

# The Way of Gaia

Art by Martin Bridge  
Words by Steve Trombulak

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# Entering *The Way of Gaia*

## A Foreword by John Davis

The late wildlands philanthropist Doug Tompkins said, “If anything can save the world, I’d put my money on beauty.”\* To this I would add that beauty comes best at the confluence of art and science, which together help us understand and protect the wild world around us.

*The Way of Gaia* is an astonishingly beautiful book, with writings by conservation biologist Steve Trombulak and paintings by artist Martin Bridge. At a time when many need relief from the ongoing grief of accelerating environmental and humanitarian crises, *The Way of Gaia* lifts spirits and inspires action for our beleaguered home. While spiritually guided, it is scientifically grounded and bears witness not just to the great beauty but also the great tragedy we see around us every day.

This meditation on the wonder of life on Earth reminds us that we are kin to all creatures, that we are all comprised of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water; and that Movement is central to our being. Bridge and Trombulak share the insights of biologists who have disclosed the urgent need of wild creatures to be free to move widely to meet their needs.

Those of us devoted to rewilding—to helping protect big wild places and restore missing species—will especially appreciate the portrayal of Predation: a critical part of life, but one from which people have detached themselves, getting food from supermarkets rather than directly from the land. We all take lives, but killing ceases to be part of the Way when causing unnecessary harm.

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\* Butler, T. and Lubarsky, S. 2017. *On Beauty: Douglas R. Tompkins—Aesthetics and Activism*. Berkeley, CA: David Brower Center. 110.

# *The Way of Gaia is the Way Home*

## A Foreword by Andras Corban-Arthen

A very long time ago, the Greek lyric poet Simonides of Ceos reportedly said that “a poem is a painting that speaks, and a painting is a poem that has no words.” Those two art forms blend and complement each other splendidly in *The Way of Gaia*, the inspired collaboration between a painter—Martin Bridge—and a poet—Steve Trombulak—who bring their singular gifts to bear upon the complex relationship between humanity and the natural world.

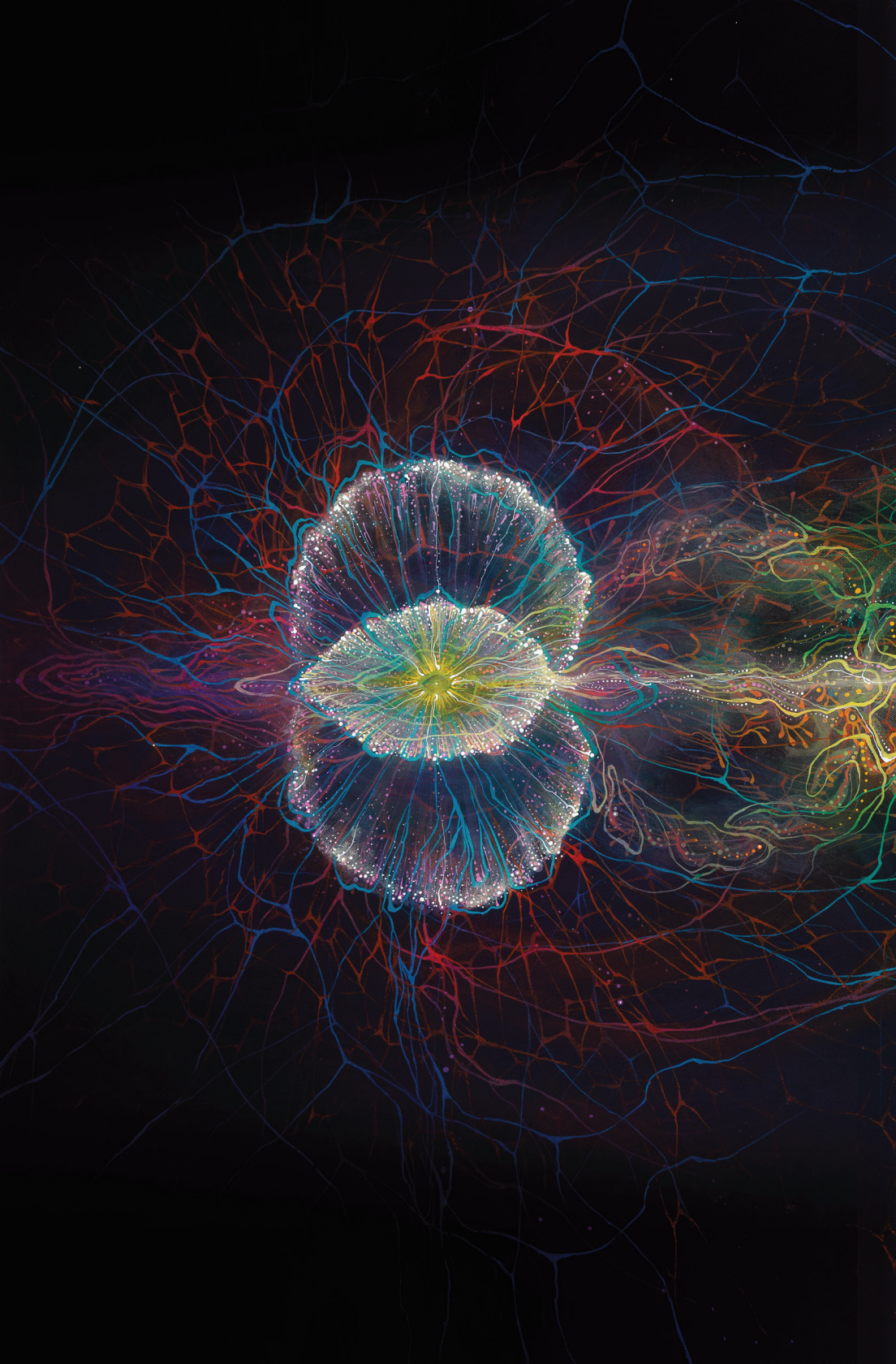
The authors have been my dear friends for many years. We all met through our involvement with the EarthSpirit Community, an organization which I founded in the 1970s with the aim of developing Earth-centered culture, spirituality, and community. Steve and Martin, despite coming from rather different backgrounds, nevertheless shared an affinity with these aims, and our community provided a fertile common ground to help nurture the realization of this book.

Both Martin and Steve identify themselves as animists, as do I. Animism is an ancient spiritual modality in which all of the natural world is perceived as alive, sentient, and ensouled. It does not rely on dogma, on anthropomorphic deities, on revelation or blind faith. Instead, animism seeks a direct and unfettered experience of reality that transcends the boundaries of language and reason, of explanations and definitions, to engage a more expansive and enhanced awareness. It is rooted in an understanding that humans are not at all separate from Nature, and that we exist as part of an interdependent web which binds all beings of the Earth; in short, that the Earth does not belong to us, but

## Biographies of Foreword Contributors

**John Davis** is the executive director of The Rewilding Institute and a rewilding advocate on the staff of the Adirondack Council, where he previously served as conservation director. He is the author of *Big, Wild, and Connected: Scouting an Eastern Wildway from Florida to Quebec* (Island Press, 2015); *Split Rock Wildway: Scouting the Adirondack Park's Most Diverse Wildlife Corridor* (Essex Editions, 2017); *Rewilding Earth Unplugged* and *Rewilding Earth Best of 2019* (Essex Editions, 2018 and 2019), editor of the website *Rewilding Earth* and co-editor of the book *Rewilding North America* (Island Press, 2004) by Dave Foreman. His eight months spent hiking the proposed 5,000-mile Wildway from Mexico to Canada are the subject of the 2017 film, *Born to Rewild*. Davis is a co-founder of The Wildlands Project (now Wildlands Network) and Wild Farm Alliance.

**Andras Corban-Arthen**, founder and spiritual director of the EarthSpirit Community, is also president of the European Congress of Ethnic Religions headquartered in Vilnius, Lithuania. He sits on the advisory council of the Ecospirituality Foundation, a United Nations Consultative NGO in Italy, and served for thirteen years on the board of the Parliament of the World's Religions. Originally from Galiza, Spain, he has taught about the indigenous European pagan traditions throughout the U.S. and abroad since the 1970s. He was chosen to represent those traditions at the United Nations Interfaith Conference on Religion and Prejudice in 1991, and has been a featured presenter at the Parliaments of the World's Religions; the Encuentro Mundial Interreligioso; the Diálogo Cultural Universal; the Religions for the Earth conference, and at the concurrent People's Climate March, in NYC.













# Time's Arrow

The Universe moves toward disorder

Proving time's arrow with

t-i-c-k and t-o-c-k but not also k-c-i-t and k-c-o-t

Gaia's body ever changing and us along with her  
with more ways to glide into chaos

A natural state

of things as pieces

pull apart

atoms cells soil

relationships

homes

mountains stars

galaxies

∞

Yet pay the tax on energy flow and  
another state

emerges on

order's one-way street

pushing against stasis complacency

instability

Promoting

pattern structure innovation

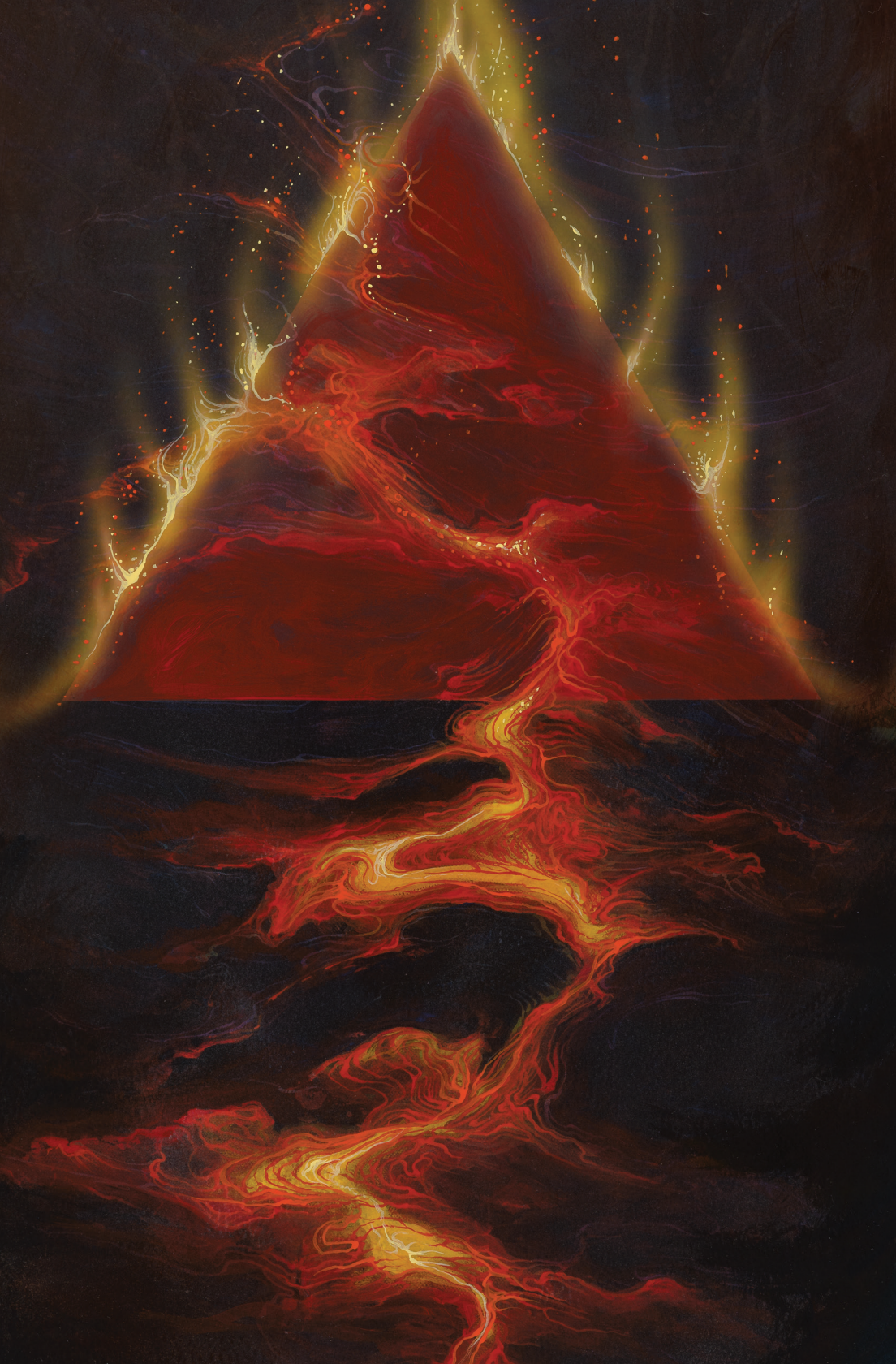
gears that function in the engines of life

new forms living new lives in new ways

Opposing chaos with energy

becomes purpose

in life





## *Fire*

In every moment, let me give thanks to Fire.

Gratitude for the fire of the Sun, whose heat and light feeds all life on Earth.

Gratitude for the metabolic furnace of my cells that warms my blood and gives me the power for action.

Gratitude for the transformation of my food, baking bread and loosening sinew to allow its nutrition to enter my body.

Gratitude for the warmth of fire that burns through the rhythmic night.

Gratitude for the light that shows me the faces of my friends and family.

Gratitude for the sparks that shoot free like stars into the sky.


Gratitude for the cascading chain of energy that powers the tools that create homes, grow food, transport water, and save lives.

Gratitude for the clearing of land and the restoration of life to the forests and plains.

Gratitude for the burning spirit that drives me toward justice.

With gratitude I see that what I have is enough.

Gratitude to Fire.



These words for you  
as you spin and flow:

**Give thanks for the ride.**



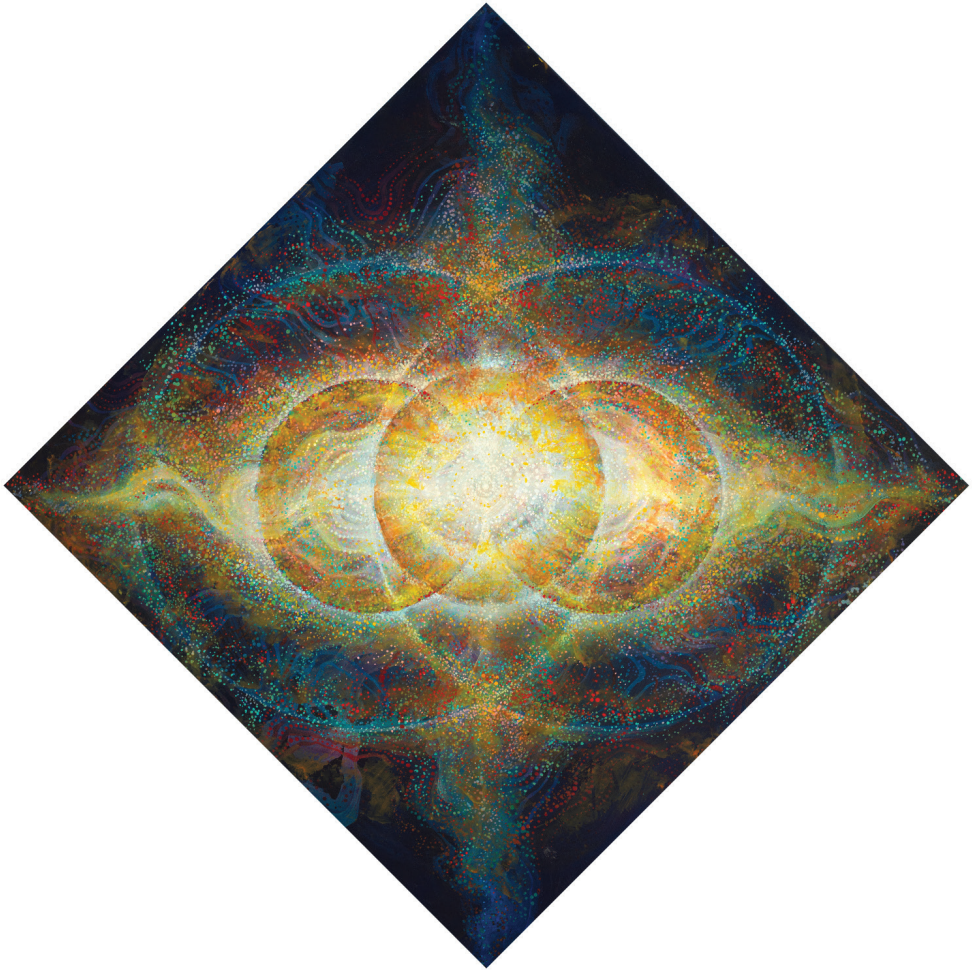


## Decay

If I am to embrace life, I must also accept aging.  
If I accept aging, I must acknowledge death.  
If I acknowledge death, I must yield to decay.

In death, a body does not simply disappear.  
Its lifestuff is broken apart and scattered,  
transformed and transported to build anew.

All that lives is made of all that died.  
All that dies feeds all that will live.  
Both part of the indivisible Whole, eternal.



## The Way of Gaia

All this and more.  
In the reach of time and space  
across the fullness of Gaia's body,  
no teaching yields instruction  
for every step along your Path.

Each moment offers  
a choice of how to travel,  
and the choice is always yours.  
The Way of Gaia is not a code  
on what choice to make  
but in how to make it.

	Self	Respect	
	Family		Love
	Tribe		Peace
	Species		Honor
	Life		Aware
Pattern			Thanks
Time			Flow
Spirit			Grace
Change			Protect
	Union		Connect
	Balance		Energy

Interwoven lines linking  
circles within circles of kinship  
and the cultivated voice of your soul.  
Gaia's gift is not a waymark on a map  
but a light to help you find your way.

May her light guide you  
with every step.



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