

Alignment Beyond Agreement

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1. Alignment versus Agreement

Alignment is congruence of intention, whereas agreement is congruence of opinion.

Opinion is a supposition elevated to the status of a conclusion held to be right but not substantiated by positive proof—rational or evidential. Because disagreement means difference of opinion, disagreement often escalates into a dispute as to whose opinion is right. When the dispute is not resolved through the logic of argument, the illogic of *might* tends to enter the realm of *right*, sometimes resulting in violent conflict.

Alignment does not require agreement as a necessary condition. Alignment as congruence of intention is congruence of resolution for the attainment of a particular aim. An aim being in and of the future, unknown or unpredicted variables inevitably enter the generative equations for its achievement. Inherent in alignment, therefore, is the spirit of quest.

The spirit of quest generates open and evolving dialogue-in-action. Participants of a quest bring in diverse points of view while remaining united in the same quest. When they jointly choose a course of action, they know that the choice is a tentative mutual agreement, to be modified, altered, or even discarded along the way. The question is not “who is right” but “what is best” for the fulfillment of the intention.

Alignment engenders synergy. Following R. Buckminster Fuller's definition, synergy means behaviors of whole systems unpredicted by behaviors of their subsystems taken separately and observed apart from the whole.⁽¹⁾ When individuals are aligned in quest, their collective intelligence often produces results that are beyond the intelligence of any single individual. Although the locus of thinking always remains within the individual, the synergetic impact of the thinking of others takes the individual beyond the normal mode and boundary of his or her thinking.

Intelligence follows intention. Aligned intention creates a synergetic field of spiritual coherence that works as a conduit for enhanced intelligence and empowered action beyond the usual limitation of the individual. This explains in part the occurrence of concentrated upsurges of phenomenally creative geniuses in certain epochs in history, such as the ancient Greek civilization, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment.

In an alignment-based organization or movement, disagreement among participants does not diminish but rather enhances the power of the alignment and its synergetic impact. Plurality and diversity of ideas and views, united in a shared intention, mutually enrich one another toward the achievement of an end. In an agreement-based organization or movement, on the other hand, disagreement among participants often leads to internal strife, divisive politics, splitting into cliques, or eventual demise.

An agreement-based organization can transform itself to an alignment-based organization by shifting its value focus from agreement to alignment, from opinion to intention. Alignment is not a static state; it is a dynamic process of constant aligning and realigning in the continual movement of time through the timeless commitment to an intention.

People who differ in their opinions can align in their intentions. No more do we need the usual politics of opinion-domination, which is subverting the very integrity of human-unity. What we need instead is a new politics of intention-alignment, which is a co-creative art of peaceful and mutually contributory co-existence of people and nations through alignment beyond agreement or disagreement.

A set of critical challenges that face humanity today includes the challenge of whether or not we can shift our value focus from opinion to intention, whether or not we can affirm common intentions, whether or not we can transcend differences of opinion and unite in common intentions, whether or not we can forge a planetary alignment for the achievement of our common intentions, and whether or not we can reconcile seemingly conflicting or misaligned intentions.

2. Nature of Opinion

Opinion is a substitute for authentic knowledge. The epistemic nature of human consciousness is such that we obtain access to reality conceptually through abstract symbolic forms in the symbolic space of images and languages. Authentic knowledge or truth is traditionally understood to be a contextually unified arrangement of coherent symbolic representations that coincides with (the human experience of) reality. However, except in the discipline of physical science wherein the scientific method and the standard of knowledge have been long established, the distinction between opinion and knowledge in other fields of epistemic pursuit has remained somewhat obscure.

With the establishment of the scientific method in the 17th-18th centuries by such thinkers as Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz, the physical science of external nature in its quantitative and quantifiable aspects (primary qualities) has emancipated itself from the realm of mere speculation or opinion. Authentic scientific knowledge is knowledge attained through strict adherence to the scientific method. What makes scientific knowledge objective is the objectivity or the public nature of the scientific method itself.

In science, knowledge claims are legitimized not by their origins, because the origins of knowledge—individual human experiences and observations—are diverse and fallible, but by the objectively established norms and rules of inquiry: the scientific method. In science, therefore, method is the final arbiter and judge of knowledge, which by design always remains to be hypothesis, verifiable or falsifiable, and constantly in the process of modification or revision on the way toward its ultimate destination—final and ultimate hypothesis or theory of physical reality.⁽²⁾

However, no such objective method of inquiry or standard of knowledge exists in any other fields of epistemic pursuit. Science means the systematic pursuit of knowledge of reality *subsumed under the category of quantity*. The domain of proper scientific inquiry is thus outside the qualitative realms of reality and the value dimensions of life.⁽³⁾ Reality, or experience of reality, however, is not limited to the realm of quantity. In order to live a meaningful life as a functioning human being, we require sound knowledge in the realms of quality, value, and meaning. Yet, when it comes to knowledge in these realms of quality, value, and meaning, humanity today remains essentially at the level of opinion.

Whereas quantitative knowledge of physical science pursues *objectivity* through adherence to the scientific method, qualitative knowledge of value and meaning pursues *certainty* through the attainment of wisdom. Wisdom is appreciative discernment and critical acumen concerning quality, value, and meaning, which arises from a systemic awareness of reality that is free from egological fragmentation.⁽⁴⁾ Being short of attaining wisdom, qualitative knowledge remains at the level of opinion, held to be right but without certainty. Wisdom requires a *systemic* intensification of intrinsic cognitive capacity and therefore a *systematic* self-development and self-intensification of intrinsic cognitive capacity. Unfortunately, relatively few people are given to engaging in such a process of self-development toward genuine wisdom. Hence, our world tends to remain more opinionated than wise.

Nevertheless, knowledge concerning value and meaning holds a fundamental significance for human beings. Epistemic certainty in regard to the questions of ultimate value and meaning bestows us with existential certainty and psychological security. Traditionally, religion is supposed to provide answers to such ultimate questions of value and meaning. However, religion usually provides answers in the form of mere beliefs, that is, opinions, and hence it provides only a semblance of certainty. Insofar as that which religion offers remains to be mere beliefs or opinions, it can provide believers only with a false sense of certainty or security. Deep down in their psyche, religious “believers” remain uncertain and insecure. The extremism of absolutistic religious fanaticism or fundamentalism is a psychologically reactionary, fear-driven expression of this deep-seated uncertainty and insecurity.

Similarly, in their search for certainty and security, secular modern and postmodern minds are not free from the absolutist or extremist tendencies characteristic of the mindset of religious believers. Both the modern and the postmodern minds produced two extremist-absolutist schools of thought, the former being materialism and scientism, and the latter being relativism and subjectivism. Certainty is the spiritual and existential need of the human psyche, which no absolutist-extremist opinion or belief can provide.

What began in the 17th century as the primary focus of scientific investigation—the material realm of reality that yields to quantitative measurement—came to be considered by the 20th century the only reality there is: materialism or materialistic monism. The scientific method originally developed in the 17th century for the objective investigation of the quantitative

realm of reality came to be considered by the 20th century the only legitimate method of reaching valid knowledge: scientism. Yet, ironically, materialism, scientism, and its combination, materialistic scientism, remain classes of mere opinion, along with other kinds of opinion- *qua* -knowledge, because they suffer from the self-deceptive irrationalism of excepting themselves from the standard of knowledge they claim to be valid. That is, materialism in its subject matter belongs to the domain of non-quantitative metaphysics and scientism in its theoretical formulation is not based on the scientific method.

Relativism, which epitomizes the postmodern pluralistic mind, is the opinion that absolutely denies every kind of absoluteness. Relativism sets out to reduce every kind of absoluteness to a mode of relativity, while irrationally and absurdly making itself the only exception. Relativism categorically claims that it is absolutely true that there is no absolute truth, and that it is absolutely true that only relative truth exists. Subjectivism, on the other hand, universally claims that human knowledge can never escape human subjectivity and therefore no objective knowledge is possible. Subjectivism thus irrationally denies objectivity to all possible knowledge claims except itself, and thereby self-negates its own validity.

Today public discourse is often dominated by religious fundamentalism of various denominational persuasions (absurd absolutism of plural absolutism) on the one hand, and by secular extremism of various philosophical persuasions (absolute absurdity of absolute relativism and absolutely objective subjectivism) on the other. Even the voices of wisdom and reason uttered by today's sages and seers often become intermixed with the noisy commotion of opinionation and disappear into a mono-dimensional, flat relativity of multitudinous opinions.

People's opinions often differ, sometimes vastly, so vastly that they speak literally different languages even when they share a common linguistic heritage. No universal agreement on any issue is ever likely to be reached. Therefore, if we were to bet our future on agreement, on congruity of varied opinions, we would be making a grievous mistake. What is taking place today is that those who share the same opinion form a group of their own, often against other groups who hold different or opposite opinions. This tendency is most pronounced in the world of politics or wherever politics is involved, because politics as practiced today is based on and thrives on the logic of *versus*, of opposition and conflict. What is considered a religious or ethnic conflict is in facticity often a political conflict for power in the battlefield of opinion-domination.

3. Transcending Opinion

Human beings are beings of symbolic consciousness. We obtain access to reality through a symbolic re-creation of reality in the symbolic space of images, languages, and concepts. Thus, in the process of our enworldment, we become existentially embedded in this abstract, symbolic space. Our opinion is not just a point of view that we happen to hold in order to relate to the world. Our opinion indeed constitutes a significant part of our egological self-identity existing inside symbolic space. That is, we identify our egological self with the opinions we hold. To a significant degree we *are* our opinions. Therefore, dissemination of our opinion is tantamount to propagation of our egological self. Negation of our opinion is tantamount to denial of our egological self. To the degree our opinion is validated or invalidated, our egological existence is validated or invalidated. For this reason, a dispute as to whose opinion is right can escalate into a battle of life and death.

To transcend the stronghold of opinion, we must first transcend the stronghold of our egological self, because the powerful hold that opinion has on our existence stems from the mistaken identification of our opinion with our egological self, which we presume to be our true self.

The self is the locus of integrity that coherently holds experience together. Integrity is the intentional coherence that maintains the balance and harmony of the whole. The egological self has its locus of integrity in the notion of the 'I' inside the abstract, symbolic space. The notion of the 'I' or the ego exists in contradistinction to the notion of the 'not-I'. Thus, the ego, as the locus of integrity that holds experience together, holds experience together in terms of the division between 'mine' and 'not-mine'.

More precisely, the egological self exists as a sentence structure in the symbolic space of language. The egological self is the sentence structure: I am that I am X or I am that it is X, in which the predicate "am that I am X" or "am that it is X" becomes the self-identifier of the 'I' and "that I am X" or "that it is X" becomes the self-identity of the 'I'. As the sentence structure of an opinion can be reduced to "(that) it is X," it is easy to recognize how the egological self identifies itself with opinions.

In the process of our enworldment in term of the egological self, the number of X's in “that I am X” and “that it is X” increases, along with the increase of the number of Y's in “that I am not Y” and “that it is not Y.” Thus the “individuality” that develops with the egological self is based on the *divisibility* of the world into the ‘I’ and the ‘not-I’. Within the symbolic space, this divisibility serves an important purpose and function of making distinction and differentiation, and therefore of conceptualization and communication. Yet, the egological self is not the whole self, nor is the egological “individuality” true individuality.

The totality of our experience includes both the symbolic and non-symbolic experiences, both the internal and external experiences. Our true self or whole self is the locus of integrity that coherently holds and upholds the totality of our experience—the symbolic and non-symbolic, the internal and external. In the presence of our whole self as the locus of integrity, everything that constitutes our total experience integrally coheres into an *indivisible* whole. This indivisible whole is what our true individuality means (from Latin *individuus* : *in-* , not , + *dividuus* , divisible), which is different from the divisible “individuality” of the egological self.

Following Ken Wilber's distinction, the term “Kosmos” we define as the external universe (the cosmos) interpenetratingly conjugate with the internal universe (the mind).⁽⁵⁾ Our true, whole self is the Kosmic Self, which is the locus of integrity that coherently holds and upholds in wholeness the total experience of the external universe interpenetratingly coupled with the internal universe, including the symbolic universe of images, languages, and concepts. The Kosmic Self designates the self in the presence of which true individuality emerges. When expressed as a sentence, the Kosmic Self is “I am that I am” without any particular ‘X’.

The egological self is a subsystem of the Kosmic Self, even as the symbolic universe is a subsystem of the whole Kosmos. Opinion-making is a sub-process of the whole process of symbolic re-creation of our experience of reality inside symbolic space. From the Kosmic perspective, we *have* our egological self but we are not our egological self; and we *have* our opinions but we are not our opinions. By thus seeing through and through what the reality of the egological self is and what the reality of opinion is, we transcend and free ourselves from the stronghold of the ego and opinion with which the ego tends to identify.

4. Creating Alignment

Both intention and opinion are functions of symbolic thought. However, whereas intention is creative and future-directed, opinion is re-creative and past-based. Intention uses symbolic thought to create a future as an idea or vision, whereas opinion uses it to symbolically re-create observations of the past. Intention followed by action transforms idea into reality. Etymology indicates that “to intend” means “to stretch toward” (from Latin *intendere* : *in-* , toward + *tendere* , to stretch). Through the act of intending, we stretch our thought and imagination toward a future and, through action, bring it forth into reality.

Research by the pioneer researcher Cleve Backster has shown that sentient organisms from plants and bacteria to human cells respond to human thought and intention.⁽⁶⁾ Research by the frontier experimental scientist William Tiller and his colleagues has shown that even what is called non-sentient matter responds to human thought and intention.⁽⁷⁾ Various writings of such illumined thinkers as Thomas Troward, Walter Russell, Ernest Holmes, and Harold Percival expound that this universe (the Kosmos) itself is a thought-created universe,⁽⁸⁾ which view the transdisciplinary researcher Keith Chandler calls *mental realism* in contradistinction to *physical realism* .⁽⁹⁾

According to the mental realist perspective, at some levels of reality, that which is thought or intended invariably happens, albeit possibly unseen or invisible. This means that our intention has a consequence and that we are responsible for our thoughts and intentions and their consequences. This also means that we hold the power to impact the destiny of the world as well as our own individual destiny.

Thus, the world we observe today can be seen as the manifestation of the collective intentions of the whole of humanity. Accordingly, we are collectively responsible for the state of affairs of the world. Therefore, we can take individual responsibility for the destiny of our world—if not the whole world, then its integral part. To proclaim the power to help mold the destiny of our world may indeed be the most powerful stand that we can take in life.

Looking at the world as a whole, we recognize that the fundamental, underlying problem of the world is the systemic breakdown of integrity, affecting and afflicting the whole meridian of human-unity. For example, the astronomical disparity

in wealth existing between the rich and the poor of the world is a clear sign of a breakdown of integrity of human-unity. The unending conflicts existing in certain parts of the world is a definite sign of a breakdown of integrity of human-unity. Integrity means intentional coherence that maintains the balance and harmony of the whole. Therefore, a breakdown of integrity indicates a deficiency of intention for coherence as well as coherence itself.

There are a multitude of intentions composing the human world, many of which are misaligned or conflicting. Egologically-based intentions are often misaligned or in conflict; Kosmologically-based intentions are basically aligned and in accord. Whereas the basic intent of egologically-based intentions is the advancement of the egological self and all that which it identifies itself to be, the basic intent of Kosmologically-based intentions is the advancement of the whole, that is, the Kosmic Self in at-one-ment with a world of experience that coheres into a whole in the presence of the Kosmic Self as the locus of integrity.

Needless to say, egological intentions dominate and have always dominated the world. Even those who profess to champion the causes of the advancement of the whole are sometimes motivated by their egological orientations and self-serving intentions. An egological orientation is intrinsically antithetical and non-conducive to successful alignment. Yet, in order to create significant change and development in the world and in order to generate increasingly greater integrity throughout the whole system of human-unity, it is precisely amongst those who are egologically oriented that alignment needs to take place.

The creation of successful alignment requires a cause, a final cause, that transcends but includes individual intentions and concerns of the egological self. Those who are Kosmologically oriented are already Kosmically aligned. It is the primal responsibility of the Kosmically-aligned not only to work with one another to enhance their Kosmic alignment but also to engage all levels and kinds of people in the creation of an alignment designed to be maximally inclusive and optimally synergetic. They are uniquely qualified for the task of expressly creating a visionary intent that serves as the final cause and the unifying vector which generates an energetic-synergetic field of alignment.

Forging a successful alignment requires tremendous creativity; it requires a dynamic, collaborative art of co-creation. An intentionally co-created alignment with an overall creative design is called creative alliance. Creative alliance is the *designed order* of energetic-synergetic alignment designed to facilitate the optimal emergence of *spontaneous order* in the fulfillment of a common intention and for the attainment of a shared vision.

5. From Solution to Resolution

Einstein's oft-quoted saying, which states in effect that a problem cannot be effectively solved at the same level of thinking at which it was created, does not address the most critical question: how to transcend the level of thinking that created the problem. Einstein himself, however, with his two 1905 papers, not merely solved a set of problems vexing the world of physics at the turn of the 20th century but also, more precisely speaking, *resolved* them by proposing a new vision of the universe wherein the laws of physics were invariant, the speed of light was constant, space-time was relative, and the ether as theretofore supposed was not required. [\(10\)](#) Thus, Einstein demonstrated through his work what it meant to transcend the level of thinking that had produced the problem, which was resolved at a higher level of thinking.

There are two distinct approaches to problem solving: the atomistic approach and the systemic approach. Our normal approach to problem solving is to seek to formulate a solution *particular* to the problem at issue. This is the atomistic approach in which problems are identified locally in isolation from the whole system and particular solutions are formulated to solve them. A solution thus formulated requires for its existence the very existence of the problem to which it is a solution. For, to have an existence means to have an identity. Therefore, the solution's existence is tantamount to its identity as a solution to a problem. That is, the atomistic existence of the solution depends on the atomistic persistence of the problem. No shift in worldview has taken place; the problem and the solution co-inhabit the same world wherein the problem has arisen in the first place. Besides, solutions atomistically formulated tend sooner or later to turn into additional problems to be solved.

There is a different approach to problem solving, the systemic approach, which involves a higher level of thinking than the level of thinking at which the problem in question was created. This approach requires (1) that we envision a whole new world or a whole new system wherein the problem at issue does not exist to begin with, and (2) that we take necessary action to systemically and systematically create that new world.

Another of Einstein's insightful statements, that “imagination is more important than knowledge,” directly addresses the difference between these two approaches to problem solving. In the symbolic space of images and concepts, creative imagination *constructs* a future, whereas informational knowledge *reconstructs* the past. When faced with problems, we habitually seek solutions inside that which we already know—the domain of our knowledge. However, the kind of knowledge we have, the kind of being we are, and the kind of thinking we use constitute the kind of world we inhabit, which produces the problems we have and the solutions we formulate.

The systemic breakdown of integrity that underlies the existing problems of the world is symptomatic of the kind of world we inhabit, and is therefore symptomatic of the kind of knowledge we have, the kind of being we are, and the kind of thinking we use. To resolve this systemic breakdown of integrity, we must create a new world where systemic integrity and coherence is present. Viewing a particular breakdown of integrity as a holographic manifestation of a systemic breakdown of the whole, we can systemically approach a particular problem. However, even when we deal with a particular problem, we must first envision a *whole* new world wherein breakdowns of integrity are absent and systemic coherence is present.

In the systemic approach, as Einstein demonstrated in his work, we envision a new world, a new universe, free of the problems at issue. The difference between the worlds of scientific theory and human action (praxiology) is that in the latter the envisioning of a world wherein the problem does not exist is not the end point as in the former but it is the beginning of necessary action for the realization of that world.

The vision of that new world beckons people to come forth in alignment. The intention to create that new world engenders alignment. In envisioning a world wherein the current problems of the world do not exist, we have *resolved* the problems inside the symbolic space of imagination and ideation. This symbolic resolution of problems through envisioning evolves into an aligned resolution for the creation of that world in reality.

As the new universe envisioned by Einstein required a new set of mathematical equations, the new world envisioned by an alliance integrator requires a new set of praxiological equations proper to that world. That is, the principles of human action and the design of human alignment for the realization of a new world need to be those of that new world, not of the current world, in order for that world to become a reality. We are required to be and to act in accordance with the principles and designs of the envisioned world, not of the current world. Gandhi said this eloquently: “Be the change that you want to make.” We must *be* before we can *become*. This also corresponds to the profound but seemingly paradoxical Buddhist insight that to reach the other shore (*nirvana*) from this shore (*samsara*) one must come from the other shore.

Opinion by nature is of this shore, and therefore no opinion, no agreement, will ever lead us to the other shore. It is aligned intention alone, empowered and enabled by the vision of the other shore, which can lead us to the other shore. Designed order of creative alliance comes from the other shore. Spontaneous order unfolds in the intentional re-creation of the other shore as this shore. Alignment evolves in the creative dance between the designed and spontaneous orders. Aligned, we remain in but not of this world, because we are of the other world of our envisioning, for the creation of which we are together engaged in transformative action.

Notes:

1. [This](#) definition of the term “synergy” is a combined modification of the original definitions in Fuller, R. Buckminster, *Synergetics*, 1975, and *Synergetics 2*, 1979, Macmillan Publishing Co, Inc.
2. [Most](#) penetrating analysis and synthesis of the scientific method can be found in the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce's writings. *The Essential Peirce* Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, (Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, Editors), 1998, Indiana University Press.
3. [The](#) contemporary scientific work by systems-oriented scientists such as Ervin Laszlo and Wing Pon expands the discipline of science beyond the realm of quantity. (See Yasuhiko G. Kimura's book reviews on their work that will appear in *VIA: The Journal of New Thinking for New Action* throughout 2004.)
4. [The](#) terms “appreciative discernment” and “critical acumen” are taken from the Buddhist scholar Herbert Guenther's *The Creative Vision*, Latsawa, 1987, and his other writings, including *Thig-le: Ultimate Simplicity as Dynamic Multiplicity – singulare tantum*, unpublished manuscript, 2002.
5. [This](#) definition of the term “Kosmos” is conceptually aligned with Ken Wilber's original distinction in Wilber, Ken, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Shambhala, 1995.

6. [Backster](#), Cleve, *Primary Perception: Biocommunication with Plants, Living Foods, and Human Cells*, White Rose Millennium Press, 2003.
7. [Tiller](#), William A.; Dibble, Walter E.; Kohane, Michael J., *Conscious Acts of Creation: The Emergence of A New Physics*, Pavior Publishing, 2001. Also, Tiller, William, "Toward Quantitative Science and Technology that Includes Human Consciousness," *VIA, The Journal of New Thinking for New Action*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Vision-In-Action, 2003.
8. [Major](#) works of these authors are as follows: Thomas Troward, *The Creative Process in the Individual* (1915); Walter Russell, *The Universal One* (1926); Earnest Holmes, *The Science of Mind* (1938); Harold Percival, *Thinking and Destiny* (1946).
9. [Chandler](#), Keith, *The Mind Paradigm: A Unified Model of Mental and Physical Reality*, Author's Choice Press, 2001.
10. "[On](#) the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies" and "Does the Inertia of a Body Depend on Its Energy Content?" included in *Einstein's Miraculous Years: Five Papers That Changed the Faces of Physics* (John Stachel, Editor), Princeton University Press, 1998.

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