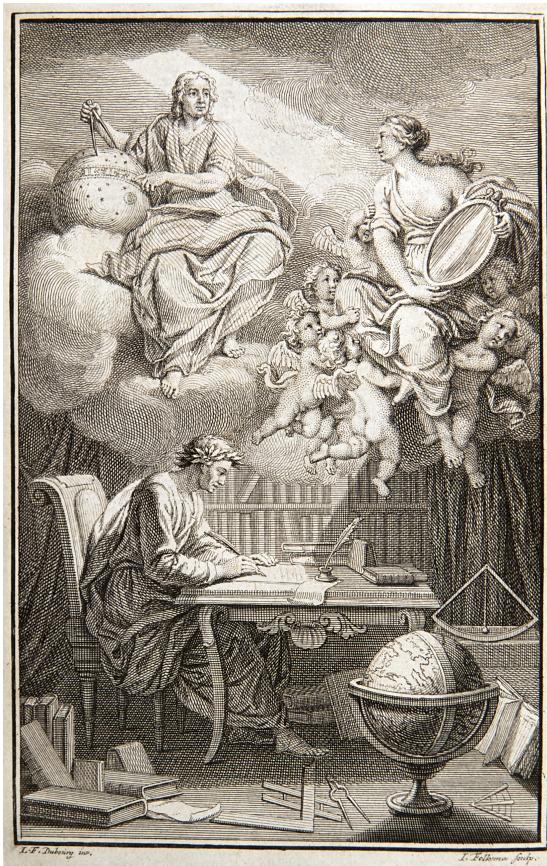


# Consilience: Reason and Emotion

*“Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, its is a gift for the guilty.”*

— Steve Lawson, author

The virus is a lesson in the reconciliation of opposites and the shepherding of resources.



## Learning

Learning is change. We use the term “learning” to mean something conscious or intentional, but even if we’re unmotivated or the change is unintentional learning still changes us. We also talk about machine learning, and we can think of species learning, or environmental learning.

When we think about learning we think about teaching, as the two seem complementary. But who teaches a machine, species, or environment? In truth, while learning describes something that happens, teaching is a concept we’ve invented. What we call teaching is an act of changing the environment so that learning, which happens anyway, happens differently.

Teaching is interference for the purpose of bringing things to the learner's attention. There has long been a confused discussion as to whether better learning requires better teachers or better learners. We observe that better performance, happiness, security, and control follows from better learning, and we presume it comes from better teaching.

We focus on the credentials of teachers but not the quality of teaching if, indeed, teaching really exists as a quality. Certainly, some situations are more conducive to learning than others. Some of those more conducive situations involve people designated as teachers but, as most people would agree, the most important learning doesn't involve people who see their role as teachers.

For example, a college student learns many things, but most of what he or she learns doesn't happen in classes taught by teachers. Similarly, most of what parents and warriors learn is not learned in school but on the battle front. What we learn is embedded in our character. Who teaches this?

Evolution is a learning process. Evolution can be described in many ways, and natural selection—the old Darwinian idea—is the generally accepted description. Natural selection does not arise from basic physical laws, so I don't believe it, but it's easy to understand and simulate in a lab or machine.

Natural selection is anthropomorphic. It's what we do when we think logically: we recognize choices, test the choices, accept some and reject others. Few things in the natural world operate in this fashion. Logical natural selection does not describe evolution in real systems, and this is quite important. If evolution—or learning—it did follow logic, exceptions would never occur. For this reason, random mutations must be added for natural selection to work.

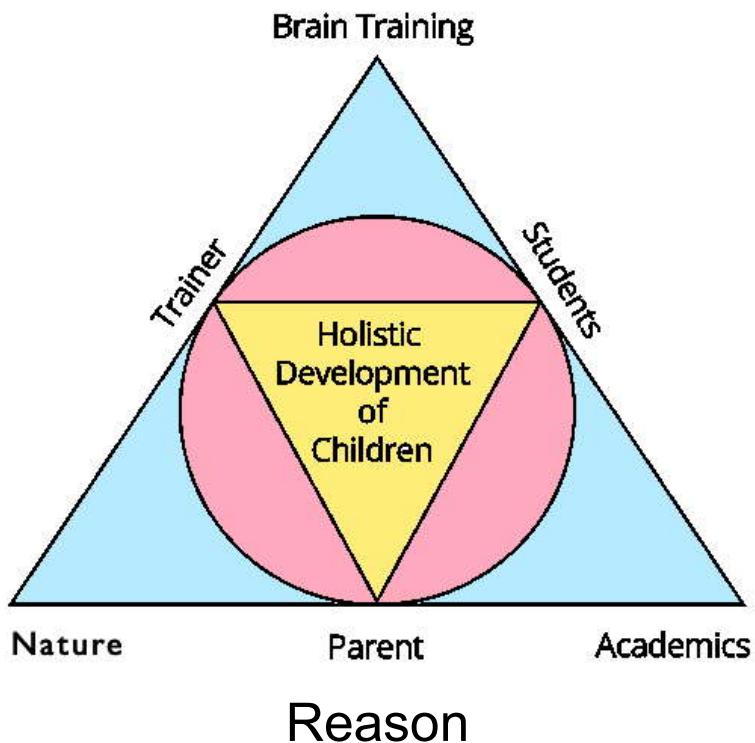
Ecological systems learn through nonlogical means. We might call them statistical, many-threaded, or holographic. Most learning in nature occurs in a chaotic fashion in which old structures collapse and new ones emerge. Much of our own learning is done by nonlogical means. There's more to our learning process than what's rational because there is so much more to us than our rational awareness.

I suggest using the word rational instead of logical because we almost never use logic. Logic rests on certainty while reason only requires the plausible, and that's usually all we have. We develop strategies and program learning machines on the basis of what's plausible.

This happens at a superficial level. Making strategies is how we test things, but it's not how we learn things. Most of our learning is done by association, metaphor, and emotion. There are good reasons for this as it allows for creativity.

COVID-19 as a learning situation. The chaos the virus has fomented—disorganized as it might be—is a learning environment. The “solution” to the COVID-19 “problem” is not a rational strategy because none of the rational strategies available are big enough. COVID-19 is here because we’ve been thinking too small for too long.

What the virus is exposing is the reality of our social and environmental structure, not the reasoned personal and national identities we believe define us. And how have we been deceived into learning a flawed version of our place in the world’s ecology? We designed our parents, teachers, and leaders to teach this to us.



I offer you three related points of view: physics, neuroscience, and behavior. As you move from the first to the second to the third, the rules governing behavior degenerate toward chaos.

Part of this is historical. It’s certainly easier to learn, teach, and navigate systems that are well-ordered. It’s easier to write history according to the fiction that causes and events made some kind of sense, and one version of events provided the rationale for the narrative. But as one’s awareness broadens, the reality that chaos is a dominant force becomes more evident.

When you study any historical event you “go down the rabbit hole.” This means that what’s going on under the surface is unlike what we see on the surface. It also refers to the nature of rabbit holes as full

of passage ways, rooms, twists, turns, and alternative destinations. The rabbit hole metaphor is a more accurate description of history and, consequently, a better model for learning.

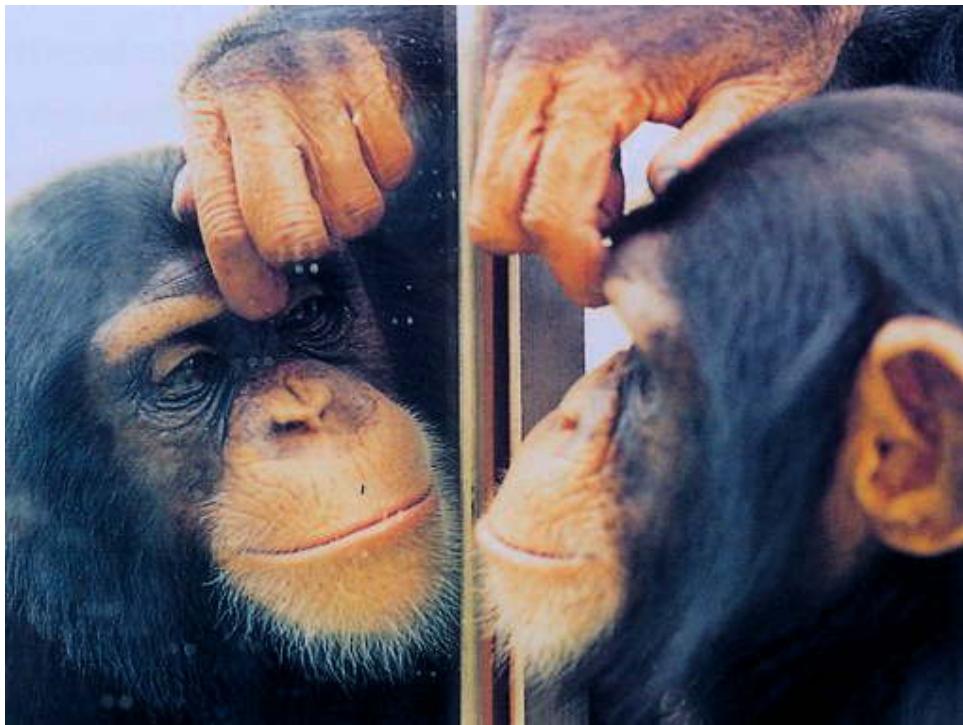
Things are organized and logical in isolation. The number of choices can be limited. As systems get larger and more components interact we're quickly overwhelmed with choices, forces, and outcomes. Chaos is just a label for a situation we no longer understand.

We can't understand big, complicated systems because we cannot contain them in our awareness. The human brain may be the most complicated system in the universe, but it can barely cope with the reality it confronts. You can barely remember a string of more than seven digits and you can only hold one thought in your head at one time. We're underpowered given the problems we face.

We're starting to understand that our minds can operate holistically, and that most of our learning happens this way. This is what dreams are, and this is what we spend all of our sleeping time doing, though we remember next to none of it. We are probably also dreaming while we are awake without being aware of it. We actually have many mental processes going on at once, with the conscious, logical process being just the tip of the iceberg.

Understanding our experience of COVID-19—our understanding of anything, really—depends on our incorporating multiple perspectives. No one perspective is complete and no one story is complete.

Looking for a “complete description” is a dead end. There is none, because the virus lies at the intersection of many systems. Many of these systems were not designed, or did not evolve, to respond to this infection. The virus has disrupted medicine, politics, economics, science, genetics, and ecology, not to mention your physiology and metabolism. No story written from any of these points of view will be complete.



## Awareness

We think of attention as an action, as “to pay attention,” but it’s also a state, as “to be attentive.” We identify attention with awareness and apply the binary quality of awareness—of either being aware or unaware—with a binary quality of attention—either paying attention or not.

“My experience is what I agree to attend to.”  
— **William James, PhD**, psychologist

Watching brain states reveals that attention lies on a spectrum. One can only pay attention to what one can discern, and discernment requires change. Our minds need change in order to maintain focus, which is why we use rosaries, mantras, dialog, legends, and spectacle to hold our attention. It’s next to impossible to meditate on nothing; you can do it only by going into an intermittent state of thoughtless awareness, a kind of listening state with distant boundaries.

As your brainwaves become faster you become more attuned to rapid changes and, I believe, memories of shorter duration. Slower brainwaves enable you to be more aware of slower changes and, I suspect, memories of longer duration.

The character of your brainwaves change with your situation, your energy level, and the time of day. You can also train your brainwaves. With practice, you can voluntarily control what you're aware of. This hyper-focus supports higher-level performance (Thomas 2018).

The character or your thought and speech follow the nature of your focus. The range of your brainwaves—which is to say your focus—defines your personality, your responses to your environment, the ideas you hold, and the friends you make.

To one extent this is obvious: when your brainwaves stop you're dead. But to another extent it's profound: you can change your awareness. We don't know how much control you can gain, or the full range of characteristics controlled by it, but controlling your brainwaves controls your ability to attend. You can voluntarily become more aware, engaged, and insightful.



## Identity

You are what you're aware of. This is quite a different thing from your personality.

Your personality determines your success in your interactions with other people, but not your control over your environment. Patience, temperateness, and good humor will help you solve problems, but intelligence, insight, and artistry exist in a different realm.

Our personality is shaped by school, work, and society, and is a measure of our maturity. With our personality we navigate social situations. The major focus of modern schooling—which is to say nonsectarian schooling of the last 200 years—is in the shaping of personality.

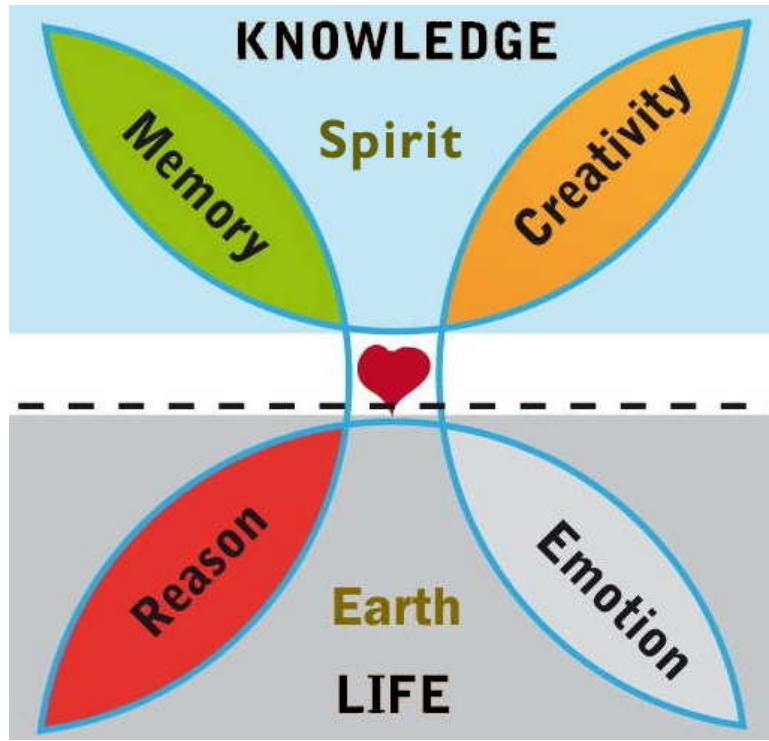
Our awareness—which includes intelligence, insight, and artistry—is not considered to be a learned skill. Yet our awareness determines to a large degree our ability to navigate our environment. My experience training people's brains, and the whole field of neurofeedback therapy, is all about enabling people to become more aware.

You learn through feedback. You stretch your awareness by encountering elements outside your full awareness but partially within reach. You typically have, or can be directed to have, a small awareness of larger phenomena. Understanding complex music, for example, can be achieved by learning to separately hear its distinct parts. In this case, one experiences a kind of cognitive fine-tuning.

There are limits to how much you can change—you can't become a musician overnight. You can only learn to do later what you can almost do now. New skills build on existing skills. Growth occurs at the boundaries of your awareness.

Before schools were invented, learning was through apprenticeship and play in nature. These forms share a multiplicity of scales, times frames, and points of view. In its largest sense, nature contains all scales—many more than we're aware of. Nature offers learning situations that cross many boundaries.

The virus is a crash course in environmental education. It has stretched or broken the personality-based structures—like politics and culture—that we build around the idea of control. The virus is the result of a global experiment in production that has made humans vulnerable at many levels. From the virus's point of view, globalism has made humans a resource.



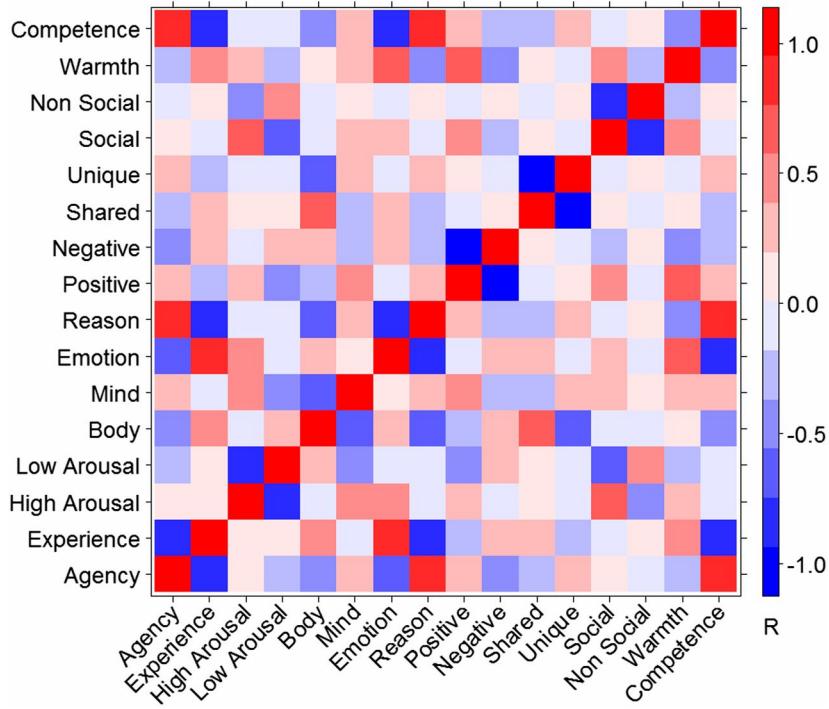
## Interconnection

People connect with each other through personality, and modern culture is largely personality-based: it's based on our needs, wants, and vulnerabilities. We've become increasingly less aware of our environment as we've become less concerned with it.

We have little control over what we're unaware, and we're not aware of how vulnerable we've made ourselves to viral transmission and infection. We need to quickly gain more awareness. We need to understand what we've done to enable this virus to appear, infect, and exploit us.

These questions span the gamut ranging from our impact on our environment to how our cells defend themselves. They are not answered by knowing which pharmaceuticals benefit ill patients, which vaccines will protect us, or which policies will restore our economy.

They are not questions being asked by politicians or doctors although, to give credit where it's due, doctors would like to know all they can in the interests of public health. The same can't be said for politicians struggling for power, using the virus as a weapon.



## Science

Science emerged from centuries of conflict between reason and emotion. Science advertised reason over emotion, but there is no such thing. Truth, confidence, certitude, and trust are foundational to science and entirely emotional in nature. Science is an alternative use of emotional reasoning, not a replacement of it (Fleck 1979).

A battle for hegemony between untrusting allied superpowers has erupted in the virus's theatre of war. These same acquisitive efforts pulled the virus in the cities and infected the world. Similar to the way that oil is a positive resource all nations, the virus is a negative resource all nations want to divest—like a hot potato. It's as if someone pushed the “mutually assured destruction” button and now all nations are fighting for the residuum.

A vaccine will be developed. It will hold the promise of crowning victorious the nation who possesses it. It will be a messenger RNA (mRNA)-based vaccine, similar to other RNA-vaccines developed before, none of which have ever been successfully tested or approved (Wood 2020).

These are genetic modifying agents that rearrange your DNA. They are not medicines. This new accelerated vaccine effort, named “Operation Warp Speed,” will skip many of the safety and all of the long-term tests. It will be interesting to see whom we’re told should take it first (Boodman 2020).



## Ecology

Expand individual engagement in the multiple levels of the ecology.

Things don't end well for a native species when it's native ecology changes. And that's what we are and this is what's happening to us. We can either adapt to the new ecology, work to restore the old ecology, or do nothing. Looking for pharmaceutical cures, preventative vaccines, and economic restoratives are the third choice: doing nothing.

Solutions offered by conservationists are a combination of restoring the old ecology while doing nothing about the underlying forces that are upsetting it. Technology, which is mostly reactive and weakly adaptive, does not address the ecological problem.

G5 networks, electric vehicles, advanced weaponry, and other benefits of technology are not ecologically motivated. Adapting to our ecology would mean changing food production and consumption, and changing global environmental impact on the land, sea, and air. Few nations can claim any progress, and globally we can claim none.

The problem is that modern civilization is not designed for environmental sustainability. There have been some civilizations in the past that have done much better, but they had to because they didn't have any alternative. They also didn't have the environmentally destructive power we have now.

## Hypnosis

The remarkable doctor, surgeon, and hypnotherapist Dabney Ewin, MD expressed the opinion that “almost anything you can treat with cortisone or antihistamine will probably respond to hypnosis” (*Shenefelt 2011*). Cortisone is a type of steroid. Another steroid drug, dexamethasone, was recently found to reduce deaths by one third for severely ill COVID-19 patients (RECOVERY trial 2020).

Over a half million people have died worldwide from COVID-19 as of late June, 2020. This number continues to rise linearly, as it has for the last three months. I have heard no mention of the use of hypnotherapy for the treatment of COVID-19 at any stage, in spite of its efficacy in emergency medicine (*Iserson 2014*). This is my main motivation for writing this book.

The long-term, environmental solution is to change people’s awareness. Until people become aware of their ecological danger and grasp how it results from their actions, they won’t change their actions.

Many argue for greater understanding, but understanding only changes behavior when it’s consistent with desire. Teaching people why they should want what they don’t want—even if they understand what you’re saying—is a fear-based strategy of questionable merit.

People who love the earth are already concerned with redressing environmental problems. People who don’t have this kind of deep connection with the earth, or don’t want to address the problem, will only be motivated to change when what they do value is threatened.

The hypnosis presented in each of these chapters is a taste of what might be done. These inductions aim to enhance your self-awareness, enhance your self-control, and expand your environmental awareness.

Like other forms of learning, hypnosis works by leading you beyond what you already know. You must immerse yourself in it to make new connections between old memories and sensations in order for it to create new feelings and levels of awareness. Once you have experienced these and their effect has been positive, you won’t lose them.

## Change

“As above, so below” has become a mystical buzz word, which is too bad, because it has a long history and a lot of practical meaning. Rejecting “as above, so below” is a rejection of the connection between opposites. This rejection has been a fundamental driving force in Western culture from before Christianity (*Kingsley 1999*) and has found its leading proponent in Christianity.

Ecology is the connection of opposites, as well as the connection between many disparate but related elements. The notion of balance is fundamental, and this is not “balance” as in moderation, but balance as in the bringing together of opposites.

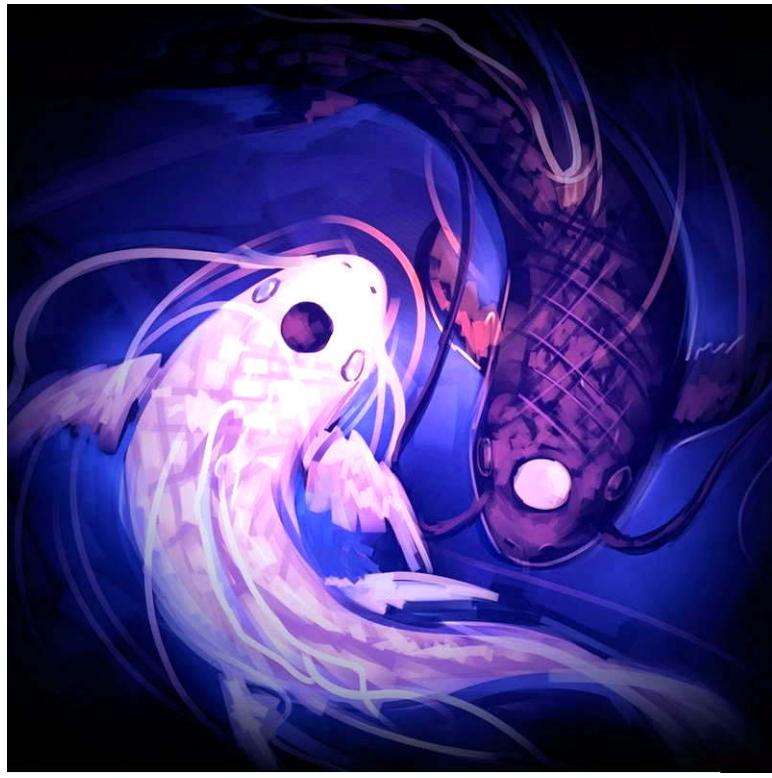
It is probably no coincidence that sustainable cultures have been earth-based, or based on earth deities. That is, they've worshiped nature incarnate, rather than a dis-incarnated divine. It would seem that restoring ecological order calls for a recognition of the ecosystem's importance as both fundamental and, if not sacred, then overarching.

Humans have long fought over religion and gotten nowhere, but a conflict between all peoples and the environment—such as this virus and other ecological consequences present—is a conflict of a different order.

The rationalist in me would like to say that developing a sustainable ecology is a practical problem, but I suspect not. It is a spiritual problem, as it certainly is for those who revere the earth. It certainly requires of people something more than a rational commitment. It is spiritual in the sense that spirit motivates action.

If a microscopic, ubiquitous, almost non-living thing can play a role in turning the minds, values, and behaviors of the earth's dominant, disruptive species—which is us—then “as above, so below” is more than just a buzz word.

“Religion and philosophy are to be preserved as distinct. We are not to introduce divine revelations into philosophy, nor philosophical opinions into religion.”  
—**Isaac Newton**, physicist, alchemist, and theologian



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