

Vistas

Evolving Our Beliefs to Evolve Our Lives

Alt subtitles: Life and Getting Where You Want to Go
or
Beliefs, Values and Realities

by **Elisabet Sahtouris**

© 2004

Work In Progress - Preview of the Book

**To my grandchildren, Phoumara, Nick and Maya,
to Puma and Traci
and all the first generation of adults in a New Millennium**

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my father who taught me to recycle and renew, as well as to gain security in my own resourcefulness, and to my mother who encouraged me to explore nature on my own and role-modeled courageous initiative.

My gratitude also extends to the Fetzer Foundation for support during the writing of this book.

Synopsis

Ideas of reinventing the world are seen as less realistic than ideas of reinventing computers -- especially if you talk seriously about "liberty and justice for all" the world's people or world peace. The argument repeated like a mantra and thus revealing a powerful cultural belief is, "You cannot change human nature."

The basic model -- the 'engineering diagram' or flow chart -- of *How Things Are* in our world has pretty much been created by Western science. It consists of a non-living universe in which blind forces of Nature, expressed as the Laws of Physics and Darwinian evolution, made us what we are. Human Nature is what it is, according to this scheme of things, and no amount of dreaming about liberty, justice and peace for all will change our competitive nature in the natural struggle for survival.

But this book will show you a new view of Nature as conscious and creative intelligence, with biological evolution typically occurring as rapid response to crisis, rather than as mechanical selection within a slow stream of accidental mutations. This new understanding is part of an integral new paradigm emerging in all fields of science. Its most fundamental feature is the recognition that our human minds reflect the inherent intelligence of Nature and are the creative source of our evolving lives as individuals and as a human society, for better or for worse.

A little reflection makes it obvious that we have thought up everything about our world mentally and emotionally before we could make it all happen, from creating religions or science, from designing constitutions or fashions to doing economics and education, building houses, communities and computers, making wars, raising families and so on. Yet we haven't really gotten it deeply that *we create our own reality* through our minds, spirits and hearts, because the old scientific worldview is still so strongly clouding that truth by teaching us that the material world's reality is *independent* of us -- that its "objective" reality has nothing to do with how we think about it "subjectively."

That view is now crumbling under evidence produced by science itself that consciousness is not a late emerging property of evolution but the very *source* of the entire material world of Nature, including humanity. As that discovery spreads through society at large, along with its implications that we can dream and create the world any way we desire, we need to be well prepared for conscious creation of the reality we truly want.

While people have *always* created reality out of their beliefs, until now a handful of powerful people dictated the beliefs of each human culture. The glory of our own time is that the news is finally out that each and every one of us has the authority, even the mandate, to choose the beliefs by which we live and create our individual and communal lives.

To create the human future well we need good *Vistas* -- consciously created belief systems comprised of worldviews and the values for negotiating them courageously and lovingly. The word VISTA being composed of VITA and VISA, a Vista is the best possible understanding of life and getting where we want to be!

Prologue

My Dear Reader,

Every new generation changes its world, but few are called to make changes as creative, as sweeping as those impelled by the ecological, economic, political, and spiritual crises we face everywhere today. As I travel around the United States and around the whole world, I am enormously impressed by young people, by those of you now called *Millennials* -- the first generation adults of the new millennium. You know the world as a whole; you understand that all its parts are interdependent; that what is happening in any part of it affects its wholeness. I see you talking, planning, rolling up your sleeves and working hard already to change things for the better. I have written this book for young people of *all* ages -- meaning all those with open minds and hearts -- yet it is especially you Millennials I've had

in mind, not only because every generation of young adults is the hope of the future for those who are older, but because you face global challenges that are the most enormous opportunities for a whole new way of being on this planet.

Though you inherited this world in an unsustainable condition -- which purely and simply means a world that cannot last as it is -- you seem to accept that as your challenge, so I believe you are exactly the agents of change the world needs. Yet paradoxically, the world "out there," however much it inspires the need for change, is not where change begins. Rather, change begins inside every individual -- inside your consciousness and mine, inside your dreams and mine, inside our minds and hearts where all our beliefs about How Things Are, How to React, What's Important, What's Possible and What to Do mill around and around with or without our attention to them.

There is something truly new about this time in human history besides the recognition of humanity's wholeness, and directly related to it. This is the first time that each and every one of us is faced with daily decisions about *what* to believe and think and feel about our world -- what this world *is*, how it works, what's happening in it, as well as virtually everything about how we live our lives within it.

This may not seem strange to you, but it is a *very* new and unusual situation when compared with all other cultures throughout human history. Up until the present, all cultures successfully raised their young on traditional *worldviews* -- stories of How Things Are -- and on the principle that any other worldview they might encounter in life, whether through warfare, travels, encounters with strangers, or even with "deviants" within their own community, would simply be *wrong*. Most cultures still attempt in greater or lesser degree to do this, but their efforts are meeting with ever greater resistance and in some cases are crumbling. More and more fingers, we might say, are pointing at the naked emperor.

Independent thinkers who resisted cultural teachings and came up with their own ideas of How Things Are and What To Do -- the "deviants" -- historically suffered ridicule, punishment, exile or death. This really kept dissent down effectively and kept a culture's beliefs pure, except in those historic moments when some other culture conquered it, stamping out and replacing those beliefs with their own. On occasion, radical thinkers had such powerful or appealing new ideas that they could persuade even kings or emperors to believe in them and decree that all their subjects adopt them.

President Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, is a recent historic example of such adoption of new beliefs. Earlier, Rome, and all Europe after it, had gone Christian in similar conversions of rulers. From the Fall of Rome until the Industrial Revolution in Europe, even through the modifications called the Reformation, feudal lords and kings allied themselves with the worldview of the Christian church. Because of this alliance, the Church had the power to impose its worldview on all European cultures. But once the industrial revolution was underway, its newly rich and powerful industrialists, ever more dependent on the engineering applications made possible by science, allied themselves with the developing scientific worldview. This rescued science, from persecution by the Church (remember the fates of Bruno and Galileo, who failed to convince the Church of *their* worldviews?) and actually elevated science to the kind of authority that could dictate a new worldview -- a new story of How Things Are in the Universe as a whole and this Earth in particular. That's how

a scientific-industrial worldview conquered a religious state worldview and became the foundation on which the modern world was built.

In the 20th century, worldwide wars, post-war occupations of foreign countries and new technologies of travel and communications, brought about so much mixing and resettlement that human cultures have been blended considerably. Even people who stayed put were increasingly exposed to new cultural ideas by the mushrooming media, including telecommunications, TV and the Internet.

This process has eroded the power of entrenched cultural worldviews to dictate people's beliefs and values. We now live in a vast marketplace of worldviews from shallow materialist consumerism to deeper scientific, philosophical, religious, political, ecological, esoteric, and other worldviews. This means we have ever more belief frameworks to choose among in interpreting our own experience of the world and of the greater cosmos. Even the worldview of science, which was supposed to be infallible in our culture, has spun off alternatives among which to choose, as you will see in this book.

How is anyone to decide what to believe and what to do in all this confusion? Do you stick with the beliefs of the most loved, powerful or respected people influencing your childhood, like wearing familiar and comfortable clothing? If it doesn't fit you any more, do you shop around for a different but readymade worldview until you find one that suits you, perhaps by joining a new religion? Do you haphazardly patch together bits and pieces from an assortment of worldviews, or do you consciously design and tailor something unique that really suits you while it may seem weird to others?

How do you decide the drawbacks and benefits of each of these choices? Do you even know what worldview you hold now? Can you *recognize* your beliefs within it? What's the difference between a fact and a belief -- after all, facts aren't really up for question here, are they? What difference does your worldview make to your life? Do you have beliefs *about* your beliefs? For example, do you believe that your beliefs affect your reality? What happens to the social context in which you live if the various people in it see things differently and have different beliefs? Can people learn to live peaceably with different beliefs?

Have you discovered what are your *values* -- your beliefs about how to react to things, what is important and how to behave toward yourself and others? Is your behavior consistent with your value beliefs? Values may be even *more* essential to human harmony than beliefs about How Things Are.

By what compass will we navigate the stormy seas of our current cultural and ecological chaos? How do we find positive personal meaning, guidance and courage, as well as enough common ground among us to establish a thriving and peaceful global community within a healthy planet? *That* question drove me to write this book, which is based on my own struggling lifelong process to answer it. I have come to call the compass of beliefs resulting from my odyssey and by which I steer my life, my *Vista*.

By my definition,

A Vista is an evolving set of beliefs that include a consciously chosen yet evolving worldview and values to guide behavior towards personal, communal and global thrival.

This book is about consciously creating my, your, anyone's Vista -- about becoming aware of our beliefs, recognizing how we create our reality through them, identifying their sources and questioning them in order to decide which ones serve us well and which work against us. I hope it will help inspire you to do whatever you need to clarify, clean up, revise or replace your own beliefs.

I wish I could know who you are as you pick up this book and decide whether to let me share my stories with you. Am I right that you are someone who looks for meaning in life, who seeks something beyond having a well-paid job, loving family and fine friends, who wants this life to be rich with learning and growth and perhaps thereby make some kind of positive difference in the lives of others? Then it's a privilege to be permitted into your mind and heart. I hope this book will inspire you to create and/or evolve your own Vista, and thereby your life, responsibly and joyfully.

This isn't the usual "How To" book leading you step by step through just the right exercises to reach your goals. That kind of book may be very useful to lots of people, but I happen to be the kind of person who gets bored with the exercises long before I do enough of them to have any effect. Rather, I have tried role-modeling because my children taught me long ago that was the only effective way to induce change in others. By sharing stories about my most valuable insights in shaping my own Vista, by thus showing what Vistas are and how they work in creating our realities, I hope to help you identify and edit your own.

If together we bring your own beliefs, including your values, into the bright light of your attention, to discover who and what are their sources, to weed out those that don't work for you, to think hard about how to edit or replace them in order to achieve your dreams, I think you'll find you can get to wherever you want to be in life, doing whatever most fulfills you. What you envision as an interesting and rewarding life is a very personal matter and will not look like mine. Nature *loves* diversity and builds the most wonderful harmonies from it. Only humans think up monotonous monocultures. There are as many lives to invent and live as there are creative people to invent and live them, and it is my firm belief that every one of us human cosmic children are extraordinary, creative beings.

Come along, then, on this adventurous journey in which we learn to abandon the beliefs that don't work for us, taking only the very best into the future with us to create wonderful lives with loving hearts and spirits *no matter what is going on around us*. All it takes is belief in your own youthful potential and a fresh sense of adventure. I assure you the payoffs are enormous. I'll lead the way until you break away and run ahead on your own.

With love and gratitude,

Elisabet Sahtouris

Santa Barbara, California 2004