

Mythologizing for Our Times

▣ *Opening the Space for Emergent Possibilities* ▣



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“I have a utopian vision for the 21st century: Planet Earth undergoes a spiritual awakening and begins its ascent into a Golden Age. This spiritual awakening is none other than the enlivening expansion of awareness of the Mother Goddess Gaia as she progresses in conscious evolution and matures within her domains. As the thinking, reasoning, conceptualizing, mental organ of Gaia, humanity likewise and synchronously experiences a profound transformative spiritual awakening – a raising to conscious awareness of its role and purpose within the total planetary Biosphere. A regenerated, renewed, reformed human being emerges and begins to accept loving responsibility for the long-term health, maintenance of vitality, and organic evolutionary fruition of the greater Life of which it is a part.”

I wrote these words in the weeks just preceding the tragic, stunning, de-evolutionary events of September 11, 2001. The words seem innocent to me now, almost naïve, for they convey optimism and a trusting faith that the human ‘experiment’ on Planet Earth will have a desirable, positive, celebrative outcome – yet the words also represent the sincere accumulated contemplations of one who has had the opportunity and privilege to devote years to the vocation of academically investigating the nature of the human condition and its relationship with the greater planetary ecology. The mood is mythological in tone and undeniably suggests “prospects for humanity” that have yet to be widely considered or accepted; indeed, they portray prospects for which humanity now seems utterly incapable.

Now that the world context post-9/11 has been so drastically altered, do I still believe that this buoyant, organic, idyllic vision has any chance of manifesting? Yes! more than ever, for as Buckminster Fuller warns, for humanity it will be either “Utopia or Oblivion” (1969), or as Willis Harman (1984) exhorts, “Let us envision Utopia, and thus bring it into existence. There is no other reasonable alternative.”

How, then, are we possibly to arrive at a condition of symbiotic mutual cooperation among human beings and between humans and the Biosphere when humanity seems so bent on destruction, a creature cerebrally disconnected from its biological roots? How are we collectively to realize a state of enlightened spiritual benediction and expanded evolutionary capability when the world at the moment is floundering in mass fear, hatred, uncertainty, and base primitive motivations? How do

we get to *there* from *here* when the path to travel seems so intraversable, so completely unknown?

While directly relevant to the affairs of the day, this line of questioning also has direct relevance to this Context Paper¹ and to the thrust of my education, for the critical question I asked after my Convergence meeting was:

“How can I organize my life so that a perceived image and felt experience of Paradise (or, a preferred cultural bias) can be shared with others, in a holistically designed setting that promotes and allows for this potential to unfold, so as to influence the spiritual regeneration of humanity, in a way that provides comfort, security, and abundance for myself and my extended family?”

The remainder of this Context Paper, and my work at Antioch, will be an effort at providing a meaningful set of answers and constructive proposals to this heartfelt, personally life-spanning question, within the protocol of a Whole Systems Design degree process. But first, to elucidate the still *greater* context within which this query is posed, please allow me to diverge a bit with some Socratic dialogue:

A Retelling of the Universe Story

The astrophysicists have calculated the universe to be between 15 and 20 billion years old (Sagan, 1980). They claim that there was an initial starting point of extremely consolidated matter surrounded by absolute nothingness. This consolidated starting point suddenly exploded in a Big Bang that sent matter hurtling outward to form our perceived expanding universe of atoms and molecules, galaxies and stars, planets and people, events and potentialities. This highly materialistic theory further asserts that the universe thus created is inexorably running down, eventually to expire in entropic heat-death, a state of complete disorder and randomness. While *materially* calculable from one point of view, this theory makes no provision for the presence of *Life*, which is by its nature negentropic, always self-organizing highly improbable states of order and increasing complexity from out of the amorphous background of seemingly disorganized matter. By ignoring or de-emphasizing the pervasive and perhaps, arguably, pre-existing presence of Life, is not the paradigm forwarded by these scientists only speculating part of the story?

----- It would seem so.

And since there are and have been a plethora of other universe creation stories formulated by countless other cultures around the globe – particular mythologies for their space and time and circumstances – can we not conclude that the Big Bang theory

¹ The Context Paper was a process paper for a Master of Arts in Whole Systems Design at Antioch University Seattle.

is essentially just another mythology, adapted to suit and support the worldview of our specifically Western materialistic culture?

----- Yes, I think that would follow, for the theory certainly cannot be proven.

Well then, continuing on with the scientific explanation, it is said that the Sun and its planets, including our Earth, were formed just five billion years ago (Sahtouris, 1989). That means that from the time of the supposed origin of the universe to the creation of our solar system, some 10 to 15 billion years had already elapsed. Is it not conceivable that there were other solar systems started, other worlds self-organizing within that vast interceding time span?

----- Of course, that seems highly likely.

And of all the billions of stars with their millions of planets potentially created during this immense time-span is it not possible that there were many, or even just a few, with conditions propitious for the germination of carbon-based life as we know it?

----- OK, I'll give you that. I would suspect that organic Life as we know it, wherever it may appear in the universe, must be carbon-based.

Well then, all these planets that preceded us in self-organizing Life would be in an advanced evolutionary condition compared to our own planet Earth. Perhaps there are even planets that have reached evolutionary fruition or completion, their stars having grown inhospitably too large and too hot to support further organic extension and complexification.

----- Of course, I see what you mean. That would suggest there are precedents to what is happening on Earth. Organic life is not an isolated situation but is part of a greater galactic and universal experience. When conditions are favorable, Life will appear. When conditions become unfavorable, Life will move on; but it is always happening somewhere. In some places it is only at the stage of developing unicellular organisms; in other places it has reached the level of primates; and still other places it has advanced beyond that stage.

Yes! That is exactly what I am attempting to illustrate. But we can get even more specific than that by focusing on the *species* level. The word 'primate' or even 'humanity' is so general as to be vague. The primates are a diverse branch of the order *Mammalia*. At some point they evolved to the level that they could be ascribed human characteristics – industrial tool-making, symbolic languaging, and especially the transmitting of culture (Clark, 1965). The paleontologists have further divided this humanness into distinct species – *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthalensis*, *Homo sapiens*...and now we've come to the point of distinguishing a species called *Homo sapiens sapiens*, civilized us! Tell me, do you consider Neanderthal to be human?

----- Interesting question. Not in common parlance because Neanderthal is considered to be so inferior to us. But then again the Aborigines are similarly devalued, and now even the Muslims are sometimes stereotypically portrayed in this light, as were the Germans and Japanese in times past. But yes, you are right: from a scientific perspective Neanderthal exhibited all the essential characteristics of being human.

Yes they did. Neanderthal even had a larger cranial capacity than we do (Brace, 1967). Even now there are more genetic variations *within* a race than there are *between* races (Crapo, 1993). The point is that there is a continuum: Just as *Homo neanderthalensis* evolved into *Homo sapiens* that in turn differentiated into *Homo sapiens sapiens*, 'civilized' human beings, surely *Homo sapiens sapiens* is not the endpoint of Creation and will eventually evolve to the level that a detached observer may say a new species has appeared.

----- Well that puts things in perspective. It gives me a little hope that the current global dilemma may somehow be transcended. But what will the new species look or be like?

To knowingly answer that question it would be most helpful to gain an overview of the evolutionary progression on planetary systems that preceded us, for surely a precedent has already been set. Perhaps there is in place a sort of generalized universal template, a "morphogenetic field" (Sheldrake, 1981) to guide the evolution. In the meantime it will be useful to understand what the role of *Homo sapiens* was in the larger planetary body, the evolving Gaian consciousness of our Earthlife. What was it exactly that distinguished *Homo sapiens* from all other species?

----- That is obvious. It was the conspicuous growth of a neocortex with the ability for abstract, disembodied, time-independent thought, with the self-reflective consciousness that went along with that (Rensch, 1972).

Excellent; and such a useful ability it was. It allowed for the rise of reason, objective understanding, and eventually all the technical wonders of civilization. But, unfortunately, this same neocortex has become a source of imbalance. Its abstracting ability, coupled with a lack of a sense of responsibility, is now threatening to unravel the Web of Life literally at its very genetic core, and is erasing millions of years of planetary evolutionary complexity, placing great stress on the Biosphere. The species *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the creator of civilization, has unwisely placed itself above and outside of Nature, believing itself to be superior to and in control of Nature. Of course this is just an abstract illusion, because *Homo sapiens sapiens* is an inherent *part* of Nature, and how could a part ever be above or outside or superior to the Whole from which it is constituted?

----- That is obviously an important consideration.

Yes, but we must have a happy ending to our story. Since *Homo sapiens sapiens* is integrally a part of living Nature, and since it is quite possible that this species level has already appeared on more advanced planetary systems, then we can assume that it is not necessarily an evolutionary dead-end or a mistake, but actually has a purpose. If that is so, then what possible function could the development of an abstracting, separating neocortex serve within the overall organic life-cycle?

----- That, my friend, is a very good question, but I know not the answer.

Well, consider: The abstracting neocortex has facilitated the emergence of highly advanced material technologies, essentially extensions of our sense organs. By way of these extended sense-organ technologies, Earthlife has placed itself in outer space, outside the planetary milieu, to look back upon itself and witness all its vibrant, dazzling, azure splendor. Is this not a remarkable achievement?

----- Well yes, you are certainly right, that achievement is quite remarkable.

Then consider further: Is not the ability for Earthlife to place itself outside of itself and to objectively witness itself, could this not be considered an image of coming to self-reflective, self-conscious awareness?

----- That does seem plausible. As *Homo sapiens* was the species on the planetary evolutionary progression that came to self-reflective, self-conscious awareness, by extension it would necessarily generate that same function in the greater Whole of which it is a part, as an organ to a body.

Yes, that is whole systems thinking. Earthlife viewing itself from afar facilitated a sense of planetary unity, the indisputable visible affirmation that we are really One, that we are all in this together. This unitary global perspective has recently been enhanced by the proliferation of Internet technology, a sort of partnership with silicon-based Life that is emerging as a quasi global brain. The illusory perception of isolated, independent, autonomous unities standing outside of Nature that was created by the abstracting neocortex is now being transcended by the very technologies produced by this mental organ! *Homo sapiens*, while believing itself to be in control as the pinnacle of Creation, has been all along merely a temporal function of a much greater planetary evolutionary cycle.

----- That is quite ironic, and quite profound.

Well then, here is a conclusion: *Homo sapiens* is that stage in a planet's organic evolution when it develops the ability to rapidly transmute the material component of itself into so much sensory-extended technology (Arguelles, 1987), ushering in the ability to purposefully experience itself as a unified self-reflective, self-conscious awareness. This is the initiation of what could be called, on Earth, Gaian self-awareness, the recognition of a greater, whole-planet intelligence. Gaia, the planetary entity, is coming to know Herself, and that is something to celebrate.

----- Wait a minute. There are so many loose ends. How can you be ready to celebrate when it seems that humanity is once more on the verge of destroying itself and messing up the whole planet?

There you use that limited word 'humanity' again. Please be more specific. Do you speak of the evanescent, passing *Homo sapiens sapiens* or of the emerging new species that is already manifesting? I would agree with you that *Homo sapiens sapiens* is making a mess of things, but they were predisposed to the type of behavior we are observing; they cannot change. Their function has been fulfilled and their time is up. The emerging new species is a direct evolutionary response to the excesses of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, and is a further refinement and complexification of the now self-aware Gaian evolutionary progression. The emerging new species understands intuitively that it is an organic part of the Whole and that it must attend to the health of the Whole in order to ensure its own health. The new species still has a neocortex, and abstracting reasoning capabilities, but it is most specifically characterized by a conspicuous growth in the *posterior* of the brain to offset the imbalance caused by the neocortex. By developing this region closer to the spinal column and thus to its biological roots, this new species feels a reconnection with all of Earthlife, and will become a conscious agent in positive, life-affirming Gaian evolution. "They regard as self-evident their unity with Nature. (What else *could* it be? Really.) Comfortably immersed in this acknowledgement, acutely aware of their function within the total network of Gaia, they will set about their task: enhancing Life with every act; retarding entropy because of genetic predisposition; enriching the economy of Nature *by design*, without resistance or contention" (Mare, 1998).

While the world may seem dark and heavy at the moment, this is actually the prelude to a glorious time. Chaos Theory teaches that within a period of accentuated disequilibrium lies the hidden pattern of a refined order (Gleick, 1987). Biological evolution has been punctuated by spontaneous discontinuous leaps during times of excessive stress (Augros and Stanciu, 1987). *Homo sapiens sapiens* is transitioning into *Homonovus* (Richards and Richards, 1973). The Golden Age of Earth is close at hand!

Thank you for reading along this "retelling of the universe story." As this is an official Context Paper, a significant milestone on my educational journey, I felt it important to describe the overall greater context in which I perceive myself thinking and acting. I thought it necessary to explain the metaphysics – or, should I say, the mythic-scientific basis – that I have formulated that underlies the significant Convergence question I posed, and informs the constructive proposals that will follow – but there is still so much more to the encompassing context than that.

Yes, I have a utopian vision for the 21st century; but it is not just a hopeful wish that 'humanity' is somehow evolving into a new species. It is also based on the observation that there is a convergence of prophecies and predictions, from many different cultural traditions, pointing to these days as a critical transition zone for 'humanity,' in particular, and the Earth more generally.

For example, witness the dawning of the proverbial Age of Aquarius which is upon us. This is a measurable astronomical event that is given an astrological interpretation. It turns out that the Earth does not spin true on its axis but has a slight wobble, so that the extension of the North Pole slowly retrogrades in a 25,000 year cycle called the Precession of the Equinoxes. This phenomenon results in the terrestrial event of the Spring Equinox retrograding through the twelve signs (segments of the elliptic) so that approximately every 2100 years the Equinox begins to appear in a preceding sign. This point, called the S.V.P., is now hovering on the cusp of Aquarius, and will actually enter that sign in 2040 (Rudhyar, 1970). The astrological interpretation of the astronomical event is, above all, the manifestation of universal humanitarian ideals; also, a revolution in thought, originality, and interdependence, and mundanely, advances in light-wave communication. We may expect, with a studied understanding of astrology, that these qualities will come to prominence on Earth during the next 2100 years. The previous Age of Pisces was initiated with the coming of Christ, who spiritualized the planet in preparation for the 'descension' of Spirit into the material plane (Spangler, 1976), a process intended to prepare Planet Earth for a subsequent expansion of consciousness.

Consider the prophecies of the Hopi, who speak of a coming Fourth World, a world cleansed by fire and then inhabited by a Rainbow Tribe (Waters, 1963). The Third world, by the way, was destroyed by water (the flood?).

Consider the enigmatic Maya, who devised an extremely complex, accurate calendar that is based on 260 days. The extrapolation of this cycle is said to coincide with *galactic* rhythms (Jenkins, 1998). Their unique calendar, which has been assiduously attended to by shaman-timekeepers for 5000 years, has an origin point of 3110 BC and a culmination point in 2012 AD, just ten years from now. Mayan scholars have interpreted the end of this cycle as signifying the end of time as we know it, or at least with the beginning of a whole new Age, an Age impregnated with *galactic* consciousness.

Witness the Christian faith, propelling a large percentage of the Western world, which is anticipating a fiery Apocalypse and associated Rapture. Revelations 20 states: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the old dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless

pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled...But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Saint Augustine, 1957). Could this not be interpreted as a prophesy that Heaven will appear on Earth for at least a thousand years?

In Hindu cosmology, Creation ebbs and flows in vast cycles called Yugas. It is written that we are currently in the lowest, densest part of the cycle – the Kali Yuga – in which humanity’s potential is greatly impaired. “Their lives will be short, their desires insatiable, and they will display but little piety...property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of devotion; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation; and women will be objects of merely sensual gratification. Earth will be venerated but for its mineral treasures, dishonesty will be a universal means of subsistence, presumption will be substituted for learning.” At the end of times *Kalki*, a divine incarnation will arise...“He will then re-establish *dharma* on earth, and the minds of those who live at the end of the *Kali* age shall be awakened...The men who are thus changed by virtue of that peculiar time shall be as the seeds of human beings and shall give birth to a race who shall follow the laws of the *Krta* age” (Klostermaier, 1994). Elsewhere this is called the Dwapara Yuga (Richard, 2007).

Witness the rise of the ‘new science.’ Did not the findings of quantum and relativistic physics demonstrably shatter the materialistic paradigm a hundred years ago? In physics, the most rigorous and empirical of the sciences, we are left with a worldview in which our very observations shape our reality, in which there is no demonstrable material basis for reality, and in which the entire universe begins to appear more like a thought pattern.

As intention is the ‘attractor’ for eventual manifestation, as conviction and belief shape the unfolding appearance of reality, as the quantum level reveals THAT which we are looking for, then, so much collective expectation (or is it desire?) for fundamental, monumental change is precipitating a transformation of consciousness of hitherto unparalleled proportions. To each his own. My purpose is not to critically compare one cultural tradition with another in an effort to single out the ‘right’ one; they all contain a reflection of the truth. Nor is my purpose to attempt to convince anyone to adopt any of these beliefs as their own. No, my purpose is simply to highlight that there is a convergence of prophesies, predictions, and worldviews from many different sources that point to these times as a critical transition zone for ‘humanity,’ in particular, and the Earth more generally.

Shifting down from the prophetic, metaphysical, or even 'physics-ical' realm, an objective, scientific evaluation of the momentum of the day will also lead to a similar conclusion: A major transformation is pending because a convergence of so many signals is indicating that human global systems are fundamentally altering natural global systems, causing uncertain chaotic disequilibrium: business surely cannot be carried on as usual. The Earth is heating up – sea levels are rising, glaciers are receding, and a large chunk of Antarctica is slipping into the ocean. Precious topsoil is being blown away or washed into the sea as deserts relentlessly expand and marginal agricultural lands are salinized. Aquifers are depleted and lakes and rivers are poisoned as priceless freshwater supplies are squandered. Forests are cleared and wetlands are paved over as multitudes of living creatures go extinct from loss of habitat; billions of years of genetic diversity is cashed in for quarterly profit earnings. That nouveau global economy that requires ever-increasing growth is running into the serious and real resource limitations of a finite, materially closed Earth (Meadows and Meadows, 1992). Genomes are patented as the new techno-toy of biotechnology introduces novel, manufactured life-forms that have not been integrated into the Web of Life, with consequences unknown. Exponentially intensifying human population pressure leads to poverty, scarcity, misery, genocide, a perpetual state of war, and a gnawing sense of dis-ease.

Indeed, an objective analysis of the 'state of the world' must conclude that we are in a crisis situation. A complete re-evaluation of the human presence and purpose in the world is in order.

Education can sure be enlightening but at times disheartening (Oh, the bliss of ignorance!). To become aware of the details of the degradation that is taking place; to become aware of the details of the shameful behavior of my ancestors; to understand the implications and consequences of the inherited materialistic paradigm; to witness, in these days, the unconscious clinging to dysfunctional, destructive modes of living by the vast majority of humanity, for example the blind consumerism of my neighbors all around me, leads to moments of despair.

Yet, education has also given me insights into improving the human condition. Having knowledge and not acting on it is worse than not having any knowledge at all. Make no mistake: the situation on Earth is quite serious. Yet, I have been exposed to enough positive people, visions, and situations, running contra-current to the prevailing momentum, to have faith in a utopian vision for the 21st century – and beyond. I truly believe the Earth is on the verge of a spiritual awakening of unparalleled proportions, a collective initiation into galactic consciousness, the potential of which we can hardly fathom at the moment. When I am with my own people, my extended family, it seems most obvious; when I descend into metaphorical 'Babylon' it seems far away and untouchable. What is this dichotomy?

My only recourse, as an educated individual aware of the degeneration yet living the regeneration, is to mythologize my experience. That way, imagination knows no bounds, and doesn't imagination precede manifestation?

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