



The Evolution of Consciousness

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Contact Details and Background Info

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In this talk I want to ...

1. Situate neohumanism within an evolutionary narrative
2. Describe the evolution of consciousness as various forms of organisation of relationships
3. Suggest that the future (one possible and my preferred future) is to see evolution take the next step towards greater consciousness of relationship

Background

- ▶ It has been very important for me as an historian, educator and futures researcher to have a sense of how the current struggles towards a more wholesome and love-filled world fit into our human story
- ▶ The key is to understand our story as a movement or evolution from simple forms to complex ones
- ▶ From inanimate matter to life, and from life to self consciousness and then on towards relational consciousness

A working definition...

- ▶ Consciousness is an organising principle
- ▶ Consciousness is a non-local state expressed in local phenomena...
- ▶ So according to time, place and person it fluctuates but has an 'energy' we call order/awareness
- ▶ In human contexts we might call this energy individual awareness and at the collective level we call it culture

- ▶ For me I like to think of Consciousness as 'conversation'
- ▶ Consciousness is the conversation each element of this universe has with the Whole.
- ▶ Ultimately this conversation is an expression of Love!

General Proposition

“Life is not merely matter, but matter energized, matter organized, matter with a glorious and built-in history.”

Margulis and Sagan, 1995, p.41

- ▶ Sarkar argues that everything is consciousness – it is the self-organising principle of the Cosmos
- ▶ Neohumanism is the philosophical commitment to living as though everything *is consciousness*

- ▶ In inanimate matter, consciousness is stored in molecular pattern and bounded by either the laws of Newtonian or Quantum physics
- ▶ Living things are subject to these laws but...
- ▶ In living things consciousness is expressed through problem solving around how to extract energy from the environment.
- ▶ Solutions are stored in our DNA

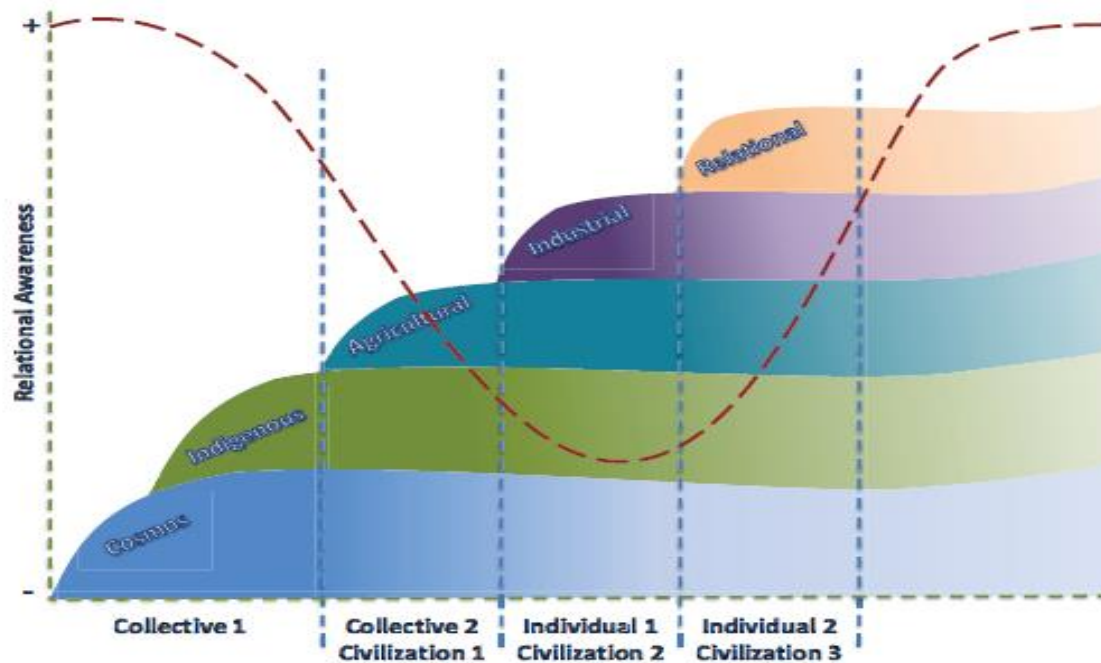
From DNA to Memory



Culture: Collective Memory

- ▶ Culture is what we do – Human beings are culture makers
- ▶ Culture keeps us safe both physically and also existentially (Conservative)
- ▶ Culture sets the conditions for human beings to fulfill their potential (Radical)

My Narrative Map



In the beginning

- ▶ In the beginning of human history we were few and roamed the earth (well parts of East Africa) in small family bands.
- ▶ Education was transmitted orally and through example
- ▶ Spirituality was in the air



Collective 1

This period is the indigenous period where life was collective and the Cosmos was a source of wonder and meaning

Then

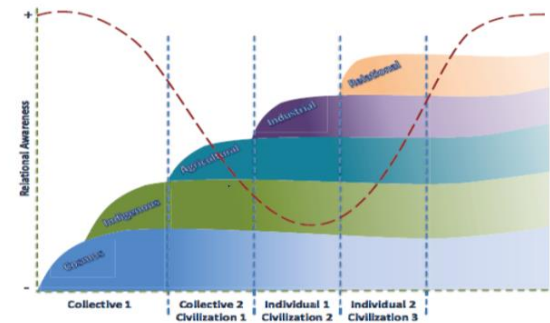
- ▶ Then there were some environmental changes which affected the food supply and some innovative people in South West Asia developed agriculture (about 11 000 years ago)
- ▶ Education was transmitted orally and through example
- ▶ Spirituality was mostly in the air (but also in temples)
- ▶ People began to specialise
- ▶ People began to build permanent homes

The Agricultural Revolution



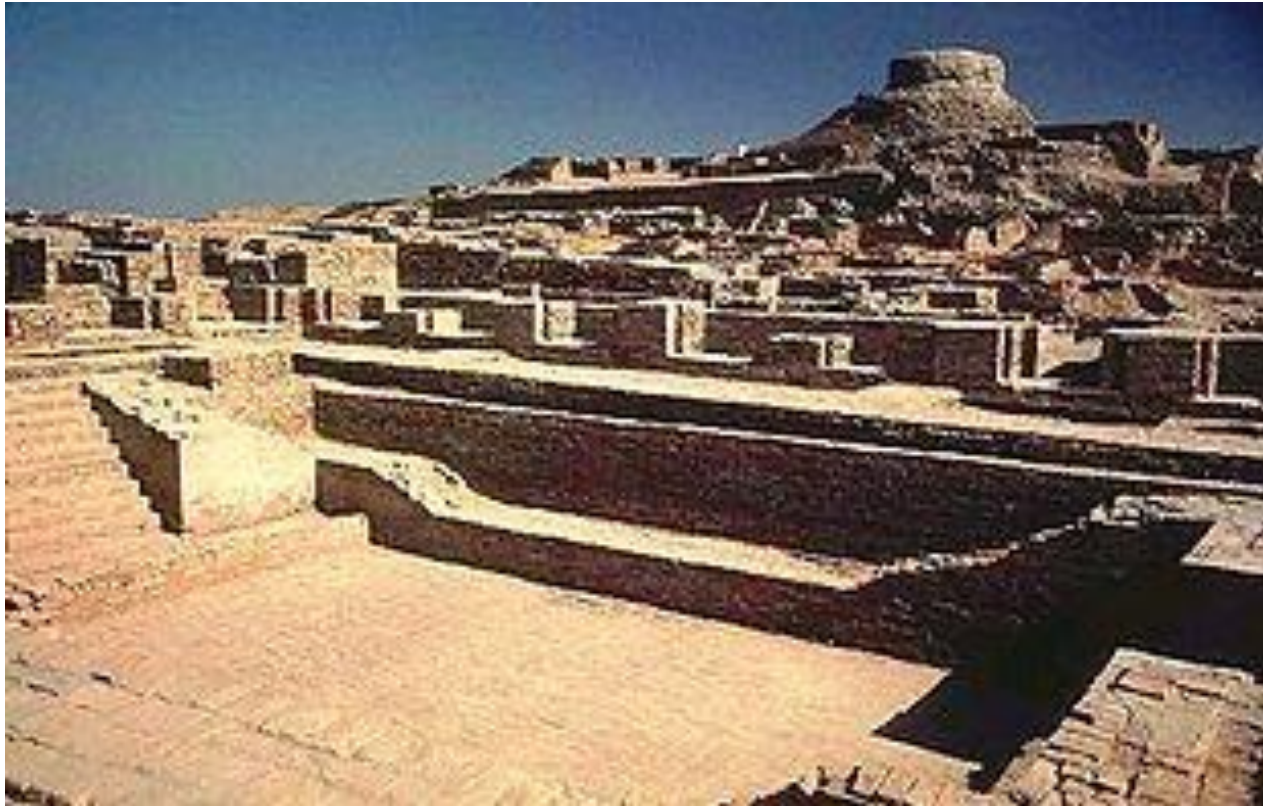
Collective 2

This period was much like before with collective consciousness still closely identified to the cycles of nature



Cities

- ▶ Over the generations population increased and larger towns and even cities began to emerge
- ▶ Most education remains oral but small schools began to emerge to cater for specialised needs such as writing and arithmetic
- ▶ Spirituality began to be organised and associated with places and authority
- ▶ Period of increased specialisation
- ▶ Populations continued to grow and nature came to be seen as a resource



Civilisation: Collective 2

- ▶ This period saw an increased separation between culture and nature with an increase in the sense of the individual
- ▶ This is the beginning of early Civilisations and human intensification

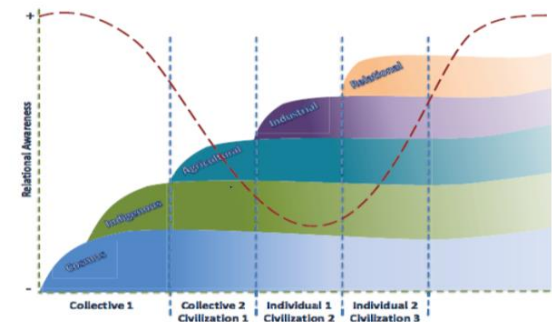
Empires

- ▶ All this continued and cities became powerful and were lead by strong rulers
- ▶ Hierarchy was important and power lead to conflicts and empires
- ▶ Education became a tool for managing complex social order – the priest–kings mostly controlled this, though the elites also became literate
- ▶ Specialisation and militarisation intensified



Collective 2

- ▶ The distance between culture and nature increased, hierarchies continued to grow and a small but powerful group of people began to **think of themselves as individuals** first and members of collectives second
- ▶ Civilisations flourish
- ▶ Sense of relationship begins to diminish



Humanism

- ▶ Beginning about 500 years ago in European countries a new movement began – it was called Humanism
- ▶ Humanism emphasised a new approach to being human and to learning based on literacy and (European) culture
- ▶ European Education became a vehicle for spreading Humanism (ie Imperialism)
- ▶ As more people became literate it was hard for Church to hold them together – and individualism grew



Transition

- ▶ Humanism continued the separation between culture and nature
- ▶ Authority became an increasingly personal (inner) issue
- ▶ Reasoning became more important
- ▶ Scientific method emerged
- ▶ Periods of devastating intolerance and struggles to overcome it
- ▶ Individualism slowly grew more wide spread
- ▶ A new kind of civilisation begins to emerge based on scientific knowledge

Industrial Revolution

- ▶ Around 250 years ago science and commerce merge and is directed towards a powerful new civilisational model
- ▶ Individuals become more important and more self obsessed
- ▶ Education is used as a tool to develop a literate and obedient work force
- ▶ Education is modeled on the factory
- ▶ Specialisation is the norm
- ▶ Capitalism emerges and promotes dynamic and rapid cultural changes

Early English industrial town, Staffordshire.



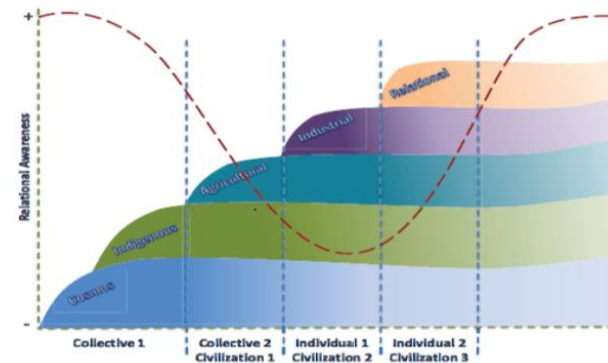
**IT'S ALL ABOUT
ME**

Individual 1 / Civilisation 2

- ▶ This is a period in the West of increasingly strong individualism
- ▶ This individualism ushers in a form of capitalism that makes some people very wealthy and increases the general prosperity of about 25% of the planet
- ▶ Over time more and more peoples are drawn into this dynamic
- ▶ It comes at a cost as people increasingly loose contact with nature and with one another as hyper competition increases
- ▶ Loneliness and meaninglessness increase

A New Renaissance?

- ▶ Faced with new ‘surprising’ problems humanity looks for new forms to live by
- ▶ This is a search for Relational Consciousness



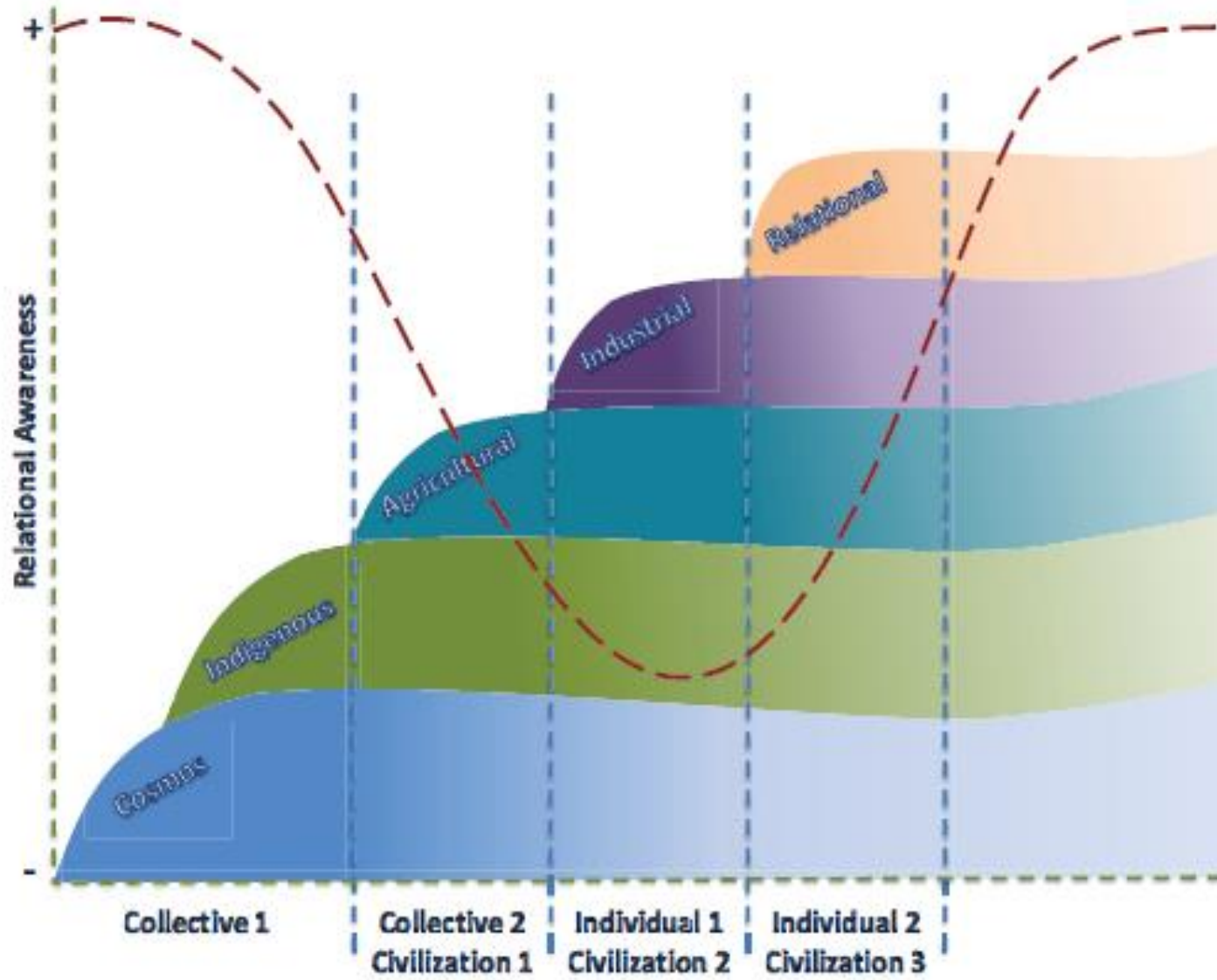
Relational Civilisation

- ▶ The unsustainability of the industrial/capitalist system becomes increasingly clear
- ▶ We begin to (re)learn that all things are connected
- ▶ Education for individualism loses its authority – leading to ‘soft individualism’
- ▶ Education shifts to develop *relational neohumanist consciousness*
- ▶ Technology and nature develop new partnerships



→ Individual 2 / Civilisation 3

- ▶ This is a period of nested soft individualism – where people find themselves in relation to the Whole
- ▶ Loneliness and meaninglessness decline
- ▶ Partnerships between men and women, nature and culture emerge
- ▶ Spirituality is separated from hierarchical religion and becomes a social force and the ethical benchmark for healthy inclusive relationship



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This is what Gurukula is working towards

