

Unity

Unity is a force that permeates everything and without it, nothing would be possible. Each of us forms our own unions, playing our part in multiple narratives simultaneously. Whether insignificant or impactful, we contribute our lives, actions, and matter to the beautifully chaotic narrative of the universe.

Unity joins us in many ways and affects everything on multiple levels. Our blood joins us to our families forming a union that can be stronger than any other bond. Our skills help us excel at our goals and professions. Through the unity of stimulating work and equally engrossing passions, we find balance in our lives and a better understanding of our place in this universe. Nations are a union of geographically and ideologically linked people. These nations mold us, and for better or for worse, they motivate and empower us to do astounding things. When a nation is truly unified, its people prosper, and great advancements can be made.

Our DNA joins us as a species, programming us at a primordial level with the knowledge and intentions to improve our chances of survival. We are inherently social and inclined to form unions with other people as if safety in numbers is written into our DNA. These mechanisms that help to ensure our survival even persist across borders, and while our instinct towards tribalism can hinder our ability to truly unify as an entire species, those barriers seem to melt away bit by bit with each passing generation.

Even our base elements join us with the universe itself. From the union of giant cosmic clouds of dust to the quantum entanglement of particles, unity is at the heart of it all and powers the engine of progress.

(1) Without the union of protons and neutrons colliding to produce deuterium (one proton bound to one neutron), followed by the deuterium then colliding with other protons and neutrons to produce helium and a small amount of tritium (one proton and two neutrons) within the first 3 minutes after the big bang, we would never have additional base elements, the essential building blocks for life and everything we know. Without unity, our universe would consist only of the large mass protons and neutrons forever expanding in the vast emptiness of space. Unity is a powerful and prevalent force constantly molding and changing our reality. For billions of years, unity has been the driving force progressing everything in existence forward.

In the 1980 world-renowned documentary “*The Cosmos*”, Dr. Carl Sagan made a profound statement that stuck with me throughout my life. The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff."; “*The cosmos is within us. We are made of star stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself.*”

This left a lasting impression on me, a sense of unity with everything, and an understanding of my connection to the universe that has persisted throughout my life. At its core, everything is connected as a result of countless unions that have created the reality in which we now inhabit.

The unity of one’s mind, body, and soul creates the self. The unity of societies creates nations, laws, possibilities, and new concepts. Even our currently accepted understanding of the origins of the universe is a series of primordial unions ranging from the subatomic to the galactic scale. A genealogy of everything if you will that starts after the big bang.

(2) Between 100-250 million years after the big bang, the first stars began to form in small protogalaxies made up of hydrogen and helium that evolved from density fluctuations in the early universe. Within these stars, more protons and neutrons unified creating heavier elements that were thrown out creating new clouds of mass to start the process over again. Each time this process repeated itself, the stars would last longer and develop new elements with larger atomic mass and complexity. This process has continued for billions of years and as a result of innumerable unions, we find ourselves here today, floating on a small planet, in a solar system, on the edge of the Milkyway galaxy, discussing the possibility that we are only able to do this because of unity. The universe getting to know itself I suppose.

(3) Even our bodies are a union of base elements creating complex cells, and bacteria that also join together forming a symbiotic union that makes life possible. Almost 99% of the mass of the human body is made up of six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. Only about 0.85% is composed of another five elements: potassium, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, and magnesium. All 11 are necessary for life.

(4) In terms of cell types, the body contains hundreds of different types of cells, but notably, the largest number of cells contained in a human body (though not the largest mass of cells) are not human cells, but bacteria residing in the normal human gastrointestinal tract. While in practice... this union creates some rather shitty results, pun intended this union is just one of many examples within us that make life as we know it possible.

Unity is also responsible for the impressive technological advancements made by the human race. Collective learning is our species' unique ability to share, preserve, and build upon knowledge over time. It's a key part of what unifies us humans. In a letter to Robert Hooke in 1675, Sir Isaac Newton, the famous English scientist, wrote, "*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.*" As far as we know Newton wasn't literally standing on the shoulders of giants (screenshots or it didn't happen), but what he was explaining is that his ideas didn't come from him alone.

He relied on the ideas of those who came before him. He recognized the contributions of his predecessors and attributed his success to the collective learning they had contributed. Though Newton was a genius himself, he acknowledged he couldn't have come up with his scientific breakthroughs without their collective knowledge to build on.

You rely on collective learning when you learn by reading a book or even by listening to this lecture. Using these ideas in your daily lives, you make your own contribution to collective learning by sharing your ideas with others. In that way, we all become a part of the chain of collective learning. This unified knowledge base is also currently being used to create new artificial sentient consciousness. These artificial general intelligences are built on neural networks that mimic our own brains and are trained on the data we've collected on ourselves.

Yet these AI continuously surprise us with their interesting new ways of looking at everyday problems. Examples like the supposedly sentient chatbot Lamda, developed by Google. The AlphGo AI by Deepmind, which astounded the players of the game Go by beating their grand champion with unexpected and never before seen moves in multiple games. Or the more recent example of AI's creative abilities with the Dal-E2 AI developed by OpenAI, a system that can create realistic images and art from a description in natural language.

All of these examples are impressive by themselves, but when combined into a unified general AI it will truly be something greater than the sum of its parts. However, it may be limited in areas like ambition, hope, faith, and even pleasure. All of these things are commonplace to use but can they be mimicked by binary and printed circuit boards?

Will they ever know love without hormones and the proper chemical reactions being interpreted by an organic neural network like ours? Or perhaps the next step will involve a union of organic and digital intelligence in a symbiotic relationship providing both parties with the missing processing power or data.

From clay tablets to quantum computers reading databases stored in DNA, the way we collectively learn and the speed at which we are advancing is increasing at exponential rates.

I'd like to think we are headed towards a unified knowledge of a unified species working in harmony with their technologies, and it has been my impression that Masonry shares a somewhat similar goal of unity. Unity through our acts that help our fellow man and by encouraging freethought, discussion, and the exchange of ideas.

I have Spoken, W::M::

Bro.: Frank Yoder

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