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Theory of Reality
Science, Spirituality and a New Worldview

by
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Theory of Reality: Science, Spirituality and a New Worldview

Introduction

The last 40 years have brought with them an extraordinary evolution in our knowledge base in medicine, neuroscience and the physical sciences. During this period, we have also witnessed a growing number of profound observational and experimental findings that our current scientific paradigms have no way to address or explain. Many of these findings come from medicine, neuroscience and the physical sciences themselves, and others emanate from what has traditionally been classified as metaphysical science.

Important and pioneering work has come from many diverse channels and the findings and results have, in many cases, become recognised, verified and intuitively accepted throughout wide swathes of the general public. We have now come to a point where limiting ourselves to current scientific paradigms in the face of so much new evidence which does not fit with them would ultimately threaten the credibility of science and its applicability to the reality which we are collectively experiencing.

Over the years and decades, I have marveled at the brilliance and persistence of the diverse group of pioneers who have brought so many of these observational and experimental findings to light and I have come to feel a great sense of indebtedness to them. I have been awed by what seemed to be a fairly consistent stream of important contributions emanating from different places and different approaches, and I found myself in constant search of ways to decipher the critical elements of these findings and put some or all of

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the bits and pieces together to arrive at a greater and more profound appreciation or vision of the whole.

A New Knowledge Base

The Theory of Reality (TOR) is a new theory or knowledge base.¹ It combines key elements of neuroscience, physics and metaphysical science to allow a deeper understanding of the nature of consciousness and the nature of reality as we experience it. It provides the scientific underpinnings to address profound spiritual issues, reaffirming many ancient spiritual concepts and understandings

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while also building upon and expanding them. It also provides compelling evidence that consciousness does not arise from the matter that constitutes the human brain, but rather is the fundamental fabric of ourselves and our universe, a concept that is critical to a more comprehensive worldview and to a more holistic approach to science and medicine.

In 2005, the journal *Science* published a special anniversary issue delineating 125 questions that scientists have so far failed to answer. The most important question was: 'What is the universe made of?' and the second most important was: 'What is the biological basis of consciousness?' The TOR

provides answers to these questions along with supporting scientific data and relevant citations.

Beyond the Current Paradigm

The vast majority of individuals involved in consciousness research, including neurologists and other neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychologists and philosophers are still of the opinion that consciousness arises entirely from the matter that constitutes one's brain. This is a materialistic viewpoint and would mean that all of our behaviour would be the inevitable outcome of nerve cell activity in the brain and that free will would not truly exist.

Yet we are all able to recognise that we have the power (or free will) to decide what we do next and what we think next. It is, of course, not up to some material object such as our brain to decide this for us.

Consciousness is the *canvas* upon which mind generates our impressions—it is *not part* of the impressions. Therefore, we do not ‘see’ consciousness ‘out there’ with the other apparently material ‘things’. This has been the basis for decades and centuries of confusion and conundrums behind the so-called ‘hard question’ in physics and philosophy—namely, ‘How does consciousness arise from matter?’ It cannot and does not. Consciousness is *not* contained within matter or the world—it *contains* all matter and the world.

Conventional neurological science has clearly shown that brain function *correlates* with various states of consciousness (which are actually clinical states of awakesness relative to this material world), that are in turn *correlated* with various brain structures. However, these observations in no way prove that the brain or any brain structure *creates* consciousness.

The brain is both wondrous and highly limiting—it does not create one’s thoughts or one’s consciousness but rather facilitates one’s thoughts and consciousness, and their application and expression to this plane of existence. It acts as both a receiver and a transducer of a wide range of deeper consciousness-based information. During life on this plane, most humans (and non-humans) perceive with the materially-oriented senses while the brain functions as an interface between one’s ‘outer’ or ‘particle-based’ materialistic world and one’s ‘inner’ deeper subconscious or ‘wave-based’ non-materialistic reality. One’s subconscious mind is far more conscious and far more capable than what is normally thought of as one’s conscious mind.

The TOR is organised into three major components: You, Your Journey and The Territory. It starts by describing and defining the core identity of each individual beyond the body and brain, since the fundamental nature of individual consciousness is the same as the fundamental nature of the universe and All That Is.

Elements of the Approach

The TOR is organised into three major components: You, Your Journey and The Territory. It starts by describing and defining the core identity of each individual beyond the body and brain, since the fundamental nature of individual consciousness is the same as the fundamental nature of the universe and All That Is.

Coming to recognise (and deeply understand) the body and brain as temporary vehicles rather than one's core identity is fundamental to any form of what has been referred to as spiritual enlightenment. Looking inward (with or without the assistance of numerous existing tools) rather than looking outward for meaning and answers is also paramount. An active vs. passive process, and charting and navigating one's own journey, give rise to 'knowing' or 'experiencing' vs. 'believing' these fundamentals, and allow higher understanding, uncommon creativity, and greater effectiveness, happiness and fulfilment to unfold.

Science meeting spirituality is key. Science and spirituality can *combine* (rather than conflict) to open new vistas, provide self-actualisation and optimise neurological performance. Neuroscience meeting physics to expand and enhance each other is also key.

The TOR provides a paradigm that enables one to build upon and add to a purely materialistic approach to science, medicine, life and existence. It provides individuals with knowledge and techniques to prove important fundamental concepts for themselves through direct experience and to look inward for their own answers to profound questions. Applying this new knowledge can allow a broader understanding of ourselves, our lives and our place in the universe while advancing individual learning, creativity and human development.

Science meeting spirituality is key. Science and spirituality can *combine* (rather than conflict) to open new vistas, provide self-actualisation and optimise neurological performance. Neuroscience meeting physics to expand and

enhance each other is also key. As wonderful as the fields of neuroscience and physics have been, they both need to evolve into the 21st century and beyond. They are slowed by the inertia of outdated and limited concepts and paradigms. Until these disciplines incorporate what are now thought of as largely spiritual and metaphysical dimensions, our models will only be able to account for the most materialistic and mundane aspects of our lives and will miss many of the most important aspects of life and existence.

The Science within the TOR

There are 11 critical evidence categories which underlie the TOR and these have been described and referenced in detail (80 pages and 100 references) in the book.¹ All of these categories overlap, intersect and interface with each other.

I would submit that if one looks at and deeply analyses existing information, there is compelling evidence to prove that brain activity in itself cannot account for consciousness.

I would further submit that there is also convincing evidence for our ability to exist and function mentally very well without the brain. In other words, the brain and body are temporary vehicles rather than one's core identity.

There is also strong evidence for a field of consciousness as the basic underlying fabric or canvas for all that exists, including ourselves. When you think about it, it makes sense that the nature of the universe and the nature of ourselves would be the same.

Even if you are not a scientist, I would strongly encourage you to take a look at the detailed evidence in the TOR—it can be a wondrous and beautiful thing, and even a life-changing experience to discover in your own way how these aspects fit together and to attain your own deeper and higher understanding of the whole. I would further posit that such discovery and attainment also constitute important parts of our lives' purposes here on this planet.

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In the brief expanse of this monograph, it is not, of course, possible to delineate all of the scientific evidence underlying the TOR. In lieu of this, however, I'd like to briefly present five fascinating aspects of this evidence to attempt to pique your interest and perhaps expand your awareness if you're not already familiar with these concepts.

- Aspect #1—Attempts to Prove that the Brain is the Source of the Mind (or Consciousness) Have Failed

As previously referenced, most neuroscientists and others involved in consciousness research assume that our thoughts and consciousness arise solely as a result of the matter that constitutes the human brain. What you may not know is that all attempts to prove that the brain creates consciousness have failed and that, furthermore, no structure or feature of the human brain has ever been identified which is capable of producing consciousness.

Wilder Penfield, a Nobel Prize winning neuroscientist and neurosurgeon, was a revered pioneer in the understanding of the functions of various parts of the human brain. His work (designed in part to prove that the brain accounted for the mind), was extensive and extraordinary, and it included electrical stimulation of a wide variety of brain areas among living, awake humans. While stimulation of certain parts of the brain could activate various fragmented memories or streams of memories, Penfield ultimately concluded that 'none of the actions that we attribute to the mind has been initiated by electrode stimulation or epileptic discharge.... There is no area of grey matter as far as my experience goes, which local epileptic discharge brings to pass what could be called '*mind-action*'...what the mind does is different. It is not to be accounted for by any neuronal mechanism that I can discover...To expect the highest brain-mechanism or any set of reflexes, however complicated, to carry out what the mind does, and thus perform all the functions of the mind, is quite absurd.'^{2,3}

Another critical point to consider is that if the brain generated consciousness, then one would expect that consciousness (or mind action) would be affected

by electrical stimulation or seizure activity in some way other than simply being switched off—or, in other words, other mind-related aspects such as decisions or beliefs would be produced. This simply does not happen.

- ASPECT #2—The Basis for our Believing that Consciousness Arises out of Physical Processes is Unsound

The belief that consciousness arises from various physical processes within the brain is largely based upon the following types of studies: (1) stimulation studies (such as the electrical stimulation studies mentioned above by Penfield—despite Penfield’s ultimate conclusions); (2) ablation studies (part of the brain is damaged or destroyed), and (3) other types of correlation studies involving clinical tests like magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), functional MRI (fMRI), positron emission tomography (PET) scanning, or electroencephalography (EEG).

In all of these types of studies, the methodology involves determining how a specific area of the physical brain correlates (or is activated or is involved) with a specific aspect of function. However, one can observe that analogous methods are utilised to repair a television set with analogous results—yet this does not warrant the conclusion that the pictures on the screen are coming from within that individual television set.

- ASPECT #3—Photon Communication

Another exciting and relatively recent revelation came from the world of physics in 1982, when Alain Aspect and his team at the University of Paris at Orsay provided experimental evidence to show that entangled photons (light particles) were able to communicate with each other faster than the speed of light and with no material exchange of energy.⁴ This phenomenon could not be accounted for by any conventional scientific paradigm. Further experiments such as the one by Bouwmeester et al. published in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* in 1997 revealed similar results.⁵

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Subsequently, in 2001, four Swiss physicists from the laboratory of Nicolas Gisin reported a series of experiments which sent entangled photons (particles of light) along fibre optic cables to different cities which were more than 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) apart (prior experiments had dealt with much shorter distances). When both photons reached their target cities, they passed through multiple devices that would allow the photons to take one of numerous different paths. Each time, the particles followed the same paths as the other, with apparent instantaneous knowledge about which path its entangled twin had taken. The particles were calculated to be in communication about 20,000 times faster than the speed of light, leading the investigators to conclude that 'correlations in the quantum world are insensitive to space and time'.⁶

The distance of more than 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) is extremely vast in the realm of quanta, yet the strength of the correlations did not diminish or weaken over any distance. The results indicate that similar correlations would almost certainly occur even if the particles were billions of miles apart.

Think about this—these are light particles communicating with each other at least 20,000 times faster than light can travel on this plane of existence. Einstein had observed this behaviour decades earlier and called it 'spooky behavior at a distance'. He didn't understand the behaviour but he ended up suggesting the experiments (that were eventually technically possible) that definitively proved the existence of such behaviour. Einstein insisted that nothing could 'travel' faster than the speed of light and he was right regarding this material plane. It is clear that these light particles must be communicating on a different level—a level more fundamental than this material plane.

From this and a lot of other complementary evidence presented in the TOR,¹ it follows that the basic essence of all matter and energy exists as components of one deeper and fundamental unity.

Max Planck, widely considered to be the founder of modern quantum physics, at least partly envisioned consciousness as the essence of a field or matrix which underlies all matter when he declared in an interview in 1931: 'I regard

consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.'

I believe that Planck was correct and that consciousness does not arise in the brain, but rather is the fundamental fabric underlying our brains, ourselves and everything else that exists. It is more fundamental than atoms or molecules or any other material things that exist, including our brains and bodies.

- ASPECT #4—Coherence and Intelligence within Living Systems such as Human (and Non-human) Bodies

From the time humans are born on this planet, they are taught to look outward and look to various institutions for meaning and for answers—academic institutions, economic institutions, political institutions, social institutions, religious institutions, etc. In reality, they need to look inward for answers. Everything that is needed is inward, including the highest intelligence, which is contained within one's individual consciousness and within each of the approximately 100 trillion cells in one's body.

Each of these cells takes part in many thousands of signals and exchanges every second, meaning that many thousands of trillions of signals are constantly taking place. The coherent instantaneous behaviour of these cells, *individually* and as *integral parts of tissues and organ systems* in the second-to-second survival of each cell, and even more so in accomplishing enormously complex functions over seconds, days or years as part of one's body, is strikingly beyond the capability of the human brain to fully comprehend.

A human, for example, may *simultaneously*: monitor his or her environment for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and other sensations; navigate and interact with a crowd of people while walking down the street; fight off numerous invading infectious bacteria or viruses; isolate and destroy stray toxins or cancer cells; heal a foot sore, hand blister and a cut on the arm; digest food; pump blood through the heart and circulatory system to all organs including the brain;

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adjust for the effects of gravity when sitting or standing to allow the right amount of blood to be pumped to the brain; constantly regulate the amount of oxygen being extracted from the air and distributed to various parts of the body via the blood; regulate the levels of scores of electrolytes, enzymes and hormones; and, in some cases, even support and nurture a growing fetus!

Each of these functions is extraordinarily complex and many require the precise interaction of numerous organ systems. All of the cells within each organ must act together second by second, not only for their own survival, but to help the body as a whole.

Such functions have existed in humans since prehistoric times. Yet we can't even begin to fully understand or describe all of these interactions, and the human mind or brain is certainly not orchestrating them. It is useful and instructive to reflect deeply upon whether or not one believes that he or she could orchestrate the thousands of trillions of interactions per second to accomplish these functions—and then expand this reflection to include the cells of all living beings and all life on this planet.

The ongoing quasi-instantaneous coherent communication which exists within cells and within entire organisms such as human and non-human bodies has been well documented in the emerging field of biophysics and cannot be accounted for on the basis of biochemical, electrical or other physical interactions.^{7,8,9} Biochemical signalling is fairly slow and electrical conduction through the nervous system is typically around 50 metres/second compared to an order of magnitude exceeding 20,000 times the speed of light (or around 5.4 trillion metres /second).

As is the case with photon communication in the physics lab, the coherent communication which we can observe within our bodies cannot be accounted for by conventional materialistic scientific means and must be taking place at a *more fundamental level* than this material plane.

Quantum physicists have conclusively shown that at the subatomic (smaller than whole atoms) level of virtual particles, 'things' don't exist in material

form but rather as fleeting displays of tendencies and superimposed possibilities with non-locality and indeterminacy. This is also the nature of consciousness as we experience it. Given that the universe is incredibly interactive and coherent at all levels (a unified living process, as detailed more thoroughly in the TOR¹), it is *inconceivable* that individual consciousness would be fundamentally different than the essential nature of the rest of the cosmos and still be connected with it in the ways we can observe. It follows that consciousness is the most fundamental fabric of ourselves and the universe.

- ASPECT #5—Blind People can see during Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) and other Types of Out-of-Body Experiences (OOBEs)

One other fascinating aspect of the evidence that further suggests that our consciousness is not produced by our brains involves Near-Death Experiences (NDEs)—which are profound events that generally occur in association with a life-threatening situation and often take place during a time when an individual would be considered clinically dead. During these times of little or no brain function (such as during cardiac arrest or under deep anaesthesia in the operating room), individuals report lifting out of their bodies (a form of OOBE) and having very lucid experiences including thinking, seeing, hearing, remembering, and accurately reporting details and events from near and far away such as what people were saying or doing in the operating room or in some other part of the hospital. There is now considerable convincing evidence to indicate that NDEs are valid real phenomena and not hallucinations, seizures or some other aberration.¹

Something further about NDEs, however, that most people do not know is that Kenneth Ring, an Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of

From the perspective of medical practice, the primacy of consciousness is a critical concept—because if one assumes that the physical brain and body create consciousness, then one assumes that finding and repairing physical or material defects in the brain and body will take care of all aspects of consciousness and health—and this is far from the case.

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Connecticut, and colleagues, have documented that blind people (including those who have been blind from birth who have never been able to see while awake or in dreams, and who consequently do not have functioning material brain/eye visual systems) can see during NDEs and OOBEs, and have reported independently verifiable details requiring vision during NDEs (which, as above, have been documented with little or no demonstrable brain function) and OOBEs.¹⁰

These individuals are clearly operating outside of the realm of their brains because they are seeing things despite having no functioning visual-brain systems during their lives on this planet.

All of this evidence (along with much more detailed and complementary evidence presented in the TOR¹) collectively and strongly suggests that:

- we can all exist and function separately without our brains;
- the brain and body are temporary vehicles rather than our core identity;
- our essence beyond the brain and body is indestructible, even by physical death;
- our consciousness is not created by our brains, but rather that consciousness (as opposed to atoms and subatomic particles) is the fundamental fabric of ourselves and our universe.

The Two Most Important Unanswered Questions in Science

So where does all of this leave us in answering the two most important unanswered questions in science as referenced above?

Question #2: What is the biological basis of consciousness? Answer: There is none—consciousness is the basis for biology.

Question #1: What is the universe made of? Answer: Consciousness or units of consciousness at its most fundamental level.

Implications for Medical Practice

From the perspective of medical practice, the primacy of consciousness is a critical concept—because if one assumes that the physical brain and body create consciousness, then one assumes that finding and repairing physical or material defects in the brain and body will take care of all aspects of consciousness and health—and this is far from the case.

The incredible intelligence and coherence within our individual consciousness and within our cells and tissues are also important concepts as they cause us to be much more thoughtful and humble about our capabilities as physicians, particularly in regard to our materially-oriented medical and surgical interventions and their long-term implications. They also cause us to be more mindful of the body's profound innate healing capabilities and of the virtues of 'doing no harm' and promoting these capabilities more naturally and holistically.

Taken collectively, these concepts suggest that our medical practice should be less about finding and reacting to any of an increasing array of material defects or abnormalities involving the body and brain, and more about a holistic approach that promotes health and primary prevention. Over the past several decades, physicians have increasingly become procedure providers instead of health providers and our whole system of rewarding and reimbursing doctors for people being ill is neither the way that it should be nor the way that we in medicine will provide the best results for society.

The bottom line from a healthcare standpoint is that we need to change our fundamental approach from one of merely reacting to end stages of disease processes that may have been going on for decades prior to a patient developing symptoms, to a more proactive approach that focuses upon facilitating health, preventing diseases, and preventing risk factors that can lead to disease. We need to emphasise personal responsibility and empowerment throughout people's lives as opposed to empowering the purveyors of high technology and corporate resources very late in people's lives.

Therapeutic and Spiritual Considerations

The construct of a more proactive and prevention-oriented approach to healthcare involves attention to more than the absence of disease. It includes *adding* things to individuals to make them *better* than normal and *more* capable than ever before as opposed to the more traditional approach of trying to identify and *subtract* diseases or abnormalities to try to get individuals back to 'normal' or 'baseline'. It involves the recognition that health includes a balance of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being that allows an individual to live, learn and love, and to express the full range of that individual's potential.

At the heart of such an approach is the emerging science which surrounds the concepts of resilience, equanimity and coherence. *Resilience* is the capacity following adverse or stressful events to adapt to (and even thrive in) the resulting challenges and changing circumstances. Such a capacity proactively insulates and protects individuals from a variety of adverse conditions such as anxiety disorders and depression. Similarly, *equanimity* is the inner strength and stability to experience well-being and confidence in the eye of the storm—enabling one to maintain a relaxed body and calm, balanced mind regardless of the circumstances. It allows one to remain centred and to see the big picture with perspective and patience. *Coherence* implies a form of order or focus—coherent thought implies very focused, clear, non-random thought as opposed to disorganised, haphazard, 'noisy' thought processes that we are used to in our day-to-day living. Going from random incoherent thought to coherent consciousness can be a powerful tool for increasing one's effectiveness, understanding, creativity and intuition. By achieving a highly focused level of awareness, individuals are able to tap into normally unconscious or latent abilities.

In general, factors that increase one's resilience and equanimity also tend to increase one's coherence. Nutrition and exercise play underlying fundamental roles but a variety of other factors that are generally fun and compelling for

individuals that can increase one's resilience and equanimity include: laughter; music; friendship and intimacy; spiritual exploration and understanding; and sleep. Enhancing these factors can be a fun and compelling way to increase coherence, while optimising brain and neurological function as well as psychological health.^{1, 11-13}

Peak Experiences (PEs) generally involve seconds to minutes in which one feels the highest levels of peace, connectedness, happiness, harmony and possibility.^{14,15} They are pivotal moments in a person's life and are often associated with key insights, 'waves of understanding', and/or instantaneous 'thought balls' (large packages of thoughts/ideas that arrive spontaneously and unfold in real time as they are processed and expressed through our brains). A variety of other related phenomena and techniques have been associated with producing or facilitating Peak Experiences or with otherwise deeply enhancing one's creative, intellectual, visionary or integrative understanding and/or capabilities. These phenomena and techniques (which include Near-Death Experiences, Out-of-Body Experiences, various types of yoga and meditation, intentional techniques to connect with one's 'higher self', and numerous other spiritual, metaphysical and religious practices) generally involve focused (coherent) states of consciousness and can be important tools for all kinds of discovery and understanding—e.g., scientific, spiritual, musical, artistic, interpersonal.¹

The aspect of tapping into a higher level of subconscious or universal information (or Source Consciousness) can be important in guiding all sorts of behaviours and decisions including those regarding one's individual health. It can be incorporated into daily practices such as meditative techniques or can be experienced in less frequent (but often more pivotal) PEs. Future healthcare paradigms will give greater intentionality to the process of having and creating PEs and related experiences that catalyse personal advances, and will place increasing emphasis upon coherence, resilience and equanimity as vehicles to promote optimal neurological and psychological function as well as overall health.

The Relationship of Humans to Non-human Beings

The wiring and organisation of the brains, spinal cords and the peripheral nervous systems of non-human beings are fundamentally the same as the wiring and organisation of these structures in humans down to the cellular level. In mammals such as gorillas and chimpanzees the wiring and organisation are essentially identical to that of humans. These brains and nervous systems are the structures that allow the expression of human and non-human consciousness to occur on this earth. Without them, we could not meaningfully interact with our environment or with those around us.

Moreover, without the consciousness and energy that activate the brains and bodies of humans and non-humans (and instil recognisable 'life' into an individual's protoplasm), our brains and bodies are merely carcasses, devoid of the capability of thinking thoughts, taking actions, and feeling pain and pleasure.

I was quite shocked about 35 years ago when I asked a couple of my colleagues at Mayo Clinic (who were world authorities in electroencephalography) about the comparison of the electroencephalogram (EEG) of a human patient to the EEG of a gorilla and they told me that they could essentially not tell the difference.

The brain waves that are measured by EEGs represent the fundamental, measurable, quantifiable energies that emanate from the brains of human patients or, in this case, from the brain of a gorilla or other non-human being.

There is little question that the consciousness that gives rise to these energies and inhabits the brains and bodies of these non-human beings must be of the exact same fabric as the consciousness that inhabits and activates all of our human bodies and brains.

Few would deny that the mentally retarded child, or even the child born without cerebral hemispheres (who cannot even meaningfully react to his or her environment) has the same fundamental underlying consciousness or energy (or soul or spirit if you prefer those terms) as other humans, yet there has been

a reluctance on the part of most humans to accept that this possibility exists in non-human animals. The day will come when our species as a whole will recognise that it is preposterous *not* to accept this possibility.

We humans should be open to the further possibility that the differences we observe between humans and non-humans may not relate as much to the consciousness/soul/or spirit that inhabits the bodies and brains of humans and other animals as they do to the bodies and brains themselves, which specifically define and limit the expression of this consciousness.

It hardly seems possible that the consciousness or soul residing within a human who has a stroke or contracts Alzheimer's disease is somehow eternally destroyed or damaged. On the contrary, that part of all of us which is immortal or capable of transcending the body and brain should *not* be damaged by illness or any other structural change to the human body, but rather its expression temporarily limited.

We know this from a variety of sources such as Near-Death Experiences, but also from patients like my 97-year-old aunt who had a transient ischemic attack (or temporary stroke episode) whereby a part of her brain that supports language was not getting its blood supply and was damaged for hours, creating a situation where she could not talk with me or follow commands.

Thankfully, the blood flow to that part of her brain was later restored and when I talked to her about her experience, she indicated that she was well aware of all that I was saying and asking her to do and within herself knew the words to say and could say them to herself, but her change in brain function would not allow her to express them to me. The consciousness inhabiting her body and brain was unchanged by the change in her brain structure and function.

When compassion for all life becomes the principal motivation underlying a given endeavour, it becomes a powerful force and a force for uncommon creativity, understanding and wisdom. Accessing that part of our consciousness that is closest to our underlying motivation of compassion for all life allows any of us to reach beyond ourselves and beyond what we may have thought possible.

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Clearly, there are distinct and major differences between humans and other animals. However, we should not be too quick to judge the significance of these differences, since there is considerable and growing evidence to suggest, even by human definitions, that the most important and enduring elements in humans and non-humans are those elements which differ the least. Those enduring elements (as opposed to our bodies and brains) constitute who we really are at a deeper and more fundamental level.

Compassion for all Life

Extending the circle of humanity's compassion to non-human beings is an important concept and is the next logical step in the evolution of our species.

When a human is born, his or her first and foremost concern is with his or her own personal comfort and safety, and usually, this concern and priority gradually extends to include one's parents, followed by one's immediate family.

From there, as a child grows and learns to grant others the same feelings and awareness achieved for his or her own self, the circle of compassion widens. The learning process is not automatic, and the extent to which humans are encouraged to see beyond themselves and are taught to recognise the independent value of other beings is a matter of parental and societal influence.

This influence can be directed at breaking down barriers of difference, teaching people that behind the externalities of nationality, race, economic class, religion and ethnicity there exists in the other a consciousness and a set of yearnings that demand uncompromising respect. The next logical step in this pathway is to extend one's circle of compassion and caring to beings other than humans, who also have a consciousness and a set of yearnings that demand uncompromising respect.

The work that I have done in animal protection is a logical extension of my other work as a physician. One's goal in the medical community is to decrease unnecessary death and suffering in humans. The animal protection community simply seeks to extend this same goal to beings other than humans. This is a

very important step in the advancement of humankind and we all have the opportunity to help facilitate it.

As a physician and scientist, one of the things I've come to realise is that it is compassion for all life rather than scientific achievement that represents the greater pinnacle of human existence. Scientific achievement is indeed a wonderful thing—in direct proportion to how much it either reflects or reinforces compassion for all life. Happily, it often does both in the field of medical science.

When compassion for all life becomes the principal motivation underlying a given endeavour, it becomes a powerful force and a force for uncommon creativity, understanding and wisdom. Accessing that part of our consciousness that is closest to our underlying motivation of compassion for all life allows any of us to reach beyond ourselves and beyond what we may have thought possible.

Within human medicine and animal protection, the underlying motivation of compassion for all life, combined with the ability to recognise the deeper identity of other sentient beings, instils within the human spirit an enduring and unflinching energy to protect and care for non-human as well as human life. Simple as this may seem, none of us should underestimate the power of this motivation.

Concluding Thoughts

The universe is a unified living process rather than a collection of separate objects, and, although things and beings can still be part of a unified whole while possessing their own unique qualities, our tendency to fragment our world and to see ourselves as separate from the universe, from the earth, and from other human and non-human beings is responsible for many problems in science and society, and ultimately is responsible for our neither being at peace as a species nor as a society.

In order for us to evolve beyond this perspective we will need to invoke something within us which reaches beyond a purely materialistic approach. Such an eventuality need not take anything away from the materialistic aspects

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of science and medicine that have already been delineated, but rather, should add to and build upon what has been delineated.

It is no coincidence that such a large number of the most influential pioneers in physics who helped catalyse the last major paradigm shift in the early 20th century from classical (Newtonian) physics to relativity and quantum physics (including Planck, Jeans, Einstein, Eddington, Schrödinger, De Broglie, Pauli and Heisenberg) *all* evolved beyond a purely materialistic approach in their conceptualisations of reality and wrote about it extensively at various points in their careers and lives. We, as a scientific community, as a society, and as a species, would be wise to follow their example.

When one looks at the profound interconnectedness of all life on this planet including all human and non-human beings, as well as the earth itself (another life form), it becomes clear that compassion for all life is not a luxury for humanity but rather a necessity.

Ultimately, the survival not only of other species on this planet, but also of our own, will depend upon humanity's ability to recognise the oneness of all that exists, and the importance and deeper significance of compassion for all life.

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