take feedback so if a group leader says to you that was completely off, you have to be willing to do this or this, you cannot get defensive.

In the subtle, following the energy of the moment helps to continually focus one’s attention on the tangible present moment, both with the energy of the group, and with what is actually happening in one’s experience moment to moment. In the causal, this develops into a moment-to-moment group inquiry, and can allow the energy of a group to build upon itself, each contribution to the space further opening up the group’s potential, until an awakened We can emerge.

*We Space involves the practice of transparency and clear communication.* Hübl teaches a practice called ‘transparent communication,’ and I’ve adopted the word transparent and am using a few Hübl quotes. Whatever word was used by my interviewees, the concept was the same: We Space invites the freely shared disclosure of what is ‘up’ in the experience of the practitioner, regardless of what it is, while also listening to the other without letting the self-filter to get in the way:

We developed a tool that is called transparent communication, it’s an empathic way of communicating, which means that I’m really listening but I’m not only listening I’m also attuning myself to the field of information that I interpret as the other, so I take cues, I will attune my whole awareness, not only listen to you, but then I also in a more deep way listen to the person that I see but also your life.

Hübl also offers a beautiful description of how this practice helps bring one’s identification from the subtle to the causal:

By listening and allowing impulses from a deeper place to arise, by practicing communication we learn not to listen to symptoms [i.e. the subtle, surface patterns of self] but to more and more learn to read the sources of symptoms, because most of the people they talk about symptoms, it’s the reflection, in the mirror, of their level of consciousness on the surface.

While I did not interview anyone associated with Authentic World for this project, I did take a five-month long training with them in their central intersubjective meditation, *circling*, and there is a similar emphasis on disclosure, transparency, and clear communication, focusing on making clear statements of experience (e.g., what a person is wanting in the moment), on ‘sharing the impact’ that others have on you, and on surfacing assumptions that one might have of the other that can get in the way of seeing someone clearly. Gunnlaugson gives a beautiful summary of the potential of this kind of transparent communication: “when beings start speaking to beings, something socialized starts to fall away and something else starts emerging.”

*We Space is supported by commitment and agreements among practitioners.* This is true for any We Space, whether in the short or the long term, and was mentioned explicitly by each of my interviewees, but since EnlighteNext puts such a strong emphasis on commitment, I am using two quotes here by Jeff Carreira to help elucidate this, and his quote on page twenty-five is also relevant:

We actually got pretty good at eliciting that kind of experience [of We Space], you know to varying degrees of intensity but pretty consistently we were able to bring groups of people together in that, but we realized that without that experience happening in some kind of committed context, it tended to be an experience that people would have, and then walk away from, and maybe they’d want to come back and repeat it, but it didn’t necessarily lead to anything,

Without a genuine commitment to work through what is difficult, which is where the greatest amount of energy is liberated for personal development and liberation, and group evolution, it is too easy to leave when it gets tough, it is “intense, very difficult work, and particularly as it gets very serious, not many people are up for it.” As we identify ourselves as our subtle boundaries, that is, we think they are who we are, when they are challenged we have a myriad of defenses to ensure that they are not breeched. To earnestly transcend them, we must commit to staying present especially in periods of greatest reactivity.

*We Space takes a great deal of effort from participants.* We have seen this theme already running through many of the quotes, and will see it again, so I will only sum this up quickly. The energy of our habits and patterns, personally and interpersonally, is strong, and hard to counter. Like any worthwhile personal development, and like any marriage, We Space takes a great deal of effort.

*We Space is a practice of discernment.* Miriam Martineau phrases this well:

…intra-personal discernment…where am I residing in myself, am I residing in my contracted frontal sense of self, in my personality, or am I able to drop into that deeper essential I that I am? and then if I can drop into that place you know when am I seeing an impulse or nudge to speak in and speak it offered into the space?... there’s also the discernment and the listening to everything that happens within the circle, so if someone is speaking you are listening also not only to the words but to the vibration, to where it’s coming from… is this coming from a place of authentic self within the other, does it have that quality? and if it does you know than anyone in the circle who is moved to can actually build upon it.

To follow the energy of the group, one must be able to discern what the energy of the group is. To deepen the energy, one must be able to discern what is shallow, what is deep, and what is deeper still. Practicing at our fullest, going all-out, making mistakes is an important part of the learning process, and the group will help you course-correct when you do, which will sharpen your discernment of where in yourself you are interacting from. “It’s super-important, and you know it goes against the post-modern sensibilities that say listen to everyone, [but you need to] listen to the select few that get it” (MW).

*We Space* *requires silence and deep listening, and is a practice of speaking from silence/the depths of oneself.* “You have to really practice listening, we don’t generally listen to each other during conversations…I’m pretending to listen superficially so I can find a way to make my point. We’re not listening from a place of genuine curiosity” (MW).

Silence is okay and I find that so incredibly important as a guideline [for We Space] because many people are not comfortable with silence and if you’re coming together and you’re not okay with silence it’s very easy then for the ego battle to come in, and then you know there’s a bit of discomfort and I feel like I should say something (MM).

This kind of listening is not simply a listening for sound, or a listening for information. The silence *is* the listening. “I’m saying listening beyond your ears, listening with your whole being, listening with your soul, so that when you feel a soul nudge to speak, you feel your authentic core as an impulse there, then you have the courage to [speak from your depths]” (MM). In profound states of shared awareness, the silence is listening and speaking at-once. In subtle work, this kind of listening and speaking is a continual injunction to put your attention elsewhere than your habitual self, and to train your performance of deeper self-sourcing. In the causal, this becomes more natural and expands, until in an awakened We, Spirit is listening and speaking to itself through the participants.

*We Space is a practice of non-exclusion.* Closely linked to the need for participants to show up as their full selves, non-exclusion is the complimentary opposite of discernment. While it is important to make discernments about who joins a practice group depending on what the intention of the group is, about where in oneself one is speaking from, and about where another is speaking from, it is crucial that what appears in the space is welcome.[[37]](#footnote-35) We Space welcomes what is authentically in the experience of any member of the group, and individuals are not shamed for how they are showing up. Stephan Martineau, in a response to a question of mine, gives a good example of how this might work in practice:

Ideally [feedback] needs to be absolutely embracing, where you need to be more discerning is in the invitation process, and once someone’s in the circle it needs to be so embracing of the whole person, and feedback has to be almost, in a way unspoken, it can be as simple as a, “thank you Joe for your contribution, this was a very interesting perspective that you’re bringing in here, but I think that what Sam was up to is maybe something that we should keep focusing on here.” That would be a way of just embracing the person completely and at the same time redirecting the energy to the sweet spot that just got dissipated a little bit…Joe’s attempting his best basically. It’s not to dismiss someone’s attempt, it’s more to redirect the energy towards what is juicy, and to stay with that, and trust that Joe will feel it, that he will feel the difference. “Oh that ‘s true Sam was on to something, and what I just said was not on what Sam said.” Allow that process to be felt by people.

Non-exclusion also refers to one’s own relationship to the contents of one’s own consciousness. As Fitch’s quote on page twenty points towards, part of moving into identification with the causal whether as a state or as a structure is that subtle material in the self that is usually dis-identified with begins to come into conscious awareness. For a simple example, one might begin to feel persistent feelings of shame as one moves into causal identification. Part of solidifying one’s identification in the causal is to allow the shame (non-exclusion) while not indulging it, or taking it as being referent to an objective state of reality (i.e., “I am bad.” This is discernment.)[[38]](#footnote-36) Non-exclusion also refers to the evolutionary way-of-being-in-the-world-with-other, where, while it is important to discern amongst people for specific contexts and practices (i.e. to enact an awakened We Space, it is necessary to practice with people who are at least well established in causal awareness), in the ‘real-world,’ you can be with everyone, and in every social occasion, carrying the same space subjectively. Each being can be encountered with the same respect for their subjectivity as during intense practice.

*We Space is a practice of impersonality.* Allowing the subtle experience to be present without identifying with it (or dis-identifying with it, which is a form of identification), that is, practicing both non-exclusion and discrimination, is an *impersonal* practice. If what composes our personalities is the subtle boundaries with which we form our experience and the world we take as real around us, then to practice awareness of what is inside and outside of those boundaries, while orienting from a place which is not described/limited by those boundaries, is by definition a non-personal practice. “Speaking as that larger self…you can feel an intelligence that isn’t personal speaking through you” (TP). “You don’t speak personally…if somebody speaks personally then everything that was happening in the room becomes about them, but there’s a way to speak from personal experience without speaking personally and that basically has to just be learned” (MW).

We use the fuel of the trapped intelligence of the shadow for forward movement and then we will not be so consumed by ourselves and tuning out, so once I tune in with you, I need to make inside myself a bit of a space, which means I need to put my own personality a bit to the side in order to see you and if I do this I open already a bit of an intersubjective spaciousness that allows new information to come in (TH).

*We Space is a practice of curiosity, which opens into a field of living inquiry*. “Authentically listening and not already knowing, being very curious, responding from the immediacy of your own experience [are important elements of creating We Space]” (MW). “A dis-identification [with experience], a curiosity about what it is that’s emergent, a willingness not to be the center of the universe…all of these are elements of the attitude set that allow people to resonate with [the causal field]” (TP). Taking a stance of curiosity allows us not only to discover newness, but also radically brackets all that we think we know, and allows us to continually surface underlying assumptions about the way things are, leaving us open to the transparency of our own selves. In subtle work, taking a stance of curiosity towards your own and other’s experiences helps you from getting stuck in assumptions, abstract discussions, and personal patterns. If I become angry and react to that anger, I reinforce it. If I am curious about it, if I take responsibility for it instead of locating its cause as external to myself, (e.g., ‘you made me mad!’) then I may discover something about myself in relationship. As the focus shifts from individual patterning to the group field, this attitude opens into a radically alive and in-the-moment inquiry. There is no pre-defined goal to reach in We Space: we are always learning and discovering, the boundaries of our investigation creatively unlimited.

It felt to me that inquisitiveness and curiosity were foundational to opening the space… it’s a stance, you come at it from a place of inquisitiveness and curiosity, and that opens the space for everyone for this to emerge, so it’s not about something we know, not a place for us to voice some of our beliefs and concepts and philosophies and experiences, it’s more about opening yourself up to something that we share together, so curiosity and inquisitiveness is a really important element of creating these spaces where and when people come together (SM).

This is true in the smallest, and largest scope, both in moment-to-moment practice, and in a general orientation to the work and life itself: “I’m learning about this every day, every month, and I think whatever I know about it now is very much a work in process, a work in progress” (TP).

There’s always a next step, and it’s never a given, and it always needs to be discovered and then taken, and you take that step and then you need to discover the next step. In the most general sense that’s the conversation that emerges at the edge, because the evolutionary impulse has the intention and energy to evolve, but it doesn’t necessarily know how to evolve in human form. It needs human beings to work together to figure out how to evolve, and that’s what we tend to do when we as a collective make a heroic effort to surrender to the reality of the evolutionary impulse that’s moving through us and come together in that context, then what we naturally start to talk about is what the evolutionary impulse wants to know, which is how do I do this in human form, and it’s very deep and profound, and you really do start to feel like it’s the authentic self or the We Space becomes the vehicle for the evolutionary impulse to have a conversation with itself about how do you evolve in human form, and without the We Space it can’t actually have that conversation (JC).

As noted, the sense of direction, dedication, and commitment is as important as the openness. As foundational boundaries become transparent, we find that true openness relies on a strong directivity, and vice-versa.

Andrew:…this sense of real dedication…but to what?

Patricia: but to what?!?[[39]](#footnote-37)

As in Carreira’s quote just above, there is a strong sense of direction, dedication, and drive, but the outcome is spontaneous. Whatever happens in a We Space is not anyone’s ‘doing,’ this happens without anyone’s direct operation. As Miriam Martineau points out: “there is a ton of grace involved.” It is also why it is so important to enter fully into the Space, and to be willing to make mistakes. Listening, not-knowing, openness, they are all ways of describing this fundamental practice, which is itself foundational for a post-metaphysical, evolutionary way of being as the world together.

*We Space is a practice that both requires and strengthens our post-ego, integrated selves.* Before jumping into this theme, I want to point something significant out about the wording: the practice is the goal, the practice is the means for practice. From a viewpoint where linear time has become transparent,[[40]](#footnote-38) cause-and-effect, or action and result, have very different meanings. This dynamic is something intimately tied in with Carreira’s sense that the more energy that goes in to We Space, the more energy there is available for We Space, or the similar dynamic with the shadow. Presence works similarly. Presence is a sense organ, its object is presence, and it is strengthened through presence, through putting awareness on presence. To source ourselves from a post-ego position, we source ourselves from a post-ego position. There is no *how* to putting these dynamics, orientations, and injunctions to work. While this sounds circular, it is perhaps more accurately a spiral: we attempt transparency and find ourselves more transparent with even more transparency to attempt. The simplicity of this can take some time to get used to. In circling training, we would often feel ‘stuck.’ The injunction is to return to whatever is present: what is your experience in that moment. “Well, I’m stuck… oh, and I don’t want to be stuck… actually, I want to be having a good time, but I feel nervous that no one is enjoying themselves.” In presencing what is authentically in experience, the experience of what is authentically present deepens, and abstract thoughts and subtle orientations of self become increasingly obvious and empty.

As for post-egoic ways of being:

Engaging our whole being I think is really important, when the mind the heart the gut the whole being is there and open and it’s all alive in the exploration, I think that’s a really important part of [practice,] allowing all of them to be alive simultaneously (SM).

In this example, practicing showing up with your full body, heart, and mind, helps you show up more fully as an integrated body-heart-mind.

*We Space is synergistic and catalytic.*

We were talking from the we to each other, from the I of the We, and what began to be clear was that from that space we had access to all of the information that each of us singly held. Because we were all a part of this entity, everything you knew was part of this entity… we could actually form this one being, and as this one being we of course had everything that each of us had individually, plus we had the new perspective of a new fuller emergent being that wasn’t possible otherwise, because we now had this new vantage point of the singular we (DD).

Following the trope of We Space being a fundamentally different way of relating from our culturally inherited notions of billiard-ball relationality, We Space is synergistic and catalytic because balls are not merely banging against balls. Every encounter, every moment is genuinely transformative, and exponential rather than additive or even multiplicative. With DiPerna’s quote above, the multiple perspectives of the individuals are not reduced into a single mind: each individual maintains their autonomy, but the We that arises between them is emergent. This sense of an ‘explosion,’ or a ‘landing’ was a common thematic trope: “something just erupted, it was like a circuit: more and more people during the course of the month were kind of stepping into and embracing and embodying a degree of awakened consciousness” (JC).

It’s kind of like tensegrity, the way a dome holds itself up, because there’s a pull and push at all these different points, and it distributes the stress across the system…all those things are complementary and distributed across the whole…a meta-field. One of the metaphors that I use for what we’re doing is that we array our bodies in a circle, and like a group of computers that get linked together, when they do that they call it a massive array, you array your body minds in an array that in a sense becomes a lens that allows the intelligence that’s present in the universe and in all these body minds to arrive in a way that’s not really personal (TP).

**Meta-Sangha**

*We Space allows for a Meta-Sangha*

Perhaps the most surprising theme for me was the theme of the Meta-Sangha, surprising both because it was mentioned in some way by each of my interviewees, and as I had not given it much thought beforehand, or seen it as integrally connected to We Space. We Space provides a way for communities of different traditions to come together and interact, without having to fit into one or the other’s tradition of practice. In a way analogical to what happens to subtle boundaries when individuals come together for We Space practice, this can help to shed light on blind spots in a community of practice.

In a therapeutic relationship, we can gain an objective view of our own shadows through someone else reflecting it back on us so we can actually do work on that. It’s more difficult for us to get a view of our collective shadow, the way that we most easily do that is to collectively come together with another collective, so when us as a group of shared people come together with another group that’s not sharing our same values but they obviously overlap, and then each of our collectives critiquing, this is where you get into a little more of a trans-lineage space (DD).

“We can move beyond separate we spaces and explore the strengths and weaknesses of each individual We Space and come together in a space that brings the best of both to bear” (JC). It appears that We Space is offering the means to build a foundation for a genuinely trans-lineage, inter-spiritual emergence.

A meta-sangha is arising, and this meta-sangha is involved in a wildly wide ranging experiment and exploration, and…this process of exploration is actually a process of collective learning, and that we’re learning how to be us more robustly and more fully and to honor and appreciate the teachers and framers of processes who can catapult us into our shared we awakeness (TP).

**Discussion: Creativity and World-Making**

Several central points come out of these interviews. We Spaces are practices that increase the intensity of the interpersonal space, and provide methods through which individuals can come together in a way that increases their autonomy and their community at once, by surfacing and helping to make transparent the subtle boundaries and ways of metabolizing energy that create our personalities and their corresponding worldviews. Secondly, that We Spaces are practices that increase individual competency in the causal realm of awareness, and enact an interpersonal state of shared, self-reflexive awareness. Out of this space of shared, self-reflexive awareness, something happens that represents a radically different interpersonal possibility: that of the shared group mind. As I have tried to stress, this is a significant evolutionary development.

Additionally, and what I was not trying to discern before the interview process, the interviewees painted a picture of an evolutionary, creative culture, one of awakening, and natural growth, where the animating spirit of life is becoming aware of itself through humanity. Two extended quotes help to sum these interviews up:

You can re-contextualize your entire life, and suddenly the context of your life is blown open and you realize that for one thing you really deeply sense and feel that we’re in this together, there’s a collective journey that we’re a part of, and also you can really sense the momentum of transformation within these spaces. There’s really the potential of transformation to happen really quickly for people. Lifetimes, and I don’t think that’s an exaggeration, lifetimes of karmic evolution can pass through a person in days, and that’s the mathematics that I’m talking about and the thing that gives me so much hope, because when you look at the evolution of a person, and you look at all the steps and all the challenges that they need to face and all they need to figure out and all of the elements that need to come together for them to even see the light in their own evolution, and you look at our global situation that we face and you say ‘oh you know we’re hooped,’ you bring in this element on top of it which completely blows open the mathematics of it all and suddenly there’s real hope in the core. We can really navigate this if we really start to give a voice and give a body and a hosting to this, because that voice, that being, that I totally experience as another, as a being [of its own], has answers that we cannot even imagine, has plans and ideas and perspectives and solutions and directions that none of us can see on our own, and by [giving it] a voice suddenly we have a whole new complex that will open up, for everything we do, and how we relate and the choices that we make (SM).

As you drill down to your intentions people begin to really realize that the reason that they’re in that room is much deeper than the superficial, and that most of them, well probably all of them, have been following an intention however vague it might have been for a long time and have put a lot of energy into it. Even to have worked against the cultural norms that would have tended to knock them off that path, but they stuck to it, so they obviously had a strong intention, and…as that intention begins to come to light, and you begin to see that it wasn’t just your intention, but it’s an intention, it’s an intention in human consciousness, that we, all the people in this room for some reason or another are responding to, and that intention has brought us to this point, to me that’s when the We Space starts to become interesting, because then you do start to have that flip where you begin to see that this is not just however many individuals all on a personal individual journey for spiritual fulfillment that happened to read the same ad for a We Space gathering and happened to end up in the same room. We start to look around and see we’re all vehicles for the evolution of consciousness and this intention to come together in higher consciousness isn’t just an intention in each of us as individuals, it’s an intention at the edge, that’s emerging at the edge of consciousness itself, and it’s gathering those people who have the ears to hear it, who resonate with it, it’s gathering us together in order to explore what’s possible, you know, in that space, and when people start to see that, universes start to open up on what a human really is, what a kosmocentric perspective is, about our actual non-separation form the universal process of development in ways that just flattens the room in the sense that…you recognized that you really were a vehicle through which consciousness at the edge of the universe was developing itself (JC).

This evolutionary way of being enacts a ‘We without a They,’ a term I have heard from Hübl and DiPerna, though I think Hübl originated it. When we ask ‘what do we want to create here?’ the ‘we’ asking the question is the whole of life and being. This is a view of life of radical creativity, where we are freed from the burdens of our collective and individual pasts: they present initial conditions more than final sentences. Each moment arises with a radical newness, and disappears into nothing. It is these insights into the nature of evolutionary possibility that I am mostly left with after this phase of research. “Nothing, not what I think, not what I feel, what I do, is original unless or only if I become infused by the future, if I transcend my karmic package and I become like an active particle of reality, this is the only thing that’s original” (TH).

We often try to transform by forcing ourselves to change, but in the end you realize that the part of you that’s forcing yourself to change isn’t actually connected to the transformational energy of the universe, and if you connect yourself to that energy then change is just what happens, “Oh, I really get it, we really are part of an evolving universe, and human beings you know we really are there to evolve, and if we eliminate those things that stop us from growing, we’ll grow, just like trees. Trees don’t grow into a sprout and then say, ‘oh no I’m going to have to grow into a tree.’ It’s just what happens (JC).

Without a “they,” we are not fighting against an other, even a de-personalized one such as fate, or time, to create our vision: we are rather coming together to birth it. Neither is it a static vision. Every moment, the direction changes. As emphasized, We Spaces involve less a specific goal than a way of travelling together.

That’s a kind of second-order We Space practice because it’s a self-authoring We Space, meaning that you’re authoring the subtle and causal We Space form, and it’s not just what do we want to create but that the process that creates that is a We Space…it’s not a… strategic planning, top-down problem solving approach, but it’s...We space which actually can form and evolve its own We Space (GF).

I can not emphasize enough that the methods of We Space are the spaces brought about. It is not that We Space methods move from the subtle to the causal, but that the practices of transparency, respect for other, attention on connection, etc. move one, and/or a group, from a way of engaging that is subtle, to causal, to awakened. This last one represents a significant inflection point. While subtle and causal We Spaces seem to melt into each other, awakened We Spaces happen after some significant threshold has been reached. I have been stating this threshold as the intersubjective field becoming self-reflexively aware of itself, but I imagine there are many other ways of expressing this. Additionally, as this can sound entirely developmentally biased, one thing that has come through clearly is the compassionate and heartfelt sense of this way of being as the world together. An evolutionary, with no they, can enter any group and act as a catalyst, helping the group reach greater expressions and articulations of their evolutionary direction.

Why does this all happen? Why do We Spaces make our subtle boundaries empty? None of this has been an explanation, exactly, and to be sure what I have been trying to communicate is beyond the realm of objects that are subject to explanation. With that said, We Space calls our attention to the *active* nature of the boundaries that we draw the world with. As we come to synchronize our outer and inner lives, those boundaries become more and more visible. Perspectives on the self from the outside can be brought in line with those we hold personally about ourselves, leading towards greater self-awareness, and greater awareness in general. In terms of field effects, coming into contact with a field of resonance at a stronger and higher vibration can tune an individual. Freeing up Shadow material releases energy to show up more fully autonomous, where deeper levels of Shadow can emerge, making the process snowball. Diving into the innumerable and invisible whys that must be for any of the interviews to make sense, let alone together, and according with my experiences of We Space practice, the simplest explanation is that We Space brings us into contact in ourselves and others with this sheer and dancing naked Living, showing us the potential of lives intensely Alive, and making us want to live so. In a way, any of the practices could be said to be to hold the secret of We Space: presence, or transparency, or clear communication. They are each enfolded within the others, revealing as a whole the light that is and illuminates them.

In that sense, I feel no closer to an answer than when I began, though my understanding of “What is We Space” has certainly been honed, in some cases revolutionized or matured. That is to say that I have moved closer to a horizon that is ever receding. First, though, I will present my first-person methods to give some account of my own meaning making as a researcher, before moving on to the third person, and the conclusion.

**Results and Discussion: First Person Methods**

*Psychometric Analysis*

My score in December 2011 on the SCTi was 5/6, which corresponds to the Construct Aware stage in Cook-Greuter’s model. Construct Aware individuals are “able to take successive perspectives on perspectives at will” (O’Fallon, 2010, p 59), and are also aware of projections in the moment, as they arise. For the first time in development, the subtle ego becomes transparent and becomes an object in awareness. This does not mean that the ego disappears, but that in accounting for and interpreting data, personal[[41]](#footnote-39) distortions of meaning-making due to the ego’s attempt to construct an enduring reality and meaning out of the conditioned reality of the embodied self can be accounted for (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 29). To a Construct Aware individual, “the conventional belief [in] a permanent object world [is] deconstructed as interpretation and context-dependence [is] recognized as crucial to any knowledge endeavor” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 29). “Final knowledge about the self or anything else is seen as illusive and unattainable through effort and reason because all conscious thought, all cognition is recognized as constructed and, therefore, split off from the underlying, cohesive, non-dual truth” (Cook-Greuter, p 28).

The Construct Aware level of meaning making brings many strengths for a researcher. Epistemological flexibility allows me to inhabit a number of non-native perspectives, while also accounting for them with a minimal degree of ‘warping’ due to my own personal egoic biases. “Unlike earlier stages, Construct-aware persons are aware of the ego’s clever and vigilant machinations at self-preservation” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 28). As in Appendix A, these machinations at self-preservation are integral to one’s meaning making, and the ability to observe them allows for a meaning making that is not exclusively sourced on the psyche’s abstract flight from impermanence. This is an early phase of what I have been calling a ‘post-metaphysical way of being,’ and is necessary for the complex accounting of multiple perspectives as being equally ‘real.’ Additionally, this is important for the overall project of Integral Research, which is a generative comparison and interpenetration of multiple enacted constructival-perspective sets of reality between individuals and groups of researchers. The cross-paradigmatic capabilities of this stage of meaning-making are also necessary for a truly embodied and creative Integral Research, where the researcher is not only modeling earlier researchers, but also generating new and fecund combinations of perspectives and methodologies. Add to this the “capacity to draw from and appreciate insights from non-rational sources of information” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 30), and the Construct-aware individual as researcher has the potential for emergent and encompassing enactments of data as truth, goodness, and beauty. With an emphasis on methodology, any project of Integral Research properly carried out develops valid data, but construct awareness brings along the ability to enact worldviews creatively through research, as opposed to an attempt explicitly or subtly aimed at uncovering a pre-existing truth.

Construct awareness brings weaknesses to a researcher as well. Construct Aware individuals can often feel as if they’ve “swallowed a tsunami” (O’Fallon, 2010, p 60), as the release of a sense of reality as arising from personal identifications of and within the egoic personality structure that had previously and for all of the mental life been understood to reveal and contain reality opens the individual to a constant and layered phenomenological world where every apparent object of consciousness shines in immediacy. Where once reality had been carefully structured to allow only certain streams of experience through, at Construct Aware, the dam has burst. “All objects” in the Construct Aware individual’s consciousness “are human-made constructs, including such abstract constructs as the ego, three-dimensional space and time. All are based upon layers and layers of symbolic abstraction” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 27). This can make it extremely difficult to find footing and grounding for any presentation of data. “Final knowledge about the self or anything else is seen as illusive and unattainable through effort and reason because all conscious thought is seen as constructed, and, therefore, split off from the underlying, cohesive, non-dual truth” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 27). I resonate strongly with this description, and it can often be difficult for me to even write a sentence on the page. Sentences seem simplistic, or inadequate, or conversely entirely too complex and filled with caveats. Additionally, the cultural tendency to offer abstract explanation is strong. When everything is a construct, it can be difficult to prioritize constructs in communication, especially with the function of knowledge creation. “No matter what level of abstraction and what level of cognitive insight one gains, one is always separated from the underlying nondual reality” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 28). Not yet fluent in a kind of communication that is entirely post-abstract,[[42]](#footnote-40) I have felt at times a great deal of awkwardness around communicating great abstractions about the essential lacuna of abstract communication. Furthermore, as this stage is transitional, no longer entirely personal, but neither entirely transpersonal, I feel the possibility for massive confusion is high. The fundamental and seed boundaries out of which the personality grows are in the process of becoming empty (assuming a developmental trajectory), and so while at the Construct Aware level one’s subtle meaning making *can* be apparent to an unprecedented extent, the subtle boundaries that are *not* empty within one’s overall life-world are likely to be those that are the most ingrained, and the most distorting. Said differently, as no one psychometric score is perfectly descriptive of a person’s life world, those areas in my life where fundamental boundaries and my own subtle ego are not empty are likely to be central stage in any presentation. A central example of this may be the following: “they want to face their own profound need for theories and explanations. They hope to unearth the limits of the rational mind, and to unlearn their automatic, conditioned responses based on memory and continuous, everyday cultural reinforcement” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 28). “To deal with the fundamental assumptions about human nature and one’s need to make order out of the chaos is one of the main existential concerns of men and women at these two highest stages of ego development” (Cook-Greuter, 2007, p 28). I have experienced this much as I experienced the experiential paradox that occurs when one is making meaning chiefly as an Individualist, when the embodied understanding of the role of context in meaning-making, and becoming context aware, brings about the dissolution of the most essential frames of reference through which one had implicitly understood the self and world. When everything is meaningful in context, everything appears to become meaningless. Another way to phrase this is that when there is no objective truth without subjectivity, meaning is arbitrary. The profound depression that I felt during this period in my life itself belied the meaning that was immediately present to me, and was finally my way out of this period. Sure, everything may be meaningless, but if there were truly no meaning, it *could not* mean anything to me! Similarly, I experience now a drive and a “profound need” to make meaning out of the limits of the rational mind’s meaning making. I have experienced a much more minor and occasional depression along with the sudden hollowness of all that I have felt to be meaningful from the perspective of my subtle ego, and this excitement and drive to make meaning. At this point, however, I am still not entirely sure how (and whether) this drive to make meaning without reference to the subtle ego leads out of the morass of construct horizontality (the inability to prioritize constructs), or whether it does in the first place and if I am mistaken in this intuition.

My paper emerges from this way of making meaning with its benefits and drawbacks. What I have noticed about these spaces in the last two years tracks my own development: I am obsessed with the inadequacy of meaning making emerging from subtle boundaries, my main attention is on awareness itself, and I am beginning to touch upon awakening, within the emergence of an evolutionary way of being as the world together. This, not coincidentally, is exactly the trajectory I have seen in We Space practice, and its progression and development at this moment in time. Rather than seeing this as a problem, though, it is much the point of establishing the first-person perspective in research. The following interpretations are all likely helpful in understanding this: I am seeing/ seeing through my own epistemological lens; We Space, and culture on the edge of evolution, is genuinely just beginning to ground in the causal, and touch on awakening; and I have been attracted to this subject because of this elision. This relates to my focus on inquiry as a living iteration of intent and openness, speaking and listening from present awareness and not an uncritical orientation to one’s self-story, the potential for these practices to reveal nondual awareness and the dissolution of fundamental metaphysical boundaries, and an emphasis on constant creative discovery, change and evolution. “Construct-aware individuals are at the first stage that looks at all experience fully in terms of change and evolution” (Cook-Greuter, p 31). With an appreciation for the human need to make meaning, and transparency to my own subtle and historical ways of meaning making, I am also able to honor people in their present developmental stage without wanting or needing them to be more advanced, or projecting developmental capacities onto them that are stage-inappropriate, while simultaneously holding out the challenge of growth, an orientation that I think is critical to hold We Space.

At least dimly self-aware of all of this, I have put a focus on staying close to my data, and on being concise. I have recognized and disclosed that awakeness is a little too ill-defined for me to speak authoritatively about, which is also perhaps why I’ve left these sections even more than usual to my interviewees. Another factor that shapes the final paper is the difficulty in being certain when something is a discernment, i.e. when there is a legitimate reason for differentiating one phenomenon from the other, and when a distinction I make is structurally metaphysical. Nonetheless, construct awareness should be sufficient for the apperception and articulation of this emerging evolutionary worldview. If I am presenting a type of my mind in this paper through the subject, I have not avoided doing so, but have rather seen it as natural. My wish is that this is sufficient to open up the exploration of We Space, to start and join ongoing conversations.

**Results and Discussion: First Person Intuitive Inquiry**

Returning to my earlier lenses, I was surprised to find how many of them still fit within my overall rubric and understanding of We Space practices. I “overturned” none of them, something which at first I felt concerned by. Had I learned nothing? As I began to come up with my current lenses, however, I began to feel something rather magical, embodied in lens 10. We Space is pointing at something that is absolutely radically new. My intentions were never simply ‘off’ by so much as to be irrelevant to my current understandings, but that is because they acted more like the entrances to a mine: the place that I began digging, the entrance to deeper understandings. In a few cases, the lens flipped, and I realized that I was looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Many of the original lenses are subsumed in later understandings as well, as many anthills lead to the same colony. The original lenses are included as Appendix E. The final lenses are in a generally narrative order below, but are not ranked by importance, comprehensiveness, or the like. These represent the current understandings that I have come to regarding We Space, and as such echo much of what is present in the second-person phase of the project.

*Current Lenses*

Lens 1: *Intersubjective Practices are the conscious practice of relationality, a fundamental aspect of being-in-the-world.* This lens is definitional and foundational, but missing entirely from my original lenses. This is telling: I had been thinking of We Space practice as something that can only happen with a certain developmental achievement. While this is true of the kind of awakened self-reflexive ‘I of the We’ that got me interested in We Space in the first place, and is true as well of the other developmentally dependent practices that I discovered and practiced along the way and which I now include as being ‘We Space,’ the extension of We Space as something humans do in practice spaces to the embodied recognition that we are fundamentally relational, and that this aspect of self/humanity can always be approached consciously has been profound, and feels deeply compassionate. It is as if my focus had been exclusively developmental and evolutionary as I started the project: We Space was a ladder into profound states of consciousness, but outside of We Space, or occasional moments of mutual intimacy and inquiry, I could frequently relate to others who are not capable of such intersubjectivity as if they were not subjects themselves. Obviously, this was not a conscious orientation. As I prepare to become a father this sense has stuck in my mind as well. Even with an infant, even with Nature, the Earth, even with oneself, there is a way of being as the world with other that enters into relationship fully while entirely embracing and respecting the other’s autonomy and agency *even and especially if they are only dimly aware of their own autonomy and agency*. It does not matter who that other is. While intersubjective states of the kind that have been my focus here might not be available in the space between these subjects, a skillful We Space practitioner is practicing co-creation with every other he or she encounters.

Lens 2: *This aspect (relationality) is underdeveloped and often ignored in our culture.* To be sure, I think that our cultural notions of independence, especially in America, *ask* us to treat each other as objects, or competitors. In this I see a deep and subtle distrust of the other, one that does not easily allow for the kind of relationality We Space awakens the potential of. And yet, the deeply healing experience of We Space and practice community speaks to a readiness in the participants, and one that I feel comes out of an imbalance. In AQAL terms, our focus is on developing our Systems, and perhaps secondarily on our own personal selves through therapy or meditation. We are almost *blind* to the equally as deep relational aspect of our lives, and it is as if we are walking around on one leg.

Lens 3: *Intersubjective Practices challenge our developmentally earned notions of independence, or hermetic “billiard-ball” inter-self-hood, and, founded on respect for the other’s subjectivity, open up a similarly developmentally earned inter-relationality in which an individual can take the perspective of the relationship.* This is complementary to the above lens. While the ‘hermetic’ self, or a view of self and other where each is an entirely separate entity, is a developmental achievement, We Space will challenge that sense *when it is over-ripe,* or when the individual is prepared for transformation. I further believe that a child reared by parents with a fundamental respect for the child’s subjectivity will come to understand his or herself as a separate and healthy ego-self without as many developmental ‘scars.’ It may well be impossible to develop much beyond the totally separate self anywhere except a meditation cushion *without* a practice of relationality, however informal.

Lens 4: *There is a developmental trajectory of these practices, both within the practices (i.e., a ‘practice space’ can develop from one kind of being-with-other to the next) and within the individuals (i.e. these practices represent a potent way of facilitating development of an individuals being-in-the-world-with other, that is, the development of their first person experience of self, their 2nd person ways of relating, and their 3rd person understandings of what is real).* Again, by locating a trajectory of practices as being developmental, I mean to say that there is a transcend-and-include relationship to them. Without the balanced interplay of self and other of circling, entering a space of shared awareness becomes much more difficult. The causal space transcends the balanced interplay of circling, but includes it as well. As for the second piece, by constantly and consistently shedding light on metaphysically defended boundaries, boundaries that are implicit in the subjectivity of the self and *not* empty, We Space and intersubjective practices bring about a continuous self-reflexive mode of being that calls an individual to continually grow out of and embrace him or herself.

My sense of this has developed quite a bit in the last eighteen months. I had originally seen the trajectory I am describing here as being primarily about the *practices* themselves, and what they bring about. While different injunctions can lead to different realizations and experiences, this distinction no longer makes sense to me as being primary, with as much stress as it puts on the practice boundary, and as little as it puts on the ‘real world,’ being in the world aspect of relationality. The two trajectories are more a function of the development of relationships,[[43]](#footnote-41) and of individual’s capacities and abilities, and not of the practices themselves. With that said, if the framing and context-setting of an engagement is itself a central focus of We Space practice, then we can say that certain practices can be framed in such a way as to focus attention on particular aspects of relationality, particularly desired intersubjective phenomena, such as awakened We Space, and on particular capacities and abilities that groups or individuals may want to train.

Lens 5: *The 2nd person field can develop from feelings of empathy, insight and understanding of the other, as well as insight, empathy, understanding, healing and ownership of self and shadow, into a self-aware field of intersubjective awareness where participants can feel fully in community while not sacrificing any autonomy, out of which can further emerge an “I of the We,” a group mind not reducible to any of the participants, but dependent on their full participation*. The first stage, which is personal/subtle work, brings the separate sense of self into community, while healing it as well, giving it a solid and healthy foundation for relating. The second stage brings one from the sense of being a body-mind, a whole and healthy separate self, to being presence, shared presence and awareness. Boundaries between I/We, Self/Other, Inner/Outer, are becoming object, but may not be entirely transparent. Finally, in the space of awakened intersubjectivity, a group mind emerges which calls upon each individual’s full presence and autonomy, while having a life and presence of its own. These are broad strokes that necessarily leave out many nuances, but they articulate three distinctly different practice spaces.

Lens 6*: The ‘needs’ expressed by persons in each separate state express a trajectory from ego-based survival needs, to needs for autonomy-in-communion, to needs for self-transcendence, to needs for the creative manifestation of future possibilities.* Following the above, the first stage takes participants into a greater space of self-understanding, and ability to be with others in intimacy, from a way-of-being that is mostly automatic, using the fuel of the need for autonomy-in-communion, breaking down many of the constructions upon which attachment to personalities is based. The second stage takes individuals and brings them into an experience of identity with non-local, non-temporal, shared awareness, fueled by the need for self-transcendence. The final stage that I have been able to discern brings about the “I of the We” from the awakened intersubjective field, fueled by a need to serve the further unfolding and future potentials of humanity and evolution-through-humanity.

Lens 7: *The trajectory of these practices is towards greater autonomy and greater community, and We Space is so a deeply developmentally perspectival practice, where our implicit metaphysical categories are challenged, brought into a dynamic balance, and can eventually become transparent, or empty.* I have stressed this often, partially because I am wary of terms like “one mind.” Because of the way we locate reality in the boundaries between categories like I/We, Self/Other, and out of which grow other locations of reality and our senses of self, it is difficult to conceive of a ‘group consciousness’ that is not an abrogation of individual autonomy. The practices of We Space, however, disclose that while progressive stages of self-identity may alternate between those preferring autonomy and those emphasizing community (Kegan, 1982, e.g.), ultimately the boundaries between autonomy and communion are constructed, and pitting one against the other limits both. Development, even into stages considered more autonomous, entails deeper and deeper possibilities, experiences, and enactments of community, and vice-versa. In conscious community, I am more myself, and I am also more with you.

Lens 8: *The state practice of emptiness of metaphysical boundaries in intersubjectivity sheds light on the ways in which we create our personalities, and can lead towards structural ways-of-being-in-the-world-with-other: it is in fact the direct operation upon this aspect of human being-in-the-world, and an active meditation.*

This is another way of saying that We Space is a developmentally potent practice, along with Lenses 7 and 4. The states brought about in formal We Space practice point the way towards transpersonality in an active, engaged way.

Lens 9: *Many of our crises today as a global humanity stem from our inability to interface and relate with each other, in small and large scopes, from such a way-of-being-in-the-world-with-other. Our technological sophistication has outstripped our ability to create beauty, and goodness*. This lens is basically unchanged from the preliminary version—I have just worded it differently now compared to before. We are developing more and more complex technology, but it is in service of a sense of self and way of being with other that is inherently competitive, and combative. We are overly defensive, we use others as means towards ends, and we are terrified of being affected by the other, of being in community. This may not be the underlying root of our crises, but it may well be thought of as the trunk.

Lens 10: *We are just at the beginning of this, and so this account can only be exploratory, its lines meant to evoke rather than explain.* While I would be rather shocked if any of these lenses turned out to be grossly inadvisable ways of understanding We Space, I would not be surprised if the ‘digging’ of the last two years has been scratching on the surface of the desert with a single hair. There is more potential in our coming to being with each other than I could possibly express in an account like this. If transpersonality is the opening of a finite individual to infinity, our ways of being with each other conventionally is like adding finite amounts. Coming together in We Space is then not even like adding, or multiplying infinities, but like raising infinity to the infinity power, and then again. The metaphor of a baby incubating, or having just been born, comes up often in these spaces, and it is as if the entire history of humanity has been gestation, our entire world and all that we have thought to be real up to this point only the womb. Another common metaphor is that humanity is entering its adulthood, and the implications are similar: we are transitioning from a phase of preparation, and learning how to see ourselves in an entirely new and unfamiliar way, in ways that fundamentally change our ideas of who we are and what we can do. In these tropes, the crises we are undergoing now are initiatory.[[44]](#footnote-42)

Lens 11: *While the experiences of We Spaces are horizontally and vertically developmentally contingent, the practices are not.* In the beginning of the process, as mentioned under Lens 1, I put a great deal of emphasis on the fact that certain practices and certain We Spaces were developmentally inappropriate without the contingent development. Though I think it is extremely important to make discernments about the kind of We Space and practice that is being enacted, and have spent a great deal of energy in this project and paper to make some initial steps towards doing so, the practices themselves are often very simple: the kind of simplicity that, returned to again and again, transforms. In subjective meditation, such a practice is: pay attention to the breath. The injunction is constant, the self changes in years of engagement with the practice. Similarly, a practice like “speak from the deepest part of yourself” has no developmental requirement, beyond an ability to understand the sentence. Practically of course, few people will be drawn to these practices who have not the requisite development to feel a desire for conscious interpersonal engagement. Nevertheless, the most basic dynamics of intersubjective practice, which hold from the earliest to the latest practices, can be practiced by anyone.

**Third-Person Results: Relational Experience**

As noted in the ‘Method’ section, the aims of this phase of research were modest. I was looking primarily for some confirmation that participants in We Space practices found them significant; that is, that there is something about practicing intersubjective awareness that is meaningful in practitioner’s lives, and that is unique to these sets of practices. I did so both by asking questions distilled from my first and second person phases of research to participants, and by comparing participants’ responses about their experiences to non-participants’ responses. While I do not have the training (or funding!) to do a thorough statistical analysis, nor have I selected responders with this kind of analysis in mind, some clear patterns emerged.

The clearest results came from my final two questions to the ‘practitioners’ group, and in comparing this group to the people who had never practiced We Space. For question six, “the above [experiences] have generally occurred more often/ with more intensity than in my day-to-day relationships,” 89.4% of participants responded ‘yes.’ In question seven, a staggering 95.3% felt that participating in intersubjective practices positively affected how they showed up in their social environments (work, school, hobbies, etc.), while 93% felt that intersubjective practice had positively affected their sense of self, and their close relationships. 94.2% felt that it had positively impacted their other relationships, and daily interactions. The lowest percentage for this section felt that intersubjective practices had positively affected their sense of drive and purpose, and this was still 82.6% of respondents. While these questions were not designed to say much, they say it clearly: participants in intersubjective practices experience them as being significantly impactful and positive in their lives.

Comparing the two question-sets regarding specific experiences (question five for practitioners, and question two for non-practitioners), significant trends also appear. First, with the exception of “Community Healing,” which in both groups had the largest cluster in the second-least experience category of “occasionally,” the non-practice group experienced each of the first twelve questions, corresponding to the subtle range of practice, ‘often.’ At the higher end of the frequency range, “every time I am with another,” there were only a handful of responses at 8.6%, and the experiences were mostly 0.0%, or 2.9%, and never more than 8.6%. There was also a clear split between the most common response cluster in the subtle and causal ranges. From experiences 13 to 21, the cluster dropped a frequency category, going from “often” for every experience but “community healing” to “occasionally,” while the higher end of the frequency spectrum was split evenly between 2.9%, and 5.7%. I was surprised that there were as many at the higher end, and so sifted through the responses one-by-one. As several circles that I mostly draw my friends from on are self-identified as ‘integral,’ ‘spiritual,’ and/or ‘conscious,’ including several people who are relational teachers and therapists, I would not have been surprised if one or two people with an extraordinary relational capacity took the survey and cheerfully clicked off the higher end for each choice. What I found when I looked was therefore surprising. For the most part, people clicked ‘occasionally,’ or ‘often,’ with a subset of responders choosing one or two of the higher two categories. Only two responders checked “every time I am with another” more than twice. My interpretation of this is that people have individual relational emphases, and that for them, to be in a relationship *is* to a significant extent, for example, to experience ‘fun’. As people practice We Space, this begins to even out, opening up an opportunity for the repeated awareness of these possible experiences.

I made one decision in designing these that I still have not found a satisfactory solution to, but that I think leads to an interesting interpretation. While the non-participants were being asked how often they experienced the experiences in relationships, the practitioners were asked how often they experienced the experiences *during a session*. With the significant ‘bump’ that occurs in the ‘causal’ area of the experiences, one way to interpret this is that in the subtle realm of experience, We Space practices are somewhat more intense than ordinary relating. The difference between the non-practitioners and the practitioners was mostly one of the causal. While the results of non-practitioners went through a significant drop-off in the causal range, the responses of practitioners saw a significant jump in the same range. The most significant jump was in “a greater/deeper sense of presence,” which, over both surveys, was the only experience whose cluster (44.2% of We Space participants) was in the highest frequency range.

In the Awakening range, which included the final three experiences, the non-practitioners’ responses stayed in the “occasionally” range. The practitioners’ responses similarly dropped from ‘nearly every session,’ the second-most frequent category where the causal experiences were all bunched with the exception of ‘a greater/deeper sense of presence,’ to ‘often,’ remaining one step more frequent than non-practitioners. I feel that this supports an interpretation that We Space brings one to experience these positive relational experiences with a greater frequency than in ‘normal’ relating.

Again, not much can be definitively expressed regarding these results. The samples are skewed, the sample sizes are rather small, and the questions were not designed to hold a level of scientific adequacy. Nevertheless, in the supportive role that the third-person method takes within the overall project, it serves the purpose of broadening my own first-person experiences and intuitions, themselves clarified, expanded, and confirmed by my interviewees and the process of coding the interviews and articulating the findings for this project. In terms of validating the central thrust of the research, that We Space represents a significant development of our ways of being-together, I do feel that this survey provides suggestive support.

**Conclusion: A New Way of Being as the World Together**

We Space represents the first signs of an emergent and radically self-aware way of relating, and we are all called to contribute to and deeply affect its ever-unfolding outcome. If this process has brought about only one insight for me, it is this: we are partners in the creative discovery of our culture, now, and now again. What begins to come into focus with this view is a new way of being as the world together emerging as a response to the crises of the age. Another way of saying this is that the problems of our outdated social modes of being have begun to significantly outrun the benefits we have received from them, and we are called to reconvene to develop the new social agreements and ways-of-being that can address these problems, global, and meta-systemic as they are. While relationship is a fundamental aspect of life, We Space, whether the intimate, exploratory, self-aware, or emergent-awake variety, is not. We can apply the skills and orientation learned in such a way of relating to all relational spaces, making *any* relational space potentially more self-aware, and this points towards a compassionate, evolutionary way of being as the world together. This is a genuinely new dimension of human being.

This way of being, and its practices, are post-postmodern. The sense of commitment and depth, of ‘staying on the inside,’ and of not indulging the need for personal comfort and pleasure run counter to postmodernism’s feel-good individualism. The emphasis on both intrinsic and extrinsic value, of the irreducible value of each individual and the inescapable value of hierarchical skill and development, can be anathema to the postmodern tendency to see these modes of valuation as being inextricably opposed. Following injunctions and disallowing open dialog can feel limiting, and even repressive, to the postmodern self’s desire for open expression and following the natural flow. The tendency to devote the individual’s energy towards something higher and deeper, to remove the psychological self from the center of the universe, runs counter to postmodernism’s narcissistic streak. While these are suggestive, seen in this light postmodernity’s interest in cultural realities is transitional, laying the groundwork for embodied and self-reflexive intersubjective ways of being as the world together, but without itself such a set of practices.

These set of practices constitute Integral, and further, transpersonal social practices. They are the relational aspects of Integral and evolutionary ways of being as the world together. In the Integral stages, by which I mean the chiefly exploratory, and self-aware stages, they are developmental, aiding in the formation of an integrated body/heart/mind, and move towards the integration of the first, second, and third person, through the transparency of subtle boundaries. While the deep mutual embeddedness of these perspectives poses a problem for postmodernism, in an Integral way of being as the world together, it is seen as the natural result of the constructed, perspectival nature of reality. As transpersonal, evolutionary practices, they reflect the further integration of first, second, and third person perspectives into a seamless moment-to-moment performance and exploration of being, doing, and knowing. Whereas integral ways of being as the world together find more and more refined, nuanced, and articulated expressions and articulations of truth, evolutionary truth is alethic, dissolving the separate arenas of truth construction into the iterative movement towards greater evolution. This is not a linear movement, or process, but it is directional. When the question of what is real, or what is true, is not entangled with the relationship between third-person ontology and first-person epistemology, truth is this movement towards greater depth, which direction relies upon an individual expression of being as a manifestation of a way of knowing third person reality to a second person community. The alethic direction of the present moment is the expressive act of community in world making, from which I have derived the phrase ‘being as the world together.’ In short, this moment’s being as the world together is an open reception to the direction of the next moment’s being as the world together. The wisest thing to do is the most loving, and the most beautiful.

I am shaping We Space by writing this, and you are shaping it by reading. The writing is not exclusively active: it is guided by a felt-sense that is and can be *off* or *intuitively inadequate*. I am writing to readers, I am writing to reflect an emergent understanding, I am writing according to an ever-receding ever-nearing event horizon, and am surprised to see these words now tapping out of my fingers. Similarly, the reading is not passive: as you read this, you are complementing the activity, allowing my words to open up new spaces of inquiry, and comparing the narrative to your own personal interface with your own view of the ever-receding ever-nearing event horizon.

Into this space, as a world making personal expression of community, I say: a world ‘in which the free development and flourishing of each unique human being is understood to be the condition, as it is also the consequence, of the free development and flourishing of all’ (Bhaskar, 2012, p 9) is *possible*, and that a major aspect of the way of creating this world is the practice of We Space as it has emerged in this paper*.* It is possible in the sense I have been using it so far in this paper, the sense that Charles Eisenstein uses it in *Sacred Economics* (2011): not as one of any number of possibilities, but as something that can genuinely be realized by the committed and long-term effort of humanity coming together. The end of this paper, then, is another invitation, another beginning. More strongly, it is an exhortation: join this boundless community by giving your passion to the creative discovery of a world we can all celebrate.

**Appendix A: Development, Post-Dialectics, and Post-Metaphysics**

The model of psychological and epistemological development that I rely on in this paper assumes a certain dynamics of development, and a fundamentally constructivist, post-metaphysical viewpoint. Clearly, this in itself is a proper object of study, and I find what I wish to say in no place in its entirety. I had originally intended a scholarly companion to my research that I was not able to put together under the conditions of my degree. Here I present a simplified working model, upon which implicitly much of the background theorizing in my research project is built. I include this as a deeper disclosure of my first person understanding, both to situate and give context to what I am writing.

I am drawing from many sources, chiefly from Wilber (1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2006), Robert Kegan (1982, 1994), Cook-Greuter, (2007), Terri O’Fallon (2010), H.A. Almaas (1988) and the Enneagram writers (Maitri, 2000, Palmer, 1991, Riso & Hudson, 1996, 1999, 2000), Gabor Mate (2008), Abraham Maslow (1968, 1971), Kurt Fischer (Fischer & Mascolo, 2010), Jean Gebser (1985), Allan Combs, (2002, 2009), and others, and my experiences with and meaning-making around psychological growth, which has been an in-depth and living inquiry for me for over ten years, including such practices as advaita and non-dual self-inquiry (Maharshi, 2000, Maharaj, 1973) and my Buddhist practice (Brown, 2006).

When I say that this model is fundamentally constructivist, I mean to say that the world as it appears to us is not simply ‘out-there,’ but arises along with our ways of seeing it. The basic meaning is that everything that we think is real is not simply real-as-such, but the product of how we are looking. How are we looking? We are looking through states of consciousness, through shared intersubjective ways of being together and our acculturation, we are looking through individual ways of metabolizing energy, through our identifications, our fears and hopes and desires, as an exemplary handful. This does not mean that *nothing* is real. It means that *we* are real. The world is never ‘outside’ of us, or ‘around’ us without being us as well. The technical term for this is ‘enacts,’ which I have avoided in this paper mostly for its specialized meaning. Enacts means basically ‘brings about,’ which can sound as if the emphasis is on the first-person, or at least the interior world, whether first person or second person. Even in the language above, ‘looking through’ can appear to mean that a separate and pre-existing subject looks through a lens, and sees an image of the separate and pre-existing world. I do not intend this. Rather the subject, the looking, and object are inseparable. Enactment means that the world-spaces of first, second, and third person arise together. Every occasion, every ‘thing,’ is composed of an I, an It, and a We.

Neither is this a rejection of ontology, or that there is something ‘real’ beyond our notions and engagement with it. It *is* to suggest that the ‘problem’ of relating epistemology to ontology only arises within a certain mental/rational/abstract way of enacting a world. As there are no problems of ontology and epistemology for a dog, so is it possible that there may be no essential problem at as-of-yet ill defined reaches of human development. Every ‘thing’ is composed of an I, It, and We because you and I are human beings, communicating in subtly bound, mental/rational/abstract language.

What we take as being uncritically real, or real-as-such, has its correlate in our interiors as what I have been calling the subtle boundaries with which we construct reality. Boundaries can seem rather abstract of a term, and can also seem to be referring to a world of separation, as I mention above. Instead, I mean to use boundaries here to indicate our bodily-emotional-mental ways of interpreting and being reality. Furthermore, these are the products of, and conditions for, our states of consciousness, the interface of our being with our ways of knowing that were never separate. To make a boundary empty is to strip it of its unconsciousness: to see how a bodily-emotional-mental habit of interpretation creates our sense of what is real, and that our interpretation is not ‘just-so.’ It is also not that what we draw boundaries disappears but, for example, that the boundary between I and we is seen as an activity, and not having a fundamental reality.

In a way, this articulation is an artifact of the very shift that I am talking about in the paper. As a global society, we are moving into post-metaphysical ways of understanding and being, and I am presently unpacking why that is so, and trying to bring attention to the activity of world-creation that is present in our every activity. If our society were held by and aimed for a post-dialectical, post-metaphysical maturity, this might well be as ‘obvious,’ as it is obvious today that there is an objective and third-person reality. That is, it might someday be just as obvious that there is no fundamentally real boundary between “I” and “We” as it is obvious today that water freezes at 0 degrees Centigrade.

A constructivist view is also developmental: the objects of consciousness that one ‘enacts’ develop in complexity along with our psychological maturity. In my introduction, I have referred to a ‘world that does not exist yet,’ and this is one example of what I mean. As of now, we have no “world” of the kind I mean, or at most are in a lengthy transition into one. We can look back and extrapolate that yes, fifty-thousand years ago there existed a planet upon which every human, and all of our ancestors, existed, but this was *not* something any of those ancestors would have understood. We can say reasonably that there was a planet, but there was no Earth. Without rational discourse, which requires the development of an individualized ego, something that has been happening for a handful of thousands of years and only has become the standard of adulthood recently, there would not even be a means to explain what we meant to those ancestors either, assuming we could travel back and communicate with them. If this is an uncomfortable idea, it may also be taken as an example of what I mean by subtle boundaries. It is hard to imagine that the planet could have existed fifty thousand years ago, and at the same time not existed. That boundary between what exists and what not is something that we assume is ‘real-as-such.’ I am saying that this too is something that we are doing. In this light, what exists and what not is a function of our developmental epistemology, and the audience with which we are communicating. There is a reality, or there would be no basis for the generation of knowledge.[[45]](#footnote-43) Interpreting this line of thinking as saying that ‘there is no objective reality,’ or as reducing ontology to epistemology, is also an assumption of the metaphysical reality of the boundary between what is real and not, and placing this line of thinking on the ‘not’ side entirely, since it is not saying uncritically that there is a reality.

For this research, there are a few crucial points of reference on the spectrum of development. This spectrum is not clean (like, say, a ladder): which is to say that this is also a way of looking. The first important point is the creation of the self, the first and most fundamental boundary line. Whether this happens in the womb, or after birth, is not entirely important here. What is is that at some point a psychological being forms, and it forms with its seed as the experience that there is a ‘me’ and a ‘not me,’ both products of this first metaphysical boundary which brings into being self and other, and quickly ‘inner,’ and ‘outer,’ and ‘singular’ and ‘plural.’[[46]](#footnote-44) This is not a simple straight line drawn between self and the world, but a way of metabolizing energy, a relationship between self and other. It is also the coming into being of hell, something deeply painful. It is not that before this split, everything was perfect, rather that the split itself creates a projection into a perfected past. ‘I,’ intuiting the anxieties of separate self hood, and namely, that I may be no more, looks on a time of non-anxiety remembered and sees it as all that was good, the time when ‘I’ and ‘other,’ inner and outer, were in perfect synchrony. This is a projection, as there was, in that state, no self, and no other. This is also the seed of time. Fusion is timeless. As a self arises, so does a sense that there was something *else*, something lost, the state of fusion, and that it was something *different* than now. Now, I must act, as I am something with agency. But, in acting, in coming-into-being, I destroyed the state of being that looks like perfect communion. I am then terrified of my own agency, as it threatens community, from which I receive everything that nourishes me and sustains me, and I am terrified of communion and unity, as this would mean the dissolution of my self. I am a double bind: I must now act to receive nourishment, but my very action creates the gap between myself and what is nourishing (the other.) Whatever orientation I take in the face of this problem becomes the seed out of which my personality grows, the central way in which I metabolize energy, and the way I both ensure my agency and autonomy, negating true community and communion, and ensure my communion, negating true agency. This is, and develops into, who I am, whom I identify myself as. Before I am anything, I am a dynamic energetic pattern response to the terror of my own being. This pattern can take any number of forms: I may take the shape of entirely denying and negating my own agency, hoping that if I just don’t do whatever it was that I did to cause the split, then I’ll get my nourishment, or I can take a rather opposed position, and say ‘well, there’s no going back now, I’m going to be as expressive as possible—I’ll make *sure* I get my nourishment!’ Whatever the response is to the dawning apprehension of separate self hood, it is a way of answering the question: who am I that I can get my needs met?

This dynamic creates a direction to development: away from pain, away from anxiety. As I develop, I build more and more elaborate ways of ensuring my nourishment in ways that construct the separate self sense, and negate the possibility of receiving the deepest nourishment that I am always looking for: the being-at-home-in-life, communion with God, identity as spirit: for this there are a thousand different ways of saying it. Where there is an other, there is fear, but also anger, and shame. Each of these stem from orientations to pain and avoiding pain, in the process creating suffering. Fear (I don’t want any more pain), shame (I am bad to have caused that pain), Anger (why did you cause that pain). This is a grossly simplified account: I merely mean to suggest some of the dynamics that occur in the construction of the self-sense, whether thought of as happening in infancy, or now, moment-to-moment. These emotions that we experience as negativity, fear, shame, anger, are closely interrelated, and create elaborate patterns of defenses.

If this seems grim, it is not. There are positive emotions that arise out of this process, and we are not *merely*, or *actually* our psyches. In a way, the deeply positive emotions are not implicated in this: they are *natural.* There is no reason to be blissful, or to be joyful, grateful, or loving. Additionally, I do not use subtle metaphysical boundaries in a pejorative manner. They are essential in every facet of our lives. I am stating that we have culturally come to the end of a particular orientation to these boundaries, and that to clean the mess up that we have created, we must mature in a way that makes these boundaries transparent/empty *when it is psychologically appropriate to do so.* Asking a ten-year-old to do so, or, to be sure, the majority of adults on the planet, is nonsensical.

As these boundaries develop, so do our ways of seeing the world and our sense of time, as we continually make distinctions that separate what is real, until we get to the second major point relevant for this narrative: the modern ego, the separate sense of self. This is the sense of self we are culturally taught to think of as being adult, and is the culmination of the separation of self from other. Time is now linear, abstract. In abstraction, in the identification with a mental idea of who I am, one that has moved out of the body, and its emotions, I can now exist in my own understanding as being entirely separate from them. In abstraction, without reference to the practical body, I project myself into a future that is an extension of the past (i.e., that is determined,) and of my attempts to find an identity that is incorruptible, that is not subject to death. I am oriented to time such that I am always running from the past into the future. This is also the self of ‘knowledge,’ of already knowing before asking, and of third person objective truth, of the separation of subject and object.

The next important developmental zone for this paper is the space of deconstruction of the separate self. This happens in several movements corresponding to the Individualist to Unitive self-senses in Cook-Greuter’s model. The Individualist begins the ‘inward arc,’ finding that the idea of an objective and separate world is inextricably tied into the self’s subjectivity. As this subjectivity increases, the self begins to understand the idea of a shadow: that there is a strongly unconscious component to what they take as their selves that affects their identification, their relationships, and how they show up in the world. In We Space, this is primarily the space of healing and intersubjective nourishment.

The Autonomous self-sense begins to be able to access their wholeness, and an active sense of the fluidity of reality. The self can now begin to actively do both the shadow and developmental work of finding subtle metaphysical boundaries of the self, and make them empty. This is greatly facilitated by We Space, as the self is now open to other possible interpretations of reality, and to noticing and working with the friction that arises with others’ subtle boundaries. This is a period of the activity of making empty personal boundaries.

The next self-sense, Construct Aware, takes a major turn. As the construct of time becomes empty, time is increasingly experienced as ‘now,’ while the past, and the future, radiate outwards from the present, reiterated each moment. The psyche is more and more transparent moment-to-moment, allowing for ‘Shadow’ moments of reactivity to arise clearly and to be noticed in the moment. Without a sense of being subject to linear time, the self is also freer to choose an orientation in the moment, without it defining an essential self that must be protected. Movement through construct awareness is the process of making empty the foundational boundaries that started the process of individuation, such as self/other, inner/outer, and I/We. We Space at this stage is much about this dynamic, within the holding space of shared mutual intersubjective awareness. At the last marker relevant for this paper, Unitive, or a fully transpersonal way of being as the world together, all experience is the flow of emptiness, and boundaries that arise with the formation of the separate self, such as reality/non-real, and being/non-being, dissolve becoming tools for skillful means towards alethia, the ongoing revelatory movement of evolution. Cognition is no longer representational, or dialectical: rather life is seen directly, and the world is a creative act that spills directly from one’s social being. This is living as the ‘source code,’ as Hübl put it in our interview, or a-waring in Gebser. Time here opens up from the present moment to a dynamic future-oriented sense. This future is not the projection of need, or of some desired state extending linearly from the present: it is an open field of creativity and possibility, itself re-iterating moment to moment.

There is a cultural arc to this as well, one that traces how we investigate and research what is real.[[47]](#footnote-45) In the pre-rational cultures, the first, second, and third person perspectives are not fully differentiated. The medieval church, for example, has authority over what is true (third person), what is good, and codes of conduct and morals (second person) as well as over art, and expressions of self (first person). In the modern age, these three areas are differentiated into their ‘non-overlapping magesteria.’ The objective pursuit of truth is divorced from any direct accountability to the social good, and likewise from art and expressions of self. While these are never entirely separable, the *motion* is towards differentiation, and we are culturally moving into a place where the inseparability of the three is becoming evident.[[48]](#footnote-46) In the Integral, they are differentiated and non-reducible, but the motion is towards integration. While postmodernism relies on method to dis-entangle the increasingly obviously mutually embedded subject and object, Integral methodology acts to ensure that subjectivity is accounted for, either in the subject, or the researcher. In disclosing the subjectivity of the researcher, Integral states about the research data: this is both real *and* it’s a way of looking, where a postmodern approach might tend to view opinion pejoratively, “it’s just a way of looking,” or ultimately “it’s my opinion and you have no say in the matter!” disclosing the solidity of the boundary between the two. Views, perspectives, lenses, metaphors, and dynamics become important ways of enacting knowledge-generation and of describing the construction of the world.[[49]](#footnote-47) In the transpersonal, the separateness is entirely empty, and ‘truth’ is a direction towards greater evolutionary unfolding, something deeply unique and personal, and cultural.

There are some complications to all of this, of course. While I tend to write as if subtle boundaries come into being at once with the creation of the self, this seems grossly simplified. Boundaries, polarities, and these dynamics , and even the most advanced ways of being as the world together are subject to polarities which determine modes of action and behavior. Additionally, the one writer I am aware of that I genuinely resonate with and that writes about post-dialectics (and from whom I have stolen that term) is Bonita Roy (2013), and she is rather dismissive of developmental constructions. One further complication is O’Fallon’s recent work with subtle and causal quadrants, which situate a more finely grained version of Cook-Greuter’s self-senses within (AQAL) quadrants that describe the individual level’s focuses. In her account, Individualists and Autonomous selves are both individually subtle, in that their self-senses are based on the subtle ego, and collectively subtle, in that coming together as a group is based on sharing subtle values, etc. Construct Awares break into the causal quadrants individually, meaning that their sense of self is now based on a causal ego, but their collective attention remains in the subtle: the causal has of yet no way to *communicate*. All of this is just another footnote to say that any research that is describing these ways of being as the world together is provisional.

**Appendix B: Practical Examples of Boundary-Emptiness**

The following examples of intersubjective awareness with my wife, two in ‘real world’ occasions, and two during practice sessions, help to show what I mean in a grounded and practical way with some of the orientations and actions of We Space.

This first example is an example of disclosure, and of the boundaries that may keep us from disclosure. A few nights ago, I was feeling distant from my wife, and I told her. There is no reason to think that this feeling is any less or more real or important, but it was up in my experience. Feeling distant can become a reason for a fight, an admission or a worry that the relationship is not on the right track, or a reason to retreat further from the relationship. When it is shared openly in a holding space of curiosity and inquiry, when it is not pushed away or indulged, it becomes the fuel for intimacy and connectedness, even and especially if the feeling shared is ‘disconnection.’ As I looked into the feeling with my wife, there were plenty of external reasons for not being entirely connected. My wife had just been doing some personal psychological process work in drawings and was working through other personal material, and she was feeling tired. Nonetheless, in the brief impromptu investigation we undertook, I realized how pervasive the feeling of “you’re pulling away from me” was in my life, how worried about it I am disposed to be, though in every way my relationship with my wife is fantastic. In the moment, the exploration together helped my wife to understand my psyche a little better, while in the long scope I can see the feeling surface more often, knowing what to look for. This gives me a great deal more freedom to act without being under the thumb of the feeling, and also gives me a thread to pull on that goes deeply into my own issues of worth and value, one that may potentially lead to very fruitful places.

This second example is of a practical, real-world awareness of subtle boundaries in the moment. A few days ago I proposed having a large salad for dinner. My wife said, “ugh, I’m sick of salad” (or something to that effect.) As she said this, I felt somewhat hurt, but was entirely present with the feeling as it arose. In the past, a similar feeling may have brought me to close down somewhat, to be less available for relationship, to bring up feelings of shame, and affect my mood negatively. Catching the feeling, I was able to quickly find what it was coming out of. I have been eating a mostly whole-foods plant based diet for this year, as I have had a history of unhealthy eating, and have gotten to the point where it is more important to me to eat and live healthily and ethically than it is to give in to whatever craving I have at the moment. Food has historically been my primary way of ‘numbing out,’ a psychological move that allows me to escape discomfort. It is also a major way of finding and sharing connection, a fall-back for community. Attached negatively to this complex, and positively to a future image of myself as healthy, where I might live longer, feel better about myself, and so also feel more comfortable socially, I saw my wife’s exclamation as threatening. I had seen her as a partner in this, and was anxious that if she didn’t want to eat salad that evening, all would go up in smoke. I was triggered, however slightly. The boundaries here involve a negative self-sense and identification, as well as the ego’s projection of self into the future, a sense of motivation stemming from avoiding rejection and pain. All of this came together in a mapping of abstractions that was enacted as I cognized my wife’s exclamation, which mapping was experienced in somatic sensations and an emotion of hurt and shame. All of the background associations are latent in my ego patterns, and are enacted *before* I am a subject, as the process of my cognizing my wife’s “ugh.” Now, my wife may also have been putting ‘triggered’ energy into her response, or she may not have been. Whether she was or not is rather irrelevant in the present case, though it is perhaps easier to get triggered by someone who is triggered themselves. In a circle, our interaction may have been slowed down and witnessed, helping us both to see how we were acting in an unskillful way. Fortunately, though I was not ‘with’ the feeling of hurt as it arose, I noticed it immediately, and was able to see it as being empty, orienting to it with curiosity and fascination. When Hübl says that in an intense field, we pay attention to the little things, because they reflect a lot, I interpret him as talking about moments like this, with the proposal of having salad for dinner.

These next two are longer, and come from excited posts in an intersubjectivity class. I italicize them without changing much, and insert editorial notes where necessary.

*This started out simply enough. We sat down and connected with our selves, and then started an exercise we've developed where we each take a turn to say a sentence back and forth, with the context being what was up for us as we put out attention on the inner/outerness of intersubjectivity. Karen said something beautiful early on, that it felt like the 'making the obvious non-obvious-' that tension of not-two not-one as a sort of respect of the ineluctability of the other. For me, one of the main experiences early was noticing how easy it is for me to put my attention on the other as an object, but not as a subject, and that when I did that the object was sort of included--but I was also opened into a real feeling of humility in the face of something genuinely alive-not-me. There is a profound sense of mystery in that.*

*We went through some rather nice and touching intersubjective motions at that point, including a holding of shame through both of us, and a respect for each other's subjectivities that can be too easy to ignore day-to-day, and then something genuinely amazing happened. I noticed that when I 'put my attention on her subjectivity,' that I was doing so basically with her subjectivity located in her body--using the twinkle in her eyes as the sort of anchor. Then I realized that her subjectivity wasn't actually something that was local--it was pervasive--this led to a whole number of openings/realizations in both of us.* [This is an example of reality-location: Karen’s subjectivity is ‘in’ her head. Noticing that this was empty, her mind became what I am calling ‘all-pervasive:’ boundless].

*We kind of put the brakes on, and started the exercise again, but instead of putting our attention on my and/or her subjectivities in the body, we started putting our attention on, first my subjectivity, as all-pervasive mind (mind without time or space)- on my presence, and not either my body or my energy. As I grounded first in my all-pervasive mind, I asked her to put her attention on it--and I felt when she did--it was rather awesome. The quality of mind totally relaxed from any sense of effort, obvious, even ordinary. Certainly beyond thought, self, emotion, time, 'other-ness, it was like breathing after having held my breath for a long time- genuine emptiness of doing or looking for an outcome, two of my biggest “clouds."*

*Anyway, what happened next was even awesomer: We shifted to put our attention on Karen's subjectivity, and I had difficulty 'packing' my all-pervasive mind back in the 'place' it usually is. Karen went from her 'normal' experience of self/awareness to this sense of 'all-pervasive mind' and we put our attention on her mind. As I did so, I started to 'see' quite a few ways I habitually pattern-out intersubjectivity, or even recognition of another's subjectivity: my attention would flit back to 'my' all-pervasive mind, and I felt a pressure. I realized that even if I'm not aware of it per se, that my mind (and everyone else’s) is all-pervasive, and that I can feel that the way that I 'guard' my subjectivity in groups nonetheless has a profound effect on the group (like a negative sound filling the space around me--but space is of course only a metaphor for it). As we continued our dialogue, I realized that something that was happening was that I was 'pushing' my subjectivity 'against' hers. I shifted into "receiving" hers, and suddenly...there she was. Karen started crying, and the depth of connection that we felt in that moment was beautiful.*

*We then shifted into doing both at once- meeting all-pervasive minds as it were: the receiving and giving of self was one movement: two infinities meeting. It was much easier for me to rest in my all-pervasive mind-- more very subtle ways of avoiding relationship started coming through--a sense of defensiveness of my own subjectivity, of shutting the blinds to hers and ours. Ours was easier for me to get, but it took a little concentration to do all three at once, to not 'shut the blinds.'*

[A little context-setting, Karen and I were pregnant at the time of this writing.] *So she said "Do you think we could do this with three?" I thought she meant calling someone else in, and I demurred, since I didn't want to break with the space--but she said, no, I mean with the baby. Oh, oh yeah-- so we put our attention on the baby's all-pervasive mind, and sat like that for sometime, mostly silently. Soon, though, it really all just seemed to drop away: we were just there with each other. I realized that something I've been coming into touch recently- the ever-presence of the masters that sets the stage for meditation--that you can literally tune into the presence of Jesus or Ramana Maharshi or Sri Aurobindo or all at once now and carry it with you--is applicable to others. I connected with my mom, and sent her well-wishes and prayers for healing. Suddenly, my mind jumped, seeing connections upon connections that I was a part of-- and extrapolating out to all of the different relationships in the world (for example, my and karen's relationship is different than my and karen's and the babies---trillions and trillions of different holonic fields) and it dropped down into my heart in a way I don't know how to express: all of that is Love-- I am all of those connections, the presence we were sitting as is all of that and it's all just absolute beaming unconditional and ecstatic love--I began sobbing, and contracted slightly from it. The sense of overlapping infinities was pervasive, and I brought that back down into my and Karen and our baby's little family circle, sitting on the couch in Gent, just the three of us, nonetheless one, nonetheless three. We ended talking a little more informally about all of this and just what was happening, as my sense jumped back and forth from heart (which would evoke a sob or two) to mind (and a drier but nonetheless joyful understanding), and slowed down into a place of perfect depth, peace, and clarity, one with construction outside, breathing, birds chirping. Karen's words for this end bit: "just sitting."*

This next account happened two months later, in a conversation about what our gifts were, and what we wanted to give as a couple.

*And so we began Tuesday’s conversation with a meditation that Karen guided, touching us in to several aspects of ourselves, our others and our experience. We then briefly investigated whether we should start from “We,” or from our individual “I’s.” Having seen Monday that trying to start from a We perspective without having sufficiently grounded in the intersubjective space our own individual needs and wants led to a sort of vagary and an unrooted sense of We, we decided to move first from our I’s. Karen asked me what was most alive for me in this question of a gift.*

*As I tuned into this, what came up was the sense of joy: that same sense of joy that came up in my investigations into the dynamic with my mother a few months ago. As I spoke, though, I became aware of a different dimension of joy. My sense of joy here came up in relationship to Karen: I was putting a word on something that I felt around her, similar to the feeling of being in love: the indescribably pleasant tickling that another’s being can give your own just in the way that she coughs, or moves her hips to be closer to you while sleeping. And yet, this joy as I talk about it is usually clearly an experience, and one of a great deal of energy moving through me. It is intense. The sense that was coming in-the-moment with reflection was that actually, the joy that I felt with Karen was a background, and something that I had noticed often and never seen as joy. It is the broad shining peacefulness I felt meeting her for the first time, this wondrous smile of a woman looking up at me. Yes, it came out while speaking, this joy is my gift, and it is not mine: it is me. Joy not exclusive of pain, but underlying it: the pain points to and reveals the joy. This gift can move through any domain that is present in the moment, the gift a sharing of essential and substantial joy. I laughed: of course, we can get to the practicals of that later as well.*

*What is most alive for you, Karen? How odd, she started, while I was in the bathtub, and I was reflecting on this today, I had the same sense. For Karen, this sense of her gift is her participation in divinity, something which is dynamic and rooted in the moment’s needs. It is similarly not something that belongs to her, nor is it something separate from her being. We began to discuss the question of the difference between a gift as something that needs to be given, or the uniqueness of a gift as some kind of personal purpose, and the uniqueness that arises from being in a place and time and of doing or saying what can only be done or said by the position occupied by one’s self. One, we said, was personal in the sense of personal: very wrapped in personal identity. She added a perspective from Indian philosophy: the personal gift is always in a sense polluted. Yes, I agreed, it is karma-creating. For self, and other, she added.*

*Warm and rapt, we began to have a series of understandings and shared experiences that we continued to work out in dialog. What just happened? Karen asked. Our We had woken up, somehow, it felt. She asked a question I do not remember that I quieted as we sat together in silence and presence. We are seeing ourselves self-reflexively, I remarked. Yes, she agreed, and as we pay attention to this, it is sinking in us, palpable to both of us.*

*As we came to this point, Karen then asked what our unique We’s gift was, and expressed a sense of participation in a higher, or Kosmic We. This I could not quite jive with at first: the word “Kosmic” often feels forced to me, or a hang-over from New Ageism. As she spoke of what she was intuiting, however, she used a phrase that I did resonate with: “a we without a they,” one borrowed from Thomas Hubl. Quickly, but not in a moment, the sense of “interiority” dawned on me: we were participating in and actively aware of “We-ness:” the interiority that everything that exists participates of: the inside of the one without a second, a Universal We. This was not an understanding, but a realization, and an experience, as obvious as my hand is now. While in awe, with some teasing out, we realized that this we was a we without a they: literally all beings’ interiorities are coterminous with this interiority--something which in no ways negates the individuality of each being’s interiority. We realized as well that this we was not inclusive of all we’s: there were many other we’s, horizontally and vertically, that were not present--yet all We-ness and interiority was present. The link between this and my sense of needing to create value with a developmental construction came through: this interiority is present in and partaken of by all, whether or not they would be able to natively construct the experience I was having at the moment, and that it really didn’t matter in the way I have for a long time implicitly thought that it did. This is no dismissing of development: in fact, the joy that I was experiencing seemed to me to be a continuous expansion beyond itself, an urgent motivating force of development and evolution, though with no sense of necessity, or of coming anywhere then out of a deep love and joy. There is no question of a ‘they’ developmentally.*

*Such beauty present in this moment. We continued to have a series of cascading understandings about the state we were in, and what was revealed in it. Rooted, Karen said, doesn’t even apply here: we are grounded not even in each other or our own selves only, but with being as everything arising moment to moment to moment. Yes, I said, nothing to root in because how could we be unrooted? And there is no death here, only a simple feeling of being totally at home at the origin and end of all things, present, and now. Ah joy! Even my boundaries are joy-composed. Joy is outside, joy is inside, and the boundary between them is nothing but joy. She began to cry softly, and almost rebuked herself. I don’t know why I cry when we do this, she said. This reminded me of something Terri O’Fallon had said at the Integral Next Step Community Seminar that we attended together over the summer, during a closing circle, as she was softly crying: “The Universe is crying through me,” and as I said that to Karen, I began crying as well, realizing with a sense of gratitude that it is true, and beautiful. She thanked me. Yes, I got excited, what, yes--I am the Universe, I am Andrew Venezia, and the Universe is not Andrew Venezia! This sense of being the Universe was not an understanding, but a direct and obvious seeing. It occurred to me that all knowledge is direct seeing, though mediated through different structures: be they concrete, abstract, or intuitive. While it is hard to language this at the moment, I am also saying then that our sense of mediated/unmediated is somewhat odd: of course, it makes sense to say within certain contexts that knowledge and experience is mediated, but then, what is mediating the mediation? We were by this point lying down and holding each other in our arms, two universes looking at itself. I made this Universe for you. I made it to share with you this love and this joy. I am joy only through you, my love.*

*And I deserve this, she said. Deserve it? Yes. This is, natural. Yes, natural, that’s a sense that I resonate with--though I would have never said deserved. What a different sense to contractions? How so? Well, they just come up. So? There’s no grab to them, no sense of needing them to go, or of moving energy through them, none of that, just, so? And yet, they are present! I was just thinking about the sense of judgment: no one needs to approve of or verify this experience we are having. Judgment! How odd, I never would have thought of that. Exactly--and I never would have thought to think that I deserve this. There’s just no sense of deserving or not-deserving that I create meaning out of. And none of judgment for me.*

**Appendix C: Subtle, Causal, Development, State, and Vantage Point**

Like elsewhere in this paper, I will conduct a bit of natural history to help unpack the terms subtle, causal, state, and vantage point. It should be understood, however, that these terms are rather fluid, and our distinctions around them are under very active investigation. What is common is that the term subtle refers to the realm of experience, objects of consciousness that are not ‘gross,’ physical, material objects, like a chair, but that are nonetheless a strong part of our experience of self. This includes occasions in our individual, interior experience, such as thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as well as external ‘energies,’ such as qi. We are used to thinking of thoughts[[50]](#footnote-48) and emotions as being separate, but in this view, every thought arises with a feeling. ‘Causal,’ refers instead to the dimension of awareness: not to the objects of consciousness, but to the open space[[51]](#footnote-49) in which those objects arise.

Wilber, for the majority of his work, placed the subtle and causal on a single spectrum with ordinary experiences, reducing, though not entirely, the realm of state experience, to that of psychological development and structure (See Wilber, 2000b, the fullest articulation of this view.) The first major clarification came about with the Wilber-Combs matrix (Wilber 2006), in which states and structures were fully separated. One could experience (almost) any state from (almost) any structure. A causal experience of complete dissolution of objects, where consciousness is present without gross objects, or subtle objects, can be experienced whether one is in a pre-conventional, conventional, or post-conventional stage of psychological development. Similarly, every individual goes through the stages of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, in each twenty-four hour cycle.

This still collapsed two important dimensions of states into one. Recently, Dustin DiPerna (2012) has pointed out that any experience of the subtle or causal *realms* is not the same as the quality of awareness that is aware of those realms, a dimension that he calls *vantage point.* One can experience subtle experiences of divine light with the quality of awakened (what Wilber calls non-dual) consciousness. There are, then, at least three relevant dimensions to psychological being: the ‘vertical’ structural element of psychological maturity mapped out by researchers such as Cook-Greuter and Kegan, horizontal *realms* of state experience, such as waking, dreaming, shamanic voyage, or the dissolution of all objects, and horizontal *vantage points*, or qualities of awareness describing a spectrum of emptiness of the subtle boundaries through which we construct our sense of what is real. One can sit in a room in Paris France and observe experience with an awareness beyond subtle constructions of self, or have a lucid dream where one is in the subtle *realm* of dreaming with a clarity of awareness beyond self, time, and space. Why is this important? Because each of my interviewees were talking about We Space in the *gross*, or *waking* realm. The *states* that comprise We Space practice are not, to my knowledge, describing *realms* of experience, but qualities of awareness. These qualities of awareness, and the *experience* of a shared group mind, are not, strictly speaking, *experiences*, but are taking place in/as awareness, whose spectrum is described by *vantage point*. These three dimensions are closely interconnected, but are not entirely reducible to each other. For example, the witnessing vantage point, or the ongoing experienced emptiness of at least *some* subtle boundaries seems to be necessary for one to express Construct-Aware being in the world. (Fischer’s (2010) Skill webs may be helpful in envisioning this.) As I am using them in this paper, *subtle* We Space practice refers to occasions of We Space that focus mostly on the subtle boundaries of individuals. *Causal* We Space practice refers to occasions of We Space whose focus is on the nature of intersubjective awareness and the ‘field’[[52]](#footnote-50) of consciousness. awakened We Space refers to We Space within which a shared self-aware and self-reflexive interpersonal mind has emerged. As mentioned, this is provisional, and I do not pretend here to present a final map of these experiences, but to suggest and reinforce some important distinctions.

A final note about awakening: as difficult as it is to parse out the above, it is even more difficult to speak of awakening, and I have intentionally not defined the term well throughout this paper. Awakening refers to the natural arising of consciousness when all subtle boundaries are directly seen as being empty. It is the recognition that there is nothing that is not Spirit, or non-dual beingness, or suchness. This is not to be confused as ‘all is one,’ as awakening is beyond mental/experiential categorizations such as one/zero/multiplicity. Awakening is the structure and the content, the stillness and the motion, that which is present whether it is realized or not, the movie screen upon which images play, the images of light themselves, the projector, and the audience watching the movie. This is also something that I have not mastered in my own consciousness, and as such is somewhat over my head. With my meditation teacher, I am working currently on preparing the ground for this arising, in Wilberian terms, in stabilizing the witness during the waking state. My personal ‘clouds’ that obscure ever-radiant awareness include ‘doing:’ or the subtle reinforcement of the metaphysical reality of the “I” brought about by not seeing the emptiness of ‘individual’ activity, ‘I am not enough/good enough,’ in which feelings of personal inadequacy deep within the self-sense are not empty, ‘looking for an outcome,’ where awakening is projected as an event that is possible to experience in some future moment, and closely related ‘looking for awakeness as a state,’

Obviously, I do none of these activities purposefully, they are rather artifacts of my attachment to the very early subtle boundaries with which my infant self created its world and sense of self, habitually re-enacted moment to moment.[[53]](#footnote-51) The activity of meditation in stabilizing witnessing on and off the pillow is not to ‘rid’ the self of these clouds, but to see that they are already empty, that they could not occlude awakeness. Trying to change experience stems from these clouds, reinforcing them.

**Appendix D: Examples of We Space Practices**

I am presenting these only as an idea of what We Space practices are. I imagine that one whose only exposure to We Space is this paper might practice a few of these with friends and find them interesting. I would have to advise against that. Nothing would go wrong, I imagine, but their potential is best brought out with experienced facilitation. We Space is something that you learn by coming into curious contact.

Sentence Completion

Sentence Completion is one of the seemingly simplest practices, but can quickly reach into the profound. Structures vary, but usually have a dyad or a small group taking turns to complete a series of sentence stems, with a limited time frame to do so. Listeners are instructed not to think of what they will say next, but to give their deepest attention to the speaker. Speakers are instructed to speak from the moment, as spontaneously as possible, and from the deepest part of themselves. Participants can be strangers, and this practice can be a good icebreaker, or they can be an intimate community in an ongoing exploration, or a team with a task in mind looking to brainstorm and clean out conceptual cobwebs. Sentences usually progress during the practice, giving it a flow of some sort, perhaps from the personal to the transpersonal, or from the relatively superficial to the profound. In dyads, a small modification is to have the listener respond to the speaker with a different stem.

Some possible sentences and observations:

*“What is most alive for me is…”* This sentence is always a good start, and I have found it to be effective even when used outside of practice, when at a loss of things to say at a party, for example. It calls attention to the living quality of the present moment, and invites the speaker to share their experience in a direct way.

*“Being with you/here/the group, I notice…”* Another good entry point, this sentence brings attention to the relational quality of being present with another/others.

*“Being with you, I notice… I imagine… and I desire.”* A follow-up for the above, helping to further disclose the speaker’s experience. In a dyad, this might be returned by “hearing that, I…” back and forth until time is up.

*“The reason I’m here is…”* A sentence structure that helps to provide some context in a group.

*“The* real *reason I’m here is…”* Coupled with the above, a sentence structure that helps to dig down below our first level of reflective responses, helping to uncover a person’s deeper motivations.

*“If you really knew me, you would know…”* Responses from this prompt have always surprised me for the variety of directions they head in.

*“One of the ways in which I hurt is…”* This stem helps to open the empathic personal.

*“What I’m not saying that would move this space deeper is…”* This stem can bring about a variety of responses, from those that break through tension in the group or name what has been hanging in the air, to responses that open up the transpersonal.

Speaking to God

Speaking to God is a triadic exercise that I experienced while practicing with the We Practice Community in Berkeley CA. Participants take turns as themselves, God, and a third person observer. For the practice, the “God” participant is the presence, eyes, ears, and voice of God, which is part of what I mean by ‘perspectival practice.’ Suspending any objection, the participants sit in the view of God being, in fact, God, however they interpret that. Prompts for the speaker might be “Speak to God about your childhood,” or “Tell God how you feel about God.” One interesting thing to note is that the practice is much more powerful with a third person observer, even, and perhaps especially, when they do not speak a word, but only watch.

Circling

Circling is the practice structure I have seen with the greatest range, though I have most frequently seen it being practiced formally in the subtle and early causal range. Because of its personal intimacy, and its ability to create a genuine shared field of transparent caring, I do think there is tremendous potential in circling for introducing people to the later causal interpersonal states, and even Awakened intersubjectivity with proper context setting.

Circling is also perhaps the most difficult practice to properly describe. A group of people sit together, and decide (sometimes beforehand) who is going to be ‘circled,’ and who is ‘circling.’ The ‘circler,’ is the facilitator of the circle, and is something of a traffic conductor. They are in the driver’s seat. The participants focus their attention on the one being circled in the same full-body/heart/minded way spoken of frequently in this paper. Then, technically, there are four ‘steps’ to circling that continually iterate. The first and second, connect with self, and connect with other, start a circle off (usually the facilitator will lead the group in some sort of opening exercise), and are also good to check in with as a circle continues. In my experience, people who are skilled in circling never lose touch with themselves, or with the person being circled. The next two steps are where circling becomes magical, and a little hard to explain. The third step is to set context, which just means to make sure that everyone is on the same page about what the group is doing. At the beginning of a circle, it might mean that the circler asks the one being circled whether there’s anything that they would like to explore. If this changes, and it often does, context can, and should, be reset. This can happen with a simple “I’m really interested in what’s going on with the energy in your stomach, would you like to follow that?” or might be a re-direction of attention in the moment, such as “I’m going to pop out now for a second and see what everyone else in the circle thinks.” The fourth step is “weaving shared reality.”

Circling is primarily a practice of weaving this shared reality, of finding out what is occurring for the participants, and what they want to have occur. If setting context is about checking to see whether or not everyone is on the same page, weaving shared reality is discovering together just what is on that page, and where it might lead. The facilitator, and other participants, share their observations and curiosities about the experience of the one being circled, who shares how they are affected, and moment by moment, the group follows the energy down whatever rabbit holes present themselves. Because of the high degree of attention and intimacy, people might touch in on wounded places in a powerful way, and in a supportive environment, reconfigure themselves around the material. Interpersonal patterns, potentially difficult and usually mostly unconscious, can come to the surface under the attention of others. Groups can find a sweet place to sit with each other in community and intimacy, simply enjoying being with each other, or can go into deeply philosophical conversations about the nature of intersubjectivity. Every circle is entirely different.

As deep and varied as this practice is, I can only give a slight impression and a minor account, and any other circler would likely give a different one. My purpose for including it here is that I think as a structure it is both the simplest to get an idea of, and the most adaptable, since the circle follows the context set and agreed upon by everyone in the group. While this is true for any of the practices of any of the people who I have interviewed, I have to double underline it here: if this is interesting, get in touch with Authentic World, and find out where and how to circle. Circling has changed the way I relate, in every relationship, and has been a profound practice. It is difficult to imagine my life today without having undergone the training that I did.

**Appendix E: Original Lenses for Intuitive Inquiry**

1: Engaging consciously in intersubjective practices creates deeply nourishing experiences for participants.

2: There are differences between an intersubjective mode of relating that inquires into the other, and one that relates to the other in a defensive/aggressive way, or that views the other functionally, or as an object. This inquisitive mode can be practiced. There are many other possible modes of intersubjectivity.

3: Inquiring into the tension between self and other can bring about profound personal recognitions for participants, and elicits paradoxical constructions of consciousness (i.e., that the other is no other than I, and that the other is profoundly unknowable.)

4: There is a distinct Intersubjective “State” of consciousness found in advanced practice groups of a shared Inter-self-reflexive awareness.

5: Shared Inter-self-reflexive awareness includes the experience of the profoundly alive present, and yet orients consciousness towards the future.

6: The future as experienced in an intersubjective practice does not refer to a psychological projection of the present, but to a field of at-once tangibly real and yet entirely open possibility.

7: There is an evolutionary component to the emergence of these practices: they are appearing and proliferating at this point in time because the problems facing humanity are too complex to be managed using our more familiar modes of interpersonal relating.

8: Reality is radically non-dual in nature, and this can be revealed in intersubjective practices.

9: Intersubjective awareness practices act as a developmental spur for individuals and for groups.

10: Intersubjective awareness practices make the participants aware of previously unconscious responses to relationship and intimacy.

11: Intersubjective awareness practices challenge participants’ notions of what is metaphysically real.

12: Intersubjective awareness practices will make one uncomfortable.

13: Human beings have an innate need for interpersonal connectedness, and have deeply personalized ways of defending against and asking for connectedness.

14: ‘Personality,’ or the particular shape of the Ego/Shadow complex is the/ the result of the process of the embodied contraction against the totality of existence, including the depths of intense pain, suffering, and joy, mostly organized from the seed of personal identification and reluctance to release/ terror of releasing identification to death.

15: While it is necessary to ‘learn’ these practices culturally, it is possible to embody the kind of relating/embodiment that they lead/point to in any interpersonal space.

16: Inter-subjective awareness practices have the potential to dramatically shift the tenor of our cultural spaces.

17: As intersubjective awareness practices are largely developmental, there are developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices for people at different stages of development.

18: There is a mode of human being-in-the-world-together disclosed in advanced practice that dissolves the hard boundaries between the individual and the collective, where the unique energy and contribution of the individual is not only constructive but necessary and constitutive without being oppressed, and where this contribution deepens the cohesiveness of the group rather than dominates it. Interpersonal (inter-personality) tension in the group becomes here fuel for emergence, rather than fuel for conflict.

19: The future as an intuitive real field of potential can be intuited and inform our present moment and presence.

20: It is fundamentally important that EPPMIS spaces be facilitated and held by those competent in them to produce genuinely emergent cultural spaces.

21: A certain “center of gravity’ of participants is necessary for the spaces to produce genuinely emergent cultural spaces.

**Appendix F: Interviewees and Associated Practice Groups**

**Patricia Albere (PA):** Evolutionary Collective. The Evolutionary Collective focuses on committed and long term group work, with a focus on awakening the shared field. More information at: evolutionarycollective.com

**Jeff Carreira (JC):** Evolutionary Collective (see above), and EnlighteNext. EnlighteNext, under the leadership of Andrew Cohen, has done the most to bring Conscious Evolution into broader discussion, and have what seems to be the most effective and efficient method for bringing people into an Awakened We. More information at: enlightennext.org

**Dustin DiPerna (DD):** We Practice Community. We Practice Community is an experimental group with several different practice communities across the United States. There is a focus on longer term community building, energetic practices, Awakened We, and much experimentation. More information at: wepractice.org/

**Geoff Fitch (GF):** Pacific Integral and Generating Transformative Change. GTC is Pacific Integral’s flagship program, and works with Causal Leadership. The emphasis on We Space is not so much as a practice, as it is a way of being, which is itself a deep practice. More information at pacificintegral.com/

**Olen Gunnlaugson (OG):** Olen has worked with many different intersubjective practices. His main focus for a while has been on bringing intersubjectivity into the business world, and has worked extensively with Theory-U. Information on Theory-U: presencing.com.

**Thomas Hübl (TH):** Thomas must be seen to be believed. He is a clear walking example of an evolutionary way of being in the world. Thomas holds many group sessions around the world, and the focus of his work is what he calls Transparent Communication. More information at thomashuebl.com/en.html

**Miriam and Stephan Martineau (MM/SM):** Miriam and Stephan Martineau are the founders of Next Step Integral, and have run seminars on education, ecology, and We Space. More information at nextstepintegral.com/

**Terry Patten (TP):** Terry Patten is a long time practitioner, working to establish and support a generative and daily Integral practice, and Integral Activism. More information at terrypatten.com.

**Mike Wombacher (MW):** EnlighteNext. (See above).

In addition to the above, I also highly recommend the work of **Authentic World**. Unfortunately I did not conduct an interview with any of the senior team at AW, but I did take their Train the Trainer course, training in circling, and highly recommend their work.

**Appendix G: In-Depth Interview Questions**

Note: I had been using Emerging Post-Postmodern Intersubjective Practices as my all-inclusive term for We Space practices at this point in my research.

1. Please give an overview of your experience facilitating EPPMIS practices.
2. Please describe the means through which you facilitate EPPMIS spaces.
3. What do you see as happening and newly emergent within these spaces?
4. What do you see as necessary from participants for participation within these spaces?
5. How can experiencing and working within these spaces change an individual?
6. How can experiencing and working within these spaces affect a relationship?
7. What do you see as the organizational potentials of these spaces?
8. What do you see as the healing potentials of these spaces?
9. What is the difference between these spaces and normal “day to day” spaces of interaction?
10. Do you see a potential for a globally awakened intersubjective field?

**Appendix H: List of Themes from In-Depth Interviews**

1) We Space is a distinct and newly emergent intersubjective state with great potential for addressing our human crises at this moment in time.

2) We Spaces differ based on who is participating in a We Space, what the intent, goal, or object of the Space is, and the practices that bring a We Space about.

3) We Space entails a set of practices that operate on our subtle and psychological boundaries, making transparent our self-identifications and reality-locations.

3a) We Space has a great potential for healing and nourishing the individual psyche.

3b) We Space surfaces Shadow material and helps to integrate it.

4) We Space enacts an interpersonal field of awareness.

4a) The causal field is a space of love and compassion.

4b) We Space is a space of presence.

4c) Causal realization reveals the interpenetration and mutual emptiness of foundational boundaries and the mental/interpretive categories that result, such as I/We, Inner/Outer, Doing/Being, etc.

4d) Causal We Space is transpersonal.

4e) We Space is a perspectival practice that is inherently post-metaphysical, and post-abstract.

4f) We Spaces rely on a fundamentally second-person orientation of respect for the other’s subjectivity where the other is not reduced to a third-person object, and can build upon this to present a new perspective from the relationship itself.

5) Out of the field of causal awareness an awake and ontologically unique interpersonal ‘shared mind’ can arise that is dependent upon each but not reducible to any of the participants.

5a) Awakened We Space is evolutionarily significant, and both fundamentally service- and future-oriented.

5b) Awakened We Space is a sacred experience.

6) The state of We Space points towards a possible acquired stage of cultural development.

aa) We Space relies on ‘container-setting,’ the establishment of an environment of earnestness, trust, sincerity, intimacy, and vulnerability between participants.

ab) Personal familiarity and affinity, a sense of community, helps the work ‘go deep.’

ac) We Space relies on the full participation and responsibility of each participant.

ad) We Space involves following the energy and intensity in the relational space between individual participants.

ae) We Space involves the practice of transparency and clear communication.

af) We Space is supported by commitment and agreements among practitioners.

ag) We Space takes a great deal of effort from participants.

ah) We Space take a great deal of effort from participants.

ai) We Space is a practice of discernment.

aj) We Space requires silence and deep listening, and is a practice of speaking from silence/the depths of oneself.

ak) We Space is a practice of non-exclusion.

al) We Space is a practice of impersonality.

am) We Space is a practice of curiosity, which opens into a field of living inquiry.

an) We Space is a practice that both requires and strengthens our post-ego, integrated selves.

ao) We Space is synergistic and catalytic.

7) We Space allows for a Meta-Sangha.

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1. I will continue to capitalize “We Space,” including when the two words are used separately, but refer back to a We Space phenomenon (e.g., “the Space was very potent.”) I do this to help distinguish the conventional use of “we,” and the phenomena I am investigating here.

   Some of the impetus for this paper was to clear up the usage of the term “We Space,” and for a long period during the research I shied away from the term entirely. I had felt that several importantly different intersubjective phenomenon were all happening under the general name of We Space, and that what it seemed to have originally pointed at, the awake and ontologically unique and active We and the subjective experience of this phenomenon, had gotten watered down to include experiences of empathic community. Hanging out had begun to be referred to as “We Space,” which seemed to me to the detriment of the potentials of some of the intersubjective experiences that I had had. However, there is a reason that “We Space” has become the common usage (beyond that it has been awkward to try and come up with a similarly inclusive name), as there is an important commonality to everything being called We Space: intersubjective self-reflexivity, something which even in its least mature form is nonetheless radically different from our culture’s conventional intersubjective space. I take the word now to indicate the entire spectrum of self-reflexive intersubjective practices, and will use it that way in this paper.

   Additionally, there are a number of organizational practices that I feel are closely related to the emergence of We Space, some of which invoke conscious relationality, and some which do not. See Holacracy 1 (http://www.holacracy.org), and The Ginger Group (http://gingergroup.net/). For practices that exemplify both relational and organizational practice, see Scharmer, 2009, and Torbert, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. That is, We Spaces are fundamentally intersubjective. Of Sean Esbjörn-Hargens’ (2001) categorization of the different types of intersubjectivity found in Integral Theory, this paper deals with intersubjectivity in the following ways: the first, intersubjectivity-as-spirit; the third, intersubjectivity-as-resonance; the fourth, intersubjectivity-as-relationship; and the fifth, intersubjectivity-as-phenomenology. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. Each interviewee is introduced by their full name if I refer to them by name when I use their name for the first time. Otherwise, their initials in parentheses denote them after their quotes. For the full list, a brief description of their We Space work, and more information, see Appendix F. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. See Appendix E. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. See Appendix G. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. A full list of major and minor themes without commentary is presented as Appendix H. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
7. There is perhaps no way to properly language this, as the awareness and awakening of We Space are not, properly speaking, experience. I will continue to use the word experience with the caveat that this is not technically accurate. See Appendix C. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
8. Like much else, how I use these terms will become clear in the exposition, but I also present a brief but detailed discussion of usage in Appendix C. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
9. Appendices A+B. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
10. In context, this is metaphorical. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
11. Wombacher is speaking of a particular state in We Space. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
12. Indeed, in the broadest sense, as intersubjectivity is understood in AQAL metatheory as an irreducible aspect of every occasion in the universe, there are an infinite number of unique We Spaces. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
13. I am primarily using Cook-Greuter’s (2007) work as a model of vertical development, both because I am most familiar with it, and because it is the model based on the test I took for the first-person phase of research. I use Brown’s (2006) state-stage model most as I am most familiar with it and as he is my meditation teacher. This is not to suggest that there aren’t equally valid ways of conceptualizing these two dimensions, and applying such conceptualizations to We Space. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
14. Our measurements of developmental capacity are also of *performances*, but this is a slightly different thread. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
15. Robert Kegan’s (1994) Orders of Consciousness, for example, contain an irreducible interpersonal element. One cannot express 5th Order Consciousness without the corresponding interpenetrating interpersonality. Indeed, to exhibit such interpenetrating interpersonality *is* to exhibit 5th Order Consciousness, in its interpersonal aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
16. See Brown, 2006. See as well Appendix C. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
17. Here, self-identifications indicates the patterning of the subtle boundaries and attachments with which we consciously and unconsciously answer the question “who am I?” and reality locations indicate the patterning of the subtle boundaries and attachments with which we consciously and unconsciously answer the question “what is real?” In each person, they are intimately related. See Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
18. See Appendix B for practical examples of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
19. In this paper, this is all happening in the waking state, or the gross *realm*. See Appendix C. This description relies heavily on the subject/object construction, which is an empty subtle boundary itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
20. Or: as a centaur/ body(heart)mind, that is, not as wholeness itself. There is no requirement that one has moved their center-of-identification to wholeness as such. We Space would not be arising at this moment in time. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
21. Which is not to deny the first and primary intersubjectivity from Esbjörn-Hargens (2001), intersubjectivity-as-spirit. See also Dan Brown’s explication of ‘Storehouse Consciousness’ in McNay, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
22. An identical footnote to the last one could be placed here, which is also to say that the two points I’m making here are two very different ways of approaching an underlying truth about the causal field. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
23. Or, without distinguishing it, simply “coming into awareness,” as awareness is not multiple (though neither is it singular). Hübl made an interesting remark in regards to this: “The separate version of psychology would say everybody needs to see their own stuff to integrate it. A new view would say life [i.e., awareness] needs to see the unintegrated stuff. So there needs to be an awareness online that is aware of what we are not aware of, because the definition of unconsciousness is that it’s not in our awareness. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
24. It may even be fair to say that awareness, love, and presence are the mind, heart, and body of causal realization. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
25. See Appendix A for more on polarities within development. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
26. Technically, post-metaphysical is a term that refers to third-person realms of truth, and the project of knowledge creation through inquiry into the nature of reality, and methods of investigation of reality (whether first, second, or third person), rather than an intersubjective or subjective experience or way of being as the world together. I use post-metaphysical here because of my emphasis on the subtle metaphysical boundaries that compose our self-identifications and world-making. The ‘non-emptiness’ of these boundaries creates unacknowledged metaphysical frameworks. To act free of these frameworks is then to be post-metaphysical. Bonita Roy (2013) uses the term post-dialectical in what I take to be much the same way. I am not entirely a fan of either of these terms, and am looking for a new way of framing this. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
27. See the “Talking to God” exercise in Appendix B for a simple example of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
28. Here I am perhaps more strongly even then elsewhere influenced by the practice of mahamudra, which, after a certain point, is a practice of ‘view-holding,’ of entering into a perspective, or a way of looking, and allowing the worldview to arise within consciousness. Realization is the direct seeing of world as disclosed by perspectives/view. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
29. These agreements can change moment to moment, as in circling, or be held for an extended period of time, as with an EnlighteNext retreat. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
30. See Appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
31. As far as I can tell, this is not covered by any of the three versions of Integral Theory’s intersubjectivity-as-relationship: We Space *includes* and *depends* upon the I-I, I-It, and It-It perspectives, but holds the potential of taking a perspective from intersubjectivity-as-spirit as the relationship itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
32. Even in the traditionally second-person emotional field. In We Space, you are not reduced even to my love for you. (Or my hatred). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
33. By “future,” I mean the field of possibility, rather than a future that extends linearly from the past. See discussion in Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
34. Here is perhaps the most important place to hold in mind that this use of the word “future” is something fundamentally different than our conventional notions of linear time. See Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
35. With the radically open nature of its inquiry, and the newness in the scale of human being, I believe there are few people capable of doing anything at this point but speculating about evolutionary being as the world together, even with a great deal of experience in We Space, because this We-ness itself, Evolution itself, is just waking up. When it learns to speak, and has mastered its scales, it will speak for itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
36. I have tended to avoid this word, as it seems to have three rather different meanings, within We Space. First, authentic is often taken by the postmodern self as simply being an uncritical stance towards one’s own being, a way of not examining one’s opinion or behavior. While it is important to honor one’s experience as it is without trying to change it, this use of the word authentic can rather tends towards indulgence. The second use is in Authentic World, which seems to aim towards an integrated centauric body-heart-mind: a whole and healthy individual in community. The third is with EnlighteNext’s Authentic self, a post-egoic, evolutionary being as the world together, something that seems to me in intention at least genuinely transpersonal. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
37. The EnlighteNext folks will likely disagree with this. My emphasis here though, and I think they would agree with me, is that any discernment ought to be *impersonal.* Certain phases and focuses of practice, of course, require different emphases of these different injunctions. EnlighteNext puts a focus on moving beyond ego and the personal and on the emergence of an awakened We, while other spaces put the focus on including ego, and then transcending it. I tend to agree with Terry Patten when he says: “we can go into very deep personal spaces, and then go into the transpersonal on the basis of our personal vulnerabilities, and there’s a potential I think for a kind of exaltation and intensity that’s beautiful but that tends not to be sustainable when you go to the transpersonal immediately.” In any case, I do feel strongly that

    one should never be shamed in these practices for showing up as they do, as this is the kind of interpersonal pattern that perpetuates shadow and that needs to be healed before we can move on. EnlighteNext does practice with a strict set of injunctions, however, and participants are engaging consciously in attempting to source self from a non-egoic/personal place. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
38. This is not to privilege what is positive over what is negative. *Any* feeling, any element of experience, or object of consciousness, is *not* causal. Persistent feelings of happiness can similarly arise without history, and can similarly distract from awareness itself. Resting as the causal can affect subtle experience, and positively, but it is a by-product, and not the central focus of practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
39. One of the few occasions where it was impossible to code a statement without the context of the back-and-forth of the interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
40. Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
41. In the sense of *persona.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
42. And see Appendix A about subtle and causal quadrants in O’Fallon’s work, and how this may complicate matters further. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
43. See Masters, 2012, for an exploration of the development of a relationship itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
44. Which also means that the danger is real: we may die in birth, and we may be lost to the woods on our vision-quest. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
45. Or as Nick Hedlund-De Witt says: “Science works, bitches!” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
46. It is not a coincidence that Wilber’s four quadrants are territories described by the fundamental axes “interior/exterior” and “individual/collective,” or that the self/other relationship takes form as the negotiation of autonomy and community, and the way that the individual self fits into its environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
47. Wilber writes of this dynamic in, 2000, ch. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
48. Witness some of the attempts to explore and explicate an integrated ontology and epistemology: Wilber, 2006, Bhaskar 2012, Barad, 2007, Morin, 2008, Mol, 2002, Varela, 1992, to name a few. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
49. For examples, see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 & 1999, Edwards, 2010, or Tim Winton’s Pattern Dynamics. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
50. Again, for a dearth of words in English about these phenomena, I am using ‘thought’ here in the broadest possible way, including pre-verbal mentality, and post-verbal mentality. Anything seen with the ‘eye of the mind’ is in this use a ‘thought,’ even if it is not verbalized, or imagined. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
51. Space is another mis-taken metaphor for awareness, a construction which is also empty. As awareness is not in the realm of experience (while an experience of space is) however, and most people do not have long-term meditation training in our culture that points out these constructions, ‘space’ is one way to help convey the idea, as long as it is kept in mind that ‘space’ is an unfortunately misleading metaphor. The same caveat applies for We-“Space” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
52. Another metaphor that suggests that causal awareness exists *in* experience. There is a field of subtle energy in intersubjective practices that is and can be an object of awareness, and an intersubjective ‘field’ of causal awareness within which subtle experience arises. Rather than surround the practitioners as if they were standing in a football field, this field is interior, something which is interior to our collective experience. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
53. Of course, this is my interpretation of all of this, a traditional Buddhist explanation would be entirely different. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)