

“It is clear we need far better ways to perceive our world, to reflect on it, to act and to learn from what is going on around us. Of course, we need these things as individuals. But most of all, and urgently, we need these capacities as whole societies – indeed, as a civilization.

The language I use to talk about this is that *we need greater collective intelligence than our democracy is able to deliver in its current form*. It is not that we need a better collection of intelligences, a mere sum of all our individual smarts. We need something that is significantly larger and more synergistic than that, an intelligence that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

In other words, we do not need *collected* intelligence. We need *collective* intelligence, a coherent integration of our diversity that is greater than any or all of us could generate separately, just as an orchestra is greater than the sum of its instruments. We need a new kind of collectivity that does not repress individuality, diversity and creativity but that, instead, allows us to arrive at creative consensus without compromise. We need a shared power that calls forth the best in all of us and cherishes our diversity for the riches it contains.

Furthermore, we need to apply an unprecedented level of collective wisdom to all the challenges we face. Right now, there is much wisdom on earth, scattered here and there. But our collective actions as societies are clearly not wise. It is far too easy to imagine that the problem is “out there,” with all of the various powerholders and interests groups that keep the wise solutions that already exist from being implemented. But if we find ways to work with one another across a wide range of differences, we could then create the broad-based coalitions we need in order to implement the wisdom that we have.

We need ways to focus our full capabilities – heart, mind, soul, and gut – on our collective situation. We need to be informed by big-picture sensibilities, aware of our potential for both catastrophe and evolution, for both co-stupidity and collective wisdom. We need methods that can help us deepen and expand our thinking, feeling and dreaming, and we need ways to weave it all together, collaboratively, into a shared future. Co-intelligence is the capacity to do that, individually and collectively...

Dialogue is a central aspect of co-intelligence. In my co-intelligence work, I usually define dialogue as *shared exploration towards greater understanding, connection and positive possibility.*”

-Tom Atlee, [The Tao of Democracy, 2003](#)