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From: (dave "who can do? ratmandu!" ratcliffe)

Subject: **A Native American Worldview / Hawk and Eagle, Both are Singing**

Summary: **Oneida ancient understandings/comparison of western&indigenous science**

Keywords: **shamanic training, oral history, relatedness, seeing the whole**

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there is a great deal of "ground" covered in the following.
before you go for the Back button, perhaps reading the following excerpts
will ignite yer curiosity enough to save it . . . that you might return later.

--rator

Indigenous science begins with an apprehension of the Whole, only very carefully and on close inspection reaching tentative conclusions about any Specificity.

Indigenous science is based on a profound immersion in and awareness of the whole circumstance. Rather than mistrusting personal experience, Indigenous science has learned to thrive on it. . . .

I don't want to give you the impression that this transmittal is based on automatic lineal descent. It's not. In this tradition, a man learns these things from a woman, if possible, and a woman learns them from a man. That way you keep things in balance. It gives you an understanding of the other half of life and prevents some of the competition that can often come in when you learn from someone who is also male, also female. . . .

One of the attitudes taught in my tradition is the Rule of Six. The Rule of Six says that for each apparent phenomenon, devise at least six plausible explanations, every one of which can indeed explain the phenomenon. There are probably sixty, but if you devise six, this will sensitize you to how many there may yet be and prevent you from locking in on the first thing that sounds right as The Truth. . . .

From an Indian perspective, the "priesthood" nature of Western science is anathema. My own tradition disbelieves in "experts." "That which enables, disables also" means that a physicist will fail in understanding in many other areas, precisely because of the amount of time she/he spends on physics and therefore not on other things. Such people are not considered "experts," but "those extensively informed on part of the whole". They are listened to not on a priesthood basis, but on the basis of their having information others may not yet have--just as vice versa.

The search for greater wholeness--which has no room for "expertise"--is unending!

Any highly trained person will of course have a particular view--and therefore has a special responsibility to listen before speaking in any discussion of what the people may choose to do. Any person in a group who gets out of touch with his, with her community, is separated therefrom. Although I don't think there is the same negative connotation as there is in English, a shaman out of touch with her, with his community takes on aspects of the wizard--an isolated person who can inadvertently or on purpose do things that are harmful to the community. The process of Western "expertise" would be seen as a process of encouraging people to be isolated from the rest of their community in some way. . . .

The basis of learning, the basis of the pedagogy, is to cease preventing people from learning things for themselves. This way of thinking, what goes on in here, can really be taught from the inside out. When it's taught from the outside in, someone else comes between you and yourself, and that's not considered a wise idea. That's the tradition.

In one of your papers on Perennial Wisdom it says that the Native tradition is nature-focused. I would like to modify that a little. I would like to say that Indian traditions are nature-inclusive. You do not see man and nature as separate from each other, but you see yourself in the context of an interrelated whole instead.

. . . The idea is that everybody learns, but you need to figure out *how* a child learns in order to design a learning circumstance in which each individual can teach themselves. The idea is always to teach yourself. In fact there is no word "teach," or there didn't used to be, in the fundamental language.

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From *Noetic Sciences Review*, Summer 1990:

A NATIVE AMERICAN WORLDVIEW

by Paula Underwood Spencer

Based on a Presentation to the Board of Directors
of The Institute of Noetic Sciences.

Paula Underwood Spencer is responsible for one traditional way of knowing. Passed down with what she calls "meticulous care" from her grandfather's Oneida grandmother, this tradition contains vast oral histories, some related to the first settling of North America; an extensive educational structure, part of which has been declared "an Exemplary Educational Program" by the US Department of Education; and a specific shamanic tradition called The Strong Spirit Path. In this article she relates her Native American educational and shamanic trainings to Western science. Paula Spencer also holds an MA in International Affairs/Communications and has extensive experience with organizations and government in Washington, D.C. She describes herself "as still looking for words and phrases with which to share more effectively the ancient tradition."

[in the original article, the follow segment appears as a box on two pages in the middle of the article, following the paragraph ending with: "You let your thoughts flow into that circumstance to understand it." and before the "[Specificity and Wholeness](#)" section. it may be useful to read this segment first, then the actual article, and then go thru this segment again. -- [ratitor](#)]

Hawk and Eagle Both are Singing

A Comparison Between Western and Indigenous Science--in
which the author attempts to share the relevance of her
shamanic training to Western science.

As a part of the Native American training I received from my father, one of the aspects of perception that I was asked to understand was the distinction between Hawk and Eagle, between the way Hawk perceives and the way Eagle perceives. In this shamanic tradition, you gain the appreciation by what is considered to be direct experience. However, the distinction--once learned--is easily translated into Western logical sequential language structure.

Dictionary definition of "science:"
"Originally, state . . . of knowing"

When hunting, Hawk sees Mouse . . . and dives directly for it.

When hunting, Eagle sees the whole pattern . . . sees movement in the general pattern . . . and dives for the movement, learning only later that it is Mouse.

What we are talking about here is Specificity and Wholeness.

Western science deals from the specific to generalities about the whole.

Indigenous science begins with an apprehension of the Whole, only very carefully and on close inspection reaching tentative conclusions about any Specificity.

Indigenous science is based on a profound immersion in and awareness of the whole circumstance. Rather than mistrusting personal experience, Indigenous science has learned to thrive on it. The standards for personal honesty are excruciatingly exact and taught from earliest childhood. Educational structures like the Vision Quest have as one goal coming to terms with accuracy outside of or devoid of your own assumptions or the assumptions of your society. The idea is that you are always--if you are wise--moving toward enhanced accuracy. You will never entirely arrive at complete accuracy, but you are constantly trying to move in that direction.

As to the efficacy of Indigenous science, let me give you one example.

Since universe is Energy, part of the process of understanding, at least as I experienced it, is to learn to "see" flows of energy and specificities of energy. Both are necessary. Because, you see, Universe is both Whole and Specific. Western science is beginning to understand this through explorations of theories about particle and wave. Both the particle/particularity/specificity of Universe and the wave/flow of Universe were aspects I was encouraged as a child to apprehend and understand. I was asked to "see" the "dancing points of lights" and then to apprehend the shift from location to flow. Much of shamanic practice has to do with developing the ability to enter and use this shift.

So when I read that the Western science of physics was looking at particle/wave theories, I had no trouble with that at all. Instead of being startled or surprised, I was given a wonderful gift--the ability to communicate more easily some of the things I learned in the shamanic process of understanding Universe.

**To the extent that Universe is Whole, location/time
is irrelevant. To the extent that it's Specific,
relationship is a better construct than either time
or location for purposes of accurate understanding.**

The process of Indigenous science allows you to learn about and to experience the flow of Energy through Universe. You quickly come to understand (well, maybe it takes a while) that Universe has a kind of binary on/off structure, which can certainly be stated as particle/wave. In the particle state, particles can be understood in terms of "location." But "location" requires a point of reference which is more or less fixed in relation to that particle.

Tell me now, where is that point of reference? Are you not also moving?

The Indigenous scientific approach understands Universe--or All Things--as constantly in motion. Even the particles are "dancing," already moving toward the flow state. Since everything is in motion all the time (oops, time is irrelevant!)--since everything is constantly in motion, any location is in constant flux in relation to everything else.

Ah . . . in relation to!

"All Things, All Things are Related" is not just a charming chant, designed to put you in touch with "all your relations," it is a profound evaluation of the nature of Universe.

Language predicts the conclusions that we reach therein.

There is great contrast between Native American languages in general and that logical, sequential construct called English. In general, it can and has been explained that Indian languages are much more verbal--that is, verb oriented--than English. English uses an extensive noun/category structure which requires you to constantly decide which "category" whatever you are describing belongs in. Thus, in English, we constantly divide a whole Universe into semi-relevant parts. Indian languages generally don't do this.

Language predicts the conclusions we reach therein. Understanding this, my ancestors consistently examined new words the way the commerce department examines applications for new patents, except that their usefulness was also explored, as was their impact on the culture as a whole. The Academie Francaise limits itself to examining the accuracy of French. My ancestors required a detailed cultural Environmental Impact Report!

That which enables, disables also.

From an Indian perspective, the "priesthood" nature of Western science is anathema. My own tradition disbelieves in "experts." "That which enables, disables also" means that a physicist will fail in understanding in many other areas, precisely because of the amount of time she/he spends on physics and therefore not on other things. Such people are not considered "experts," but "those extensively informed on part of the whole". They are listened to not on a priesthood basis, but on the basis of their having information others may not yet have--just as vice versa.

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Any highly trained person will of course have a particular view--and therefore has a special responsibility to listen before speaking in any discussion of what the people may choose to do. Any person in a group who gets out of touch with his, with her community, is separated therefrom. Although I don't think there is the same negative connotation as there is in English, a shaman out of touch with her, with his community takes on aspects of the wizard--an isolated person who can inadvertently or on purpose do things that are harmful to the community. The process of Western "expertise" would be seen as a process of encouraging people to be isolated from the rest of their community in some way.

If Universe is Whole, what causes what?

As I have said, Universe in its particle state has the quality of relatedness. Universe in its wave state partakes of flow. The particle state can be said, then, to have the quality of location. The wave state can be said to have the quality of direction. It is this movingness of Energy that of its nature produces Change.

But look, if everything is in motion, what causes what? How can we say that this drop of ocean water pushes that drop of ocean - and that's why it moves! Rather, direction, flow, the movingness of Energy of its nature produces Change.

And here we have a problem with English. "Produces" means "causes." It doesn't mean that in my tradition. There is more a sense of evolution, a sense of cooperative evolvingness, of the Universal Reality acting through you and with you and with everything else--all at once. Perhaps "engenders" is a better term. Perhaps a better term has yet to be invented. In any event, in any shift from one

language to another, much is lost in translation.

It seems to me that there are two aspects here that make Western science's preoccupation with causality sometimes counterproductive. (Remember, that which enables, disables also.) One is the probability of multiple causation. Laboratory experiments obsessively select out "causative" factors for experimental demonstration. This clarifies and obscures, both at once. It leads to situations in which, for example, a blood test run to determine "causation" of some disease may not reveal the culprit, as "we weren't screening for that condition."

It also leads to situations in which the results of isolated experiments are applied to the broader community with disastrous or semi-disastrous results. Mistakes are not ruled out by any discipline. But this kind of mistake (Love Canal, nuclear waste disposal) would be less likely in any Indigenous, Whole way of understanding the Universe in which we exist.

The other aspect I see that seems to me to question the relevance of Western science's preoccupation with causality, is: In a sea of constant movement/change--which the wave aspect of Universe certainly seems to imply--is causation really a viable way of understanding?

So Hawk--the tendency to look at the Specific--and Eagle--the tendency to look at the Whole--have something to say to one another. And if they both listen, what is engendered is what is called in my tradition an Interactive Circle. Like Yin-and-Yang, each encourages the other toward heightened acuity.

In cultural terms, this has been going on for a long time. Renaissance Europe was preceded by the Crusades, during which Europeans developed a taste for foreign knowledge/science and technology--and they just kept it up! Much of "Western" science is truly based on earlier exploration by other peoples--Chinese, Muslim, Native American. According to my own oral history, for instance, Benjamin Franklin's famous key-and-kite experiment was his effort to try to demonstrate and understand better what he was hearing from some of his Iroquois friends--which was that Universe is energy . . . and so on.

To learn to demonstrate through replicable, quantitative experiments to those unwilling to spend the time to acquire shamanic skills--or whose culture has chosen to forego these skills--some of the thing that can be learned through this Whole approach to Life . . . is no small thing. It is an invaluable contribution to human understanding . . . a second eye opened on the Universe to help give us some greater depth perception.

For me, Western science is that second eye.

Perhaps Indigenous science can provide that second eye for the West, to the greater benefit of one and all.

Hawk and Eagle--both are singing.

Let us hope they are listening to one another.

Kind thoughts come

A NATIVE AMERICAN WORLDVIEW

First I want to explain to you the base from which I'm speaking. My grandfather's grandmother was Oneida. She became responsible for an ancient tradition and for passing it along. She did this because she was both a Healer and a Spirit Healer. During what was, in effect, her internship, she was assigned a man who was slowly dying. That man, as it turned out, was dying of grief. She learned this very quickly.

This was a test for her, by the equivalent of the Community Medical Board, to determine what kind of healer she was, and what she would do.

She pinpointed the cause of his grief: He was the Keeper of the Old Things. He had not been able to find, during his very long life, anyone at all who would take the time to sit with him and learn all of these ancient treasures. This was because of the oncoming tide of the Pale Ones.

Therefore as part of this man's therapy, my grandfather's grandmother began to learn these things from him. And immediately his condition improved. He got better and better.

Now her purpose in life had always been to be a Healer. So during this therapy, she thought she would find somebody else to learn all these things from him and pass on the responsibility. But she was never able, in three decades of trying, to find anyone at all who could learn this from him or from her. So finally she accepted maintaining this tradition as a family responsibility. The idea was to perpetuate this ancient wisdom as far into the future as necessary, until Earth's children grew Listening Ears.

Black Elk, whom some of you will know, said that it was the fifth generation that would grow Listening Ears. I am the fifth generation. In my own lifetime I have discovered that people have indeed grown Listening Ears.

Now--my father's idea was that I should wait until I had developed some grandmother wisdom before writing this down. In other words, I needed to live through the life cycle before trying to commit to paper all these ancient understandings. My grandfather had given up a career in medicine to spend his time learning all this from his grandmother. He then passed it on to my father after a great deal of testing.

I don't want to give you the impression that this transmittal is based on automatic lineal descent. It's not. In this tradition, a man learns these things from a woman, if possible, and a woman learns them from a man. That way you keep things in balance. It gives you an understanding of the other half of life and prevents some of the competition that can often come in when you learn from someone who is also male, also female.

My father's responsibility was to find someone who would have the natural proclivity, the motivation, and the latent skills to learn all this. I went through extended periods of testing with my father, not pass/fail tests, but evaluations. There's a lot of evaluative testing that goes on in the tradition (see following box).

Learnings in Sensitization

There are many kinds of sensitization processes that you have the opportunity to go through if you choose. You get many kinds of testing to evaluate how you think. The idea is that everybody learns, but you need to figure out *how* a child learns in order to design a learning circumstance in which each individual can teach themselves. The idea is always to teach yourself. In fact there is no word "teach," or there didn't used to be, in the fundamental language.

Then you go through mind transfer situations. One of the ways oral history can be handed down is in visual form. How do you do that? When my father was teaching me, we sat in the garage. You have to have a sacred place for learning, and the fire laws in California prevented us from having a traditional sacred place, so we had to settle for the garage. My dad would be just sitting there staring at the back wall, and he would say, "What am I looking at?" It wouldn't take me very long to figure out he wasn't looking at the wall, and he wasn't looking at the gunny sack that was hanging there, or the hoe, or the rake, and all of a sudden I said, "Oh, you're looking at a mountain." "What kind of mountain?" And then we would go through a long process of description of every inch of the mountain.

Then, he would say, "Try this," and all of a sudden I realized I was looking at a tree, one I hadn't seen before. Then he would take me for a little walk maybe several days later, and all of a sudden I would say, "Oh, look, there it is!" So, you test whether this is working all the time. Then he would come home from work and he would say, "You know what I was thinking about today?" and that would just click and I would say, "Yes, I do--you were thinking about . . ."

My dad was functionally illiterate, he was so dyslexic. This worked out very well because his mind wasn't distracted with academic things, as my grandfather's mind had been, because he was a very educated man. My father had a very simple job, where he didn't have to do anything but physical labor. He'd get himself into the swing of his work, and then he'd just start figuring things out, maybe my lesson for the next day, or maybe, "Let's see if she can pick this up." So the thought would just come to me. And then he would find some way of establishing whether or not I had picked up his thinking accurately.

Then at that point, when you've checked, double checked, triple checked, quadruple checked, at that point you begin trying to hand down some of the visual information. So I have stored visual information to which I would give a very high probability of accuracy, maybe 96%. And I went through all these excruciatingly detailed testing processes first.

As a result of 15 years of careful exploration of ways to share these things, the first book to be published out of the three Basic Learning Stories has received three national awards, one of them being recognition by the US Department of

Education as part of an Exemplary Educational Program. The three Learning Stories represent Body, Mind, and Spirit. We hope to publish them soon.

The Consensual Oral History, under the title "The Walking People," has also been written down. It is about 700 pages long. It goes back to before what logically must be the crossing of the Bering Strait, which was called at that time Walk by Waters. There is a great deal that precedes that event, so it is indeed an ancient history, which has been maintained down all these generations.

Now--one of the difficulties of my path through life has been to find ways to express these ancient ways of knowing. I knew from the time I was a child that I would need to take the step in my generation of stating these things in English. I wrote a thought piece a while ago which refers to the problem of "catching a concept in a net of sound patterns called English." Sometimes you can do that and sometimes you can't. I want to speak to that briefly.

Years ago I took a class in parapsychological research. The language was driving me crazy. In my tradition, for instance, the process of going somewhere when your body stays here is called Spirit Walking--because that's what happens. The Spirit Walks. It feels like moving forward, like walking. In English, it's called Out-of-Body Experience. Well, in my tradition, that's considered dangerous. You don't want your whole Spirit out of your body because you may not find your way back. You handle it in a different way and you speak in terms of Spirit, rather than Body. So, all these body-related terms bothered me.

Finally I went to the teacher and told her my problem. She asked me to make a presentation to the whole class explaining this. The whole class spent time making up new terms in English. Over the years I have found ways to deal with this, which do not include leaving the room. And this has worked reasonably well.

When you talk to Native American people you need to understand that most Indian languages are much more verbal--that is, verb-oriented--than English. English has worlds of nouns. Iroquoian languages--which is my tradition--have nouns also, but not so many. The Hopi, I understand, have no nouns at all. Everything is described in verbal terms.

You would not, for example, call Paul Temple over there the Chair as much as you would call him Man who sits at the head of the table. This tells you something. You go through the thought process of placing him at the head of the table (in the North) and thinking about his behavior, rather than just announcing who Paul is, what his title is. It becomes extremely difficult, painful, agonizing sometimes, to try to say things in English, because you're forever jamming things into categories that don't work and making yourself think in ways that aren't natural to you.

Now--the tradition that I come out of says: If you want to be truly understood, you need to say everything three times, in three different ways. Once for each ear . . . and once for the heart. The right ear represents the ability to apprehend the nature of the Whole, the wholeness of the circumstance, the forest. The left ear represents the ability to select a sequential path. And the heart represents a balance between the two.

How do you choose a path if you haven't looked at the forest?

If you've only admired the Forest, where are you going in Life?

The distinction that I want to make between Western science and the approach to science which my tradition, and perhaps other Native traditions, have found useful . . . is that first you look at the Forest . . . and then you look at the Path. We had a speaker earlier, Michael Murphy, who described a process of acquiring sensory data and then testing it. This is the reverse of my tradition, which is that you first acquire an intuitive, whole understanding, and then you focus on a Specificity and examine it, and then you always put it back into the whole.

Now--when you examine anything, you examine it first with your mind. When I was a child, if I were trying to understand the process of a leaf growing, for example, the idea was to sit and think, allow my thoughts to flow into the leaf. Only after I was completely satisfied with my explanation would I ask the plant's permission and hold it in my hand. So you go through sort of a mirror image, a reversed image of the process of Western science.

We were talking earlier about the difference between the Western way of understanding, the Eastern way, and the Indigenous way--the Native American perspective and approaches. It strikes me that the Western tradition represents Body because it's always looking at things out here at arm's length. It's using microscopes, it's using all kinds of tools to look at things, to take them apart. That's changing, but this has been the understanding. The Eastern approach uses Spirit--you meditate, you breathe, you apprehend the nature of the Universe through your Spirit. I think the Native American tradition, at least the one that I understand and grew up in, represents Mind. Because, as I say, you let your thoughts precede you. You let your thoughts flow into that circumstance to understand it.

Specificity and Wholeness

Now--there are general similarities in Native American approaches to life. But they are similar as you go from Ireland to Turkey. There are enormous variations. But to a certain extent it's the same dance, from one end of Europe to the other. The similarities I see in many Native American cultures include such things as an absolute sense of the Wholeness of Things. One of the problems that Indian children often have in this education system is that in school people are always talking about specific and separate things, but the Indian children may understand that it's really one interrelated whole. And this passion for separation just sounds crazy. You try to translate it from English into an Indian language and it literally sounds crazy.

So it's very hard for them to take this seriously. Very difficult. This was hard for me, when I began school, but my father kept saying, learn the system, learn the system. How can you learn to say what we understand in an intelligible way if you don't learn the system? So the idea is, learn the system and contribute in that way. And it is a very viable way of understanding life. What becomes dangerous is when any one way of understanding life is considered to be the only way, or the Right Way.

The idea of relatedness runs throughout all Native American thinking. Everything is related to everything else, everything is attached to everything else. So everything affects everything else. This gets into the causality issue that you've been examining here at the Institute. The idea that this-causes-that is simply impossible in Indian understanding, because everything is attached; everything has its own gravitational attraction. So you can say what I say comes out of my tradition, but what Michael said this morning has already affected what I say and the presence of the people on each side of me also affects what I say in an ongoing way, and that's the way the world works.

The way that is stated in mythic terms is that Spider Woman created the world, and she did it in this way: In the beginning all that existed was Thought Woman. She was the totality of all that existed until Spider Woman came and took from that Whole Thought the specificities that were implicit in it and from these she spun the world in which we live.

You see how it is? Every place where a thread crosses a thread, that is an Individuation. And the continuing thread connects every Individuation to every other.

The idea of how Universe functions that comes out of my tradition, and I

hear echoes of it in other Indian traditions, is that Universe is Space which contains Energy. Energy of its nature moves. As it moves it produces Change.

In the Western world we call that Change "time"--past, present and future. But the idea is that it isn't time at all. It is Change--it was, it is, it will be.

Part of the process I'm describing is what I hear discussed in scientific terms at the present time as the distinction between wave and particle--is it a wave or is it a particle? And the answer is: yes!

In the shamanic tradition you understand the distinction and the interrelationship of Specificity and Wholeness. Particle is Specificity. Wave is Wholeness, the direction that the energy takes. And you spend a great deal of time looking at each. I can't speak for all shamanic traditions. I suspect there may be something similar. But in the shamanic tradition that I'm familiar with you understand the world as binary. Now that's not good/evil, any more than light is right and dark is wrong. Dark is not wrong in relation to light. Light is not wrong in relation to dark. In fact, we need both. We need both.

So the binary nature of life gives us a multiplicity of yes/no choices from which we choose our path, constantly branching in the direction of our yes decisions. Each minute yes/no decision is a binary decision. Understanding this helps you understand another binary, co-equal aspect of Life. When you want to enter a different aspect of Life, you wait for the point at which Particle becomes Wave. And just at that split second before the Particle is gone and the Wave takes over, you enter between, and you become Energy. At that point where the Wave becomes Particle again, you enter between, and you re-become who you were or you make a different choice. Which is possible. I think it is that space in which healing occurs.

The critical thing is to understand that Particle and Wave co-exist.

In one of your papers on Perennial Wisdom it says that the Native tradition is nature-focused. I would like to modify that a little. I would like to say that Indian traditions are nature-inclusive. You do not see man and nature as separate from each other, but you see yourself in the context of an interrelated whole instead.

The Rule of Six

One of the attitudes taught in my tradition is the Rule of Six. The Rule of Six says that for each apparent phenomenon, devise at least six plausible explanations, every one of which can indeed explain the phenomenon. There are probably sixty, but if you devise six, this will sensitize you to how many there may yet be and prevent you from locking in on the first thing that sounds right as The Truth.

But your task isn't over yet. Because you can't just float on a multiple option basis. Now your task is to apply your life experience, which is unique to yourself, and use it as a base to evaluate each of those options. Now you assign a probability factor. That probability factor can never be 100% . . . and absolutely never zero.

You keep a floating attitude toward life, but you constantly know where you are in that context.

When I was very young my father would stand me on my left foot and say, "Answer this question in the manner of the people." Wholeness. And then he would stand me on my right foot and say, "Explain this in a way your mother would understand." Sequence.

Then he would stand me on both feet and ask, "What do you see now?" Because it isn't enough to do only one, only the other. The critical thing is to strike a balance between the two.

In my tradition you get mind puzzles a lot. One of the questions that my dad gave me as a mind puzzle was, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" When I

as it moves
it produces Change

Change is
it was<>it is<>it will be

sometimes we call this past, present, future
and we say it is Time
it is not time
it is Change

you see how it is
how everything in Universe
is Energy
flowing from one place to another

what we call matter
is merely a relatively stable form
of Energy
which is also changing
also moving
only more slowly
like Earth and Ocean
each at its own pace

all things that contain Energy
are alive
as all things are formed of Energy
all things are alive
and all things are related
each to the other
always
*

from the Strong Spirit Path
a Native American Tradition

and expressed in English by
Paula Underwood Spencer