

The New New Age:

Rediscovering the Cutting-Edge Qualities of the Edgar Cayce Work

BY LYNN SPARROW CHRISTY



How often will people say that they got their start with Cayce but have now moved on to more “advanced” material? They may speak of Cayce with the fondness one might have for a favorite elementary school teacher, but their time and interest now goes to other sources of information. Yet, to take this view of the Cayce readings is like reading the Cliff’s Notes version of *War and Peace* and thinking you’ve gotten all there is to get out of it.



AS THE NEW AGE movement picked up momentum during the last decades of the 20th century, Edgar Cayce began sounding pretty stodgy to many people. Seek a life of service; rout out tendencies toward selfishness in your patterns of thought and behavior; attend to your body’s health with careful nutrition, exercise, and other lifestyle choices; set an ideal that you can live by as you go about your normal life activities; form intentional groups to bolster your resolve and follow-through; make a difference in your world; pray; meditate—none of these had quite the wow factor that seemed to fuel popular New Age culture. What about experiences in altered states of consciousness? What about great psychic attainments? What about contact with entities on higher planes? What about the power of stones and crystals? While the Cayce readings address all of these things and more with great depth and considerable sophistication, they were often branded as beginners’ material simply because they do not emphasize the phenomenal aspect of the spiritual path.

If we take the time to look, we will find that the Cayce material is at the cutting edge of some of the most important developments on the contemporary spiritual scene. For, even as the popular explosion of New Age interest in the late 20th century was drawing increasing criticism for its

tendency toward somewhat narcissistic and magical thinking, other influences were growing up alongside it. Influences that took the best of the burgeoning spiritual awakening and wedded it to science, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. Influences that have now come together to form an expansive and promising spirituality for the 21st century that is both “integral” and “evolutionary” in the way it draws on upon diverse sources of knowledge and wisdom in order to engage creatively with an evolving cosmos, world, and human psyche—a *new* New Age that is all grown up in comparison to its late 20th-century counterpart. And it turns out the Cayce work was there all along.

The Integral Movement

Going beyond the merely holistic, the integral movement combines the wisdom of the East and West and emphasizes the importance of both psychology and spirituality. It embraces all developmental stages of life as they are played out in individuals as well as the collective evolution of humanity. Integralism is interdisciplinary, embracing the wider world of science, sociology, business, education, medicine, politics, economics, and art. According to integralism, interior dimensions of thought and intention co-evolve with the physical organism and so both must be attended to if we hope to reach the highest



levels of functioning, where the various “departments” of our lives—things like relationships, work, and self—are parts of an integrated whole.

The influence of integralism breaks the negative stereotypes of the 20th-century New Age to reach new levels of acceptance and respectability. For example, integral research has appeared in such diverse publications as: the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *The Journal of Transformative Education* and *The Journal of Futures Studies*. Professor Huston Smith has hailed integral theory as bringing together Asian and Western psychology better than any other approach. Don Beck, a management consultant who is currently a Fellow at the George Gallup Institute at Princeton, along with Christopher Cowan, his co-author of the integral manifesto *Spiral Dynamics*, were part of the discussions that eventually led to the end of apartheid in South Africa. Integral thinkers range from its seminal theorist, Ken Wilber, to popular figures such as Deepak Chopra to Harvard-associated developmental psychologist Robert Kegan to mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme to Esalen co-founders Michael Murphy and George Leonard to systems theorist Ernest Laszlo to *Matrix* film writers Larry and Andy Wachowski. The

international flavor of the integral world is evidenced by the thousands of participants from all over the world who are drawn to its numerous events in cyberspace.

This same expansive, multi-disciplinary approach is deep within the DNA of the Cayce readings. For there, too, we find a synthesis of the wisdom of the East and the West, and an integrated view of body, soul, self and the world we live in. The integral character of the Cayce material is also evident in the catalog of topics in the readings, for among them we find not only spirituality and health, but business, education, world affairs, economics, and community involvement. Nor are these subjects usually addressed as purely discrete aspects of human experience. The frequent interweaving of spiritual and practical concerns is most decidedly integral. For example, when a

man asked for business advice in the middle of the Great Depression, his reading (78-4) gave him the business guidance he sought, but then added the admonition to take his attitude toward life and his relationships with others into consideration and to be a channel for the expression of an Ideal.

And how is this for integral economics?

Q. Will it be possible to maintain a fair standard of living for our own people while helping to raise economic standards in other parts of the world?

A. Not only must it be possible, it must be done! if there will be any lasting peace! But it must begin in the hearts and minds of individuals. For it is as just given. As the vital cells of the body—when they have rebelled, and caused sufficient others to do likewise, destruction sets in. (3976-28)

This is typical of the readings’ integral treatment of practical matters in tandem

business leadership backgrounds.

This is exactly what Edgar Cayce recommended: commitment to a specific path while honoring other paths and those who chose them, as exemplified in this reading:

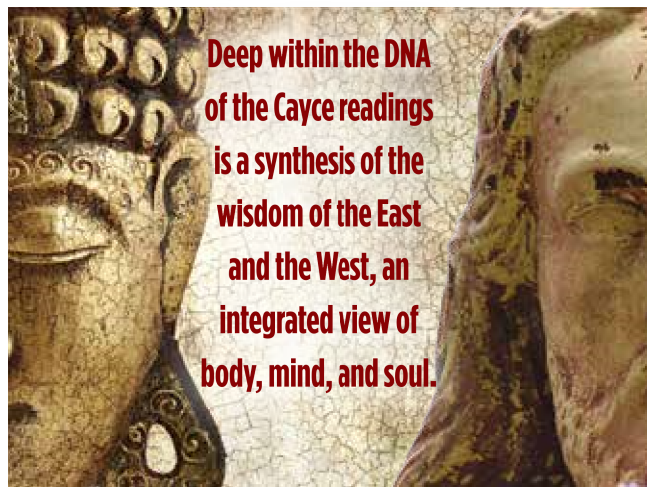
Truth—whether in this or that schism or ism or cult—is of the One source. Are there not trees of oak, of ash, of pine? There are the needs of these for meeting this or that experience. Hast thou chosen any one of these to be the all in thine usages in thine own life? Then, all will fill their place. Find not fault with any, but rather show forth as to just how good a pine, or ash, or oak, or vine, thou art! (254-87)

The Evolutionary Outlook

Like integralism, the “evolutionary” approach to spirituality promises to reshape the way we think about our place in this world. To appreciate its impact, it is important to recognize that evolutionary spirituality goes beyond the age-old concept of soul evolution, which casts the earth as the place where we come to learn lessons, grow, and work through our karma. From this perspective, the earth plane is often at best little more than the schoolhouse of the soul and at worst the prison of illusion that we seek to escape at the earliest possible time.

By contrast, from the evolutionary perspective, the opportunity of incarnation has as much to do with the evolution of the cosmos as it does our own development. And most evolutionary thinkers point to human consciousness as the current frontier of evolution as it manifests here on earth. The Divine Source from which we arise has an irrepressible drive to *create*, and we are on the advancing edge of ongoing creation. Our primary role is that of co-creator and the theater of our creative operation is *here*, in this three-dimensional world of form.*

Although evolution of life on this planet is often denied or at least downplayed by religious traditionalists whose eyes are on a heaven beyond this world; and even though it is often overlooked by those who see our presence in this world as imprisonment in illusion; it is not denied or overlooked in the Cayce legacy. Ongoing evolution from mineral to vegetable to animal to human to



with internal matters of ideals, intention, and openness of consciousness.

Another hallmark of integral thinking is the championing of distinct strands of belief while honoring the universal truth from which they all flow. Many in the heyday of the 20th-century New Age expected the demise of distinct religions in favor of one amalgamated, generic spirituality. Yet the integral way is to create cooperative effort among those who are committed to specific spiritual paths rather than promote cafeteria-style picking and choosing that can too easily cater to our weak points and areas of personal blindness. And so we find conversations in the integral community to include leaders from Buddhist, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christianity, Jewish, Islamic, and Hindu traditions—alongside those who come from science, psychology, and



divine is addressed with fascinating subtlety in the readings, and always against the backdrop of our crucial role as co-creators with God. A closer look at the Cayce readings on evolution and co-creatorship will make it clear that they have an important contribution to make to the evolutionary spirituality movement at a time when the stakes are high. As the human race faces mounting ecological crises, poverty, greed, oppression, and economic woes, we seem to be at a crossroads where we will either leap to a new level of approach to our problems or be inundated by them. But it's not enough to merely embrace an evolutionary philosophy. What the evolving creation needs right now is *participants*—incarnate, awakened souls willing to dedicate their lives to what may be the greatest evolutionary advance since hominids first walked upright. And in the Cayce material we find practices that are aligned with some of the most evolution-conducive trends in the new New Age.

Integral Evolutionary Practices

MEDITATION. From an evolutionary point of view, meditation for the purpose of personal peace and wellbeing is eclipsed by the need for meditation in service to the whole. When we meditate for ourselves alone, it is all too easy to skip it or give up entirely if we do not seem to be having the “right” kind of experience with it. But from the evolutionary perspective, meditation is not optional, for it is indispensable to expansion of consciousness and it may well be our best shot at reaching a level of mind higher than that which created our collective challenges. Edgar Cayce’s characterization of meditation as a necessary *skill* that must be learned just as we learned to walk and talk, implicitly addresses the practice, discipline, and patience a committed life of meditation requires.

INTEGRAL LIFESTYLE. Proponents of modern integral practice tell us that synergy arises from coordinated attention to the various aspects of life. When we simultaneously address health, spirituality, relationships and acts of service, for example, results are enhanced across the board. Our meditation is improved with health and fitness efforts and vice versa; both have a synergistic effect with acts of service


and the quality of our relationships; all together, they leverage overall development. According to integral and evolutionary thinkers, it is here, rather than in some of the “old” New Age’s more scintillating pursuits, that we find the cutting edge of human development in the 21st century.

Students of the Cayce material will know that the readings have always encouraged such integral practice in recommending a “balanced lifestyle”—a juggling act of good diet, exercise, meditation, intellectual development, acts of service, civic responsibility, involvement in spiritual community, to name just a few of the more prominent components. In this regard one of the Cayce work’s greatest contributions to integralism is the ideals chart, which is an integral practice map *par excellence*. It sets a framework for applying one’s deepest value and intention (the spiritual ideal) to disparate life areas. In focusing on mental ideals it further addresses the interior dimensions of life such as attitudes and emotions (“mental ideals”) and then integrates them with the exterior aspects of experience through specific behaviors and practices (i.e., “physical ideals”). In short, Cayce ideals work engages body, mind, and spirit in the larger context of one’s personal life and place in the world—an integral vision if ever there was one.

GROUP WORK. One of the hottest discoveries of the “new” New Age is that small groups—where the contract is to leave ego (Cayce would call it “self”) at the door and participate for the sake of the group’s common aim—can become catalysts for higher intelligence and emerging unity consciousness. In the words of Dr. Otto Scharmer, Senior Lecturer at MIT and core faculty member of the UN Leaders Program, “What’s new today in the world is that now the first and most accessible gateway into deeper spiritual experience is not individual meditation but group work. What happens is that, in quite a spontaneous way, you tap into this deeper process of awareness and consciousness as a group. And *then*, once you have done that, you can say, ‘Well, I want to sustain this quality in my own life, so therefore I will pick a practice or two to do on a day-to-day level.’ I think that for many people today, the collective is the most important teacher on this whole

journey, because it allows us to explore a territory that is much less accessible, if at all, for individuals.”

In this enthusiastic statement, Scharmer could have been describing the intensive growth track to be found in Cayce’s *A Search for God* small group work. With their emphasis on coming together around shared ideals, group meditation, and commitment to specific application practices (disciplines), *A Search for God* groups have been leveraging participants’ personal growth and contribution to the world for more than 80 years now. And as contemporary experience outside the Cayce work is now discovering, this kind of roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-to-work group is a living experiment in collective evolution.

Indeed, there is a new earnestness afoot in today’s version of alternative spirituality. The new New Age is all about putting self aside in order to serve the needs of an evolving humanity in an evolving cosmos. It is more about hard work than spiritual thrills. Its agenda calls us to reverence the creative impulse alive in the cosmos, and align our daily choices around that impulse. Sounds a lot like the spiritual path detailed in the Cayce legacy. 

*For a more detailed treatment of the history of evolutionary thought in philosophy, science and spirituality, see Lynn’s previous article, “Evolutionary Spirituality and the Edgar Cayce Readings” in the Oct-Dec 2011 issue of *Venture Inward* p.15, and watch for her upcoming A.R.E. Press book, *Beyond Soul Growth: Awakening to the Evolutionary Call of the Cosmos*, in January.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LYNN SPARROW CHRISTY is a teacher, writer, Master Hypnotherapist and hypnosis trainer, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioner, and Life Coach, with a private practice in Virginia Beach. She is also the author of two previous books and numerous home-study courses based on the Cayce material, and has served as a Licensed Minister with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Join Lynn at Virginia Beach HQ on Dec 7 for **Christ and Christmas Today: Experiencing the Kingdom Within.** Visit EdgarCayce.org/conferences or call 800-333-4499. 