

Toward a New Paradigm:
An Essay in Philosophical Transformation

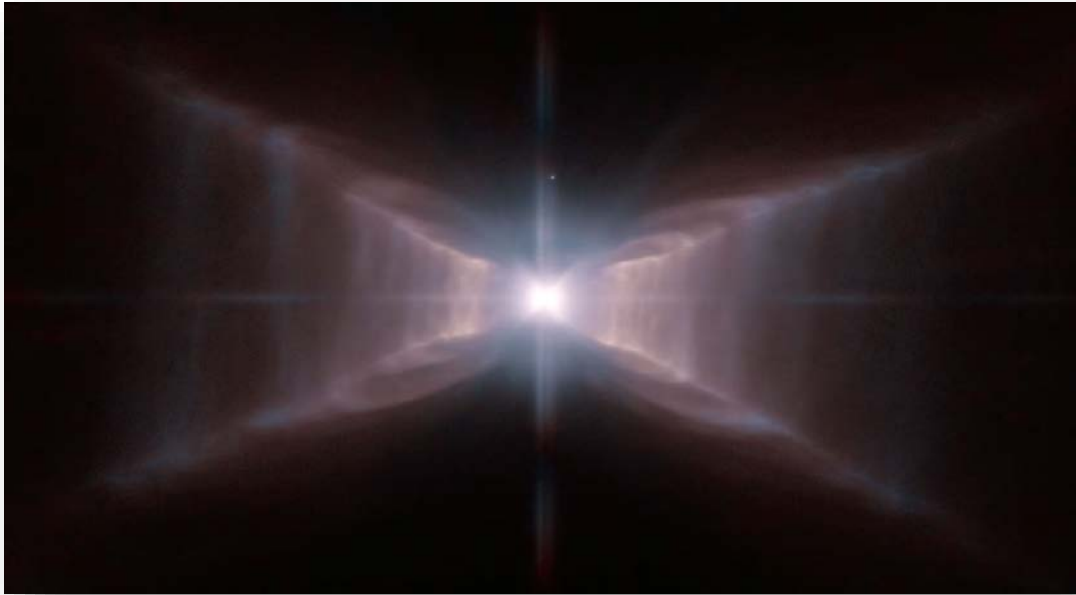


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I. Paradigms



In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn argues that normal science moves in a relatively smooth fashion, integrating new knowledge into preexisting theories, which operate within particular world views.

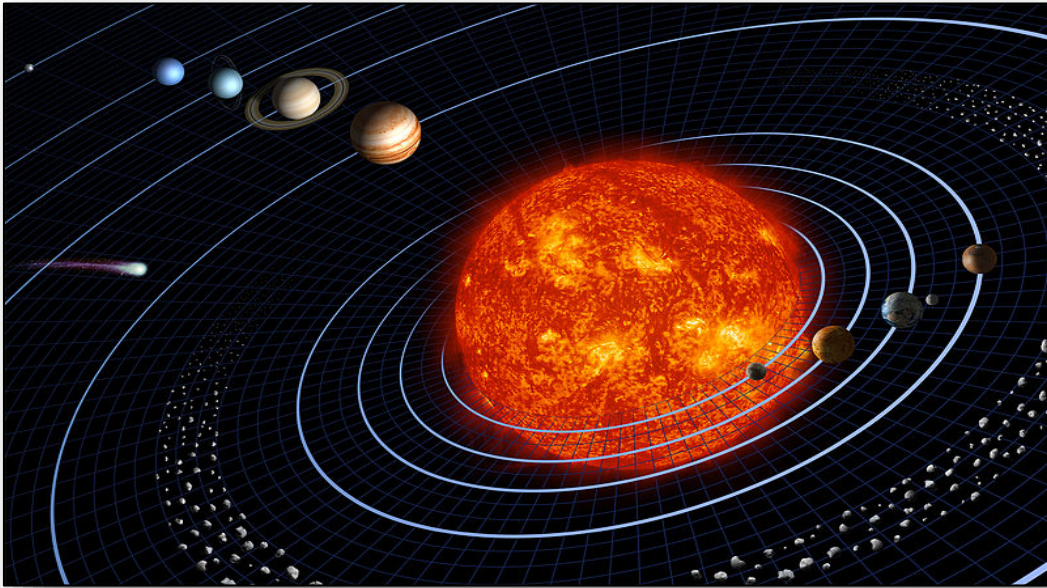
However, periodically, there are scientific revolutions when the whole world view or, as he puts it, the paradigm changes. Moving from a geocentric to a heliocentric solar system and from Newtonian to relativistic physics are two such examples of changing a paradigm.

Now we are in the middle of another, perhaps even more basic, paradigm shift. If we use the methodology of philosophy to explore contemporary science's core assumptions, we find that science has produced powerful knowledge leading to amazing technologies, but, at its core, the philosophy of contemporary science is profoundly lacking.

We are moving, inexorably, from traditional science based on the assumption of a mechanistic, deterministic, probabilistic Universe where human consciousness is a sort of random accident, to the recognition of a living Universe in which human consciousness is a natural, evolutionary component.

So let's explore what's wrong with the current paradigm of traditional science and see what we can discover about the new paradigm that is emerging and its implications for social action.

II. Traditional Science



In the mid-twentieth century, a philosophical school called “Logical Positivism” asserted that science provided the only true knowledge. That school suggested that we should stop considering metaphysical questions (about how to understand the nature of our world and ourselves and anything spiritual and how to choose the best actions to take). Rather, Logical Positivism asserted that we should use the Scientific Method (verifiable, replicable experimentation leading to the formulation of mostly mathematically expressed laws of nature) to answer all questions.

Because of the many successes of science, Logical Positivism was popular for a little while, until some Philosophers of Science noticed that there was no way to use the Scientific Method to prove that the Scientific Method provided the only true knowledge. That assertion, the core insight of anti-metaphysical Logical Positivism, was a metaphysical one. Oops.

Logical Positivism lost the argument philosophically, but, unfortunately, by and large in practice it still holds sway with the scientific community and with the popular imagination of a significant portion of the population. For those people who do not look to religion as the source of secure knowledge, the Scientific Method is assumed to be pretty much the only way to produce virtually certain knowledge. What we know using science is what is known. What we don't know yet will someday be known if we pursue the Scientific Method.

Mechanistic-Deterministic Model of the Universe: This prejudice in favor of the Scientific Method and against metaphysical philosophy, has led to some very serious

conceptual problems. For example, most contemporary science is based on a mechanistic-deterministic model of explanation that eliminates consciousness and purpose from all aspects of the Universe except for human beings.

According to this, mostly hidden, assumption, the Universe is like a machine (or more recently, a computer) that somehow made and continues to make itself. The way this universal machine functions can be understood if a group of people carefully observe it, share their observations, formulate a set of, usually mathematically formulated, rules governing what they have observed, and then use those rules to predict how the machine (computer) will function in the future.

Science, guided by this mostly implicit philosophy, has produced some very significant understandings. It has also provided the basis for some very impressive technologies (specialized machines/computers taking advantage of an understanding of the rules of the universal machine/computer).

Unfortunately, the whole human experience suggests that machines (and computers) don't make themselves. Rather they are made by people. So we should not get too enamored of the rather naive assumption that the Universe is like a machine/computer that makes and keeps on making itself, even given the technological successes and the predictability of the laws science has discovered stemming from this approach.

So, where has this combination of the anti-metaphysical version of the Scientific Method and the partially buried assumption of the mechanistic-deterministic model of explanation gotten us? It's gotten us into a bit of a mess.

Let's look at what orthodox science says to us about ourselves and the world we live in.

The Big Bang: It all started with the "Big Bang," when a virtually infinitely small and virtually infinitely dense particle of some unknown substance exploded for an unknown reason and launched the Universe. What surrounded that primordial particle is unknown. What came before that primordial particle is unknown.

The Universe that began with this an explosion of energy has led to a rapidly expanding Universe with billions of galaxies made up of billions of stars, but where the Universe is headed, as it expands in all directions, is unknown. The expansion does seem to be speeding up, though no one knows why.

Dark Matter and Dark Energy: For the equations of astrophysics to work and account for why the force of gravity doesn't cause the Universe to collapse in on itself, scientists have had to postulate that most of the Universe is composed of dark energy, an unknown something that has never been directly experienced in any way, and also of dark matter, another completely

unknown something. According to the NASA website, “It turns out that roughly 70% of the Universe is dark energy. Dark matter makes up about 25%. The rest—everything ever observed with all of our instruments on Earth or anywhere else—*all normal energy/matter adds up to less than 5% of the Universe.*”

Quantum Indeterminism: Things are similarly opaque at the smallest levels of sub-atomic quantum physics, where the mechanistic/deterministic model of explanation has become the mechanistic/probabilistic model of explanation, which sees the smallest energy units, quanta, as having the characteristics of both waves and particles, with measurement difficulties.

According to the Heisenberg Principle, it takes at least a quantum of energy to measure a quantum of energy, or anything else, and the act of measurement changes the system, so all knowledge must become approximate and take into consideration the observer. At the quantum level, quanta of energy and sub-atomic particles seem to go in and out of existence, or at least in and out of observability.

Some Scientists hold the view that all of the possible states of a quantum system exist in a Multiverse of many parallel Universes. However, why any of this should be so is left unexplained. Are there many Universes? If so, why is this so? How many Universes are there? Why and how do they interpenetrate each other? These are all questions that have not been answered.

Matter, Energy: Albert Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity showed that matter can be transformed into energy and that the amount of energy would be the square of the speed of light. The atomic bomb was a dramatic demonstration that Einstein was correct in his assertion, but why is it that, when matter transforms into energy, the amount of energy produced is the amount of matter times the square of the speed of light? Why does light move at the constant speed that Einstein formulated? Can anything move faster than the speed of light? Traditional science doesn’t know.

Life: Life is an emergent property in relation to the agglomerations of chemicals that compose any living system, but science hasn’t been able to produce life from chemicals or to explain either how or why it happens. The 2nd law of thermodynamics posits that all systems tend to degrade into their simpler and simpler components, yet the whole of evolution is the story of increasingly complex systems, with emergent properties that can’t be predicted based on their component parts, building on their predecessors to produce new complexity with different newly emergent properties.

Chemicals become cells. Cells agglomerate to become lower organisms. Lower organisms evolve to become higher organisms, including plants, insects, animals, and, ultimately, human animals. Cells, lower organisms, and higher organisms form ecologies that co-evolve together. All of this is a huge, unexplained, violation of the 2nd law of thermodynamics.

I could go on, but I think the point is made. Science with its mechanistic/deterministic/probabilistic metaphysics has produced a significant amount of knowledge surrounded by a much vaster amount of ignorance.

The Limits of the Scientific Method: The Scientific Method has similar Philosophical problems. The Scientific Method involves making precise, verified observations about some aspects of the external world, formulating usually mathematically expressed 'laws' about the relationships between those aspects of the external world, and then, based on those laws, making precise, verifiable predictions about observations of what will happen in the future in relation to those aspects of the external world.

It is essential that the observations can be repeated by comparably situated observers. However, as the Heisenberg Principle has demonstrated at the quantum level and as the placebo effect has demonstrated at the level of medical trials, all observation has an effect on what is observed. What the Scientific Method does is try to minimize that effect, so as to be able to obtain results that are approximately verifiable by different observers using similar procedures.

In fact, the problem goes much deeper. The Scientific Method tries to correct for the impact of the act of observation on what is being observed, but it assumes that the future will be essentially the same as the past, at least as regards the aspects of the external world being observed. If you are studying magnetism and observing magnets and formulating laws about magnetic polarity and then predicting the behavior of magnets in the future, you are assuming that the Universe will stay constant, at least as it relates to magnetism, in the future. If the nature of the Universe as it relates to magnetism were to change in the future, your predictions wouldn't be accurate and, therefore, your laws would be wrong.

The hidden assumption about time probably won't trip you up in relation to predictions about magnetism, but that hidden assumption about time may be very significant in relation to emergent phenomena. That's why it's much harder to predict the economic and political behavior of human beings. The hidden assumption that things will be the same in the future—in relation to what is being studied—as they were in the past may very well be, and often is, wrong in relation to human behavior.

The Consciousness Conundrum: The problem goes deeper still. The Scientific Method was designed to use precise observations to focus on the external world. But it's hard to study the nature of consciousness that way. Yet, everything we know about any aspect of the Universe comes through our consciousness. Research on how the brain works is exploding and it is extremely interesting, but all that knowledge comes through the consciousness of the brain researchers and comes to us through our consciousness.

Traditional science just attempts to explain various aspects of the mind by using the reductionist approach of describing brain cell operations that are correlated with those aspects of the mind. That's like trying to explain the plot of a television program and the process by which the television program was created by more and more careful observations of how a TV set works. The TV set is relevant. If it is not working, you won't receive your program. If its images are distorted, your program's images will be distorted. But explaining how the TV set works won't tell you anything about the meaning of the TV program you are receiving and how the actors and the director and the technicians in a studio produced it.

So, we have come full circle to something analogous to the Logical Positivist's conundrum. Consciousness is required for the Scientific Method to operate, but the current application of the Scientific Method (with its mechanic deterministic/probabilistic metaphysics) based on objective observation of the external world, can't directly study the consciousness that is central to its operation. Therefore, science as currently practiced can't really study the most basic thing we know about ourselves and the Universe—our consciousness.

Inner Work and Outer Action: Just as in the West, we have developed a materialistic science and used it to create a wide variety of powerful technologies, in the East the Yogis and Buddhists and Taoists have developed a kind of Science of Consciousness. They have paid close attention to the inner experiences and developed inner practices as the route to understanding and strengthening of their consciousness. These inner practices not only provide inner knowledge, they also provide increased inner power which has a kind of resonance effect, whereby the stronger consciousnesses attract less strong consciousnesses as followers.

The Indian Guru with thousands (sometimes millions) of followers is an example of this phenomenon of inner knowledge leading to inner power with a powerful magnetic resonant effect. In its worst manifestations, the cult leader with cult followers is also an example of the phenomenon. Hitler was such a leader who combined occult knowledge and power with military science and technology to bring millions of people into a Nazi movement that used terrible means to accomplish horrific ends.

However, the history of the Mahatma, Mohandas Gandhi, and the movement for Indian liberation shows the potential positive side. Gandhi combined his philosophy of non-violence, (whereby the means were the ends in process), with a personal power, schooled by significant inner work, to create a movement that engaged millions of people and provided a way for these people to act in concert with great moral force and great political effect.

Therefore, it seems clear that it is important that we go beyond the paradigm of traditional science and apply our consciousnesses and our philosophical capabilities to formulating an understanding of the Universe that accepts consciousness as a central, perhaps the central, aspect of it.

III. Consciousness



The different aspects of our consciousness—our conscious thoughts, feelings, sensations, intuitions, etc.—provide us with our experience of ourselves and of the world around us. In fact, our conscious experiences are our only awareness of ourselves and the world. This means that the world has to be the kind of place where this type of consciousness exists.

A Conscious Universe: Since any explanation of the Universe has to begin with the use of our consciousness, shouldn't our explanations of the Universe be grounded in what we know best about the Universe—our conscious participation in it? Since we are conscious beings, we have to accept that the Universe is a Universe that allows for our consciousness. Therefore, it is quite clear that at least a part of the Universe is conscious—the part that is the consciousness in each of us.

Since each human being is a conscious living organism, the most basic thing we know about the Universe is that it has to be a place that allows for conscious living organisms to exist. Therefore, it is much more likely that the Universe is also a kind of conscious living organism rather than the traditional scientific view that the Universe is a non-living, non-conscious machine that somehow randomly makes itself and then somehow, again randomly, makes conscious humans that are inherently alien to it.

But, you may reply, we don't experience the larger consciousness of the Universe. Well, the most realistic hypothesis may be that the Universe has many levels of consciousness, a consciousness spectrum like the energy/light spectrum if you will. (In fact, the energy/light

spectrum can be viewed as the external perspective on the consciousness spectrum.) However, like the energy spectrum, we humans ordinarily only experience a relatively narrow band of the consciousness spectrum.

At the most basic level, our ordinary human consciousness is an interior experience of the world outside and the world inside through a succession of instants of awareness in a stream of presents that remember their pasts and anticipate their futures. However, there also has to be an over-arching unity, the most intimate example of a field of consciousness if you will, that enables us to connect our immediate past with our immediate future and make some sense of what's happening in the immediate present.

Expanded Consciousness: Let's take this a step further. Since each of us is an aspect of the Universe and each of us is conscious, it follows that becoming conscious of our own consciousness would seem to teach us about the consciousness that is at the heart of the Universe—at least the Universe as we experience it.

What happens, then, if we hypothesize that inner experience can provide knowledge that is valid? Is it possible to attain heightened states of consciousness that participate more deeply in the (conscious) Universe? Doesn't it make sense to train our consciousness, as the key vehicle we have for experiencing and exploring the Universe, to experience what may be a wider range of the spectrum of consciousness in this conscious Universe? And, doesn't it make sense to compare our inner experience with the inner experience of other people in a way that produces potentially verifiable inner knowledge?

Let's accept that we humans exist as nodes in a field of consciousness that extends out as a spectrum of consciousness throughout the human species, the solar system, and the whole Universe. Our human nodes of consciousness only receive and process a small portion of the larger spectrum of consciousness, which is unconscious for us.

At the lower (slower) end of the spectrum of consciousness, we encounter the realm of physical matter. At the higher (faster) end of this spectrum we touch the realm of the spiritual. In the mid-range we inhabit the mental realm—the realm within which most of us operate.

As several of humanity's esoteric traditions put it, the Universe is essentially mental, with a sub-conscious dimension (the realm of physical reality), a self-conscious dimension (where our minds operate), and a super-conscious dimension (the spiritual). This implies that the physical is a particularly dense sub-conscious form of what is essentially a mental reality in a mind or a set of minds that are much more powerful than our ordinary human minds are.

The typical Western mind is pretty much cut off from the experience of the realm of the sub-conscious and the realm of the super-conscious, but it was not always thus.

Spiritual Participation: Judging from the traditional societies that survive and/or have been documented, when we started our journey as the species Homo Sapiens some 200,000 or so years ago, we lived in a state of natural and spiritual participation. We engaged with the world around us along an expanded portion of the spectrum of consciousness, experiencing directly the natural and the spiritual dimensions of places and of animals and of other people.

During those early times, nature pretty much called the shots. Humans adapted to the natural world we encountered and the natural world that controlled us was also a spiritual world. Then, sometime around 12,000 years ago we began to get aspects of the natural world to adapt to us through agriculture and villages. And, at the same time, we began to live along a narrower band in the spectrum of consciousness. As the millennia passed, the balance progressively shifted until now we have the ability to transform the entire ecology of the Earth pretty completely.

And we are transforming it pell-mell. A large number of the adaptations we are forcing on the Earth are turning out not to be so good. At the same time many of us have narrowed our natural/spiritual participation to the extent that we don't really experience and empathize with the life of the natural world, let alone its spiritual dimension. This narrowing of consciousness shuts out much of (most of) (maybe all of) our empathy with the suffering we are causing with our highly inadequate economic, social, cultural, and military systems.

In the end, of course, the natural world is still much more powerful than we are. If we try to make it adapt to us in the wrong ways, these actions will just backfire and extreme weather—blizzards and droughts and hurricanes—and/or extreme pollution, and/or pandemics, and/or all the other types of extremes will just take us out and we will become one of the little also-ran species that failed our great challenge and our great opportunity to find a way to create a magnificent planetary/species ecology as an end in itself and as a foundation for continued joint evolution and exploration.

Expanding our participation in the spectrum of consciousness—giving us the ability to empathize with other people and the natural world as well as the capability to learn from the world of the spirit—may very well be essential for us to find a way to live at peace with ourselves, each other, and the Earth.

IV. An Emerging Paradigm



Western Science has begun to recognize the need for a paradigm shift through the formulation of what is known as the Anthropic Principle, which is based on the reality that we live in Universe that is remarkably fine-tuned to allow for life, human life, and human consciousness.

The Anthropic Principle: The Anthropic Principle holds that observations of the physical Universe must be compatible with the conscious life that observes it. Stephen Hawking, the theoretical physicist and cosmologist, frames the situation this way, "The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers...(that) seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life." (*A Brief History of Time*)

There are two main schools of thought and lines of reasoning that derive from the Anthropic Principle. One school is represented by Stephen Hawking himself, among others. He suggests that it is just an accident that human life on Earth exists—and can only exist—within a very narrow and improbable set of physical and biological tolerances.

If there are an infinite number of Universes even the most improbable occurrences will happen somewhere. By the Anthropic Principle, the Universe we are observing has to be such that we can observe it, but we just happen to be here in this highly improbable reality and we shouldn't draw any special conclusions from that fact.

The other school, represented by the 'intelligent design' folks, asserts that the existence of our conscious life on Earth, within the very narrow and improbable tolerances required for it,

implies that an intelligence created the Universe (for us perhaps) and has some purpose in mind for it. They typically go on then to make the connection between this philosophical viewpoint and the Christian God.

The Living Conscious Universe: However, both schools seem to miss an important implication of the Anthropic Principle. We each are alive and experience the Universe through our living consciousnesses. We are each parts of the Universe. That means that the Universe is experiencing itself through an aspect of itself (each of us) that is alive and conscious. What we know most intimately is that aspects of the Universe (each of us) are alive and conscious and those aspects of the living Universe experience other aspects of the Universe consciously.

As I discussed in the *Consciousness* section above, this implies that we inhabit and experience one small portion of a consciousness spectrum that makes up this living conscious Universe. Therefore, a strong form of the Anthropic Principle can be stated as: “We live in a Universe that is a living evolving system characterized by a spectrum of consciousness and we experience a (small) portion of that spectrum.” Some esoteric traditions formulate this as “The Universe is mental, made up of sub-conscious, conscious, and super-conscious dimensions.”

One of the many implications of the strong form of the Anthropic Principle is that it makes sense to explore and act on our consciousness directly and, thereby, explore and act on the consciousness of the Universe directly by using our inner senses and inner capabilities—not just restrict our explorations of the Universe to our outer senses.

Philosophy: From this perspective, then, what is the best way to formulate the new paradigm that is arising? Let’s use the discipline of philosophy.

Philosophy deals with basic assumptions about ourselves and the world we live in; how we choose them; how we organize them; and how we use them to guide ourselves and interact with others. This means that philosophy really is the right discipline for choosing, evaluating, and modifying paradigms.

Traditionally, philosophy has three main branches:

- Ontology, which focuses on the nature of being and the types of existence.
- Epistemology, which delves into what constitutes knowledge and how to know and test knowledge.
- Axiology, which considers values, morality, and how to act.

The Philosophy of Traditional Science: Based on this understanding of philosophy, the traditional scientific Ontology is that the Universe is a machine/computer (perhaps one of many, even one of an infinite number) that somehow made itself, is continuing to make itself, and behaves in a way that is consistent over time. This machine/computer has evolved a few

parts (we humans) that are inherently different from all the other parts (for no apparent reason) because they are conscious and can come to experience some of the other inherently different aspects of the Universe and can even come to control some of the other aspects of the Universe.

The orthodox scientific Epistemology is that knowledge is based on independently verifiable (often instrument mediated) observations through the external senses that can be explained by (usually mathematically expressed) hypotheses which predict future independently verifiable observations. Hypotheses that are “proved”—by predicting something that actually happens regularly—become “natural laws” that can be pieced together to form integrated theories that give a broader understanding of different aspects of the Universe.

The orthodox scientific Axiology is that truth (as defined by scientific Epistemology) is the only scientific value. Science should pursue knowledge, regardless of the result and science bears no responsibility for the uses to which its knowledge is put.

This approach to scientific knowledge has led to very powerful technologies with little grounding in human values. The value system of traditional Capitalism has typically filled this void.

In fairness to the scientific community, many scientists are beginning to break with the paradigm of orthodox science. Climate scientists, for example, are taking the ethical implications of climate change research quite seriously. However, a fully developed alternative paradigm has not been developed and embraced.

The Paradigm of a Living Conscious Universe: The fully developed paradigm shift that emerges out of the strong form of the Anthropic Principle gives us a very different philosophy for our time. According to this new paradigm, let’s posit:

- The Ontology of a Living Conscious Universe of which we are living conscious contributing aspects.
- The Epistemology of balancing the outer knowing of scientific, political, and economic observation with the inner knowing of mindfulness, visualization, and meditation.
- The Axiology of using good means to exemplify and accomplish the good ends of health and well-being for all people and ecological harmony with the Earth.

We can call this the paradigm of a Living Conscious Universe.

V. Planetary Consciousness



Now let's take a look at the possibility that the Earth itself, when looked at from the perspective of the paradigm of a Living Conscious Universe, can be seen as a unified coherent living system with a kind of consciousness.

The Gaia Theory: In the 1970s, the chemist James Lovelock proposed the Gaia Hypothesis, named after the Greek Earth goddess, Gaia. The Gaia Hypothesis proposed that organisms interact with their inorganic surroundings on Earth to form a system that contributes to maintaining the conditions for life on the planet. This means that life on Earth is a self-regulating system involving the biosphere, the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the pedosphere (skin of soil and living organisms), all of which are intimately integrated as an evolving complex system.

The Gaia Hypothesis has been modified and elaborated enough and there have been enough predictions made and confirmed that it has become the Gaia Theory, which now holds that the Earth evolves through a feedback system— including many processes essential for the conditions of life—that regulates the Earth's surface temperature, surface composition, atmosphere, and ocean salinity, among other factors.

Acceptance of the Gaia Theory has become so widespread that, in 2001, a thousand scientists at the European Geophysical Union meeting signed the Declaration of Amsterdam, starting with the statement “The Earth System behaves as a single, self-regulating system with physical, chemical, biological, and human components.”

Originally, many Earth Scientists strongly criticized the Gaia Hypothesis, suggesting, among other things, that it involved a teleological explanation, incorporating active purpose on the part of the planet (rather than the type of mechanico/deterministic explanation favored by traditional science). Lovelock responded that “Nowhere in our writings do we express the idea that planetary self-regulation is purposeful, or involves foresight or planning by the biota.”

The Earth Is Alive: However, maybe Lovelock hasn’t gone far enough. It seems possible to simplify and strengthen the Gaia Theory if we apply the paradigm of the Living Conscious Universe. From this perspective, we can reformulate the Gaia Theory as “The Earth is alive and behaves in a purposive fashion with a type of evolving consciousness in order to pursue an environment optimal for life.”

Let’s take seriously the possibility that the Earth is in a transition that could lead to a new, higher level of organization and “interiorization” (as Pierre de Chardin proposed in the *Phenomenon of Man*), producing a new emergent consciousness. This transition may be like what happened when collections of individual cells evolved to form insects and plants and animals and, eventually, humans. And, these individual insects and plants and animals and, eventually, humans came to have relatively coherent consciousnesses that could guide the—now unified—collections of cells.

The proposed consciousness of the Earth would clearly be located at a place on the consciousness spectrum that is quite different from ordinary human consciousness or human consciousness as augmented by the technologies of traditional science.

There is significant evidence that people who train their consciousness, e.g. Yogic, Buddhist, Taoist, and Sufi masters in the Eastern metaphysical traditions, can reach and participate in wider portions of the consciousness spectrum, and, in some cases, touch the unique form of consciousness that is (beginning to be) manifested by the Earth. Certainly, very many Native traditions talk of Mother Earth and experience the Earth as a living conscious being.

Planetary Consciousness: The paradigm of the Living Conscious Universe may also be taken to suggest that groups have a kind of group consciousness, a group mind if you will. The psychology of crowds and the behavior of herds, flocks, hives, ant hills, and many other types of group behavior argue for this perspective.

If this is true, then it may be the case that the large group that is the human species has a type of consciousness. And the consciousness of humanity appears to be a key vehicle for the emerging new higher level of organization/consciousness of the Earth.

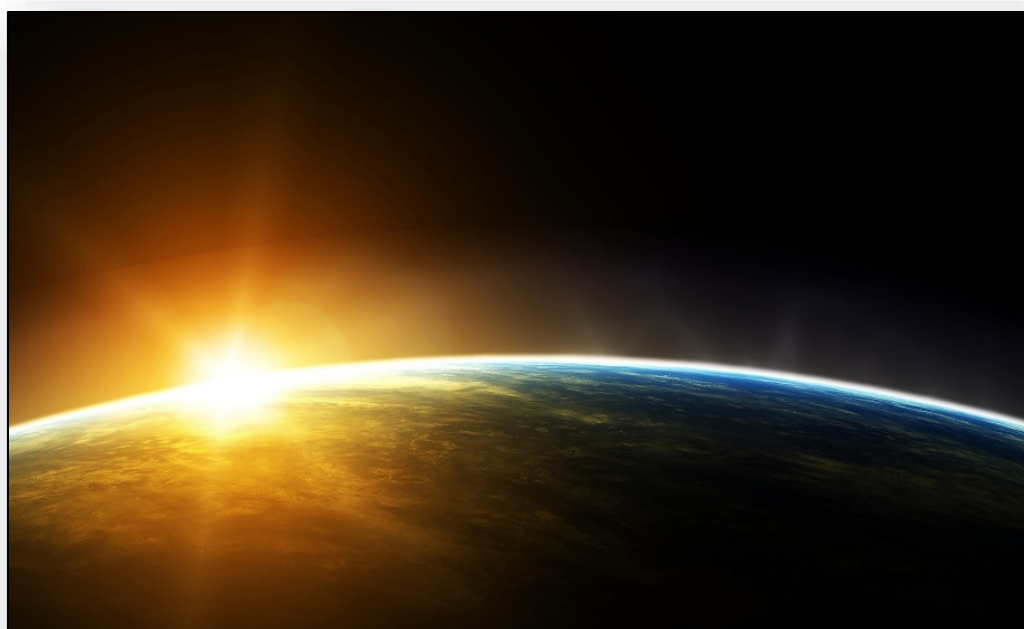
Right now the consciousness of humanity is fragmented and divided against itself. But if we quiet our minds, pay attention to our breathing, relax, look inside, and listen, perhaps we can participate in the consciousness of our species that is joining with the consciousness of the

Earth to form an emergent Planetary Consciousness, where the deeper singing coming from our species joins in harmony with the great song of our planet.

We can see ourselves at a moment of crucial Planetary Transformation, when the Earth evolves to the point that it acquires an integrated consciousness—with humanity playing a critical role—that can guide the formation of a planetary civilization that is conducive to continued human life on Earth. It may be the case that we have the capability to reach down into ourselves, selves that are aspects of the Earth, and find the Earth calling to us showing us the ways to transform our own lives and the life of our species so that we can come to live at peace with Her.

And maybe, just maybe, we can actually connect with the emerging Planetary Consciousness that is a blending of the emerging unified consciousness of the human species and of the Earth. And maybe we can engage with this Planetary Consciousness to help it emerge further. And maybe we can take strength from it and use it to unite with and act together with the very large numbers of us humans that will be needed to work the work of the Great Transformation whereby we learn to live at peace with ourselves, with each other, and with the Earth.

VI. Planetary Philosophy



So, let's try taking the idea of Planetary Consciousness seriously, even though at this time we, at least most of us, only participate in our own individual consciousnesses. (One of the most significant things about the art experience is that it allows us to participate, to a certain extent, in the consciousness of the artist and, thereby, expand a little our own consciousness.) Let's explore some of the first steps in how we get from our individual human experience to this posited Planetary Consciousness.

As one first step in the emergence of this Planetary Consciousness, I believe that we need a new, effective, practical philosophy, a Planetary Philosophy, guided by a set of simple, powerful, straight-forward core principles.

These core principles should embed the paradigm of a Living Conscious Universe and an emerging Planetary Consciousness in them in a way that is so clear and so self-evident that it is virtually impossible for anyone to deny them. And these principles need to provide clear direction to help us understand what's happening in the world right now and decide how to take action and what action to take.

So what are the core principles of this Planetary Philosophy? Let's try three.

One Planet: The first principle of Planetary Philosophy is the realization that we are One Planet.

Every human being has a body that is made of the Earth. We are each made of the Earth. We are not something outside of the Earth. Our bones, our blood, our muscles, every cell in our bodies are all composed of materials that come from the Earth. These materials are still part of the Earth even as they are composing our bodies.

Where is the boundary between our little portion of the Earth that is our body and the rest of the Earth? We are continually breathing in air from the Earth and breathing out air into the Earth. We are continually eating and drinking parts of the Earth and then giving back feces and urine to the Earth. We are continually seeing and hearing and smelling and tasting and touching parts of the Earth and we are continually taking actions that affect the Earth, picking something up, opening a door, digging in a garden, or driving a car.

There is no place where it is possible to draw a line and say this is where I begin and the Earth stops. Intellectually, we know this is true. According to relativity physics, everything is connected and an action any place affects every place, at least a little bit. Also, according to the principles of the Science of Ecology, any action affects the whole ecology, at least a little bit. And, it is certainly clear that the Earth is one ecological system.

So, we are a part of the Earth and the Earth is a part of us. What we experience is something that a part of the Earth is experiencing. Our experience is an aspect the Earth experiencing other aspects of itself. Each of us lives a life that is one strand woven together to form the fabric made up of all of the strands of all of the lives of everything alive on Earth.

We cannot, we must not deny that everything that we do to the Earth we do to ourselves. Everything that everyone does to the Earth they do to us. If we humans seriously disrupt the very narrow and very fragile tolerances that permit human life on Earth, then the result will be that the part of the Earth that is humanity will cease to exist. If we seriously disrupt the narrow and fragile tolerances that permit organic life on Earth, then the result will be that the part of the Earth that is organic life will cease to exist.

And humans now certainly are forces for disruption. Climate change, massive pollution, forest destruction, and species extinction are all symptoms of this disruption. It is almost as if we were at war with the Earth, which means we are at war with ourselves.

What we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves. There is no separation. We need to make peace with the planet, which means we need to make peace with ourselves. Let's call this aspect of Planetary Philosophy "One Planet."

One People: The second principle of Planetary Philosophy is the understanding that we are One People.

Without question the fact that each of us human beings is one part of the Earth means that all of us together are one people. Since the body of each human being is made of the one Earth, we are all intimately linked together as different parts of one whole.

Since anything that any member of the human species does affects the Earth; and, since the Earth forms the body of every member of the human species; and, since anything that affects a part of the Earth affects all of the Earth; therefore, anything that any member of the human species does affects every other member of the human species.

However, we live in a much more intimate relationship with each other even than that. We are One People because we are one species. We come from common ancestors and, as members of the human species, we share 99.9% of our DNA—99.9% of our genetic make-up unites us and only 0.09% divides us.

The ethnic differences that divide us are miniscule compared to the massive genetic reality that unites us. At any moment any virus or any bacterium in the body of any human being could mutate to become a virulent disease that could become a pandemic that could potentially kill every other member of the human species. The Ebola epidemic is just one current example of this truth.

Inventions, like the telephone, the light bulb, and the Internet rapidly diffuse throughout the human species. One terrorist with nuclear weapons could destroy an awful lot of us. A few of us in political leadership can make peace or start a war that would dramatically affect all of us. A few of us in economic leadership can create prosperity or poverty for the rest of us.

The health and wellbeing of each individual in the human species profoundly affects the health and wellbeing of the whole species. The human species is going to survive as a whole—not just some dominant part of the species. What we do to each other we do to us all, to the whole species. Let's call this aspect of Planetary Philosophy "One People."

One Purpose: The third principle of Planetary Philosophy is the recognition that we have One Purpose—to assist humanity and the Earth to evolve into a new higher, more effective, and more just form of organization.

According to Systems Theory, when a system in a steady state of equilibrium takes in too much new content—new forces, new elements, new relationships—it goes into a state of disequilibrium, which is unstable. At that point, the system has to evolve and transform to a new, higher, better, more powerful, more effective form of organization or else devolve into a new, lower, simpler, less powerful form of organization.

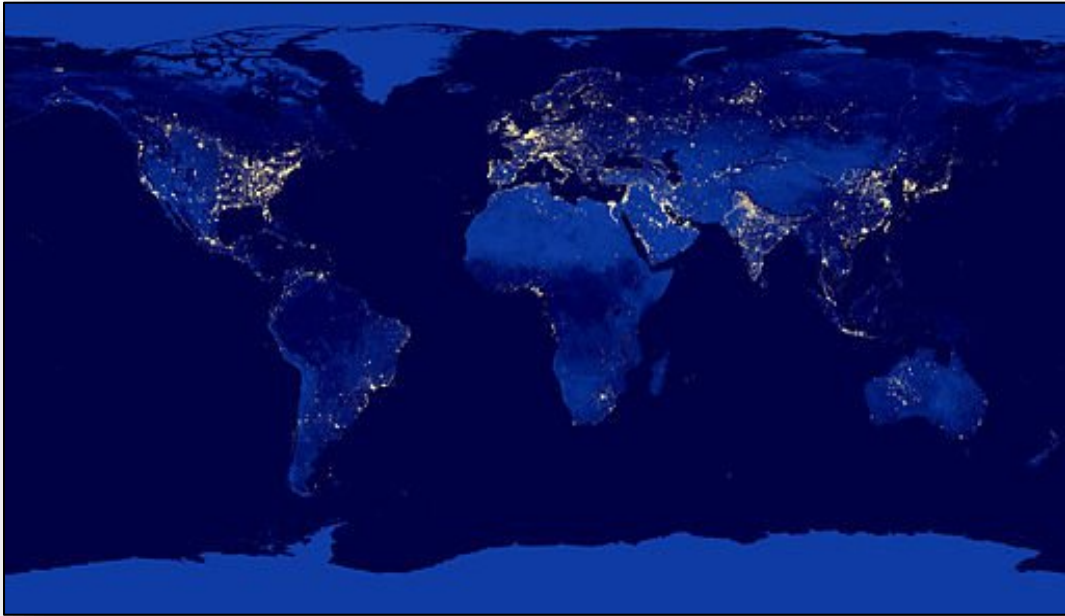
The Earth is a system. The human species is a sub-system of the Earth. The system of the Earth and the sub-system of the human species have entered a state of profound disequilibrium. Humanity and the Earth must now either evolve to a higher level of organization or devolve to a lower level of organization. It is the responsibility of each individual human alive right now to be part of the solution or else he or she is part of the problem.

We see the instability caused by and causing this disequilibrium wherever we look—climate change; habitat destruction and species die-off; failing and failed states; the poverty, hunger, and disease that affect half the population of the human species; economic dislocation; wars and the threat of larger wars; the list goes on and on.

We need to evolve to a higher level of organization or we are going to devolve to a lower level of organization as a planet and it is likely that the human species won't be a part of or be a very degraded part of the lower level of organization, if it comes to that. We need a new and better system for the human species and the Earth—a system that yields: peace among people and peace with the Earth; health and wellbeing for all people on a healthy planet; and an opportunity for each person to live a creative satisfying life and make a contribution to the whole.

Staying true to the Principles of One Planet and One People will help us make the Great Transformation and build that new and better system. The time is short. We all have to act right now. Let's call this aspect of Planetary Philosophy "One Purpose."

VII. A Planetary Movement



We clearly need a Planetary Movement to bring about the Great Transformation. And, we can use the perspective of Spiritual Democracy, the paradigm of a Living Conscious Universe, and the three principles of Planetary Philosophy—One Planet, One People, and One Purpose—to help us undertake actions that contribute to that Great Transformation.

Planetary Actions: Let's call actions that measure up according to all of the three principles of Planetary Philosophy "Planetary Actions". The three principles of Planetary Philosophy can work as three lenses that we can use to evaluate possible Planetary Actions.

Does the potential Planetary Action:

- Accept that we are One Planet and contribute to the ecological viability of the Earth?
- Recognize that we are One People and contribute to the health and well-being of the whole human species?
- Acknowledge that we have One Purpose—to bring about the Great Transformation needed for us to evolve a new planetary system that enables us to survive and thrive as a species and a planet—and does the potential Planetary Action contribute to the accomplishment of our One Purpose?

Within this context, it is important to recognize that one of the implications of Planetary Consciousness in the context of a Living Conscious Universe is that there are two basic kinds of Planetary Actions that we can take either individually or in groups—actions in the world outside

of us and actions that we take within our individual consciousnesses and fields of consciousness that surround us.

So, what are some examples of Outer and Inner Planetary Actions that meet the criteria inherent in the three principles of Planetary Philosophy?

Actions in the World: Any action in the world that benefits the Earth's ecosystems and humanity and contributes to a more powerful and just system of planetary organization can count as an Outer Planetary Action, such as:

- Launching or going to work at a socially responsible, sustainable business.
- Helping to change a business to become more socially responsible and sustainable.
- Consistently buying and/or selling products or services that are socially responsible and sustainable.
- Divesting fossil fuels from public and private investment portfolios.
- Organizing or joining a campaign to support the rights of children and/or women and/or immigrants and/or oppressed minorities.
- Organizing or joining a campaign to eliminate police injustice and to support effective, constitutional, and community policing.
- Organizing or joining a campaign to stop deforestation and/or to plant trees.
- Running for office or supporting candidates and elected officials based on a program of commitments and actions that lead to a prosperous, equitable, just, sustainable locality, region, country, and/or world.
- Producing poetry or a novel or a painting or a dance that expresses the need for and/or a vision of the Great Transformation.

We need a Planetary Movement that is made up of millions of such Outer Planetary Actions that are examples of a new Planetary System so that we can learn to create better examples enabling us to come to a better understanding of what the new Planetary System looks like and feels like.

Inner Actions: However, there is another kind of Planetary Action that we can engage in as well. By taking seriously the idea of an emerging Planetary Consciousness, we can come to recognize that there are Inner Planetary Actions that we can undertake to affect directly the energy/consciousness field that is the basis of that Planetary Consciousness.

From this perspective, each of us human beings is, in fact, a node in the energy/consciousness field created by the whole human species, which, in turn, interpenetrates the more complex energy/consciousness field generated by the Earth. The nodes that are each of us impact the field and the field impacts us as nodes at many levels. The more powerful the human node, the more powerfully it affects the energy/consciousness field around it.

This means that each of us can undertake Inner Planetary Actions. We can work to strengthen our consciousness to make ourselves more powerful nodes through any one of a wide variety of inner disciplines. And we can focus the practices of those inner disciplines on contributing to the Planetary Transformation that we need. Prayer is one simple Inner Action that is available to everyone. Mantras, Visualizations, Rituals, and Vision Mediations are four other good ones.

1) A Planetary Mantra: We can practice Mantra Meditation with an affirmation designed to have a positive impact. If you don't already have a relevant Mantra, try the Planetary Mantra. Breathe in, while silently saying in your mind One; breathe out while silently saying Planet; breathe in silently saying One and out saying People; and finally breathe in silently saying One and out silently saying Purpose.

I have found that the Planetary Mantra always helps me put things in the larger context, while, at the same time, having a grounding and focusing impact.

2) Planetary Visualizations: A large number of esoteric disciplines embrace the core principle that what is envisioned in one's mind tends to happen in the world. "Mental action precedes physical action." This implies that visualizing what we want will tend to bring it about.

We can formulate Planetary Visualizations that show what we want for our planet on a small scale or a large one—for our neighborhoods, our cities, some aspect of our country, some aspect of the planet as a whole. And we can combine the Planetary Mantra with appropriate Planetary Visualizations of the planet, humanity, and a new and better planetary reality.

3) Planetary Rituals: For thousands of years, ritual dances have been used by traditional cultures to pursue a successful hunt, a bountiful harvest, a fruitful marriage, or a journey into the afterlife. The ritual was thought to create an energy form that then tended to manifest in the everyday physical world. When, for example, the members of some hunting cultures enact the hunt, the dancers seek to invoke a sympathetic magic by which the correct completion of the ritual ensures the successful completion of the hunt.

Planetary Rituals can be a way for us to use this principle to help evoke the Planetary Transformation that we seek. The Planetary Dance, created by Anna Halprin, is one such Planetary Ritual, which a group of us have been doing for more than 35 years and which has been performed in many dozens of countries around the world.

4) Planetary Meditations: Vision Meditation enables us to have inner visions, which can provide access to deeper experiences and insights and more profound knowledge and wisdom.

One process for undertaking Vision Meditation can be to:

1. Formulate some focus or question.
2. Close your eyes and pay attention to our bodies, the sensation of our feet on the ground, our seats on our chairs.
3. Pay attention to our breathing.
4. Allow awareness to shift to deeper levels.
5. Just wait until a vision presents itself.
6. When the vision comes, go with it, explore it, and see if it doesn't provide insight into our focus or an answer to your question.
7. Return to physical experience and open your eyes.

The vision can be a little like a waking dream or a movie. The visions we experience with Vision Meditation are not visualizations in that we are not actively controlling the visions with our volition. Rather, we receive the sights and sounds that are presented to us on the screen of our awareness as if it's coming from someone else or someplace else or perhaps a deeper aspect of ourselves.

Vision Meditation focused on connecting with the ancient and evolving Spirit of the Earth, the emerging Spirit of Humanity, and the arising Planetary Consciousness can give us new inspiration, new insights, and new direction, while also engaging new sources of energy and power. Just ask to experience the Spirit of the Earth and/or the Spirit of Humanity and to receive appropriate guidance in order to experience a helpful vision.

One of the great things about these and the many other kinds of Inner Actions is that pretty much anybody can undertake them no matter what their circumstance or state of consciousness.

And Inner Actions connect with Outer Actions, providing inspiration and smoothing the way energetically for our Outer Actions to produce the results that we seek. Imagine millions of us taking such Inner Planetary Actions in a coordinated way leading to and supporting correlative Outer Planetary Actions. It's hard not to believe that things would begin to be very different, increasing the speed of the Great Transformation.

A Planetary Tipping Point: We need a Planetary Movement with enough people taking Outer and Inner Planetary Actions so that we reach a tipping point and the direction shifts and we start building momentum for the new way of life. If we haven't already, each of us needs to identify what contributions we want to make to Planetary Evolution and to work hard to make those contributions. Otherwise, by our passivity in this time of crisis, we are contributing to Planetary Devolution.

There must be some magic number of people that are required to join this movement and live according to its philosophy in order to reach the tipping point when the new Planetary Consciousness and the new Planetary System take off and start building massive positive momentum.

We don't have much time, so it's important to get to the tipping point as soon as possible. However, it's got to be the right tipping point. A significant error right now could lead to very unfortunate consequences. It's important for the Planetary Movement to include a powerful commitment to self-evaluation and self-correction.

If we just looked at all the problems facing us as a species and somehow thought that we needed to create a whole new system out of nothing to take care of all of these problems, the situation would, indeed, be pretty hopeless, but the truth is that there already is a powerful Planetary Movement alive and strong and growing almost everywhere.

However, that's not what gets paid attention to as the story of this time. The story of this time that gets paid attention to right now is the story of economic disparity and dislocation combined with religious, ethnic, economic, political, and cultural conflicts and the inadequacy of our economic, social, and political institutions to deal with the disparity, the dislocation, and the conflicts. We need to change the story.

Changing the Story: Planetary Philosophy offers a way to help change the story and re-frame our reality. The new story is the story of the emergence of a Planetary Movement made up of thousands, millions of specific Outer and Inner Planetary Actions. If we look at what's going on around the world through that lens, everything begins to look different.

The reality is that Planetary Actions that are instances of the Great Transformation are everywhere. As examples, just look to:

- The socially responsible, sustainable businesses working to treat the Earth well and their employees well and to do business with other such businesses to begin to form a sustainable, restorative economy.
- The social action, political action, community action, divestment, peace, and environmental organizations working to transform our political, economic, social, and environmental landscapes.
- The cultural, arts, and dance organizations creating a culture of peace and justice and respect for the Earth.
- The Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, Temples, and other spiritual organizations praying for peace and justice and teaching their people to live in a way that is peaceful and just.
- The traditional societies working to preserve and adapt their traditions of reverence for the Earth and for all life.

To change the story fully, we may need to go beyond valuing these actions and movements intrinsically and reframe them as aspects of an emerging Planetary Movement that is taking off and building toward the tipping point that we need to reach.

However, it's important to recognize that the Planetary Movement emerging now is a transition to the next higher level of planetary organization and intelligence. We don't know what that will be like and we don't know what that will be called. But we can be sure that, once we have made the transition to that next higher level of organization, we will have created a platform from which to begin another cycle of creativity and evolution.

So, what would a thriving, growing, powerful Planetary Movement look like? What are the different types of Outer and Inner Planetary Actions that are its components? How do they get launched and coordinated? How do they engage with culture, with politics, with business, with science and technology, and with the great religions?

As with other forms of evolution, the successful initial Planetary Actions that are examples of the Planetary Movement ought to manifest the next higher level of order and be much more efficient, effective, enjoyable, and powerful than current organizational manifestations of the Earth in crisis.

So the challenge is to undertake Planetary Actions that are powerful examples of the Planetary Movement and that have within themselves the ability to inspire and to replicate themselves. Then the challenge becomes how to connect all of these examples into a much larger integrated example and then to begin the process again.

We certainly need to realize that the Planetary Movement must transcend any particular organization or set of organizations. We need to move too fast, grow too large, and expand too rapidly for the Planetary Movement to be encompassed by just one organization or even one set of organizations. The Planetary Movement needs to be a true movement of many organizational forms.

We also need to realize that—while many examples of the Planetary Movement already exist, already are in place, and already are producing significant progress—it might be useful to adopt a guiding philosophy. How about the One Planet, One People, One Purpose of Planetary Philosophy? A guiding Planetary Philosophy could help formulate specific Inner and Outer Planetary Actions, help weave the many strands of the Movement together, and help spin out the many new strands that need to be created.

We may not have arrived at the tipping point where the momentum begins to shift strongly in favor of the Planetary Movement, but strong and deep forces are emerging and growing and connecting. A powerful vector is taking shape as it begins to incorporate millions of people. The tipping point may be closer than we think.

One of the reasons for this is that the Planetary Movement may have some very powerful friends on its side. Perhaps we are beginning to tap into the emerging unified consciousness of the Human Species and the Earth in a Planetary Consciousness that takes on our One Purpose that is the mission to preserve the life of our One People so that our One Planet survives as home to the next wave of evolution and the generations of life yet to come.

Steps to Reach a Planetary Tipping Point: From the perspective of Planetary Philosophy, let's postulate that there are five steps for each of us to follow to contribute to reaching the tipping point when the Planetary Movement takes off and begins to generate massive, explicit, positive momentum. The five steps can be formulated as Acceptance, Engagement, Exemplification, Connection, and Celebration.

1) Accept: The first step is acceptance. If we embrace the fact that we are individual manifestations of One Planet and One People and if we accept that the current system cannot hold—must evolve or devolve—then we have a great responsibility and a great opportunity to make our own unique contributions to the accomplishment of our One Purpose. And each of us has special talents and gifts and skills to contribute to an emerging Planetary Movement.

2) Engage: The second step is engagement. Some of us have already found the best Outer and Inner Planetary Actions for us to take to engage with the Planetary Movement. Maybe it's working in a local environmentally and socially responsible business. Maybe it's joining a social or environmental action organization. Maybe it's working for divestment from fossil fuels. Maybe it's creating or supporting art that tells a piece of the story of our times. Maybe it's joining a circle of people meditating and praying for peace and social transformation. That engagement can be strengthened by framing it as part of a Planetary Movement.

Some of us need to find the best way for us to engage in one or another of the many possible Outer and Inner Planetary Actions that are aspects of the emerging Planetary Movement. If that's true, then we just need to look within and ask ourselves, what is the contribution that is right for us to make right now? What are the Planetary Actions that we can take right now?

It doesn't have to be the perfect first engagement. What's important is starting to undertake Planetary Actions that engage with some aspect of the Movement. If it turns out not to be the best choice, make a change when the opportunity presents itself.

3) Exemplify: As the Mahatma, Mohandas Gandhi, said, 'The means are the ends in process.' For any engagement to tap into the power of an evolving Planetary Consciousness and truly contribute to an emerging Planetary Movement, each Planetary Action has the capability to exemplify some version of One Planet, One People, and One Purpose. The way to build the Movement is to create examples of the Movement—of the Planetary Society, of the Planetary Economy, and of the Planetary Civilization we aspire to.

We need to make sure that each action we take and each organization we build truly manifests the peace to which we aspire within ourselves, among all peoples, and with the Earth. Bad means create bad ends, period. For the good to triumph in the end, it has to triumph each step of the way.

4) Connect: Let's recognize that our deepest strength, as an emerging Planetary Movement, is in making connections. My business can do business with your business. I can patronize your business. You can patronize mine. My stream can link with your stream on Facebook, You Tube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Tumblr. I can join your political effort. You can join mine. We can learn from each other and connect our work.

My organization can form a coalition with your organization. I can support your organization and you can support mine. My art can join in a Planetary Festival with your art. I can appreciate your art. You can appreciate mine. We can create Planetary Rituals together.

As we connect, we can strategize ways to make more powerful Outer and Inner Planetary Actions and more powerful connections between Planetary Actions. We can weave each of our powerful examples together to create the tapestry of our future world right now.

5) Celebrate: The Planetary Movement is not about struggling to survive, though our survival is at stake. The Planetary Movement is about taking Planetary Actions that create examples of the world we want, connecting them to build larger examples, and celebrating what we do as we do it.

Ultimately, the Planetary Economy will win, because it will be more successful economically. It will be possible to make a better living within it. It will be more fun. Planetary Politics will create more effective governments. Planetary Art will be better art. Winning is not winning at the end of the process. Winning is winning right now and celebrating our victories along the way, as we move into the Great Transformation.

Each of us can take on this challenge of helping to build the emerging Planetary Movement in our own lives by practicing a Planetary Philosophy however it manifests for each of us, through our family lives, our social lives, our work lives, our political lives, and our cultural lives. We are One Planet. We are One People. We have One Purpose. And the time has come for all of us to embrace our One Purpose. The time of the Great Transformation is now.

If you'd like to explore these and related ideas further, there's an easy way to do it. You can get the backstory for the essay and the spiritual philosophy out of which the essay emerges, *Spiritual Democracy*, by purchasing [*In Search of a Revelation*](#) at Amazon.