

THE AGE OF ENHEARTMENT

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A proposal for an emerging epoch that re-imagines, and acknowledges the importance of, the heart in the 21st century

Abstract

In this paper, I take a transdisciplinary view and make a case for an emerging epoch that I have termed *The Age of Enheartment*. I contend that this emerging epoch is defined by a growing acknowledgement within many areas of society of the heart's vital role in offering a valuable, counter-balancing perspective to a contemporary approach towards knowledge production which increasingly fuels polarisation at all levels of the human experience – manifesting in a myriad of ways including scarcity, ecocide, societal breakdown, aggression, violence, conflict, and war. I propose that this emerging epoch, that acknowledges the importance of the heart and its inherent capacity to connect what was once divided, is arising as a direct reaction to the well-documented limitations of a contemporary way of knowing, and consequently engaging in, the world that is most often associated with the mind situated in the brain (and the take of the left-brain hemisphere in particular). By examining the movement of Western consciousness across the past two millennia, I show that while this approach has attempted to obfuscate the heart's vast potential for guiding us towards better ways of being with one another and the world at large, the heart is continuing to

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reach out in multiple ways. That is, through its benevolent qualities (facilitating the possibility for deep connection with others in the dynamic unfolding of the relational space), as well as through its capacity as an organ of imaginal perception. I contend that, when taken seriously, the heart illuminates the possibility for epistemological and ontological reorientation which could support Western society to better navigate the increasing challenges that we are facing. Focussing on *Heart Sense*, an approach I developed during my doctoral research, I suggest that *The Age of Enheartment* arises through the heart and offers humanity the possibility for a profound ontological and epistemological shift. However, a major challenge in the manifestation of this new epoch will be our willingness and ability to engage with the heart differently, and to take seriously all that entails.

1 Introduction

The literature that underpins this paper is wide-ranging and has touched on many diverse areas including conflict resolution, modern neuroscience, holistic science, medical science, transpersonal and depth psychology, Pre-Enlightenment philosophy (Platonic, neo-platonic, esoteric), religious mysticism, linguistics, feminism, and transformative learning. These discourses informed my doctoral research as I uncovered a lost heart hidden in our past that carries deep implications for how we, as a Western culture, relate with one another in our modern world across all areas of society. In 2019, I advanced an approach in my doctoral dissertation that I call *Heart Sense* [27]. Based on further research and having worked practically with *Heart Sense* since that time (as well as being acutely aware of increasing references to the heart in everyday life), this paper illuminates a growing potential for epistemological and ontological reorientation through heart-centred perception. Essentially, I am putting forward a case for a new epoch that I have termed, *The Age of Enheartment*. However, before we can move into a serious exploration of the possibility of this new age, there are a number of hurdles to overcome, and I will make these clear as this paper unfolds.

As I am proposing a new term for an emerging epoch which illuminates

a shift in attitude towards the world, it is important to set this in context with other historical shifts that have taken place in Western consciousness¹. It is well documented that Western history has been marked by significant transformations in perception, culminating in new ways of thinking about, understanding, and consequently acting in the world. Indeed, each of these epochs were so significant that they have been given specific names. From the flourishing of Western philosophy during the Pre-Socratic era circa 600 BCE, to the marked shifts in culture, art, politics and science that defined the European Renaissance (1300s-1500s), to the Scientific Enlightenment in the 1600s², and the Industrial Revolution that began in the 1700s which characterised life in increasingly machine-like, mechanistic terms, each of these epochs marked significant shifts in how people thought about, and consequently engaged in, the world.

In this paper, I show how the thinking brought about through the Scientific Enlightenment is now reaching its limitations and propose that we are standing on the edge of a new epoch, an age where the heart could be having its own Renaissance – particularly in terms of a greater appreciation of the heart’s benevolent qualities which facilitate the possibility of deeper connection with others, as well as the heart’s vast potential as an organ of knowing. This is significant because, as I make clear, the past two thousand years have been a story of the head and the heart – in the sense of the head and heart being competing spaces through which we develop knowledge about, and consequently engage in, the world. Generally speaking, the former (particularly in the modern world) implies separation consciousness, and the latter implies a way of knowing and being that inherently connects what was once seen as divided.

Today, there are various terms being used to describe our modern times from the Anthropocene to the Information Age³. However, as the 21st

¹When I use the word ‘*consciousness*’ in this paper, I am referring specifically to a state of awareness that, in turn, affects thought, behaviour and engagement in the world.

²The Scientific Enlightenment (that took place in Europe during the mid-1600s to early 1800s) refers to the period when Enlightenment thinkers placed significant emphasis on empirical knowledge and the scientific method, viewing scientific advancements as a means of progress and understanding the natural world. This era, marked by a rise in reason and the scientific method, saw a shift away from traditional authority and religious dogma.

³The term ‘Anthropocene’ originated in the latter part of the 1900s/early 2000s

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century progresses, and postmaterialist approaches to knowledge arise⁴, I propose that the heart - both in terms of its benevolent qualities, as well as an organ of knowing - is offering the possibility for people in Western culture to think about their place in the world differently; moving beyond familiar head-based separation thinking into the possibility of a higher unity where the connective capacity of the heart unites with the mind/head's way of approaching the world - having direct impact on engagement in the world as a result. However, as discussed widely in my own research and the *Heart Sense* methodological framework [27], this paper cautions that if the heart is to truly have its Renaissance and offer the possibility of a different way of engaging with modern challenges, it must be acknowledged that the heart still occupies a difficult space in modern awareness. In this context, I suggest that modern preconceptions of the heart must be illuminated and challenged if the possibility and potentiality of the reimagined heart of *The Age of Enheartment* is to fully manifest and offer genuine support and guidance to navigate these increasingly challenging times.

It is my contention that, in the Western world, we are standing at a threshold. The decision we make at this time in terms of how we come to know our place in the world and consequently engage within it, could lead us into greater separation and competition in the context of having 'power over' others, or lead us towards co-operation and connection. In this sense, if nothing changes and we do not question how our traditionally-accepted way of knowing is directly impacting our being, we can expect to have more conflict and wars, further degeneration of the environment, greater societal divisions, distrust of the body and assimilation into AI, and so forth. However, if we take the time to pause and allow ourselves to acknowledge

and defines a block of time in which the Earth has been shaped by humans rather than the other way around. The term 'Information Age' describes a historical period shaped by information technology, beginning in the mid-1900s

⁴Postmaterialism describes a shift in awareness from traditionally accepted ways of making sense of the world (particularly since the time of the Scientific Enlightenment), to taking seriously lived experience (inner and outer), becoming aware of the interconnected and richly complex nature of life that cannot be defined or pinned down in narrow, objectifying terms. Postmaterialist discourses include Holistic Science, Transpersonal Psychology, Transformative Learning and Consciousness Education, to name a few. These discourses propose that the human species is part of something greater, moving beyond the human exceptionalist attitude of the Anthropocene, and the machine-based attitude of the Informational Age.

that something about our worldview and consequent approach towards the world is limited, perhaps we may find the courage to consider a way of attending to the world that could guide us beyond what neuroscientist Dr Iain McGilchrist calls the “hall of mirrors” that modern culture has been living in for the past several hundred years⁵.

In short, do we continue to choose mind-based (and left-brain hemisphere in particular) reasoning, mistrusting the heart and bypassing everything that makes us human, or do we choose to step into the possibility of uniting both ways of knowing – sinking into the heart and letting it guide the mind, so that we can experience knowing and being in the world through our whole selves *in living relationship with the world’s unfolding through us in every living moment?*

Before moving on, it is important to state from the outset that what I am exploring in this paper in the context of our lived experience is not meant to create a simple dichotomy – that is, head/mind is ‘bad’, heart is ‘good’. As McGilchrist states, “it only becomes so in the hands of those who interpret the results with Cartesian rigidity”⁶. Religious scholar Jeffrey Kripal makes a similar observation, suggesting that dichotomy can be helpful in terms of interpreting the human experience [22], p.63, enabling us to consider our place in the world more deeply – however, at some point whatever has been divided must be elevated into a higher unity. In that sense, you will notice in the last paragraph that I say, “sinking into the heart and letting

⁵McGilchrist, [29], p. 6. suggests that the left-brain hemisphere’s take on the world creates a hall of mirrors that maintains itself through narrower and narrower thinking. In this scenario, the left hemisphere creates a self-reflexive virtual world, blocking off all available exits that would lead into a reality that the right hemisphere could help us understand. Escaping from the hall of mirrors/prison therefore entails an openness towards the different ways of knowing that are available to us – thereby aiming to reach the depth of a phenomenon as it is directly experienced.

⁶See McGilchrist, [29], p. 11. In relation to the term “Cartesian rigidity”, this derives from the philosophical position of the French philosopher and scientist René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes stated that the world and the human being each has its own characteristic essence and therefore each is entirely independent of one another. This is the Cartesian dualism according to which reality divides exclusively into mind and nature (matter), which are entirely distinct and separate from each other. Furthermore, the body belongs to the world and is therefore excluded from the human being whose essence is thinking. The Cartesian bifurcation of reality is at the same time the dualism of mind and body.

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it guide the mind.” Through the heart’s way of knowing and being, there is only a continual reaching for connection, integration, transformation and the opportunity to create something greater than what was already in existence within the relational space in the ever-unfolding present. In short, through my research and practical work in the world, I have discovered that the heart as an organ of perception makes possible the potential for a world where every-one and every-thing carries the potential to flourish.

2 Challenging preconceptions

One of the key findings of my doctoral research is that the heart has been seriously misinterpreted and misunderstood, particularly in modern times. In this context, the heart cannot live as fully as it needs to in our modern framework of knowing. Indeed, the narrow space that the heart is allowed to occupy today (and which consequently creates problems in relation to being able to take the heart seriously as a thinking organ) begins with the contemporary Western mode of meaning-making and knowledge production. This way of knowing the world and being in the world is built on the scientific method of fragmentation of knowledge, using predominantly the left hemisphere of the brain which itself has inherent qualities and characteristics (most notably, taking things apart, distancing from what is being observed, and fixing on answers). This has become such a well-developed mode of perception that it is often difficult for us to move beyond these reductionist, literal ways of relating to each other and nature as a whole (Bird-Rose, [8]; McGilchrist, [29], [30]⁷). This is not necessarily bad or wrong, *but when seen as the only way of meaning-making to the detriment of all the other ways that we could be making sense of the world as experiencing beings embedded in the world’s unfolding*, it leaves us in a mode of perception of a detached observer, living outside of the world.

This way of making sense of life has become so accepted as truth over the past century that even our language now reflects this perspective, and we unconsciously act from this point of view. Therefore, to fully comprehend how we have arrived at our present mode of awareness, and to create a

⁷See McGilchrist’s excellent book, *The Master and His Emissary* [29] for a deeper understanding of the development of the Western mind and subsequent ways of thinking about our place in the world.

genuine possibility to welcome in *The Age of Enheartment*, I suggest that it is crucial to understand the roots of our modern conceptual framework as well as examine closely any preconceptions that could miss this valuable opportunity for reconnection and the potential to co-create a world that flourishes for all.

3 The birth of modern consciousness

I will begin my explorations in the sixth century BCE, where there is evidence that the way people described the world began to change. Specifically, a number of scholars, including philosopher Jean Gebser (1905-1973), psychologist Julian Jaynes (1920-1997) and McGilchrist pinpoint a shift in awareness at around this time in Greek culture when people became more aware of themselves and had a greater capacity to perceive difference. However, based on archaeological and anthropological evidence, psychologist Steve Taylor contends the timing of this shift, suggesting that an “Ego Explosion” occurred 6000 years ago⁸. Taylor suggests that what is actually visible in the records at around 600 BCE is a “more developed sense of ego”, or sense of self ([39],p.118).

What is interesting here is that a shift in the awareness in the psyche of certain human groups meant that a space was created for one person to be able to perceive the ‘other’, making empathy, care and compassion possible. McGilchrist states that this new way of seeing the world becomes particularly obvious in Greek art. [29]

This idea of a change in awareness around the sixth century BCE also receives support from Gebser. He identifies five basic structures of consciousness: archaic, magical, mythical, mental and integral. He sees the ancient Greeks as foundational in the development of what he terms the ‘mental’ structure of consciousness, which emerged from the prior ‘mythic’ structure. According to Gebser, ‘mythic’ consciousness is polar, with *complementary* aspects like yin and yang, male and female, whereas similar pairs of terms under the mental consciousness are *dualities* (opposites

⁸Taylor, [39], p.115, in his book ‘The Fall’ suggests that a sudden change in the psyche of certain human groups occurred at this time, with people within these groups starting to develop a strong and sharp sense of self or individuality.

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and divided) rather than polarities⁹. In mental consciousness, time and space become objectified, and the world is dichotomised and divided into subjective self-consciousness and objective matter. Gebser is fluid with his dates for the shift from mythic to mental consciousness, suggesting that the movement began around 1225 BCE, coming into perfect expression with the Greeks around 600 BCE ([23], p.221-222), however not becoming prevalent in Europe until around 1500 CE ([13], p.73). Gebser goes on to suggest that integral consciousness is the structure emerging at present. Specifically, integral consciousness is typified by transcendence of the ego, and the “general integration of the abstracted (fragmented) world of the mental-rational into wholeness” ([35], p.172). This is certainly an interesting observation in relation to the heart’s resurgence in modern awareness, as well as in the context of my own framework of *Heart Sense* that I developed in my doctoral research (which I will speak about later), particularly as many people around the world are becoming more aware of the importance of the heart and its inherent ability to hold complexity in a unified space.

Also identifying the time around 500 BCE as fundamental in human development is philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), who stated that at this point “Man, as we know him today, came into being.” ([21], p.1) Jaspers is acknowledged as developing the general theory of the “Axial Period” or “Axial Age” - a term that honours the dramatic cultural changes in the middle of the first millennium BCE which were occurring in several societies across the ancient world ([3], p.69). Jaspers was probably influenced by German philosopher Max Weber (1864-1920), specifically in relation to Weber’s observations of changes in religious thought across Israel, Persia and India between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. ([3], p.76)

Influenced by Jaspers, Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt (1923-2010) emphasises that this time period brought forward a new degree of reflexivity within individuals - namely, “the capacity to examine one’s own assumptions” ([3], p.77). At this time in history, it appears that human beings became able to make specific distinctions between objects and developed the ability to perceive the ‘other’ as separate, making it “possible to see oneself as a self like other selves; to stand back and observe” ([29], p. 259).

⁹For a full understanding of the different structures of consciousness, see the book review of Feuerstein’s *Structures of Consciousness: The Genius of Jean Gebser, An Introduction and Critique* by Purdy, [35], p. 172

It is to McGilchrist's thesis that this paper now turns in an effort to explore how this 'standing back' might have contributed to our contemporary view of the heart as a mechanical organ of science that we are so familiar with today – obfuscating or trivialising other hearts and making it difficult for us to consider that the heart is a thinking organ capable of offering guidance to us in these challenging times. This idea of the progressive movement of awareness within human beings is particularly key because, in contemporary thought, the mind/brain (situated in the head) is seen as the controlling organ where cognition, apprehension and awareness about the world takes place. ([4], p.14)

4 Dr Iain McGilchrist and the divided brain

McGilchrist points out that the development of the human brain (as it develops in conjunction with its environment) would have left its mark on the world that Western culture brought about, putting forth evidence to support this in or around sixth century BCE Greece when, as previously highlighted, a profound change in the way we think about the world occurred ([29], p. 266). In a thought-provoking cultural analysis, McGilchrist puts forward a metaphorical argument from the standpoint of contemporary neuroscience which suggests that the movement of Western thought over the past two thousand years has occurred through left-right brain hemisphere lateralisation. McGilchrist's thesis suggests that as the left and right hemispheres of the brain have developed from ancient Greece to the present day, the characteristics of each hemisphere have either flourished or waned. Based on a vast body of experimental research, McGilchrist, through the metaphor of epistemological duality, argues that for human beings there exist two fundamentally conflicting realities; namely, two different types of experience which bring about the recognisably human world, and that the difference has its foundations in the bi-hemispheric structure of the brain. While both hemispheres have considerable ability to perform any task, the striking difference between them is that each hemisphere goes about its tasks in different ways. Importantly, it is at the level of experience that the hemispheres differ – each with its own "take" on the world. ([29], p. 10)

The left hemisphere tends towards abstraction, extracting things from their context, categorising, focussing on the parts, while in contrast the

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right hemisphere is concerned with context, the relationship between things. Its way of approaching and understanding reality, McGilchrist suggests, is embedded directly in experience, which is “multiple in nature, in principle unknowable in its totality, changing, infinite, full of individual differences” ([29], p. 352). In contrast, the left hemisphere sees only a representation of that experience, “in which,...the world is single, knowable, consistent, certain, fixed, therefore ultimately finite, generalised across experience, a world that we can master” ([29], p. 352-352).

Certainly from McGilchrist’s perspective, the world of the Scientific Enlightenment is the domain of the left hemisphere, and the approach formalised during this period in history is still characteristic of our modern world. Indeed, this era paved the way for our machine-based, technical society within which our intellectual and philosophical ideas are underpinned by measurement and control. This observation is particularly significant because, as McGilchrist states, our disposition towards the world and one another is “fundamental in grounding *what it is that we come to have a relationship with*, rather than the other way round” ([29], p. 5). Specifically, how we approach the world, creates what we see. In support of this McGilchrist states that, “The kind of attention we pay actually alters the world: we are, literally, partners in creation” ([29], p. 5). McGilchrist is keen to point out that the “model we choose to use to understand something determines what we find” ([29], p. 97). How we therefore think about ourselves, our place in the world and our relationship to it, is revealed in our language and how we choose to talk about these things, and paradoxically, it appears that we are obliged to understand something well enough to choose the appropriate model before we can understand it; “Our first leap determines where we land”, says McGilchrist ([29], p. 97).

Since the sixth century BCE the left hemisphere developed in tandem with the right. However, since the time of the Scientific Enlightenment, characteristically left-brain attributes – namely, logical, rational/analytical thinking and objective observation – appear to have become more dominant. Indeed, according to McGilchrist, the seventeenth century philosopher René Descartes’ (1596-1650) belief that “I could take it as a general rule that the things we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are all true” missed the point that nature is far more subtle than our senses or our understanding ([29], p. 328). The movement towards rationality and objectivity, relying solely on what could be observed, measured and counted as the basis for developing absolute truth about the nature of the world, was, according

to McGilchrist, the fallacy that was to derail the next three centuries of Western thought, and as a result, I argue in my doctoral thesis that this has contributed to the way that the heart was subsequently perceived and engaged with; that is, as a biological organ. This way of knowing the world has led Western society into an increasingly narrower framework of limited terms and definitions within which Western society must place the rich complexity of lived experience – making sense of the world in increasingly oppositional, reductionist, and materialist terms¹⁰. This is important from the perspective of the heart and its way of knowing, as I shall be moving on to explain shortly [27].

5 The story of the heart

Within this story of the mind/brain and its impact on human consciousness the heart has lived within numerous traditions and cultures in diverse ways. Before proceeding, I must point out that the story of the heart over the past two millennia has been well documented and therefore I will only offer some observations that are pertinent for the development of this paper¹¹. In this context, it is worth briefly noting some key points to make the case that the heart has been understood and engaged with differently throughout time, and has therefore made meaning in a myriad of different ways in the lives of our ancestors. Indeed, I suggest that this way of engaging differently with the heart (and developing knowledge about the world as a result) could be seen as a perceptual shift of parallel and equal value to the development of the Western mind as detailed in the exploration above.

Beginning in the ancient world, many of the planet's oldest civilisations including the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Hebrews, Greeks and early Christians respected the heart's wisdom and intellect [1]; [9], p. 7–8; [34]. According to Hillman, the oldest heart appears in ancient Egyptian myths – “the heart of Ptah, who created the

¹⁰See the work of feminist writers Val Plumwood (1939-2008) and Joanna Hodge [17] who explore the idea of separation between Western binaries which places value to one side of the binary and relegates the other to a position of “oppositional subordination” (Bird Rose, [8], p.94).

¹¹For a comprehensive understanding of the story of the heart and its ontological and epistemological implications, please see my PhD thesis [27], as well as my book – *The Heart Sense Journey: Your Heart's Invitation to Deeper Living* [28]

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world from the imagination of his heart”¹². All emerges from the heart of Ptah, including words which express its imaginative power – “The world was first imagined, then declared” ([15] p. 121). For the ancient Egyptians the heart was the central organ of the body, the seat of conscience, the site of mind or intelligence, as well as the place associated with their spiritual destiny. As the heart was considered essentially pure, it was so important that it became an integral part of the ancient Egyptian rituals performed upon an individual’s death ([33], p.249-251). In this sense, the heart only speaks the truth.

Moving into Greek antiquity, understanding of the heart subtly begins to change with key thinkers attributing differing capabilities to it. In the writings of Homer and Hesiod, the heart was the centre of feelings, passions, and love. In the fifth century BCE, Empedocles understood the heart to be the seat of thought, with later thinkers identifying the heart with intelligence ([32], p.235). The heart has also occupied a significant place within religious traditions, from Christianity, to Roman Catholicism, to Sufism and Buddhism. Certainly, it is worth noting that right up until the time of the Scientific Enlightenment the heart was closely tied with religious and spiritual life – being the place of divine vision within which an individual might come into contact with a transcendent reality.

Before exploring the modern heart of our scientific world, and consequently the problems that this has generated for the heart that I believe is trying to emerge at this time, it is interesting to note that a number of scholars have begun to re-imagine the heart as an organ of perception - including religious philosopher Henry Corbin (1903-1978), and depth psychologist James Hillman (1926-2011). Indeed, Hillman was inspired by Corbin’s philosophical-religious understanding of the imagination being a bridge between the physical and divine realms, and he built on Corbin’s understanding, suggesting that the imagination (and consequently its organ of perception, that is, the heart) could be seen as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche. The *Heart Sense* framework that I developed during my doctoral research is founded on the thinking of these two scholars (Corbin, [11]; Hillman, [16]).

¹²See Hillman, ([15] p. 121). Interestingly, cultural studies professor Ole Hoystad suggests that the first known literary sources that speak of the heart’s place in human life originate in Mesopotamia over 5000 years ago - see Hoystad, ([20], p. 19.)

6 Heart of science

In a book titled ‘*The Medieval Heart*’, cultural historian Heather Webb writes that at least up until the medieval period the heart was understood to be a complex, vulnerable organ, open to sensation and “host to myriad entities that we [in contemporary society] would now divide into the categories of physical, spiritual and psychological” ([43], p. 1-2). Additionally, as the seat of the soul in respect to the act and power of life, the heart occupied a position of primacy in everyday existence. However, the heart’s reign as a place of power, open to the countless realms and dimensions that comprise the human experience, began to be questioned when the English physician William Harvey (1578-1657) published his findings in the early 17th century. According to Webb, Harvey so successfully insulated the heart that even today, the Western scientific world is “reluctant to consider the heart as susceptible in any way to the outside world, or even to emotion (now located at a safe distance in the brain)” ([43], p. 50).

Certainly, since the time of the Scientific Enlightenment, heart and mind have become increasingly separated - reflecting a much longer tradition of separating out of phenomena from their customary partners (that is, spirit from matter, mind from body) beginning at the time of the pre-Socratics, as I have outlined above. Today the heart is generally referred to within one of two distinct categories: firstly, as the physical organ that moves blood around the body, or secondly in a metaphorical context as the loving or feeling heart. This idea links to cultural historian Fay Bound Alberti’s observation that there are two hearts living in contemporary society; the first being the heart of science that is a biological organ, and the second, the heart of culture that grounds feelings in the organ and symbol of the heart. ([4], p. 166) As Webb states, in the modern world we are quite secure in this division, assured of the physical job the heart does, and that in reality it has nothing to do with the “messiness of emotion, thought, or sensation” ([43], p. 1).

As Bound Alberti states, for many working in medical science today the heart carries no special significance. She goes on to say that such an “attitude is understandable [for] how else could one operate without a sense of dread?” ([5], p. 108) In stark contrast, for the medieval scholar, seeing a heart would have been the closest way of seeing the soul, whereas in modern times the idea of the soul has been removed from the heart, particularly within the scientific framework. However, it appears that the heart’s rich and complex history, and the place the heart still holds in human life at the

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intuitive, sensory level, refuses to submit to modern medical interpretations. We only need to look at modern dictionary definitions of the heart to know that this is the case, as there are multiple definitions for the heart. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary describes the heart as follows:

1. The bodily organ, its function, region
2. The centre of vital functions: the seat of life or the vital part or principle
3. Mind – in the broadest sense, including functions of feeling, volition and intellect
4. The seat of one's innermost thoughts and secret feelings; innermost being, depths of the soul, the spirit
5. Intent, will, purpose, inclination, desire
6. Disposition, temperament, character
7. The seat of emotions generally, as distinguished from the intellectual nature placed in the head
8. The feeling or sentiment one has in regard to a thing
9. The seat of love, affection and courage
10. Kindly feeling
11. Moral conscience
12. The innermost or central part of anything: the centre, the middle.

This range of meanings shows that, even in our modern world where the medical idea of the heart as a biological organ takes precedence, the heart continues to be the place of subjective emotions and feelings via metaphoric language and symbolic imagery.

As a final point here, it is interesting to consider that in what Bound Alberti suggests could be seen as a “backlash in Western scientific medicine against medical specialisation and the heart’s identification as a material pump, or muscle” ([4], p. 40), attempts are now being made within the medical sciences to redeploy the heart as an organ of emotion. Further, Bound Alberti states that such a move indicates the “ideological, philosophical, and theological weight of resistance against viewing the body

and mind as separate or divisible worlds” ([4], p.40); themes which have arisen repeatedly for the past several hundred years both within the sciences and culture as a whole. In a similar observation, Webb states that today “we are describing new routes back into the heart” ([43], p.4).

7 Engaging with the heart differently

In this context, and under the banner of medical holism, since the mid-20th century there have been a number of interesting attempts to resolve the mind-body dualism highlighted above ([4], p.39). Certainly developments in neurocardiology appear to confirm ancient understanding of the heart, suggesting the existence of an intelligent link between the heart and the brain. Additionally, HeartMath Institute founder Doc Childre and his colleague Howard Martin suggest that the heart has its own independent nervous system - “the brain in the heart” - enabling it to make functional decisions independent of the cranial brain. In this sense, the heart learns, remembers and feels in its own right. This idea contrasts significantly with traditional science’s understanding that the heart is simply a biological organ, and that intelligence resides solely in the brain, yet closely reflects the understanding of ancient civilisations who believed that the heart carried its own ability to think and make decisions:

Instead of simply pumping blood, it [the heart] directs and aligns many systems in the body so that they can function in harmony with one another. And although the heart is in constant communication with the brain, we now know that it makes many of its own decisions. (Childre and Martin [9], p. 4)

Since the late 1990s, HeartMath has been pioneering well-being research based on discoveries made by physiologists John and Beatrice Lacey of the Fels Research Institute in the 1970s. At that time, scientists knew that the body’s nervous system connected the heart with the brain, but they still presumed that the brain made all the decisions.

The Laceys found that when the brain sent “orders” to the heart through the nervous system, the heart didn’t automatically obey. Instead, the heart responded as if it had its own

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distinctive logic...the heart appeared to be sending messages back to the brain that the brain not only understood but obeyed...The Laceys and others discovered that our heartbeats aren't just the mechanical throbs of a diligent pump, but an intelligent language that significantly influences how we perceive and react to the world. ([9], p. 10-11)

As a final point in this part of the paper, it is interesting to consider that a different view of the anatomical structure of the heart is now emerging, based on the pioneering work of the late cardiologist Francisco Torrent-Guasp (1931-2005) who advanced the theory that the heart is a helical shape and thus functions in a twisting, spiralling motion [7]. Theories that the heart functions by means of a twisting motion have been circulating for over 2000 years ([7], p.2), and in the 1600s it was suggested that the heart has a helix or spiral structure ([6], p.863). While Harvey's theory of the divided, pumping heart held sway in the advancement of modern medical science, in 1864 anatomist J Bell Pettigrew (1834-1908) wrote about the spiralling course of muscle fibres of the heart, speaking of the Gordian knot of anatomy ([18], p. 7); ([41], p. 192). In the early 2000s Torrent-Guasp used hand dissection to successfully unfold the anatomic architecture of the heart, demonstrating what he called the ventricular myocardial band, creating the heart's unique shape and its separate chambers. [42]

Beyond the work taking place in fringe areas of cardiology and neuroscience challenging preconceptions of the heart, the heart also appears to be having a Renaissance in popular culture, with an increasing number of books being written by researchers and therapists who are speaking of the importance of the heart as an organ of knowledge and transformation - specifically within the genre of new thought and the well-being sectors. One most recent publication has been written by Cissi Williams - a complementary therapist and practicing Shaman - whose book is titled '*Your Heart Knows How to Heal You*' [44]. Williams' work places the heart squarely in the position of teacher, and she shares with her readers how her heart guided her to transform both her physical health as well as her life¹³.

¹³Certainly, Williams' experience of her heart as teacher resonate deeply with my own experiences with my heart.

8 Highlighting challenges in relation to the heart in the academy

While the examples I highlight above are encouraging in relation to our deepening reconnection with the heart, in my work and research I continually find myself having to reiterate that whenever one is invoking the heart, *it is important to fully absorb and commit to experiencing what this invocation actually means – in conversation with life’s unfolding* ¹⁴. Specifically, what I mean here is that when approaching the world *with and through the heart as a benevolent organ of knowing*, one is invited (and expected) to place one’s attention *in the heart and commit to meeting the world from there*. If this is not taken up as a foundational practice (meaning that, generally-speaking, one is approaching the world through a taken-for-granted, left-brain hemisphere mode of awareness that often distances us from our actual, felt, lived experience), I have discovered, time and time again, that the nuance and complexity that the heart is able to offer as a benevolent organ of knowing in conversation with the living, breathing world, will not be accessible.

To highlight this point within the context of the academy, many scholars across numerous discourses including conflict resolution, holistic science and feminism frequently mention the heart in relation to their work [2]; [25]; [26]; [10], but never precisely define what this heart is, or what it might mean in practice. Specifically, biologist Marc Bekoff speaks from an ecological perspective about the need for humanity to compassionately engage with nature. Bekoff’s book – *Rewilding our Hearts* ([2]) – relates to the heart in terms of a human capacity to develop kindness and compassion for nature, envisaging a global social movement based on “peace, compassion, empathy, and love” ([2]) p. 19). Interestingly, the word heart does not appear in the index once, and the idea of what the heart actually is, remains implicit in

¹⁴Holistic Scientist and Physicist, Philip Franses, (and my tutor on the MSc Holistic Science at Schumacher College 2013-2014) often describes this mode of attention as opening oneself to realise an internal comprehension/description of how the world actually presents itself to our lived experience of it [12]. As I have contemplated this over time, it has made increasing sense to me that there must be an organ of knowing that is best placed to receive the world’s conversation in all of its glorious and rich complexity. As I listened more deeply, the more I was able to make space in my awareness to hear the wisdom and guidance of my own heart.

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his work.

In the feminist literature, Hilary Rose titles a paper *Hand, Brain, and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences* [38]. In this paper Rose gives no real definition or explanation as to what this heart is. The reader has to make the assumption that Rose is speaking of the heart in relation to loving and caring attributes – which she states are necessary for human survival ([38], p. 83). With all of these writers, the role that the heart plays is left implicit – specifically, it is assumed that readers already understand what this heart is. However, this understanding does not necessarily arise from within the heart itself, and is most often based on a preconceived, contemporary definition of the heart that still does not comprehend the vast potentiality of the heart as an organ of knowing.

Considering the work of the scholars highlighted above, it could be suggested that the heart being referred to is loosely associated with love, feelings, emotions, compassion and kindness. However, while we may intuitively know what we might mean by this heart, the issue is that a dominant narrative generally perceives any other heart (beyond that of a pump) as a sentimental add-on, and consequently nothing that we need to seriously concern ourselves with in relation to dealing with life. Illustrating this point, in the context of religion, French author and intellectual René Guénon (1886-1951) suggests that sentimentalism is the product of Enlightenment society, which suppressed “Divine” intellect and led modern society to materialist views and notions of sentimentality ([14] p. 61). Psychologically, Romanyshyn suggests that in modern society we have abandoned our bodies, and consequently our hearts, to a way of seeing that states the medicalised, objectified body/heart are the only reality, the way they are, the only heart and body that there is ([36],p. 173).

In this context, perhaps one can see how the heart beyond the scientific organ can only ever be reduced to ideas of sentimentalism consequently having little to offer at the level at which valid knowledge about the world is created and agreed upon. Considering this, it is interesting how many times other hearts try to make themselves known in the literature, however, whatever these hearts are, or mean for us practically in the modern world, fail to be brought into conscious expression. I suggest that this evidence beautifully highlights a challenge in how we genuinely manifest the heart of *The Age of Enheartment* that I will be speaking to shortly.

9 Introducing *Heart Sense*

My heart has played a significant part in my life. From physical illness in childhood and early adulthood (chest pain, myocarditis, cardiac arrests, arrhythmias), to a revelatory experience in my early thirties when my heart spoke to me, followed by postgraduate study at Masters and PhD level, I have a strong sense that my heart has been guiding me my entire life. I realise that this may sound strange to many, however, it was through the guidance of my heart received through an active imagination methodology called Transference Dialogues (developed by depth psychologist Robert Romanyshyn) that I came to understand the heart's crucial role in my life as an organ of knowing ([37])¹⁵. My doctoral thesis title was: *How can the thought of the heart offer effective ways of engaging with conflict? An imaginal and reflexive study* [27]. In bringing through what my heart wanted me to know and express in the contemporary world, my research was informed by scholars and key thinkers in the fields of depth psychology, holistic science, transformative learning, esoteric philosophy, and cultural history - particularly focussing on the potential of the imagination as a mode of perception within each of these discourses. These postmaterialist discourses provided a framework for me to move beyond the rigidity of scientific materialism, which enabled me to let more of the world in and transform my world as a result.

In this context, I put forward the idea that knowing *in and through the heart* (*Heart Sense*) in direct, lived experience with life, is a vitally important human capability which has, over the course of many hundreds of years, been divorced from, and rendered subservient to, knowledge about the world as generated through the brain (understood in modern times as the seat of knowledge and rational thinking). This move has been utterly catastrophic on numerous fronts. Specifically, not only does our modern way of engaging with the heart distance us from its wisdom, guidance and innate ability to support us to deeply relate with one *an-other in each and every unfolding moment of our lived experience*, it also cuts us off from knowing just how

¹⁵Transference dialogues are entered into through the creation of a ritual space of reverie, which involves letting go and falling into a kind of daydream, "dreaming the subject matter of one's work with one's 'eyes wide shut'" ([37], p. 143). The transference dialogues help to open out into the unfinished business of the "other" in the work ([37], p.147), which could appear represented as mood, dream image, spontaneous visual image or bodily sensation ([37], p.156)

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valuable the heart is in our lives for creating conditions for peace, harmony, flourishing and thriving – for all. When we no longer can hear our heart in direct experience with the world, we are cut off from an ancient source of wisdom and guidance, inhibiting us from creating mutually nourishing relationships within the world in its entirety, and leads to challenges at all levels of scale – from wars, conflict, aggression, violence, to degradation of the environment, social unrest and much more, as we become distanced and separated from the world and our direct, lived experience.

Indeed, *Heart Sense* acknowledges the fundamental importance of the relational space in and through the heart (with its unique ability to hold complexity and nuance, as well as its inherent benevolent qualities); understanding that in each moment, we are always in relationship with an-other. In this context, the relational space *demands something of all parties* in order to create the possibility for mutual flourishing. After years of living in and through my own heart, I contend that it is the heart - as an organ of perception - which has the potential to be our main guide and ally to help us wisely, and with sophistication, navigate the complexity of the human experience in relationship with life as it unfolds through us in every living moment.

10 What is *Heart Sense*?

Heart Sense definition: “Insightful perception and considered discernment regarding daily life developed through the wisdom of, and benevolent qualities associated with, the heart” ([27] p.255).

Heart Sense is a way of being in, and knowing, the world *in and through the heart* – understood in this context as a valid organ of knowing and meaning-making, and taking this seriously in terms of what this means in an embodied sense in everyday life. It also means taking seriously and embodying the heart’s benevolent qualities – deep listening, deep relating, deep attending, reverence, unconditional opening towards difference [28]. In this context, the heart attends to the world differently by responding directly in the present moment-by-moment *unfolding of life through each individual – taking lived experience seriously and all that entails*. *Heart Sense*, therefore, is coming to know our place in the world, through direct, lived experience, completely immersed in the world’s moment-by-moment

conversation. This way of experiencing the world is accomplished by being open to using all the ways that one comes to know one's place in the world, including taking seriously the faculty of the imagination and intuition which provide a container for not only holding, but making sense of, the subtle calls of the world (calls to which Western society is often deaf and blind through an often limited framework of knowing).

In the context of *Heart Sense*, the imagination is used in its broadest sense; that is, as a way to engage seriously with whatever might lie beneath outward appearances. This is in stark contrast to contemporary understanding that defines the faculty of the imagination as childish, fantasy, a lie, an escape from, or substitute for, reality ([24], p.31), equated with "the unreal" ([11], p.181), and never in the sense of offering someone a deeper engagement with the world's unfolding. These narrow definitions are unhelpful, based on reductionist thinking incapable of engaging deeply with the vastness of the world that, by its very nature, it brackets out. However, bracketing out something through a narrow definition or framework of knowing, does not mean that whatever has been bracketed out has disappeared.

Therefore, *Heart Sense* takes the faculty of the imagination seriously as an approach towards knowledge production that is capable of letting more of the world in. From the perspective of *Heart Sense*, the imagination is the way that we can fully engage with, and make sense of, the world's ever-unfolding conversation in its deep richness and complexity. This understanding of the imagination has its roots over two thousand years ago in the philosophy of Plato, and later in Sufism. In more recent times, numerous scholars have taken seriously the importance of the imagination, including Corbin, poet and scientist J.W. von Goethe, Jung, Hillman, McGilchrist and Romanyshyn to name a few.

In the context of *Heart Sense*, my understanding of the imagination is largely informed by Hillman and Jung's depth psychological approach (where the imagination is seen as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche), and Corbin's philosophical-religious understanding of the imagination (where the imagination acts as a bridge between the physical and the divine realms), as well as Goethe's imaginal approach towards the natural world ¹⁶. Additionally, Goethe and Romanyshyn's engagement with

¹⁶Goethe termed this "exact sensorial imagination" – using the faculty of the imagination to deepen one's connection with what one is observing ([19], p. 35)

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the imagination each provided the practical framework through which I was able to develop my PhD research and consequently the *Heart Sense* methodological framework¹⁷ .

Each of the scholars highlighted here suggests that it is only through the imagination that we can access a more expanded sense of the world – enabling us to explore more deeply and legitimately what lies beyond the physical world of matter, which constitutes an enormous part of our lives (and which our ordinary, analytical mode of awareness is unable to satisfactorily hold on its own). While Goethe, Jung and McGilchrist do not correlate the heart with the imagination, Corbin and Hillman do. Also, it is worth adding that Romanyshyn takes the heart very seriously – stating in his book *The Wounded Researcher*, that as the heart is attuned to compassion and respect, feelings and emotions, it is suited to an imaginal approach because one of its chief characteristics is a devotion to something more. This is what Romanyshyn understands as the “unfinished business” in work or research that wishes to speak.([37], p.287)

From the perspective of *Heart Sense*, what is important about each of these scholars’ engagement with the faculty of the imagination is the imagination’s capacity, as a valid faculty of knowing, to let more of the world in and consequently make deeper meaning born from lived experience. In this sense, dream imagery, spontaneously arising images, deep inner knowing, intuition, arising memories, mood, feelings, and so forth, are all taken seriously as ways of meaning-making arising through direct, lived experience in living relation with the world.

11 Key discoveries from *Heart Sense* research

The main discoveries of *Heart Sense* are:

- The traditionally-accepted framework of knowing through which we come into relationship with the heart does not allow other

¹⁷In my PhD research I used Romanyshyn’s imaginal methodology as detailed in his book – *The Wounded Researcher – Research with Soul in Mind* [37] to enable a conversation with my heart. This approach made it possible for me to work with my heart to extend Goethe’s active imagination process. Both scholars’ work supported me to develop the *Heart Sense* methodological framework.

hearts to live in their wholeness. For example, any heart that lies beyond the definition of a physical organ, as understood through a scientific/medical narrative, has been relegated to a position of inferiority and subordination in our modern world (Livingstone, [27]; [28]). In this context, this heart is ‘just’ sentimental, irrational, and cannot be trusted.

- However, this does not mean that other hearts do not exist, or that other hearts are not important. In the context of *Heart Sense*, I have developed a transformative learning programme that facilitates connection with thirteen hearts, that are each taken as seriously as the physical heart of the scientific narrative - leading to profound transformations in my own life, as well as in the lives of others¹⁸.
- The heart invites us to be in the world, and consequently make sense of the world, through itself as an organ of imaginal perception in deep relation with the world’s unfolding through us in each moment of life. In this context, the heart’s way of knowing is made manifest through deep knowing, intuition, dream imagery, moments of revelation. ***Importantly, we cannot come to know the heart’s way without first sinking into the heart and meeting the world from there.*** To paraphrase McGilchrist once more, our first leap in terms of making sense of the world around us, determines where we land.
- The heart’s way of being in the world facilitates the possibility of deep connection with others in within the relational space – both through its inherent benevolent qualities, as well as through its capacity as a sense-making organ.
- We cannot possibly come to know the potential of the heart’s way of being through our traditional framework of knowing – through the intellect situated in the mind. To truly know the heart’s way, we are required to move into the heart itself and commit to experiencing the world from there.

In relation to the final point above, as I have discovered in my research, a key obstacle to taking the heart seriously as an organ of knowing is an

¹⁸Research is currently being conducted with participants of *The Heart Sense Journey* who have each reported deep transformations in their own lives through the application of *Heart Sense* in their lives. The research is currently being funded through a project titled Consciousness Education, and the findings are planned to be published sometime during 2026.

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individual's willingness (and oftentimes, unwillingness) to move into the world from the heart and directly experience its way of knowing and being in direct relationship with life. In this context, as already highlighted, numerous people and organisations working in the space of the heart are still speaking about heart from an objective, distanced, intellectual framing towards the world – that is, what the heart is like, and what it does (a legacy of the Scientific Enlightenment approach towards knowledge production that most people within modern Western society have been educated into). While this approach has its place, it is a limited viewpoint because the heart is infinitely more than the modern Western framework of knowing makes possible ([27], [28]). Engaging with the heart from this traditionally accepted mode of knowing does not offer the space for the heart to fully live and reveal its hidden depths to us. The heart, if fully engaged with, offers an entirely different way of knowing, and being in, the world because it perceives differently – and it is only possible to begin to comprehend this, by first moving into the heart and being willing to experience life from there.

In a direct response to addressing this important issue, the *Heart Sense* methodological framework advocates starting from the heart, *moving in and through the heart*, taking seriously the heart as an organ of knowledge and perception. In this context, to truly gain a heart-centred perspective, it is imperative *to move into the depths of one's heart first and open oneself to learn and be guided from there* – opening to the possibility that the heart is an organ of perception. My life, research and therapeutic work always begin with *moving my awareness into my heart and committing to thinking with my heart* – letting my heart speak first and my head (mind) follow - a subtle, yet deeply important difference, which plays into the head/heart dichotomy that I have already illuminated, and which is still a barrier to fully connecting with the subtle power, potency and profound wisdom of the heart as an organ of knowing.

Approaching the heart from head-based intellect (a way of perceiving the heart that is still relatively new as we have seen in our journey across cultural history) results in a number of problems that I have attempted to make clear in this paper, and which I highlight in my doctoral thesis and ongoing research and work. When approaching the heart through a dominant narrative that generally perceives any other heart (beyond that of a biological organ) as a sentimental add-on, and consequently nothing that we need to seriously concern ourselves with in relation to making sense of, and engaging with, life, it is impossible to explore understanding of the world arising in

conversation with the heart itself or hope to develop a true methodology of the heart. It is also easy to see why heart-centred traits, like kindness, love, compassion, are often deemed irrelevant or unnecessary at the socio-political level, because of our modern consensus reality and consequent subconscious bias towards the heart as a symbol of triviality and sentimentality beyond our understanding of it as a biological organ. In contrast the *Heart Sense* framework carries a foundational intention to put the heart and the heart's wisdom first, as well as placing value on the benevolent qualities associated with the heart itself. Indeed, I contend that we cannot immerse ourselves in the full implications of *The Age of Enheartment* without this commitment and understanding in place.

12 *The Age of Enheartment*

Before laying out my proposal for *The Age of Enheartment* to define the epoch that I believe is now emerging, I would like to point out that there exist several references to a slightly different term, that is The Age of Enheartenment. This term is currently being used by film maker Benedikt Just, creator of The Heart Revolution. On his website's home page Just states that, "The Age of Enheartenment begins with The Heart Revolution. Your Heart is much more than you think" [40]. Just's use of the term Enheartenment was inspired by Zen Buddhist Daniel Stacy Barron. Just believes that we are on the cusp of a new age, advocating for the centrality of the human heart, which he believes can support global humanity connect deeply with one another across differences, frictions and conflicts. Just's film offers a compelling and powerful view of the heart that makes clear how misunderstood the heart is in our modern world. During many conversations with Just, I have learnt that his film has been guided directly from his heart as an organ of knowing, in the way that I have outlined above – enabling him to include a scientific view of the heart while at the same time extending beyond this view into the fascinating potential of the heart as a place of knowing. Another reference that I discovered for The Age of Enheartenment is a single page website (please note, without a named author but a web address titled Enheartenment Community), that compares and contrasts the features of the Scientific Enlightenment with The Age of Enheartenment. See table below:

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The Age of Enlightenment	The Age of Enheartenment
European movement	Global movement
17th - 18th century	21st - 23rd century
preceded by the Scientific Revolution	preceded by the Heart Revolution
patriarchal	balancing patri and matriarchal
emphasis on scientific method, reductionism	emphasis on intuitive method, holism
I think, therefore I am	I feel, therefore I am
the mind is what makes us human	the heart is what makes us human
emotions hinder human flourishing	emotions enhance human flourishing
the heart is a pump	the heart is much more than a pump

(Source: <https://enheartenment.community/>)

Reviewing both Just’s and the Enlightenment Community’s understanding, it could be suggested that the use of the term The Age of Enheartenment encapsulates a growing desire to move beyond the separation thinking so characteristic of modern times – as we have discovered, a legacy of Enlightenment thinking – towards way of making sense of the world that creates the possibility for connection on a deeper level. Indeed, I wholeheartedly resonate with their position on the centrality of the heart in creating possibilities for deeper connection with one another and the world in general. However, I suggest that the word ‘Enheartenment’ might not be most appropriate term to create the optimum possibility for the heart to have its Renaissance in our modern times for reasons I will now make clear.

Looking at the dictionary definition of the word ‘Enhearten’, we find that it means “to give heart to, encourage”. On first inspection the meaning of this word suggests reaching out towards the world through benevolent heart-centred qualities. However, keeping in our awareness the key discoveries of my doctoral research, if we approach this definition through an outdated mode of perception (that is, from the mind, distanced from the heart), we will still be developing an understanding of this word from this limited mode of perception, *missing the opportunity to manifest the potency held within the heart itself*. In short, unless we are aware of the challenges already outlined above, we could continue to approach this new age from an outdated mode of perception. In short, how are we giving heart to this new age – *from where?* Have we practically grasped, fully, bodily comprehended, this subtle yet important difference?

I propose that by retaining the prefix ‘en’ (meaning ‘in’, ‘into’) and joining it to the word heart (which carries multiple definitions as detailed earlier, and which all have value in terms of sense-making in the complexity of the world within which we live) it is possible to retain *all the definitions of the heart* and take each seriously, reminding us of our responsibility to bring *the wholeness of the heart* into expression across all its manifestations. In this sense, *The Age of Enheartment* asks something of us. That is, to commit fully to learning the way of the heart, *in and through the heart as an organ of perception in conversation with the world’s unfolding through us in each and every living moment*. This is why, in the context of my own research and teaching within the *Heart Sense* methodological framework, I have been using the term *The Age of Enheartment* for a number of years now.

13 A way forward? *Heart Sense* and *The Age of Enheartment*

Heart Sense offers a way of knowing and being through the heart; re-imagined for modern times and understood in this context as an organ of perception that, through its inherent benevolent qualities, facilitates a skilful way of engaging with others in the relational space. Challenging dominant Western epistemological frameworks that prioritise analytical cognition and objectivity, *Heart Sense* and *The Age of Enheartment* position the heart as the primary site for receiving, interpreting, and co-creating a way of engaging with the world that honours all within the dynamic unfolding of the relational space. Through an integrative approach that embraces intuitive, somatic, and imaginal ways of knowing, the heart of this new epoch fosters deep relationality and the potential for holistic world-making – in short, offering each and every Being on this Earth the possibility to flourish. Contemporary reductions of the heart to mere biological function have obscured these capacities; thus, a re-education in heart-centered perception is offered through the framework of *Heart Sense* as a critical task for reclaiming the full richness of human experience. *The Age of Enheartment* as understood through the framework of *Heart Sense* (and arising through the way of the heart) offers a pathway to re-engage with the heart’s wisdom, inviting a transformative reorientation toward co-creation, relational wholeness, and embodied knowing. In this context I have begun

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the task of developing a metaphysics for *Heart Sense* and the arising *Age of Enheartment* as follows:

1. **Holistic perception and transcendence of dualities** The heart that lives in *The Age of Enheartment* perceives reality in its wholeness, moving beyond the fragmentations of conflict, division, and separation that often characterise mind-centred modes of perception. It embraces an epistemology that privileges the connective potentiality of the dynamic, ever-unfolding relational space over separation consciousness (achieved through the heart's benevolent qualities and ability to remain in the ever-unfolding present in living conversation with the world).
2. **Integrated comprehension – the possibility of experiencing wholeness** Though *Heart Sense*, in *The Age of Enheartment*, heart-centred knowing seeks to comprehend and integrate diverse expressions of being, curating possibilities for connection and co-creation rather than domination or control. It reflects an ontology wherein differentiation contributes to, rather than detracts from, a deeper relational wholeness – understanding that wholeness is not a 'thing' or a goal to be achieved, but a process of forever becoming in the relational present.
3. **Unconditional welcoming toward difference** Operating from connection consciousness (rather than separation consciousness) created through the *Heart Sense* framework, the re-imagined heart of *The Age of Enheartment* honours the uniqueness of all beings and welcomes difference without the impulse to divide, standardise, or control. It sustains a knowing that remains open to an-other's irreducible uniqueness, while at the same time remaining connected.
4. **Co-creation beyond division and separation** Through *Heart Sense* and *The Age of Enheartment*, heart-based perception shifts the ontological ground from competition toward co-creation, recognizing the relational space and the flourishing of all as the foundational condition of existence. Knowledge becomes a living and collaborative act rather than a hierarchical conquest.
5. **Suspension of preconceived ideas** Rather than imposing prior conceptual frameworks onto the world, in *The Age of Enheartment*, through the *Heart Sense* approach, the heart encounters the other with epistemological humility, refusing to fix or finalize the world's

meanings. Uncertainty and flow become principles through which we can remain open to life's unfolding – where heart and mind (head/brain) come together to support a deeper experience of life.

6. **Becoming in living conversation with the world's unfolding** In *The Age of Enheartment*, through *Heart Sense*, the heart grants each and every one infinite ontological space to evolve toward its fullest expression, viewing the other not as a static object but as a dynamic unfolding. It invites continual becoming, grounded in relational trust and imaginative openness.

14 A re-imagined heart with boundless potential and value

As this paper has made clear, contemporary Western ways of thinking about the world that grew out of the Scientific Enlightenment and our place in it are dangerously inadequate in relation to the growing challenges and crises that our modern world is facing. Indeed, McGilchrist puts forward a compelling argument, as well as a chilling view of the world dominated by the 'take' of the left-brain hemisphere (which many of us may be able to recognise as we bear witness to the ongoing conflict and challenges that seem to saturate our modern world).

Working in my heart space as I have for many decades, I firmly believe that our hearts are calling us forth right now, and in that regard, we stand before the possibility of a new epoch. In *The Age of Enheartment*, in and through our heart, we come to know that the heart can live in multiple ways without being categorised or pigeon-holed into narrow, materialist terms or side-lined into sentimental, religious terms. In this context, the heart is a physical organ, as well as the site of emotions, as well as a wise and intelligent ally which can offer us guidance in our world of increasing conflict, challenges, injustice and inequality.

As part of this new epoch, the *Heart Sense* framework reimagines the heart as an organ of knowing and perception which can offer the possibility for us to learn to hear our heart once more and its many different aspects. As we open to our own heart's depths in *The Age of Enheartment*, we will be guided to co-create the world of our heart's vision opening ourselves to the

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possibility of personal and planetary transformation – realising that nothing is ever fixed or static, and that wholeness is a process of forever becoming through us, in conversation with the living, breathing world. This heart, therefore, asks something of us. It is a container within which we are gifted the possibility re-educate ourselves and learn the language and way of being of the heart – in and through the heart itself, which offers invaluable wisdom and guidance to support wiser engagement with the challenges of the modern world as it invites us into its co-creative dance. In this context, it is not the heart that must change to fit into our view of it – instead, each one of us is gently invited into the vast potentiality of the way of the heart, and we, as a result, could be forever transformed.

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