

The RETURN of  
COLLECTIVE  
INTELLIGENCE

*Ancient Wisdom for a  
World out of Balance*

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Bear & Company  
Rochester, Vermont

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# In Gratitude

As might be expected, this book is a collective effort.

It grew out of an innovative two-and-a-half-year doctoral program in New Paradigm thought created in 2002 by the late visionary educator Francisco Gutiérrez. Headquartered at Costa Rica's Universidad de La Salle, the Doctorado de la Tercera Cultura is also offered in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Panama, and Spain.\*<sup>1</sup>

The program is unique in many respects. Instead of being taught by professors, you learn from the authors of books on a vast reading list—a bursting treasure trove of world wisdom most of us would never encounter otherwise.

Upon entering the program, you must declare your *chifladura* (madness, passion, obsession)—whatever it is you're hungering to know more about. (Three guesses as to what mine was!) Your reading and writing are done through the lens of your *chifladura*. You must also find a group of people with similar or related *chifladuras* and produce group work.

It was one of the most enjoyable, life-changing experiences I've ever had.

Like the rivers of wisdom that flow from so many different sources into this book, the wisdom from our work in the *doctorado* program flowed into what I'd learned over the years from native wisdom keepers and other friends and teachers, many of whom are quoted here. For these priceless gifts, which have enriched my life beyond measure, I'm deeply grateful.



The book has had good friends helping it every step of the way. My soul teacher Janine Fafard planted the seeds years ago during many latenight conversations; laughter-filled talks with soul sister Katya de Luisa made new insights bloom; Linda Moller, the soul sister who first set my feet on the Andean Path, bravely slogged through an embarrassingly boring and overwritten early draft and gave me excellent criticism. Ehud Sperling and Jon Graham generously offered incredibly valuable advice that inspired me to vanquish my timidity and write from my heart.

Along the way, I was delighted and humbled to discover that the editorial job requirements at Inner Traditions include infinite kindness and patience with clueless, fretful newbie authors. Special thanks to Patricia Rydle and Mindy Branstetter for gently shepherding this one through the bewildering publishing process.

And the book would never have happened without the consistent kindness of my husband (and fellow *chiflado*) Jim Molloy, who listened to me patiently; clarified my thinking with brilliant insights; contributed books, photos, technical and artistic skills, and countless hours of his valuable time; and repeatedly restored the peace—and my sanity—with timely interventions whenever he'd find me locked in mortal combat with my nemesis, modern technology.

May he and my other co-chiflados—Victoria Fontan, Jacqueline Gillet, Jan Hurwitch, and Steven Kogel—continue exploring, learning and helping the world. May the spirits of my parents, Elisabeth and Richard Dyer, see their work in this work. And may my many *waikis* (spiritual brothers and sisters), on Earth and in spirit, whose light illuminates this book and my life, recognize their contributions and know that I honor and thank them, even though I can't possibly list them all.

I am truly blessed by so many beings—including the unseen helpers who unfailingly placed the right books in my hands at

precisely the perfect moments. *Mil gracias!*

## INTRODUCTION

# What Is This Force Called Collective Intelligence?

It was magic!

Fifteen of us, representing various nationalities and ranging in age from our early twenties to our mid-sixties, were about to celebrate the final ceremony in our ten-day initiation journey through the Peruvian highlands. Our work had connected us with the energies in the land and ancient structures that marked places of power in the Inkas' spiritual tradition.

Our guide was Elizabeth Jenkins, fourth-level teacher of the Andean Path and author of three books on Inka spirituality. With great good humor, energy, and dedication, she had shepherded us flawlessly through the powerful energetic exchanges, rituals, and cleansings at each site—many of them quite challenging, some downright scary.

Now we were gathered at the massive stone ruins of the Wiraqocha Temple, and she was presenting us with what appeared to be the most difficult task of all. She asked us to separate into two circles—men in one, women in another—and immediately choose a High Priest and a High Priestess to conduct our closing ceremony.

We gaped at her in disbelief. Choose immediately? She had to be kidding! Our group contained an overabundance of likely

candidates—even a kahuna from Hawaii!

Everybody agreed that Elizabeth simply wasn't being realistic. What she was asking us to do would take hours of discussion and many rounds of voting.

She listened, grinning, as we voiced our doubts.

"You can do it!" she insisted. "Just consult your *qosqos*." (In the Andean tradition, the *qosqo* is the "spiritual stomach"—the energetic center of one's being.)

We finally agreed to humor her. Shaking our heads dubiously, we formed our circles, closed our eyes, and zeroed in on our *qosqos*.

Within seconds, my left hand shot out involuntarily and grabbed the arm of Juliet, the woman to my left. At that exact instant, three or four voices blurted, "Juliet!"

Everyone's eyes snapped open. Those who hadn't spoken were nodding vigorously, gazing at Juliet, who was even more astonished than the rest of us. A humble, soft-spoken woman in her sixties, she was not an obvious candidate.

But here she was—our instantaneous, unanimous choice. Our rational minds hadn't participated at all—they'd been bypassed by an immediate knowing that seemed to spring from somewhere in our bodies.

As we tied a *pareo* around her shoulders to honor her new status, Juliet seemed to grow taller, serene and proud, her gentle eyes radiating a power we had not noticed before . . . every bit the High Priestess.

The men took a little longer to choose the High Priest—about a minute. The youngest in the group, he was another unlikely (and unanimous) choice.

Priest and Priestess proceeded to lead the ceremony with an

impressive intuitive certainty, as if they'd done it hundreds of times. All of us (except for Elizabeth, who was beaming proudly) were in awe.

It was magic!

It was the magic of collective intelligence.

\* \* \*

What is this magic?

What is the mysterious force that enables flocks of birds, swarms of bees, parades of ants, and schools of fish to function together in perfect synchrony, obviously communicating and cooperating at some undetectable level, for the good of all?

What is the process that has always guided indigenous people to acquire the information they need to make important decisions, with no need for lengthy discussion or debate?

## **WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN OUR CIRCLES IN PERU?**

As we will see in the chapters to come, the endlessly fascinating search for answers takes us deep into the discoveries of New Paradigm science—as well as into territory formerly reserved for shamans and mystics: sacred geometry, geomancy, multidimensionality, expanded states of consciousness, deep ecology, Black Madonnas, White Lions. And we find that all the paths ultimately converge.

Modern humans, accustomed as we are to perceiving the world through our individualized lenses, find it hard to believe that it's possible to think, or act, as a single entity. But collective intelligence was a normal part of life for our ancestors and still is

used by indigenous cultures throughout the world.

It lives on in native spiritual traditions and in universal symbols, which hints that it's encoded in us, as it is in all beings. Swarming and flocking behavior is its most obvious expression. At its most subtle, it's an instantaneous knowing, shared by members of a group, of the wisest course of action that will benefit all.

It may be Gaia's greatest gift to her children. And now, with all life on Earth critically endangered, I believe it has become her most urgent imperative.

If humans in the "developed" world can reconnect with this ancient gift, we may be able to repair our fragmented perception and reverse the devastation it has wreaked on our planet before it's too late.

**PART ONE**  
**ALL THAT IS**

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*Fig. 1.1. Looking back: stairway in Machu Picchu, Peru.  
Photo by Dery Dyer.*



# 1

## An Ancient Gift

### *The Interdependence of All Life*

*Perhaps, despite great destruction of human experience, ancient insight and wisdom are not lost. Somehow they are still part of us, inside us. These insights can and will come back to us when we need them.*

ROBERT WOLFF<sup>1</sup>

We—you and I—are part of a collective.

Not just the collective formed by our family, our social circle, our nation, or even the human race. We're part of a collective that includes everything on Earth and beyond. Animals, plants, trees, bugs, bacteria, viruses, molds, cells, stones (stones? Yes!), wind and water, fire and earth, stars, sun, moon, cosmos.

All That Is.

Ancient spiritual traditions and now science tell us that each of us is a member of an intricately interconnected, infinitely complex whole that works cooperatively for the greatest good of all; each of us is a cell in a single immense organism that is constantly evolving . . . and intelligent.

It should be so obvious. You and I, the lone cells, couldn't survive for a second—much less thrive—by ourselves. From the instant of our conception we are utterly, inextricably dependent on All That Is—on sunlight, rain, bacteria, one another. At the same time, we are responsible for contributing to the success of everything we're part of.

We are not only participants in the awesome power of collective intelligence—we're proof of it.

But along the way, we humans forgot that we're part of this miraculous process. Our amnesia was so total that we deluded ourselves into believing we were autonomous, powerful, and immune. Our ability to manipulate the material world convinced us that our technology would guarantee our impunity, allowing us to act recklessly, selfishly, and destructively.

Fortunately, we're waking up. We're reconnecting with the ancient gift. Collective intelligence—aka collective wisdom, swarm intelligence, collective consciousness—has become a hot topic. Biologists, social scientists, computer researchers, robotics engineers, transport companies, and students of metaphysics, working through such organizations as the Co-Intelligence Institute, the World Café, the Collective Wisdom Initiative, and the Center for Collective Intelligence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, are all hard at work studying its implications for everything from traffic control to world peace.

Some researchers are concentrating on the behavior of animal groups; others are focusing on cities; still others are looking at circles of spiritual seekers. Most agree that collective intelligence occurs spontaneously when individuals who share a need and a purpose instinctively self-organize into a group and function with no leader or central authority. Whether they are flocks of birds, schools of fish, ant colonies, or gatherings of humans, such groups are somehow able to exhibit abilities much greater than what any

—or all—of their members would normally possess.

“Where this intelligence comes from raises a fundamental question in nature,” writes Peter Miller in his *National Geographic* article “Swarm Theory.” “How do the simple actions of individuals add up to the complex behavior of a group? How do hundreds of honeybees make a critical decision about their hive if many of them disagree? What enables a school of herring to coordinate its movements so precisely it can change direction in a flash, like a single, silvery organism? The collective abilities of such animals—none of which grasps the big picture, but each of which contributes to the group’s success—seem miraculous even to the biologists who know them best.”<sup>2</sup>

I’m convinced that a group’s extraordinary abilities are actually evidence of highly developed intelligence in its individual members. Each must be able to comprehend not only the big picture, but the *really* big picture—one that extends far beyond the success of the group. Each member of the group is smart enough to know that he or she has something of vital importance to contribute to the whole—and that the group does too.

As we’ll see, our very use of collective intelligence implies an understanding of the importance of working together to ensure not only our individual survival and the success of our group, but the survival of our world.

And there’s more. We’ll be looking at how collective intelligence

- expands the definition of *intelligence* beyond standard accepted forms (logical, emotional, linguistic, spatial, musical, corporeal, intrapersonal, interpersonal, etc.). It includes but is not limited to brain function.
- appears to be hard-wired in all life forms. But most of humanity—with the exception of traditional cultures—has

suffered such psychic fragmentation that we've lost much of our ability to use it.

- is based on wholeness—the interdependence of all life. As such, it always works for the collective good and benefits the entire web of life.
- was an important part of prehistoric spiritual beliefs and practices, conserved in esoteric traditions as well as by indigenous people, and is being remembered by many contemporary scientific theories.
- is the opposite of mob mind or groupthink. That's collective stupidity, which we'll be visiting in part 2.
- is much greater than what can be replicated by artificial intelligence. As experienced by ancient and contemporary humans, collective consciousness invariably includes the numinous.
- is available to all of us, all the time.

To comprehend the subtle and profound reaches of collective intelligence and how we can relearn to use it, we'll be looking closely at ancient and indigenous spirituality, the distortions in modern perception, the power of archetypal forces, and the many ways in which our ancestors worked—and native people continue to work—with energy. What we'll find is aweinspiring, especially when seen through the lens of recent scientific thought.

## **THE VOLCANOES ARE TALKING**

My experience in the circle in Peru was my first conscious brush with collective intelligence. But it wasn't my first taste of magic—or of the Andes (for me, the two are pretty much synonymous.)

Born in Brazil to two adventurous journalists from the United

States, I spent my childhood in Costa Rica and Chile, punctuated by forays throughout the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe, before going to high school and college in the United States.

As a child I found the dizzying power of the Andes intoxicating; as a grown-up, I was called to them again and again—ostensibly to learn about Andean spirituality, but also to bathe myself in the delicious energy emitted by the beautiful peaks and their people.

Everywhere I lived or traveled, magic was afoot somewhere in the natural landscape. In Latin America it blossoms with a continuous crop of inexplicable happenings that intrigue, baffle, and often terrify—such as when my U.S.-trained Costa Rican pediatrician, a close friend of my parents, confessed that he was haunted by the X-ray of a young TB patient whose lungs displayed a pattern of lesions that corresponded identically to pins stuck in the chest of a crudely made rag doll the child’s parents had found in their yard.

In Costa Rica I spent my childhood in the Central Valley canton of Escazú, known as “Land of the Witches” because of its profusion of *brujos* who, since pre-Columbian times, healed with herbs or practiced sorcery in the hills beneath Mount Pico Blanco. This enchanted mountain is the home of the legendary witch Zárata, still said to work her powerful but benevolent magic in forest and fog.

I grew up savoring the rich soup of cultures with their fantastic tales of magic, miracles, spooks, and spirits. From the country folk who worked for us, I learned to hurry inside after dark if a certain owl hooted; it was announcing that its sidekick, the puma, was coming down the mountain. I learned that if it didn’t rain on Good Friday, there would surely be an earthquake. I learned that one had to prune trees and cut hair only during the waning moon, and that the sheet lightning illuminating the mountain ridges was the volcanoes talking to each other.

And so much more. For children lucky enough to live immersed in wildness—untamed mountains, jungles, coastlines—the energies of the Earth are palpable and whisper of a mysterious world where anything is possible.

As I grew older, the enigmatic power and beauty of traditional cultures kept tugging at my soul. I felt that the ancients who had left traces of their vanished world on our land, and their descendants on every continent, had access to some kind of essential truth missing from the lives of “civilized” people.

All of this, of course, collided head-on with my rigidly rationalistic education, and certainly had no place in my subsequent journalism career, in which anything but the verifiable facts—especially anything woo-woo—was a no-no. But Costa Ricans live by the maxim *No hay que creer ni dejar de creer* (one must neither believe nor cease to believe)—in other words, be skeptical, but keep an open mind.

So, neither believing nor ceasing to believe, I lurched back and forth between “the facts” and the magical world I had often experienced, always wondering if there was a way to reconcile these paths that were so different. After years of seeking, I finally found it—first in the spiritual wisdom of native cultures, then in the new science that has come to validate it for those of us still arrogant enough to need convincing.

## THE PARADIGM SHIFT

For many new-science pioneers, the idea of collective intelligence easily follows the great discovery that everything is interconnected and interdependent. If, at the quantum level, we are all one, how extraordinary is it, really, that we are able to think and act together?

Numerous aspects of the New Paradigm, such as systems

*I am one with All That Is,  
All That Is is One:  
Rocks and trees and  
Hawks and bees,  
All beneath the sun.*

OWL WOMAN<sup>5</sup>

Nature is the source of all indigenous wisdom because it shows the way—the *only* way—to live in harmony with All That Is.

According to Tom Cowan, author of *Fire in the Head: Shamanism and the Celtic Spirit*, what the Eskimos call *sila* “is similar to the divine power the Polynesians call *mana*, the Algonquin *manitou*, the Lakota *wakanda*, the Iroquois *orenda*, the Pawnee *tirawa*, and the !Kung *ntum*. It is very much the same idea expressed as *brahman* in India and the *tao* in China and Japan. In the European esoteric tradition, it is often called *magick*. It is the God-Without-Form, the Great Spirit or wondrous mystery behind all that is and, in fact, it is All-That-Is.” Cowan says the ancient Celts believed that this power resides in everything, so “the vital essence of the universe interconnects all living things.”<sup>6</sup>

Native people throughout the world hold this same view, venerating Mother Earth and honoring “All My Relations,” the myriad beings who share their world, as brothers and sisters.

While learning the Andean spiritual path from native shamans, Elizabeth Jenkins frequently found her eyes opened to a startling reality in which what was metaphorical to us was literally true. “Again and again my exposure to this tradition has revealed to me as obvious the fact that on levels often too subtle to notice, human beings, plants, animals, nature, and mother earth all constantly communicated, affected, and exchanged energy with one another,

and that should these incalculable inter-species exchanges cease, life itself as we know it would also cease,” she writes. “Together, we formed an immense living system in which each part performed some necessary service essential to the survival of the whole.”<sup>7</sup>

The elements show us the awesome power of the collective. A single drop of water, a soft breeze, a pebble, or a spark might go unnoticed, but when each contributes its energy to the whole, rivers, hurricanes, avalanches, and flames resculpt our world in a continuous process of creation.

The new science is confirming what native people have been insisting for thousands of years: Mother Earth is not just a colorful metaphor. Now that we’ve finally begun to wake up, we’re amazed to learn that she really is the one running what we thought was our show. Moreover, unlike the ham-fisted, destructive humans who think they’re in charge, she maintains harmony with astounding delicacy, precision, and care. As “new thinker” Ken Dychtwald points out:

Since all aspects of the universe can be seen to exist as energetic systems, then the rigid line between living and nonliving systems immediately disappears and we see that everything is quite alive in some very fundamental way. Not only are the tiniest atomic particles to be considered whole, intelligent and alive systems, but we must also view the planet earth, the solar system and the galaxy as being alive, whole and self-intelligent at a fundamental energetic level.<sup>8</sup>

Physicist, systems theorist, and deep ecologist Fritjof Capra writes:

The earth . . . functions not just *like* an organism but



actually seems to *be* an organism—Gaia, a living planetary being. Her properties and activities cannot be predicted from the sum of her parts; every one of her tissues is linked to every other tissue and all of them are mutually interdependent; her many pathways of communication are highly complex and nonlinear; her form has evolved over billions of years and continues to evolve.<sup>9</sup>

“Only now are we realizing that the Earth is a self as well,” adds cosmologist Brian Swimme, author of *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*. “The Earth is a self-organizing process of astounding complexity and achievement.”<sup>10</sup>

## AWARENESS OF ONENESS

*The universe is a multiform event. There is no such thing as a disconnected thing.*

BRIAN SWIMME<sup>11</sup>

*The universe came into being with us together; with us, all things are one.*

CHUANG TZU<sup>12</sup>

The heart of indigenous spirituality is the heart of the new science.

“Traditional people look at the world and everything in it as ‘wholes,’ as universals: each a universe in itself, a microcosm of the macrocosm, each a part of an infinity of other wholes, and itself comprising an infinity of other smaller wholes,” writes James David Audlin in his compilation of teachings of Native American elders.<sup>13</sup>

He could be talking about systems theory, which introduced the idea that “systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units.” Every organism, says Fritjof Capra, “from the smallest bacterium through the wide range of plants and animals to humans—is an integrated whole and thus a living system.”<sup>14</sup>

Our indigenous ancestors were clearly more observant of what was actually going on in the natural world than were the mechanistic scientists who sought to separate, label, and categorize.

“The mechanistic view of reality separated substance from process, self from other, thought from feeling,” say systems theory scholar and deep ecologist Joanna Macy and writer Molly Young Brown. “In the systems perspective, these dichotomies no longer hold. What appeared to be separate and self-existent entities are now seen to be interdependent. What had appeared to be ‘other’ can be equally construed as a concomitant of ‘self,’ like a fellow cell in a larger body.”<sup>15</sup>

Wholeness is also the basis for chaos theory. In a chaotic system, say holistic theorist John Briggs and holistic physicist F. David Peat, “everything is connected, through negative and positive feedback, to everything else. . . . Chaos theory, like the image of our incredible planet in space, offers us a perception . . . of an interconnected world—a world organic, seamless, fluid, whole.”<sup>16</sup>

According to Ervin Laszlo, field theory proposes that “human beings and all living things are a coalescence of energy connected to every other thing in the world.” The discovery that energy fields link everything has led to the realization that “the reality we call universe is a seamless whole.”<sup>17</sup>

# THE ILLUSION OF ISOLATION

*A human being is part of the whole, called by us the “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.*

*Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN<sup>18</sup>

The tendency of individuals to self-organize into groups is an essential quality of living systems, and it’s where collective intelligence reveals itself.

“The social insects—bees, wasps, ants, termites and others—form colonies whose members are so interdependent and in such close contact that the whole system resembles a large, multicreature organism,” Fritjof Capra explains. “Bees and ants are unable to survive in isolation, but in great numbers they act almost like the cells of a complex organism with a collective intelligence and capabilities far superior to those of its individual members.”<sup>19</sup>

Of course, *nothing* can survive in isolation. We humans may live under the illusion that once we become adults, each of us is independent and can easily live on our own. But just try it. We wouldn’t last very long without our support group of countless beings and systems inside and outside of us.

grass, a hurricane, a mosquito, and us. The sacred was not remote, exclusive, or difficult to touch; it was an intimate part of every being's life.

Specific points on the Earth and places in nature—mountains, forests, bodies of water—as well as cyclical celestial events such as solstices, equinoxes, and the appearance of certain stars, were acknowledged as openings to divine energy. Working with air, water, fire, and earth in sacred places at certain times, ancient people used tools such as the circle to exchange energy with the cosmos, thereby fulfilling their responsibility to the forces of creation and receiving infusions of grace. Sacred reciprocity—the energetic give-and-take the Andeans call *ayni*—became the cornerstone of indigenous spiritual life.

Tom Cowan stresses that in the mystical literature of all peoples, regardless of religion or century, “we find vestiges of the belief that the natural landscape is spiritually alive and that an indwelling spirit animates each living or created thing.”<sup>27</sup>

“When we speak of the human animal's spontaneous interchange with the animate landscape, we acknowledge a felt relation to the mysterious that was active long before any formal or priestly religions,” adds philosopher, cultural ecologist, and performance artist David Abram. “The instinctive rapport with an enigmatic cosmos at once both nourishing and dangerous lies at the ancient heart of all that we have come to call ‘the sacred.’”<sup>28</sup>

We see this rapport in children, which implies that spirituality may be something every human is born with. Ramón Gallegos Nava, sociologist and author, maintains that “children are spiritual beings by nature. Their recognition of the mystery and wonder of life places them in contact with an immense non-material world ready to be discovered.”<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, the syncretism that followed every effort by

dominant religions to eradicate traditional beliefs epitomizes the wholeness-holiness link. Instead of disappearing, ancient and indigenous Earth spirituality simply incorporated elements of the new religions being imposed on them. From prehistoric Goddess-worshipping cultures to Afro-Caribbean religions to Mayan and Andean spirituality, native peoples' insistence on blending ancient and recent shows that they don't admit the doctrinaire divisions created by modern minds.

Our ancestors were also well aware that collective activities facilitate communication with divine energies. Not surprisingly, the sacred pops up often in contemporary discussions of collective consciousness.

“Miraculous”—a word frequently used by scientists examining the behavior of animal groups—is voiced repeatedly by awed humans who have experienced collective intelligence. Reports contain such phrases as “You feel the presence of the sacred,” “It was as if something larger than me was speaking through me,” “It was totally magical,” and “We're absolutely convinced that we're experiencing the beginnings of an evolutionary shift that's greater than anything we've ever experienced.”<sup>30</sup>

If mechanistic science falls short when trying to explain the apparently miraculous behavior of animal groups, it's at a loss to deal with such dramatic experiences among humans.

According to Fritjof Capra, science and the sacred can no longer be on separate pages. He explains, “In the stratified order of nature, individual human minds are embedded in the larger minds of social and ecological systems, and these are integrated into the planetary mental system—the mind of Gaia—which in turn must participate in some kind of universal or cosmic mind. . . . In this view, the deity . . . represents nothing less than the self-organizing dynamics of the entire cosmos.” Therefore, he says, “the systems

view of mind seems perfectly consistent with both the scientific and the mystical views of consciousness, and thus to provide the ideal framework for unifying the two.”<sup>31</sup>

For biologist Rupert Sheldrake, “God is not remote and separate from nature, but immanent in it. Yet at the same time, God is the unity that transcends it.” He quotes fifteenth-century mystic Nicholas of Cusa, who said that “divinity is the enfolding and unfolding of all things in such a way that all things are in divinity”—presaging Bohm’s theory, centuries later, of the implicate order unfolding into the explicate.<sup>32</sup>

“Far from destroying God, science for the first time was proving His existence—by demonstrating that a higher, collective consciousness was out there,” writes Lynne McTaggart. “There need no longer be two truths, the truth of science and the truth of religion. There could be one unified vision of the world.”<sup>33</sup>

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*Fig. 1.2. Leaf-cutter ants at work. Photo by Jim Molloy.*

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## 2

# We Can't See

## *The Crisis of Perception*

*Reality is the vision we have of what surrounds us, but there are other, much more subtle realities that are more important. As humans evolved, they lost this ability to perceive and are thus disconnected from the cosmos, in a state of neglect that they seek to fill with material goods.*

RAMÓN CARBALA<sup>1</sup>

*Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see.*

THE BEATLES

*Something there is that doesn't love a wall.*

ROBERT FROST<sup>2</sup>

We can't see—even though we think we can.

Five hundred years of perceiving reality through the lens of mechanistic science has fragmented our thinking, creating boxes in our brains. More than brainwashed, modern people are brain-

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Bear & Company  
One Park Street  
Rochester, Vermont 05767  
[www.BearandCompanyBooks.com](http://www.BearandCompanyBooks.com)

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Cataloging-in-Publication Data for this title is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-59143-352-1 (print)

ISBN 978-1-59143-353-8 (ebook)

To send correspondence to the author of this book, mail a first-class letter to the author c/o Inner Traditions • Bear & Company, One Park Street, Rochester, VT 05767, and we will forward the communication.