



## ON BEING A PILLAR OF LIGHT

### *Contextualizing Anthropocene: The Tears of Gaia*

by Muktananda

I wrote *Anthropocene: The Tears of Gaia* as a wake-up call to those who see themselves as pillars of light preparing the way for a major shift in consciousness necessary to mitigate the possibility of a sixth extinction event in the history of the planet caused by climate change. To paraphrase Jamie Wheal, the founder *Flow Genome Project*, those who are committed to facilitating a shift of consciousness find themselves in the cross hairs of two intersecting arcs:

- **Arc of Coming Alive:** Being fully present and committed human beings vibrating at the frequency of quantum consciousness so we can serve as pillars of light for the rest of humanity, and
- **Arc of Staying Alive:** Dealing with the fear, panic and existential despair that we are not safe and may not survive climate change as civilized society unravels and descends into chaos.

The greater the dissonance between these two intersecting arcs, the greater the tendency to live in denial by making an ungrounded leap towards a utopian outcome. Because we aren't dealing with the potential catastrophe posed by climate change, our temptation is to believe that a major shift in consciousness is imminent and everything will turn out rosy. But what if there isn't a happily ever after ending? I ask this question because, as we learned in *Quantum Physics and Consciousness*, the universe is governed by probability and chance. Dinosaurs roamed the earth for 170 million years and they would still be around today if a gigantic asteroid hadn't slammed into the Yucatan peninsula 66 million years ago and triggered the most recent extinction event in the planet's history. Had that chance event not occurred, we humans and countless other living species would probably not exist.

## THE APOCALYPSE AS ANTHROPOCENTRIC MYTH

*The Arc of Staying Alive* is mitigated for many by utopian narratives that are deeply engrained in Judeo/Christian ideology. The chapter on *The End of Religion?* argues that all politics is a

footnote in the larger history of religion. In *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (2008) philosopher John Gray contends that in religious versions of apocalyptic belief followed by redemption, the author of the script is God with the devil and assorted demons writing their own lines, but finally submitting to the authority of the divine narrator. In secular apocalyptic narratives, the author is the equally elusive figure called “humanity” battling the forces of ignorance and superstition. Either way, the demand for meaning is met by narratives in which each individual life is part of an all-encompassing story. Paranoia is often a protest against insignificance. Collective delusions of persecution bolster a fragile sense of agency. These narratives are our last attempt at hope. They are premised on a belief that mankind is suffering from some version of original sin. Even though we are in chains, we believe that something beautiful will happen soon, and we will all live in redemption – in a state of perfection.

Basically all of our Western narratives - free-market capitalism, Marxist communism, neo-liberalism, the Nazi Third Reich, psychedelic renaissance, blockchain revolution - are hockey stick redemption curves to some idealized end state. Thus, when the ends are paradise on earth, the means are almost always justified, including genocide and torture. These unconscionable acts are rationalized by those who perpetuate them as being necessary for the greater good. Such deeply engrained beliefs must be dispelled if a shift in consciousness will enable us to address the perils posed by climate change. That is why I began the book with the chapter *How Beliefs Create Our Future*. It addresses the nature of subconscious beliefs and how they affect our perceptions which, in turn, shape our futures. We want to believe that a shift in consciousness will intersect the curve of climate change thereby mitigating the threat. For this belief to be other than a fantasy story, pragmatic action on the ground is required now. That means we must deal with the inherent contradictions that are built into our Western worldview.

First and Second World countries must acknowledge that their progress was built on the backs of those whom they considered disposable. They committed genocide on their indigenous populations, enslaved Africans to build their economies and left in their wake a legacy of systemic racism, exploited Earth's resources in the name of progress, engaged in war, rape and torture, and developed and deployed chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. What moral authority gives them the right to tell Third World developing countries what they can and cannot do vis-à-vis the environment? We all need to look ourselves in the mirror and acknowledge that we are all co-conspirators in creating and perpetuating the current state of the environment. By acknowledging our own complicity, we set the stage for an authentic global shift in consciousness that is necessary to address climate change. There are no shortcuts. Karma is a bitch and no one and no country gets a hall pass forever. The piper will be paid sooner or later.

We create more suffering when we fail to recognize what **is**. Our redemption lives in acknowledging the reality that **is** and dealing with it. And what **is** includes the reality of climate change, the politics of Donald Trump, the rise of nationalism and white supremacist militias, the erosion of democracy in America and its abdication as the leader of the free world, and the ascent of China as the world's preeminent superpower. Denying reality as it is happening for a preferred more idealistic version of what ought to be happening is foolhardy. Injecting *ex nihilo*

some preferred idealized outcome is engaging in utopian thinking. The reality of climate change demands that we deal with what **is** and take the next difficult steps. A shift in consciousness by a significant number of people will greatly enhance our ability to address this challenge, but that does not mean that it will be easy, nor does it tell us anything about what the world will look like once the danger has passed. A post climate change world, if we get there, will not necessarily result in an idealized end state of perfection. We are moving into a hyper-pragmatic phase in which the survival of all planetary species hangs in the balance. Philosopher Isaiah Berlin tells us that dealing with the inevitable conflicts that will ensue requires rivalrous debates of competing ideas. John Gray characterizes Berlin's approach to social change as *Agonistic Liberalism*.

## TRANSCENDENTAL EXISTENTIALISM

The chapter on *Quantum Physics and Consciousness* reminds us that we are all connected in the quantum energetic field. The *Arc of Coming Alive* is a rejection of Gary Wolf's new-atheism. Instead, we are evolving into a transcendental state of quantum consciousness. If existential despair, which causes so much suffering, is balanced by transcendence, we experience grace, joy, insight, and inspiration on a somatic level. *Transcendental Existentialism* is the ability to hold a transcendental experience and contextualize it with agency and outcome without fetishizing it. It is structurally grounded in Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, Gnosticism, and Mysticism. Stoicism is especially important at this time because it reminds us that we need to suck it up and do the hard work that confronts us. There may not be a happily ever after ending but, if we can survive what Saint John of the Cross called the *Dark Night of the Soul*, we arrive at the discourse on the battlefield between Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita where our only redemption lies in the fulfillment of our dharma. That's why Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Thoreau, and Emerson revered the Bhagavad Gita as an instructive text in transformational leadership.

Carlos Castaneda tells us that the act of the sorcerer is controlled folly -- do the thing you must do with the full understanding that it is utterly pointless. I know the tide is going to wash away my perfect sandcastle, yet I am going to build it anyway. There may not be a happy ending, but if we can deal with the existential meaningless of it all, we will end up in a deeply empowered place on the other side of the veil. It's Jesus in the Judaeen Desert for forty days being tempted by Satan and overcoming it. It's being in the illusion with the knowingness that it's all an illusion and not being grabbed by it. It's remembering we are *in* this world but we are not *of* it. Even though there may be no cherished outcomes as in the crucifixion of Jesus, we don't get to sulk or withdraw from the battlefield because things aren't going the way we want them to go. Enlightenment is the ability to match state to task -- to live with courage and play our part fully with commitment and impeccability regardless of what life throws at us.

We didn't sin and fall from grace. We chose to be here. The Yang element chooses to incarnate so it can bring remembrance to the Yin element but, in doing so, it forgets itself. The irony is that in choosing to take birth in the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension, we forget who and what we are - our true self - and we immerse ourselves in the soup. But we redeem ourselves by reawakening the Yin

element, which then takes its rightful place as part of the balance. In doing so we become homoplasmic – twice born humans. Our true nature is that we are in human form (biology) combined with the knowledge of spiritual mysteries (gnosis). By opening up to the suffering of the world we take on the wounds of the world. We acknowledge and affirm for ourselves that all wounds are love waiting to be recognized. This is the path of *Christ Consciousness*.

Can we open up to all of it as it is without breaking? How do we stay awake at the intersection of sacred time (Kairos) and linear time (Chronos) without flinching? Doing so is transformative. It's time to embrace our transcendent selves and remake the world through creativity, innovation, art, science and service. We are built to rail against entropy - the second law of thermodynamics. Doing so is a confirmation of the *Hedonic Paradox* - we don't find happiness by seeking it. This is blasphemy to the American psyche, which believes it has a constitutional right to pursue happiness.

The coronavirus is not the end of civilization as we know it, but it is probably a harbinger of things to come. As a dress rehearsal, it is stress-testing our systems and everything to do with decision-making, collective mobilization and pattern recognition. In the chapter on *The Wealth and Power Gap*, I outline my views on the future of the US economy. The coronavirus is a messy reminder of how it all plays out. Arguments about the macroeconomic collapse being the result of libertarianism or social-democracy are irrelevant. It is what it is and people are making fear-based decisions by acting compulsively on partial information.

Our civilization has turned most people into passive zoo animals who have become complacent and narcissistic. They have lost the ability to be practical on the ground. The chapter on *Conscious Awakening* addresses the need to build spiritually-based communities of conscience in what may be the final stages of the Anthropocene. We need to pool our resources and reduce our collective footprint on the environment. This is where the intersecting curves of human ingenuity and climate change meet? This is how we hold the two interdependent arcs without defaulting to utopian thinking? Our redemption is found where the arcs converge. That is our dharma. That is why we chose to take birth at this most interesting and challenging time so we can serve humanity as pillars of light.

## UNIVERSAL PRAGMATICS – MAKING SENSE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

I wrote the chapter on *Universal Pragmatics* to serve as a foundation for taking pragmatic action. However, the principles and practices of universal pragmatics can be expanded upon to help us make sense in uncertain times. How do we work together and arrive at a functional consensus? How do we collectively build coherence when so many people are prone to false certainties, entrenched positions and pissing-matches as they descend the rhetorical pyramid into ad homonyms, or opt into this or that Facebook group or Twitter feeds to weigh in on QAnon's latest conspiracy theories? How do we make meaning in the midst of magical thinking and utopian ideologies? Jamie Wheal developed the following three-pronged approach to collective

sense-making. It balances the principles embedded in Pascal's Wager, Occam's Razor and Bayes' Theorem so we can make sense of anything that is complex, interdependent and uncertain.

**Pascal's Wager:** Blaise Pascal was a 17<sup>th</sup> century French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Catholic theologian. He argued that it is in one's best interest to behave as if God exists, since the possibility of eternal punishment in hell outweighs any advantage in believing otherwise. In other words, it's better to consider the one-off black swan possibility, whether it's mystical non-ordinary or existential and potentially cataclysmic, just in case. For our purposes, it's better to behave as if climate change is real and potentially cataclysmic than to believe it is a hoax.

**Occam's Razor:** William of Ockham was a 13<sup>th</sup> century English Franciscan friar, philosopher and theologian who argued that if two explanations account for all the assumptions and facts, the simpler explanation is more likely to be correct. In other words, don't oversubscribe to complexity when a simpler answer is possible.

**Bayes' Theorem:** Thomas Bayes was an 18<sup>th</sup> century English statistician, philosopher and Presbyterian minister. Bayes' theorem is based on a statistical paradigm that answers research questions about unknown parameters using probability statements. Bayesian analysis weighs complex, interdependent variables dynamically over time and sees how they unfold. As we get more data points, we can progress along the following ontological scale:

**Hypothesis → Theorem → Law**

Hypotheses are proposed explanations for phenomena. To be scientific, they must be tested. Theorems are non-self-evident statements that have been proven to be true. As such, they take hypotheses one step further. The final stage is to convert theorems into scientific laws which mean that they are based on repeated experiments or observations.

Our task is to hold these three ontological buckets such that we can engage in collective sense making. By testing our ideas through a dialectic process, we can make sense in complex, unstable situations. However, to engage in this manner, we need to establish relationships built on trust in low-friction environments, which is why I wrote a chapter on *Building Trust*.

## PSYCHEDELICS

In the chapter on *The Awakening of Global Consciousness*, I devote a section to the new science of psychedelics as vehicles for jump-starting a major shift in consciousness. In this paper I address some of the issues that arise with psychedelics and psycho-technologies as they gain wider acceptance and use. Psychedelics and psycho-technologies are the fastest route to waking up with the lowest success rate at maintaining the transcendent state they induce because many of the people who take them have a proclivity to magical thinking where everything is an illusion

so they make stuff up as they go. Many get their spiritual wisdom from YouTube videos, Instagram, The Secret, Abraham-Hicks and assorted spiritual slogans often without applying any discernment, rigor or discipline.

Many psycho-spiritual teachers do not establish and maintain rigorous standards of eligibility for those who get to take their expeditions into the numinous. When someone facilitates a cathartic psycho-ecstatic experience by sending people to the moon or breaking down their defenses some very predictable patterns emerge not the least of which are cult-like tendencies including the erosion of sovereignty, the tendency to group-think, and the exultation of the facilitator. Tantra and brainwashing are identical psycho-technologies. One raises sovereignty, the other erases it. When people learn to press the pleasure levers, the ability to descend into addictive sensation seeking is pronounced because they've hacked the reward system. They try to relive their initial experience, but each time it feels like it's a little less than it was the first time, so it takes them more effort, time and resources to get back to that initial sensation.

When people engage in unfiltered ecstatic techniques and practices, they must learn how to reintegrate healthy super-ego narratives of meaning. They can do so by asking themselves what ethics come into play when engaging in such practices. Instead, many people are live-podcasting their own unravelling, which makes them prone to narcissism and solipsism. When you enter these realms, the whole "Hey brother, get out of your head, get into your heart, and just feel and trust" doesn't work because you're back to regression. So much of it is based on magical thinking and questionable sense-making. It's important to reintegrate emotional somatics because most of us are disembodied heads on sticks. The end game is to bring everything together and become a balanced human being. Only then can we assume our rightful place as pillars of light in the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension.

## THE HEDONIC YOGA OF BECOMING

The answer to becoming a balanced human being lies in what Dr. Itai Ivztan and Angeliki Papantoniou call *The Hedonic Yoga of Becoming* – a yoga practice that integrates the hedonic (gratitude) and eudaimonic (self-actualization) impulses through positive psychology. Historically, these techniques were kept secret, and only advanced disciples were initiated into them because very few people are able to play with fire without getting burned. If you pursue the intersection of cutting-edge neuroscience and optimal psychology with an open mind you end up in a psycho-sexual tantra as did all the esoteric and wisdom traditions. The human ecstatic nervous system matches with the sexual arousal network because evolution is efficient. There are massive amounts of evolutionary biological encoders which precipitate, enforce and encourage sexuality and respiration. Both are heavily imprinted into our nervous systems. The bad news is that the majority of human suffering has to do with sexuality. Rape, incest, pedophilia, trauma, unwanted children all derive from sexuality. Enormous grief comes from being controlled by the puppet strings of our biological encoding.

There is great potential if we can isolate our biological encoding from the amoral evolutionary impulse which doesn't care about our sexual preferences. All it cares about is perpetuating the viability of gene pools. If you can master that impulse, you can use it as a baseline in the hedonic yoga of becoming. It's Homer's Odysseus resisting the bewitching song of the Sirens by having his crew tie him to the mast of the ship. In other words, a powerful path of human becoming is available to us if we can learn to harness and precipitate the neuro-physiological ecstatic state in service of trauma relief, defragmentation and integration. By doing so, our nervous systems, our psychology and our relationships become stabilized and clarified at a high-frequency level in a path of human becoming. Essentially, it's Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Human. That's why mastering our sexuality and respiration are the keys to transcendence. It's high frequency kundalini yoga and ecstatic tantra combined with techniques of meditation that focus on prana or the breath.

How do you get to this post-orgasmic state where the Kairos/Cronos crossroads meet? You need to establish a lifestyle of recurring spiritual practices – daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual where you know you can catch yourself by remembering your true nature and purpose. If all you have is a peak experience but no sustaining recurring spiritual practices, you go into the world naively thinking you're going to change it, but end up getting hammered by it because people don't play fair. So, once again, you're thrown back into subject/object duality. You're trying to stay pure but the world is corrupt, so you end up resenting the world as it is. This yoyo state of being leaves you desperate for your next retreat. In the meantime, you self-flagellate by promising to do twice as much meditation. In effect, you've created a prophylactic relationship with the world by trying to protect yourself from it. This is problematic for people who aspire to serve as pillars of light.

However, if you have a recurring hedonic yoga of becoming practice you learn to trust that it will support you. That's why you periodically drag your broken spirit to the doorstep of the ashram where you will once again remember and be remade. Then you can lean into your dismembering. You can do a swan dive into the swamp and it doesn't matter how dirty you get because you know you can always go down to the river to pray and be washed clean. That is how you show up in the Bodhisattva space without seeking or banking on some redemptive, utopian eschaton. You are showing up fully realized in this life in this moment as it is. The miracle isn't that we are starlight dressed-up as matter. The miracle is that for a handful of decades we are homo sapiens -- linguistic beings with prefrontal cortexes, spinal columns, erogenous zones and opposable thumbs acting with illuminated minds and purified hearts vibrating at the frequency of quantum consciousness so we can play our part fully and consciously. That's what it means to be a pillar of light in this critical stage of the Anthropocene. That's amazing! That is quantum living!

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