



Service-Growth

WHITE PAPER

Expanding Our Vision of What's Possible

by

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Expanding Our Vision of What's Possible

We are part of an abundant universe, though many assume an environment of scarcity. While we often think we must have pain in order to have growth (“no pain, no gain”), that is not true. In fact, a belief that change and growth must be painful usually leads to our being fearful and constricted in our perspective. While fear may, at times, move us to action, it is not an empowering emotion. It often leads to our trying to avoid risk and “hunker down.” It predisposes us to accept doom and gloom predictions. It does not empower us to look for alternatives.

Embracing Joy

The keynote, or basic energy, of our universe is actually joy. Joy is a quality that produces a delight so extreme that we radiate and express it spontaneously. It is similar to happiness, but does not involve having achieved some result. Our natural state is joyous. Just watch a young infant as it delights in each happening. That delight is possible for us every day, depending on the focus we choose. We can choose to focus on what we feel is missing from our lives, or we can choose to be grateful for all the positives.

Shifting to a focus on joy involves a conscious *experimental approach* to life. We need to love obstacles, to welcome making mistakes as part of growth. We need to encourage ourselves in risk-taking instead of aiming for a static state of perfection. Risk-taking, after all, is critical for learning to make appropriate choices. Instead of focusing on our mistakes or on what we are giving up—for example, attachment to specific outcomes, criticism of others, a sense of separateness and superiority—we need to focus on what we have learned from our mistakes and on strengthening our compassion for ourselves and others.

Think of a beautiful passage of music. The beauty flows from the musician selecting certain notes to be played in a specific sequence with other notes. The musician cannot create the music if all notes are selected indiscriminately, or if the musician's focus is on the notes that are being “given up” by not being selected. Joy arises from the possibilities unleashed when the selection or choice is made.

Joy crowds out illusion and misunderstanding and brings with it a sense of strength, of no doubts, no regrets, no fear. In fact, joy and fear are incompatible. While in a state of joy, we may recognize any immediate distress and deal with it; our focus is on positive ways to heal and transform the experience.

Remembering Who We Really Are

So how do we shift our focus from fear of scarcity to joy? How do we open ourselves to a universe of infinite possibilities? *Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen*¹ outlines seven core principles that are central to our being and yet are often misunderstood. If we understand these principles and take them to heart, we will transform our presence in the world and the options that we see as possible.

First and foremost is the **Principle of Interconnectivity**, reminding us that we are all part of the same cosmic energy field. Usually we experience ourselves as unique individuals. In fact, establishing personal boundaries that separate and distinguish us from others has been assumed by psychologists to be a critical sign of maturity. But actually maturity is related to holding the tension of simultaneous separateness and wholeness, of being unique and yet being part of the cosmos and linked to all other living beings.

Most of us have been raised believing that we are unconnected to others except by biological links or emotional choice. This illusion allows us to believe that we need to rely on our own resources and protect ourselves from others. But our reality is that our energetic fields are interconnected.

We can help ourselves understand this dynamic by reflecting on how the energy of others affects ourselves. Can you remember a time when you encountered someone who really disliked you and who seemed to be “looking daggers” at you? Or can you remember how it felt when someone acted as though you were invisible and didn’t exist? Conversely, can you remember how it feels to walk into a space where others love you and are eager for your presence? Even before a word is spoken or an action taken, you can feel that loving energy surrounding and enveloping you, can’t you? These are just a few demonstrations of the energetic web that binds us together.

The **Principle of Participation** confirms that what we experience as reality is a result of our observation and the meaning we attribute to that observation. In other words, we really do create our experience of reality. Our choices focus the energy on a particular outcome out of a range of possibilities. In an everyday context, what about when you are about to fix dinner? Until you decide what to fix, there are a number of possibilities. Once you decide, only one possibility becomes a reality.

An important aspect of our behavior is the perspective we bring due to the language we use. For example, how we name actions shapes our sense of what is happening. Do you feel any differently, for example, if you talk about “culling” elephant herds or “killing” elephants? If you refer to “missing women” or “abducted, violated women”? If you describe “procedures against Armenians” or “the genocide of Armenians”?



The linguist Benjamin Whorf argued that, since language presents reality in a culturally-specific way, we become parties to an unspoken agreement to organize our experience in those ways. All of us view our experience through the filter of a worldview—a framework of attitudes, beliefs, values, presuppositions through which we interpret our experience and interact with others. It is this worldview that shapes our perceptions, and it also limits or expands the options we see as possible.

To the concept of a worldview, the psychologist and linguist Susanne Cook-Greuter has added the idea of the “language habit which allows us to categorize and label . . . [objects and concepts].”² Cook-Greuter goes on to describe the language habit as having the following attributes:

- It constitutes a universal, all-pervasive dimension of human existence.
- It is innate but needs activation and modeling by expert speakers in early childhood to emerge.
- It is a learned behavior that becomes automatic and unconscious once acquired.
- It bundles the flux of sensory input and inner experience into labeled concepts shared with one’s speech community.
- It is so deeply engrained that speakers of any given language are not aware of the reality construction imposed on them by their language.
- It can become a barrier to further [personal] development if it remains unconscious, automatic, and unexamined.

Recent research has shown that artists perceive the world differently than non-artists.³ Artists tend to scan an entire environment, noting contours and colors and spending only part of their time on objects. Non-artists, by contrast, focus immediately on objects, turning images into concepts (of their own creation) through filtering and anticipation.

Our perceptions and experience are directly shaped by our language and, in turn, create the reality that we experience. If we do not choose to become aware of the “language habit” or way of conceptualizing the world that we have acquired, we will have relatively little control over how we experience the world. In this instance, our “language habit” about whether or not we are innately abundant will shape our reality.

The **Principle of Nonlinearity** asserts that our experience, including how we change and grow, does not occur in a smooth sequential fashion. Time itself is elastic, and we have the ability to reframe our experience in ways that change and heal the past. We have already seen this with the Truth and Reconciliation process that is taking place in a number of communities, most notably South Africa but also many others divided and weakened by hatred and trauma. In



such a process, witness is borne to the facts of what occurred and then ways are found to bridge differences and build towards a better future. This dynamic is possible in any situation where we are estranged from another or where groups in our community are in conflict.

One of the critical aspects of this principle in relation to harmlessness is how we choose to name the cycles of our experience. Historically, we have marked cycles of change by the sequence of warfare (for example, after World War II) and the development of violence-related tools. How might our experience be different if we used time frames related to peace and harmlessness?

This brings us to the **Principle of Nonduality**, which underscores that either-or thinking is too simplistic to describe our experience. Our cosmos is much more complex than considering only two alternatives, which we so commonly do, would imply. We can expand the options we consider at any time by looking for a third, a fourth, and a fifth alternative.

This principle also warns us about a key dynamic underlying violence, which is the division of the world into “us” and “them,” or “friend” and “foe.” In order to harm someone, we have to be able to objectify them and experience them as “other” or “not self.” Tales of genocide and mutilation are routinely accompanied by accounts of the ways in which the victims were first humiliated and degraded. As with the *Principle of Interconnectivity*, this principle reminds us of the interweaving of our energetic selves. So, part of eliminating or avoiding harm to others or ourselves is moving away from this tendency to objectify.

The **Principle of Interdependence** expands on the interconnectedness underlying our being. We are surrounded by a wide variety of life forms on whom we depend and who in turn depend on us. For example, we depend on plant life for oxygen just as it depends on us for carbon dioxide.

In our cosmos, all other beings matter and deserve respect. We are reminded to refrain from harming all other life forms – not simply other humans – through thoughtless or deliberate dismissal and to thank them for their contributions.

We are also interdependent with each other. None of us is completely self-sufficient. We look to others in areas where we are not highly skilled – whether it is the doctor, the auto mechanic, the professor, or the waster recycler. In fact, we can think of the ability to live interdependently – both giving and receiving – as being a mark of maturity.

With the **Principle of Adaptability**, we see that we are part of an ongoing process of growth and change. There is no necessary failure, only feedback and learning what not to do the next time. This dynamic is being captured in the growing popularity of lifelong learning. Our role is not to reach a static perfection. As Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, “Life is a journey, not a destination.”



We grow through the process of focusing and then releasing tension. The question becomes what range of choices we permit ourselves for that release. Do we “let off steam” by allowing ourselves to be violent or by criticizing ourselves or by discussing the problem with a friend?

Finally, the **Principle of Cooperation** directly challenges the widely held belief that we are innately violent, mired in self-interest, and that competition is at the root of our survival. Scientists like Lynn Margulis have shown us that networking, not competition, is actually the fundamental survival strategy used from microbes on up.⁴

Recent psychological research has verified that other primates are helpful, cooperative, and sensitive to situations where participants are not treated equitably.⁵ Of course, we know from watching children that, if we expect someone to behave violently, they will likely do so. If, on the other hand, we trust that others will cooperate, our trust will often be rewarded.

Manifesting Abundance

It has become popular to talk about a Law of Attraction⁶ that, if used, will attract abundance to us. What would be more accurate is to say that there is a basic principle, verified in scientific research, that energy follows thought, that where we focus will determine our experiences. Imagine you are listening to a professional orchestra give a concert. If you allow yourself to be swept up into the music, you will probably have a very positive experience and “glow” with the energy you have absorbed. But, if you choose to focus on details like whether or not the musicians are dressed correctly, whether they are holding their instruments properly, or whether you agree with the method that the conductor is using to conduct the orchestra, you will likely have a negative experience and feel irritable. This propensity for energy to follow thought is the dynamic that underlies the Principle of Participation.

People often overlook the fact that promoting the ability to attract wealth and “all good things” to ourselves implies that we do not already have “all good things” available to us. The image of attraction implies a deficit, that there is something we have to bring to ourselves in order to experience abundance. It implies that we are not already abundant (if we don’t get in our own way), that abundance is somehow outside and may or may not move towards us. We already *have* abundance ... we just need to manifest it in our daily lives.

The popular focus on attracting “all good things” for our individual pleasure also overlooks the fact that we do not exist in isolation. What happens to us affects all those around us. If, for example, we want a clear sunny day to go picnicking or hiking or to the beach, that desire for lack of rain may deprive nearby woods or farm lands of much-needed moisture. When we focus just on



our own desires, we disengage from who we really are as part of a vibrant cosmic energy field. Wanting what works for all of us is more important – and more powerful – than thinking only of ourselves.

If we accept that we are already abundant by nature (since we are part and parcel of our abundant universe), then the issue becomes one of manifestation, not attraction. The dynamic of manifestation is about expressing or becoming who we really are. The critical key is remembering that anything is possible as long as we work together, fuelled by hope, not fear.

¹ Dorothy I. Riddle, *Principles of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen: Volume One* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010).

² Susanne Cook-Greuter, “Mature Ego Development: A Gateway to Ego Transcendence?” *Journal of Adult Development* 7, no. 4 (October 2000), 234.

³ Sadie F. Dingfelder, “How Artists See,” *Monitor on Psychology* 41, no. 2 (February 2010): 40.

⁴ Lynn Margulis, *The Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (London: Phoenix, 1998).

⁵ Sadie F. Dingfelder, “Nice by Nature?” *Monitor on Psychology* 58 (September 2009): 60-61.

⁶ The esoteric Law of Attraction is actually based on the principle of coherence and governs whether our physical selves are viable (“cohere”) or whether we die (“disperse”).