

**Consciousness, Cosmos, And The Fate Of Life On Earth**  
**A MAHB Dialogue With Science Philosopher And Systems Theorist**  
**Ervin Laszlo**



*“The cusp of the process of evolution is bifurcation, which is danger as well as opportunity. Evolution is not a linear process, it is highly nonlinear: it is interrupted, but it is never stopped.”*

Ervin Laszlo

**Geoffrey Holland - Your recent book, *The Tuscany Dialogues*, is a wonderfully rich discussion with your friend Michael Charles Tobias about life being ‘an expression of build-up of structure’. Is that how we should see the cosmos and the universe that we are immersed in?**

Ervin Laszlo - The build-up of structure in the universe is what we call evolution. It started, as far as cosmologists know, with the Big Bang. Our science tells us this was 13.8 billion years ago. And that was the beginning of a continuing process. So, what we know of the universe, of the galaxies, all the planets, all forms of life, ourselves included, is that all are part of the continuing build-up of structure that started with the Big Bang. It started when the universe cooled sufficiently to allow semi-stable structures to form, as particles or quarks. And from this point onwards, the universe has kept evolving to higher and higher levels of structure and complexity. We humans are an expression of that build up. The world around us is another expression, manifestation of that process.

**GH - You have written that the laws of nature express a cosmological intelligence because the universe is coherent and what happens is not accidental. Can you explain that in terms an 8<sup>th</sup> grader can understand?**

EL - I think it's a common sense proposition, even if it refers to a complex state of affairs. The fact is that the universe is not simple. It's not the kind of process where one thing can give rise to another automatically in a mechanistic way. The things that emerge and evolve in the universe are unexpectedly coherent. The universe is what we call coherent. Now, what do I mean by that? Think of this: You have a lot of things in a playroom, everything is mixed up together; the things are all over the floor and all over the walls. To sort them out takes some kind of an intelligence; something that knows what it wants, looking for how to put it all together. Because, simply by pushing, pulling the pieces in a random way, won't make that playroom any less chaotic. We know that the universe started with chaos, as cosmologists tell us. Nothing was firm, all was in flux. And since then, we have developed a universe in which many things can exist in sufficient coherence so we can understand them. They make sense. There must have been some intelligence that was responsible for that.

**GH - You talk about what humans call mind, spirit, or soul, and that in fact those terms all refer to the same thing, a super cosmic intelligence in the universe. Can you elaborate on that?**

EL - Mainstream science doesn't want to talk about any intelligence that's outside of the universe. But it seems that the laws of nature are such things, building coherence in the course of evolution. But the laws that are responsible for the direction this process is taking are not 'in' the universe -- not in the observable dimension of the universe. Consider a game of chess, as an example. It has its laws that define how the pieces can move. And the game develops according to those laws. But the laws are not part of the game: they remain the same no matter how the game is played, by a novice or by a grand master. Or, think of the designs of architecture. There are certain ways you can put bricks together, mix mortar and so on, which will make a building. But the design of the architect is not part of the materials that goes into the building of the structure. We need to assume that there is an intelligence beyond the observed universe that creates the universe we observe. Acting like a conductor conducting an orchestra, or like a chief architect is designing the process of construction. Such laws are not within the process that they govern: they are algorithms, which decide how things can be put together. It is clear that some kind of ordered build-up must be taking place, otherwise we would not have a coherent universe. Nature itself has the rules; the rules of the game are built right into this process which we call evolution. And these laws are such that evolution builds coherent things into more and more complex and coherent structures. Cells make organisms, organisms make societies; all of this is based on atoms. These structures build everything we observe, including the web of life. And we can assume that elsewhere in the universe a similar process is taking place. This means that when we are talking about mind, spirit or soul, we mean something outside the body, the same as the laws of nature are outside the observed universe. Often, people who are spiritually inclined, say there is a spirit; that this spirit is associated with us. But it's not possible that this Spirit would be a part of our body. It acts on our body, guides it, conducts its evolution, but is more than the body itself.

**GH - So, our consciousness as humans is folded into the cosmic intelligence of the universe?**

EL - I would rather say that our consciousness is a *result* of the cosmic intelligence acting on the universe. The intelligence of the universe can be seen in the way the universe is constructed, so that things in it evolve; chaos is being reduced; more and more, coherence is coming to light. Our

consciousness, our mind and our whole being, is an expression of this intelligence. This intelligence is a “lure” or “attraction” that biases the way things work together and evolve. It is a tendency toward higher and higher levels of coherence and complexity. The intelligence of the universe is a cosmic drive toward higher and higher forms of structure, mind and consciousness. We are an expression of it as well. We are all children of the universe, expressing the spirit that governs the universe in our very being.

**GH - The Great Native American, Chief Seattle is quoted as having said, ‘All things are connected...We do not weave the web of life; we are only a strand of it. Whatever we do to it, we do to ourselves.’ Does that reflection of indigenous wisdom strike a chord with you?**

EL - We know that all things are connected, that is something that is coming forward now very clearly in quantum science. It could not be maintained in terms of classical science in which everything is viewed as mechanical, because then the connections are finite; then there are some things that are outside of this connection. But the universe is not a mechanism; it is no such thing, it is not like we used to think it was. Now, in the quantum disciplines, we see that the universe is constituted of the intangible element we call information. It is a kind of cosmic information system. And we know that in an information system, a cloud, or a program, whatever we do to any part of it, has a repercussion on all the other parts. And so all things in it are connected. We can build systems where what we do to any one part of the system reacts on the whole system, and the whole system reacts back. In the real world this is the case. We are part of the system, the universe, so that everything we do to any part of this system we do to ourselves. That's the quantum vision, the vision of the quantum sciences, where everything is based on information. All information is unified, is coherent, is built together. So yes, Chief Seattle was right. Everything we do to each other we do in the final count to ourselves. There is another term we can use, which comes from the new sciences, which is called nonlocality. Locality refers to something that is limited to the here and now. It's just here, and just now, not elsewhere, and it is not the same as that which was here before. Nonlocality means that everything that happens here has an effect over there, in fact everywhere. And everything that has happened anywhere has an effect on the here and now. This is a very strong element in the quantum disciplines. It corresponds perfectly to what native people like Chief Seattle articulated intuitively.

**GH - We live in a time of unprecedented existential threats to life on Earth, including human overpopulation, climate change, deforestation, food insecurity, and wildlife numbers in free fall. Humanity has only itself to blame. You have characterized this as ‘a radical paradigm shift, a chilling but informing bifurcation.’ Does that mean that humanity is dangerously out-of-step with the cosmological trend toward ever more coherence? And, if so, what could it mean for life on Earth?**

EL - To the first part of your question, there's an easy answer. It's not a happy answer, but it's an easy answer because the answer is clearly and evidently yes, we are dangerously out of step with the cosmological trend toward ever more coherence. Just look around you. Where do you find coherence, when society is in turmoil? There is more and more violence. There's more and more conflict. The climate is warming up. We are using up our natural resources that are in finite supply. And we are reducing the carrying capacity of the planet. At the same time, an increasing number of people are

entering this world. Reducing the carrying capacity, while increasing the population means there are less and less resources to go around. Being out of step with the cosmos, with the coherence of the cosmos, we create an unsustainable condition in our world. Too many people are doing too many things that are inequitable, that are not sustainable and are not creating an environment that is adapted to human life on an ongoing basis. We are out of step. This fact is of paramount importance. We have forgotten that we are part of nature. We are acting as if we are unconnected to our own nature, to our environment, our own world. This is wrong. We are still very much part of nature, and we need to come back to this realization and live accordingly. We could be a positive element of the world, but then we must not forget that we are built into nature, and our well-being is linked to the health of nature and the evolution of the universe.

**GH - If we are connected to the cosmos, why do we keep doing such stupid things?**

EL - That is a very good question. I believe that the answer is, we are doing stupid things because consciously we don't know any better. We don't realize who we are and what nature is. We used to have this realization instinctively, just like Chief Seattle did, and the Vedas of India. They were telling us how much we are a part of the whole. We have lost this sense, this intuitive wisdom. The good news is that we are beginning to recover it at the leading edge of science, but in the everyday world, we are disregarding it. Intuitively we have a sense of coherence, of belonging, and ultimately of unconditional love. But we are not acting on this intuition, even though we can perceive it when we go deeper into ourselves. The majority of us on this Earth are not living and acting in collaboration with others, our fellow inhabitants of the planet. We put ourselves first. This kind of narrow vision has very negative effects. We are destroying the natural systems we need to survive and to flourish. We are not acting wisely, not as a dominant force of life on Earth should act. My hope is that this will change, that there will be a reawakening, a renewed sense that we are part of a larger whole, and that this whole has coherence—and our task is to become a positive part of it.

**GH - You say 'there is a higher reality than the one in front of our eyes'. It is the intuitive recognition of our oneness with nature and with each other. Does that mean that nature is in essence a wondrous reflection of the higher consciousness of the cosmos?**

EL - What I am saying is a form of holism in worldview and philosophy. It used to be thought, even just a hundred years ago, that holism is just metaphysics and imagination. Now we find that nature is a whole, intrinsically interconnected system. Life is a whole system. The biosphere is a whole system. Why don't we see this? We have been blinded... carried away by our own powers, by our wealth and our technology. Let me quote a saying by Mark Twain that I find very insightful. He said, 'to a young boy with a new hammer, the whole world looks like a nail.' To us, being carried away by our power and our technology, everything around us looks like something that we can have and we should have by using money and technology: our new hammer. We have discovered the awesome power of the atom, the incredible power of information, and all the things we can have when we join them together. We are using this discovery indiscriminately, for the immediate satisfaction of our wants, without regard to what it does to others, to nature, and so ourselves. It's time to reconnect to the spirit, to the intelligence

that is the subtle but real governing force in the universe. We must allow our own intuitive intelligence to guide our steps.

**GH - Could embracing our oneness with nature be key to our survival?**

EL - If the higher Intelligence is actually in nature, embedded in the laws of nature, then we are not separate from it; we need to follow that intelligence. We are an outcome of the work of this cosmic intelligence. Many scientists do not hesitate any more to say there is a higher intelligence manifesting itself in the world. I would say that it is manifesting in the laws of nature, in the way this world operates. We are an information system; a mutually connected, highly intelligent information system. And we are the consequence of the workings of that system. So, we should realize this, and then we can try to make that system work for our benefit.

Look at the whole system. What is good for the whole system? On Earth, first of all, to the web of life on the planet, what is good for the whole system is good for us all. However, what may be good for a few of us in the short term is not necessarily good for the whole system. Because a few can distort the dynamic, the structure of the whole, by biasing it to work for their immediate benefit. So, let's look at the whole system, let us act as if we are part of it—because we are. We are part of nature, and nature is part of the universe. This recognition is probably the best deepest guidance we can have.

Oneness doesn't mean that we lose our individuality. Oneness means that we are joined together, each of us bringing something to the whole system. This is what we need to understand; that we can, we must be, one with nature, without losing our individuality. We are not separate mechanical elements outside of nature. Every individual is a complex system running on the same information that orients all of nature. By following the intelligence implicit in the laws of nature we are not losing anything. We are gaining everything, because the secret of our health and wellbeing is to be one within ourselves, and to be one with others. Every event, every action impacts the whole system. If we know that, then we can freely choose to act as part of the whole.

**GH - So, as we move forward, would you advise the world's people to celebrate their common humanity and work together to restore the biosphere and to shape a sustainable future?**

EL - I would say, yes, absolutely right. This is a crucial tenet of the physiology of life. Every living system is alive and healthy when all its elements, every one of the trillions and trillions of cells, are working together with and for the whole system. If any part of this whole, this “concert of oneness” is out of step with the rest, then the entire whole suffers. If in the human body there is a group of cells that is out of step, moving on its own, if it just grows and multiplies on its own we have the condition of disease. In the worst case, cancer. Every disease is basically a condition where some parts of the body do not cooperate with, are not fully aligned with, the whole.

The message I would like to share is the message of my latest book, *Reconnecting to the Source*. As the title suggests, the challenge before us is to reconnect with the source, and the source is nature, it is the

universe. If we become conscious of who and what we are, we will not separate ourselves from this harmony of oneness, but will embrace it and be elevated by it.

All of us, all of the web of life on Earth, must come together to form the symphony of oneness. That is the purpose of our existence. It is our contribution to the world. When we use our mind, our spirit, our consciousness the natural way, the way they were born to be used, we will find our way to oneness in our family and community, on Earth, and in the universe.

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*Born in Hungary, Ervin Laszlo began his public life as a celebrated child piano prodigy. He later was awarded a PhD in the Sciences and Humanities at the Sorbonne in Paris. He is the author of 92 books. Nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Laszlo is the founder and President of the Laszlo Institute of New Paradigm Research <[www.laszloinstitute.com](http://www.laszloinstitute.com)> and of the global think tank, The Club of Budapest – [www.clubofbudapest.org](http://www.clubofbudapest.org)*