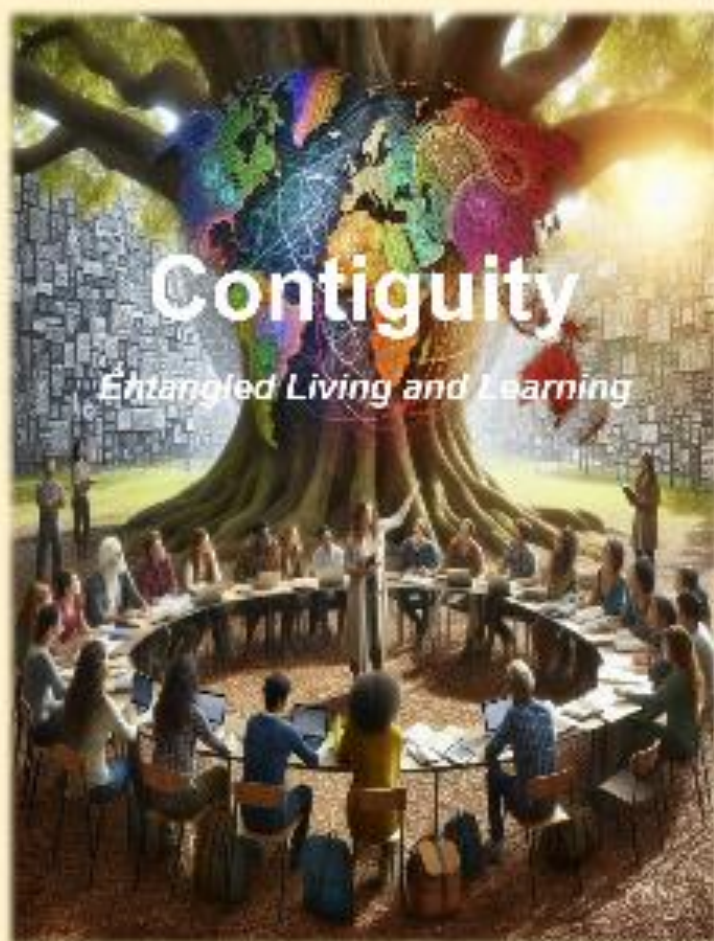




Alex Bennet  
Mountain Quest Institute



*As an Orthodox Jew, I have long reflected on the dual dimensions of holiness central to our tradition: the holiness of time—manifested through Shabbat, holidays, and life-cycle moments—and the holiness of place, such as the Land of Israel and its sacred sites.*

*Reading Contiguity offered a new and profound lens through which to understand these age-old concepts. The exploration of spatial and temporal perspectives in the book enriched my appreciation of how Judaism intuitively recognizes these two planes—not as abstract constructs, but as dynamic forces that shape meaning, memory, and identity.*

*For me, reading a book by Alex Bennet is never a passive experience. Her works—this one included—do not simply inform; they invite. They spark curiosity, provoke reflection, and inspire the reader to move from thought to thoughtfulness, from observation to innovation. Contiguity is a compelling example of how learning can become an active, engaged process—one that not only deepens understanding, but also invites each of us to participate in developing new ideas of our own.*

**Dr. Moria Levy, ROM Global (Israel)**

*In the present epoch (which may have already changed by the time you read this), Generative/LLM AI is spreading faster than any previously encountered viral phenomenon. A major effect has been a growing dependence on external systems, and along with it, increasing disassociation from the inner self. We must not allow this degree of separation to continue.*

*Contiguity comes to the rescue by helping us gain a deep understanding of how the world's myriad array of tools, devices, perspectives, and yes, billions of minds, grounded in consciousness, can be harmoniously integrated. Through a series of reflections, stories, and exercises, this book applies the brakes and brings us back to our true home, our unlimited source of knowledge, the human mind. It could not come at a better time.*

**Dr. Arthur J. Murray, Author, CEO, Applied Knowledge Sciences, Inc. (USA)**

*The author of Contiguity systematically and masterfully outlines a framework which uses contiguity as an organizing principle for understanding how consciousness connects our experiences over time and across different domains. Understanding this profound connection potentially unleashes individual and collective capacity to have more unified and holistic experiences that transcend conventional boundaries. This new capacity is the gateway for a new individual and collective reality characterized by enhanced unity, empathy, creativity, adaptability, decision-making and personal growth and fulfillment. This conceptual framework is richly complemented and reinforced with pragmatic exercises, case examples and tools. Contiguity is truly a seminal work which interlaces multiple fields to make its case, thereby modeling contiguity in action.*

**Dr. Joyce Avedisian, Avedisian Management Consultants, Author (USA)**

***A refreshing framework for appreciating our brain-heart/mind-soul!***

*Contiguity reveals complexities and considerations about the concept of consciousness which needs freshening. To use a proverbial metaphor, if we throw consciousness at the wall, like one might do with Jello, it doesn't stick well. While consciousness has been extensively pursued, it is still relentlessly debated. Significant advancements have been made in philosophical perspectives, psychological approaches, neuroscientific advances, and influential contemporary theories like Integrated Information Theory, but no general theory has emerged.*

*What Alex Bennet does in Contiguity is create a refreshing, comprehensive epistemological perspective surrounding a clear set of thoughtful consciousness contributors. This positions well for a timely consilience approach, especially between consciousness and AI, and offers contemplation for consciousness in the field with a deep and detailed range and depth of an inviting framework. She may be on to something. In any case, it sustains the challenge that the magnitude and function of the human brain-heart/mind-soul state of being far exceeds our understanding of the sciences and forces that explain its creation and existence. Therefore, the exploration continues.*

**Robert Turner, Author, *Reblooming the Knowledge Movement: The Democratization of Organizations; Unleashing the Human Mind; Knowledge Capacities I and II; and fRAGmentation: e Pluribus Unum* (USA)**

*The contiguity of two nations physically next to each other has historically implied a special relationship, with entangled threads producing the possibility of greater collaboration. There is value in proximity, through close connections in resources and relationships. As global access has increased with virtual travel reduced to milliseconds, the possibilities of contiguity have also increased. Now, in the knowledge economy, where ideas represent the raw materials, the interconnectedness of all things cannot be ignored. This book explores the significant ways that we can recognize and leverage contiguity through our learning and consciousness connections. With the backdrop of contiguity within AI, the emphasis is rightly focused on the human mind, the need for personal growth, and continued exploration of our conscious experience.*

**John Lewis, Author, *The Explanation Age and Story Thinking* (USA)**

*In "Contiguity: Entangled Threads of Living and Learning," the author masterfully illuminates the profound connection between learning and living through the lens of human consciousness. The essence of contiguity lies in recognizing that our experiences and knowledge are not separate entities but are intricately woven together. As the author suggests, this interconnectedness transcends mere conceptualization; it underscores a fundamental truth: learning and living are one.*

*In a world where we often compartmentalize our experiences, this book invites us to embrace a holistic perspective. We are urged to see that ideas emerge from a shared consciousness, where every thought and experience is adjacent to another, creating a rich tapestry of understanding. By exploring the dual nature of contiguity, the author reminds us that our lives are shaped by the direct relationships between moments, thoughts, and actions.*

*The call to acknowledge our contiguous existence is both a philosophical and spiritual journey, encouraging us to explore the depths of our interconnectedness.*

**Dr. Rongbin W.B. Lee, Professor Emeritus, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Chairman of the Global MIKE Award Committee (Hong Kong)**

*Traditional learning has tried to isolate and fragment content to make it simpler to understand, but this severely underestimates the impact of how our (seemingly disconnected) worlds interact with each other. The real truth is that everything is interconnected with everything, and their contiguity influences across social, emotional, rational, and spiritual aspects of being human in a physical universe. Understanding contiguity means knowing it is a blessing that we all "see" things from a slightly different perspective, and that we each learn as we clash our ideas against each other.*

*Each of us subtly shifts the perspectives of others as we pass through each other's "field", both consciously and subconsciously. This is why Contiguity is critical for accelerating learning on our personal and collective Intelligent Social Change Journeys. The proximity of contiguous elements in a social sphere (three-dimensional moving ecosystem) creates a field of influence on each other as they propel through time and space. This (mostly invisible) field influences how each element evolves through its separate but parallel trajectories and often changes the trajectories themselves. Being more consciously aware of contiguity (and how to leverage it), its influence in your ecosystem and beyond, will amplify learning, build relationships, and enhance the impacts able to be achieved at personal, organisational, societal, and humanity levels.*

**Dr. Arthur Shelley, Founder, Intelligent Answers; Author, *The Organizational Zoo, KNOWledge SUCCESSION and Becoming Adaptable* (Australia)**

*Every age has its philosophers - asking the "why." Ours is no different: we have Alex. As a Professor, I learned that the answer is not as important as the question—which leads to curiosity and critical thinking. Knowledge and learning are accretive—connected to past knowledge. Alex has taken us into this realm. Enjoy the adventure and discovery—the "intellectual contiguity."*

**Michael Stankosky, DSc., Cofounder of the Institute of Knowledge & Innovation, GWU; Editor Emeritus, VINE; Member of the Academy of Scholars (USA)**

*This book is an excellent example of how we can examine the surrounding reality and ourselves, not as continuous things, events or results and actions, as apparently these seem to be, but as associative clips, fragments of reality, as they truly act. The contiguity vs. continuity concept is derived from this analysis, becoming a milestone for the understanding of reality. In an explicative way, with examples from mathematics, where a function is continuous if it gets values for any value of argument in a smooth progressive manner, from geography, where continuity might refer to unbroken stretch regions, or from personal development and learning, as a progressive pursuit and growth.*

*Different from continuity, contiguity accepts the diversity, the variety of objects, ideas and facts, which coexist in the spatial and temporal scales, but which may be unified into a whole, in our perception and in the surrounding environment. That is because not only do all things interact between them by physics, chemical or biological laws, due to their proximity and adjacency, but also because of the corpuscular interactive nature of reality, following a spatial-temporal linkage within a whole, including the human and living being structures. From such a comparative analysis, the main conclusive, emergent result is that we are actually rather contiguous beings.*

*Following this line of analysis, the author explores and clarifies the contiguity of the human lineage, genetics and ancestry, of cultural, migration patterns and shared health conditions, philosophical and spiritual connections, and of that of consciousness and the conscious self and identity, learning and memory, consciousness states and emotions, perception, knowledge and meaning, creative thinking, contiguous living and flow, offering multiple exercises on connection and learning, on multi-disciplinary mind mapping, creativity and constraints, reflexing and journaling techniques, collective consciousness, and even on the contiguity of artificial intelligence, transpersonal psychology and interdimensionality.*

*With such a large and comprehensive field of unfolding, this book is undoubtedly a necessary source of knowledge and inspiration for an optimized interactive interaction with self, with society and with the environment.*

**Dr. Florin Gaiseanu, Professor, Science and technology of Information, Bucharest (Romania) and Barcelona (Spain), Honor Member of NeuroQuantology (Europe) and International Journal of Neuropsychology and Behavioural Sciences (USA)**

# **Contiguity**

***Entangled Threads of  
Living and Learning***

**Alex Bennet  
Mountain Quest Institute**

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## **Dedication**

*To the trillions of minds that have contributed to—and continue to entangle their thoughts and feelings to—create the contiguous consciousness field in which we live and learn.*

## **Appreciation**

*We are hooked. AI is becoming an amazing support tool. Appreciation specifically to DALLE-E for the cover picture and AI-PRO 4o for assisting with scenario examples for the pressing issues we feed it. Thank you to David Hughes Bennet, before AI and no longer among us, who served as our personal HI (human intelligence), providing many years of thought-provoking questions which still guide our work today.*



## Preface

**H**ow do ideas emerge from that great field of consciousness of which we are a part? It doesn't matter what you call that field or what you believe it is—an energy field, information field, consciousness field, quantum field, God field, and so many more terms that have emerged in the human mind and wound their way into our thoughts and hearts throughout human history. These names represent different perspectives of what it is to be human.

All things are interconnected. We know this from a scientific viewpoint, although it was true long before that knowing. We think this from the philosophical viewpoint, with that thinking emerging concepts like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Noosphere. We'll talk about that in more depth in Chapter 11. We believe this from a spiritual or religious viewpoint related to the powerful concept of soul. Recognizing that we are contiguous beings was an idea bound to emerge at some point in our intellectual pursuits.

Why do we need the term "contiguity"? Why does the term "continuity" not suffice? Continuity, in a general sense, refers to the unbroken and consistent existence or operation of something over time. It implies a seamless progression and connection between parts without any interruptions or abrupt changes. In mathematics a function is continuous if, at any point within its domain, its value changes gradually without any jumps or gaps. In geography, continuity might refer to geographical features or ecological regions that maintain an unbroken stretch or connection. In personal development, continuity might refer to the coherent progression of personal growth or skill development over time. Each of these contexts emphasizes an uninterrupted and coherent linkage that connects different parts into a unified whole.

Contiguity, on the other hand, emphasizes the physical and spatial proximity and adjacency between and among objects, entities, or areas. While continuity focuses on the seamless and uninterrupted flow or connectivity over time, contiguity is concerned with the direct connections or relationships between things that are positioned next to each other in time *and* space. This dual nature of contiguity allows it to play an important role in areas like learning and psychology, where temporal contiguity occurs when experiences or stimuli are presented close together in time, or related to previous learning, facilitating the formation of associative memories and enhancing learning processes. In narrative structures—including the story we construct of ourselves—contiguity describes not only how scenes or events are placed spatially but also how they

are laid out temporally to create a cohesive story. In process management, ensuring tasks or phases are contiguous in a timeline helps maintain project momentum and ensures a smooth coordinated progression of events.

While we include business examples, as we dig deeper into the concept of contiguity and what it means specifically to living and learning, we invite your ideas and thoughts to emerge such that we can together learn how this shift in thinking can affect our actions, and expand our understanding of the reality in which we act.

Alex Bennet

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## Foreword

For over a decade, Dr. Alex Bennet and I have shared a dynamic partnership—one that has blurred the lines between mentor and mentee, collaborator and co-author. Together, we’ve navigated the intricate landscapes of academia, publishing papers that dissect complexity. Yet, with *Contiguity*, Bennet ventures into uncharted territory, offering a bold reimagining of how interconnected systems—scientific, socioeconomic, and beyond—cohere, adapt, and thrive.

At its core, *Contiguity* asks a deceptively simple question: What binds the fragments of our world into meaningful wholes? Bennet’s answer lies in the invisible forces she terms “connective agents”—the principles, practices, and paradigms that bond disparate actors in a network, from microbial ecosystems to global supply chains. This is not merely theoretical musing; it is a call to rethink collaboration itself.

This book is both a mirror and a map. It reflects the tangled realities of our interconnected age while charting pathways for innovators to harness *contiguity* as a tool. Readers will find methodological gems that balance stability and adaptability in any interconnected relationships.

What sets this book apart is its interdisciplinary audacity. Bennet bridges perspectives from fields often siloed: the relentless evolution of technology, the existential urgency of environmental and ecological planning, the precision of systems management, the pragmatism of project execution, the idealism of educational reform, and the life-or-death stakes of healthcare systems. Even more strikingly, she anchors these domains in a philosophical stance that reframes how we perceive interconnectedness—not as a static web, but as a dynamic, living process. *Contiguity* is not just interdisciplinary; it is a radical synthesis, one that dissolves boundaries between theory and practice. For scholars and innovators alike, this approach opens unprecedented avenues for knowledge creation, inviting us to cross-pollinate ideas in ways that spark breakthroughs.

*Contiguity* widens our perspective to reveal both the depth and breadth of interrelations among agents in a connected network. Bennet’s framework uncovers the “connective bonds” that sustain these relationships—whether tangible, like data flows in smart cities, or intangible, like trust in community

healthcare. She exposes the fluidity of these interactions, illustrating how influence, resources, and meaning ripple through networks with the unpredictability of a river carving its path. Yet within this fluidity lies structure: her analysis reveals the hidden patterns and feedback loops that turn chaos into coherence. The result is a recognition of greater intricacy—not as a problem to solve, but as a fertile ground to explore. Here, complexity becomes an asset, offering infinite permutations for innovation.

This is more than a book; it is a manifesto for a new paradigm of examining the interconnectivity among agents in interconnected relations. Bennet's work will challenge your way of looking at the world through a new cognitive lens.

To read this book is to witness a mind in infinite discovery. The future belongs to those who understand the connection, and Bennet has just handed us the blueprint.

Dr. Chulatep Senivongse  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The term “contiguity” might be new to you, and indeed you may just think we made a huge typo and that we actually mean “continuity”. However, these two words describe different concepts. “Continuity” refers to something that is unbroken and without interruptions, permanent. It’s often used to describe actions, processes, or things that occur over a length of time or space without stopping.

On the other hand, “contiguity” refers to things that are adjacent or touching. Historically, it’s been used in the physical sense to describe objects, pieces of land, or sections that are next to each other. For example, the contiguous United States refers to the 48 adjoining states on the continent, excluding Alaska and Hawaii, which are not touching or directly connected. However, if considered through the lens of democracy and commitment to democratic principles (beliefs and acting on those beliefs), all 50 states may (or may not) be contiguous!

We’re going to explore this concept further throughout this book. But let’s start with some basics, and example this concept in the context of our everyday activities and working life, and perhaps in terms of some of our larger concerns in the current world.

### Vertical Contiguity

Conceptually, vertical contiguity is temporal in nature, referring to connections or sequences of events and processes over time. Unlike horizontal contiguity, which is more spatial and relates to things being physically adjacent, vertical contiguity emphasizes continuity in a temporal frame, where one moment or stage builds on or follows directly from the next, creating a continuous chain of development, causation or expansion.

The temporal sequence involves the orderly progression of events, actions, or states, which flow seamlessly from one point in time to the next. In our subjective perception, each step or event in this sequence is often dependent on the preceding one in terms of causality, making it crucial for understanding processes that evolve over time such as historical events, developmental phases, or procedural methodologies.

By analyzing how events are temporally linked, historians can understand causation and evolution, making sense of how past actions shape current and future circumstances. For example, in project management and execution, having a clear sequence of tasks ensures that each stage is built on the requirements fulfilled by the previous step, minimizing errors and optimizing workflow.

Personal and intellectual development often follow vertical contiguity. Skills and knowledge acquired at one stage serve as the foundation for more complex understanding later. Similarly, natural processes, like ecological succession or biological growth, are predicated on phases that occur sequentially, reinforcing the orderliness and predictability necessary for sustainability and adaptation.

Let's look at examples of applications in various fields. In *education*, curriculum development often relies on vertical contiguity to ensure there is a logical progression that helps learners systematically build knowledge. When new thought is related to something known, it is both easier to understand and easier to recall. Linked to *technology and engineering*, design systems and software developments often depend on temporal (vertical), methodical progression to ensure that each iteration leads to a more refined product. In terms of *psychological development*, vertical contiguity in developmental psychology highlights the life stages individuals pass through, offering insights into typical and atypical progressions.

As in all aspects of life, there are challenges related to vertical contiguity. Interruptions in temporal sequences can disrupt the flow of processes, whether by external interferences, errors, or unexpected changes in conditions. For example, when a supply chain disruption delays the arrival of building materials in a construction project, it interrupts the temporal sequence, causing project timelines to extend and increasing overall costs.

Another challenge occurs when multiple sequences of vertical contiguity intersect or overlap. Managing these dependencies can become complex, affecting project timelines or ecological balance. For example, in a large software development project—when the timelines for backend, frontend, and QA testing phases overlap—coordinating these dependencies can become complex, potentially leading to integration issues and project delays.

As can be seen, vertical contiguity is fundamental for mapping process dynamics across various domains. Understanding this concept allows us to navigate the complexities of time-dependent systems, ensuring coherence and consistency as events unfold.

## Horizontal Contiguity

Horizontal contiguity is spatial in nature, referring to the spatial continuity or adjacency of objects, entities, or sections that are directly connected or adjacent to each other in a literal or figurative sense. It emphasizes the importance of spatial relationships and connectivity, playing a crucial role in various disciplines and practical scenarios as well as living.

For example, in *urban planning and development*, effective city planning often relies on horizontal contiguity to ensure neighborhoods, infrastructure, and public spaces are thoughtfully connected, enhancing accessibility and efficiency. In *ecology*, creating contiguous habitats is critical for the movement of species and the maintenance of biodiversity, helping to ensure healthy ecosystems. In *supply chains and logistics*, the layout of warehouses and the organization of supply chains can benefit from contiguous arrangements that optimize the flow of goods and reduce transportation time. In terms of *social cohesion*, contiguity in social spaces fosters community interactions, shared resources, and collective identity, thereby strengthening social bonds.

Let's briefly look across various domains of knowledge. In *geography*, the concept of contiguous territories is crucial for understanding political boundaries, regional coherence, and resource management. Related to *architecture and design*, building designs often incorporate contiguous spaces to enhance functionality, movement, and aesthetic appeal. In the area of *data visualization*, particularly in fields like cartography or data analysis, spatial contiguity helps in representing relations or distributions meaningfully.

Challenges related to horizontal contiguity include fragmentation and resource allocation. Unplanned development or environmental changes can lead to fragmented landscapes, disrupting connectivity and reducing the effectiveness of ecological or social systems. For example, unplanned urban sprawl can lead to fragmented green spaces, disrupting wildlife corridors and making it difficult for species to migrate and thrive, thereby weakening the local ecosystem.

Another challenge is ensuring resources and services are distributed evenly across contiguous areas. This can be challenging, particularly in densely populated regions or isolated communities. For example, in densely populated urban areas maintaining an even distribution of essential services like healthcare and public transportation is challenging, often resulting in some neighborhoods becoming underserved despite their spatial contiguity.

Horizontal contiguity is essential for understanding and optimizing the relationships between adjacent spaces or systems. It enables planners,

designers, ecologists, and policymakers to create connected, efficient, and sustainable environments that cater to the needs and well-being of communities and ecosystems. As we shall see, it is also critical to living.

### Working Together

Vertical and horizontal contiguity, while focusing on different dimensions—temporal and spatial, respectively—work together to create comprehensive systems that are both functionally and structurally sound. Understanding how these two concepts intersect and complement each other enhances the design, execution, and understanding of complex processes and developments in various fields as well as aiding our understanding of the contiguous living and learning systems of which we are a part. Let's look at some examples.

First, in terms of *integrated systems management*. In urban planning, vertical contiguity refers to the sequence of developmental phases, such as zoning, construction, and community engagement. Horizontal contiguity ensures that these developments are spatially connected, providing accessible and contiguous neighborhoods that progress over time. In transportation, the design of public transit systems often requires a temporal sequence of planning and execution (vertical contiguity) while ensuring that stations and routes are physically contiguous for optimal accessibility (horizontal contiguity).

Second, in terms of *project execution*. Vertical contiguity is seen in the sequential phases of a construction project, from groundbreaking to completion. Simultaneously, horizontal contiguity ensures that elements like utilities, access roads, and landscaping are spatially aligned and integrated into the final design. In business operations, product development might follow a temporal roadmap (vertical), while horizontal contiguation ensures that different departments (like R&D, marketing, and distribution) work in spatial and functional proximity to each other to streamline processes.

Third, in terms of *environmental and ecological planning*. In conservation efforts, protecting species may involve temporal strategies such as breeding programs or seasonal habitat management (vertical contiguity), complemented by ensuring that physical habitats are contiguous to facilitate movement and genetic exchange (horizontal contiguity). In resource management, managing resources like water requires a temporal understanding of seasonal availability (vertical contiguity) as well as strategies to ensure contiguous distribution networks (horizontal contiguity) to meet regional demands.

Fourth, in terms of *educational systems*. Curriculum design in education involves a sequential learning process (vertical contiguity), while ensuring that

knowledge areas (such as STEM subjects, humanities) are taught in an integrated manner and connected across subjects (horizontal contiguity).

Fifth, in terms of *healthcare systems*. In patient care, treatment plans might follow a temporal progression (vertical contiguity), but require spatial coordination of services like diagnostics, pharmacy, and specialist consultations to provide holistic and accessible care (horizontal contiguity).

In both innovation and global challenges, vertical and horizontal contiguity provide frameworks that ensure not only the progression of ideas and solutions over time but also the spatial connectivity necessary for effective implementation and adoption across different areas and disciplines. By integrating both vertical and horizontal contiguity, systems can achieve greater coherence and efficiency. Let's explore this in terms of interdisciplinary approaches, smart technologies, climate change, and public health.

**Interdisciplinary Approaches.** Both contiguities encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. *Vertical Contiguity:* The progression of knowledge and ideas over time allows for cumulative advancements. Consider the evolution of computing technology. From the first mechanical calculators to modern quantum computers, each stage built upon previous discoveries and innovations. This temporal sequence of development demonstrates vertical contiguity as each innovation sets the stage for future breakthrough. *Horizontal Contiguity:* In contrast, horizontal contiguity fosters innovation by allowing for the integration of ideas across different fields. For example, biotechnology is an interdisciplinary field that bridges biology with technology. Innovations like CRISPR gene-editing technology emerged from the convergence of genetic science and computational tools, illustrating how spatial connections between disciplines can lead to groundbreaking innovations.

**Smart Technologies.** *Vertical Contiguity:* The continuous improvement of software and hardware exemplifies vertical contiguity, where updates and new versions iterate over time, enhancing functionality and user experience. For instance, smartphone technology evolves with each model leapfrogging the capabilities of its predecessor. *Horizontal Contiguity:* The Internet of Things (IoT) exemplifies horizontal contiguity spatially as various devices—thermostats, cameras, and appliances—are interconnected. This spatial network allows for the collection and analysis of data in real time, improving efficiency and personalization in smart homes, healthcare, and even agricultural practices.

**Climate Change.** *Vertical Contiguity:* Long-term strategies to mitigate climate change rely on temporally sequenced plans. For example, countries develop phased approaches to reduce carbon emissions, such as the Paris Agreement's timeline for achieving specific climate goals by mid-century.

These initiatives require a step-by-step time-bound progression to create meaningful impact. *Horizontal Contiguity*: Spatial cooperation is critical in addressing climate change, as it is inherently a global challenge. Initiatives like the REDD+ program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) involve cross-border efforts to protect contiguous forest areas, ensuring sustained carbon storage and biodiversity preservation.

**Public Health.** *Vertical Contiguity*: Public health relies heavily on understanding the progression of diseases over time to manage and prevent outbreaks effectively. For example, tracking the temporal spread of infectious diseases helps in sequencing vaccine distribution and enhancing readiness for future outbreaks. *Horizontal Contiguity*: Spatial distribution networks are crucial in public health. Vaccination programs depend on establishing contiguous healthcare facilities and logistical channels to ensure wide and rapid access to vaccines. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, distribution networks worked to achieve contiguous coverage across geographic regions to maximize immunization rates

## Importance to Life and Living

From a broader perspective, the concepts of vertical and horizontal contiguity hold significant importance across various facets of life by providing foundational frameworks for understanding, organizing, and navigating both time and space. This dual awareness allows for more holistic planning, deeper comprehension, and more seamless integration of systems and processes.

Life is composed of intricate systems that are both spatially connected and temporally evolving. Together, vertical and horizontal contiguity offer a framework for understanding how these systems function, interact, and sustain life. Recognizing how different elements and stages of life and ecosystems are connected—and understanding the relationships among them—helps individuals and communities appreciate the interdependence and intricate dance of nature and human society.

Applying both principles ensures that ecological networks are maintained, supporting biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems against disruptions like climate change. Sustainable utilization and distribution of resources (water, food, energy) require both temporal management strategies and spatial distribution networks. As touched on above, addressing climate change requires a temporal approach to strategizing long-term actions (vertical contiguity) and a spatial approach to ensure global cooperation and the distribution of solutions (horizontal contiguity).

Also as introduced above, efficient development and planning rely on seamless integration of contiguous communities and supportive timing of infrastructure and services. In a rapidly globalizing world, the spatial connections facilitated by horizontal contiguity, combined with timely interactions (vertical contiguity), enhance international trade, communication, and collaboration.

At the personal level, each of us follow temporal growth processes (vertical contiguity), from childhood through adulthood, which are greatly influenced by spatial environments (horizontal contiguity) such as community, family, and cultural settings. Learning and career development are continuous processes over time with spatial contexts, such as schools, workplaces, and professional networks, playing a crucial role.

Social structures benefit from contiguous spaces where people can interact, share resources, and build relationships, fostering a sense of belonging. And horizontal exchanges across borders, along with the integration of historical narratives (vertical contiguity), enrich societal perspectives and cultural heritage.

## **The Expanded Human**

Encompassing both spatial and temporal dimensions, contiguity in the context of living encompasses more than just the physical environment, which has served as most of the examples previously provided. However, we are holistic beings who exist in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Contiguity touches all of the dimensions that are integral to holistic well-being.

Physical contiguity, as introduced, involves creating environments that support healthy lifestyles, such as access to nature community spaces, and infrastructure that promotes movement and physical health. For example, contiguity emphasizes how living spaces are organized and interconnected, affecting both physical movement and social interaction. Communities benefit from horizontal contiguity by creating environments where resources, services, and social connections are easily accessible, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity.

Mental contiguity involves fostering spaces and experiences that facilitate mental growth and clarity, such as providing access to education, intellectual stimulation, and environments that encourage creative and critical thinking. Beyond creating external spaces that promote mental clarity, we consider the contiguous nature of thought itself. Our thoughts flow in a continuous stream, where each idea bridges to the next. This mental contiguity allows us to build complex concepts, solve problems, and engage in reflective thinking. Thought

processes often rely on connecting disparate ideas into coherent narratives or solutions, highlighting an internal and existential continuity of cognition.

Emotional contiguity includes creating supportive social and community networks that provide emotional connectivity and support. This could be through family, friends, and community services that nurture emotional security and resilience. But there is more. Emotions are not an isolated phenomenon, but are interconnected and build upon each other. Our current emotional state often stems from previous emotions, experiences, and memories, creating a contiguous emotional narrative. This facilitates resilience, as where we learn to use past emotions to inform future responses, and personal growth, as we navigate and understand our emotional landscape over time. Emotions drive us forward, especially in terms of passions, influencing decisions and actions and providing the momentum for personal development.

Spiritual contiguity involves creating spaces and practices that foster spiritual growth and reflection, whether through access to nature, spaces for contemplation and meditation, community gatherings that nurture a sense of purpose and connection to something larger than oneself, or religious practices. Moving beyond that, spiritual experiences often reflect a contiguous journey of seeking and connecting with larger existential questions and meanings. This dimension of contiguity emphasizes an ongoing relationship with one's sense of identity, purpose and connection to the universe or to divinity. Spiritual practices often build on prior insights and experiences (horizontal or temporal contiguity), creating a cumulative journey that shapes an individual's worldview and ethical framework.

Understanding contiguity in all of these dimensions highlights the interconnectedness of our internal landscapes, reflecting how each aspect of our lives informs and supports the next in a continuous cycle of growth and discovery. This holistic perspective underscores the importance of nurturing all facets of our being in a balanced and integrated manner.

In essence, vertical and horizontal contiguity are vital to life as they provide the dual lenses of time and space through which we can interpret, organize, and optimize the world around us. This understanding aids in creating a balanced, interconnected, and sustainable existence on both individual and global scales.

Let's dig deeper.

## Chapter 2

# Contiguous Human Lineage

The concept of human ancestry in terms of vertical contiguous human lineage emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living humans. We explore this in terms of biological continuity and conceptual continuity. At the biological level, the idea of a contiguous lineage, a vertical contiguity, is evidenced by our DNA. Every human carries genetic material that has been passed down through generations, linking individuals to their ancient ancestors.

Mitochondrial DNA, in particular, provides a clear lineage that is traceable back to a single maternal ancestor, Mitochondrial Eve. This unbroken chain of genetic transmission illustrates how all humans share a common ancestry, reinforcing a sense of unity despite the vast differences in culture, language, and geography that exist today. Even as populations migrated, intermixed, and evolved, the fundamental genetic threads remain, demonstrating that we are all part of a larger narrative that has unfolded over hundreds of thousands of years.

Conceptually, the notion of contiguity in human ancestry invites a broader understanding of what it means to be human. It emphasizes the shared experiences, challenges, and evolutionary adaptations that have shaped our species. The interconnectedness celebrated by genetic studies can foster a sense of global community, suggesting that our differences are superficial compared to the profound similarities that link us. This perspective encourages a holistic view of humanity, prompting reflection on how our collective past impacts our present and future.

Digging a little deeper into our contiguous human lineage, we specifically look at genetic studies and ancestry, cultural continuity, migration patterns, shared health conditions, and philosophical and spiritual connections.

### Genetic Studies and Ancestry

Genetic studies provide strong evidence to consider physical human life as contiguous. Recent advancements in genomics, including whole genome sequencing, have revealed intricate patterns of human migration and interbreeding. For instance, studies have shown that modern humans share genes with archaic hominins like Neanderthals and Denisovans. This interbreeding illustrates a complex web of ancestry that connects diverse populations across different regions. The findings emphasize that rather than

having isolated evolutionary paths, human groups have influenced each other genetically, enhancing the idea of a contiguous lineage.

The 1000 Genomes Project is a comprehensive research study that mapped the genetic diversity of human populations worldwide. From this research evidence emerged pointing to all modern humans sharing a relatively recent common ancestry. Through high-density SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism) data, researchers demonstrated direct connections between genetic variation and historical migrations and interbreeding,<sup>1</sup> highlighting connections that span geographical and cultural boundaries.

As introduced above, consider the case of Mitochondrial Eve, the name given to describe the most recent common matrilineal ancestor of all living humans. She was estimated to have lived in Africa some 150,000 to 200,000 years ago. Mitochondrial Eve was identified through studies of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed down from others to their offspring. Unlike nuclear DNA, this DNA doesn't undergo recombination, which makes it useful for tracing lineage. The foundation of this concept is that if you trace the maternal lineage of all living humans that eventually you arrive at a single female ancestor. Not that Mitochondrial Eve was the only woman alive at the time! She simply represents the most recent common ancestor from whom all of us currently alive can trace our maternal lineage. Most likely there were other females, although their mitochondrial lines were not passed down to current-day humans, which could be due to extinction or genetic drift.

The interesting concept of “genetic drift” refers to random changes within a population over time in the frequency of alleles (variations of a gene). These changes, not due to natural selection, occur by chance and are more significant in small populations where small changes can have larger impact on a population's genetic makeup. Over time, genetic drift can reduce genetic diversity and affect the ability to adapt to environmental changes.

Supporting the idea that all modern humans have a shared common ancestry in Africa, geneticists have used mtDNA from diverse populations around the globe to construct a “family tree” which is inclusive of contemporary humans.<sup>2</sup> Their findings highlight the interconnectedness of all humans and have important implications in terms of our understanding of human evolution and migration.

## **Cultural Continuity**

Anthropological research into cultural practices and linguistic studies highlights the continuity of human life beyond genetic ties. For example, many modern languages can be traced back to common ancestors, revealing shared

cultural heritages. Practices such as storytelling, tool-making, and social structures often have deep roots connecting contemporary societies to their historical predecessors. For example, indigenous populations in the Americas, such as the Navajo Nation, have preserved traditional cultural practices, languages, and crafts over centuries. Their weaving techniques, storytelling traditions, and spiritual beliefs reflect a contiguity of culture that connects them to their ancestors. These cultural elements, rooted in history, demonstrate how shared practices can persist and evolve, highlighting the interconnectedness of human experiences across time.

Investigating the historical dynamics of cultural continuity in the Eastern Mediterranean by analyzing archaeological data and its relationship to shared cultural practices, an interconnectedness among ancient societies was revealed. Specifically it was found that artistic styles, religious beliefs and social structures persisted and evolved over time, supporting the notion that cultural lineage plays a critical role in shaping modern identities and experiences and underscoring the shared heritage of human life.<sup>3</sup>

## **Migration Patterns**

The study of ancient human migrations shows how populations have moved across the globe, adapting to various environments while maintaining genetic and cultural links. These migrations often happened in waves and were shaped by factors like climate change, resource availability, and social dynamics. The result is a tapestry of human life that reflects ongoing interactions, with each wave of migration contributing to the shape of current populations.

By studying genetic markers in ancient remains, insights into how different groups interacted and migrated can create a complex but contiguous human movement timeline. Utilizing ancient DNA analysis, shared ancestry and genetic intermingling is identified, reinforcing the idea of a contiguous human narrative influenced by migration.<sup>4</sup>

The Bering Land Bridge migration is a key example of human migration patterns. Evidence suggests that early humans migrated from Asia to North America via a land bridge that existed during the last Ice Age. Studies of archaeological sites, such as Paleo-Indian remains found in Clovis, New Mexico, illustrate how this migration contributed to the genetic and cultural diversity of indigenous groups throughout the Americas, emphasizing the shared ancestry that links contemporary populations.

## Shared Health Conditions

Research in medicine often finds that certain health conditions and genetic predispositions are present across populations, suggesting shared ancestry and environmental influences. Conditions such as specific genetic disorders can emerge in various populations due to common ancestors, illustrating a biological continuity that often transcends geographic and cultural divides.<sup>5</sup>

For example, the Tay-Sachs disease, an autosomal recessive genetic disorder, primarily affects individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish descent. Genetic studies have shown that the higher prevalence in this population is due to the shared ancestry of a relatively small gene pool, combined with historical reproductive patterns. This illustrates how specific health conditions can transcend cultural and geographic boundaries, connecting individuals through shared genetic histories.

## Philosophical and Spiritual Connections

Many philosophical and spiritual traditions emphasize the interconnectedness of all human life. Ideas of shared consciousness, collective memory, and ethical responsibility towards one another can be found throughout diverse cultures. These beliefs foster a sense of unity, suggesting that human experiences and existences are part of a larger, interconnected whole.

As an example, the Ubuntu philosophy in African cultures emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people, encapsulated in the phrase *I am because we are*. This worldview highlights the importance of community, mutual support, and respect for one another, paralleling the idea that human existence is deeply interwoven. Ubuntu encourages collective responsibility and harmony, reinforcing a sense of shared humanity that transcends individual differences.

In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge discusses concepts of interconnectedness and collective responsibility within organizations and communities, expanding these ideas to a broader philosophical perspective on life. He emphasizes the importance of understanding our place within a larger system and recognizing the interdependence of individuals.<sup>6</sup> Senge's exploration of shared consciousness and ethical responsibility resonates with the contiguous nature of human life, reinforcing the notion that all individuals are part of a collective whole, which can inspire cooperation and empathy.

## **After Thoughts**

The contiguous nature of human ancestry enhances both our biological understanding and our conceptual appreciation of humanity. It illustrates not only how deeply interconnected we are on a genetic level but also how this connection shapes our societal relationships. Our human lineage is indeed contiguous.

As we explore our past, we can better understand our present and cultivate a deeper sense of unity for the future. This profound interconnectedness can inspire us to approach global challenges with compassion and collaboration, reinforcing the notion that we are all part of one shared human story.

## About the Author

**Alex Bennet** is a Professor, Innovation and Knowledge Institute Southeast Asia (IKI-SEA), Bangkok University, and the Director of the Mountain Quest Institute, a research and retreat center located in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia. Through three quests—the quests for knowledge, consciousness and meaning—the Institute is dedicated to helping individuals achieve personal and professional growth, and organizations create and sustain high performance in a rapidly changing, uncertain, and increasingly complex world. Alex is the former Chief Knowledge Officer and Deputy CIO for Enterprise Integration of the U.S. Department of the Navy, having previously served as Acquisition Reform Executive and Standards Improvement Executive, and is recipient of the Distinguished Public Service Award, the highest civilian honor from the Secretary of the Navy. She has published hundreds of papers and journal articles, and authored, co-authored or edited over 40 books, primarily with her life partner, Dr. David Bennet, a nuclear physicist and neuroscientist, who recently transitioned. Together, the Drs. Bennet have spoken and taught around the world. Some of these publications are called out at the end of this book. In 2025 she has expanded her voice to develop a deeper shared understand of the societal political fragmentation and hubris that is fracturing U.S. democracy, causing pain around the world. With strong conviction, Alex contends that the answers to these looming issues lie with each of us. These four volumes are: (1) *fRAGmentation: The Power of e Pluribus Unum*, (2) *The Taint of Hubris: Rediscovering Humility and Bridging Authentic Connection*, (3) *Choosing Whysly: Why We Can't See What is Right in Front of Us*, and (4) *Becoming Wise, Open, Kind, and Empowered: The Millenium Challenge*. Alex believes in the multidimensionality and interconnectedness of humanity as we move out of infancy into full consciousness. She may be contacted at [alex@mountainquestinstitute.com](mailto:alex@mountainquestinstitute.com)

### **The Mountain Quest Research**

**Center** located in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia is a research, retreat, and learning center dedicated to helping individuals achieve personal and professional growth, and organizations create and sustain high performance in a rapidly changing, uncertain, and increasingly complex world. MQI has three quests: the Quest for Knowledge, the Quest for Consciousness, and the Quest for Meaning. MQI is scientific, humanistic, and spiritual and finds no contradiction in this blend.



***In the world of today, we have a role to play. Make informed choices.***

### ***fRAGmented: e Pluribus Unum (2025)***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by YOU

*This is our world, a tapestry woven with threads of diversity and division. As we journey in this book through the complexities of our world, we critically explore fragmentation in the physical, holistic human, digital, narrative/art, and societal domains, and delve into the societal political fragmentation occurring today.*

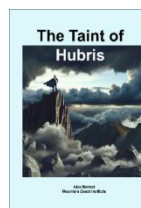


### ***The Taint of Hubris: (2025)***

***Rediscovering humility and bridging authentic connection***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by William Hale

Characterized by excessive pride or arrogance—and referring to something being spoiled, sullied, or negatively influenced in some way—hubris can be thought of as a contaminating aspect of human nature. It stands out as a pervasive taint that has woven itself into mythology, literature and history, and is highly visible in the societal political landscape of today.



### ***Choosing Whysly: (2025)***

***Why we can't see what is right in front of us***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by Robert Turner

This is a large question. It can't help but be complex, because we are complex, and this question is not only dependent on the situation and context but also on you, the individual, and your perception, beliefs, intentions, biases, blindnesses, and self-deceptions as well as cognitive dissonances, relativism, and, ultimately, your conscious and unconscious choices.



### ***Becoming Wise, Open, Kind, Empowered (2025)***

***The Millenium Challenge***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by Arthur Murray

Being “woke” signifies a positive awareness and active engagement with social justice issues, which is the intent of social and cultural awakening consistent with spiritual awakening and Enlightenment ideas embedded in the U.S. Constitution. However, in this fragmented world, core tenets of democracy such as diversity, equitable equality and inclusiveness are being tossed aside and translated through prejudicial and biased beliefs and political frames. It is time to set the record straight.

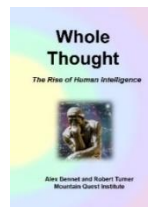


## **Whole Thought:**

### ***The Rise of Human Intelligence (2024)***

Alex Bennet and Robert Turner with Foreword by David Bennet

In tracing the arc of human progress, one can discern an underlying pattern steering the course of our intellectual evolution—a gradual but persistent gravitation towards what is now identified as Whole Thought. This paradigm represents a transformation in the fabric of cognition brought into relief by the cumulative ascent of human intelligence. Whole Thought is a call for action—a framework for living, learning, and leading in a manner that is reflective, inclusive, and deeply interconnected.



### ***Infinite Learning: Your Life, Your Choice (2024)***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by Vincent Ribi re

Infinite learning is the pulse of human existence, the essence that breathes life into our quest for understanding, innovation, and growth. It is not an optional luxury but an essential requirement, ensuring we are able to meet the demands of a changing world while capable of achieving personal growth and societal contributions of profound significance. Embracing infinite learning in pursuit of Whole Thought ensures that we are constantly expanding our horizons and discovering new potentials. *Living is learning; learning is living.*



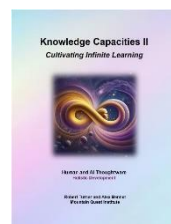
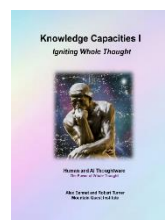
### ***Knowledge Capacities I and II (2024)***

Our capacity for knowledge is not a fixed quantity but a horizon ever-expanding. It is the reservoir from which we draw strength, the lens through which we view possibility, and the compass by which we navigate the future. It is the creation of the rise of human intelligence.

*KC I: Igniting Whole Thought (40 Capacities)*

*KC II: Cultivating Infinite Learning (24 Capacities)*

In today's dynamic and rapidly evolving environment, fostering capacity has become increasingly essential. Capacity refers to the broad potential or inherent ability of individuals and organizations to learn, adapt, and grow over time. It encompasses the fundamental ways of thinking, being, and acting that allow us to effectively engage with dynamic and complex environments.

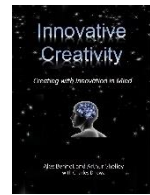


## ***Innovative Creativity: Creating with Innovation in Mind (2024)***

Alex Bennet and Arthur Shelley with Charles Dhewa

Foreword by Robert Turner

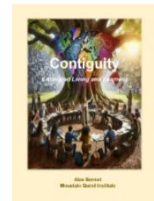
*More than ever, how do we release the Genie from the lamp? How do we tap the next level of creativity and innovation that we need here on Planet Earth? This groundbreaking work beckons us to deepen our innate creativity capacities in a new and expansive way to summon the genius within each of us.*



## ***Contiguity: Entangled Living and Learning (2025)***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by Chulatep Senivongse

Learning and living are contiguous experiences, with mind creating the subjective relationships that create the temporal and spatial relationships in our stories and memories. Our thoughts, sensations, and perspectives form the connected and cohesive experience of the contiguous mind. Embrace the entangled dance of living and learning, and discover the profound connections that define our shared existence.



## ***C&C Thinking: Becoming Whole (2025) (Critical and Creative)***

Alex Bennet & Robert Turner with Foreword by Moria Levy

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and constant change, the ability to think critically and creatively is more crucial than ever. As we look toward the future, it becomes evident that the traditional reliance on past patterns to predict and plan for what lies ahead is insufficient.

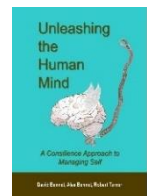


## ***Unleashing the Human Mind: A Consilience Approach to Managing Self (2022)***

David Bennet, Alex Bennet, Robert Turner  
with Foreword by Florin Gaiseanu

What does it mean to be human? Increasingly we recognize that we are infinitely complex beings with immense emotional and spiritual, physical and mental capacities. Presiding over these human systems, our brain is a fully integrated, biological, and extraordinary organ that is preeminent in the known Universe. Its time has come.

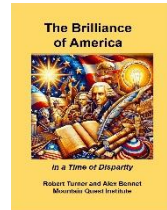
This book is grounded in the Intelligent Complex Adaptive Learning System (ICALS) theory based on over a decade of researching experiential learning through the expanding lens of neuroscience.



## ***The Brilliance of American in a Time of Disparity (2025)***

Robert Turner and Alex Bennet

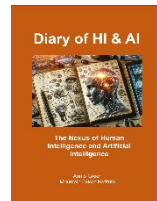
The brilliance of America was initially emblazoned in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights in the latter part of the 18th Century. These living documents preside as the charters of freedom and the foundational framework for governance. Indeed, our Founding Fathers heard the voices of freedom ringing across time from the Age of Enlightenment, ancient civilizations, and the expanding American colonies, and in this work they speak to us today. As they established the nation, the American way of life emerged, raising a resounding proclamation of human nature voicing and demonstrating the dignity and sovereignty of citizens. Their foresight asserts democratic governance to form a more perfect union, establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty, creating an unprecedented human civilization that emboldened and secured democracy both in America and the world. This brilliance shines still, speaking to us today through the voices of the Founding Fathers.



## ***Diary of HI & AI: The Nexus of Human Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence (2025)***

Annie Green with Foreword by Anthony J. Rhem

*Diary of HI & AI* examines the dynamic between human and artificial intelligence, tracing the development of AI and its impact on society. It highlights society's shift towards valuing intellect, explores institutional influences, and discusses common concerns such as job loss, ethics, and social fragmentation in an AI-driven world. Drawing parallels between myths and technology, the book stresses the essential roles of human intellect, ethics, and cooperation. It encourages readers to view AI as a tool for progress, offering strategies to understand and adapt to AI's complexities, while emphasizing that humans remain vital to harmonious coexistence with intelligent machines.



## ***The Crucibles of Trust: A Millenium Challenge (2025)***

Alex Bennet with Foreword by Arthur Shelley

Crucibles of trust—challenging situations, tests, or moments in relationships—are underpinnings for continued growth. As we reflect on examples, whether interpersonal challenges, institutional trials, or universal crises, it becomes apparent that trust is the cornerstone of human expansion and progress. In the midst of this understanding, we begin to recognize that trust is both a path and a destination, reflecting its dual role in both the journey of life and the outcome of personal and collective endeavors.

Building on our Equilateral Triangle of Life (self purpose and identity, relationships, and existence and sustainability), we navigate these crucibles armed with our individuated five human trustables—belief and faith, experiences, environment, infinite learning, and chosen behaviors. Each journey through this network of entangled pathways, sparked by moments of profound vulnerability and strength, is rich with the potential for deep change, offering the legacy of organisms who choose faith and trust over fear and collectively arise stronger.

