

Paramount Worldview Changes

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If two fundamental changes could be made in the worldview of human societies – changes which would make the greatest difference in the ultimate opportunity for the survival of the human species and its modern civilizations – what would these changes be?

The changes that I am considering probably would not occur to most who might suggest an answer. Most would focus more specifically on a couple of socio-political, economic, or religious principles or concepts [eg. democracy, justice, equality, religious tolerance]. And in the process they might address some of the important stumbling blocks to human societal progress but allow a lot of others to escape. I suggest that there are two essential changes in worldview that, if made, would ramify through the entire fabric of human culture and wipe the conceptual slate free of virtually all the “errors” that underlie modern civilizations and that persist to plague us to the present.

The first change is to put the physical or material world, which humans regard as primary because of its relationship to biological survival, into proper perspective. In this regard, the most credible of theories in modern astrophysical and cosmological science illuminate four important facts that can assist us in gaining this “proper perspective.” First, the physical/material sphere on which we focus so much attention – from atoms to animals, to planets to solar systems, to galaxies, to multiverses – is only about 4% of what makes up reality. Second, the basis for this very small part of reality emerges late in the early sequence of events that occur after the Big Bang, more or less a secondary side effect [the simplest atom – hydrogen – arises about 350,000 years after the Big Bang and the heavier elements upon which most of our physical reality depends come much later yet!]. Third, in this 4% material realm that humans inhabit, we make up a virtually infinitesimal part, being but one physical species on one small rocky planet in one very average solar system in one ordinary galaxy of 100-300 billion solar systems in a universe of at least 100 billion galaxies in what is likely to be a multiverse of what may be a virtually infinite number of universes. Fourth, the primary component in reality is energy, which in its various forms makes up about 70% of all existence.

The FACT is that humans as a physical species, much less as any one individual or race or ethnic group or religion or nation, are of essentially no consequence whatever even in the scale of physical existence, as minor as this physical domain is in what constitutes all of reality – most of which is energy.

How about a little humility in light of the infinitely small role that humans play first in physical reality and then in the much grander reality beyond the physical? It is a modern truth that physically humans as species are not the center of ANYTHING, and no one individual or group or culture can claim a greater position in this physical/material insignificance than any other.

Consider what a difference it would make if our worldviews accommodated the actual physical place of humans in the vast reality in which we exist. Virtually all of: 1) what divides us as cultures, 2) what forms the basis for our making so much of our “differences,” and 3) what leads to most of our conflicts at all levels of social organization is grounded in the fundamental misconception of the central importance of the physical dimension of our existence and the physical centrality/importance of our species in that existence.

Unfortunately our major religions, which arose long before we have become aware of our miniscule physical role in reality, play a key role in promoting this misconception – God or gods and the debates over whose beliefs are those of the “elect.” If humans would assign the physical/material to an appropriate value where their actual needs were met and stop the excessive hoarding of resources in order to supply their wants and to alleviate their fears, much of the cause of conflicts among humans and their societies would be eliminated. What we require are worldviews that locate the physical/material in a place of considerably reduced importance.

It is our privilege as a species to have evolved to the point of becoming aware of our absolute physical insignificance and of our need to reduce the value we assign to the physical/material. Fortunately, what we release in terms of the physical can be more than countered by what we can gain if we make the second of the worldview changes that I am proposing.

Because humans arise as part of a physical reality that emerges out of a primary, energy-based reality, so humans are not just physical entities. We are also energetic phenomena with the capacity to participate and achieve self-identity in terms of the energetic aspects of our existence. We make so much of

the physical dimension of our existence, and yet most of what makes us appear so “solid” is really energy organized and moving at incredible speeds around the tiniest bits of mass. In fact, there is almost no mass in each of us at all. Our physicality is very nearly an illusion, whatever the importance is that we place on it. Along with the trees and rocks around us, we are mostly just energy organized through field characteristics into what seems so solid and substantial.

The fact that humans – and all the rest of physical existence – are mostly energetic phenomena means that humans in fact participate much more in reality as energetic beings than as physical beings. And since it is a fundamental property of energy that it is everywhere all the time and that it is infinitely interconnected from quarks to universes, at the energy level humans are not isolated at all in spite of the separation and discreteness that their physical being and senses seem to denote. They are part of the totally interconnected web of energetic reality. And they participate in this energetic reality and have presence and identity within it.

Unfortunately, modern humans, especially in developed societies, fail to assign a proper value to their energetic identity and to develop their faculties so as to know themselves and participate in existence from this position.

Most traditional human cultures have known about their energetic dimension for all of human time [the animistic view of reality – all things having a sacred or spiritual essence], and they have discovered the many ways in which they can use their mental faculties in certain states of mind to both know themselves and participate more fully in their world [exemplified most notably by shamans, artists and other spiritual masters]. Dreams and all forms of artistic expression [all performing as well as graphic and plastic arts] arise out of experience in this energetic awareness. Religion also emerges from this source, but unfortunately virtually all social institutions of religion in all cultures surround the human experience of unification in the energetic domain [e.g. “born again” in fundamentalist Christianity] with highly dogmatic, restrictive and physically literal interpretations of how this experience is to be understood and managed.

All humans are energetic phenomena, and the human mental faculty of intuition is the avenue of mind available to humans to participate directly in this totally interconnected energetic reality. Although many modern humans regard dreams as illusory, dreams nevertheless constitute the first universal portal for

humans to experience the energetic. The most convincing evidence in the everyday reality for humans of their ability to participate in the energetic comes from the whole range of paranormal phenomena [telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis], which are again universal among human groups. All of these paranormal events exceed the limits of physical reality and demonstrate the capacity for humans to know themselves and benefit from their relationship to other phenomena from this energetic position. Mystical masters of all persuasions, with their “pursuit” of enlightenment through various forms of meditation, have recognized “forever” the paramount importance of the energetic/spiritual/immaterial dimension of reality.

As science has illuminated it, from the physical perspective humans are totally insignificant, but from the energetic perspective humans share identity with all of reality and are confirmed by the colossal extent of their interconnectedness, which sustains forever – just forming and reforming in different energetic and physical expressions as we flow through what in the physical sense we call life and death. Indeed, from this energetic perspective there is no birth or death, just change and transition. Like the stars from whose dispersed elements we derive physically, in the energetic sense we come from everything and participate in everything in an infinite recycling system.

So, humans are both nothing and everything at the same time, and if we live fully, we live within this dynamic as both physical and energetic entities. As physical entities we are competitive and struggle for biological survival at the expense of other physical resources. As energetic entities we are cooperative with and respectful of all other phenomena due to the fundamental condition of our inherent interconnectedness and shared identity [the true basis for morality].

Humans exist within a reality that is defined by a physical versus energetic dynamic, and they succeed and make progress as a species to the extent that they individually and from within their groups at all levels balance their behavior to accord with these two different perspectives on and experiences within existence. In the process of seeking an appropriate balance, there are many ways to go wrong. Fundamentalist religion is one of these ways, and full blown secular materialism is another. In modern developed societies we see the tension between these extremes, neither one of which forms the basis for the human species to make the kind of progress that is possible for it.

Until we as humans adjust our worldview and jettison both the notion of our physical centrality in a reality totally defined by the material and the idea that our salvation is to be achieved by denying the physical and committing to some set of dogmatic and literal religious beliefs, we will dwell in the conflicts that arise from these imbalanced and limited worldviews. We need to know the limits of the physical without denying its relevance, and we need to incorporate and explore more fully our energetic capabilities without getting consumed by the dogma of religions.

If we make these worldview changes, we can watch the consequences ramify through the fabric of human societies as the option truly arises to work for balanced input from the physical and energetic perspectives. Humans are unique as a species in that they can now be aware of the fundamental worldview changes that they need to make if they are to maximize their opportunity to succeed to the greatest extent possible. The question before humankind is: Will we remain mired in worldviews where the excesses of secular materialism battle against the excesses of religious fundamentalism or will we replace this unproductive and inaccurate opposition with the creative dynamic of the physical and the energetic properly understood and appropriately balanced?

Afterword

For the most part in this essay I have used the terms “physical” and “energetic” to describe the two dimensions within which humans exist and participate in their reality. I could just as easily use the terms “material” and “spiritual” or “objective” and “subjective,” which I do use elsewhere [see: www.dynamic-humanism.com]. The problem is that the term “spiritual” tends to carry with it negative connotations for many because of its unfortunate association with religious beliefs or the quackery of some nineteenth century and new age practices. And for many the term “subjective” carries with it the connotation of having only a loose relationship to the real. In relationship to human ways of knowing and participating in existence, I use the terms “energetic” and “spiritual” and “subjective” interchangeably. In this essay I use the term “energetic” because it is the scientific understanding of the energetic basis of all existence that confirms the basic tenets of the spiritual/subjective perspective: universal and total interconnectedness in an experience of reality that exceeds the limits of time and space and that allows for participation in and a wholistic sense of

identity recognized through that experience.

The sense in which I use the terms “energetic,” “spiritual,” and “subjective” is not to be confused with religion or the claims of any set of beliefs or rituals. The energetic, spiritual or subjective exists apart from all such specific claims, though religions and their rituals often do provide humans with avenues to the experience of the universal or energetic aspect of knowing and being. The problem with these “avenues” is that they most often turn around and restrict and define what the experience of the energetic IS and MEANS. As such these “avenues” greatly diminish thereby the potential significance of this experience and end up claiming exclusive truth for their various absolutist interpretations – promoting thereby conflicts over which “avenue” is authorized by “God.” In my view, we need to separate the term “spiritual” from these unfortunate negative connotations so that we can use this term along with the terms “energetic” and “subjective” and “immaterial” to refer generally to the alternative to the physical/material aspect of reality.