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Article

Inner Transformation for Planetary Well-Being: Going Beyond Rational-Based Anthropocentrism

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Abstract: As the Earth faces escalating crises—ecological, social, economic, and spiritual—a growing number of individuals and communities are recognizing the need to transcend anthropocentric and purely rational paradigms. This paper explores the role of heart-based consciousness in cultivating a deeper sense of connection to all life and a more holistic foundation for planetary flourishing. Drawing on the different levels of human consciousness as outlined in *The Theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness*, the author argues that going below rational mind-centered consciousness toward heart-centered perception is essential for individual transformation and collective well-being. This shift allows for the reawakening of intuition, empathy, unity, and reverence for life, enabling the development of new narratives and systems grounded in love, interconnectedness, and a spiritual understanding of reality. By integrating inner development with broader efforts for planetary health, the paper invites readers to reflect on exploring consciousness as both a pathway and a precondition for a regenerative future.

Keywords: consciousness; levels; rational; mind; anthropocentric; spiritual; heart-centered; intuitive; life; interconnected; love

1. Introduction

Modern society's growing disconnection from the natural world has contributed to widespread ecological degradation and a parallel crisis in human well-being. As biodiversity declines and ecosystems are disrupted, there is a corresponding rise in psychological distress—evidenced, for example, by increasing rates of antidepressant use across diverse populations [1] (Alvarez del Vayo et al., 2021). These concurrent crises raise essential questions about the deeper cultural and psychological roots of human disconnection from nature. This viewpoint examines how dominant Western paradigms, particularly those grounded in what has been termed "the master form of rationality" [2], have contributed to a split between humans and the natural world and within human consciousness itself.

Aligned with ecofeminist critiques, this perspective highlights how Western culture has historically framed nature as an "inferiorized, feminized otherness" [3] (abstract) obscuring its own dependence on the living systems it seeks to dominate. Rather than addressing this disavowed dependency, the approach adopted here explores how dominant rationalist worldviews have reinforced hierarchies that privilege disembodied reason over intuitive, relational, sentient, and embodied ways of knowing. This paper draws on interdisciplinary perspectives from embodied cognition, contemplative philosophy, and ecofeminism to argue that restoring the balance between rational and intuitive modes of knowing is essential to advancing planetary health and human flourishing. The inquiry is situated within the framework of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness, a theory developed by yogi Srinivas Arka [4] based on experiential research through the contemplative practice of Arka Dhyana (Intuitive Meditation). This heart-centered approach offers a phenomenological method for reconnecting with intuitive capacities and understanding consciousness as multilayered and relational. A novel dimension of this exploration involves

connecting this framework with early embryological development and reflecting on gendered dimensions of consciousness and embodiment.

Ultimately, the paper contributes to a growing effort to integrate inner development, spiritual insight, and ecological responsibility—inviting a shift toward a more holistic understanding of human identity as inherently embedded within the web of life.

2. Consciousness

Although consciousness has fascinated philosophers and scientists throughout the ages, there is no clear consensus in the West regarding its origin. However, based on the study of the microcosmic world, quantum physics has moved the debate of consciousness being merely an emergent property of the brain to being the fundamental nature of reality where matter is a derivative of consciousness [5,6]. Quantum physicists describe the fundamental nature differently; for example, Planck [5] talks about "a conscious and intelligent mind" behind the force that brings "an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together" [5] (quote 6), whereas Bohn describes a "ground of being" as being behind the finite world [7].

In contrast to quantum physics, the East has traditionally gone about studying consciousness through introspection, which is to an alternative way of comprehending the fundamental nature of reality based on one's own experience and insights. Although most metaphysical schools in India describe the fundamental nature as consciousness, for some, it is the ground of all being where "Brahman is conceived of as a pure, transcendental, subject-object-less consciousness that underlies and provides the ground of being of both Man and Nature (Sen as cited in [8]) (p.1). For others, "consciousness is mainly a non-physical yet powerful entity that is the pivotal point of all life It is highly responsive and expressive and activates many levels, especially in humans [4] (p. 37). Clarifying India's different metaphysical positions is beyond this paper's scope. What is important is that, unlike quantum physics, the Indian introspective perspective arises from the examination of the nature of one's consciousness using a variety of different meditation methods, which allows the practitioner to experience "the different forms the cosmic dance takes on various other levels of reality [6] (p. 72). For instance, somatic heart-based meditation methods enable practitioners to shift their consciousness from the head to the heart, which initiates a transformative inner journey, allowing individuals to move beyond their rational mind and connect with a heart-centered perception. While this journey focuses on uncovering our spiritual nature, often called the Self or soul, it also enlightens our relationship with the cosmic entity known as the Oversoul or Higher Self.

Most importantly for the context of this paper, this exploration affects our relationships with other living beings, directly relating it to the ecological, social, economic, and spiritual well-being of all forms of life. Plotkin's account of the soul aligns with some transpersonal conceptions [9]. He describes it as the "vital, mysterious, and wild core of our individual selves, an essence ...much deeper than personalities. By spirit, I mean the single, great, and eternal mystery that permeates and animates everything in the universe and yet transcends all. Ultimately, each soul exists as an agent for spirit [9] (p. 25).

2.1. Exploring our Consciousness

Although natural, exploring the nature of our consciousness is not easy. However, yogis and sages have developed methods to help people with this task throughout the ages. This paper refers to a modern heart-based contemplative method, known as Arka Dhyana or Intuitive Meditation, developed by Srinivas Arka. Being a somatic heart-based method, it is similar to the method known as Prayer of the Heart, practiced by ancient Egyptians in Egypt, Persia, the Mediterranean, and India. It was adopted by the Desert Fathers in the Christian tradition and later by the Sufis [10]. Founded on his phenomenological experiences and that of his pupils, Srinivas Arka [4] has elaborated a theory known as The Six Main Levels of Consciousness. As our experiencing consciousness affects our insights and how we relate to and treat other beings, the shift from the head to the heart, which

reawakens our inherent feeling and empathic nature, is essential if we want to reconnect with our own inner being or essence and also heal our disconnection with nature outside.

2.2. *The Inner Journey*

Before there were teachers or books, ancient humans must have looked up at the vast night sky and wondered about their nature, how everything functions, and the laws governing nature. Those truly serious about their quest sat down, took their questions deep inside, and waited for Nature to answer them [4]. This "serious self-pondering into the depth of the soul about . . . [our] existence [4] (p.29) is what meditation is about. A method of meditation is not meditation but leads to meditation, which is coupled with intuitive insights about these profound questions. Modern-day seekers re-enact this inquiry, hoping to know the topological nature of their Self [11] and the laws of the Universe based on experimental phenomenological introspection.

When undertaking this inner journey, practitioners effectively rewind their surface consciousness to return to their experiencing consciousness during their early embodied condition. In phenomenological introspection, practitioners use the cursor of their mind, known as their "I awareness" or "I ego awareness," to undertake the inner journey of self-discovery [12].

Meditation methods can go above or below the thinking mind and may be thinking or feeling-based. This article discusses an embodied, heart-based feeling method that goes below the thinking mind. Not all meditation methods involve an experimental inner journey into the nature of the Self, and those that do are not popular with spiritual traditions that do not recognize the Self [11] (Louchakova, 2007). Although classical Buddhism does not recognize the Self [13] Buddha emphasized the non-harming of all beings, which includes humans, animals, and vegetation [14].

2.3. *The Theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness*

The Theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness suggests there is a clear metaphysical road map for anybody undertaking the journey of Self-discovery using a heart-based method like IM. Recognizing different levels, the theory includes levels of consciousness that have to do with the brain and heart, thereby including thinking and feeling, which gives rise to intuition. Although the levels are common, Arka acknowledges that the inner experiences of each person within each level are unique. Arka describes the journey of Self-discovery as "a journey from the 'Rational Mind to the Emotional Heart to Pure Consciousness'" [4] (p. 3).

The main levels Arka identifies are:

- 1) M (Mind) – Consciousness,
- 2) SM (Subliminal-Mind) – Consciousness,
- 3) F (Feeling-Mind) Consciousness,
- 4) H (Emotional-Heart) – Consciousness,
- 5) HS (Heart-Soul) – Consciousness and
- 6) PS (Pure-Self) – Consciousness [4] (pp. 37–38).

2.4. *Distinguishing Features of each Level and Its Anatomical Correlate*

In his theory, Arka [4] outlines the distinguishing characteristics of consciousness for each of the main levels he mentions. As practitioners of heart-based methods strive to reconnect with the purity of their consciousness by rewinding their surface awareness, Lindhard [15] suggests a correlational relationship exists between the levels of consciousness mentioned and the reverse order of our anatomical development. This perspective provides biologically based insights into the levels described by Arka. It also helps to clarify the argument that our overreliance on rational thought linked to the brain has led to a disconnection from our inherent heart-based nature. In much the same way Western culture has historically obscured its dependence on nature, Western neurological

science has largely ignored the relevance of heart consciousness to human well-being, favoring disembodied reason over intuitive, relational, sentient, and embodied ways of knowing.

2.4.1. M (Mind) – Consciousness

M (Mind) – Consciousness is Related to Thinking. It is Highly Prized in our society; our educational system is centered on developing our intellectual abilities linked with our thinking mind.

Our ability to reason is associated with the brain, especially the frontal lobe cortex (PFC), which develops late both phylogenetically and ontologically [18]. Although the PFC shows significant developmental changes in the first year of life, in humans, it only reaches full maturity in young adulthood [17].

Following Fuster's evolutionary model [18], the cognitive functions of the frontal lobe, and more particularly the prefrontal cortex (PFC), must be understood in the context of its evolutionary origin via the adaptation of the organism to its environment and its relation to other cortices. This insight is supported by the concept of neural plasticity, which holds the reorganization of the nervous system's structure, functions, or connections as a response to intrinsic or extrinsic stimuli [19]. However, another sort of postnatal plasticity involving synapse elimination (called pruning) starts from toddlerhood and typically lasts beyond puberty. As this is when youngsters learn to orientate themselves socially based on emotional value computation, inhibition of behavior, and acquisition and generation of rule [20], what is pruned might have something to do with more primary authentic, emotional, and intuitive ways of orientating ourselves in the world connected with the heart. Western-based educational system's emphasis on youngsters developing their thinking and intellectual minds also adds to the pruning of earlier abilities and our primary perception system, which can be recovered if we learn to descend from our thinking mind to our feeling-heart mind.

2.4.2. SM (Subliminal-Mind) – Consciousness

SM (Subliminal-Mind) – Consciousness is powerful and controls many activities. Popularized by Freud, it operates below conscious consciousness, influencing ideas, emotions, actions, and decisions.

It correlates with the more primal CNS layers comprising the cerebellum and brainstem, a gateway to other primordial levels of our being. This supposition fits Pert's [21] idea that our body is our subconscious mind.

2.4.3.1. The Heart and Its Development

Although Arka identifies three levels of consciousness connected with the heart that can be experienced individually, it is challenging to locate their exact anatomical correlates, especially as investigations into the heart as a sensory organ [22,23] are still in their infancy. However, when we consider the developing body of the embryo as a dynamic, interconnected system where ontologically the heart system is primary, we begin to comprehend its intricate and delicate nature and importance to us as a living being. By outlining the development of the heart system, we hope to show that not only is the heart system related to feeling is primary, but it is also part of our intrinsic nature, which dominant rationalist worldviews have, to a large extent, ignored or underrated its importance.

2.4.3.1.2. Development of Our Heart During Our Embryological Past

During the ontological development of the germinal disc (inner egg), the heart system develops first with blood forming in the ectocyst (outer egg) and then running in capillaries via the body stalk to the cranial end of the germinal disc (inner egg). This finding means that the initiation of the heart system is outside of the inner egg. At the central point of the endocyst, which van der Wal calls the "centripetal junction of blood vessels," the blood halts and then flows back to the periphery through

other capillaries. "This point of reversal, where the flow comes to a standstill, turns about, and takes on a rhythmical character, is the first indication of the origin of the heart" [24] (p. 44).

2.4.3.1.2. Pulsation and Spirituality

When the heart begins to beat, pulsation, the underlying core principle and property of universal existence, cosmic and local existence (Arka in [25]) becomes tangible. When pulsation, or "perpetual spanda", is understood as the essential nature of the Lord [26], also described as Spirit, or Conscious Spirit, a spiritual understanding of our nature and the nature of the Universe becomes possible [33]. This comprehension is consistent with Planck's [5] vibratory model. Although each living entity is, in essence, an expression of the Lord or Conscious Spirit, it is only in animals and humans that spirit becomes tangible via perpetual spanda [27] (p. 10) or creative pulsation.

2.4.3.1.3. The Developing Body is a Dynamic, Interconnected System

When the heart primordium begins to pulsate, development quickens in the germinal disc, comprising ectoderm and endoderm tissue. In a process known as gastrulation, the germinal disc is transformed into a three-dimensional entity. The inner layer is termed mesoderm, but according to van der Wal [24], this term creates confusion as it is not a derm or limiting skin but "creates space and connects at the same time" (p. 42).

After pulsation becomes tangible, the central midline cranial-caudal and left-right ordering principle, known as the primal streak, starts forming the notochord made from mesoderm tissue. The notochord, forerunner of the vertebral column, is a long cylindrical structure that seems to recapitulate the earliest event in the transition from invertebrates to vertebrate forms, a transition that occurred between five and six hundred million years ago [28]. Simultaneously, the heart primordium made of mesoderm tissue begins its descent in a way that resembles a triple helix [29] or a curve in three-dimensional space that, according to Corno, Kocica, and Torrent-Guasp [30], seems to repeat "the evolution of the cardiac morphology, which occurred in millions of years from worms to mammals" [30] (p. 562). The simultaneous occurrence of the descent of the heart and the development of the notochord at the caudal end of the germinal disc indicates that we are talking of a dynamic system that is interconnected and where there are parallels between our ontological and phylogenetic history. The notochord made of meso tissue induces the formation of the neural plate, which starts to form on day 18/19. It then folds into the neural tube, which gives rise to the central nervous system (CNS), including the neural part of the brain" [31]. Whereas the notochord is made of meso or inner tissue, the neural plate, which folds into the neural tube, is a thickening of the ectoderm [32], or outer tissue. Beginning on about day 25, the anterior end of the neural tube develops into the neural part of the brain, whereas the posterior portion becomes the spinal cord [33]. The neural part of the brain and the spinal cord are made from neural ectoderm.

2.4.3.1.4. Tissue Structure and the Different Layers

The heart, which develops first, and the other organs are made of meso or inner tissue, as are the voluntary and involuntary muscles involved with work, actions, and behavior, which indicate the dynamics of the physical body take place in the meso layer. The development of the neural system, made of outer tissues, is induced by the notochord made of meso tissue. This arrangement indicates that there is a basic arrangement of tissue structure in the inner egg consisting of two different layers where the meso (inner layer) is primary and the CNS and the neural part of the brain, comprising of neural ectoderm, is secondary, suggesting that the organism might have primary and secondary ways of relating to the world, which have developed during different stages of the body's development [31].

2.4.3.1.5. Contact Between Our Thinking Mind and Inner Meso Layer

From "the perspective of our thinking mind, normally associated with the prefrontal cortex, the formation of the meso layer and its contents predate its existence" [31]. This fact means we cannot directly contact the inner meso layer through our thinking-based reasoning faculty. To contact the meso layer, which involves the heart and the dynamics of our body, we have to rely on other more primary faculties. Freud was one of the first psychologists to realize that we could not directly contact a deeper aspect of ourselves, which he called the unconscious, and he suggested that we could receive information from this deeper layer via dreams and free association. Although Freud [34] admitted that he knew little about feelings and sensations, meditation practitioners can learn how to tune into this deeper, inner layer again to access their feeling-heart mind that gives rise to intuition or intuitive knowledge. It is hypothesized that we can also use our 'feeling mind consciousness' to access information about other beings, whether humans, animals, plants, or even the planet itself, who, after our birth, form our new 'placenta' or outer layer of our being. This subtle communication system is essential when healing the split between us and nature. However, interspecies communication and other psychic abilities, including intuition, are still somewhat controversial topics in science, despite meticulous work done in this field, including classified work undertaken by the United States government during the Cold War [35] (Data Beat Anecdotes, para. 4).

Our body communicates with us through sensations when it is out of harmony and needs to inform us that something is amiss. This ability is vital for our health even though many of us do not pay attention until the body really 'shouts'. However, we do not have to wait for something to go wrong to pay attention to our bodies. A recent study showed that by bringing one's awareness from the head area to 19 energy stations in the body, including the heart, this intended "shift leads to cardiovascular phase synchronicity and interconnection of various bodily subsystems" [36] (abstract). When we connect with our hearts, we bring not only our own system into coherence [36] but the larger system in which we live into coherence or harmony [37]. This finding implies that the more people involved in this task, the more we can start healing the split we have caused between ourselves and nature. This intentional shift to a more body-based awareness resulted in a feeling of well-being and a quieting or stilling of the mind, enabling practitioners to listen to their intuitive inner voice. This study indicates that body-based awareness might be essential for our overall health. According to Oschman's [38] living matrix model, actions arising from bodily cues in direct response to the environment give rise to authentic action instead of 'thoughtful action,' which involves much slower neural pathways.

2.4.4. The Three Levels of Consciousness Connected with the Heart

Below the different levels of consciousness connected with the heart, the quality of the consciousness associated with each level, and their anatomical correlates are described. Phenomenological accounts from qualitative research involving the Arka Dhyana Intuitive Meditation method are also added to illustrate some of the experiences of practitioners when contacting the different levels.

2.4.4.1. F (Feeling-Mind) – Consciousness

F (Feeling-Mind) – Consciousness prevails in the heart area and has to do with feelings, which give rise to intuitive insights. Most mothers have a well-developed intuitive ability to attend to the needs of their babies' who express themselves through feelings [4]. The heart has various dimensions; it is considered a sensory organ [22,23], and it has its own nervous system, characterized as a brain on the heart or heart-brain [39–41], which allows it to act independently of the brain. Research indicates the heart sends more information to the brain than vice versa [42]; the HeartMath Institute suggests the heart communicates through neurological, chemical, biophysical, and energetic pathways ([43], para. 1). As the heart produces the body's biggest electric magnetic field, which also penetrates every cell in the body, it may "act as a synchronizing signal for the body in a manner

analogous to information carried by radio waves" [44] (p. 1). Nevertheless, the heart field not only affects the person, it also affects other people consciously who are within its range. The expression of liking a person's vibration is probably related to this testifying to our ability to feel another person's field. A person's field also affects cells in vitro [44]. Our experiencing consciousness at the heart level might be connected to the ability to respond to changes in the heart's field via a feeling-based primary perception system, which gives rise to intuitive information. Researchers using different heart-based methods and techniques [11,25,36,42,45] all refer to the intuitive nature of the heart. Ontologically, the heart develops before the brain, which suggests that our experiencing feeling consciousness at the heart level is primary and maybe more relevant to our survival and well-being than our thinking mind, which is associated with our brain.

Sharing her phenomenological experiences, one participant commented, "After this course, I feel that I have most certainly embarked on a journey which has already taken me to other realms previously unknown to me. I am excited by this newfound deep connection and the recognition of self that I have already experienced. I realize this journey has only just begun, but I have already opened up; thanks to the connection, I am lighter and more trusting of my intuition and my previously unacknowledged connection where I could see connection but had previously written it off as coincidence and randomness" [45] (p. 179). Another participant summed up his insights by saying there are different layers and levels of heart consciousness involved in intuition; personal, social, and global, life, love, and light" (p. 179).

2.4.4.2. H (Emotional-Heart) – Consciousness

H (Emotional-Heart) – Consciousness is where emotions are felt more intensely and deeply, often resonating with "impressions gathered through what you have learned and experienced along with the memory of your personality" [4] (p. 38) (Arka, 2013, p. 38). The intensity of emotions is a lived experience; using Arka's expression, at this level, "feeling is like water (where) emotions are like waves in the lake of consciousness" [46] (p. 18). Emotional-heart consciousness opens the way to emotional regulation by letting go and/or resolving parts of our past, which have become stuck through a lack of expression and acknowledgment. As practitioners open to a bigger picture, they can constructively integrate their held emotional past, thereby honoring reality nonjudgmentally. However, there is more to emotional heart consciousness. Evidence supports that communication between people is affected by "a subtle yet influential electromagnetic or "energetic" communication system (that) operates just below our conscious awareness" McCraty, [44] (p. 7). Sensitive or empathic people can tune into this field and respond accordingly, which takes communication to another level. The ability to capture or retrieve information about the person who received a new heart lends credibility to the idea that there may be subtle forms of communication that science has yet to understand fully [47]. Most people who reported knowing about their donors were women [48]. Subtle communication of an emotional nature might be linked to the fundamental wave within the electric magnetic field known as torsion. The Russian scientist Kozyrev found that human thoughts and feelings generated torsion waves and that emotional thoughts produced a much more significant effect on his equipment than intellectual thought (Kozyrev in [49]). The Oschmans [50] refer to the same phenomena as scalar waves and scalar fields. However, regardless of the name used, this level of consciousness seems to be linked to a field around the heart, which is connected to fields of information that are not bound by the limits of time and space. Further clarification is beyond the scope of this paper except to say that empathic people seem better able to tap into these fields than others.

In talking about the integration of emotions, one participant commented, "Arka Dhyana has created in me a quick connection to source through my heart. I can do some small connective actions or thoughts such as head to heart, and through the movement of energy, I am received at home/connecting to essence. This connection has me feeling less alone, less misunderstood, more connected, supported, and whole. I am more accepting of all parts of me through this meditation, where before i was critical of the negative, the shadow and the fear" [45] (p. 179).

2.4.4.3. HS (Heart-Soul) – Consciousness

The experiencing consciousness of the fifth level starts to unfold when practitioners open to inner space connected with their deeper heart, which allows new creative insights to emerge spontaneously. Arka [4] describes this level of consciousness as being between the deeper heart and the ultimate essential being (Soul)... Here, you become more connected with Nature and the forces of the Universe (pp. 37–38). In the same study mentioned previously [45], qualitative data obtained from the Resilience Scale (RS), the Spirituality Scale (SS), which consists of three subscales dealing with Self-Discovery, Eco-Awareness, and Relationships, and the Feeling consciousness Scale (FCS) were highly significant. According to the authors, the study indicates that when participants are shown how to go below their thinking mind and connect with their deeper Self via their hearts, they "become they become more resilient, more spiritual and begin to live in harmony with nature, with a trend towards improved relationships with people" [45] (p. 176).

The deeper heart's connection to space refers to earlier stages of the heart's development when it is subject to many different interconnecting factors, including forces of the Universe. For this reason, Lindhard [15] associates this level of consciousness with blood, which is "considered a specialized connective tissue as it connects all systems of the body and transports oxygen, nutrients, and wastes" [51] (specialized Connective tissue). Blood also physically links the ectocyst's mesoderm with the endocyst's mesoderm during embryonic development. However, more than that, blood indirectly links us to our mother via the womb, the inside, and outside environment or nature, which supplies us with nutrition via our mothers, our ancestors via genes (fetal blood contains DNA), and the forces of the Universe. Our experiencing consciousness at this level is that we are related to the interconnected web of life consisting of our parents, our ancestors through whom life force has passed from one generation to the other, the environment, nature, and Universal forces.

One participant described the connection to space in the following way "I feel the heart space getting bigger, spacious even, and feel an excitement, like an orgasmic feeling, stronger every week." Another commented, "It has been incredible to see that when you give the soul space, everything begins to position itself more according to how it should be, how it feels good" [45] (p. 181). As the experience of space increases, there is a reduction in their surface-experiencing consciousness [45].

The highly significant scores in Lindhard and Edwards's study on the Eco-Awareness subscale which is said to reflect an integral connection to nature based on deep respect and reverence for the environment and a belief that the earth is sacred [52], indicates that the consciousness of the participants had opened to a deeper understanding regarding their connection with nature and the nature of nature, during the course. However, the word 'nature' was not specifically mentioned by any of the participants, which makes the authors suggest that "once a person has recognized their spiritual nature, it is possibly easier to perceive the fundamental invisible spiritual principle behind visible nature. However, this hypothesis needs further research" [45] (p.171). We must also remember that this study involved people who had just begun to practice the IM method.

2.4.5. PS (Pure-Self) – Consciousness

The sixth layer, core consciousness, is the very essence of your whole presence and of everything that you feel, think, and do. It is addressed as Soul or Self [4] (pp. 37–38). It is the state of 'looking back' where the eyes also physically roll backward. The practitioner experiences oneness where time becomes timeless as there is unity between the practitioner and time; in essence, they become ageless (Arka, private comments 2nd Dec 2024). During the experience, the practitioner realizes their timeless spiritual nature, but simultaneously, they comprehend that they are living in a time-bound body. This new duality gives rise to a spiritual comprehension of their nature and that of all creation, similar to the insight of quantum physicist Max Planck [5]. What is different is that when one undertakes the transformative inner journey, practitioners can experience the different levels of their consciousness, including thinking and feeling.

Although not explicitly referring to pure consciousness, one participant wrote: "The final session helped me to experience the process more viscerally, especially experiencing the spirit body so

clearly. I practiced that this morning. It does help me to feel centered and integrated and aligned in my heart, soul, and body after practicing" [45] (p. 180).

2.5. *Accessing the Different Levels*

Passing through the levels is not necessarily linear. Practitioners can spiral through the different levels on their journey to Pure Consciousness by experiencing ever deeper aspects of the mentioned levels. By humbling the ego, the practitioner enables their I-ego-awareness [12] to reconnect with their heart-based feeling nature, which allows intuitive insights to arise spontaneously. It is also hypothesized that this feeling ability allows humans to connect with other living beings and nature, understanding their needs and requirements. This intrinsic, heart-based consciousness forms the foundation of our compassionate, intuitive, and empathetic nature, which is essential for both human flourishing and the well-being of the planet. Phenomenological experiences indicate that by engaging with our feeling-level consciousness, practitioners who meditate on their deeper Self can intuitively grasp their own spiritual nature as well as the spiritual essence of nature, recognizing that all creation is interconnected and sacred.

2.6. *Prayer of the Heart*

Although not researched, the levels of consciousness outlined by Arka might also apply to those practicing the ancient heart-based Prayer of the Heart, where, in its initial stages, the practitioners associate "the repetition of Divine Names . . . with the somatic sense of self in the chest" [53] (p. 295). However, in the "contemporary 'accelerated' form, the beginning attention is fixed in the chest to access the Gnostic' mind of the heart'... Whence, the phenomenological analysis of the Prayer of the Heart uncovers the inner structure of consciousness within this 'mind of the Heart' as opposed to 'mind of the head'" [53] (p. 295). What the Prayer of the Heart method shares with the Arka Dhyana method is that both methods involve a transformative inner journey where practitioners connect with their 'Gnostic' or 'feeling heart mind', which uncovers the inner structure of consciousness and gives rise to our inner intuitive heart-based nature [10].

2.7. *Women's Consciousness*

Understanding women's consciousness is also vital if we are going to understand more about consciousness on the one hand and how we can heal ourselves and our relationship with the planet on the other hand. Although consciousness is neither masculine nor feminine when it takes a form, each sex has specific attributes.

The sacred cycle of women linked to the moon goes far beyond women's capacity to reproduce biologically. Before people used electric light at night, "women temporarily synchronize their menstrual cycles with the luminance and gravimetric cycles of the Moon" [54], which gives a woman a direct experience of a cosmic relationship between what is happening in her body and the cycles of the moon. This experience must have made women realize they live in an interconnected Universe. Conversely, men have no direct biological connection; it has taken men over two thousand years to come to the same conclusion based on findings from quantum physics. An interconnected understanding of reality implies that whatever we do to nature outside, we also affect our inner nature.

In addition, as a woman can bear and give birth to new life, some authors point out that before a man, she develops the capacity to love beyond the limits of her own being while looking after the fruit of her body [55]. A woman's relationship with her offspring is feeling-based as she has to understand her baby's needs intuitively; at birth, it is not an intellectual relationship. We know from Harlow's experiment with baby monkeys separated from their mothers that newborns need more than food for their well-being. When reintegrated into the group, the socially isolated monkeys demonstrated "disturbed behavior, hyperactive behavior, and even self-mutilation"; "some even died, refusing to eat. [56] (para. 2). A mother's caring and intuitive nature is vital for the species' survival.

Based on dental evidence, it is hypothesized that longer weaning periods were introduced in the Upper Paleolithic period, which helped towards the long-term survival of homo sapiens as opposed to Neandertals, who largely died out [57] (Abstract). At that stage of our history, we lived in harmony with nature.

The symbols and icons left by early women during the Upper Paleolithic period suggest that they supported a body-based spirituality. Based on a woman's capacity to give birth, it seems they drew an analogy with the creative force behind the manifest Universe, which they considered as Mother [55]. Although in the 16th Century, the Spanish mystic Santa Teresa referred to the mystery as God or Father, she too felt the mystery needed to be related to personally; it is not an abstract mystery, but a mystery that is alive and vibrates through us and is what animates every cell in our body; we are an embodiment of this living mystery [55].

In today's materialistic world, an embodied spiritual understanding of reality plus a woman's inherent caring and intuitive nature is vital in helping us move beyond rational-based Anthropocentrism. Although it is easier for mothers to connect with their heart-based feeling nature, the Theory of the Six Main Levels of Consciousness [4] suggests that feeling heart consciousness is inherent in all of us. Although men have been training their intellectual abilities far longer than women, in today's world, it is necessary for both sexes to reconnect with their hearts if they want to heal the inner split, which is also reflected in our split from nature outside. This perspective aligns with Eco feminist writers like Qualls-Corbett [56], who point out that this split has caused "our social and psychic structures to become over mechanized, over-politicized, over militarized. Thinking, judgment, and rationality become the ruling factors. The need for relatedness, feeling, caring or attending to nature goes unheeded - there is no balance, no harmony, neither within oneself nor in the external world" (p. 16).

2.8. Western-Based Society and Education

The Western educational system favors disembodied reason over intuitive, relational, sentient, and embodied ways of knowing. It has grown out of the formal education of ancient Greece, which was only open to males and was based on the concept of paidia, an idealistic stance involving "the sum of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic as well as physical qualities that make one a complete and whole human being" [60] (p.5). The modern-day progressive stance takes this concept to a new level in a much more exaggerated form in their support of the so-called NBIC technologies—nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science [61], which are 'tools' to enable humans to enjoy greater "morphological freedom" [62], including taking on new forms through prosthetics or genetic engineering, select their sexuality, or advance their cognitive capacities. Not only focused on altering and, in many cases, destroying the pristine beauty of nature outside, modern-day humans are prepared to change or even ruin their biological nature through technology to achieve their personal goals. Whereas in Greek times, the goal of Paideia was to make both a 'beautiful and good' political man 'who was the servant of the polis or state or community' [60] (p.4), these days, the stress is on personal desires and ambitions rather than service to the community. We must also remember that Ancient Greece consisted of various autonomous city-states or polis (pl poleis). The prevailing characteristic that united all the states was the competitive nature of the males, summed up in the concept of agon, which Greek has one word covering all forms of competition: agon. This concept could refer to 'war,' 'dispute,' philosophical, political or juridical, or 'contest'. There were sports contests, music, and drama between potters and even doctors [63] (para 2). Our competitive educational system echoes that of Greece, and like that of Greece, it too is not aimed at fomenting our feeling heart-based intuitive nature related to the female principle.

3. Concluding Remarks

The idea that the anthropocentric foundation of identity in Western culture encompasses not only human supremacy over nature but also a disconnection from our deeper, heart-based inner essence presents a new perspective on the problem and suggests a path forward. It has been proposed

that by prioritizing disembodied reason, our way of life and educational systems have contributed to the neurological “pruning” of our inherent, feeling heart-based, intuitive nature. Since our intrinsic nature fosters an interconnected and spiritual perception of the world, it is crucial that humanity restores this connection for individual transformation and collective well-being. Shifting from a focus on the thinking mind to embracing the feeling heart allows for the reawakening of intuition, empathy, unity, and reverence for life. This shift can help us develop new narratives and systems grounded in love, interconnectedness, and a spiritual understanding of reality. By integrating inner development with broader efforts aimed at planetary health, this perspective invites readers to reflect on exploring consciousness as both a pathway and a prerequisite for a regenerative future.

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