

The Shifting Worldview



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Keys for
Future-Fit
Leadership
Academy

Introduction

It's now pretty obvious to most leaders that the business, societal and civilizational landscape is rapidly changing before our very eyes. So too the general life conditions of our home planet, Earth. As Albert Einstein reminds us "we cannot solve our problems with the same level of consciousness that created them".

To address today's polycrisis requires a new way of seeing the world. This calls for more than creative thinking or faster technological solutions from quantum computing or AI. It requires us to undertake the inner work of shifting our consciousness, in order to cultivate the wisdom needed to meet this monumental transition that humanity must make.

Within this paper, we explore this worldview shift that is both necessary and already underway, and how becoming Future-Fit is the key to facilitating and enabling this critical transformation to take place.



Systems Change from the Inside Out

One approach to dealing with change in complex systems is the use of systems mapping models. These maps help us to see patterns, understand feedback loops, and identify high-leverage intervention points within a system, where targeted effort can catalyse change. However, when we focus only at the level of intervention points, our attention stays on transforming the system 'out there'. We remove ourselves from the change process and concentrate on what needs to change in other people, whether politicians, corporations, or the wider public.

In most systems change models, the highest leverage point is referred to as shifting the paradigm or mental models that created the system. When the paradigm changes, other interventions tend to follow naturally, producing lasting change that is not at the whim of political cycles.

Shifting a socio-economic paradigm therefore requires examining and understanding the impacts of the dominant worldview **Mechanistic Materialism (MM)** that has created the systems that are failing us. In exploring key flaws within this MM worldview, we can start to understand the need to shift towards a more expanded and life-affirming worldview of **Quantum Complexity (QC)**.

This worldview shift from MM > QC is not merely an intellectual comprehension, it is an inner journey that enables us to embody QC, connecting us with the very core of who we are, so that we can perceive the world and our sense of place and purpose within it differently. This can be summarised as a shift from separateness to connectedness. It's QC's sense of connectedness that aids our Future-Fitness.

Future-Fitness allows us to move from coping amongst our endless to-do lists and problem-fixing in an attempt to 'save the world', towards a thriving purposefulness, that integrates doing and being in a way that feels genuinely 'in service to life' while enabling us to work in life-affirming ways in-tune with how living-systems work, i.e. 'regenerative'.

In adult development psychology, this growth journey is known as vertical development, an expansion of our way of being-and-knowing in the world. This inner journey is not just about feeling calmer, reducing anxiety, or sleeping better (though these are welcome byproducts); it is fundamental to our ability to be effective purpose-led leaders and change agents in the world.

"The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor."

Bill O'Brien, CEO, Hanover Insurance

A growing body of research across psychology, organisational behaviour, neuroscience, and leadership studies suggests that when someone shifts their perception, mindset, or inner state, it changes how others respond and influences the wider system. This happens through the way we show up and shape the conditions that enable others to operate differently. There's a ripple effect created when we model a new style of leadership.

Mechanistic Materialism

The dominant worldview that drives much of how we approach life is shaped by two M's: **Mechanistic Materialism**.

The first is **Mechanistic** thinking which is a more left-hemispheric mode of attention: it drills down into detail. We pull things out of their lived context, draw hard lines around them, and then define, categorize, and manipulate the world around us. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. It helps us understand life, and it is an important part of what makes us human. The difficulty arises when this mode becomes resistant to change, somewhat fear-based, and inclined to dominate. When that happens, it crowds out other ways of knowing and tries to take over. It also encourages us to see things as machines: linear, binary and predictable.

The second 'M' is, in some ways, even more insidious: **materialism**. This worldview emerged through the scientific revolution a few hundred years ago. Prior to that, across much of human history, many cultures held a deep sense of animistic consciousness: a sense of depth to life, and of sentience throughout nature.

In a materialist frame, that depth is drained out and negated. Space becomes emptiness, and matter becomes all that 'counts'. The result can be a nihilistic worldview in which meaning and purpose revolve around material things to buy and consume i.e. consumerism.

With this materialist thinking matter is separated from mind, and outer 'things' that can be measured are prioritised over inner subjective experiences. This splitting of mind from matter and inner from outer is often called the Cartesian split named after the philosopher René Descartes, and later reinforced by Newtonian science. This creates a lens of separateness through which we view the world as separate 'things' bouncing around in a world devoid of any meaning or animating consciousness.

Materialism also shapes neo-Darwinian interpretations of evolution: evolution as selfish ascendancy, with separate species struggling for survival in a dog-eat-dog world. This tends to produce a deeply divisive logic. It is seldom questioned despite a great deal of contemporary science challenging this.



Add the two M's together and you have today's dominant worldview of MM. And while its separateness creates a divisive logic when allowed to dominate, it's important to recognize that MM's capacity to drill down, examine and focus on the material aspects of life has brought many advances in industry, science and healthcare.

We are not suggesting to 'throw out the baby with the bathwater' and lose the increased capacities we have gained from MM. Importantly this shift into QC is a **transcend and include**: a developmental shift that retains the self-agency, liberal morality, and self-responsibility that MM has enabled, while expanding into a deeper way of making meaning no longer constrained by the MM's limitations and flaws.

The lens of separateness that lies at the heart of MM is both its greatest asset and downfall. On the one hand, the objectifying lens of separateness has brought great strides in material progress, on the other hand, it degrades and de-animates our inner and outer worlds, leading to an exploitative tendency that undermines the very fabric of human civilization and the more-than-human world.

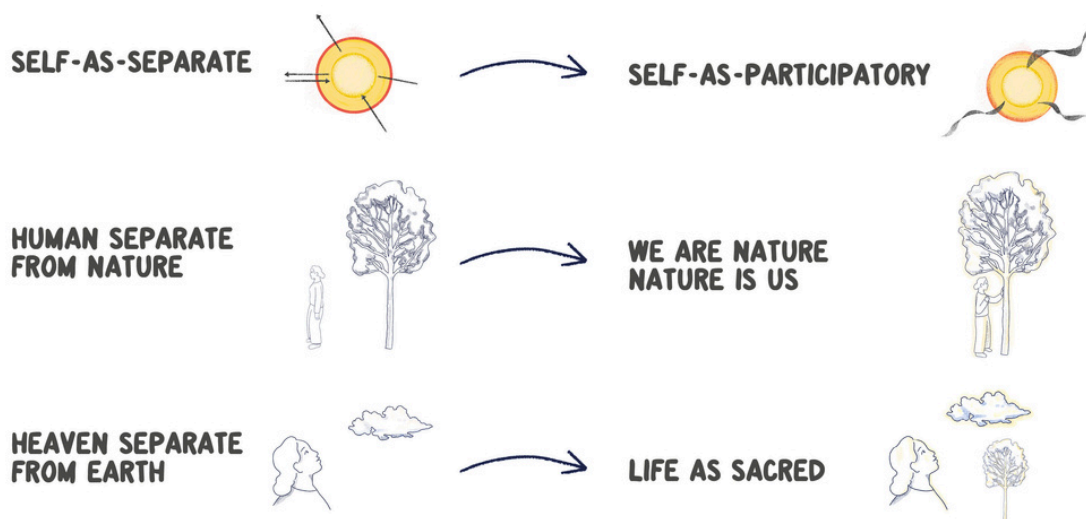
MM permits all sorts of violations against life in the name of 'progress' - from plastics choking our oceans, to millions upon millions of animals chained in factory-farm hell-holes, to child labor sweat-shops, to clear-cut chaining of pristine rainforests.

"Most people are so inured, so hopelessly dependent on the system, that they will fight to protect it."

Morpheus, The Matrix

Underpinning MM's lens of separateness are **The Three Fallacies**, flawed reasoning that is so deceptive it appears plausible. We accept them as plausible, even when they are wrong. In other words, we are operating within a flawed logic, and we need to unpick it if we are to have any hope of moving through the metacrisis in the years ahead.

OVERCOMING THE THREE FALLACIES



The Three Fallacies

1. Self as separate

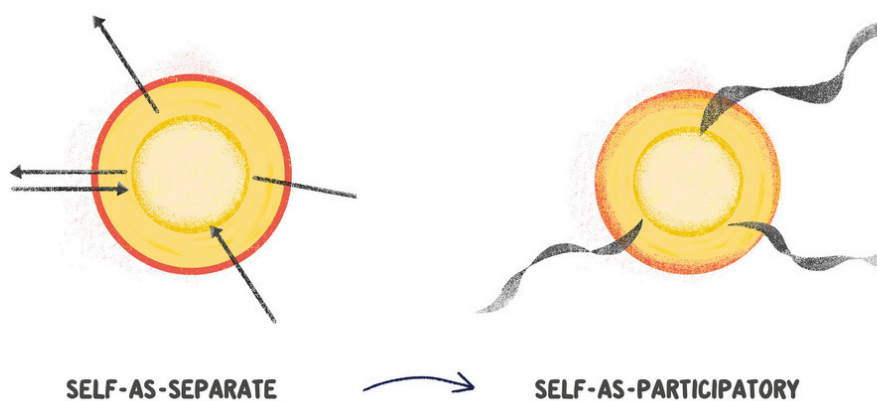
Machine-mentality objectifies systems, objects, relationships, and transactions in its world of separateness, and the individual is perceived as self-as-separate-from-and-in-competition-with-life (**self-as-separate** for short). Psychologically, self-as-separate is a heightened **ego-consciousness** which identifies with the 'I' as a separate personality with little or no sense of connection to any wider field or source of consciousness beyond the 'I' personality.

Because of its sense of separation from everything around it, this egoic personality has an innate fear of being vulnerable or unprotected and remains on the look-out for defence mechanisms and safety measures. It has an innate desire to feel in control and is therefore sceptical of change. It seeks to manage other's impressions of itself in order to survive, to fit-in, and to compete in a hostile world of judgement, cynicism, and fear.

Little does the 'I' realize that its own individualistic tendencies breed the vicious cycle of judgement, cynicism, and fear that drive the very power-control dynamics it's seeking protection from.

This self-as-separate fallacy is now prevalent throughout vast swaths of humanity yet it can be overcome once consciously recognized. When a psychological inner-journey (which psychoanalyst Carl Jung called **individuation**) takes place, the egoic 'I' can begin to permeate and open more readily into life as it really is - participatory and connective. Then self-as-separate-from-and-in-competition-with-life morphs into self-as-participatory-within-life (**self-as-participatory** for short). This shift in our own sense of self delivers peace, freedom, flow, spontaneity, creativity, empathy, and intimacy, and the way we embrace life significantly evolves.

The move from self-as-separate to self-as-participatory is vital for our Future-Fitness. It enables us to feel grounded, connected, and at home in our own self. We then live in **right relation** with others and the world around us, even, and especially, amid rising complexity and volatility.



2. Human as separate from nature

Anthropology suggests that for the vast majority of human history we held a deep sense of connection to nature. We understood ourselves as part of nature, even as nature itself. Over time a gradual separation began. Some trace its roots to the Agricultural Revolution, with theories ranging from patriarchal conquest, to the rise of money systems, to the spread of the alphabet. Whatever the drivers, the broad pattern is a kind of 'ego explosion': the sense of 'I' becomes more dominant, and we start to experience ourselves as separate from the natural world.

In the West, this separation intensified dramatically around 400 years ago with the Scientific Revolution and the rise of MM. A deeper fissure opened: mind was split from matter, and attention narrowed towards what could be measured, quantified, and controlled. Nature gets reduced to a set of 'resources' rather than encountered as animate and sentient. In effect, life becomes de-animated. The cost is not only ecological, it creates a psychological wound within us. When we lose connection to life as animate, we cut ourselves off from our home and become fearful, grasping, and caught in egotism, chasing the 'good life' through external markers of status and consumption, while feeling increasingly unhappy and unsettled.

3. Heaven as separate from Earth

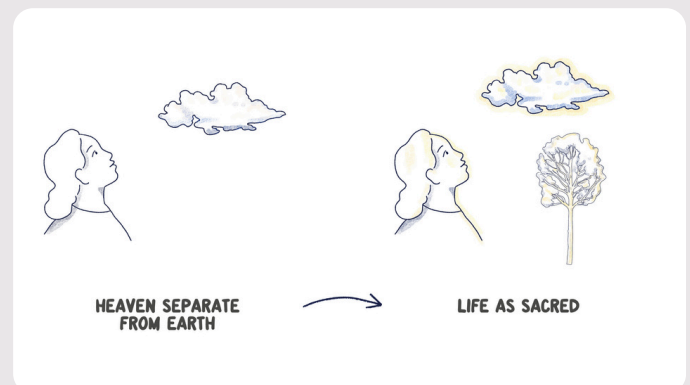
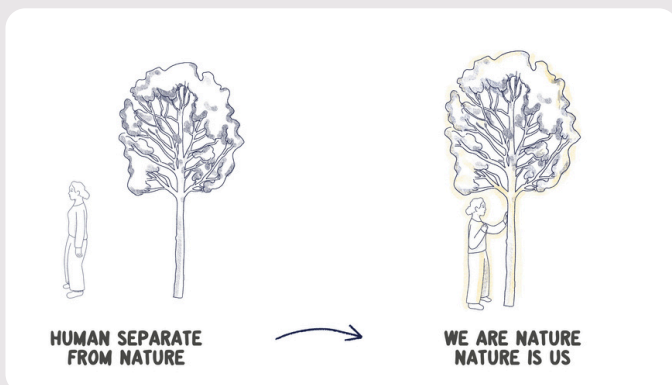
The dynamism of life on Earth and the realm of spirit (aka 'Heaven') have been artificially separated by MM's separation of inner mind from outer matter and human from nature. This created the divorce of Heaven from Earth, in doing so cutting us off from soul and spirit.

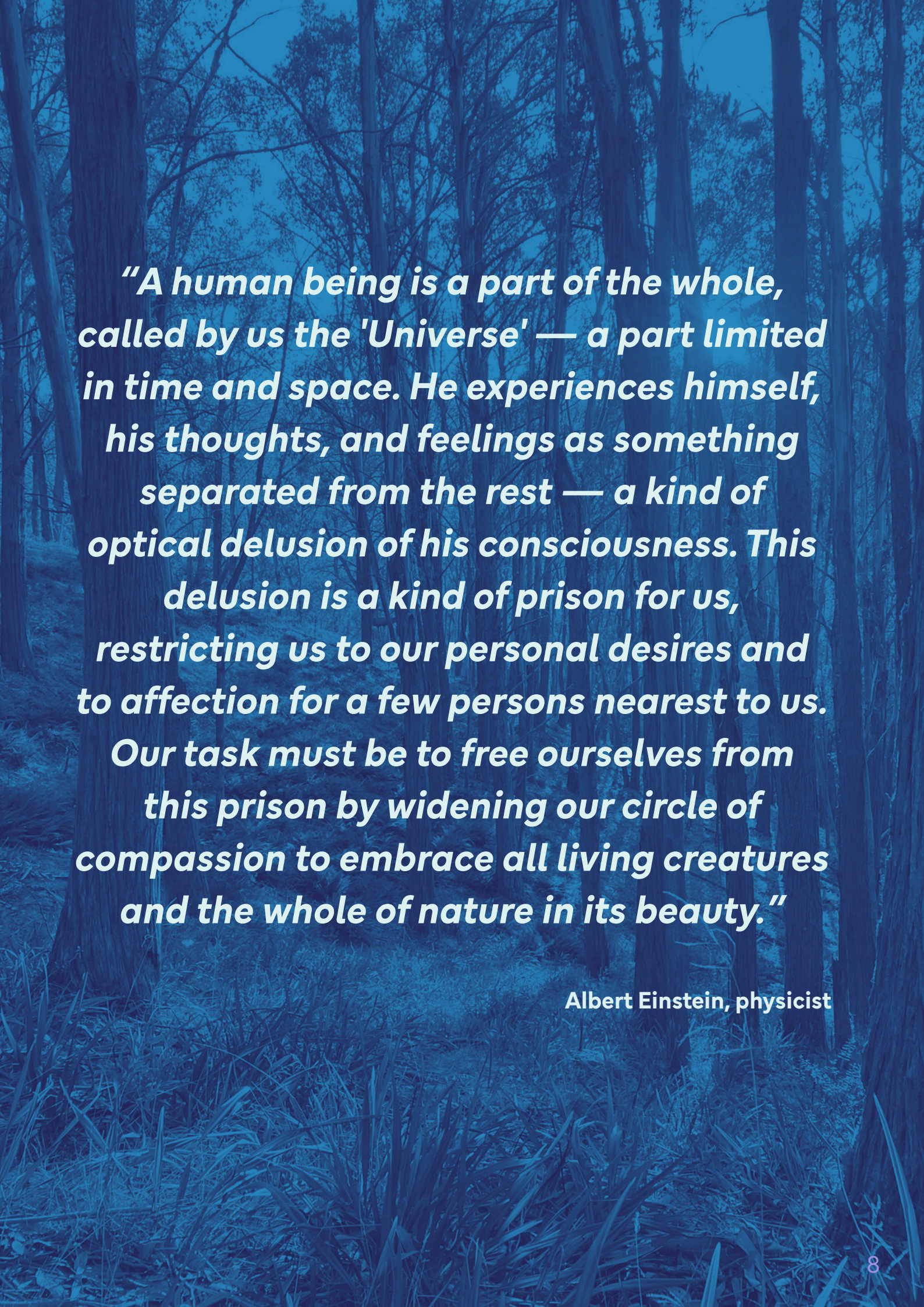
Heaven – and a sense of the sacred – is not elsewhere, it is here, woven into life and we can learn to participate in it through the way we live, relate, and make meaning.

Opening up to life as a sacred endeavour invites us to live our lives in a sacred manner, and become more conscious of when we violate this sacredness through exploitation, pollution and greed.

By MM draining the sacredness out of life, we remove depth from nature and push the 'spirit realm' to beyond the clouds. If we work hard and do well, the story goes, we will be rewarded by going to Heaven in the afterlife.

Many scientists and philosophers challenge this separation. The advent of quantum physics and complexity science has shed a light on how deeply interconnected life really is. Many view consciousness as more fundamental than what MM would have us believe. These are not just mystical claims; they are explored within scientific and philosophical inquiry by notable Nobel Laureates like Albert Einstein.





"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the 'Universe' — a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Albert Einstein, physicist

The Quantum Complexity Worldview

By creating a shift in our own hearts and minds, we can up-stretch our consciousness beyond MM and its lens of separateness. In its place, we can cultivate a quality of consciousness that is more attuned to life, which we call Quantum Complexity (QC). QC draws on developments in quantum theory and complexity science over the past few decades, bringing those insights into leadership, organizational development, socioeconomics, and systems change.

The foundations of QC were laid by a class of brilliant 20th century scientists and their breakthrough scientific discoveries. Physicists like Albert Einstein, Erwin Schrodinger, Max Planck, and Steve Weinberg; systems scientists like Ilya Prigogine, Donella Meadows, Gregory Bateson, and Fritjof Capra; psychologists like Carl Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz, Jane Loevinger, and Clare Graves; biologists like Rachel Carson, Barbara McClintock, Brian Goodwin, and Janine Benyus; organizational complexity theorists like Margaret Wheatley, Danah Zohar, Ralph Stacey, and Peter Senge; aided by insights from many others, morphed our modern understanding of how the world works.

We have the opportunity to evolve from machine-like linearity and objectification of **organization-as-machine** and **self-as-separate** to a deeper systemic perception of life as relational and interconnected where we know **self-as-participatory** and **organization-as-living-system**.



The individual leader, team, organization, and stakeholder ecosystem are inter-relating and interdependent, meaning they are not separate from or in hyper-competition with each other. Yes, there still exist competitive edges (which positively impel entrepreneurialism and creativity, as well as sometimes undermining it); however, everything interpenetrates, participates, exchanges, and connects through energetic emergent relationships that are nonlinear, complex, open, diverse, messy, and unpredictable.

The QC worldview is a profound shift from the MM worldview, and doesn't happen overnight. It involves a significant death-rebirth process in our own selves and in our collective methods of education, socio-economics, leadership and governance.

Yet, it's also a transcend-and-include (r)evolution that does not turn its back on all we've learnt during the last few centuries of MM. The ambition, self-agency, technological prowess, identity ethics, and scientific innovation evolved through MM's modernity is an important part of our lineage and learning.

In moving into QC we bring forth a deeper being-and-knowing and activate ancient wisdom inherent in us. Put simply, QC draws upon modernity's MM and premodern ways, while working with the latest scientific findings and empirical evidence available to us.

MM Mechanistic Materialism	QC Quantum Complexity
Linear, binary, cause-effect sequence	Nonlinear, relational, rhythmic flow
Outer fixing	Inner-outer developmental inquiry
Outcomes & destinations	Learning journeys
Data-acquisition for head-certainty	Receptive pattern-sensing with warm & cold data
Rational-analytic logic	Rational-intuitive-emotional-somatic knowing
Strive, achieve, seek, solve	Surrender, presence, listen, dance with
Managing others' impressions	Self-and-systemic awareness
Control over nature	Attune with nature
Reactive to external change	Responsive to inner-outer emergence
Disparate events	Systemic interdependence
Resist tension	Hold tension
Conflict resolution	Tension transmutation
Cope amid complexity	Thrive amid complexity
Left-hemispheric yang dominance	Left-right yin-yang coherence
Dog-eat-dog competition	Collaboration & competition
Power over	Power with
Short-termist, Chronos	Multiple time horizons, Chronos-Kairos
Egoic-persona	Ego-soul dynamic
Anthropocentric	Life-centric
Control-manage	Sense-respond
Parent-child	Adult-adult
Excessive doing	Being & doing
Self-as-separate	Self-as-participatory
Organization-as-machine	Organization-as-living-system
Capitalist-consumerism	Regenerative Business & Economics
Machine-mentality	Living Systems Awareness
Achiever	Regenerator
'Philosophy of hell'	'Philosophy of life'

Perhaps THE key aspect of this shift into QC is a dawning realization that consciousness is not a byproduct of neural activity in the brain but is actually pervasive throughout life, even in the emptiness of space. This is a significant shift for the MM lens of separateness to try and comprehend.

Quantum physics has smashed open the clear-cut foundations of MM's reductive rationalistic science, and there is now a significant groundswell of robust scientific thinking that acknowledges consciousness as imbued in all things. Nothing, it would seem, is separate from anything else. Nature (including human nature) is a diversity-within-unity. The transcendent unmanifest energetic 'inner' field of consciousness (mind) and the manifest immanent 'outer' physical forms (matter) are two sides of the same coin.

Nature is not an ensemble of separate things. It is animated by a primordial energetic field that in-forms all energy forms, including non-matter energy forms, such as sound and electromagnetism (which includes the light spectrum). This emanation of energy from inner into outer works through harmonics and we have the ability to attune with this animating principle - this life-force - that is beyond the world of form and matter.

The dynamics of quantum complexity may seem a bit out there or cutting edge, but in reality, they're timeless and can be found throughout the ancient wisdom traditions the world over and are simply attuning us to the way nature works.



In Summary

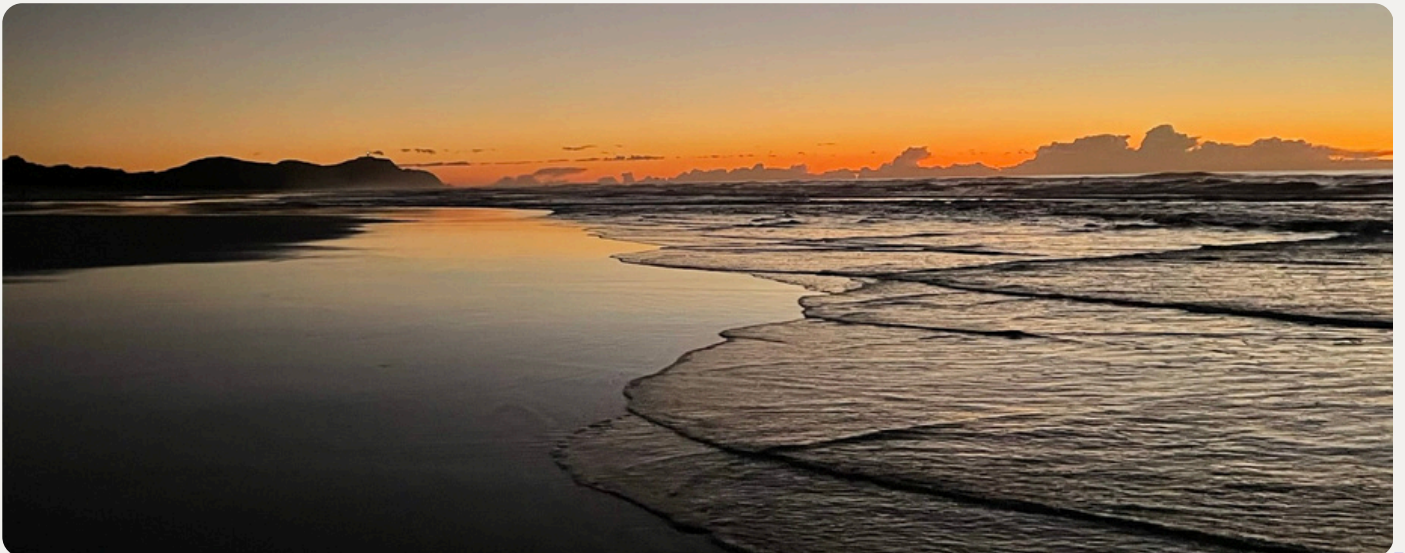
Today, much of humanity has largely forgotten what it means to be human. Our dominant worldview (MM), with its insidious lens of separation, has become a collective contagion, a stupefying intoxication that is sedating our minds and corrupting our futures. This dangerous delusion has devastating consequences for not only ourselves and our organizations, but for the future of our humanity and the very fabric of life on Earth.

To learn to see through MM's lens of separation is no mean feat. It requires a courageous death-rebirth threshold-crossing whereupon we depart the status quo safety of MM and enter into the new worldview of QC. This is what the times we live in demand of us as leaders and change agents. The word 'leadership' finds its root in the old European word 'leith' which means 'to cross the threshold', 'to die and be reborn'.

Embodying QC is a 'rebirth' - a developmental up-stretch whereupon we lean-in to life as a learning process. We make meaning in richer ways by expanding our hearts and minds beyond the narrowness of MM's lens of separateness. In doing so, we reconnect back into the rapture of reality and learn to work in-tune with life on Earth.

This involves dedicated soul-work ranging from psychotherapeutic practices to somatic body work to shadow-work to extra sensory cultivation. Over time, and with dedicated practice, we deepen into our true nature and begin to work with wisdom, ensuring we live more meaningful lives and position ourselves front and center of the emerging Age of Wisdom as opposed to being enslaved by the machines of our own making.

The time has come to unfurl our innate capacity to flourish, to realize our potential and wake up to our humanity. The precarious predicament of the polycrisis becomes the very thing that forces us to wake-up. It becomes a metacrisis that catalyses a new symphony in human identity freed from the illusion of separation.



About the Authors

If you would like to explore the themes explored in this Paper in more detail, then you can tune-in to the Keys for Future-Fit Leadership podcast found [here](#), and feel free to contact the authors Hayley Morris and Giles Hutchins [here](#) for further conversation.



Giles Hutchins

Thirty years of professional advisory & leadership experience, formerly Director of Business Transformation & Head of Practice with KPMG, and Global Director of Sustainability Solutions for multinational Atos (150,000 employees across 42 countries), last 14 yrs as Executive Coach, thought leader and advisor on future-fit leadership. Author of 7 critically acclaimed leadership books and several leadership papers. His coaching work has been called 'life changing'. Find out more about his coaching [here](#). His Leading by Nature podcast can be found [here](#), which interviews a selection of his coaching clients.



Hayley Morris

[Hayley Morris](#) is an Australian philanthropist, impact investor and social entrepreneur, with 20 years' experience across business, philanthropy, investing and systems change. She has co-founded Sustainable Table, Climate Zero, The Regenerative Leader, and farm-to-table restaurant Barragunda Dining. She leads her family's philanthropy and impact investments through the Morris Family Foundation, is a Director of her family office, The Morris Group, and is a certified leadership coach in vertical development, working with change leaders across the impact sector.



Keys for Future-Fit Leadership Academy

Co-founded by Hayley Morris and Giles Hutchins, this leadership academy is dedicated to facilitating a developmental up-stretch toward life-affirming Future-Fitness for purpose-based leaders, philanthropists, impact investors and systems-change practitioners, see www.kffla.co