

Book Review**Review of Duane Elgin's Book: The Living Universe: Where Are We?
Who Are We? Where Are We Going?**

Stephen P. Smith*

ABSTRACT

A close look at Elgin analysis shows that science has been unable to get beyond the three-fold archetype (receiving, sending, and middle-term), and it is this archetype that hints at Elgin's conclusion. Elgin gives the false impression that most scientists will welcome his conclusion (or rediscovery). No, only some will have the level of maturity to find something significant in Elgin's work. Many will accuse Elgin of being pseudo-scientific, but they are wrong. True, Elgin's account is less about science as it is known traditionally, but his interpretation of the evidence is the correct one (in my view). Elgin presents a philosophical and spiritual treatment that recognizes the scientific evidence that is found beholding to the three-fold archetype. And this is not to say that all presented evidence is valid enough to give its support to Elgin's thesis. For example, Elgin (page 103) mentions string theory: "the particle nature of matter gives way to unimaginably small, vibrating loops of non-material strings." But string theory remains a wild speculation, and it adds little value to Elgin's worthy insights. You can find this book at Amazon http://www.amazon.com/Living-Universe-Where-Are-Going/dp/1576759695/ref=cm_cr-mr-title.

Key Words: living universe, scientific evidence, three-fold archetype.

Elgin (page 19) writes: "American Indian lore speaks of three miracles. The first miracle is that anything exists at all. The second miracle is that living things exist. The third miracle is that living things exist that know they exist. As human beings conscious of ourselves, we represent the third miracle." Elgin's universe is alive, where the vital substance that permits life and consciousness is found hard wired deeply in the fabric of reality.

Elgin likes to use the expression "mother universe," and his detractors might label his views as New Age. But Elgin is no New Ager, his views integrate our spiritual traditions more fully. He (page 80) writes, "Within each major tradition - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Indigenous, and more - we can find remarkably similar descriptions of the universe and the life force that pervades it: Christians and Jews affirming that God is not separate from this world but continuously creates it anew, so that we live, more, and have our being in God; Muslims declaring that the entire universe is continually coming into being, and that the entire universe is continually coming into being, and that each moment is a new occasion for Allah to create the universe; Hindus proclaiming the entire universe is a single body that is being continually danced into creation by a divine life force or Brahman; Buddhists stating that the entire universe arises freshly at every moment in an unceasing flow of interdependent, co-origination where everything depends upon everything else; Taoists stating the Tao is the Mother of the Universe, the inexhaustible source from which all things rise and fall without ceasing."

Elgin uses the discoveries of science to justify his world-view. He (page 22) describes an innate tension on the cosmic scale: "Scientists currently describe two major kinds of invisible energies in the universe. One is a contractive force called dark matter and the other is an expansive force called dark

Correspondence: Stephen P. Smith, Ph.D., Visiting Scientist, Physics Department, University Of California at Davis, CA
E-mail: hucklebird@aol.com

energy." He (page 25) later writes: "We are just moving out of the zone of collapse of matter into a black hole, and moving into the zone where life can encounter itself, know itself, and evolve itself."

Elgin (page 26) writes: "We are giants, living in a mostly invisible universe, who are just getting underway in our evolutionary journey, and can reach with our consciousness into the larger universe. These freeing insights liberate us from thinking we are small and insignificant. Not incidentally, they also free us from the arrogance of thinking that we occupy the leading edge of evolution's wave."

Elgin (page 46) writes: "Because we find evidence of primary perception or some form of consciousness operating at the level of atoms, molecules, single-cell organisms, plants, and animals, we should not be surprised that sentience is a basic property of the universe. It is when we move to the human realm that we find the most direct evidence that consciousness is not confined within the brain; it is, instead, a field property of the universe itself." Elgin then treats "psi" abilities, and rediscovers the archetype (my word) that underwrites all communication: "receiving potentials" and "sending potentials." What holds sending to its receiving is now a middle-term (for lack of a better word), and it is here we rediscover a doorway to beyond; e.g., something Kant called "noumena."

A close look at Elgin analysis shows that science has been unable to get beyond the three-fold archetype (receiving, sending, and middle-term), and it is this archetype that hints at Elgin's conclusion. Elgin gives the false impression that most scientists will welcome his conclusion (or rediscovery). No, only some will have the level of maturity to find something significant in Elgin's work. Many will accuse Elgin of being pseudo-scientific, but they are wrong. True, Elgin's account is less about science as it is known traditionally, but his interpretation of the evidence is the correct one (in my view). Elgin presents a philosophical and spiritual treatment that recognizes the scientific evidence that is found beholding to the three-fold archetype. And this is not to say that all presented evidence is valid enough to give its support to Elgin's thesis. For example, Elgin (page 103) mentions string theory: "the particle nature of matter gives way to unimaginably small, vibrating loops of non-material strings." But string theory remains a wild speculation, and it adds little value to Elgin's worthy insights.

Where does Elgin see our evolution going? A three-fold transition becomes apparent (chapter 7), a transition that necessarily mirrors the noted archetype: from "reflective consciousness" to "oceanic consciousness" and to "flow consciousness." Elgin (page 154) writes about flow consciousness: "when our flow of awareness comes into precise synchronization with the arising of the universe, then the world suddenly becomes very quiet and our passage through life becomes calm and easeful. When we are aware of the stillness within motion, we are in the center of the flow of continuous creation. In flow consciousness, we experience a deep harmony as the personal and the universal move together in mutual synchrony."

My understanding is that flow consciousness relates to a heightened awareness of the now stark archetype that represents receiving, sending, and the middle-term. We learn to receive and send freely, and there is no resistance to this activity that implies imbalance or blockage. For example, in receiving Elgin's book I react by writing a review.

Elgin (page 193) writes, "with mindfulness, everything we do provides an occasion for observing consciousness: driving, walking, playing, eating, or washing the dishes. Flow consciousness is no different, except that it elevates attention to a much higher level or precision, openness, and continuity, enabling us to ride the regenerative wave of the ever-arising universe."

Elgin (page 194) writes: "We are also a body of resonance, or music. All that exists is vibrating with its unique resonance. We can listen for the hum of existence. In meeting another person, we can listen for the unique song of their soul. In each new situation, we can open to the feeling-tones and qualities of resonance people express. We can discover subtle feelings of harmony or disharmony and express our unique songline as we move through life."

References

Duane Elgin, 2009, *The Living Universe: Where Are We? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* Berrett-Koehler Publishers.