

## Chapter 1

# Believing That Everything's Connected

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Discovering the key to Wicca
  - ▶ Blending Wicca and science
  - ▶ Finding the Divine: right here, right now
- 

**M**any people discover Wicca in bits and pieces. Perhaps Wiccan ritual empowers them. Or the Wiccan reverence for the rhythms and cycles of nature satisfies them. Or magic fascinates them. However, in order to fully understand and find meaning in Wicca, a person needs to grasp the big picture: the Wiccan worldview.

A few core ideas underlie all of Wicca, and if you understand these basic concepts about the world and the Divine, then Wiccan beliefs and practices make sense. This chapter provides the background to understand Wicca as a full-fledged spirituality and a specific way of experiencing and interpreting the world.

## *Swimming in a Divine Sea of Energy*

You are about to discover one principle that is the key to much of Wiccan belief. Ready? Here it is: Everything is connected.

Everything that exists is part of an unbroken circle of vibrating energy. You may find it helpful to picture reality as a web of energy (like a spider's web), or as an energy grid (like an electrical grid). Some people refer to this idea as the *web of life* or *nature's web*.

Wiccans perceive Deity in vastly different ways (see Chapter 2), however, most believe in a Creative Being that is the source or creator of the web of life. Most Wiccans believe that Deity is *immanent* (is right here, right now, and all-present in the world), and also is *manifest in nature* (is evident and easily perceived). Most believe that the web of life — everything that exists — flows or unfolds from Deity. The Divine is the source of all life. Some Wiccans even believe that the entire cosmos is the living body of Deity.

The belief in Deity is a matter of faith. No one can prove that the cosmos has a Divine source; however, reality is one big, connected, infinite network — ask any Wiccan or any scientist.

## *Finding Kinship in the Cosmos*

The Wiccan view of an interconnected world isn't just a mystical, spiritual notion. Modern science, especially cutting-edge ideas in quantum physics, supports the ideas of life's interconnection and interdependence. The following are some of the leading theories that blend perfectly with Wiccan belief.

### *Going quantum: Matter versus energy*

People see the physical world as a bunch of independent and stable objects, but that's not exactly the truth. Modern science reveals that matter and energy are not separate.

Energy flows in waves that form patterns. What you see as a separate object (a dog, a bird, or a tree) is really just a pocket of reality where the energy is more dense, according to quantum physics.

#### *Quantum physics*

Physical matter is made up of molecules and atoms, which are made up of smaller components, called *subatomic particles*. In quantum physics, particles of matter and waves of energy are the same thing.

A subatomic particle isn't a little dot of matter that scientists can hold still and examine; it's more like a little dancing point of energy. These particles can't be understood as separate units. Scientists can describe subatomic particles only by talking about how they act with one another. The only way to meaningfully describe these particles is to explain the way that they interconnect.

#### *Wicca meets quantum physics*

Quantum physics clearly demonstrates the Wiccan belief that all reality is an integrated web of energy. Even at the subatomic level, life is interconnected.

## *Tuning up the strings and dancing with the universe*

The preceding section describes subatomic particles as dancing points of energy. String theory suggests that they may not even be points, but strings.

String theory is bold and beautiful, but complicated. Read on to find out more, but if you start to feel a migraine coming on, take a break and watch a *Gilligan's Island* re-run. It's always satisfying to watch the Professor build complicated stuff out of coconuts.

### *String theory*

A subatomic particle is not pointlike but is made of a tiny loop. Like a super-thin rubber band, each particle contains a vibrating, dancing *string*. Like a guitar string, each tiny string can vibrate. Every string is identical; the only difference is the way that it vibrates. Each string has a different vibration, like each guitar string creates a different musical note. The movements of the string — the “note” it creates — determine the kind of particle it will be. These itty-bitty vibrating strings make up everything in the universe — all physical matter and all forces (such as gravity). These strings vibrate throughout space-time.

We live in space-time. *Space-time* consists of three dimensions of space (length, width, and depth) and the dimension of time. All objects and all events exist in these four dimensions. Well, that's what scientists used to think. According to string theory, space-time can have up to nine dimensions of space, plus the dimension of time.

### *Wicca meets string theory*

String theory unites matter and energy, and confirms the Wiccan view that the cosmos — from the smallest particles to the largest solar systems — operates by the same principles and is made from the same stuff. At all levels, life is interconnected.

## *Spreading chaos*

String theory shows the interconnectedness of life at all levels, big and small. Chaos theory deals only with the big — and super-complicated.

### *Chaos theory*

*Chaos theory* suggests that the weather and other huge, complex systems in nature have an underlying order, but they are chaotic and virtually unpredictable. The problem with predicting the weather and the behavior of other

big systems is that nature is extremely sensitive to changing conditions. Very tiny changes can have major effects. Nature on a large scale can drive a scientist nuts!

Any small inaccuracy in evaluating the initial conditions leads to growing errors in the calculations. For example, the flapping of a butterfly's wings in one location may affect the weather on the other side of the Earth.

### ***Wicca meets Chaos Theory***

The important lesson here is that any action, no matter how small or insignificant, can affect everything else. Earth's ecology is a network of relationships. All the members of Earth's environment are interdependent. The success of the whole community depends on each living thing, and the success of each living thing depends on the success of the community. This idea forms the core of Wiccan ethics (see Chapter 4 for more explanation).

## ***Gazing at Gaia***

The universe appears to be made up of individual parts, and these parts may function on their own. However, the parts are all made of the same energy and are connected to form one giant whole. For example:

- ✓ An individual cell is a part of a human being.
- ✓ Human beings are part of life on Earth.
- ✓ Earth is part of the solar system.
- ✓ The solar system is part of the universe.

The point is that each part isn't separate and isolated from the others, even though it may function by itself. Small parts join together to form a living thing. That living thing joins others to create a bigger living thing. Bigger living things join into groups to form an even bigger living thing, and so on. Throughout reality, small parts join together to form an integrated whole.

The grand mystery is that the whole is always much greater than its parts. For example, a human being is so much more than just a collection of simple little cells. The human brain's cells work together in networks, and together, they create a brain that is so complex and sophisticated that the world's top scientists can't fully figure out how it works.

Some scientists believe that Earth as a whole is one big living system.

### ***The Gaia hypothesis***

Atmospheric chemist James Lovelock, microbiologist Lynn Margulis, and others have developed a theory termed the *Gaia hypothesis*, in honor of the

Greek Goddess of the Earth. This concept describes all of Planet Earth as a living system that organizes itself and keeps all its parts in balance.

The Gaia hypothesis links Earth's inanimate objects (rocks, oceans, gases, and so on) with living parts (plants and animals) and brings together all the planet's cycles and rhythms into one unified whole. The hypothesis links the evolution and survival of a species to the evolution and conditions of its environment.

Lovelock and Margulis never suggested that Earth is a sentient being (a conscious, creative being), but others have expanded the theory to arrive at this idea.

### ***Wicca meets the Gaia hypothesis***

Of course, the view of Earth as a living being isn't new. From Neolithic times, human cultures all over the globe have worshipped Mother Earth. This scientific theory reveals that life organizes itself into larger and larger networks that form one big integrated whole. If this is the model of the universe, then the idea of immanent Deity is rational and even probable. All reality may, indeed, arise from and be embedded in one creative source.

## ***Unfolding and enfolding***

Physicist David Bohm built an entire theory of physics on the idea that reality unfolds from one original, infinite source.

This concept is often called the holographic universe. Have you ever seen a hologram? A *hologram* is a three-dimensional image made with a laser. Many credit cards have these pictures. Each small piece of a hologram can reproduce the entire image. In other words, each part contains all the information about the whole. This structure is common in nature. A tiny seed contains all the information to grow a tall sunflower.

### ***The holographic universe***

Based on this model, Bohm (a former colleague of Einstein) suggested that the information for the entire universe is held in each of its parts. For Bohm, the *explicate order* is the separate parts of the world that we see. The *implicate order* enfolds all these parts into one whole. The implicate order is the original energy, the source of all reality.

According to the theory, this source is called the *Subtle Nonmanifest*. This holy intelligence gave rise to all space and time, all dimensions, and all planes of existence. All reality unfolds out from this primal source, and then enfolds back into the source, in a never-ending cycle.

All beings, including humans, are born from this source, are connected, and share consciousness. They continually have new experiences and grow in wisdom and knowledge. Then they enfold back into this source. This way, the source, the core energy that fuels the cosmos, is always advancing and evolving, along with everything that is a part of it.

### ***Wicca meets the holographic universe***

The relatively new model of the Holographic Universe reflects a worldview that Pagans have held since the most ancient times: We are all part of the Divine energy; we are all connected; and our fate is inexorably linked.

Human beings are a part of the Divine energy. They are a part of nature, not above it or separate from it. All parts of the Divine web of life are equal in value. This outlook profoundly impacts Wiccan religion, politics, and social relationships.

The next chapter explores more fully the diversity of Wiccan beliefs about the nature of the Divine, but the basic trust in immanence and interconnection is the heart of Wicca.

Nature flows from Deity, and Wiccan spirituality revolves around the celebration of our connection with nature, and the human place in the web of life. Much of Wiccan practice is devoted to developing relationship with the Divine energy, in which we are permanently embedded.