

## ENVISIONING OUR EVOLUTIONARY PATH TO PEACE

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How we respond to what's going on in the world right now depends upon the way we see reality, which in turn depends upon the consciousness we bring to it. Our consciousness is determined by how we view evolution, how we understand the nature of consciousness itself, and, in particular, how we view the evolution of consciousness.

Some people live with a consciousness that certain things evolve; others see all things as evolving. This is but one example of a seeming consciousness divide that becomes even more pronounced as we consider similar examples.

If we live by principles that separate, we see the parts of reality first, which creates division and competition. This becomes how we approach everything, causing fear, bias, discord, and prejudice to overtake our lives. The consciousness divide this causes can be broken down into many more divides, i.e., a racial divide, a cultural divide, a political divide, an economic divide, a gender divide, a justice divide, a climate divide, a religious divide, etc.

However, if we live by principles that unite, we see the whole of reality first, which creates harmony and cooperation. This raises the question, if all are parts of one whole, and if we see that whole first, is wholeness even divisible?

When we focus on the one reality, with everything existing within it, which is a complete wholeness already, we gain a picture of reality as it truly is. This consciousness ties everything in the entire universe together and adds meaning to everything. With this consciousness, there is not even one divide, but only gradations of conditions within that whole.

What this describes is a *Consciousness Continuum* along which all things are interconnected and interdependent within that whole. Even the extremes at the opposite ends of the continuum are not divided, but different aspects of one whole, each representative of various attitudes and values, all part of the same reality, that come to prominence dependent upon the principles being lived by.

Looking in more detail at this Consciousness Continuum, on the duality side, we live by principles that keep us apart from others, except in our own desired, comfortable, and exclusive groups. Here we view the world with an unsustainable consciousness of duality; this creates hierarchies, builds systems of injustice, distorts the way we relate to each other and the natural environment, and leads us across the continuum through generalizations, stereotypes, segregation, discrimination, hatred, exploitation, marginalization, imperialism, and oppression, ending up in racism, violence, genocide, and war, ultimately endangering our very survival.

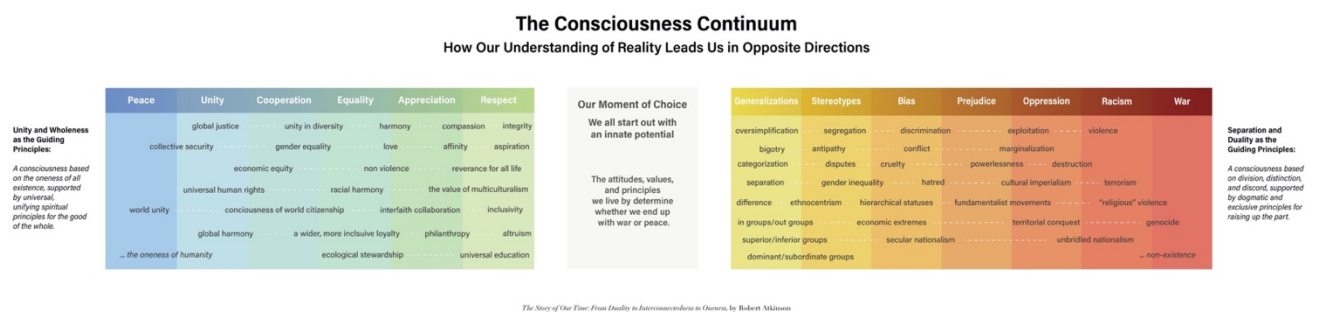
Loosening our hold on the illusion of separation, we can move in the opposite direction toward the wholeness side of the same continuum, where we live by principles that bring us together as one. Here we view the world with a unifying consciousness of wholeness, we relate to others and the planet with respect for

difference, integrity, reverence, appreciation, compassion, and collaboration, which leads us further across the continuum toward a true picture of reality as it is, expressing and inviting us to inclusivity, altruism, and love.

This side of the continuum does not let any of the parts become greater than the whole. Here, we see reality as one, and all of Creation as a unified whole, what the Buddha referred to when he said, “All things originate from one essence, develop according to one law, and are destined to one aim.”

On this holistic side of the continuum, unity and wholeness become our primary perspective with which we see everything; we come to understand that the imperative of this moment is seeing each other as part of the same human family.

We end up on this side of the continuum with the evolutionary impulse itself leading humanity to greater levels of advancement toward universal human rights, gender equality, economic equity, a consciousness of world citizenship, and social, environmental, and racial justice, all interconnected stepping-stones to peace.



[ Zoom document out for a better view of the Chart ]

Rather than look at all of this as a divide, a great chasm that needs healing, what would it feel like if we viewed it all as a continuum that was already connected,

already one, already united, but because there are so many different places to be on that continuum, we are looking at the same reality through a different lens?

We are born at the center of this consciousness continuum, with the potential to grow and develop toward our inherent wholeness. We all start out with this endowed capacity for wholeness that needs to be nurtured and developed, like the acorn that carries within it the tree it will become. But as we are influenced from the beginning by parents, family, friends, school, media, and everything else going on in the world, these all impact our outlook in one way or another, and our consciousness develops in one direction or the other, toward the separation and duality side or toward the unity and wholeness side, or even both at the same time.

A lot is happening in the world right now to dissuade us from even thinking that peace is possible. But viewing consciousness as a continuum, and adopting a holistic vision of evolution, gives us the understanding that all life comes from the same Source with its own direction and inherent purpose, and that evolution has its own developmental trajectory leading to the fulfillment of an inner potential of cooperation and harmony. This gives us great hope for the future.

It also helps to understand that evolution in all realms is a gradual process of growth, but never a straight line. Evolution's trajectory is not smooth, as we witness in this year of lockdowns, demonstrations, and confrontations. It is rather cyclical, with built in ups and downs. The way to a consciousness of wholeness passes through many cycles of transformation, with adversity being necessary for progress, and unity being the outcome of consciously confronting opposing forces.

In this holistic perspective, all things go through cycles of birth, growth, maturity, decline, and *renewal*. Common examples of this are the cycle of the seasons, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the cycle of spiritual epochs.

Humanity's collective evolution includes periods of struggle and conflict that slow things down, but growth spurts follow those times. This holistic vision of evolution, accounting for cycles of progress *and* regress, means that, over centuries, evolutionary advancement can be seen going through various stages.

This cyclical process started long before human beings arrived on the planet. In the natural world of four billion years ago, cycles of renewal were the norm, with many life forms having gone through fits and starts, near-endings, and new beginnings.

The earliest indigenous peoples observed this pattern, incorporated it into all their rites of passage, and understood that all things are related and interdependent. They lived in harmony, intrinsically understanding that they are an integral part of the natural order around them; they lived life with an inherent consciousness of wholeness.

As societies became more complex, with different cultures and divergent beliefs, a series of spiritual epochs began, with each defined by this same cycle of birth, growth, maturity, and renewal. This brought about leaps in consciousness while the consciousness continuum became even wider at both extremes. Initiated by the world's major prophets — Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus,

Muhammad, and Baha'u'llah it's difficult to deny that they have each changed the course of human life over the last five thousand years.

Previously, the Islamic Epoch, which began some fourteen centuries ago, inaugurated humanity's evolutionary stage of unity on the national level. Now in the springtime of a new spiritual epoch, *our* time is characterized by the promise of unity on the global level.

A holistic vision, emerging in this new phase of our collective evolution, acknowledges a purpose to these turbulent times, and demands, out of necessity for our own survival, that we reclaim our intended consciousness of wholeness, already evident in emerging notions such as global economy, global consciousness, and world citizenship. Our challenge is to transcend the illusion of separation, shift our consciousness toward wholeness, and begin to relate to reality as one.

We are entering humanity's stage of maturity, the natural outcome and culmination of where the evolutionary impulse has been leading us. The sacred story of our time is about the death of old systems that divide and the birth of a new global community that will unite humanity as one family.

A two-fold process of purging and reshaping humanity is underway. There may be further pain and strife during this period of global transformation, but this is what will finally bring the opposite extremes of the consciousness continuum into sharper focus. This is when our choice will become crystal clear.

The age-old vision of peace on earth is like the promise of light at the end of a dark night. But this is not only an organic evolutionary process; the coming dawn is

up to us to usher into reality. A hidden potentiality within us awaits our activation. We have all the tools needed to fulfill this age-old promise; its realization depends wholly upon the action we all take now. To ensure that the rebirth of the planet happens as gently as possible, love is the sacred activism needed for our time; it is the unifying force that binds the universe together.

Nothing less than the entire world community working together in harmony will enable us to build the culture of wholeness needed for our collective survival. This will be a global culture in which our diversity of views, appearances, and contributions to the whole become our sustaining strength, what will unify us as one human family. We are at a threshold never before crossed. Our collective coming of age as a single people is at hand.

Our challenge is to disregard the fleeting notions of the day, recognize their sharp contrast to the overriding unifying forces of our time, and take the action most needed by each of us to work across boundaries, across differences.

As greater numbers embrace the idea of global citizenship, as this is reflected in various spheres of action, from interpersonal to social, a consciousness of wholeness will become as commonly accepted in the near future as nationalism was in the past, bringing us to the verge of world peace.

*Adapted from *The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness* by Robert Atkinson*