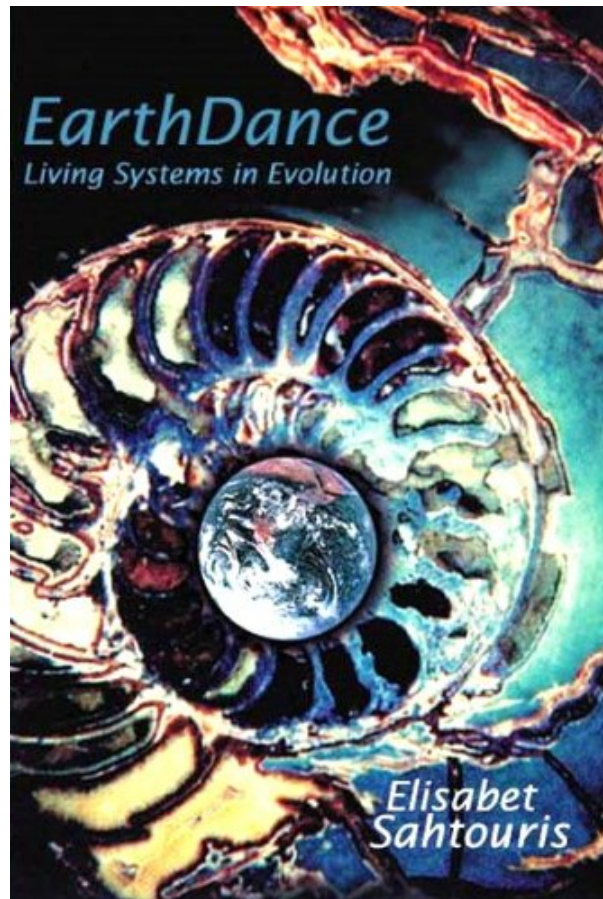
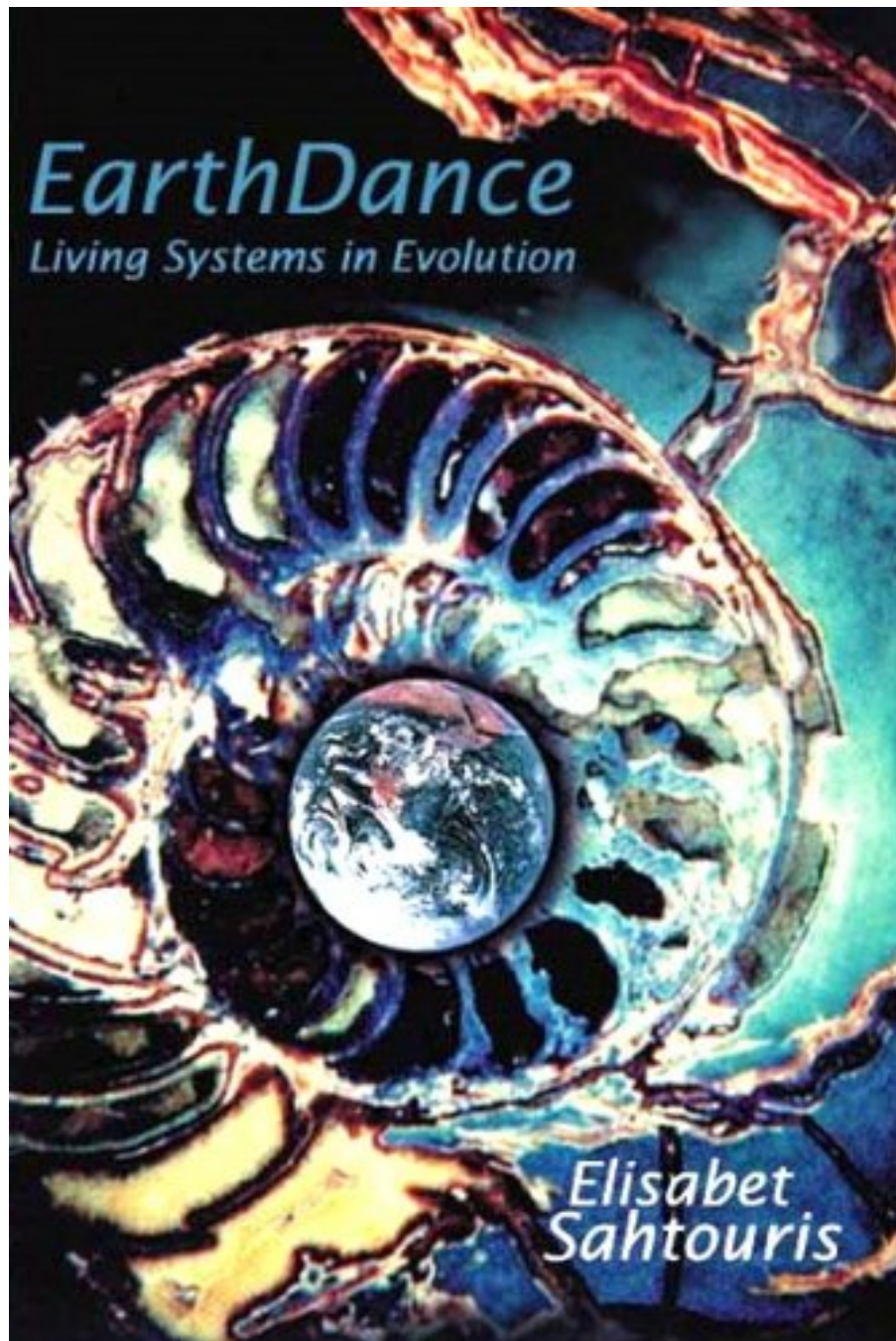


EARTHDANCE: LIVING SYSTEMS IN EVOLUTION BY ELISABET SAHTOURIS



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About the Author

Elisabet Sahtouris, Ph.D. is an evolution biologist, futurist and author/lecturer who has lived in the USA, Greece and Peru. She has taught at MIT, the University of Massachusetts and CIIS. Her other books include *Biology Revisioned* and *A Walk Through Time: From Stardust to Us*.

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A wonderfully fascinating journey through the history of EarthLife (biological evolution) and then through the history of humanity to see how we humans have seen ourselves in relation to our living planet and what that means for us now. Will we learn from Nature's amazing four billion years of experience in creating healthy living systems to give ourselves the future of which we dream?

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About the Author

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Most helpful customer reviews

57 of 57 people found the following review helpful.

Elegant, poetic, and visionary as well as excellent science.

By Keith A. Chandler

If I believed in reincarnation, I would think that Elisabet Sahtouris was Homer in a previous life. She writes with the grand sweep and musical throb of an epic poet and, as she says in her introduction to this new edition of *EarthDance*, she honed her writing skills as well as gestated her ideas on a "small pine-forested Greek island." While *EarthDance* is grounded in a thorough knowledge of Sahtouris' own field of evolutionary biology and a wide-ranging grasp of both science and philosophy, it also draws deeply on her personal experience of having lived among indigenous peoples and gained a profound respect for the traditional science of their cultures.

EarthDance prophetically represents the new and rapidly expanding Post-Darwinian evolutionary biology. Sahtouris explains how, in cycle after cycle, the living entities or "holons" in the realm of Gaia have merged, through negotiation and symbiosis rather than ruthless competition, in a constantly self-creating and re-creating "holarchy" of living systems.

Death even plays a crucial role in this ongoing dance of life. "Every dancer knows," says Sahtouris, "that each dancer can only perform one step at a time; that old steps must be abandoned so that the dancer's body will be free to perform new ones, which may then repeat or change the pattern of old steps." However, it is life, not death, which attracts the passion and vision of the author. She challenges the human species to live as the new biology now recognizes life has evolved, cooperatively and symbiotically rather than "red in tooth and claw." Unlike Edmund O. Wilson or Richard Dawkins, she does not have to explain love and altruism as a "strategy" to gain selfish ends but celebrates them as the very heart of evolution.

The impact of a massive boloid 65 million years ago wiped out all the big dinosaurs. Barring another such catastrophe, it seems likely that the human species is the best candidate for bringing about its own extinction

unless, as Sahtouris emphasizes, we grow up as humans and "take the responsibility for using our freedom in healthful ways, to help rebalance the great ongoing dance of Gaian creation and to develop harmonious new patterns within it." Perhaps the most remarkable thing about EarthDance is the way Sahtouris extends her grasp of cosmic, biological, and social evolution into more than simply a vision but a program for restructuring the economic and political forces of our human world from the ground up rather than the top down. With extraordinary insight she sees this restructuring as beginning with the endogenous creativity of the World Wide Web as well as the thousands upon thousands of new "cells" of human creative communion that are springing up all over the world. In one more stage of autopoiesis, "self-creation," she notes how all these individuals and groups come together in conferences and seminars to share their insights, pool their talents, and barter their resources. EarthDance is Elisabet Sahtouris' invitation to the entire human species to join the cosmic dance that alone can instill new life into the planetary ballroom we call Earth.

One final observation: Sahtouris does not simply represent the new post-Darwinian biology but is one of the leaders in the new twenty-first century science. In *Biology Revisioned*, a book he co-authored with Sahtouris, the late Willis Harman called the new science "Wholeness Science" as contrasted with the old "Separateness Science." When you read EarthDance, you are reading "Wholeness Science" in its most elegant, poetic and visionary expression.

32 of 32 people found the following review helpful.

All the Earth and All Its Moving Parts

By R. A. Wood

When I was in college the standard joke was that one of the final exam questions would be: construct a model of the universe with all things included with all their interactions. Elisabet Sahtouris comes about as close to doing that as anybody can. And she does it with language most people can understand. This book was so captivating I devoted an entire weekend to reading it.

Starting with the Gaia Principle the author leads us through the evolution of planet Earth; the key biological and chemical events that eventually led to life as we know it; the philosophy, politics, and religion that have shaped Homo Sapiens' environmental policies; and finally provides some sound advice for how humans should live in Earth's ecosystems. Of course it is impossible to construct a model of the universe with all its interactions in a single book or even a single lifetime; but, the author hits all the high points with plenty of easy to understand examples. Her ability to explain complicated physics and biology in terms any laymen can understand is out standing.

The author's main point is directly attached to the Gaia Principle and that Earth will survive anything humans do to it. However, humans may not survive what we do to ourselves. She makes a very convincing case that Homo Sapiens are in the very early stages of their evolution and we have yet to figure out how to use our technology correctly. All other successful life forms have learned to create symbiotic relationships with other living creatures. Modern man is not there yet. Ironically so called primitive societies had it figured out before we brought the industrial revolution on to ourselves. In fact the case is made that Gaia, or the Earth's sense of what is good for itself, may actually be trying to get rid of these destructive, industrialized humans. An argument I have heard before, but never so convincingly as in this book.

The reader who has not studied some Greek philosophy, modern physics, and eastern religion may feel a bit lost. In fact may even question much of what the author states. However the extensive bibliography, of important works by well known scientists and sociologists, should indicate to any reader that the message in this book is well thought out and well documented.

The readers who have not done so already may wish to read Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* and Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. The former explains the connection between modern nuclear physics and eastern religions, and the latter why some civilizations managed to over come and dominate other civilizations. Both of these subjects are important to Earthdance and discussed in some detail by the author.

This book should be mandatory reading in every environmental science or environmental management curriculum. I wish I could make it mandatory reading for every politician.

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

a great book on living systems

By Douglas Selby

This is one of the best books I have ever read. Certainly there is no shortage of books describing what the human race is doing to itself and the other organisms that inhabit our planet. It can be depressing reading most of the time. This book, however, managed to put all of this into context, and surprisingly, made me feel that all is as it should be in the grand scheme. It is a wonderful synthesis of past and present scientific revelations, intuition, and even religion. Do yourself a favor and read this book.

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About the Author

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