

June – August 2009 Issue 44

formerly  <sup>what is</sup>enlightenment

# EnlightenNext

THE MAGAZINE FOR **EVOLUTIONARIES**<sup>SM</sup>

## Envisioning the future

What today's brightest  
minds have to say  
about the road ahead



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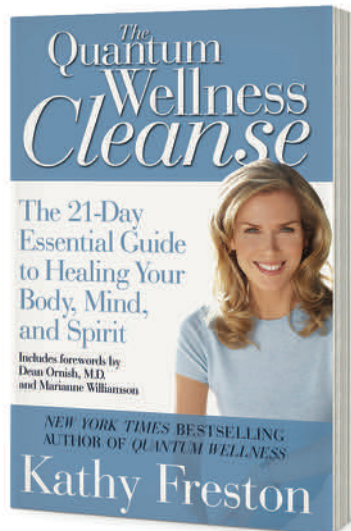
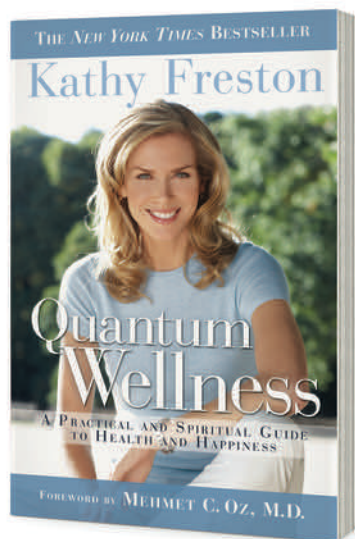
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Issue 44 June – August 2009

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EnlightenNext is dedicated to catalyzing evolution in consciousness and culture. We strive to be leaders, examples, and pathfinders in the emerging field of integral and evolutionary spirituality, and to stand for the ultimate relevance of spiritual enlightenment in our time. Through our integrated annual cycle of programs and events and our award-winning publications, we are awakening, connecting, and cultivating a global movement of “evolutionaries”—individuals who feel personally responsible for creating the future.

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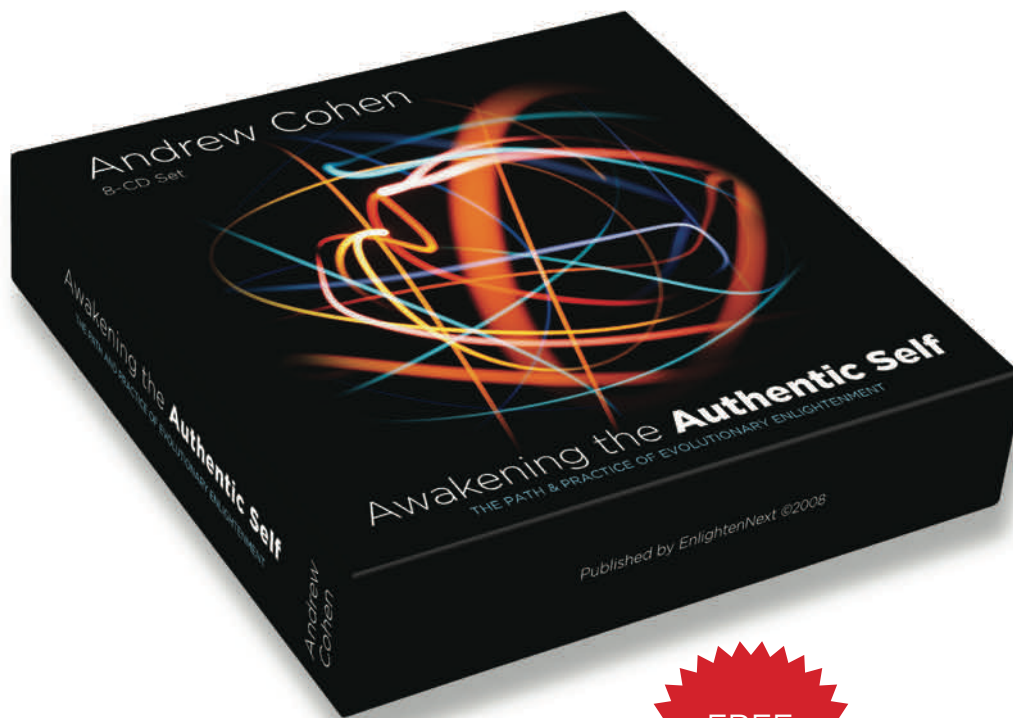
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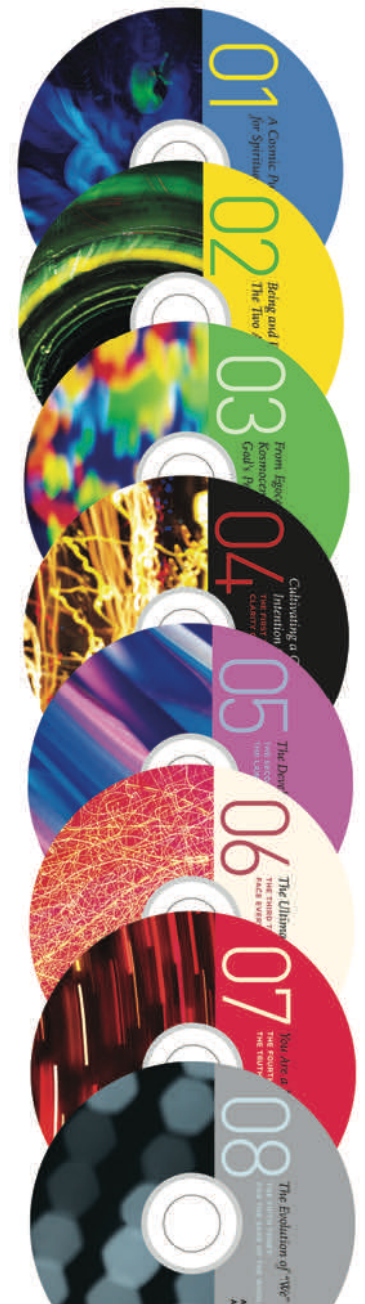


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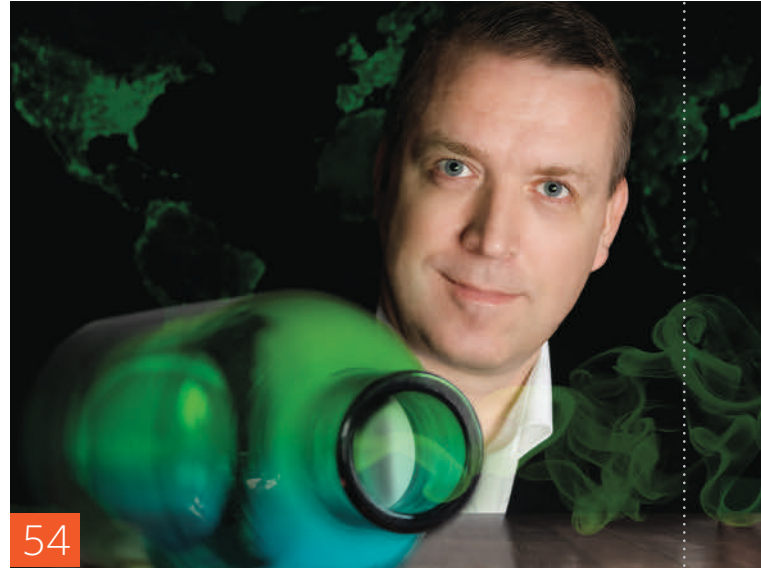
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BY CARTER PHIPPS



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BY CARTER PHIPPS



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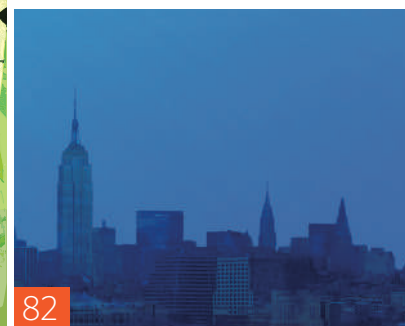
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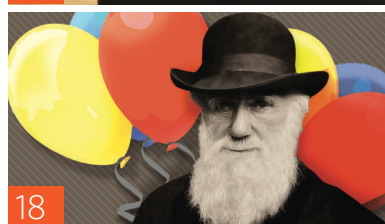
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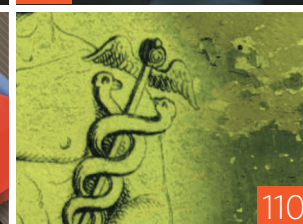
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BY ROSS ROBERTSON



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### This issue's featured audios:



#### Thomas Barnett

Military strategist and author discusses why, in spite of its bad reputation, globalization may be the best thing that has ever happened to the planet.  
[enlightennext.org/barnett](http://enlightennext.org/barnett)



#### Jim Garrison

Author and Wisdom University founder shares his bold plans to address global warming at the 2009 State of the World Forum.  
[enlightennext.org/garrison](http://enlightennext.org/garrison)



#### Gary Lachman

Occult scholar and former Blondie bassist explores the historical relationship between politics and Western esoteric thought.  
[enlightennext.org/lachman](http://enlightennext.org/lachman)



#### Speaking with Futurists

Elza Maalouf, Patricia Aburdene, John Petersen, Ray Kurzweil, and Joel Garreau give their forecasts for the not-too-distant future.  
[enlightennext.org/futurists](http://enlightennext.org/futurists)



### ONLINE EXCLUSIVE:

## "Radical Evolution"

In this online-only feature, *Washington Post* reporter Joel Garreau explores the moral implications of the fact that our incredible technological capacity has made us the first species with the power to control our own evolutionary destiny.

Interview by Joel Pitney



Read or listen to the interview at  
[enlightennext.org/garreau](http://enlightennext.org/garreau)



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Issue 43  
March - May 2009

## GETTING REAL ABOUT SEX

I am grateful for Andrew Cohen's very sound and realistic approach to sexuality in "Is Sex a Path to God?" and "Karma-Free Sex." It helps to bring a high-minded clarity to some of the other approaches mentioned in the issue, including those of Nicole Daedone and David Deida.

Sexuality is certainly a powerful and often confusing subject even for many gurus and masters. Indeed, I find Ken Wilber's philosophy of sex to be surprisingly naïve:

*"Hey guys and gals. No need for meditation, introspection or self-discipline. What a drag! The good news is that we can all become enlightened through the erotic bliss of sex. And we can all have so much FUN doing it."*

In my experience, following advice like this has brought transitory pleasure followed by enormous suffering. Apparently this is not *my* path to God.

**Susan Carlock, PhD**  
Luz, Portugal

## AN UNDERCURRENT OF PRUDERY?

I was delighted to see this magazine take on the topic of the sacred sexuality movement. But I found myself a little disheartened after reading the issue. Was there an undercurrent of prudery? Have serious spiritual seekers jettisoned the idea that the erotic energies of the body are anything other than radioactive at worst or too confusing to mess with at best? Sometimes I wonder if Boomers are embarrassed by mirrors of their own youth? I thought the idea was to transcend AND include.

The culture seems to be asking the question "Is this expansive feeling in sexual expression connected to spiritual awakening?" And experimenting with this hypothesis, even at the radical end of the spectrum, can have integrity. The frustrating thing is that pre- and post-conventional behavior can look disconcertingly similar. It's the intentions that expose the developmental altitude of the players. Crazy wisdom has never translated well; that's why it seems crazy. I do think it is interesting that David Deida wouldn't talk to your writer. And there are other, maybe less well known, figures in the field of sacred sexuality who, like Deida, earn the highest respect from serious spiritual thinkers and practitioners. I feel like the meatiest articles missed those voices.

As for sex making karma, well, yeah. Life makes karma,

even lives of renunciation.

I don't really see any value difference between spending your twenties exploring celibacy or promiscuously O'Ming in urban communes. Each creates its own unique karma, and each has the potential to become either prisons or launch pads for liberating awareness. We are all making our messy way up the same mountain using a variety of paths. What better forum for a post-conventional exploration of the intersection of sex and spirit than this magazine.

**Christina Sophie**  
Oakland, CA

## I KNOW YOU ARE BUT WHAT AM I?

In "Pulp Dharma," Ross Robertson says that David Deida conflates nihilism and nonduality. But it's actually Robertson who conflates the two in the way that he reads Deida.

I have attended Deida-based men's groups, and what I get from his work is that I need to quit intellectualizing about life and give my gift to the world. Deida certainly speaks coarsely and throws around "fuck" and "cunt" and "cock." But he does this to wake us up from our postmodern intellectualism and get us back into our bodies so that we can speak our fears and truths from a heart-centered place.

I suggest that you go to one of Deida's men's groups. Be with other men in a structured framework. Hear them tell you from their hearts if you are

bullshitting. Determine the truth for yourself. Then write your article, from experience. Deida speaks to the charged, controversial topic of sexuality with directness and certainty, continuously reminding us: Give your gift to the world from a heart-connected, loving place. Nothing else matters. Would you call that nihilism? If so, you're the nihilist, not Deida.

**Jay Glick**  
via email

## NAVIGATING THE MAZE

As the mother of boomers, I'm an outsider to the flat landscape of postmodern "all is the same" culture and I've observed these mores with great perplexity over many years. That is until reading Ross Robertson's article, "Pulp Dharma," in which he clarifies some of the fundamentals of this stage of the prevailing culture. With often poetic literary skill, Robertson takes us through the maze of so-called spiritual sexuality and its accompanying shock techniques, as well as the nihilistic philosophies out of which some of these experiments emerged. In the midst of describing what are sometimes crude and garish attempts of achieving spirituality, Robertson leads us with graceful language into the clearing... where another path out of the flatlands becomes visible.

**Frances Chavarria**  
Costa Rica

*Letters continued on page 108*





**T**here was just no way of avoiding it. The time had come to do an issue on our current global crisis. In the face of often dire and disastrous predictions, we've tried to present some compelling and leading-edge points of view while also making the effort to remain philosophical at all costs! (I mean, we don't want the impending apocalypse to make us lose sight of a higher vision and an enlightened perspective, do we?) That's what my dialogue with integral master Ken Wilber is all about in our twenty-third "Guru and Pandit" feature.

For this issue, my close colleague Carter Phipps, *EnlightenNext's* executive editor, conducted powerful and thought-provoking interviews with two visionaries holding very different perspectives on our current world predicament. Global strategist Thomas Barnett has an uncanny ability to paint the biggest possible picture about where we are, where we've come from, and where we're going. He does so in such a way that he always gives one a strong sense of hope that no matter how challenging things may seem in the short term, from the perspective of the developmental arc of human history, things are undoubtedly getting *a lot* better. And futurist John Petersen gives us quite a different way to look at our current crisis: He says we're going down faster than most of us are aware of, and that we need to get ready and prepare for the worst!

To put everything in the kind of perspective that I personally like the most, scholar of consciousness and Western esotericism Gary Lachman reminds us, with uniquely lyrical brilliance, that our predictions of our imminent demise have been part of the ebb and flow of the human experience since the dawn of civilization. But before you give yourself license to stop worrying, read scholar of theology and global activist Jim Garrison's views on climate change in an informative interview with senior associate editor Ross Robertson. Garrison articulately explains why we are running out of time, and then describes in detail the exciting upcoming 2009 State of the World Forum, which will be dedicated to educating as many people as possible, all over the world, about how to respond to this crisis from an integral perspective.

So where does all this leave us? Hopefully both a little more informed and a little more inspired!

**Andrew Cohen**  
Founder and Editor in Chief

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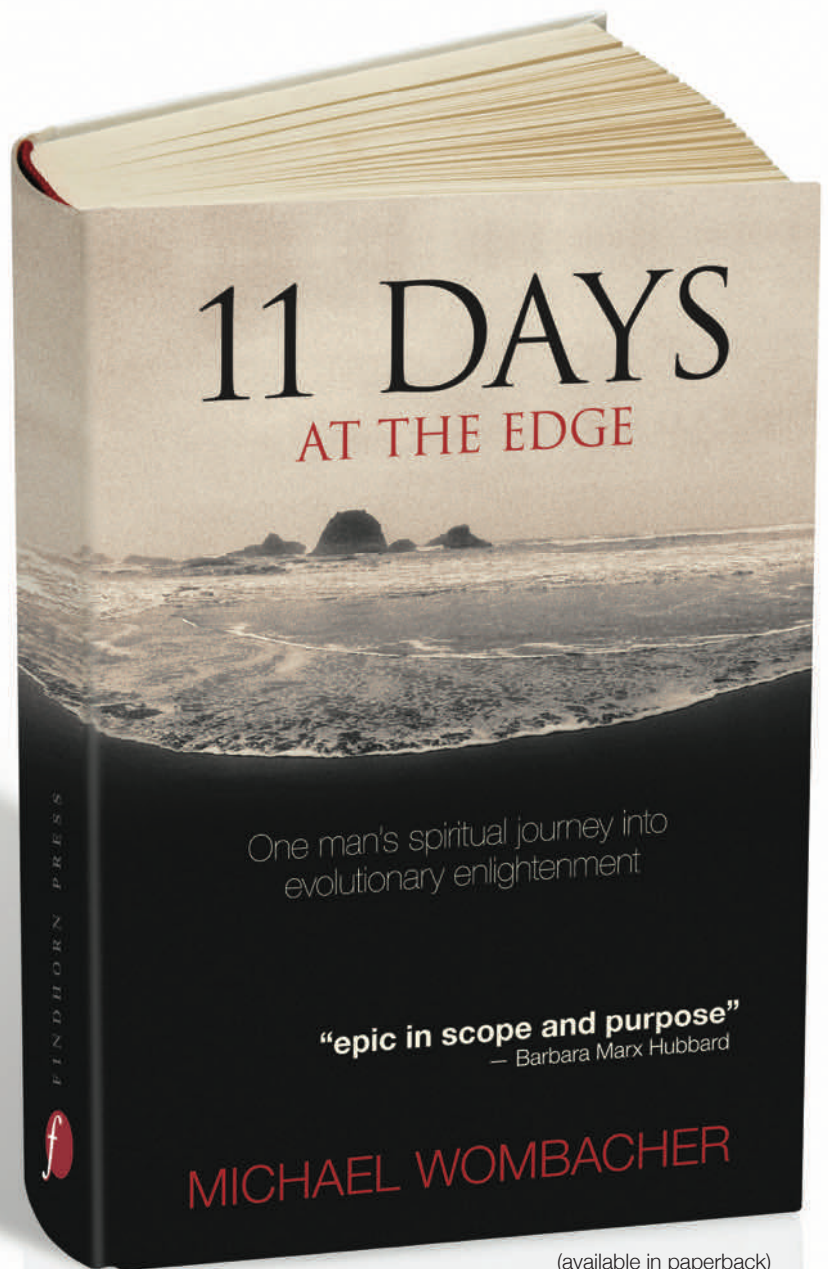
ERVIN LASZLO, author of *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything*

“Wombacher’s engaging account of his spiritual journey with Andrew Cohen is a beautiful and compelling read. His book conveys a palpable sense of the “transmission” that an authentic spiritual teacher can give to his or her students. I highly recommend *11 Days at the Edge* to anyone interested in the work of Andrew Cohen in particular, and evolutionary enlightenment in general.”

STEVE MCINTOSH, author of *Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution*

“Michael Wombacher has given us a clear and beautiful story of eleven days spent with Andrew Cohen, an authentic American spiritual master. A delightful introduction to Evolutionary Enlightenment.”

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## EnlightenNext is more than just a magazine . . .

It's the hub of a growing global movement of Evolutionaries—thinking people who are stepping forward to help define what the future will be. If you're inspired by life, turned on by what's possible, and want to participate in the evolution of human consciousness and culture, then join us as we embark on the next phase of EnlightenNext's twenty-year journey . . .

The EnlightenNext Discovery Cycle is designed to awaken, connect, and cultivate a global network of evolutionaries through a dynamic annual cycle of engagement. This cycle is organized around two major events: the Being & Becoming

Retreat and the Conference for Evolutionaries. Both will be milestone experiences in their own right, yet they are also much more than that. They are the two primary elements of one integrated process designed to explore how the evolution of our *interiors*—our consciousness, values, and perspectives— affects the evolution of the *exterior* world we all share and create.

The Discovery Cycle is the culmination of more than two decades of experience at EnlightenNext engaging with spiritual leaders, cultural visionaries, and thousands of evolutionaries around the world. Founded in 1988 by spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, we've been working ever since to awaken people to the liberating freedom of their own highest self and the empowering clarity of an evolutionary perspective.

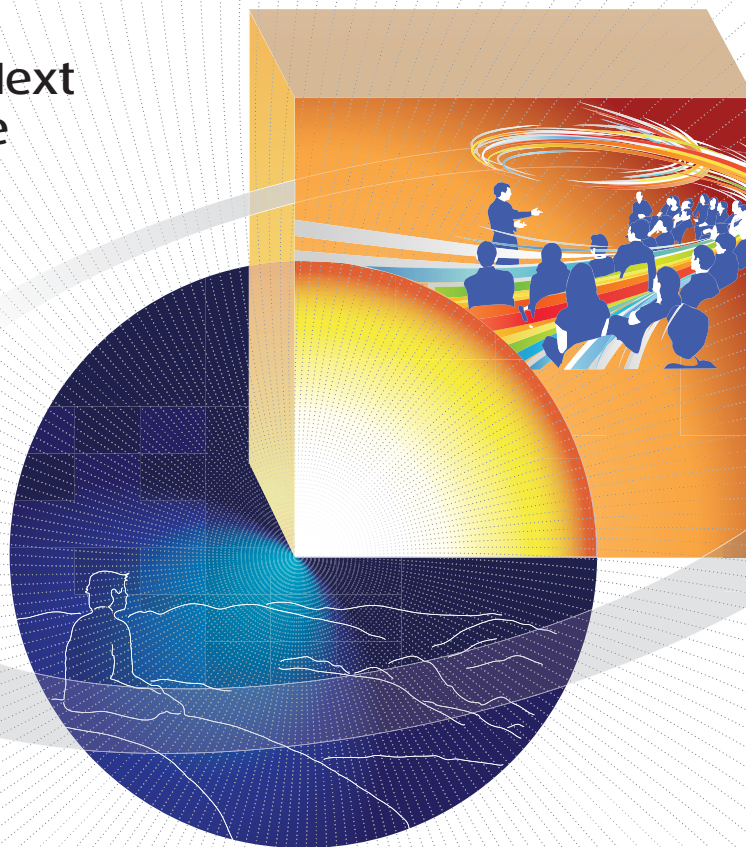
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JULY – AUG, 2009  
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### The Conference for Evolutionaries

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# to Consciously Create the Future



This summer, the EnlightenNext  
Discovery Cycle launches with

## The 2009 Being & Becoming Retreat

July 25 – August 16, Tuscany, Italy

Going on retreat with EnlightenNext founder Andrew Cohen has always been a life-changing voyage into the depths of enlightened awareness and a breathtaking encounter with the evolutionary impulse inside each and every one of us. This summer, EnlightenNext's first annual Being & Becoming Retreat will inaugurate a new, extended, two-part format for these experiential trainings in the evolution of consciousness and culture.

In the first ten days of the retreat, participants will venture directly into the discovery of pure *being* — into the empty space of consciousness that was there before the universe began — through going very deeply into the experience of silent meditation. Then, during the second ten-day period, retreatants will make the transition from this contemplation of the timeless ground of being into a face-to-face encounter with the original cosmic urge to *become*, to take form, to evolve from nothing into something. This part of the retreat will be spent in a thrilling exploration of what Cohen calls the Authentic Self, which is the evolutionary impulse itself, the unfalteringly positive urge to become as it arises within our very own consciousness and personality.

Coming up:

## The 2010 Conference for Evolutionaries

At EnlightenNext, this ongoing circular movement in consciousness from being to becoming, being to becoming, is the self-refreshing spiritual and creative driver of everything we do. Everyone who participates in the Being and Becoming Retreat will not only experience this profound discovery of freedom and creativity themselves, but will also be playing an important role in the larger collective process that leads directly into the next stage of the cycle in May 2010: the Conference for Evolutionaries.

**To learn more** about the Discovery Cycle and get connected to EnlightenNext's global network of programs, publications, webcasts, centers, courses, and events, visit:

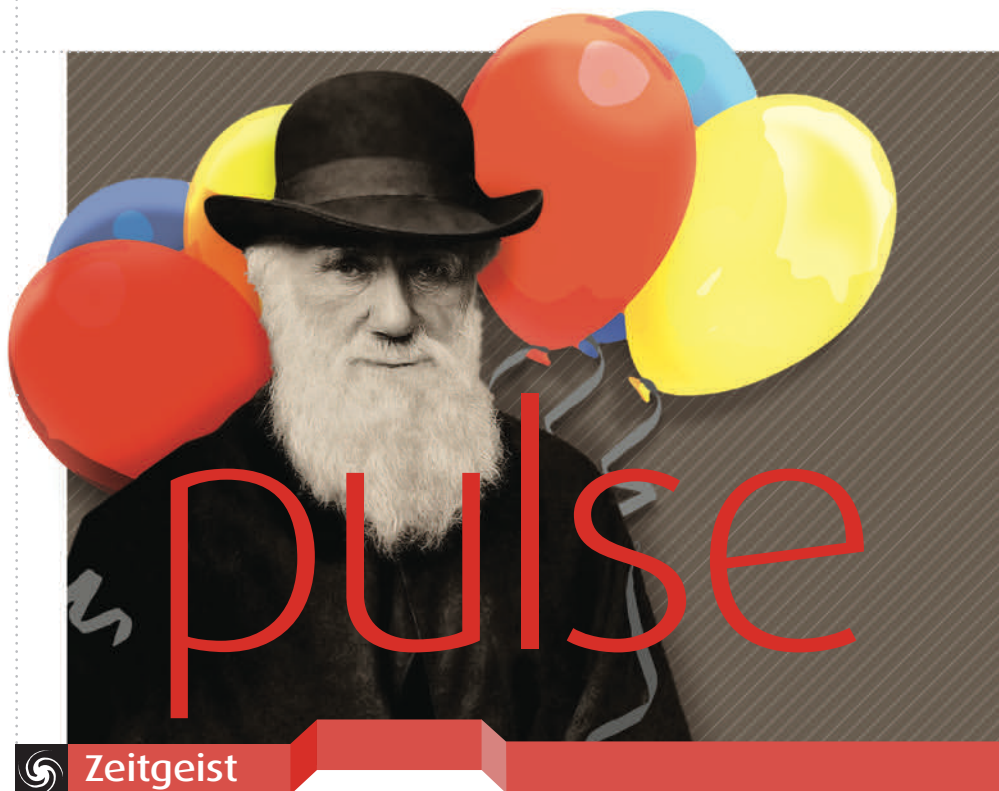
**[enlightennext.org/discovery](http://enlightennext.org/discovery)**



*"There is a very clear and direct connection between the interior and the exterior, between our inner experience of consciousness and the world we are creating together. When we begin to awaken to this connection in our own lives, our understanding of spirituality expands dramatically, embracing more and more dimensions of life, of the world, and of the entire cosmos."*

Andrew Cohen





## Sites & Blogs



### **kurzweilAI.net**

Visit futurist Ray Kurzweil's website for cutting-edge thoughts on technology, consciousness, evolution, and immortality. And don't miss the virtual hostess, Ramona, who guides you—knowledgeably, humorously, and sometimes cheekily—through the site.



### **scienceandreligiontoday.blogspot.com**

Perhaps the internet's most in-depth exploration of the ongoing tension between Bibles and Bunsen burners, this blog is especially noteworthy for its weekly posts featuring the guests of Robert Lawrence Kuhn's PBS series *Closer To Truth*.



### **soulpancake.com**

This entertaining social-networking site was created by comedian Rainn Wilson (*The Office*). Featuring funny videos and discussion forums to "chew on life's biggest questions," the site's mission to "de-lameify" spirituality is a welcome addition to the web.



### **enlightennext.org/parliament**

A new *EnlightenNext* site presenting unpublished video interviews we conducted at the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions. Twenty-six featured visionaries, including Ammachi, Michael Lerner, Jane Goodall, and Deepak Chopra, share their thoughts on the future of religion.

## Let's Party Like It's 1859

In case you're still dragging your knuckles across the savannah and somehow missed the news, this year marks the two hundredth birthday of **Charles Darwin** (February 12) and the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his paradigm-shifting masterwork, *On the Origin of Species* (November 24). And around the world, interest in the life and work of this preeminent evolutionary has never been greater.

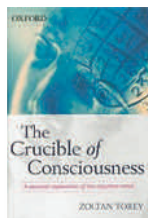
In addition to ongoing press coverage, books, and documentaries appearing throughout the year, nearly 740 events commemorated Darwin's birthday in forty-five countries. Ranging from university discussion groups to major museum installations, the diversity of celebrations highlighted how deeply Darwin's groundbreaking scientific discovery has influenced every aspect of human culture, leaving no domain untouched.

From February to May, Frankfurt, Germany's Schirn Kunsthalle displayed over one hundred and fifty paintings, drawings, lithographs, and rare documentary material in "Darwin—Art and the Search for Origins," an exhibition it billed as the "first to focus on the implications of Darwinism for the fine arts." But across the pond in Connecticut, a Yale University exhibit also claimed to be "exploring, for the first time, the impact of Darwin's theories on the visual arts." (Given that Frankfurt's exhibit began a week earlier, we think the claim is theirs.)

During the same period, the ancient French city of Clermont-Ferrand hosted a series of academic conferences on Darwinian theory while mockery of religious creationism increasingly peppered France's mainstream press. Not to be left behind, more than one thousand Christian congregations representing fifteen nations banded together to celebrate "Evolution Weekend" (February 13–15), challenging creationism themselves and exploring why, to many of the faithful, there's no real conflict between natural selection and God.

Back on Darwin's home turf, the Darwin200 organization has been busy organizing this year's celebrations throughout the United Kingdom, with London's Natural History Museum holding the "biggest ever exhibition" about their patron saint. *EnlightenNext* paid this one a visit, and we found that viewing Darwin's original specimens and notebooks up close and personal is a powerful experience indeed.

But leave it to Californians to take things one step beyond the ordinary. This past January, Stanford University chartered a Boeing 757 for wealthy alumni to embark on "The Voyage of the Beagle by Private Jet." This three-week globe-trotting expedition came replete with tour guides, "the finest accommodations and cuisine," and scenic stops at the paradisiacal islands and beaches that Darwin visited during his own far more arduous five-year tour. Now if *that* isn't evidence of evolution, we don't know what is . . .



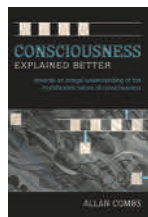
## The Crucible of Consciousness

In the January–March 2007 issue of *EnlightenNext*, we featured the remarkable story of **Zoltan Torey**, a visionary blind man who not only taught himself to “see” the world around him using his unusually keen imagination but has spent nearly half his life developing a bold and striking thesis on the nature and origins of self-reflective awareness. This June, MIT Press is finally publishing an American edition of his currently out-of-print life’s work, *The Crucible of Consciousness*. With a foreword by **Daniel Dennett** and a rich array of insights on the evolution of brain, mind, language, and the uniquely human capacity for self-reflection, *Crucible* may not be an easy read, but it’s a guaranteed five-star meal for the serious student of science and consciousness.



## I’m Off Then

For more than a thousand years, seekers and adventurers have spent weeks in rhythmic contemplation walking Europe’s most famous pilgrimage route. *I’m Off Then: Losing and Finding Myself on the Camino de Santiago* is the soul-searching account of **Hape Kerkeling**, a renowned German comedian, as he travels over 500 miles of this popular religious road. Billed as a cross between Paulo Coelho and Bill Bryson, Kerkeling brings a spiritual twist to travel writing, as he chronicles his journey from the Pyrenees to the trail’s end at the towering Spanish cathedral where St. James is reputedly buried. Recently published in English for the first time, *I’m Off Then* has been translated into eleven languages, sold over three million copies, and increased pilgrimages along the “Camino” by twenty percent.



## Consciousness Explained Better

In his 1991 classic, *Consciousness Explained*, **Daniel Dennett** offered what many considered the final resolution to the “hard problem,” reducing consciousness to the neurochemical processes of the brain. Nearly twenty years later, however, the problem persists, and many thinkers from all sides of the debate continue to weigh in. With his forthcoming book, *Consciousness Explained Better*, integral theorist **Allan Combs** is aspiring to synthesize the scientific and spiritual explanations for this most elusive of subjects. Drawing on the work of **William James**, **Jean Gebser**, and **Ken Wilber**, Combs hopes to “recapture afresh the mystery, excitement, and wealth” of consciousness studies without discounting the significant scientific work of the past century. **Michael Murphy** likens it to “Luke Skywalker’s torpedo headed straight into the Death Star of reductive materialism.” With an endorsement like that, we’re eagerly anticipating its publication this September.



## Cosmos, Nature, Culture

10th Annual Metanexus Conference  
July 18–21, 2009, Phoenix, Arizona



Increasingly, many academics are recognizing the need to bridge institutional divides between science, religion, and the humanities. One of the most notable organizations dedicated to creating this kind of interdisciplinary common ground is **Metanexus Institute**, a thriving intellectual and spiritual association with more than 11,000 members representing every major field of study. Each year, Metanexus hosts innovative research projects, a lecture series, and an international conference. This year’s theme: Cosmos, Nature, Culture. One of many highlights on the docket will be astrophysicist **Joel Primack** and science writer **Nancy Abrams**, a dynamic husband-and-wife duo whose research into the unsolved mysteries of cosmology has led them to conclude that human consciousness plays a rare and central role in the evolving universe (see our May–July 2008 issue). They’re just two among forty-plus scholars from across the globe who will be gathering in pursuit of greater integration within the vast body of human knowledge. “There is something within us,” says Metanexus, “that demands we pursue the *whole story* of the *whole cosmos* if we are to be *whole persons*.”



## On Screen

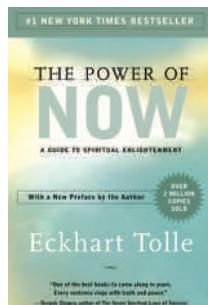
## Spiritual Liberation

What do you get when you cross a Pentecostal preacher, a natural foods enthusiast, a New Thought guru, and a slam poet? The answer: **Reverend Michael Bernard Beckwith**. In early 2009, the soulful founder of LA’s **Agape International Spiritual Center** teamed up with filmmaker **Mikki Willis** to produce the autobiographical film *Spiritual Liberation*. Inspired by Beckwith’s new book, the film is a glimpse into a Sunday in the life of this post-traditional preacher. Starting with the story of his own awakening, the camera follows Beckwith to his nine-thousand-member transdenominational church for an inspirational sermon before moving on to the aisles of his local health food store. The film concludes with a cozy dinner discussion among a star-studded group of his closest parishioners (including **Mario Van Peebles**) about the finer points of Beckwith’s sermon and his vision for a future where “creativity and beauty flower and the evolution of one’s soul becomes why we are here.”

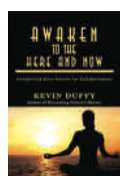




## The Top 10 Power of Now Knockoffs

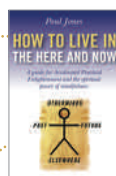


In 1984, the Smiths' most popular song posed a mind-stopping question: "How soon is now?" Today we'd like to ask, "How much now is *too much now*?" In the decade since Eckhart Tolle's runaway bestseller *The Power of Now* first brought the immediacy of enlightened awareness to the checkout lane of your local Wal-Mart, we've been continually amused by an interesting trend in the world of spiritual marketing. Nearly two dozen books have been published promoting the benefits of living in "the now"—often bearing a surprising and somewhat suspicious resemblance to Tolle's timeless hit. (Author Gina Lake even published two *different* books on "the now" in 2008.) While one can't fault them for trying, wouldn't it be nice to see something *new* every now and again?



10

**Awaken to the Here and Now**  
by Kevin Duffy



9

**How to Live in the Here and Now**  
by Paul Jones



8

**Let Go and Live in the Now**  
by Guy Finley



7

**Happiness Now!**  
by Robert Holden



6

**The Tao of Now**  
by Josh Baran



5

**The Tao of Now**  
by Daniel Skach-Mills



4

**Wake Up Now**  
by Stephan Bodian



3

**Journey into Now**  
by Leonard Jacobson



2

**The Unfolding Now**  
by A.H. Almaas



1

**The Power of Meow**  
by Bernard Gunther



**Kudos** to the popular scientific magazine *Discover* for hinting at the possibility of a new evolutionary spirituality in a recent article about the many areas of human life that have been shaped by Darwin's dangerous idea since *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859. In "We All Live in Darwin's World," author **Karen Wright** suggests that "harnessed to a supernatural dimension, the belief in evolution could itself evolve into a kind of religion." Citing the work of twentieth-century priest and paleontologist **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**, a forefather of evolutionary spirituality, and "evolutionary evangelist" **Michael Dowd**, author of the recent book *Thank God for Evolution*, Wright goes where few mainstream science writers have gone before: acknowledging that evolution could provide meaning for human beings that goes beyond the material realm.



**Kudos** to the **Evolutionary Leaders**, the gathering of thirty-five teachers, activists, authors, and spiritual leaders who met together last summer at Deepak Chopra's center in Carlsbad, California. The event, which was sponsored by the Source of Synergy Foundation and included such prominent figures as Jean Houston, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and Michael Beckwith, has already produced one positive result: a petition for the public to sign called "A Call for Conscious Evolution." Hosted by *EnlightenNext*'s new online content partner Care2, the short position statement has already garnered more than 36,000 signatures. This modest success is particularly noteworthy because of the open secret that high-level gatherings such as these tend to fail more than they succeed, sometimes quite dramatically so (see page 90). Rather than achieving higher synthesis, they often succumb to either egoic squabbling or nonproductive sessions of sharing that accomplish little of value. These evolutionary leaders are seeking to buck that trend and have already self-organized into a series of semipermanent working groups that are planning several new projects, including a possible book and documentary, as well as another gathering this summer. Time will tell if these leaders are able to transcend the troubles that have plagued such groups in the past, but in the meantime, visit Care2 to add your name to the Call for Conscious Evolution.



## Jean Houston *The Social Artist*

Jean Houston has led what could only be called a mythic life. A pioneering researcher of altered states, an Ivy League scholar, a “sacred psychologist,” and a spiritual consultant to world leaders, Houston has left her mark on nearly every aspect of the movement to awaken humanity to its higher individual and collective potential. Inspired by friendships with such revolutionary thinkers as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Aldous Huxley, Joseph Campbell, and Margaret Mead, Houston has developed a unique synthesis of spiritual practice and cultural activism that she calls “social artistry.” Through her twenty-six books (including *Jump Time* and *A Passion for the Possible*) and an extensive international schedule of workshops and lectures, she has helped thousands of individuals meet the increasing demand for new forms of creativity and leadership in what she calls “the most important time in human history.”



### Who have you been most influenced by?

Margaret Mead, who lived with my husband and me during the last six years of her life and who taught me what she knew of “how the world works.”

### You may be the last living person to have known Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. What was the single most important lesson you learned from him?

That the lure of becoming what he called the “Omega” is always present, always calling us to further our evolutionary journey. Or, as the poet Christopher Fry said, “The human heart can go to the lengths of God.”

### Where do you think your well-known ability to engage and charm an audience comes from?

Part of it comes from the fact that I grew up in show business. Also, I feel that this is the most important time in human history, and what we do and how we develop will make a difference as to whether we grow or die as a species. The communication of that is what sparks me and the participants in my talks and seminars. It’s “jump time”!

### What do you think will happen to you after you die?

For me? I’ll go in for rehab, a few months of R&R, and then be sent back with a new and more difficult job. Actually, I believe that life in one form or another is continuous and that our essential selves in some way participate in the ongoing discoveries of the universe through our many forms of life and experience.

### What is the biggest obstacle you’ve faced in your continuing work to bring about a new way of seeing ourselves and the world?

Fundamentalism of any kind in thought, being, or action, and with it, the fear of the new.

### If you could travel back in time to witness any historical event, what would it be?

The birth of the universe, whether it be a bang or a bounce.

### Of the many things you’ve contributed over the course of your life, what are you most proud of?

I helped prep Mrs. Clinton for her initial trip to Asia and advised her to bring her daughter, Chelsea, with her in order to show the women of India a wonderful mother-daughter relationship. It is thought that because of that trip, 50,000 baby girls were born who ordinarily would have been aborted or killed at birth.

### What do you think will be the leading edge of consciousness in the year 2059?

I hope that it will not be brute survival but rather that it will be worldwide creativity in developing a new ecology between persons and planet.





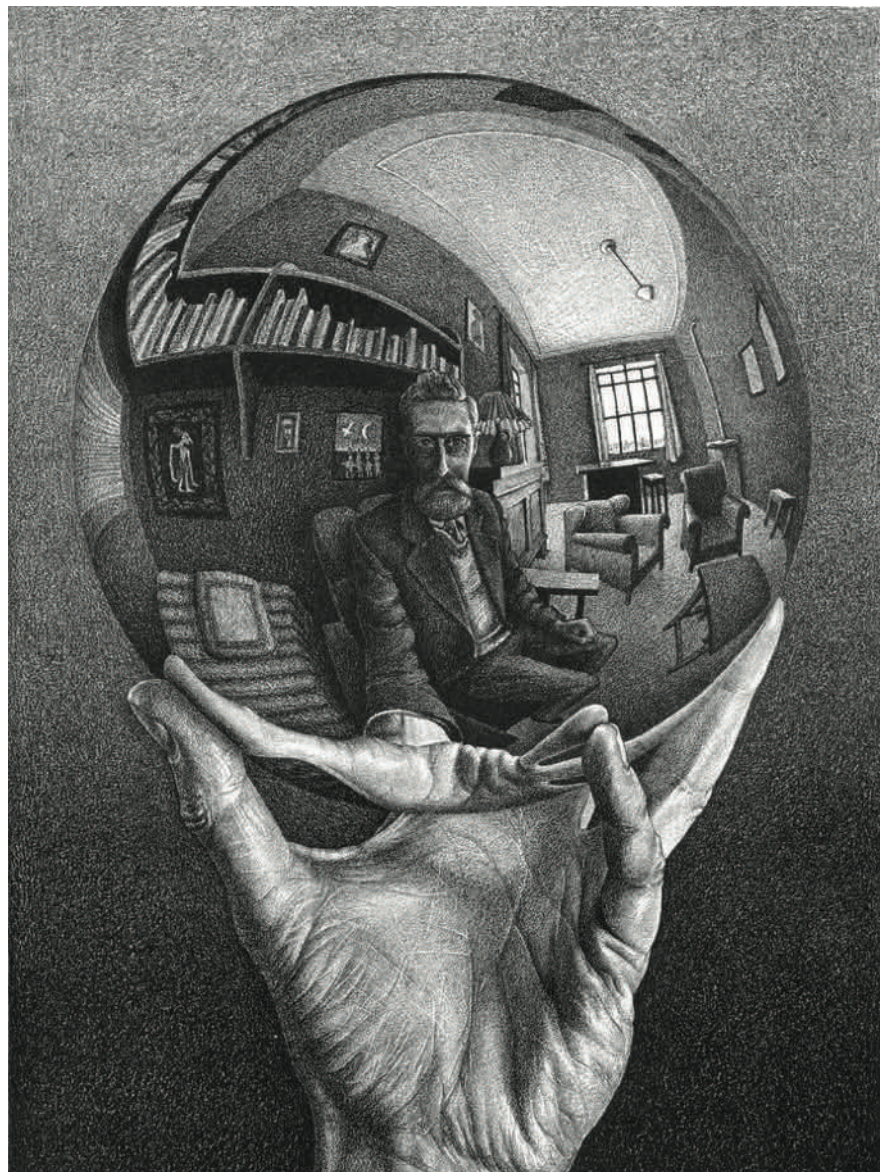
### in·te·ri·or·i·ty n.

1. The inner depth dimension of the manifest evolving Kosmos.
2. Subjective consciousness as distinguished from objective matter.

#### FROM THE THIRD-CENTURY GREEK

sage Plotinus to the twentieth-century English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, many of history's most influential thinkers have recognized that the universe is far more than a merely physical process. Hidden beneath the outer appearances of the material world there is, in the words of Jesuit priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "a *within* to things." This other half of reality, a mysterious space unperceivable by our five senses, has been variously called consciousness, spirit, sentience, prehension, or subjectivity. But when speaking about the great story of Kosmic\* evolution, it is often useful to describe it as simply *interiority*.

Viewed from the outside, the evolution of the universe appears to be a gradual unfolding of increasingly complex forms of matter and energy—proceeding from atoms to stars to amoebas to human beings. But if we look below the surface of things, we realize that in addition to producing increasing orders of exterior complexity, the force of evolution has also been giving rise to greater and greater depths of interior sensation and awareness. Like two sides of a single coin, explained Teilhard, "the Physical and the Psychic, the Without and the Within, Matter and Consciousness, are all found to be functionally linked in one tangible process." And the interior dimension of this process, Teilhard believed, pervades the entire universe, extending all the way up



and all the way down the evolutionary scale to include "every kind of psychism, from the most rudimentary forms of interior perception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought."

"In this awakening to the inherently integral nature of the entire process," writes *EnlightenNext* editor in chief Andrew Cohen, "something changes at a soul level. We recognize our significance. We see that

our human capacity for deep interiority—the fact that we have a consciousness that has developed the capacity to reflect upon itself—is the very leading edge of the inner dimension of the evolving Kosmos."

\*For the definition of "Kosmic" given in Issue 42, visit [enlightennext.org/kosmic-concepts](http://enlightennext.org/kosmic-concepts)





EnlightenNext presents  
a selection of our  
favorite articles from

 **the ONION**  
America's Finest News Source

When Jon Stewart's (*The Daily Show*) critique of the financial system created a national media uproar this past spring, it became more apparent than ever that in our contemporary culture, members of the burgeoning satirical news industry have a unique and penetrating ability to speak truthfully (and hilariously) to the stark reality of current affairs. In hopes of adding a comic spin to the pages of *EnlightenNext*, we looked no further than our favorite source for satire on popular trends in spirituality and culture: *The Onion*, a fake newspaper distributed freely in cities across America and digitally through their website. The following is a selection from the goldmine of amusing spiritually themed articles, headlines, and images from "America's Finest News Source":



## Evolutionists Flock To Darwin-Shaped Wall Stain

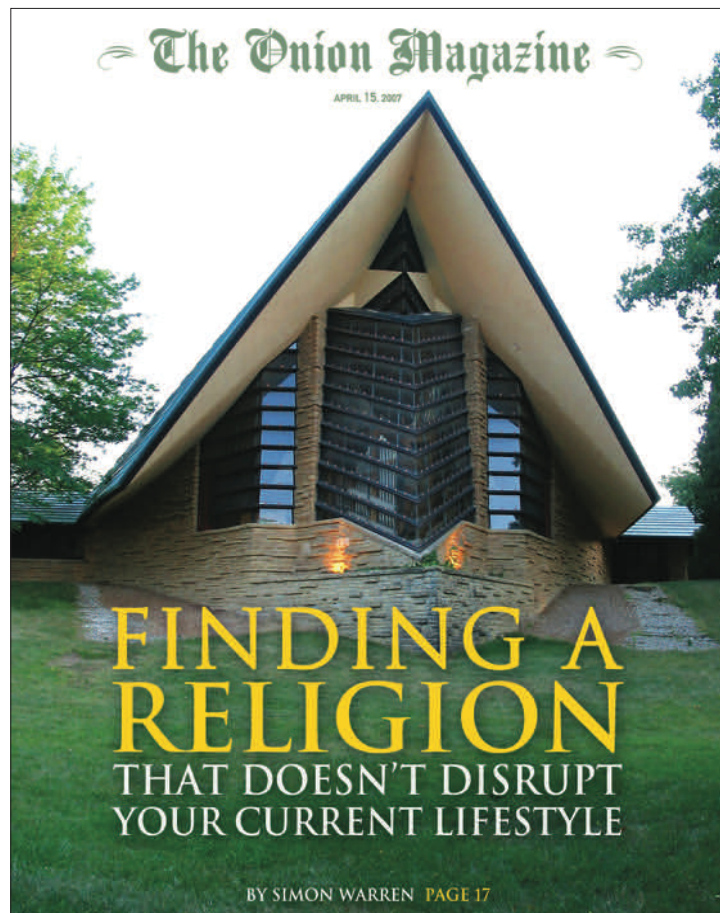


*Darwinic pilgrims claim the image fills them with an overwhelming feeling of logic.*

DAYTON, TN—A steady stream of devoted evolutionists continued to gather in this small Tennessee town today to witness what many believe is an image of Charles Darwin—author of *The Origin of Species* and founder of the modern evolutionary movement—made manifest on a concrete wall in downtown Dayton.

"I brought my baby to touch the wall, so that the power of Darwin can purify her genetic makeup of undesirable inherited traits," said Darlene Freiberg, one among a growing crowd assembled here to see the mysterious stain, which appeared last Monday on one side of the Rhea County Courthouse . . .

Read the rest of the article at *The Onion*, [tinyurl.com/theonion-evolutionists](http://tinyurl.com/theonion-evolutionists)



## Report: One In Five Women Training To Be Yoga Instructors

WASHINGTON, DC—According to a Department of Labor report on job retraining, 21 percent of American women are training to be yoga instructors, marking the highest level of female interest in the flexibility-and-spirituality-expansion industry since 1971. "One particular indicator is striking: All but 32 women in New York and San Francisco are now certified yoga instructors, specializing in either hatha, bikram, or ashtanga yoga," Labor Secretary Elaine Chao said. The report notes that the rising interest in yoga instruction has caused a commensurate depletion in the ranks of massage therapists and board-certified realtors.



## Tibetan Teen Getting Into Western Philosophy

LHASA, TIBET—Deng Hsu, 14, said Monday that he is "totally getting into Western philosophy." "I've been reading a lot of Kant, Descartes, and Hegel, and it's blowing my mind," Hsu said. "It's so exotic and exciting, not like all that Buddhist 'being is desire and desire is suffering' shit my parents have been cramming down my throat all my life. Most of the kids in my school have never even heard of Hume's views on objectivity or Locke's *tabula rasa*." Hsu said he hopes to one day make an exodus to north London to visit the birthplace of John Stuart Mill.

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## Master Sheng-Yen

(1930 – 2009)

It was a moment straight out of a classic Zen fable. In 1949, a young Chinese man—a seeker and Zen practitioner—was on a break from military life, visiting local Zen, or Ch’an, teachers in the Chinese countryside. One evening, this young man was up late at night meditating when he became aware of another monk nearby, an elderly practitioner, who impressed him with his presence and demeanor. Asking the older monk if he would answer a question or two, the young man proceeded

to pour out a torrent of all the questions and difficulties that had occupied him during his years of spiritual practice. The elderly monk listened closely, but his only response after every query was, “Is that all?” Finally, after a couple of hours, the young seeker’s questions were exhausted, and he paused, hesitating for a split second. At that exact moment, the elderly monk moved. *Bang!* The monk struck the platform they were sitting on and roared, “Take all of your questions and put them down! Who has all of these questions?” In that instant, the young seeker experienced his first *satori*.

The young man in this true story was Master Sheng-Yen, who went on to become one of Asia’s greatest contemporary Ch’an masters and spiritual leaders. A dharma heir in both of Chinese Zen’s two great traditions, Soto and Rinzai, this legendary Ch’an teacher eventually came to the West as well, founding multiple institutes, organizations, and centers dedicated to the study of Ch’an Buddhism. By the time of his death in February at age seventy-nine, he had hundreds of thousands of students

worldwide. For many around the world, Sheng-Yen was more than a spiritual master; he was a one-man representative of the rich beauty, breadth, and depth of Chinese Zen, a tradition now under siege and which exists largely in exile from its original homeland. In a role not unlike the Dalai Lama’s, Sheng-Yen worked tirelessly to reinvigorate the unique spiritual heritage of his own displaced culture, and in doing so was thrust into more roles and responsibilities than that young seeker could ever have imagined in 1949—student, mystic, intellectual, educator, spiritual master, and toward the end of his life, statesman. He was recently voted one of Taiwan’s fifty most influential people in the last four hundred years, but even at death’s door he adhered to the Buddhist principle of impermanence, writing in his final will the following verse:

*Though nothing happens, we’ve grown  
old in our busy lives.*

*We cry and laugh, all in emptiness.*

*There is originally no self,*

*So both life and death can be cast aside.*



## Penor Rinpoche

(1932 – 2009)

EnlightenNext marks the passing of another great soul, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche, respected leader of the Nyingma lineage, who left his body on April 3, 2009. The Nyingma sect, the oldest of Tibetan Buddhism’s four main lineages (the Dalai Lama is the head of the Gelukpa lineage), is known for its practice of Dzogchen, a nondual spiritual path that is said to be the simplest and most direct path to

liberation—and the most difficult. Indeed, while Tibetan Buddhism is often known for its intricate, complex and highly formalized teachings, Penor comes from a strain of Tibetan culture much more steeped in pragmatic practice and direct realization. As he himself explained to EnlightenNext founder Andrew Cohen in a dialogue they had in 2000, the signs of true attainment are not ultimately about mythology or miracles but can be seen by a “naturalness, a simplicity, and an ability to respond to everything that arises spontaneously, in a way that demonstrates wisdom, power, and compassion for all sentient beings.”

Penor Rinpoche not only was one of the greatest contemporary practitioners of Dzogchen, he was also part of an extraordinary generation of Tibetan leaders who fled the Chinese invasion and worked to reestablish the Tibetan tradition in exile from their homeland. Tibet’s loss, as it turned out, was the rest of the world’s gain, as Penor and his fellow leaders-in-exile introduced this once-unknown

Buddhist culture to lands far removed from the Himalayan plateau. In doing so, they made a considerable mark on the souls of a generation of spiritually hungry Western seekers.

Identified at the tender age of four as what the Tibetans call a tulku, a realized master from a previous lifetime, Penor spent most of his young life in rigorous study and on retreat. When he came of age, he inherited charge of more than four hundred monasteries in Tibet, overseeing the spiritual development of thousands of monks and presiding over large ceremonial events. But Penor was not only a man of spirit, he was a man of action. When circumstances led him into exile in South India, he didn’t hesitate to pick up a spade to lay a new cornerstone for his monastery or dig a latrine for one of his monks on retreat. Both revered and loved by his students, Penor will be remembered for his fierce spirit and for his larger-than-life contributions to Tibetan culture as well as to the emerging spiritual values of a post-traditional world.



## Vimala Thakar: Spiritual Revolutionary

(1923–2009)

by Elizabeth Debold

Hearing that Vimala Thakar died this past March brought me to a standstill. Immediately, just by thinking of her, I found myself plunged into the timeless stillness that, like the heady scent of a beguiling perfume, enveloped her and engulfed anyone who came close to her. I had the remarkable good fortune to meet Vimala twice, and those two encounters were enough to leave an enduring mark. Meeting her was Self recognition, a reunion with the oceanic infinitude that is the ground of all that is, and simultaneously a flaming arrow to the heart igniting inner revolution. It's strange that she is known so little in the West because Vimala holds a unique place among those rare ones who have reached the apogee

of spiritual attainment. A true spiritual revolutionary, Vimala brought fierce independence and modern rationality to the deepest mysticism, and in so doing transcended the constraints of her culture and her gender. Breaking free from the fetters of tradition, she manifested a new kind of enlightenment that was strikingly contemporary, encompassing the timeless and the timely—radical spiritual mutation and equally radical social transformation. Her life and work resonate as deeply with the demands of an India struggling to realize its independence as with the impulse toward equality and liberation that took place in the West over the past forty years.

My own desire to meet Vimala came

from that particularly Western impulse. Having spent decades of my life committed to women's social liberation, I had just begun to embark seriously on a spiritual path. On a trip to India, my teacher, Andrew Cohen, encouraged me to travel with several other women to meet Vimala because she was a living example of women's spiritual liberation. I was already curious, having read an interview of her that appeared in a 1996 issue of this magazine. In the interview, she spoke with stunning and lucid depth about the obstacles women face in seeking spiritual freedom. To meet her in person—to see a woman who had gone all the way—was irresistible.

Whatever I expected to find in this liberated woman was shattered by her actual presence. At this point, in the late 1990s, she was elderly, retired from public life and living in Mt. Abu, a small mountain town in Rajasthan. Dressed as always in an impeccable white sari, Vimala conveyed a dignity that startled me. I'd never seen such dignity, a paradoxical combination of nobility and humility, in the person of a woman before. Her eyes were large and soft, their gaze embracing you from a place so deep that it seemed somehow to come from inside yourself. She was remarkably alert and attentive, radiating the mysterious presence and stillness of eternity. And, perhaps most stunning to me, she was unfathomably strong and fearless. She was immovable, so profoundly relaxed into life that she was One with it. I could actually see in her how the human and the Absolute were truly not separate. While I barely remember what we all spoke about, I do remember how at ease and natural she was, how delightful it was to be with her, and how her responses to the questions that we asked came from a place unrecognizable to the mind. At the end of our meeting, she stood up, standing barely five feet tall. One of my companions gasped involuntarily and exclaimed, "You're so short!" Vimala



looked up at her, smiling, and said, “No, madam, it’s that you are so tall!” It seemed inconceivable that such a tiny person could house such an immense presence.

While my companions and I wanted to speak with Vimala about issues relating to women, it was not a topic that she was particularly interested in. The path to enlightenment, she said, was inherently the same for women and men. Unique among realized women I know of, she did not identify with any specifically female representation of the Divine. In other words, she did not consider herself to be an expression of any aspect of the Divine Mother or Divine Feminine. She was no longer fixated with being female at the core of herself, nor did she deny or reject being a woman. Her identification was with That, and That has no gender.

Yet Vimala’s life story is all the more powerful because she had to go against her culture’s ideas of women to win her freedom. Possessed of a powerful spiritual passion, at the age of three she jumped into a ninety-eight-foot-deep well because she had asked a dinner guest where to find God and the guest dismissively told her that God was hiding in the well! She was very fortunate that her father, the secretary of the Indian Rationalist Association, was supportive of her quest—giving her books of teachings from every tradition and admonishing her to find the light within and to take no one as her master. Often refused admittance to ashrams or connections with teachers because she was female, Vimala was forced to study and experiment on her own. At the age of nineteen, after completing her master’s degree in Indian philosophy, she had her parents’ blessing to set out for the Himalayas. Once there, she began three months of intensive practice in a cave, where, as she said, “the experience of a consciousness where there was no ‘I-ness,’ no sense of ‘me-ness’ dawned upon me.” At one point, in a very weakened state because

she had been going so long without food or sleep, Vimala went down to the Ganges River, slipped on a rock, and fell in. Carried by the strong current, she thought she had come to the end of her life and passed out—only to wake eight days later under the care of the great teacher Swami Sivananda, who had rescued her.

Vimala gave up her aspirations toward traditional enlightenment after a brief trip to the United States. Witnessing the miracles of science and technology brought by modernity, she decided that she wanted to do something for the benefit of humanity and so returned to India to join the Bhoodan movement. This revolutionary social movement inspired by Gandhi asked wealthy landowners to voluntarily give land to the

the wake of Krishnamurti’s laying on of his hands to heal her of a potentially fatal ear infection. Yet true to her intense independence, Vimala was concerned that his intervention had placed her in a position of indebtedness to him. Vimala never saw herself as a student of Krishnamurti, nor did he see himself as her teacher. It was Krishnamurti, however, who urged her to teach, calling her to “Go—shout from the housetops! Go out and set them on fire! There is none who is doing this. Not even one.”

Krishnamurti and Vimala Thakar both forged a new enlightenment, born out of a rejection of the traditions and inspired by the direct inquiry that is fundamental to modern scientific rationality. They both asked the many seekers who came to them

## Breaking free from the fetters of tradition, Vimala Thakar manifested a new kind of enlightenment that was strikingly contemporary.

poor. In 1956, while working in the movement, she attended a talk by the towering spiritual figure of the twentieth century J. Krishnamurti, and she found herself once again propelled toward enlightenment.

“When I heard Krishnamurti saying, ‘No authority! No master!’ I smiled to myself,” Vimala once said, recognizing immediately in him the same fierce independence that her father had cultivated in her. Here was a spiritual teacher who himself had renounced all ties to organized religion and was advocating a rational scientific form of spiritual inquiry. Krishnamurti immediately saw that Vimala was a like soul—the two utterly rejected the old forms of guru-disciple relationship, the trappings of religion, and the enslaving superstitions that blinded so many to Truth. After a number of meetings with Krishnamurti, a transformation began to overtake Vimala. Her final liberation came unexpectedly in

to discover for themselves the wholeness that lies beyond the mind. I find it poignant that she is the less well known of the two because she may have been the more revolutionary. For more than three decades, from 1961 to 1991, she traveled the globe, responding to invitations to give talks and lead meditation camps, trying to awaken people to the totality of Life. In 1979, she reinvented her social activism, seeing spiritual and social evolution as two sides of one integrated process. In this, too, she was ahead of her time—calling for an inner and outer revolution that would transform the ground on which society is built. “Revolution, total revolution, implies experimenting with the impossible,” she once wrote. “And when an individual takes a step in the direction of the new . . . the whole human race travels through that individual.” Vimala Thakar spent her life walking toward the new, for which we all owe her our deepest gratitude.

# Epiphany at the Museum



Is postmodern art waking up from its decades-long aversion to higher meaning?

BY ELIZABETH DEBOLD  
WITH CAROL ANN RAPHAEL

**IN 2007, BEFORE THE BUBBLE** burst in the world financial markets, British artist Damien Hirst created a work of art valued at \$100 million. It was a human skull, cast in platinum and studded with diamonds. The piece was the talk of the art world — not for its stunning aesthetic but for its drop-dead price tag. Hirst's art makes fun of the greed and materialist excess that ultimately led to the stock market careening out of control while simultaneously being an example of it.



The entire event—an intentionally vulgar object sold for a ridiculous sum—epitomizes the postmodern art establishment, which has for decades celebrated the archly ironic, the crassly superficial, or the simply shocking. To a great extent over the last thirty years, the art world's cognoscenti—critics, artists, dealers, and museum curators—have created a climate in which art has no purpose, meaning, or higher aesthetic value, having dismissed the pursuit of those qualities as hopelessly naïve.

But is it? In the past year, a number of prominent art exhibitions at significant museums in Europe and the United States have started to open up the relationship between art and questions of meaning and human purpose. It is too early to tell whether these exhibits actually express something new and deeper bubbling up within the art establishment. They may in fact simply represent a calculated response to the growing spiritual interests of the “cultural creatives,” who are certainly a demographic among art consumers. Taken on their own merits, however, these exhibitions demonstrate that the question of meaning and the pursuit of the transcendent are now and have always been enduring motivations for creating art.

“Traces of the Sacred,” held at the trend-setting Pompidou Centre in Paris, was the largest and most prestigious of these exhibits. The entire show was organized around fundamental existential and spiritual questions: “Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?” An impressive three hundred and fifty works of art were on display by nearly two hundred artists, who ranged from the early pioneers of abstraction from the beginning of the twentieth century to radical provocateurs of

more recent times. Through the remarkable diversity of media on display—painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, video, installation, and more—the exhibit demonstrated how the search for transcendence is being channeled in new and creative ways. The sacred—“with or without God, with or without religion”—as the exhibit made very clear, has been “a crucial inspiration to many artists.”

Many of the works in the Pompidou's exhibit were among the most important in twentieth-century art history, but they were placed in a new context. Take, for example, those by the famous Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky. Kandinsky is one of the first artists credited with breaking the tradition of representational art—paintings that *represent* or depict objects in the real world—and creating the first purely abstract painting. In the last fifty or so years, as the art world became increasingly fascinated with the superficial, his work has been admired almost exclusively for the interplay of color and form—elements that relate to the surface of the canvas rather than to any meaning or depth intended by the artist. But in this exhibit, with its focus on the sacred dimension of art, Kandinsky's painting could be seen for the *spiritual* breakthrough that it was meant to be. His experiments with bright colors on canvas were striving to reveal something more essential and deep than could be expressed through representational painting of objects. In 1911, as his first abstract paintings hit the art scene, Kandinsky published his first book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. He wrote, “Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with its many chords. The artist is the hand that,

by touching this or that key, sets the soul vibrating automatically.” At the Pompidou Centre, Kandinsky's vibrant and colorful shapes could once again be valued for their power to convey the pulse of life that vibrates within the soul.

Elsewhere in Europe, other exhibits addressed the religious content of current art from a new perspective. The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam explored the spiritual and religious underpinnings of modern art. As one Dutch artist pointed out, “religion and art were born at the same time,” referring both to how intertwined the two are historically and to how religion and art spring from the same source in humanity that seeks the good, the true, and the beautiful. The exhibition, entitled “Holy Inspiration: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Art,” was set up in a Gothic church, which created the perfect environment to draw attention to the sacred dimension in the modern and contemporary art on display. And Amsterdam wasn't the only Dutch city to seek out the sacred in art. The city of Utrecht had a three-part initiative that focused on “The Return of Religion and Other Myths.” Similar themes also were explored by museums in Germany. The Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe looked at the power of video and television to communicate religious material, while a smaller version of the Pompidou Centre's “Traces of the Sacred” exhibit traveled to Munich.

In the United States, too, there have been signs that, as *The New Yorker* art critic Peter Schjeldahl put it, a “sea change” may be underway. Writing about an exhibit entitled “After Nature” at the New Museum in New York City, Schjeldahl perceptively observed that the art displayed “a shift of



“Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with its many chords. The artist is the hand that, by touching this or that key, sets the soul vibrating automatically.”

—Wassily Kandinsky

emphasis, from surface to depth.” Artists, he went on, were “shrugging off the allures of the money-hypnotized market” and engaging with questions about humanity’s future. “After Nature” included ninety works by an international group of artists, filmmakers, and writers who were all exploring what Earth would be like in the wake of environmental collapse and an implosion of human civilization. Combining apocalyptic scenarios and mystical visions, the unsettling intensity

of the exhibit had a powerful effect—a cry for a change of course so that such tragedies will not come to pass. Not only was the frenzied pursuit of fame and fortune losing its grip on artists and the art world, as Schjeldahl was suggesting, but here art was being used for the purpose of sounding the alarm and catalyzing change. A similar tone pervaded Pittsburgh’s 55<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International exhibition, a survey of contemporary art that was themed “Life on Mars.” Forty

artists were chosen for work that grappled with the question of what it means to be human and “with the more infinite sense of being part of the larger universe and finding ourselves on the inside and looking out.” While neither of these exhibits explored overtly religious or spiritual themes, the engagement with life’s biggest questions marks a significant shift from the glitz, irreverence, and superficiality so prevalent in the postmodern art world.

Whether or not these recent exhibitions are signs of a more widespread phenomenon, they do indicate that cracks are beginning to appear on the glossy facade of postmodern art, revealing the longing for depth that is so much a part of the human experience. In the early twentieth century, as the world fell into the abyss of the First World War, Kandinsky apparently said, “The more frightening the world becomes . . . the more art becomes abstract.” At the time, Kandinsky was searching for something beneath the surface, beyond the world of form seen by the eye and into a realm of experience felt in the human soul. Perhaps now, in the face of even more significant dangers and after decades of soul-denying art, artists and museums are realizing that art must once again assume a role of bringing human beings in touch with something deeper, primary, and urgent. The art establishment has long been an arbiter of culture—dictating what is in and what is not—in ways that go far beyond the multimillion-dollar world of collectors and into the arenas of aesthetics, literature, and film. Were this establishment to now inquire into and explore the deeper currents and drives within humanity, it might help catalyze a shift that could ultimately lead to a new phase in culture.



# Voices from the Edge



## China's Secret Weapon?

An American developmental psychologist stumbles upon an unexpected indicator of China's possible future global supremacy: teenage girls.

by Elizabeth Debold

**OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS**, financial and political pundits have bantered about the changing global landscape as two behemoths, India and China, have set off in pursuit of the capitalist dream of a modern lifestyle. Will one of them step onto the world stage with the kind of clout, creative genius, and inspiration that will forge a new era? The bets are on. And a consensus is emerging that India, rather than China, will be the one to develop that most elusive of qualities—the capacity for creative innovation, which has driven the economic prosperity of the United States and the West. Two of America's esteemed commentators, *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman and the late great economist Milton Friedman, have observed that China's closed society and collectivism present formidable obstacles to China's advancement. They note that India, on the other hand, shares with the West a democratic form of government and an increasingly liberalized economy. Moreover, it shows a growing capacity for technical innovation.

But this fall, in the course of my work directing a leadership program at a terrific independent girls' school, I witnessed something that made me wonder if we've gotten it wrong—or if the picture may be more complicated and interesting. This particular school attracts girls of means from all over Asia—many from Korea; a smattering from Taiwan, Japan, and Hong Kong; and a few from India. This school

year also saw an influx of students from mainland China who, as one boldly described herself, are “rich and pretty.” These are the only daughters of successful and affluent capitalists with the newly minted means to send their children to the other side of the world to attend boarding school. And what I saw in one Chinese student after another took my breath away.

These girls are unlike any I have ever worked with or known. I'm not referring to cultural differences. It's *how* they are different, and the potential significance of that difference, that has led me to think in a new way about China's role in the future. While the vast majority of teenage girls want to stay in bed for a week if they have a

pimple on their nose or are terrified of stepping outside the bounds of clique and convention, the Chinese girls are asking questions, pushing an edge, and taking intellectual and social risks. One student, with barely two months of immersion in an English-speaking environment, volunteered to make a significant presentation at a school assembly. Another, who really struggled with speaking English, repeatedly jumped into role-playing exercises where she had to improvise orally in front of her classmates. I don't know of any other teens—female or male—who would so gamely risk potential humiliation and tempt judgment by the court of their peers in this way. The Chinese girls do this on a daily basis—and with aplomb. With a tenuous grasp of English grammar, they throw themselves into class discussions, often speaking in a loosely strung together mélange of words that pours forth in a torrent of desire to express themselves. It's like watching someone leap off a cliff and then begin to soar through the air. They communicate almost by defying the force of gravity (and grammar) with their own will. A fire is burning in these girls—a hunger to know, think, experience, and *create*. They are waking up to the creative power of being an individual, to the thrilling potential of being an autonomous agent with eyes on the future. For a people who spent



millennia in feudalism followed by the often brutal collectivist strategies of Maoism, this awakening to individualism is almost miraculous.

I think it is difficult for those of us born in the West, particularly at this time, to recognize that our sense of individuality is a fairly rare attainment. We tend to take the experience of being a separate individual so much for granted, rarely stopping to consider that most people in the world don't have such a highly defined sense of self. Most of those with whom we share this planet see themselves as part of a kin network or a caste or class. Their rules for living are dictated by where they are in that network or hierarchical structure. In fact, a psychologist colleague at the school noticed that when she asked many of the Asian girls about their career goals, they would answer, "My family says we need an engineer. We have too many doctors, so I will be an engineer." My colleague's questions about what *they* wanted individually, for themselves, didn't seem relevant to them.

A fire is burning in these girls—a hunger to know, think, experience, and create. They are waking up to the creative power of being an individual.

This is an expression of a collectivist mindset: The desires of one's family or group take precedence over any individual desires that one might have. Such a mindset cannot really comprehend or value individual freedom of choice. When I then pointed out to my colleague that many of the Chinese girls do not express a collectivist mentality and are actually individuating, she looked slightly surprised and then agreed, recognizing how significant a developmental step that is.

While it is far from politically correct to say, only the West (and not everyone in the West) has truly made the transition from collectivism to individualism. Historically, that shift happened in the 1600s during the period we call the Western Enlightenment. Leaving behind rigid feudal hierarchies and the narrow confines of church dogma, a new way of thinking emerged that emphasized the creativity and autonomy of the individual rather than obedience to the nobility or the church. This liberation of the heart and mind is the ground upon which rest the pillars of the modern world—democracy, scientific and technological innovation, and the capitalist

economy. Those social structures, which developed at the beginning of modernity, were made possible by the newly empowered individual. And it is that leap into creative individualism on the part of the Chinese students that takes my breath away.

Now, of course, my "sample" is exceedingly small. It doesn't even include boys and may hardly seem worth hanging my hat on. But the transformation of consciousness that these girls embody cannot be isolated to the few who have made their way to this particular school. Amazingly enough, China's one-child policy, now combined with a zeal for entrepreneurial capitalism, may have created the perfect context for the rising generation of Chinese to leap beyond the confines of collectivist thinking. This development could unite the West and China in a shared worldview that runs deeper than the social, economic, or political differences that divide us. As one faculty member noted, although different parts of Asia have been democratic for decades, oddly enough the

Chinese girls feel more "like us." While she was having a difficult time articulating what "like us" means, my colleague was pointing to the distinction I am making: The Chinese girls share our motivation for individual achievement, independent thought, and innovation, which is not simply intelligence or the capacity to do well in school. Many of the Korean, Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and, yes, Indian girls who come to the school are very high-achieving. They perform beautifully in the arts and

sciences. But their impetus for living, their core motivation, appears to be different. They strive to honor their families and to be seen as good exemplars befitting their high station in society. They don't, in general, take the kinds of risks that define the autonomous self-actualizing individual who will transform the future.

That risk-taking is what keeps me on the edge of my seat, heart in mouth, as I witness the Chinese girls leaping beyond the rules of grammar. The inner liberation that it points to suggests that this next generation of Chinese may truly give us a run for our money. Ultimately, such freedom of the human mind and spirit may be a more significant determinant than current economic or political conditions of who will have their hands on the wheel as we all speed into the future.

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# Voices from the Edge



## Night, Hoover Dam

Are we secretly longing for the end of civilization? An environmentalist finds himself in a dramatic confrontation with the dangerous allure of apocalypse.

by Alex Steffen

**JUST TO THE SOUTHEAST OF** Las Vegas runs the Colorado River. Or rather, it used to run. Now it just sort of lies there, comatose, behind the Hoover Dam.

The Hoover Dam is a marvel of engineering. It is also the only reason why the Southwest as we know it exists. Without the Hoover (and its scores of smaller cousins), the Southwest would look like what it actually is: an arid desert.

But none of this is on my mind as I approach it. Sleep; sleep is what's on my mind. My map shows a campground just on the other side of the Colorado, and I figure I can cruise over there, pitch my tent, and get a few hours of REM in before the sun rises and things start to cook.

I pull off a side road, drive down a long hill, end up at a boat launch below the dam. A sign: a tent with the universal NO circle. I look around. A few parked cars lie under the scraggly trees and three streetlights, but nobody's to be seen. So I crank the seat back, pull my sleeping bag over me, and try to get some rest.

All is still, here. With the windows down and the moon roof open, I smell desert air and gasoline fumes. The streetlights flicker off. I can see one end of the dam in the distance, lit by floodlights. A small boat splashes by on the other side of the river; then it too is gone. If there was once beauty here, it has long since been ground out of the place.

I think of something I read by Neal Stephenson: "Like refugees from a plague city, they carry that which they fled with them. As soon as they arrive, the subdivisions start multiplying, a strip mall goes up . . . and people start clamoring for Starbucks

and high-speed Net access. Pretty soon, people look around, say 'this place ain't what it used to be,' and start looking around for the next place to go. . . . With their power tools, portable generators, weapons, four-wheel-drive vehicles, and personal computers, they are like beavers hyped up on crystal meth, manic engineers without a blueprint, chewing through the wilderness, building things and abandoning them, altering the flow of mighty rivers and then moving on because the place ain't what it used to be."

I get out of my car and go and sit on the shore. Empty beer cans and junk food wrappers bob on the ripples in the water. And, sitting on that littered shore of what was once one of

the mightiest rivers on the continent, with the smell of Vegas still on my skin, I have to wonder if maybe we don't deserve whatever's coming. Maybe we care too little, are too willingly bribed to blindness with manufactured dreams. Maybe we just don't have it in us anymore to bear the weight of what we've created. Maybe our society really is, like Pound said, "an old bitch gone in the teeth."

Somewhere in the distance, a motor starts up, coughing; sputters, stops. Then silence.

Though I'm not happy to admit it, what I felt then, sitting there in the silence by an almost-dead river, was not sadness but a sort of elated resignation.

Fuck it, I thought. Tear it down. Blow it up. Let it all go smash. "When the cities lie at the monster's feet, there are left the mountains." Light out to the territories. Clear out to someplace far and safe. Watch it burn and build something newer, stronger, cleaner on the ashes. Screw the book; start the stockpile.

I could do it. It'd be a world for the strong then, for the unhesitating, and that was a sweet, strong dream. And before I knew it, I was off on the whole apocalypse trip: I'd pull together some hard-assed guys and butch women; we'd grab some remote parcel and cut the roads nearby with explosives and blocked culverts; I'd learn hunting and triage medicine, the hot-wiring of cars and solar panels; we'd have caches, night vision goggles, camouflage outfits;



we'd mark out fields of fire, strongpoints, and perimeters; there'd be a rusty windmill and row after row of canned food on the shelves in our bunker. It'd be like the *Whole Earth Catalog*, circa 1974, run backwards through a filter of the *Anarchist Cookbook* and 2600. It'd be fun—good, clean, rough living. In time, we'd move back into the cities and hunt deer on the abandoned overpasses, like Chuck Palahniuk's space monkeys. We'd do fine. I knew it.

I knew it because I'd dreamed it hundreds of times before. I'd grown up reading stories of life after the apocalypse, starting with the comic book *Kamandi, The Last Boy on Earth* (where a blond youth such as myself wandered a post-nuclear world where the animals had mutated, taken over, and rebuilt a surreal mimic of our civilization), and moving on to watching *The Road Warrior* and running role-playing games set in a ruined future. Indeed, the only thing I liked better than survivalist stories were POW escape stories, in which valiant downed officers fulfilled their duty to escape and harass the

found out about how barely the world was held together, the more deeply some part of myself cherished the idea that I could insulate myself emotionally from all of this because I, at least, was a survivor.

And sitting there by the slack and dirty water, I had one of those moments of scorching self-vision. I realized that I'd been hiding underneath the skirts of the apocalypse for decades now. I'd daydreamed disasters as a way of not wanting too much, not caring too much, keeping safe from the fear that too much knowledge of current events tends to tattoo on your brain.

But real apocalypses are sordid, banal, insane. If things do come unraveled, they present not a golden opportunity for lone wolves and well-armed geeks, but a reality of babies with diarrhea, of bugs and weird weather and dust everywhere, of never enough to eat, of famine and starving, hollow-eyed people, of drunken soldiers full of boredom and self-hate, of random murder and rape and wars that

accomplish nothing, of many fine things lost for no reason and nothing of any value gained. And survivalists, if they actually manage to avoid becoming the prey of larger groups, sitting bitter and cold and hungry and paranoid, watching their supplies run low and wishing they had a clean bed and some friends. Of all the lies we tell ourselves, this is the biggest: that there is any world worth living in that

involves the breakdown of society.

I sat there and felt foolish. Another boat went droning by in the distance. First light was breaking to the east. And whatever happened, I decided, planning for failure was no longer an option. I still couldn't tell you what success looked like, but I knew then that I was long past childhood and done with thinking like a twelve-year-old boy. I wanted to look the future square in the face and not look away, ever again.

A breeze was picking up. Dawn was not far off now.

Sitting on the littered shore of what was once one of the mightiest rivers on the continent, with the smell of Vegas still on my skin, I have to wonder if maybe we don't deserve whatever's coming.

enemy by tunneling underneath the wire, with civilian clothes cut from their uniforms and dyed with blackberry juice, hand-forged documents printed on the end pages of their Bibles, and steely glints in their eyes . . .

From a very young age, then, I'd dreamt of escape and survival, which is a pretty obvious and clichéd coping tactic when you are young, not entirely happy, and feel very, very alone. Painfully shy, with parents whose reliability was entirely anyone's guess, moving from place to place and shuttled back and forth, I developed an inner life of fantasies in which I was stunningly competent, self-contained, and entirely up to mastering the end of the world and still getting home in time to impress the girls.

As I grew older, I recognized all these dreams of guns and survival and conquest and escape for the adolescent fantasies they were. But that doesn't mean they entirely lost their hold on me. Indeed, in some odd way, the more I

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# Freedom

in the face of

# Fear

**Andrew Cohen  
& Ken Wilber**

discuss the challenge  
of staying connected  
with a higher spiritual  
perspective when  
humanity's very survival  
hangs in the balance

**ANDREW COHEN:** These days, just about everyone is aware of the fact that we're in what many consider to be a global crisis. At this particular moment, of course, we're most aware of the great financial crisis, but this is happening in the context of other looming dangers—the threat of terrorism, climate change, and the destruction of our natural environment, to name just a few. In this issue of *EnlightenNext*, we feature a number of prominent futurists who offer us their perspectives on what we may face in the coming months, years, and decades. But I thought that you and I could approach this theme from a slightly different perspective and look into the individual's internal, subjective, existential, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual relationship to crisis.

I've thought quite a lot about this matter, and I have made some interesting observations about myself and other people. I've noticed that what happens when human beings become frightened is a profound contraction in the self. When our way of life and our sense of freedom are being threatened, there is not only an emotional contraction but an intellectual,









#### ANDREW COHEN: GURU

*[n., Sanskrit]: one who teaches spiritual liberation from his or her own direct experience or realization.*

Self-described “idealist with revolutionary inclinations” and widely recognized as a defining voice in the emerging field of evolutionary spirituality, Cohen has developed an original teaching for the twenty-first century which he calls Evolutionary Enlightenment. He is also the founder and editor in chief of *EnlightenNext* magazine.



#### KEN WILBER: PANDIT

*[n., Sanskrit]: a scholar, one who is deeply proficient and immersed in spiritual wisdom.*

Self-described “defender of the dharma, an intellectual samurai,” Wilber is one of the most highly regarded philosophers alive today, and his work offers a comprehensive and original synthesis of the world’s great psychological, philosophical, and spiritual traditions. His books include *A Brief History of Everything* and *Integral Spirituality*.

philosophical, and spiritual contraction—a contraction of our capacity to think in big ways.

**KEN WILBER:** That’s exactly right. Times of crisis tend to aggravate the self-contraction. And this issue is really crucial right now, given the nature of our times.

## THE SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF CRISIS

**COHEN:** I think this is especially poignant or significant for people who are interested in what we could call a spiritually inspired worldview and perspective. All forms of mystical spirituality are based on a direct experience or apprehension of limitlessness—a primordial freedom, an infinite expanse, an eternal ground of all being. And when we have that kind of experience, when we become aware of no limitation whatsoever, it affects very dramatically the way we think about what it means to be a human being. You and I have spoken quite a bit about the mysterious and miraculous friction that occurs when the inherently limited individual self sense begins to awaken to that dimension of reality that is absolutely without limitation. It’s the friction between the unlimited and the limited that gives rise to spiritual ecstasy and spiritual inspiration and spiritual perspectives.

In evolutionary spirituality, that sense of limitlessness is experienced not only in the primordial Ground of Being, beyond time and form, that the mystical traditions speak of, but also *in* the world of time and form through the direct awakening to what I call the evolutionary impulse itself. That impulse is none other than the driving force behind all of creation. When we experience that evolutionary drive, we become conscious of a sense of infinite *potential* that is reaching out, ever expanding into the unknown future. It is calling us to itself, imploring us to respond to it and become one with it in an ecstatic embrace of the life process.

Now, generally speaking, when human beings are threatened at the level of survival—whether by war or disease or global warming or the apocalypse—there tends to be a contraction. When we get concerned with survival, we let go of the spiritually awakened and evolutionarily enlightened perspective and

The instinct to consciously evolve is very new. It needs to be protected and nurtured, and we mustn’t let it get buried under all the fear that naturally arises when our survival appears to be threatened.

Andrew Cohen





just become concerned with our own welfare. We literally lose touch with the light. And in that, we lose touch not only with the infinite openness and inherent freedom of the Ground of Being but even more importantly, in terms of what I'm interested in, with the awareness of our potential for infinite development, our potential to consciously evolve.

So I thought it would be good for us to speak a little bit about how important it is never to let that happen, *no matter what happens to us*. I think it is crucial for people to understand that the instinct to survive comes naturally to us, because we have been surviving all kinds of crises for hundreds of thousands of years! But the instinct to *evolve*, as it's just beginning to reveal itself—that spontaneous aspiration to become more conscious—is very new. For most human beings it's a barely emergent awareness. So this new instinct needs to be protected and nurtured, and we mustn't let it get buried under all the fear that naturally arises when our survival appears to be threatened.

**WILBER:** I think that's exactly right. The issues you are raising are really crucial right now, given the sense of lack in

our world, the sense of something being missing, the sense of being poverty-stricken.

One helpful way to look at this is through Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow found empirically that people are driven by about a half dozen fundamental needs, which he represented as a pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom. He observed that when we fulfill the most basic of those needs, the next higher need emerges. When physiological and safety needs are taken care of, belongingness or love needs and esteem needs and eventually self-actualization needs emerge. But what he found that was especially interesting in terms of this discussion is that human needs are divided into two major types of motivation, which he called *deficiency* needs and *being* needs. Deficiency needs are needs that are driven by a *lack*—and the five I just mentioned, from physiological to self-actualization, are all deficiency needs.

But Maslow found that after self-actualization needs are met, an entirely different type of motivation emerges—a motivation that is driven not by lack but by abundance, by overflowing. He called these *being* needs—and the need for self-transcendence was his example of this. At this point, what

has happened is that the person has indeed started to get in touch with the absolute dimension of their being, with a limitless primordial freedom and fullness, a great perfection, an infinite openness, a timeless now, the blissful joy and happiness of the Ground of all Being. When they're in contact with that, their motivation is one of fullness, of spilling out, of abundance. It's as if you're given a billion dollars—the first thing you do is start sharing it with your friends, as opposed to when you have only ten dollars and you're scrounging.

So the essential point in times of crisis is, as you have been saying, not to let the circumstances aggravate the self-contraction and cause a regression from being needs to deficiency needs. Don't let that whole dimension of motivation for self-transcendence, and even self-evolution, be lost and driven back down into self-esteem or belongingness or even safety needs.

The notion that there's going to be a complete societal collapse, and then out of that love and compassion will grow and put us back together again, is a lovely thought, but it's highly naïve and very impractical.

Ken Wilber

**COHEN:** Exactly. Especially because that need to consciously evolve is such a new emergence, just barely appearing at the top of the pyramid, it's all too easy to lose touch with it.

**WILBER:** One of Maslow's main students was Clare Graves, whose work formed the basis of Spiral Dynamics, which we've spoken about many times. In his research involving human values, Graves found two essential types of motivation, which he called first tier and second tier. Graves's first-tier stages are similar to the first five levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the deficiency needs, while his second-tier stages correspond generally to Maslow's being needs. For Clare Graves, one of the defining factors of second tier was that there is a dramatic drop in fear. And that's important.

**COHEN:** Very important.

**WILBER:** The level of fear really is sort of a marker of how identified you are with the separate, merely individual self. The Upanishads say, "Wherever there is other there is fear." Higher consciousness—the consciousness of nonduality, of suchness—transcends the sense of separation that is inherent in subject-object duality. Individuals motivated by self-transcendent needs, by being needs, feel themselves to be essentially one with manifestation. The Sufis call it the Supreme Identity. So you have what Zen calls "body-mind dropped"—you're no longer exclusively identified with the individual body-mind, and so fear drops also, because there's much less concern for the fate of this individual organism. Yet if we allow crisis times to reactivate the self-contraction and allow a regression down into first-tier or deficiency needs, then we are allowing these conditions to push us out of Kosmic consciousness, out of radiant, radical, nondual suchness, and into one of the lower value structures that is isolated and separate and contracted. Unfortunately, that's one of the main things that happens during times like these.

**COHEN:** That's all too true. I encourage people who are reading or hearing this conversation to pay attention to this movement in themselves, to look closely at their own responses to the current circumstances in light of the kinds of distinctions we're making. In putting together this issue, we did an interview with futurist John Petersen (see p. 64), which laid out a pretty bleak picture of our very near future. After listening to it, I saw myself literally descend out of what you've been calling being needs and fall right down to a survival level. Suddenly, everything I've devoted my life to and everything I'm living for—the evolution of consciousness and culture and the inherent glory of that in every moment—seemed to vanish. I found myself thinking, "There's no point in doing this. We just need to find a way to get through this crisis." It took me about three or four hours to get back in touch with the glory and beauty of what's always calling me.

So I want people to think about the distinctions we're making—to spend some time paying attention to those moments when they make this descent into fear and see how different the world begins to look. It's one thing to just discuss things like this, but it's quite another thing to actually see it in one's own experience. These internal flips

can happen very, very quickly, especially if we get faced with *real* crises. What we need to learn to do, because we *are* faced with a real crisis, is not to lose perspective and not lose touch with that dimension of our experience that isn't relative and that's always more important than anything else.

**WILBER:** It's critical. That's why, at these times, our spiritual practice becomes essential. We really do have to develop a heightened awareness of our own internal mechanisms and of what can throw us out of being grounded in this unqualifiable, timeless-moment awareness and back into a contracted, survivalist mode. That's really important, because there *are* some very serious survivalist issues right now.

**COHEN:** Absolutely.

**WILBER:** *We might not make it as a species.* There are some *very, very real* concerns. And being able to watch the internal dynamics, to watch yourself contract in the face of that, is a supreme teacher. It's a chance, as you described in your own example, to really learn how you allow the survivalist mode to knock you out of your true self and your already free awareness.

**COHEN:** Yes. The reason it's so important is that when we descend back down the ladder of development, it's not just our feeling experience that contracts; it's our *perspectives* and our *values*. We fall out of touch with that which is higher, that which has inherent glory, and we contract into a very fearful orientation to life.

**WILBER:** Yes.

**COHEN:** Often, the human beings who are able to really make a difference in these times are those who are able to see these very real crises and global events in the biggest developmental context—to see it all as part of a larger process, which itself is indestructible. Never losing touch with that perspective is critical, because the problem is that when we lose touch with the bigger perspective, we lose touch with the best part of ourselves. That's the big challenge at times like these.

**WILBER:** We've seen a lot of that, individually and culturally and planetarily.

**COHEN:** That's also why what you said about the importance of practice is true. I think one has to be a spiritual hero to be able to keep one's eye both on the timeless ground of consciousness itself and on this larger Kosmic evolutionary perspective. One needs to have a deep *samadhi*, a powerful focus, a steadiness of purpose, a big perspective, an evolutionary worldview—and this all needs to be cultivated.

**WILBER:** That is a challenging task, especially when in a psychological, cultural, and economic sense the world is going through a great depression. It's happening in all four quadrants, as we would say—the psychological, the cultural, the social, the biological. It's almost as if a subtle energy of consciousness is itself getting contracted, and that's what's getting transmitted to all of us. That's what happens during survivalist times. So being aware of that and keeping the big picture in mind is exactly what needs to be done. That's why these times are opportunities, in that sense, to be able to *find this being awareness* even in the midst of the survivalist self-contraction and to be able to affirm that unqualifiable, infinite, joyful, radiant, timeless presence in ourselves, even as we go about taking seriously the issues in the manifest world that need to be responded to. That's not to say we only want to be in touch with spiritual values and ignore the crisis. We're saying to be in touch with *both*—with *samsara* and with the troubles that are going on there *and* with *nirvana*, which is the ultimate great liberation.

**COHEN:** Yes, and I would make one addition to that. It's one thing to be aware of the inherent and timeless nature of the Ground of all Being—that infinite radiant nirvana you were speaking of. But we also want to be aware of the evolutionary impulse, the ecstatic creative spark that awakens in consciousness, the aspiration to evolve and to develop that's driven by a kind of utopian urge. It's an impulse to *express* that inherent perfection and wholeness that we intuit in the timeless unmanifest dimension *here in the manifest realm*. So I just wanted to add that element to what you were saying. The challenge isn't just to not lose touch with the primordial, timeless Ground of Being; it's also to not lose touch with that utopian impulse, that aspiration to manifest perfection.

**WILBER:** For all beings.

**COHEN:** Yes, for all beings and for the universe itself.





# W

## HEN THE NEW AGE MEETS THE APOCALYPSE

**COHEN:** You know, there are many people who say that a complete collapse is actually necessary for that which is new to be able to emerge, so that out of the ashes an extraordinary regeneration can occur. I don't just mean apocalyptic fundamentalists. I mean people we know who are generally quite progressive in their views. But I don't agree with that way of thinking. If everything collapses, we'll have to struggle just to get back to where we were, let alone move forward! But too many spiritually oriented people tend to think this way, and I feel it's a little bit naïve, if not even dangerous.

**WILBER:** I think it *is* naïve. It's like the Y2K bug all over again—the notion that there's going to be complete societal collapse and then out of that love and compassion will grow and put us back together again. It's a *lovely thought*, but it's highly naïve and very impractical. What that kind of collapse really does is throw human beings *down* the scale of development, *back down* into first tier—to physiological needs, safety needs, survival needs. If there were to be a worldwide collapse, we would be thrown back down the scale of technological modes of existence. We would be out in the streets foraging for food. Then we'd have to learn how to plant food again and go from horticulture to agrarian, and then develop machinery and slowly work our way back to the industrial era and from there into the information era. So the idea that somehow a complete collapse is going to get rid of just the bad stuff and leave all the good stuff implicitly in place is a little bit crazy.

**COHEN:** It's almost like when a New Age myth meets a kind of traditional apocalyptic perspective.

**WILBER:** Yeah. Now, if we look at human history, we do see that human beings have almost never acted with enough foresight and wisdom to change the course of the world's problems *before* some type of catastrophe. Usually something has to really get sick before we'll give it enough attention to fix it. So that's where the impetus for this collapse idea comes from. But it's crazy to exaggerate it and to say that there has to be *total* collapse before anything is going to change.

**COHEN:** Or even worse, to say that that collapse is going to pave the way for this extraordinary renewal.

**WILBER:** Psychologically, that just doesn't happen. Technologically, it doesn't happen. And culturally, it doesn't happen.

**COHEN:** On an individual level, I've seen many people go through some pretty bad phases and sink to much lower levels or structures within themselves. But that's rarely the catalyst for some kind of extraordinary awakening or renewal. There are occasional cases, of course, where this kind of thing happens, but it's the exception rather than the rule. So I think that in popular spirituality, and also in some traditional orientations, this is a kind of a myth that has gotten overemphasized. The fact that it may be true in some exceptions doesn't make it a rule. It's usually quite the opposite.

**WILBER:** Yes. I think it's a misreading of how growth and development occur. Although it certainly is the case that in some instances some type of breakdown is necessary for some type of breakthrough to occur.

**COHEN:** Absolutely.

**WILBER:** Spiritually, the ego has to break down in order for a *satori* to break through, and so on. But that's quite different from having the entire mechanism of culture collapse. That's not going to generate love and peace—it's going to generate survivalist war, aggression, anger, and hatred.

# F

## OR THE SAKE OF EVOLUTION ITSELF

**COHEN:** You know, in spite of how bad things seem, I also feel—and of course I could be wrong—that somehow or other we are going to get through this. There seems to be such a sense of goodwill and positivity and passion for life and ingenuity in the human spirit, and even more so since Obama's election. It feels so strong to me that it just doesn't

seem like we're going to be leaving this planet anytime soon. It's not certain that we're going to get through this crisis, but it feels to me more likely than anything else. Our will to survive and our capacity for innovation are such that it just intuitively feels like we're going to find a way through.

**WILBER:** I personally believe that is the case. I believe that those circumstances where it's a close call—not complete collapse but economically stressful times—can be part of the evolutionary stresses that help humanity realize the necessity to come together. One of the good ways to look at our present predicament is that the ecological crisis is basically the first worldwide crisis, the first one that affects every man, woman, and child on the planet. That type of crisis hasn't happened before, and what it's starting to show us is that in terms of the evolution of social structures, we have reached the limit of what the nation-state can do. There are three things that nation-states no longer can control: They can't control global climate issues in the great commons of the entire planet; they can't alone control monetary issues; and they can't control war. So those issues are pushing evolutionarily against the limitations of our present form of social organization, and new forms of social organization that are global and planetary are going to start emerging. Globalization, in both the positive and negative sense, is here, it's on us, and it really is showing that there needs to be a transition into the next form of human organization, one that will have to include some sort of world federation.

**COHEN:** How exciting!

**WILBER:** And have global issues at its heart. So we are just at the beginning of that, and it's a very frightening and exciting period in spiritual evolution. It's one of the positive sides of the crises that we are going through right now.

**COHEN:** The leaders of the first world, hopefully, will be able to take a big leap, because the leap to a global federation really is a big one.

**WILBER:** That's right. Nobody is going to willingly give up power. So it's going to continue to take a series of crises.

**COHEN:** To force it, to compel it to happen.

**WILBER:** Right. In measured doses, these crises do push us into coming up with new solutions.

**COHEN:** Ideally these kinds of crises can be opportune moments for individuals and cultures that ordinarily would have greater trouble getting along to realize that it's going to be much easier to survive and prosper together than it will be alone. When there's a perceived threat, either from a common enemy or from nature, we human beings have proved historically that we are willing to come together for mutual survival. But it's also important to realize that what has hardly ever happened is for individuals and groups to come together to actually *evolve*.

**WILBER:** Right.

**COHEN:** Of course, if there's a common threat that we face, there are certain differences that we're going to be willing to let go of in order to come together. We are going to have to make sacrifices for the sake of our collective survival. But this is also true for the evolution of consciousness. When human beings come together to consciously evolve, certain kinds of sacrifices will also have to be made, and I don't think that has ever really happened. So this is something I speak about quite often to try and give people a sense of what I feel we need to do now. We've proved that we can come together when we're threatened by a common enemy, but can we come together to evolve? What has yet to happen, as far as I can

When we lose touch with a bigger perspective, we lose touch with the best part of ourselves. That's the big challenge at times like these.

Andrew Cohen

see, is for human beings to be *compelled* to come together to create the future, to make the world a better and more enlightened place—not to be spurred on by crises or fear but inspired by the love of truth, the love of God, for the sake of the evolutionary impulse itself. That hasn't happened yet. It's an important thing for people to think about. Even the most extraordinary innovation—whether in technology or in breathtaking acts of compassion and bravery—has often happened as a result of crisis or warfare. I think humanity as a whole has yet to reach that point where we find ourselves inspired to work together, not because there is a common threat but because there's really nothing else to do.

**WILBER:** That's true, and demographic studies can help us to see why that is the case. If you look at moral development, it unfolds like virtually all lines of development, through three or four major stages. We can call these egocentric, ethnocentric, worldcentric, and Kosmocentric.

Egocentric means that morals are decided by what I feel: What's right is what I say is right, and what's good is what's good for me, and to hell with everybody else. That's the narcissistic, egocentric stance that is expressed in the earliest stages of moral development in individuals and cultures. That moral context expands when the individuals start to include others of their group in moral consideration. Then

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what is right and good becomes what is good for my tribe or my family or my nation. That's the ethnocentric stage. And then the next stage is worldcentric, and that looks at what is right or good in terms of what's right or good for all human beings, regardless of race, sex, or creed. And finally, Kosmocentric is what's right for all sentient beings—not just humans but the great consciousness looking out through the eyes of every sentient being and in identity with all of the Kosmos.

So when we look at the world in terms of actual development, the picture is a little bit depressing: *Seventy percent of the world's population is at the ethnocentric stage or lower.* But we have to remember that that's still a huge leap from where we were in premodern times. There is a steady increase in individuals who expand love and care and compassion beyond themselves and beyond their tribe into all tribes and indeed to all sentient beings. We're moving along on that and getting a little bit closer, but I don't think we are

at a point where the world is going to come together in one collective unity.

**COHEN:** Of course. I think it would be far into the future before such a thing like that could happen. But I'm not talking about all of humanity coming together in some kind of perfect harmony. I'm just saying that it's very rare or almost unheard of for *any* groups of individuals to merge simply for the sake of evolution itself, not spurred on by a conflict. Usually what causes us to transcend our differences and come together are crises, not these higher spiritual motives.

**WILBER:** That's exactly right.

**COHEN:** And it's important. Often people think that responding to problems and crises *is* evolution. And I say, well, not necessarily. Evolution really means a moving forward, a creation of something *new*, not just a restoration of peace and a return to the way things were. Of course, conflict, as we've been saying, *can* and often does compel us to find new ways to move forward creatively and practically, and that's good. But that's different than what it means to evolve for its own sake, which is the highest motive there is.

**WILBER:** Right.

**COHEN:** So I think it's very important not to confuse the aspiration to make the world a better place by fixing its many problems with the aspiration to consciously evolve. The evolutionary impulse is ultimately for its own sake. As we awaken to this evolutionary impulse, we begin to understand that merely surviving is not what we are here for. Consciously and intentionally striving to evolve, individually and collectively, for the sake of the evolution of the entire creative process is what imbues human life with a higher meaning and purpose. And what an extraordinary world we can create when we are in touch with this very best part of ourselves! ■



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# The Genie's Out of the Bottle

**Dr. Thomas Barnett** explains why globalization may actually be the most unifying, progressive, and liberating force in human history

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## An Interview

BY CARTER PHIPPS

The famous historian Will Durant once said, "Most of us spend too much time on the last twenty-four hours and too little on the last six thousand years." When times are tough, Durant's observation may even be more true. Indeed, under the pressure of difficult circumstances, it becomes that much more tempting to set aside the expansive, long-term, panoramic perspective of history for the immediate, the short-term, the day-to-day. In so doing, we often fail to appreciate the profound power that historical context can provide when it comes to helping us respond

to life in the here and now. We forget that when we don't have a clear view of our past, we tend to draw erroneous conclusions about our present and to have a distorted view of what's possible in our future.

It is with this enduring insight in mind that *EnlightenNext* is pleased to present the work of Dr. Thomas Barnett. Barnett is a unique geopolitical strategist who combines a futurist's sense of hope and optimism with a historian's sense of sobriety and context. He first burst on the national scene in 2004 with the publication of *The Pentagon's New Map*, a



a bestselling book that helped readers understand the confusing dynamics of the post-9/11 global landscape, shedding fresh light on terrorism, globalization, and U.S. military engagements around the world. He writes:

Show me where globalization is thick with network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media flows, and collective security, and I will show you regions featuring stable governments, rising standards of living, and more deaths by suicide than murder. . . . But show me where globalization is thinning or just plain absent, and I will show you regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and—most important—the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists.

With a Ph.D. from Harvard in a star-studded political science class of future pundits that included such luminaries as Andrew Sullivan and Fareed Zakaria, Barnett's initial education was designed to prepare him as an arms negotiator, with expertise on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War, however, ended that career before it got started, and Barnett eventually landed at the Naval War College, where he studied the intricate relationship between geopolitics, economic globalization, and America's military. With the success of *The Pentagon's New Map*, Barnett's profile grew within the Pentagon, and so did his influence. While his forward-looking vision of the U.S. military

role in the world may have initially won him friends in the Bush administration, his strong, independent voice and progressive agenda eventually earned him enemies as well. He was critical of the military's obsession with a future war with China and our strategic failures with Iran; he also argued against unilateralism and lamented the administration's unwillingness to engage more positively in Africa. And though he was cautiously supportive of the initial invasion of Iraq, he was highly critical of the aftermath. He felt that the disastrous postwar strategy revealed the need for a new global peacekeeping force with a "SysAdmin" (system administration) function, a sort of "pistol-packing Peace Corps," as he puts it, that would be staffed largely by non-Americans and help in the establishment of postwar order, from the Balkans to Iraq to Afghanistan to Rwanda. Eventually he was "sort of fired, and sort of walked away" from the military to become an entrepreneur, helping to found Enterra Solutions, a private company designed to help public- and private-sector organizations deal with the fast-changing realities of a globalizing world.

With his new book, *Great Powers*, Barnett returns to the medium that originally marked him as a unique voice, elucidating a provocative and original conception of America's role in the world. He has a gift for understanding the relationship between the evolution of economic, political, and military structures over the last several hundred years and the closely correlated evolution of culture. In Barnett's hands, history comes alive as a powerful context in which to understand the ongoing development of our globalizing world

society. He argues that America's own underappreciated history of integrating fifty states into one united nation provides the starting point for appreciating the many challenges we face globally as we work to knit the entire world together in a more secure, peaceful, and prosperous network of nations. While his politics are hard to categorize as left or right, they are certainly nontraditional and post-ideological—his work challenges sacred cows on both sides of the aisle. Barnett's idealism and activist-like passion for positive change have captured the attention of progressives, even as many struggle with his embrace of military power, his enthusiasm for globalization, and his positive conception of the U.S. role and responsibility in this young century.

"Most educated people at the beginning of the twenty-first century consider themselves to be specialists," declares scholar Craig Eisendrath in his recent book, *At War with Time*. "Yet what is needed for the task of understanding our culture's evolution . . . is the generalist's capacity to look at culture's many dimensions and put together ideas from disparate sources." Barnett is that sort of generalist. His wide-ranging mind spots those larger trends that defy the expert, the specialist, and the narrow time frame. In a spiritual world enamored with the present moment, a business world enamored with short-term profits, and a political world enamored with election cycles, Barnett helps us lift our eyes from the distortions of the day and reflect more deeply on the developmental dynamics of our past, changing our perspective and helping us to more effectively change the world.

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**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *Dr. Barnett, you have a background in political science and military analysis, but you refer to yourself as a grand strategist. Can you explain what you mean by that term?*

**THOMAS BARNETT:** A grand strategist in the way I understand it is someone who is thinking about the world in a very broad, synthetic way. I'm talking about someone who is thinking across different domains with a perspective

that spans decades. I believe that in the years since 9/11, America has really been searching for a kind of grand strategic vision to guide our actions. And frankly, I think the world needs America to think long term and strategically now more than ever.

The classic definition of grand strategy has to do with a country wanting to advance its own interests, bringing to bear all its national power toward that end. But that definition is too restrictive, especially for the United States.



It's not enough for us to advance our own interests. It's about having a vision of a future world that we want to move the whole planet toward, and it's about what we can do to serve that vision, not just in terms of government but also the entire panoply of our social and economic systems. So grand strategy means looking at the entire structure of our world and how to move it forward, as opposed to just advancing our self-interest within a chaotic environment of independent nations. Ultimately, it's an attempt to bring greater order.

Thinking in terms of grand strategy is not a skill set we value enough. The complexity of the world is so dense today that much of what passes for expertise in Washington and European capitals is a vertical drill-down knowledge: "I know the tax code in this particular area" or "I'm an expert on the enrichment of uranium." Individuals who think horizontally, meaning across many different areas of expertise, are actually amazingly rare. Political science is a broad enough background and a natural starting point for people who want to do grand strategy. But the skill set of the grand strategist should involve a lot more than politics. It should mean that one actually reads a lot outside of one's preferred domain. I read everything *but* political science; I read technology, history, economics, sociology, religion, all kinds of fields because I'm trying to explore how the many intersections between all of these big domains are affecting politics. And history is particularly important. You can't think long term and strategically if you don't understand your history.

I often go places to speak and people ask me, "How many others do you know who think like this?" and I say, "Not very many." I find it very disturbing to have to offer that answer. Instead, what passes for grand strategy is usually national self-criticism of the most dispiriting sort. So college kids are growing up on Noam Chomsky. That's a disaster. He's a great linguist, but he's not a grand strategist or a good political thinker or an international relations expert. Neither is Chalmers Johnson; neither is

Naomi Klein. On some level the best versions we have are op-ed columnists, but they tend to be too news-cycle driven, and I think that a successful grand strategist is someone who can, with equanimity, think across decades.

**EN:** *Your new book is called Great Powers: America and the World After Bush. In it you outline an economic and political strategy for America's engagement in the world after Bush. Could you explain to me what your purpose in writing the book was?*

**TB:** Well, a variety of purposes. First, I wanted to explore explicitly what should be America's grand or overarching geopolitical strategy at this point in history, and I wanted to expose the reader to what I thought was the general arc of American grand strategy historically. I want people to understand that this is very much a world of our creating, and in that self-awareness, I want them to understand exactly what the possibilities are for our global society going forward.

**EN:** *One of the points you make in the book is that America is largely responsible for the kind of global economic system that we have today. Is that what you mean when you say this is a "world of our creating"?*

**TB:** Let me provide some context. Let's go back to World War II. If you look at the global political system that existed at that time, it was the Eurasian colonial system. The Eurasian powers had basically carved up the planet. And then there was the United States, this weird, hybrid, multinational union kind of doing its own thing on its own continent. President Roosevelt decided that after the war he wanted to create a new economic and political landscape, not only in America but across the entire planet. So he engineered the creation of what we now call the international liberal trade order. Essentially, what Roosevelt did was to create a global framework for the same sort of open-market, free-trade system that America had been pioneering within its own borders for decades.

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Frankly, I think  
the world needs  
America now  
more than ever.

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To make a long story short, this new system succeeded dramatically, and by 1980 the West was fabulously wealthy and began to attract emulation from the East. Perhaps the critical point in the development of this global economic system was when Deng Xiaoping opened up China and their economy in the late seventies and early eighties. When that happened, we achieved a sort of critical mass for this international liberal trade order.

So part of Roosevelt's initial postwar strategy was economic, but the other part had to do with security. After the war, we agreed to step in to provide our allies, both in Japan and in Europe, with the military force they needed to defend against the Soviets. As a result, none of these countries went back to the kind of militaristic structures or large industrial bases devoted to the military that they had prior to the war; instead, in an amazing historical turn, they largely outsourced that function to us. In effect, we became their provider of security.

**EN:** *That highlights what I think is one of the most interesting aspects of your work, and that is your unique view of the American military. You point out that the overwhelming military advantage that America developed over the years has a pacifying effect in the world today.*

**TB:** Right. Our overwhelming military power represents a sort of God-like force, which for all practical purposes rules out the question of major war between great powers. Again, in order to appreciate that achievement, we just have to look back at the first half of the twentieth century. On the Eurasian landmass, ten great powers managed to kill a hundred million people in a conflagration that ran fairly unabated from 1914 to 1949—all the way to the end of the Chinese civil war. It was war on an unbelievable scale; nobody has ever before accomplished that kind of warfare, taken it to those heights. Then there was the Cold War. But once you get to the end of that and then fast-forward to

now, you have to admit that this is the first time in history when Britain, France, Germany, and Russia are all peaceful, all relatively more prosperous—although obviously there's a downturn now—and all are integrating. There's really no question of great power war. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. I mean, through the early 1980s, there was still tremendous fear in Europe of war.

We also have now for the first time in Asia something that's never been accomplished in history: India, Japan, China, and South Korea are all relatively prosperous, rising, integrating, and

peaceful, with no prospects of a great power war on the horizon. We've never before had that quartet of powers all strong and prosperous, and yet no one really talks about a possible war among them. Even with North Korea, it gets harder and harder to raise plausible scenarios of war. And Taiwan has begun what looks like negotiations for economic integration with China, not unlike Hong Kong. They're negotiating the idea that they can be economically unified but retain their political differences for now. That's what the

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All the violence,  
all the terrorism,  
happens inside the  
non-integrating  
parts of the world.

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European Union was for quite some time. So we're looking at what is inevitable in Asia: an Asian union centered on China.

This is not to say there aren't things that fill headlines, but here we are in our first global recession, and even with this somewhat frightening economic downturn, what most people seem to be discovering is an intense amount of economic interdependence. Countries are doing what they can within the World Trade Organization rules to protect themselves, but nobody's really transgressing those rules. Nobody is talking about war or a Nazi-like rise to power, and that's a pretty amazing achievement for us to have accomplished.

We've made our interdependence so profound that we really do sink or swim together in this global economy. The point of my book is that it is all modeled on America's own economic and political union. I like to say that America is the source code for globalization. We are the models. We are the spreaders. We are the

DNA. This process of globalization is very much modeled on our own multinational union that says states unite over time, economies integrate, networks proliferate, rules accumulate, incomes rise, and collective security expands.

**EN:** *In many progressive circles, this kind of thesis is anathema. I have many European friends, for example, who see globalization in quite a negative light, as exploitative and repressive and driven primarily by American interests. So tell me, why is it a good thing that this is happening? Why is globalization good?*

**TB:** First of all, globalization is not happening only because America backs it. Globalization happens because people find value in it. They find value in the connectivity; they find freedom in it; they find better lives. What is driving globalization are three billion capitalists. They're being transmuted into a global middle class, which will be the dominant power in the global economy and the global political system in the twenty-first century. The genie's out of the bottle. We were too successful. Also, as I said, war has gone away in this time frame. When the Americans really took over and sought to reshape the world in our image, what happened? Great power war *disappeared!* The latest tallies of international violence say that it's almost all occurring in places that are yet to be deeply integrated into the global economy, which tells me that we're in a frontier integrating age, just like we went through in America in the nineteenth century. Then the Europeans get very uncomfortable with that because they say, "We tried that." And I say, "Yes, you did, but in a very exploitative manner." And they say, "Your version is also very exploitative." And I say, "Compared to yours, it's not even close." But Europe is not in charge of this anymore, and frankly neither are we. Indeed, if you look at the regions of the world that are poorly developed or poorly connected, like much of Africa, it's Arab money and Asian money that is increasingly the main source of funding flowing into those places for development and infrastructure. I go to Africa, and to me it looks like a disaster. The Chinese and Indians go to Africa and they say, "Crappy soil, crappy climate, crappy infrastructure, crappy government, crappy work attitude—it's just like home. I'm going to make this place so profitable. I can't wait to exploit it." Africa is going to be brought into the global economy by the Arabs and the Chinese and the Indians. The Europeans aren't going to be asked. No one's waiting on their okay, much less their veto.

So the question for all of us is, "Do we want to participate in this to make it better, or do we want to wash our hands of it and hope that it works out, hope that the Indians and the Chinese and the Arabs don't exploit these situations?" I know that absent some

sort of cooperation on our part, it won't go well, but it's also clear that we're at the point where we can't manage globalization alone because it's gotten so large.

**EN:** *In your books, you point out that those regions that have the most poverty, the most exploitation of labor, the most corrupt governments, and the most violence are also the places that are the most disconnected parts of our global society.*

**TB:** That's where all the violence is happening. That's where all the terrorism happens. Virtually all of it happens inside the non-integrating parts of the world. But globalization is coming to these places. It's coming because these places want it. They look at China and they want some of that wealth. Everything you can say about Africa today we said about China fifty years ago. And now they're getting rich. Globalization has gone critical mass, and there's no way to stop it. The only question is, how do we deal with it? We need to deal with it efficiently, because if you add the factor of global climate change and add the problem of resource depletion, then you realize that we're heading into a period that is going to demand tremendous innovation and tremendous cooperation among all the major powers involved. And in terms of security, we're tapped out. We need help. We can't possibly run the world with only the Europeans and the Japanese, because they won't go anywhere and kill anybody. We need Russians, we need Indians, we need Chinese. They have to be willing to fight and kill and in effect defend globalization's advance.

People may say that I'm talking about globalization at the barrel of a gun, but that's not a bad thing. It beats *no* globalization at the barrel of a gun, because I can take you to the places where you're the most subject to the gun, and they tend to be the least connected parts of the world. It's like the rapid integration of the American West. If the military authority doesn't show up, then people will fight each other. They'll kill in large numbers. There'll be insurgencies. There'll be bad individuals. Or you can instill real governance and security and, on that basis, empower people and enrich them.

We've empowered and enriched a lot of people on this planet in the last fifty years by following this grand strategy. Now we're coming to the harder nuts to crack because these are the more off-grid places, and in terms of development, they lag far behind. They're the places where you have the most intransigent forms of religious structures (and stricture, for that matter) and, of course, amazing population growth. Then on top of that, these are all places that are going to get the hottest because of global climate change and will therefore have the hardest time growing food. So as a strategist, I'm looking at this reality and thinking that we



need to get these places wired up. We need to get them safe, we need to get them transparent, we need to get them marketized. We need to get the women into the labor force through education. We need to emancipate these situations. And we need to do it fast, because the amount of environmental stress and demographic stress and climate-based stress that these people are going to be under in the next thirty or forty years is going to be profound—unless we raise their incomes dramatically. Otherwise, we're setting ourselves up for all sorts of nasty business and much suffering and premature death.

So, yes, I'm willing to do more than merely fortify America and Europe. I'm willing to do more than put up fences to keep these "nasty dark people" from coming to our countries. I don't see that kind of mentality working. There is a lot of anger being expressed in those parts of the world. And bin Laden gave us an early glimpse of that.

**EN:** *It makes sense, but what you're saying also stands in stark contrast to those who insist that globalization is destroying cultures around the world and that we should allow people to retain their culture and identity on their own terms.*

**TB:** Yes, what they say is, let's deny them the connectivity. Let's decrease their sense of fear. Let's keep them off-grid. We'll keep them pristine; we'll allow them to retain their culture and their poverty and their disconnectedness because if we connect them, it makes them angry and demanding, and we're not sure if we want to process all that anger. But people on the other side look at us and say, "That's the most hypocritical thing I've ever heard. You're all about keeping us down in the name of some antiquated bullshit." So why take down these mud huts? Well, because they're disease ridden. We live in nice houses, and they want nice houses too. We're telling them they've got to live in these hovels that are four hundred years old to "preserve their culture." They're tired of the hypocrisy.

Marx was right. Back in the 1840s, he said that capitalism is going to sweep the planet, just crush everything in its way. It's just that it took a certain type of capitalism to do it—not the European version, not colonialism. It took an American-style, truly liberal, free-trade version. It took political adaptations that Marx considered impossible to achieve. Marx was diagnosing capitalism on the basis of Europe in the nineteenth century. He saw castes, he saw elites, he saw viscounts and dukes and duchesses. He said this is never going to work. But if he'd come to America, he would have seen that this is the place where anybody comes, anybody joins. The synthetic identity is crucial to us. We are a version of globalization before globalization.

**EN:** *Globalization may have been initially driven by the West and America. But as China and India begin to rise up, it's going to decouple globalization from being almost exclusively associated with the West. As you say in the book, it will be post-Caucasian.*

**TB:** Yes, there was a globalization that may have been Anglo-Saxon inspired, but now it's going to be overwhelmed by the rise of the rest. It's a post-American world, as my friend Fareed Zakaria likes to say. And I reply that it's post-Caucasian world, not post-American. This post-Caucasian world has also already arrived on our shores. It's already here in all of America's major cities; it's already here in our biggest state, California. In America's zero to five-year age demographic, Caucasians are no longer a majority, and European-Americans are no longer a majority. So the power-sharing agreement that is part of that post-Caucasian world is being negotiated in preschools all across America right now. And what I know about social change in this country is that when something is figured out in preschools and kindergartens across America, fifteen years later it is the dogma that unites us all. It becomes the conventional wisdom. Look at recycling, drunk driving, antismoking—once you inculcate a new ideology in kindergartners, fifteen years later it becomes the way it is.

**EN:** *What role does the European Union, the "European Dream" as Jeremy Rifkin dubbed it, play in this larger picture?*

**TB:** Well, the problem I've always had with commentary on the European Union is people claiming that this is the first multinational union in history. I don't think so.

People say, "They're going to have a single currency. They're talking about a single foreign minister for all of their states. They're organizing a parliament." Doesn't anyone recognize this? We had a single currency in 1862 when Lincoln signed the Legal Tender Act. We went from having eight thousand varieties of bank notes in America to a single green piece of paper, the greenback. That was as revolutionary as creating the euro. Everybody assumes that we put Washington's face on the dollar the minute he stopped being president, but there wasn't such a thing as the dollar until 1862. So we're further along in this process than we realize.

I admire having an alternative to America. I think it's good to have both models and to have competitiveness between us. Otherwise, too much of the world will look at the Chinese model and think that that's the way to go. And the Chinese one has huge flaws: It's pre-progressive, it's pre-political pluralism, it's pre-a lot of things. China is slated for a lot of amazing change in the next couple of decades. It won't be able to go on the way it has been.

**EN:** *I recently interviewed futurist John Petersen, who's an acquaintance of yours, and he's very pessimistic about our short-term prospects. He expects a much bigger crash over the next year. In fact, there is a lot of doom and gloom these days, especially with the financial meltdown. Even many progressive spiritual types are talking about 2012 as being some sort of crisis point. How do you relate to that kind of apocalypticism? Is it justified by our current crisis?*

**TB:** Well, they always have a new date. But it's also true that none of what I'm describing is predicated on linear motion, with no U-turns, no backtracking, no pauses, no problems. And this time, to no one's great surprise, the financial experimentation and the increasingly complex nature of risk management got out of hand. This has happened pretty regularly throughout our history, except this time it was sold and packaged around the world. We had an entire economy based on maximizing our borrowing, keeping no cash on hand. And then we have this financial panic where suddenly we need to have lots of cash on hand. And everybody looks at each other and says, "What do you mean cash on hand? Are you kidding me? You told us for the last twenty years, no cash on hand." That's the panic we're in now. But deep in our hearts, I think that we knew that discipline was eventually going to have to be applied. Ideally, we all would've come to a calm collective judgment that we can't live this way anymore. But that's not how markets work. They tend to go right to the edge, and then people panic. In that process, there's a tendency to look back and conclude, "It was all bad. This is a terrible system." It's our way of generating enough political will to change. So we're at the end of thirty years of less regulation, and now we're going to tack in the direction of more regulation. So is it socialism? Is it the end of the world? Is it Armageddon? Is it the end times? Is Christ coming back? I think it's just a change of tack.

We've got a generation now that's lived a very, very charmed life. They are now having their expectations altered, and it's probably for the better. So I see the current situation as a healthy corrective to a twenty-seven-year global boom. A lot of bad habits

accumulate in twenty-seven years, and now we're being much more realistic about some of the challenges. I wrote in a blog post today that India and China are talking about cooperating on the environment, on counterterrorism, on all kinds of things. They're really stepping up to the plate. In a big, fat, booming world where America is covering all bets, India and China don't step up and take control of anything. But in a more frightened world where the challenges are more apparent, India and China step up.

But I love these doomsayers who've been saying for a long time, "I told you we're going back to the 1930s, back to the depression." I mean, they've only been wrong for the last seventy years! I hope they enjoyed their life.

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**EN:** *Another factor that gets cited by people concerned about the state of the world is the rise of religious violence. How does that dynamic affect your optimism about globalization?*

**TB:** When you take people in the developing world from sustenance to abundance, it creates a kind of socioeconomic change that will cause people to reach for religion more and more. So this is going to be a highly religious, highly nationalistic century because of the amazingly rapid rise of a lot of previously

off-grid, sustenance-based populations. Some look at that increasing friction and say, "That's the future of the entire planet. We're going to be all inundated with religious nutcases." But globalization isn't something we're supplying; it's something they're demanding. It can't be turned off. So when people's lives are being changed and networked and reformatted, their demands for identity are going to skyrocket because they're trying to hold on to their identity amidst all the change. We've destroyed all of their agricultural rhythms and all of their religious rhythms and all of their ways of viewing the world. If you do that too much, you're inevitably going to get wild and radical responses. And those wild and radical responses, at their base, are all about "Recognize me, recognize my desires, recognize my uniqueness, recognize my identity." So a lot of people are looking at this and worrying that the world's going crazy. But I

say that this is all part of the success of globalization's spread. It's creating demands. Those demands have to be met; they cannot be squelched.

So we're heading into a very religious century, but that's not a bad thing. I often look at America's domestic history as a sort of forerunner model of globalization in miniature. And if you look at the latter decades of the nineteenth century in America, I think we're replaying on a global scale what happened then. We went through a very nasty age where politics was considered very low, very divisive, and very corrupt, and robber barons and titans ruled. Our system was very brutal, tough on labor. The child labor was intense. A lot of people were rapidly joining the middle class, but the income inequality was the greatest in American history. In many ways, we were much like China today.

Then that anger started to translate into answers, and we shifted into a new progressive age. In that time, we had people like Upton Sinclair and Booker T. Washington pushing progressive agendas, and we had a great many religious and civic groups pushing for changes as well. It was the religious groups and the great awakenings of the time that were essential for that progressive era. There was a sense that we were going to self-destruct unless we cleaned things up.

So in the same way that we did in the nineteenth century, we're going to have to co-opt and channel the current anger into a progressive search for answers globally. The good news is that in the long run, religion is going to be one of our greatest allies—not our foe, not a complicating factor, and certainly not a sign of a coming Armageddon.

**EN:** *You said at the beginning of this interview that you like to read things besides political science. What have you been reading lately that is helping inform your own grand strategy?*

**TB:** Science fiction. Right now, I'm reading *Neuromancer*, William Gibson's classic book. I think science fiction is about presenting current fears in the context of the future. It's interesting to me that for a long time the favorite villains in science fiction have been corporations. The stories often portray huge divisions between haves and have-nots and a sort of rapacious global capitalism. It's a capitalism that has not been curtailed by the shaming and taming of the system that comes with populism and progressivism. So I would say that science fiction lately has done a good job of presenting us with a series of future dystopias. These stories suggest that as we successfully project this American capitalist model on a global landscape, our failure to set in motion the commensurate social and political change—to shame and tame the more rapacious parts of globalization—is

going to come back to haunt us. Now, it is true that if globalization is done in too loose a fashion, it could definitely evolve into a have/have-not world. But I think it's an overplayed concept. Look at America. Our biggest income inequality was in the 1880s and 1890s—until an age of progressivism kicked in. It's true, of course, that globally we haven't yet succeeded at political and social change at a speed that we would find satisfying. But if you look at American history, we were pretty slow on a lot of these things too. So we need to be patient and recognize that we have won the fundamental argument about what kind of basic model the world is going to follow.

That kind of confidence, to me, is very important for America to demonstrate. Look what is happening now with the financial panic. I know that when things like this happen, there is always that *schadenfreude* that finds elation in America getting its comeuppance, like there was on 9/11. But I would argue that underneath that, there is a much more significant unease. The idea, which some are expressing, that we as a country might no longer believe in certain aspects of our model is very threatening to others. The rest of the world likes having us as a model. They know it's a model that they need to move toward, even though they fight against it a little bit. People like having ideals to work for. We represent reinvention and diversity. We are the first globalized culture. We are globalization inverted. We've been working on the complexity of globalization a long time, and we're still perfecting it. I mean, when I was a kid, the state cops would chase a bad character to the state border and then they'd stop. States are still fairly distinct. When we go through something like the vote recount in 2000, we realize that there are very different state laws in this country.

So we're still perfecting this model. We don't recognize the significance of the fact that we're the world's oldest and most successful multinational economic and political union. And that's a huge responsibility, because if we fall apart as a country or fail in our continuing quest to perfect ourselves, it would be a huge blow to the world. There is an underlying logic to our model that's inescapable. It says that we have to get along, we have to cooperate, we have to integrate, we have to increase collective security, we have to increase transparency. We're just the furthest along, so we underestimate the power of our example and the responsibility of it. ■

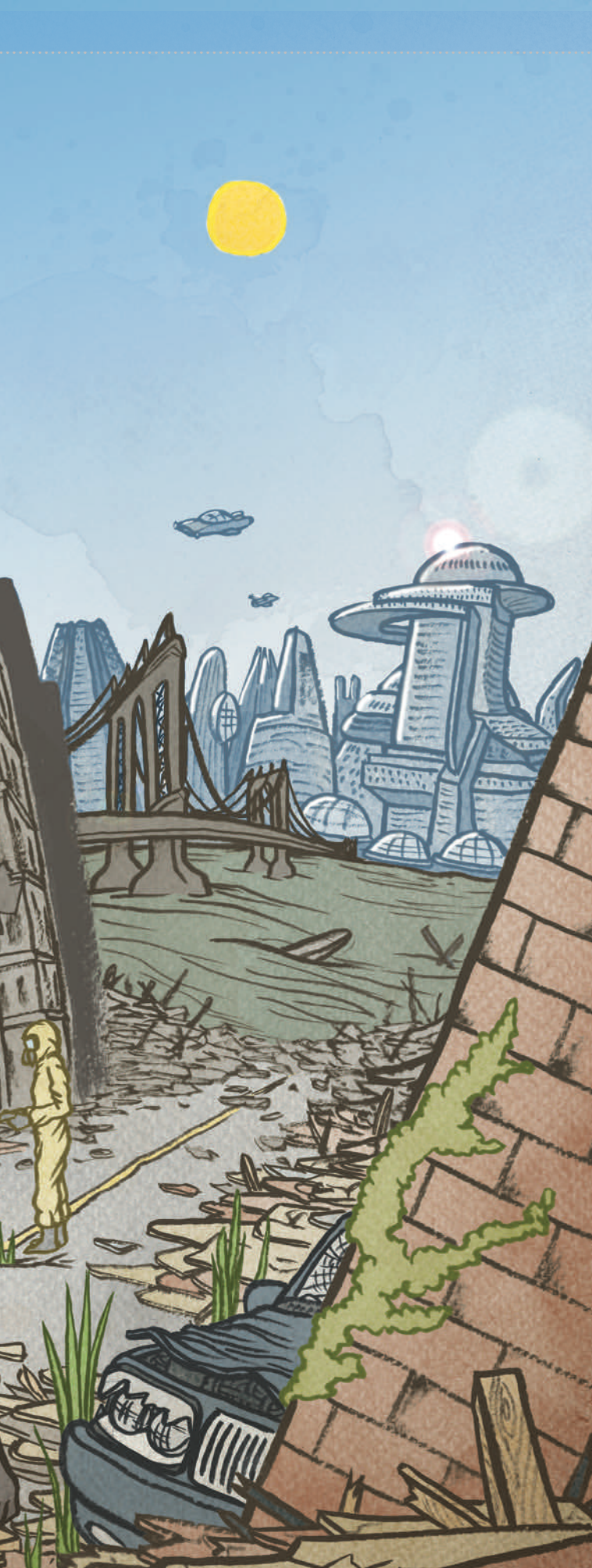


Listen to the full interview with author and military strategist Thomas Barnett at [enlightennext.org/barnett](http://enlightennext.org/barnett)









# 2012

## A Time of Extraordinary Change

Futurist John L. Petersen predicted the global financial meltdown with stunning accuracy. Now this hard-headed soothsayer is tracking the winds of change that he feels are destined to sweep away the foundations of our current society and prepare the way for something completely new.

AN INTERVIEW BY CARTER PHIPPS

“Trying to predict the future,” business consultant Peter Drucker once remarked, “is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window.” Indeed, when it comes to peering into life’s

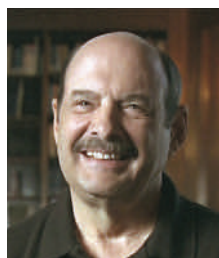
crystal ball—whether one is a futurist or a fortune teller—the experience is likely to make humble men and women of us all. That’s why it is particularly meaningful when someone steps out, takes a risk, bets their reputation on a controversial prediction—and then is proven completely right. Enter John Petersen. Petersen is the founder and director of the Arlington Institute, a think tank that has made a specialty out of helping its clients anticipate and plan for rapid, unpredictable change. Petersen’s always interesting thoughts on the future have appeared in the pages of *EnlightenNext* before, and his email newsletter *FUTUREdition* has long been a must-read for those interested in keeping up with the frontiers of human knowledge.

In August 2006, I received an email from the Arlington Institute, signed by Petersen, which contained a frightening warning. The world’s finances, it claimed, were overstretched, overleveraged, and overexposed to the U.S. housing market, creating the conditions for a financial panic that was likely to unfold in the near future. Petersen was going out on a limb, I thought, doing what so many others, futurists included, are loathe to do—make specific predictions with specific dates and do it publicly. Normally, I might have dismissed such a doom-and-gloom forecast as alarmist and not to be taken seriously. But Petersen is not the kind of person one dismisses lightly. With a military background (he is a veteran of the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars), time served in various positions in the national security apparatus, and a scientist’s penchant for fact-based analysis, Petersen has a pragmatic, no-nonsense attitude that has earned him respect inside the Pentagon and in the corridors of Capitol Hill. And yet his interests are extremely eclectic and would frustrate attempts to easily categorize him, ideologically or philosophically. On any given day, he is as likely to be having lunch with an Air Force colonel,

a maverick physicist, or a New Age psychic. He counts among his acquaintances such philosophically distinct figures as Newt Gingrich, former CIA director James Woolsey, 2012 prophet Daniel Pinchbeck, technological guru Ray Kurzweil, and UFO enthusiast Whitley Strieber. And his recent interest in the work of Rudolf Steiner and Indian teacher Sri Bhagavan shows that his spiritual interests have accelerated over recent years as well, adding another surprising twist to the resume of this unconventional futurist who has made a name for himself in the land of convention.

Recent history has been more than kind to Petersen’s prediction of financial collapse, a vindicating truth that gives a certain degree of gravitas to his other predictions about our near-term global future. Indeed, Petersen’s crystal ball has turned more and more gloomy of late, and when I called him last winter to get his perspective on our current global downturn, his apocalyptic sentiments didn’t exactly soothe my concerns. But don’t get me wrong. This broad-minded sage, whose recent book is titled *A Vision for 2012: Planning for Extraordinary Change*, is not a pessimist. He is, in fact, surprisingly upbeat about humanity’s long-term prospects. He may see us heading into extremely rough waters but feels that those turbulent seas are necessary to induce the much-needed transformations that can truly remake our society. Dare we be so casual about coming catastrophes? In the eyes

of this prescient prognosticator, such system shocks are simply the inevitable price of living in a time of extraordinary change.



**John L. Petersen** is a futurist and the founder of The Arlington Institute

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *Your new book is called A Vision for 2012: Planning for Extraordinary Change. It’s an inquiry into the ways in which the world might change quite dramatically in the next decade. You always manage to capture a wide spectrum of perspectives in your work, and this book reflects that as well. You were one of the few people who clearly predicted the current financial meltdown. You warned that the world’s finances were locked up in the U.S. housing market and predicted the collapse back in—*

**JOHN PETERSEN:** —2006. The Arlington Institute sponsored a presentation that laid out month by month when it

would start (in December 2007) and what would happen in January, what would happen in March, and so on.

**EN:** *I remember reading those reports and wondering if they would prove to be true. They turned out to be very true, and now we’ve seen the whole thing unfold. So what do you see in your crystal ball today?*

**JP:** I think it seemingly gets a lot worse before it gets better. I mean, there are a couple of ways to look at it. But we can start by saying that all the attempts by the government to deal with the financial problems are variations of



## Requiem for the Age of Oil



There are a couple of things that have already started happening and changing all over the Muslim world that I think will continue to accelerate in the near future. One is what I call a requiem for the age of oil. Oil is dying, and the Obama administration is focusing on the development of new energy technologies. This will no doubt push oil-rich countries to look for other ways to enrich themselves. I'm seeing this trend in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and even Iraq. They're starting to focus on developing *people*. The prince in Qatar, for example, has

invited the best universities in the world to set up shop in that country. He's offering grants to major Nobel Science Prize winners to come and work on research and innovation. This is a great shift, and the faster the United States develops new energy technology, the more we'll allow these countries to emerge.

This is particularly important for Generation Y, which is the untapped gold, the unused resource in Middle Eastern and Muslim countries. In the Arab world, sixty percent of the population is under the age of twenty-five.

They're educated, intelligent, and innovative. These are the kids of Facebook, MySpace, and Google. But there are no jobs, no opportunities. They are globally connected, but they are in a place where there is no release for their energy. I know these kids. I work with them all over the Muslim world. Just as a quick example, a group of students at An-Najah University in the West Bank created a solar car from scratch, and both Palestinian *and* Israeli newspapers wrote about it. They were so proud of them. So these kids are ready to

compete with the best and the brightest in the world.



**Elza Maalouf** is a native of Lebanon and the CEO of the Center for Human Emergence-Middle East

Listen to the full interview at [enlightennext.org/maalouf](http://enlightennext.org/maalouf)

what they've done in the past. There's no attempt to make a systemic or fundamental change at this point. They're trying to just reinflate a balloon that has become flat.

On one hand, from the political point of view, it's clear that they've got to do something. They have to try to jump-start the economy, and the only institution that's

large enough to do that is the government. But I think what's likely to happen soon is that we are going to see a loss of confidence in the government's ability to fix this thing. I'm also concerned that there are going to be big cascading failures and bankruptcies. We've just recently identified possible problems with the insurance industry,

for example, that may end up costing another \$400 billion, and the government is now suggesting that they will have to invest at least \$2 trillion before this is over. Others are saying more than this will be required.

All of this could lead to a period of hyperinflation where everybody is afraid of their money losing value and they start running up prices. On top of that, there are increasing numbers of people who are suggesting that by the middle of the year the stock market might collapse. And, the big wild card is the derivatives in the whole global financial system, which are commonly estimated at \$600 trillion.

**EN:** \$600 trillion?!

**JP:** Well, yes, that's the commonly reported figure which is the total of the listed credit derivatives. The total U.S. GDP is about \$14 trillion, to give you a relative sense of the size of that number. The Bank of International Settlements says, though, that when you count all of them, the real value of outstanding derivatives is \$1.114 quadrillion, or \$190,000 for every human on the planet. These are casino bets, with no underlying asset value, that are completely dependent on confidence in the system. If it doesn't look like this situation

is going to get fixed—and the casino isn't going to be able to pay—then confidence will evaporate. So I could see a slow-motion collapse going on early in the third quarter of this year, and that could fully take the wind out of the sails of the global economy. By the end of the year or earlier, we could have real questions about the viability of the dollar. Maybe we'll have new currencies and even civil unrest. It's going to be a very interesting, very disruptive year.

What you're watching, it seems to me, is the collapse of the old system. And there is no way to fix it without dealing with it in systemic, fundamental terms—redesigning the system, building a new world. My guess is that the Obama administration will not figure that out until around October or November. Of course by then there will be a whole different set of problems to deal with.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the author of *The Black Swan*, has suggested that this financial event has the potential of being the biggest thing since the American Revolution, bigger than anything that's ever happened in the history of our country.

**EN:** What do you think of the new administration?

**JP:** I think Obama is a wonderful man, but he has a very hard job. The reality of politics is that it is almost impossible for him to really change the system until it has failed. What you've got is a set of politicians who do not get the fact that we're going off a cliff, so they argue about the *Titanic's* deck-chair configuration. These are epochal times—for our country but also for the world, because we're all so tightly connected.

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**EN:** It's not like the depression, where you had relative isolation compared to our system today.

**JP:** No, the whole system didn't come down then. This time the whole system is probably going to be threatened in significant ways.

**EN:** The financial news is dramatic at the moment, but your work is about much more than the financial world. You're

tracking the energy crisis and the issue of peak oil, and you are watching many other systemic areas that may experience rapid transformations during the upcoming years.

**JP:** Yes. The CEO of Total oil company in France, for example, is now saying that we've hit the peak in terms of oil that can be economically pumped. Global oil production has been the same for the last three years—and every other year in all of our lifetimes it has increased substantially. They're saying that the cost of production is so high that Total is likely to never pump more oil than what they are pumping right now. So the reality of our energy crisis is starting to work itself into the system. If you put this on top of the financial crisis, you compound the complexity of the situation and lose all conventional ability to under-

## The Rise of Conscious Capitalism



It's already happened. We've had a total economic meltdown because we've taken unconscious capitalism—the worship of profits while ignoring the long-term costs of earning them—to its logical conclusion. Now if you look at the Fortune 500, at least fifty percent of the companies to one degree or another practice *conscious capitalism*, which responsibly embraces all of its stakeholders—investors, customers, communities, employees, and the environment. But our friends on Wall Street, especially in the financial institutions that brought the economy down,

continue to cling to the traditional, outdated brand of capitalism that is unconscious of its own ramifications.

I think that in the next three years we are going to see a gradual sorting out of what happened and hopefully an acknowledgment that the cause of the collapse was the fact that we forsook any sort of long-term commitment in the pursuit of short-term profits. I'm not a socialist by any means. Conscious capitalism wants to make profits too. But conscious capitalists—including companies like Google, Apple, and Medtronic—embrace a more

long-range commitment to success rather than the quarter-to-quarter mentality of Wall Street.

This new model of capitalism has been brewing for at least two decades, but within the next three years, I think we're going to see a broader recognition that this holistic approach to business is what creates the most sustainable profits. Will everybody be convinced? No. But a critical mass of investors, consumers, and visionary companies will be. We may even see a new index, a new standard, a new kind of Dow or S&P that represents this values-driven commitment to

long-term thinking. I think it's going to transform our whole philosophy of business.



**Patricia Aburdene** is a business journalist, social forecaster, and author of *Megatrends 2000* and *Megatrends 2010: The Rise of Conscious Capitalism*

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stand what is really going on. So this is a big thing.

Also, my guess is that we're going to have more climate perturbations in the coming months and years. My own feeling is that we're at the beginning of an ice age, not global warming.

**EN:** *An ice age? I remember people were talking about that in the seventies, but I don't hear that today.*

**JP:** Like religion, science has its theology and dogma that most everyone believes—often without considering the



validity of the underlying theories and supporting data. It becomes the conventional wisdom. Today, there is a bandwagon effect where almost all scientists have jumped on this notion that what we're experiencing is global warming. They run their simple little models and say the world is all going to cook by 2030 or something like that.

But the fact of the matter is that we're really early on in our capacity to project this sort of thing. Climate models are still relatively very primitive. There is also evidence that Mars and Pluto and Neptune are all heating up as well. So this present warming is not just the earth, which means that it may not be a result of human beings. What is happening to the sun to cause the other planets to heat up?

And then there are scientists who are starting to say that the climate is really driven by the oceans and that the winds over the oceans have very high leverage on climate; small changes in the general wind pattern affect the whole global climate situation. Perhaps that's driving our climate change. That makes one ask, "What changed the wind patterns?" Well, there has been an increase in the number of terrestrial volcanoes. Maybe there's an increase in the number of underwater volcanoes with localized heating of places in the ocean. But generally, I would suspect that we're probably going to experience a mini ice age rather than an extended period of heating. Certainly there is climate change happening, but whether it's net global warming is uncertain.

**EN:** *Some have worried that with climate change, the biggest concern is not that the earth might heat up slowly, but that it might change quite quickly—the whole system might suddenly shift.*

**JP:** Yes, rapid climate change. That's the really tricky one, because you can't adapt to it. It's a shock to agriculture because the temperature changes so quickly, and because we've got all these monocultures of crops that are all bred for specific climate conditions. The agriculture system would be hard-pressed to adjust, which would, of course, significantly influence the economies of the world as well.

So overall, there is just an interesting combination of things happening.

**EN:** *Yes, that's quite a picture. What about good news? Is there any good news?*

**JP:** Yes, there is a lot of good news. But what you've got to do is to back away from the short-term details of all of this. *EnlightenNext* readers will appreciate this: If you attach yourself to this present system and give energy to all of the negative things that are happening, you will be carried away with it in the process. It will be very painful. So what we must do is learn how to transcend all of this disruption, focus on a new world, and give our energies to manifesting that new reality.

This is an interesting place in the history of the planet,

it seems to me. We're going through a major transition, a major perturbation, an extraordinary evolutionary jump in terms of the life on this planet in general, and we're seeing the evolution of a new kind of human being in the process. Our role is to build a new world. We need to start to construct an image in our minds, a vision for what this new world is going to look like—who the new human beings will be and how they are going to operate. What are the new principles they will operate under, the

new systems and institutions? We're very much in the process, it seems to me, of being major players in the redesign of a whole new way of life.

**EN:** *If you put pressure and stress on a system, any system, it helps create change. But it would seem that the trick with any crisis like the one we're going through is for there to be enough of a challenge to create the impetus for positive change. But you don't want total collapse because then people tend to slide back down Maslow's hierarchy of needs. So if you're right, how do we negotiate that process? There is a desire for positive change, for a transformation and rethinking of our systems from the ground up, but at the same time, if no one can eat, all you've got is disaster, not evolution.*

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## The Nanotech Revolution



I think that the biggest shift will result from radical advances in information technology, particularly in the realms of energy and medicine. For example, we're now using nanotechnology to build more efficient solar panels. Nanotech is basically information technology applied to matter and energy at the level of molecules in order to create new materials and devices. In a recent study that Google founder Larry Page and I did for the National Academy of Engineering, we found that in order to meet our global energy demand, we only have to capture one

part in ten thousand of the 1017 watts that fall on the earth every day. Thanks to nanotech, solar panels are dropping dramatically in cost per watt. In fact, we're doubling the amount of solar energy we produce every two years, which means we're only eight doublings away from meeting all of our energy needs. Within three years, this exponential growth will make solar energy less expensive than fossil fuels in many parts of the world, and we will begin to be able to count on solar as our main source of energy in the future.

Medicine is now also being

driven by information technologies. Drug development used to be called drug discovery—accidentally finding things through hit-or-miss. Now we can *design* drugs on computers and test them using biological simulators. Another example of this is gene therapy. Now that we've mapped the human genome, we have the means of changing our genes, not just in babies but in mature individuals. We'll literally be able to turn off the genes that cause disease. In the next few years, the power of these technologies will multiply by a factor of ten, expanding the

capacity of modern medicine exponentially.



**Ray Kurzweil** is an author, inventor, futurist, and the producer of the upcoming film *The Singularity Is Near*.

Listen to the full interview at [enlightennext.org/kurzweil](http://enlightennext.org/kurzweil)

**JP:** Yes, that's quite important. I think of it in terms of levels of potential shock. At one level, there are shocks like 9/11 that shake everybody up. They put concrete barriers around Washington, D.C., and they make people

take off half their clothes before getting on airplanes. But it doesn't change the system. Eventually, we go back to the way things were. That's the bottom end of the spectrum. On the top end of the spectrum is a shock so

big that it threatens the whole system—like Hurricane Katrina. Your interest becomes survival and protecting your family. That’s what you’re talking about. You slide down Maslow’s hierarchy.

In my way of thinking, it comes down to two general scenarios for the future: with the internet and without the internet. If you do not have the internet, then something really bad happened, and you’ve got a whole new set of problems. But if you do have the internet, then the shock wasn’t so disastrous that it all came down.

So we don’t want a crisis that is so bad that it collapses the whole system. We want this kind of finely engineered middle-ground disruption to scare everybody, grab them by the lapels, and say, “We can’t do this anymore!” It convinces everybody that they have to redesign their lives, but you don’t lose the infrastructure. You can rebuild around *something* rather than rebuild the entire infrastructure.

**EN:** Which do you think we’re headed for?

**JP:** Any of these scenarios is distinctly possible. If we do not manage this transition well, we could lose it all. At the same time, I don’t think it’s possible to get where we need to go without the present system going away in some way. There needs to be a vacuum produced by the departure of the old system before a new paradigm can emerge. The key is to have an alternative to the old model that is ready to be fielded.

For a couple of reasons it appears that this kind of major overturning is in the works. Number one, the old system has structural and philosophical shortcomings that are just not sustainable. And two, if you go back in history, every time there was a major shift in biological or cultural evolution, over a relatively short period of time there was a complete redo of the whole paradigm, a complete change in the entire way life worked. There’s a regular cycle to these major events, and we’re due for one now.

So it seems likely to me that the present system is going to collapse, and that’s going to generate a vacuum. And in that vacuum is an opportunity for all kinds of new ideas, new perspectives, and new outlooks to be inserted by well-meaning and enlightened people who see the world in fundamentally different terms. I’m talking about people who are relating to larger spiritual realms and see themselves as part of a far bigger reality than this narrow notion of a material world where only what is right in front of us is true and real. So it’s extraordinary and amazing that we get to play a part in this.

**EN:** *So is this a multi-year process, multi-decade even?*

**JP:** No, I’ve found sixteen different, seemingly independent indicators that all suggest that 2012 is some particularly important kind of transition time that starts a new era. There’s good reason to believe that the next three years will really torque the system and open up the possibility of a new world . . . if we rise to the occasion.

**EN:** *The year 2012 has been talked about by all kinds of people. Most famously, it is the end of the Mayan calendar. But*

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there from here.**

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*there is nothing in your book that is particularly esoteric or New Age. I mean, Newt Gingrich endorsed it! You’re talking with people from science, from technology, futurists, experts across the spectrum. Who in your mind has been particularly prophetic in thinking about these dynamics?*

**JP:** Well, my publisher asked me, “What would you write if you could give the book to the new president to help him deal with this coming period of time?” That’s why I picked 2012, because it’s the end of the first Obama administration. The book is really practical. It’s about how you deal with large-scale change, whether you’re an individual or an organization or a government. How do you systematically think about it? How do you plan for extraordinary change?



But, in terms of the people who are thinking about 2012 there's a full spectrum. It goes all the way from Daniel Pinchbeck, author of *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, to some indigenous elders in the United States and other countries. Then there are psychics and remote viewers, Terence McKenna, spiritual teachers—all kinds of different people. There are the folks who track long social and planetary cycles and some, like William Strauss and Neil Howe, who track shorter cycles. You can sort of pick how far out and weird you want to be—there are indicators for anyone and everyone! But they all point to the fact that something really big is coming together now. There's too much happening for me not to believe that we're in one of these major evolutionary punctuations.

**EN:** *If what you're saying is true and there really is a major breakdown, then I guess that provides an open space for people to jump in with new ideas.*

**JP:** Absolutely! Necessity is the mother of invention.

**EN:** *As you mentioned, a big part of the current challenge is the energy crisis and the need for alternatives to oil and fossil fuels. What is the latest on that front?*

**JP:** Well, I'm convinced that we are going to have breakthroughs in terms of energy. It really does look like there is a convergence of capabilities showing up that might, in the next eighteen months, make cold fusion or zero point energy a practical reality. Certainly, there's a huge amount of money chasing alternative energy for obvious reasons, and that does encourage people who are trying to think their way through these issues. And as I said, when the CEO of Total is talking about peak oil, that makes it more palatable for government agencies like the National Science Foundation to fund these things. There is now a commonly understood economic incentive to try to make new technologies happen. So I'm encouraged.

My guess is that it's an all-electric world twenty or twenty-five years from now. The only question is how to make the electricity for everything—heating and lighting, transportation, etc. That opens up all kinds of opportunities for new ways to generate electricity that do not involve smokestacks and pollutants.

**EN:** *Given everything you've just said, what advice would you give people?*

**JP:** It all comes down to how serious you are about trying to do something about this. I think that life works in strange ways and, as I've suggested, our consciousness is causal. That means if you decide that it is quite important to do something about all of this, things will start to happen and people will show up in your life and books will show up that are appropriate. But you have to make that decision first. It has to be a kind of quiet, explicit, serious decision that has a lot of intention behind it. Then the solutions start to emerge and those solutions are different for different people. At the same time, I think it's quite important that we are open to alternatives and fully prepared to consider things that are unconventional, because if you're locked into conventionality, you're not going to get there from here. I'm talking about an open-minded commitment to change.

**EN:** *What are your own plans for the year? Is there any particular angle you're focused on?*

**JP:** Well, I think you guys at EnlightenNext are talking about what the new human is all about, and I'm trying to think about what the new world is going to look like. How will it operate? What does the new economy look like? What will the new government look like? How do the new institutions work? What does a world based upon cooperation or oneness—or whatever you want to call this inclusive, interdependent, love-based orientation—look like? All of the institutions we have now are built on competition. We've got to come up with a new framework. So I'm getting myself involved in some groups that are interested in building prototypes of what the new world might look like in terms of communities. They are starting with an open piece of ground somewhere and asking, "How would you design a new community that operates on a new economic system, a new governmental system, a new social system, an agricultural system that is self-sustaining? Somebody's got to start building these prototypes. And that's what's interesting to me. ■



Listen to a series of interviews with futurists John Petersen, Ray Kurzweil, Patricia Aburdene, and Elza Maalouf at [enlightennext.org/futurists](http://enlightennext.org/futurists)







# 2013

## Or, What to Do When the Apocalypse Doesn't Arrive

by Gary Lachman

The belief in a coming end of the world as we know it may seem understandable to people living in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but a look at history shows that it has been part of Western psychology from the beginning.

The central figure of Western religion, Jesus Christ, told his followers that the end was nigh, and most people who accepted Jesus believed that the cosmic last call would come in their lifetime. Yet Jesus worked within an age-old Jewish tradition that looked to the coming of the Messiah, a religious and political leader who would set the world to rights and, incidentally, free the Chosen People from whomever it was who had conquered them at the time. As Jesus didn't free the Jews from the Romans—nor seemed able to free himself from them either—the Jews who denied him seem justified in their disbelief. To them, and to the Romans, the Christians who preached a coming Day of Judgment were rather like the urban oracles who inhabit most major cities today, ranting on street corners and pestering passersby to repent.

Post-Jesus, the Jews didn't give up their anticipation of a Messiah. They merely pushed back the date of his arrival, a tactic the Christians soon adopted as well when it became clear that Jesus' Second Coming—after his crucifixion and res-

urrection—was delayed. The last major claimant to Messiahdom was the Turkish Jew Sabbatai Zevi, who, after gathering a huge following, ignominiously abandoned his call in 1666 when threatened with impalement by Sultan Mehmet IV. As did later students of eschatology (the study of the end times), the early Christian theorists were adept in cooking the books and explaining why their own final curtain hadn't yet fallen. Nevertheless, against all the evidence, the belief in some once-and-for-all denouement remained strong. In 156 AD, for example, a Phrygian named Montanus declared that he was the incarnation of the Holy Spirit and that, in accordance with the Fourth Gospel, he would reveal "things to come," such as the imminent arrival of Christ's kingdom, which would physically descend from the heavens and transform Phrygia into a land of saints. Understandably, thousands of Christians flocked to Phrygia to await the Second Coming. Yet again, the expected kingdom's failure to arrive did little to dampen the belief that it would eventually show up. After



Montanus, there were several other false alarms, all of which ended in the same way.

Ironically, the Church itself soon became a strong inhibitor of apocalyptic thought. By the time it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, with the emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, the idea of a coming apocalypse was more of a threat than a promise. The Church was the second most powerful organization in the empire, and that it would lose this status because of the end of the world wasn't appealing. Drawing on the work of the third-century theologian Origen, it shifted the emphasis from a historical apocalypse to a spiritual one and developed an eschatology of the individual soul. This idea caught on with the more educated and socially well-situated Christians, but the more spectacular theme of a "real-life" apocalypse remained part of the common people's worldview and has been so ever since, as anyone aware of the enormous popularity of the *Left Behind* series of apocalyptic novels, based on a selective reading of the Book of Revelations, knows. Titles like *The Rapture*, *Tribulation Force*, and *The Mark* don't show up on the *New York Times* bestseller list, but millions of readers with a taste for Christian fundamentalism buy and read these books—well—religiously, as page-turning guides to the coming end times. The overarching theme of *Left Behind* is the fate of those who are not right with the Lord and who face a gory retribution come the last days. A gateway to paradise for the faithful few, for the disbelieving many, the millennium is their worst nightmare.

As the historian Norman Cohn argues in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, millenarian scenarios share some basic ideas. Salvation is collective, involving everyone, although not everyone will be saved; it is to be experienced here on Earth, not in some afterlife; it is on its way and will arrive suddenly; it will be total, effecting a complete transformation of life as we know it; and it is to be achieved through supernatural forces. As Cohn argues, by the Middle Ages, grassroots expectation of the millennium was rampant. With a corrupt Church, the common folk sought salvation through a cleans-

ing apocalypse. This led to some remarkable developments, like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, a loose community of radical Christians circa 1200 who, because of the coming end times, believed they had become free of sin and acted accordingly. Wandering from village to village, they rejected private property—which meant they took whatever they wanted—and devoted themselves to hedonistic pleasures, including "free love" and drunkenness, rather like medieval hippies. Less driven by theology, this and other millenarian sects sought to escape the deprivations of their lives by envisioning a coming cosmic reversal that would set the righteous lowly at the head of the table, with the worldly powerful at best receiving scraps.

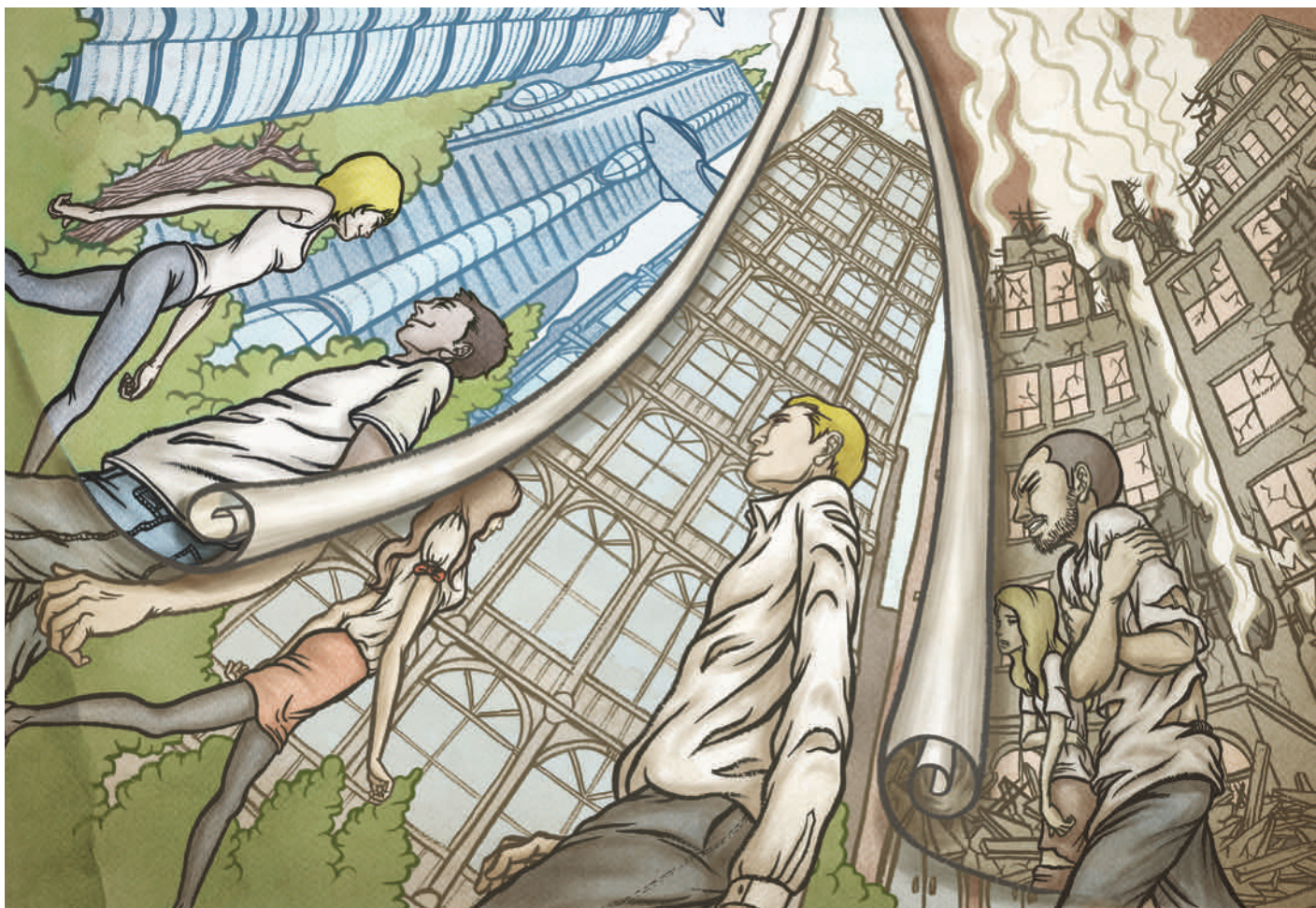
The motivation for many of these sects isn't difficult to grasp. Socially and economically disenfranchised, they resented the generally fine living many monks and priests enjoyed, and understandably wanted some for themselves. If it took an apocalypse to bring this about, so be it. This aspect of millenarianism informed the secular varieties familiar to the modern period, and while the French and Russian revolutions lacked the supernatural forces common to most millenarian movements, they both shared the other criteria admirably. The storming of the Bastille inaugurated the Age of Reason, and the Bolshevik murder of the Romanovs announced the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Hitler's National Socialism was perhaps the most millenarian modern movement of them all, celebrating a Third Reich that would, it claimed, last a thousand years. (Thankfully, all it managed was twelve.) Yet just as the Church did, the leaders of these secular apocalypses soon clamped down on any who felt these events weren't quite apocalyptic enough; and in all three cases, for many the end times only brought new oppression. Another example of secular millenarian belief was the hoopla in Europe that accompanied the outbreak of the First World War. Many believed that by the end of the nineteenth century Western civilization had become rotten, and they looked to war as a way of clearing away the old world in preparation for the new. It was not until the reality

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## Three Possible Futures

An interview with **Joel Garreau**, author of *Radical Evolution*

*According to Joel Garreau, Washington Post reporter and author of Radical Evolution, humans are at a precipitous turning point in history, one in which our accelerating technological capacity has made us the first species to have significant control over our own evolution. Citing trends in four major technology sectors—genetic, robotic, informational, and nanotech—Garreau says that the world could look very different in the not-too-distant future. The unanswered question is: Will it be utopian, dystopian, or something in between? We asked Garreau to give us his vision for our technological destiny.*

The way I see it, there are three scenarios: heaven, hell, and prevail. In the first, heaven, all of these marvelous technologies come online rapidly. We conquer pain, suffering, stupidity, igno-

rance, and even death. Essentially, it looks indistinguishable from the Christian version of heaven. And it could happen. You see amazing headlines in the paper every day.

The second is the hell scenario. That's the one in which these new technologies get into the hands of madmen or fools. Believers in this outcome suggest that if these technologies are used for ill, the whole human race could be wiped out within the next twenty years. And this is also a credible scenario.

The trouble with both the heaven and hell scenarios is that they are *technodeterministic*. In other words, both perspectives hold that technology drives history. They say that humans are pretty much along for the ride, and there's not much we can do about it.

As a humanist, I'm pulling for a third scenario, which I call prevail. To understand this scenario, imagine a graph with two curves on it. One curve represents society's increasing challenges; the second represents our potential for adaptive response. If our response curve stays more or less flat while our challenges rise exponentially, then we're obviously in trouble, because the gap just keeps on getting wider and wider. But suppose our responses are also going up at a similar clip. That's at the heart of the prevail scenario.

You can see an example of this in the Middle Ages. Looking

Continued on page 78



## Three Possible Futures continued from page 77

at the future of the human race from the perspective of that time, you could be forgiven for thinking that we were pretty much toast. You'd be seeing marauding hordes and plagues and all sorts of evil stuff. You'd probably be thinking, "God, this isn't going to end up well." Then all of a sudden, in 1450, along came the printing press, and there was a new way of storing, sharing, collecting, and distributing ideas that was previously unimaginable. This led to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which gave birth to science, democracy,

and eventually to the world we have today. What's interesting is that all of this change was beyond the imagination of any one king or country. It was the collective action of millions of humans organizing themselves in a bottom-up way. They didn't wait for the leaders to tell them what to do but changed their world to produce things as best they could.

We see this prevail scenario again on 9/11 with the fourth airplane that never made it to its intended target. A couple dozen people onboard, empowered by their cell phone technol-

ogy, diagnosed and cured their society's ills in a little under an hour. Was it a perfect solution? Obviously not, because they all died. But it was good enough. They were ordinary humans who didn't wait for their leaders to

come up with a solution but did it themselves. So the heart of the prevail scenario is the idea that humans *can* act collectively to produce astonishing change . . . and we've been doing this for a very long time.



Joel Garreau is a reporter for the *Washington Post* and author of *Radical Evolution*.

Read or listen to the full interview with Joel Garreau at [enlightennext.org/garreau](http://enlightennext.org/garreau)

of trench warfare took hold that those expectations dimmed and the war was seen as yet another example of the very thing it was supposed to eliminate.

While I've been lucky enough to have missed anything like the French or Russian revolution and the First World War, my own lifetime has been peppered with quite a few millennial expectations. Growing up in the 1960s, through the media I was aware of the modern Brethren of the Free Spirit in places like Greenwich Village and Haight-Ashbury. I was also aware that something called the Age of Aquarius either was on its way or had already arrived (the jury is still out on this). Linked to this was the idea that the fabled lost continent of Atlantis—which I read about in comic books and fantasy paperbacks—was due to surface sometime in 1969. Both were heralds of a coming golden age, when "peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars." By the early seventies such anticipations had fizzled, but in 1974 they were briefly revived when comet Kohoutek sparked new interest in apocalyptic beliefs. A Christian group called the Children of God—who, incidentally, advocated "revolutionary lovemaking" (read: promiscuity)—distributed leaflets announcing doomsday for January of that year, which my friends and I read with interest. Predictably, Kohoutek fizzled as well. That same year, the science writers John Gribbin and Stephen Plagemann published *The Jupiter Effect*, a bestseller predicting the devastating results (earthquakes, tidal waves, etc.) of a curious alignment of the planets on one side of the sun. When

the alignment took place and nothing happened, they wrote a second book, *The Jupiter Effect Reconsidered*, explaining what went wrong. Not surprisingly, this sequel didn't sell as well.

There were other millennial dates too. Remember the solar eclipse of 1999 and Y2K, the millennium bug? But the most significant millennial date so far in my lifetime surely was 1987, the year of the Harmonic Convergence—another planetary alignment—which was seen as the kickoff for the most anticipated apocalyptic event in recent years, the year 2012. For those unaware, proponents of 2012 argue that an ancient Mayan calendar—combined with permutations of the *I Ching*—predicts that tremendous changes will take place in that year and that, as one advocate expresses it, a "singularity," an event of unprecedented ontological character, will take place and, as the saying goes, transform life as we know it. Recalling Norman Cohn's criteria for millenarian belief, from everything I've heard about 2012, it fits the bill nicely.

I first heard of the Harmonic Convergence in 1987 when I was working at a well-known New Age bookshop in Los Angeles. Although items like crystals and other spiritual accessories were already big sellers, I was intrigued by the flood of people gathering metaphysical paraphernalia in preparation for some major event. I was informed that like Kohoutek, Atlantis, and the Aquarian Age, the Harmonic Convergence marked the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. There would be some disturbance, yes, the Harmonic Convergences I spoke with informed me; the shift



into the new time would not be smooth, but I shouldn't worry. Apparently, the bookshop was one of the safest places on the planet and I would be protected. This was, I admit, a relief, and as my apartment was just a block away from the shop, I wondered just how far the protection would reach.

The sources about the coming event were José Argüelles's *The Mayan Factor* and, later, Terence McKenna's writings on his "time wave" theory in *The Archaic Revival* and other books. I read Argüelles but wasn't impressed, and when a later book, *Surfers of the Zuvuya*, appeared, it just seemed silly. I was also not taken with his apparent adoption of the role of avatar, an identity other proponents of 2012 seem to embrace easily. (I did, however, find an earlier book, *The Transformative Vision*, to be a profitable study in cultural philosophy.) I found McKenna more interesting and a better writer, but I still wasn't sold on the idea. I heard McKenna speak, and without doubt the man had kissed the Blarney Stone, but after an entertaining ninety minutes I left the lecture no more convinced than when I arrived. The fact that he banked a great deal on a liberal indulgence in hallucinogens also made me question his seriousness. I had had my own experiences with psychedelics, and while some were interesting, for the most part they seemed more a distraction than anything else.

Much has been written about 2012, pointing out both the value and the flaws in Argüelles's and McKenna's interpretations. I don't intend to repeat those here. The strangeness of the ideas did not repel me. At the time that I came across them, I was reading Rudolf Steiner, who had his own prophecies concerning the third millennium, which, to be honest, were rather vague. I had also already spent some years in the Gurdjieff "work," so odd ideas were not a threat. What troubled me then and today is what I call the "apocalyptic gesture," a point I raised recently on the Reality Sandwich website, much of which is dedicated to the 2012 scenario. The desire for some once-and-for-all break with the given conditions of life seems, to me at least, to be embedded in our psyche and is a form of historical or evolutionary impatience.

Social, political, or cultural conditions may trigger it, but in essence it's the same reaction as losing patience with some annoying, mundane business and, in frustration, knocking it aside with the intent to make a "clean start." While in our personal lives this may result in nothing more than a string of false beginnings and a lack of staying power, on the broader social and political scale it can mean something far more serious.

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## The fabled lost continent of Atlantis—which I read about in comic books and fantasy paperbacks—was due to surface sometime in 1969.

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In essays like "The Destructive Character," "Critique of Violence," and "Theologico-Political Fragment," the German-Jewish cultural thinker Walter Benjamin, who combined an idiosyncratic Marxism with an equally eccentric understanding of the Kabbalah, argued for the need for apocalyptic violence in order to bring about the Messianic Age. Whether it was the class war or Jehovah's righteous wrath, Benjamin believed in the necessity for some final conclusive event that would restore the fallen world to paradise. The violence of divine intervention and a sudden eschatological change informed Benjamin's view of

history, which he famously saw as a "single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage." This hunger for some decisive action to clear away the detritus of the postlapsarian world informed Benjamin's personal life too, and in 1940, trying to escape from the Nazis, he committed suicide, enacting upon himself an apocalyptic violence he had long contemplated.

In mentioning Benjamin, I'm not suggesting that believers in 2012 advocate violence. I am saying that the anticipation of a singularity associated with 2012 is a manifestation of what may very well be a Jungian archetype, the archetype of the apocalypse. And while violence may not be part of the prophecy, it can easily become part of the anticlimax when the apocalypse doesn't arrive and disappointment sets in. Recent history suggests this. The "Summer of Love" in 1967—which by many accounts wasn't as groovy as believed—quickly became the year of "Street Fighting Man" in 1968, when the "generation gap" promised to turn into something like revolution, and dangerous slogans like "If you're not part of

the solution, you're part of the problem" promoted a simplistic us-or-them scenario. Yet by 1969 the hopes of an Aquarian Age had been severely battered by the gruesome Charles Manson murders and the Rolling Stones' disastrous concert at Altamont, when Hell's Angels murdered one man and terrorized hundreds of others, including the Stones themselves. (I tell the story in *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius*.) Exorbitantly high hopes can often lead to very deep depressions, and in a microcosmic popular sense, within a few years the peace and love unreservedly embraced by the flower generation became the "no future" of the punks. Cynicism, jadedness, and pessimism often constitute the hangover from the intoxication of excessively high expectations. No one rejects ideals more vigorously than a bruised romantic.

Again, in mentioning this I'm not saying that the many crises that lead some to look to 2012 as a solution are not real. Clearly they are. We all know them, and it would be tedious for me to roll off a list. But anticipating an apocalypse or singularity is only one response to crises. There are others. And a radical shift in the nature of things is only one possibility.

The philosopher Jean Gebser, who argued very persuasively that we are experiencing what he called a breakdown in our "structure of consciousness," likewise saw significant changes on the historical horizon. Gebser did not, however, tie himself to a deadline and didn't anticipate a golden age. "The world will not become much better," Gebser wrote, "merely a little different, and perhaps somewhat more appreciative of the things that really matter." To those expecting some unprecedented alteration in the conditions of existence, this probably seems a bit tame. To me, it is more than enough of a goal to work toward, and if only a handful of people become "more appreciative of the things that really matter," then the Life Force, evolution, or whatever you want to call it is getting the job done.

In his *Study of History*, an account of the rise and fall of civilizations, the historian Arnold Toynbee argues that there are two stereotypical responses to what he calls a "time of troubles," the crisis points that make or break a civilization. One is the "archaist," a desire to return to some previous happy time or golden age. The other is the "futurist," an urge

to accelerate time and leap into a dazzling future. That both offerings are embraced today is, I think, clear. The belief that a saving grace may come from indigenous non-Western people untouched by modernity's sins is part of a very popular "archaic revival." Likewise, the trans- or posthumanism that sees salvation in some form of technological marriage between man and computer is equally fashionable. The 2012 scenario seems to partake of both camps: It proposes a return to the beliefs of an ancient civilization in order to make a leap into an unimaginable future. What both strategies share,

however, is a desire to escape the present. Given our own "time of troubles," this seems understandable enough.

Toynbee also believed in what I call the "Goldilocks theory of history," and to me it makes a lot of sense. If a challenge facing it is too great, he argued, a civilization smashes. If it isn't great enough, the civilization overcomes it too easily,

becomes decadent, and decays. But if the challenge is "just right"—not too great and not too small—it forces the civilization to make sufficient effort to advance creatively.

Sadly, most of the civilizations Toynbee studied either cracked or went soft. The verdict has yet to come in on our own, and as everyone knows, there are no guarantees. But I'm willing to make a bet. There are still a few years left, and, of course, things can change. But I'm willing to wager that with any luck, 2013 will show that we got it just right. If nothing else, trying to meet our challenges successfully will give us all something to do when the apocalypse doesn't arrive. ■

## No one rejects ideals more vigorously than a bruised romantic.

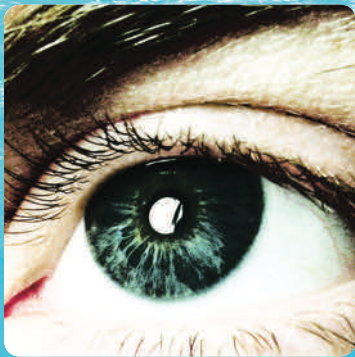


**Gary Lachman** is the author of *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius* (New York: The Disinformation Company, 2003) as well as other books on consciousness, culture, and the history of Western esotericism. His most recent work is *Politics and the Occult: The Left, the Right, and the Radically Unseen* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2008).



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# Water, Water, Everywhere

Interview by Ross Robertson

**Jim Garrison** is a man on a mission—a ten-year mission, to be exact—to green the global economy

and reduce worldwide carbon emissions by eighty percent by the year 2020. On November 12, his State of the World Forum will be convening its 2009 conference in Washington, DC, with the explicit goal of focusing the world's attention on the immediacy and urgency of the climate crisis. Over the next ten years, this international assembly of corporate and political leaders, citizens, and institutions will be gathering all over the world, from China to Holland to India to Brazil, in a concentrated effort to galvanize the unprecedented levels of public support and political willpower necessary to save the human

species from a decidedly watery apocalypse. And perhaps most significantly, they'll be framing, shaping, and assessing all of this work in the context of the newest, most progressive, and most promising set of organizing principles they know of: integral theory.

Garrison, who founded the State of the World Forum in 1995 in collaboration with Mikhail Gorbachev, is not new to living life with a missionary's sense of destiny. As Robert Hager, one of his partners from the 1990s once reflected, "[Jim] never has any lower plans than the cosmos and God's broad firmament." Perhaps it

is simply that he grew up a missionary's son in China; or perhaps it is the fact that his longtime intellectual passions for theology, philosophy, and the work of Carl Jung have given him a rich sense of the deep archetypal forces driving human history. But whatever the case, there is little doubt that Garrison has a knack for reading the cultural tea leaves and for grasping the political and even spiritual significance of new progressive causes. Indeed, with two degrees from Harvard Divinity School and a PhD in Philosophical Theology from Cambridge, this philosopher-activist and self-titled "recovering academic" has always felt the need to infuse progressive movements with a spiritual and moral sensibility. In the early eighties, in response to the Reagan revolution and the rise of the religious right, he cofounded the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm in Washington, DC, that championed left-leaning causes and whose name was taken from a phrase in the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin's book *The Heart of Matter*. The Christic Institute's legal team made a name for itself by successfully prosecuting a number of civil rights cases, and many of them had a hand in representing Karen Silkwood in her case against the Kerr-McGee Corporation as well.

After his time in Washington, Garrison headed west to California, ending up at Esalen

Institute, where he served as executive director of the Soviet-American Exchange Program from 1986 to 1990. Through the many connections he made in those days of "hot-tub diplomacy," he moved on to establish the International Foreign Policy Association with former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz in 1991. By then the Cold War was ending and leaving in its wake a more uncertain, chaotic world that was globalizing at a furious pace. So Garrison joined forces with Gorbachev to create the State of the World Forum "as an incubator, catalyst, and integrator for innovative leaders and institutions working to bring greater equity, democracy, and accountability to globalization and global governance."

Previous iterations of the Forum, in San Francisco, New York, London, Mexico City, and Brussels, have addressed the challenges of democracy and sustainability in a globalizing world from many different angles—political, social, ethical, economic, scientific, and spiritual. Garrison plans to take the same broad-minded approach to climate change. Indeed, it's no surprise that this latest initiative plans to "refract" the unparalleled complexities of climate change through the lens of integral philosophy. It is one of the few systems of thinking that has the

power to capture the multidimensional reality of this critical issue and, in doing so, to help clarify and empower our response. As Garrison observes, "It is remarkable that just as global warming threatens the world and our financial and economic structures are collapsing . . . new social values are emerging along with the appreciation, skills, and technologies that can shape a future sustainable and resilient enough to meet the challenges besetting us."

*EnlightenNext* caught up with Garrison after his return from a recent trip to Brazil, where he has been pursuing new relationships and connections and working to mobilize Brazil's up-and-coming generation of politicians to lead the way on the politically sensitive, globally relevant, spiritually urgent, and increasingly stark reality of global climate change.



**Jim Garrison** is the president and founder of the State of the World Forum.

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *You're calling the 2009 State of the World Forum "The Real Crisis of Climate Change: The Truth Is Not Enough." How would you describe your vision for the conference?*

**JIM GARRISON:** Well, the title of the conference represents the challenge we want to take up: that the truth alone is not sufficient to compel action. There's a very powerful force in the human psyche that habituates us to denial and to lethargy, and simply presenting the facts about climate change, as dire as they are, is not sufficient to prevent what scientists are telling us could be an

absolutely unprecedented catastrophe. So we've partnered with Ken Wilber, and we're using integral theory—maybe for the first time, at least on an international level—as the operating system for the conference. In particular, we believe Ken's notion of the four quadrants can help motivate people to engage in the kind of value shifts required for moving in a concerted way to deal with global warming.

**EN:** *What is it exactly about the integral perspective that has been so empowering for you in terms of meeting the enormous challenges of climate change?*

**JG:** I think the four quadrants\* are the best place to begin challenging people to take seriously the idea that we have both *personal values* and *collective values*, and that we take *personal actions* and *collective actions*. And it's only when those four aspects of our common humanity begin to synergize that we can achieve meaningful change.

It's really easy for us to sit on our couches and say the government should do this and the government should do

\*For a diagram and explanation of the four quadrants, go to [enlightennext.org/magazine/fourquadrants](http://enlightennext.org/magazine/fourquadrants)



that, but our own lifestyles, for the most part, are just as unsustainable as the corporations and the politicians we criticize. We drive fossil fuel cars. We live in enormously inefficient houses. We eat lots of red meat, knowing or not knowing that the production of beef for our tables is completely unsustainable and a major contributor to global warming. So it's not enough for us to say that the government should reduce its carbon emissions by eighty percent without at the same time understanding that we as individuals, as families, and as communities have to engage in the same kind of transformation—the same evolution of values, intentions, and behaviors—that we're

we'll have several major figures—Rajendra Pachauri, the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); Lester Brown, the founder of the Worldwatch Institute and author of *Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*; and Jim Hansen, a chief scientist at NASA who's been calling attention to climate change for the past thirty years—lay out the urgency of what we're up against. Next, we'll introduce the integral perspective and explain theoretically why, in order to really tackle global warming, we've got to deal with it from the point of view of both values and facts, at both a personal level and a collective level. Then, as different issues come up over the next several days, we're going to refract

## For the first time in history, the urgency of our crisis is at such a magnitude that everything has to change simultaneously.

demanding from our corporations and our governments.

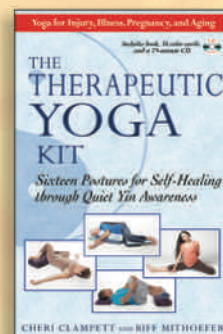
For the first time in history, the urgency of the crisis is at such a magnitude that everything has to change simultaneously. And integral theory is one of the best tools we have that allows us, almost scientifically, to understand what that means.

**EN:** *What do you imagine an integral approach to climate change will look like in practice?*

**JG:** At the 2009 Forum, for example, rather than putting on a conference where (as so often happens) you have mostly panels, plenary sessions, and workshops—mainly talking heads—we're going to use integral theory to shape a more dynamic process that is going to be leading in a certain direction. On the morning of the first day,

those issues through the four quadrants and use that framework to examine the complexities of climate change. By the end of the conference, hopefully people will go away with a much more profound sense of the relationship between the facts that they know and the values that they hold. And because of that, they'll have a much clearer idea of what they need to do both individually and collectively.

With this conference, the State of the World Forum is initiating a ten-year process in which we'll be meeting in a different world city each year. In 2010, we'll be in Brazil. In 2011, we'll probably meet in The Hague. We have conversations going on right now about meetings in India, the Middle East, China, Russia, Australia, and Southeast Asia. And this whole process is going to evolve over time. We're starting with the four quadrants because that is



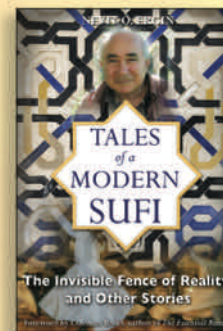
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the simplest, most fundamental aspect of integral theory. But as we move across countries and cultures each year, we're going to be building on the complexity of what integral theory can do to inform the issues that are emerging in the world as time moves on. We'll be exploring the different stages of personal and moral development, the different kinds of intelligences that can be used to approach these issues, and so on.

**EN:** *That sounds fantastic, Jim. I'm curious: Why do you see climate change as the most urgent issue we're facing right now? Given so many other pressing global situations, why is this one front and center?*

If we don't wake up in the next twenty-four months, we're going to be remembered as the generation that let the entire span of human civilization essentially go under water.

**JG:** To me, every other issue, with the possible exception of the nuclear weapons issue, is a subset of the climate change issue and will be dealt with satisfactorily to the degree that we deal with climate change. Right now, we are unleashing seventy million tons of global greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere every day, and we've been emitting CO<sub>2</sub> for the last three hundred years, ever since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The last ten thousand years of human civilization have been lived in relatively stable climatic conditions, with atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> at roughly 280 parts per million (ppm). And in the space of just a couple centuries, we've increased that number to 385 ppm and are now closing in on 400 ppm. The last time this happened was about fifty-five

million years ago when, scientists believe, a meteor hit the Earth and shook the axis of the planet. Global temperatures went up by five to eight degrees centigrade, in the face of which there were dramatic climatic changes and roughly seventy percent of earth's species, including the dinosaurs, became extinct. It took two hundred thousand years for the planet to regain its equilibrium—an equilibrium that held until the Industrial Revolution.

According to a study just released by MIT and the University of Pennsylvania, even if all the governments of the world fulfill one hundred percent of the agreements that they're currently negotiating to reduce carbon emissions eighty percent by the year 2050, carbon concentrations

will still go up above 600 ppm and global temperatures will rise by four to six degrees centigrade. The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change concluded that such an increase would amount to a catastrophe "outside of any known human experience." And the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is saying that even if we went to zero emissions right now—worldwide, instantaneously, like tomorrow morning—the effects would still be with us for the next thousand years at a minimum.

Right now, the ice off Greenland is melting at such a rate that every twenty-four hours, there's enough water going into the ocean to cover the state of Texas thirteen feet deep. Every twenty-four hours! Up until just two weeks ago, most

scientists thought the Antarctic was not being affected by global warming. But now they're saying that it's melting as fast as Greenland and that the major ice shelves are moving into the sea forty to seventy percent faster than they did in the 1970s. If all of the ice off Greenland melts, the seas will rise worldwide at least ten feet. Double that with Antarctica, and that's a minimum of a twenty-foot rise in sea levels around the world. Just think for a minute what that means. New York, Miami, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Tel Aviv, Rome, London—all are going to be confronted with twenty to thirty feet of water. The Maldives Islands are starting to talk about having to evacuate to India in the next several decades because they can see that they're going to be completely underwater.

Global climate change is dramatically changing the weather, as well. Since 1987, the number and frequency of extreme weather events have quadrupled. That means that now we get in one week what we got in a whole month twenty-five years ago. It seems like every day or two we hear about huge tornadoes in the news, fires in Australia, earthquakes or hurricanes somewhere. They're estimating that the world food supply will be reduced by five percent simply because of drought. They've got droughts in Australia right now, droughts in northern China affecting the winter wheat crop in India, droughts all over the Middle East. There hasn't been a drop of rain in Kenya for the last eighteen months, and Argentina, one of the biggest wheat exporters in the world, is going to see a fifty percent reduction in its wheat crop from 2008 to 2009. Already, the world food supply is down to less than sixty days.

And that's just the food issue. Consider that because of global warming, the vast steppes of Siberia are now melting. For the last couple million years, the Siberian tundra has been permafrost, but now there's

methane gas seeping up through the bogs. Methane contributes twenty times more to global warming than does CO<sub>2</sub> and scientists a month ago were saying that the amount of methane being released into the atmosphere is now equal to all the CO<sub>2</sub> that's humanly produced. But there's a very important difference. We might be able to reduce human production of CO<sub>2</sub> but there's nothing we can do to stop the melting of the tundra. And it's not just the melting of the tundra. With the melting of the summer icecaps off Antarctica, we also have methane bubbling up from the ocean floor underneath. We've got big boiling areas in the sea where methane levels are now one hundred or two hundred times the background amounts.

As IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri said when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2007 in Oslo, if we don't take action by 2012, these ecological forces could synergize beyond any capacity of human beings to influence events. That's where we are. And that's why the State of the World Forum is convening: to make this urgent appeal to change our personal lifestyles. Our governments basically have to do by 2020 what they're currently talking about doing by 2050, because if we don't change our momentum, everything we've built for the last ten thousand years will be seriously undermined in a catastrophe that will only have been triggered by our incapacity to change our ways.

It's an extraordinary situation when you really think about it. We're on a precipice. If we don't wake up in the next twenty-four months and take some very concerted action, we're going to be remembered as the generation that let the entire span of human civilization essentially go under water just because we couldn't get our act together to do something about it. But if we bite the bullet, if we can turn this thing around, if we engage in a ten-year campaign to green our economies and

do it in the same spirit that enabled John Kennedy's administration to put a man on the moon in ten years, then I'm absolutely convinced that we can pull it off.

**EN:** *When you lay out all the facts like that, it's certainly not hard to conjure up some terrifying images of apocalypse. Actually, one of the most interesting things we've been exploring for this issue has to do with these dynamics of change and collapse and the question: Do things need to fall apart in order for them to get better? Some people say a total collapse would be a good thing because it would wipe the slate clean and allow us to build something new. There can even be a sort of blasé cheeriness in some quarters at the prospect of exactly the kind of ecological Armageddon that scientists are warning us about. Other people say, well, no, of course it wouldn't have to go down like that if we just decided to do something about it. And furthermore, if things fell apart too badly, we might really regress to survival mode. We might find our society so completely fractured that we'd be unable to move forward at all. What is your take on this dynamic?*

**JG:** Well, I have a couple of perspectives on that. The first and the most cosmic, I suppose, is that there have been five major cataclysms in Earth's history over the last four and a half billion years, in the midst of which between fifty and ninety percent of all earth's species were wiped out. The extraordinary similarity among all five of those collapses is that when life reconstituted itself, sometimes several hundred million years later, it always did so at a higher level of complexity. What that says to me is that life is extraordinarily resilient and will move through this in a way that will affirm life itself.

The second thing, as Canadian biologist David Suzuki points out, is that ninety-five percent of all the species that

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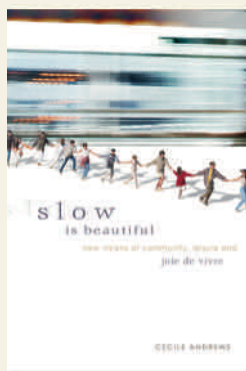


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have ever lived over the course of earth's history are now extinct. So extinction, not survival, is the norm. To survive in this process we call life requires extraordinary acuity and adaptability. And one of the lessons, by the way, of those little species that did survive those five massive historical extinctions is that they were small, round, and cooperative. We might all bear that in mind as we think about going through this one.

The third perspective is a point made by Jesus, actually, around the Last Supper and the betrayal of Judas. He said, "It must needs be that the son of man must

have extraordinary capacities to be able to flex and to move—and quickly. Lester Brown often uses the example of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The American people were lazy. They didn't want to have anything to do with the war. They were in the same state of denial about the Nazis and imperial Japan that we are in now about global warming. And yet six weeks later, Franklin Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, said "We are going to mobilize." Most people don't remember, but for the span of World War II, Americans couldn't buy new cars because General Motors and Ford and Chrysler

## I believe what distinguishes the human species from every other species is that we are the most adaptive and resilient on the planet.

die, but woe unto him by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would be better for him that he put a millstone around his neck and threw himself into the sea." The point here is that there may be an inevitability to a crisis, but woe unto you who stood there during the time of crisis and either aided the crisis or let it happen. That's where the real transgression is. So on one level, it's certainly true that life is resilient and will emerge through the catastrophe. But we're standing here as a race right now in 2009, at the edge of a precipice, and we have some fundamental choices to make.

I believe what distinguishes the human species from every other species is not that we have language and not that we have tools but that we are the most adaptive and resilient species on the planet. We've been able to thrive in every ecological niche from deserts to snow. We can endure and adapt to almost anything. So we know going into this crisis that we

were all building tanks and bombers and instruments of war. The United States simultaneously crossed the Pacific and defeated the Japanese *and* crossed the Atlantic and defeated the Nazis, an accomplishment no military analyst at that time believed was even remotely possible. In fact, that was one of the reasons the Japanese attacked in the first place. It was not conceivable to the Germans and the Japanese that the United States could fight a two-front war across two vast oceans and win. But we did it, and this is why that generation has often been called "the greatest generation." They did it because they mobilized and they set their minds to doing what was necessary. ■

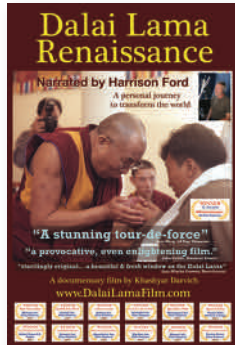


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Jim Garrison at [enlightennext.org/garrison](http://enlightennext.org/garrison)



# Natural Selection

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## Dalai Lama Renaissance

A film by Khashyar Darvich

(Wakan foundation for the Arts, 2008,  
DVD@DalaiLamaFilm.com)

For five days in 1999, His Holiness the Dalai Lama hosted a group of “new paradigm” thinkers at his home in Dharamsala, India, for a series of discussions called the Synthesis Dialogues. The guest list was somewhat of a who’s who of the spiritual-but-not-religious, science-meets-spirit, and New Thought movements in the United States, plus a smattering of cultural creatives from around the world. Their sacred, and certainly ambitious, mission was to create a synthesis of the participants’ wide-ranging and diverse knowledge that could help lay the foundation for a whole new form of secular spirituality. The Dalai Lama passionately wants such a global spirituality to emerge in the world—a shared set of higher values independent of any particular religious faith, and even of faith in general. So when the late Christian-Hindu monk Brother Wayne Teasdale and a lawyer-mediator named Brian Muldoon suggested to him that they convene a group of high-level spiritual thinkers and activists to come up with a plan that would enable a new secular spiritual renaissance to flower worldwide,

he was thrilled and agreed to host the event.

Unfortunately for him, however, he had *no idea* what he was getting himself into.

*Dalai Lama Renaissance*, a film by award-winning producer-director Khashyar Darvich, documents in hilarious, excruciating, and frequently embarrassing detail the events of those five days in the Himalayas where, perhaps for the first time, a talented and independently minded group of individuals met together to try to plan how to shift the consciousness of the world. It wasn’t exactly a “renaissance” in any conventional sense of the word, but the film has a certain persuasive power all the same, albeit in the form of irony. If you’ve ever had any doubt that the secular postmodern West is in dire need of exactly the sort of spiritual backbone and shared higher context that the Dalai Lama is so keenly interested in, then look no further. Just fire up this DVD and prepare to be amazed.

The narrative “stars” New Age physicists Amit Goswami and Fred Alan Wolf, *YES!* magazine founder Frances Korten, progressive economist Vicki Robin, and evolution biologist Elisabet Sahtouris. Many of the invited luminaries—Reverend Michael Beckwith, human potential pioneer Jean Houston, and Thai monk-activist Sulak Sivaraksa, to name a few—play only bit parts. Several of the rest (including *Voluntary Simplicity* author Duane Elgin and conscious evolutionist Barbara Marx Hubbard) never speak on camera at all, making one wonder if they declined to be included in the documentary. Regardless, there’s plenty of material left for Darvich to work with, and early on in the film, as the dialogues are beginning, he pokes fun at the antics taking place between people who have committed their lives to creating a new world

and yet, surprisingly, seem barely able to sit in the same room together.

One scene, for example, follows a group of the “synthesizers” as they sit discussing the question: What is the emerging paradigm or leading edge of thought and practice in your field? The camera repeatedly cuts between Goswami, Wolf, Sahtouris, and several others as their conversation devolves into a verbal tug of war between Goswami and Wolf, with Sahtouris occasionally patting Goswami on the shoulder and trying to soothe him into silence. While impish music plays signaling to the audience the absurdity of what is unfolding, Wolf turns to Goswami and says, “You’re going to dominate this thing.”

“Fred, you’re the one who is dominating!” Goswami replies.

“I’m not dominating,” Wolf counters. “I just want to hear what *she* has to say, and I want to hear what *he* has to say.”

“Yes, but Fred, you are not letting me speak at all!”

“That’s because you keep interrupting!”

“I’m not interrupting! She was finished!” And so on.

As all of this is unfolding on screen, Darvich also intersperses bits of interviews with Goswami and Wolf, who earnestly explain that their total derailment of that particular discussion was really just an expression of love and compassion. The scene then jumps to another vignette from later that day in which facilitator Brian Muldoon comments to the assembled group, “Some of you noticed we all have egos, and sometimes they behave well and sometimes they don’t. Tomorrow, we would really love it if they behaved well, okay?”

Things pretty much go downhill from



## Books for Evolutionaries

with Peter Russell



Peter Russell is a futurist, scholar, and prolific author whose books include *The Global Brain* (1995), *The Conscious Revolution* (1999), and *From Science to God* (2002).

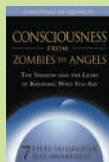
*Q: What are the three best books you've read about the nature of consciousness?*



### The Radiance of Being

by Allan Combs

This is a serious book for the general reader, filled with a mix of hard science and deep philosophy. Allan Combs is not biased toward a particular point of view, and he reviews a broad spectrum of the various approaches to consciousness, from chaos theory to spiritual insights. He provides an excellent introduction to the subject and to other thinkers in the field.



### Consciousness from Zombies to Angels

by Christian de Quincey

Lucid and comprehensive, this book tackles some of the fundamental questions about consciousness head-on: What is consciousness? Could it ever emerge from insentient matter? Are all beings conscious? What is the Self? Writing for the layperson, Christian de Quincey makes you think about consciousness in a new way.



### Toward a Psychology of Awakening

by John Welwood

John Welwood integrates the spiritual realizations of the East with the psychological insights of the West, reconciling the development of individual consciousness with the spiritual search for transcendence. A solid book on the awakening of consciousness, it weaves theory and practice in a grounded and accessible style.

*Q: What is the best book you've read in the past year?*



### The Head Trip

by Jeff Warren

Using an original approach, Jeff Warren distinguishes twelve different states of consciousness, from lucid dreaming to the transcendental. It stands out because the author bases his ideas not only on the views of neuroscientists, anthropologists, and meditation practitioners but also on his own personal explorations. Particularly fascinating are his discoveries about the murky realm of sleep. Sprinkled with comic panels, this book is as entertaining as it is insightful.

there, spiraling rapidly into a multihued portrait of narcissism, discord, and ambition that seems to flabbergast the group's facilitators as much as it defies their every effort to rein it in. One New Thought minister recounts his recent "Dalai Lama nightmare," in which His Holiness, who is known for the rare quality of his attention and for making everyone he meets feel like a close personal friend, snubs him. Facilitator Nancy Margulies shares her

"secret fantasy" that when she finally meets him, the Dalai Lama will say "Who is *that*?" and I'll be singled out somehow." Economist Vicki Robin remarks, "On the one hand, I do believe that he's the fourteenth reincarnation of some divine being. But the other part of it is that he's become something for the *rest* of us. . . . Here's this man who if he just says 'Boo!' about something, the whole world will hear it. So we're all offering him our absolute

best fruit [ideas], hoping that he'll bring our fruit, *our* fruit, to the world."

At one point, a group of about sixty or so family, friends, and colleagues of the synthesizers—who came along for the journey to India, but were never formally part of the dialogues—are invited to attend the group's working sessions, not as participants, but as witnesses to "hold the space." Soon, however, some of them begin to rebel,

# Speaking of Books

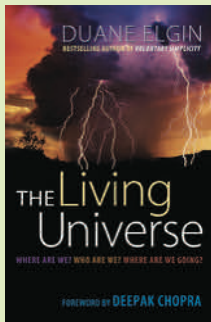
with **Duane Elgin**, author of *The Living Universe*

Interview by Joel Pitney and Megan Cater



Duane Elgin is no stranger to the conscious evolution movement. His 1981 classic, *Voluntary Simplicity*, inspired a generation of people to approach their lives and choices with the entire planet in mind. Since that time, Elgin, whose biography includes

working with Stanford University's famous CIA-sponsored "psychic spying" program, writing multiple popular books, and founding several nonprofits dedicated to media activism, has been a tireless advocate for helping humanity awaken to a larger perspective on who we are and why we are here. In his new book, *The Living Universe* (2009), Elgin broadens the scope of his vision from a planetary scale to include the entire universe. In it he proposes a new spiritually based and scientifically informed cosmology that sees the universe not as a mechanical conglomeration of lifeless particles but as a dynamic, living system.



(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009, paperback \$15.95)



Listen to the full interview with author and evolutionary activist Duane Elgin at [enlightennext.org/elgin](http://enlightennext.org/elgin)

**ENLIGHTENNEXT:** *In the book, you talk about how our scientific understanding is telling us that the universe is a living entity. Can you explain how science is leading us to that conclusion?*

**DUANE ELGIN:** We've discovered that one of the key characteristics of any living system is continuous regeneration. Consider your body, for example. The inner lining of your intestine is renewed roughly every five days, the outer layer of your skin is replaced every two weeks, and your bones are replaced every seven to ten years. This isn't just true for

our bodies. We've discovered that the entire universe is being continuously regenerated at every level, from atoms to humans to galaxies.

One way to understand this is to look at the geometry or the architecture that the universe is creating over and over again at every scale. What we see is a form called a *torus*—a kind of donut shape—which is the universal form of self-organizing, self-referencing systems. We can see this in nature, for example, in the air currents generated by a tornado or in the magnetic field surrounding the earth. It's a system that is simply holding itself together with its own forces. Like an eddy in a stream or a vortex in a whirlpool, all that exists is energy flowing through and sustaining these persisting patterns. So the universe is creating these self-organizing systems throughout itself. It's a garden for growing life in a context of enormous freedom.

**EN:** *Why do you feel it's important for people to develop this understanding of the universe as living?*

**DE:** Until recently, the dominant cosmology in contemporary physics held that since the big bang nearly fourteen billion years ago, little more has happened than

a rearranging of the cosmic furniture. This dead-universe theory assumes creation occurred only once, when a massive explosion spewed out lifeless material debris into equally lifeless space. Life then somehow mysteriously emerged as nonliving atoms inexplicably organized and grew themselves into ever more complex forms. In this scenario, who we are and life itself are meaningless. We're just a speck of aliveness in a vast ocean of deadness, and when we die, we just sink into oblivion.

But now science is starting to say, "Wait a minute. We're living in a continuously regenerating system, and there are extraordinary amounts of life just pouring through all of it." From this perspective, we see that the whole of existence is alive, and when we die, we die into this vast ocean of aliveness. We're beginning to recognize how extraordinary we are as a species and that what really matters is the extent to which we recognize ourselves as that intensification of aliveness. Do we exist in a reality that has no meaning, or do we see ourselves in this much larger context? It matters enormously whether we're just playing biochemical games or we're authentically connecting with the deeper aliveness that permeates the universe.



complaining that they are being unfairly excluded. One vocal member of this witness group is Thomas A. Forsthoefel, an assistant professor of religion at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania, who objects to the “hierarchical structure” established by the organizers: “[We are] witnesses who are mute here! I’m sorry, but we all come from certain experiences, spiritualities, trainings, and we have something to say.”

Forsthoefel’s declaration of victimhood lands like a perfect sucker punch to the soft, sensitive underbelly of politically correct postmodern spirituality: *compassion*. Perhaps the word “compassion” means something else entirely in a traditional Buddhist context, but as the ubiquitous buzzword here, it means including everyone without discriminating; making sure that no one feels bad; and attending to every cry of victimization, even when it thinly masks self-serving motivations. It’s the kind of compassion that makes it impossible to deal directly with the egotism and fractiousness that stand in the way of unity and cohesiveness among this group of spiritual leaders with an almost toxic aversion to hierarchy and leadership. So when Goswami hijacks the synthesis process once again by refusing to let anyone else speak for him at their final audience with the Dalai Lama, demanding the chance to personally present his own work and ideas to His Holiness, it’s not exactly a surprise that the facilitators give in. At this point, they hardly seem to have much choice in the matter.

“When [Brother Wayne and I] visited with His Holiness last month,” Muldoon says to the Dalai Lama and the assembled crowd on the day of their final, culminating meeting, “we said that surely by Wednesday afternoon we’ll have solved many of the world’s problems. And we’ll be ready to move on, because we’ll have jelled as a group, we’ll have our strategy together, and we’ll be able to move ahead. Well, we’re not quite there. Because frankly, the facilitators have been *fired* in the process.” His Holiness, clearly mystified, can only turn to his Tibetan attendants and ask them to

translate. And the following look of confusion and disappointment that comes over his face is really the most painful indictment of all.

Indeed, it’s one thing for this diverse group of highly accomplished scientists, philosophers, spiritual leaders, and social activists to struggle to find a strong, stable, creative common ground on which to work together, which is by no means an easy thing to do. But it’s another for them to so consistently sidestep, misinterpret, or simply ignore their most basic reason for being there and the deeper message His Holiness is constantly trying to get across to them. It’s almost as though the difficulties he sometimes has in understanding them are mirrored by the startling incapacity of the group as a whole to appreciate his real reason for bringing them together, or his real hope for the outcome. For whatever any of the participants may have

If you’ve ever had any doubt that the secular West is in dire need of a spiritual backbone and a shared higher context, then look no further. Just fire up this DVD and prepare to be amazed.

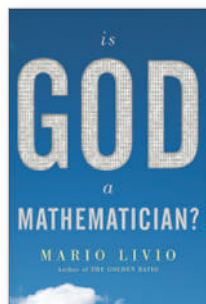
done, on or off camera, to get things back on track—and many of them certainly tried—the centrifugal force of the collective seems almost destined to pull them apart again. His Holiness always seems to be reaching to convey that the world is desperately in need of an actual spiritual renaissance, an effective post-religious context for shared purpose, meaning, and morality in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex global society. His boundless passion on the subject is a beautiful and dignifying thing to watch. “This is not in my interest,” he says. “It is in the interest for everyone. We have not come here for making money, or for making fame, or for making a nice statement. No!” But if the participants ever did discuss these deeper questions in their sessions together, Darvich doesn’t show it in the film.

In the end, the closest they come to a concerted response to His Holiness is a proposal by one of the members to help save Tibet by organizing international economic sanctions against China. (At one point, environmental activist Vandana Shiva also asks him to become the leader of the free world, which he politely declines.) His Holiness patiently explains that this is not the problem he wants them to solve, and that the issues are far more complicated than they realize. But by that point, their time is almost up, and the dialogues are concluding. According to the filmmakers, who chose the title *Dalai Lama Renaissance* after all, the final emotional catharsis of the Synthesis Dialogues seems to be the ensuing recognition among the majority of the participants that their real task is not to save Tibet at all, but to embrace, confront, and heal their own “inner Tibets” —

whatever personal challenges they each might have that stand in the way of their own development. For Darvich (and most reviewers of the film, I might add), this shift of attention from larger collective questions to smaller personal ones seems to hold water as a profound discovery, a weighty crescendo, and a truly happy ending for a group of forty of the world’s best and brightest spiritual minds who gathered to help take humanity forward a step or two. But frankly, it’s hard to imagine what planet they could possibly be living on, in this solar system or any other, in which that particular reading of things could ever be taken seriously.

*Dalai Lama Renaissance?* Here on Earth we’ll call it *The Real World: Dharamsala*.

Ross Robertson



## Is God a Mathematician?

by Mario Livio

(Simon & Schuster, 2009, hardcover \$26.00)

I grew up across the street from my art teacher, a devout Christian woman with a deep love for drawing and painting. She'd often let me continue working after class. For a long time, I'd sit alone in her studio's late afternoon light, aware of nothing but the image emerging before me. Recently, while reading Mario Livio's new book, *Is God a Mathematician?*, I discovered a connection between art and another passion of my school days—math. Both disciplines are inspired by a desire to create something that reflects the world we observe, that clarifies it and reveals a level of beauty and order otherwise unseen. After a few semesters of college calculus, however, I left behind my interest in the subject and eventually took up the common notion of math as rather dull, robotic calculations. Mario Livio's book on the history and phenomenon of mathematics lured me back, and then some.

Livio has an impressive background, having spent several decades conducting research on the origin and mechanics of the universe as the senior astrophysicist at the Hubble Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore. He has also published three other popular books on mathematics and more than four hundred scientific papers. But, *Is God a Mathematician?* is his first book that focuses on the individuals responsible for developing mathematics

and the fascination that drove them. Writing about thinkers ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, Livio gives an in-depth chronological account of the mathematicians who have contributed so much to what we know about the universe. He dives deeply into their individual lives and work as well as the influences they had on one another. At the same time, he shows how mathematics can reveal fascinating details and new discoveries about the world around us. But the most intriguing aspect of Livio's book is his depiction of the human passion behind mathematical discovery. The best mathematicians were enthralled with life's beauty to such a degree that they were able to tap into an extraordinary capacity to understand and articulate it.

I was most struck by the power of their passion as expressed in what Livio calls the "anticipatory" side of mathematical achievements. This anticipatory pattern can be seen only by looking back at the development of math over a long period of time. Livio writes, "Many mathematical truths miraculously anticipated questions about the cosmos and human life not even posed until many centuries later." He gives several examples of this phenomenon, but the one I found most remarkable began with the development of Euclidean knot theory. It started in the 1700s with French mathematician Alexandre-Théophile Vandermonde, who was the first to recognize that "knots" could be studied by calculating the position of interconnected loops embedded in three-dimensional or Euclidean space. By the nineteenth century, a few mathematicians had picked up the theory as a possible means to explain the structure of the atom. Influenced by the ideas of English physicist William Thomson (aka Lord Kelvin), they were convinced that "atoms were really knotted tubes of ether, that mysterious substance that was supposed to permeate all space." It wasn't long, though, before an alternative view prevailed,

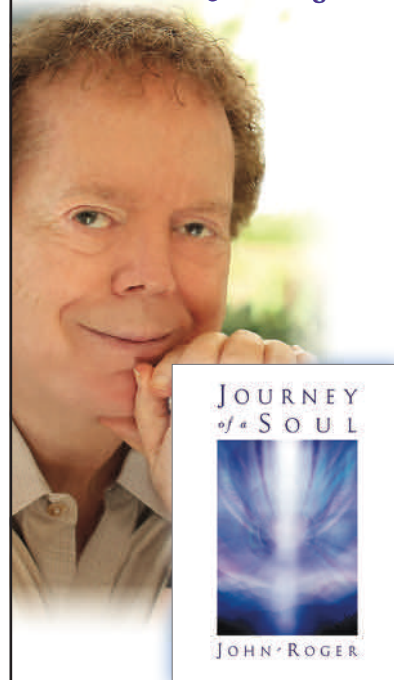
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leaving knot theory at a seeming dead end—and here is where the story takes an unexpected “twist.” Even though it no longer had a known purpose, work on the theory continued. In fact, knot enthusiasts would spend the next *several hundred years* trying to understand the many variations of knots simply because they were curious. As mathematician Michael Atiyah puts it, “The study of knots became an esoteric branch of pure mathematics.” “To these individuals,” Livio says, “the idea of understanding knots and the principles that govern them was exquisitely beautiful.”

The grand finale came centuries later, however, when these abstract endeavors in knot theory were found to be fundamental in understanding a wide range of modern pursuits—including the double-helical structure of DNA. Knot theory became so useful in modern physics that it led to the infamous string theory, which may finally explain the physical law that governs everything from the largest to the smallest dimensions of the universe. And all of this came from an obscure branch of math developed by men who believed their work had no application in physical reality. There was little of the mental toil and grasping for answers I’d imagined would be behind such startling mathematical insights.

Ultimately, *Is God a Mathematician?* shows that it was human fascination with the absolute truth and beauty characteristic of math that eventually led to revelation. This makes clear why so many of the great mathematicians in Livio’s book were also instrumental in developing philosophical and moral ideals. In the end, Livio succeeds in showing how math illuminates the fundamental workings of the universe and thus something significant about the nature of God. But it is the way he reveals the internal creative experience and how it drove the best mathematicians that makes his book so extraordinary.

Megan Cater

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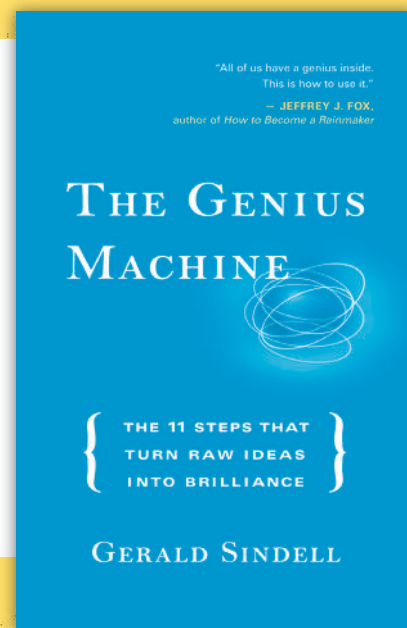
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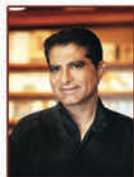


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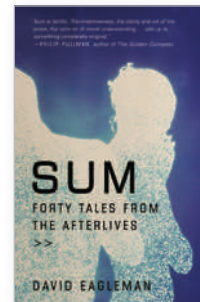
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### Sum

*Forty Tales from the Afterlives*

by David Eagleman

(Pantheon Books, 2009, hardcover \$20.00)

I've never read anything quite like David Eagleman's *Sum*. Forty fictional vignettes, each no more than two to four pages long, revolve around a central question: What happens to us after we die? It isn't exactly a collection of short stories, and I can't quite call it a novel either. One reviewer suggested calling it "philosophiction" or "a brainy parlor game in print." But however we might classify it, this is undoubtedly an original, compelling, and strangely uplifting little book.

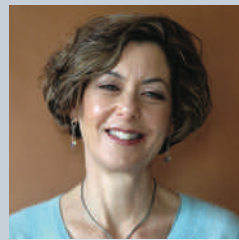
Each of Eagleman's imaginative and beautifully written tales presents a unique vision of the afterlife, ranging from the cleverly sci-fi to the mesmerizingly sublime. Though some scenarios are based on traditional religious concepts, most are clearly the ingenious products of Eagleman's own mind. In a chapter called "Seed," one arrives in heaven to meet an accidental God, a trial-and-error Creator who is just as baffled and awestruck by the inner workings and beauty of the universe as we are. In a piece titled "Great Expectations," materialistic human beings attempt to upload their consciousness into exciting computerized fantasy worlds immediately prior to death, only to have the souls they didn't believe in rudely whisked away to a dull heaven of gentle harps and puffy white clouds. In "Circle of Friends," we enter an afterlife populated only by the people

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we met while alive—an ultimately lonely existence for most souls, reflecting back to us the stark degree to which we lived our lives self-absorbed. And in yet another tale, we expand enormously after death back into our true nine-dimensional forms, resuming our roles as cosmic construction workers upholding the movements of galaxies.

Throughout *Sum*, I couldn't help wondering where the author actually stands on matters of spirit. At times he seems like a sensitive atheist; at others he comes across as an interfaith humanist. A visit to his website reveals that he disavows all ordinary labels, considering himself a "possibilian" instead. The important thing for a possibilian, he explains, is "to explore and celebrate the vast possibilities" of existence, holding multiple hypotheses in mind simultaneously, especially with regard to topics where no definitive answers seem near at hand. If that sounds a lot like the open-minded stance of a good scientist, well, it is. Eagleman is a professional neuroscientist, who spends his days studying the ways the brain perceives the world and cognizes the passing of time.

As scientists go, Eagleman certainly defies the stereotype of the cold, detached analyst, viewing human beings through a telescope from afar. *Sum's* tales are at turns hilarious, satirical, poignant, existential, and spiritual, and one catches frequent glimpses of the author's deep humanity and love of life pulsing behind the scenes. While *Sum's* scenarios seem to present mutually exclusive conceptions of the hereafter, they do add up to a kind of multidimensional perspective on the human condition that is difficult to pin down. And that, to me, seems to be the book's "possibilian" goal—offering a broadly nuanced suggestion of what it means to be human, here and now, by envisioning the full sum of what our lives may ultimately amount to when all is said and done.

*Tom Huston*

## RELEASE THE POTENTIAL OF EVOLUTIONARY VALUES

In this radically refreshing opus, Mick Quinn clearly exposes the kaleidoscope of metaphysical distractions orchestrated by concealed conditioning—those words, actions, and ways of being that keep us well clear of authenticity and transparency, directly pointing us toward our next levels of individual and cultural development.

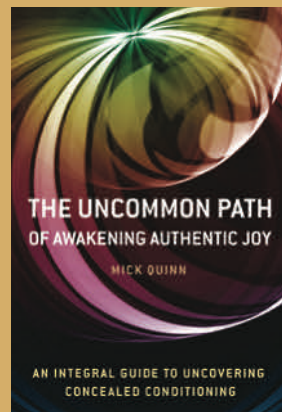
Quinn's first awakening occurred with Andrew Cohen in the summer of 2001. He is married to Debora Prieto who facilitates Big Mind in the Spanish communities.

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ex-president of the *Spanish Integral Association*.

## THE SIXTIES ARE OVER

Thank you for an interesting edition on sex and spirituality. Being a baby boomer who took full advantage of the sexual revolution, I was a bit surprised to notice that you devoted a lot of space to organizations/groups that are still going for the sensational. Of course, in its time and place (decades ago) it was a step out of the rigid and repressive past structures and perhaps was necessary to break up such set patterns. Now it just seems very passé and self-indulgent.

This wouldn't have been too bad if there had also been a balanced view available to the reader. For example, it would have been good to see an article on the extensive work of Barry Long,\* who was a worldwide enlightenment teacher with a special insight into the topic of sex and spirituality. The focus of his teaching, as I understand it, is the quest to realize "God in existence" through the selfless union of man and woman and right action in the world. His work in this area was prolific, and I believe that it would at least warrant a cursory overview or, better still, a deeper exploration.

*Dianne Pope  
Bunbury, Australia*

*\*Editor's note: See the Spring/Summer 1998 issue of *EnlightenNext*, "What Is the Relationship Between Sex & Spirituality?" for an in-depth feature interview with Barry Long and two of his students.*

## THE BODY DOES NOT EXIST

Your issue on sex was full of complex, uncertain, confused ruminations on the physical

instinct. If it proceeds from a true foundation, it should be simple, certain, and reasonable. How is this for a beginning point: At no time does the body exist. The thinking of the magazine seems to be getting away from its Hindu and Buddhist roots. What ever happened to the fundamental idea of maya? Come on, guys.

*Alden Hughes  
Wisconsin*

## I'M ADDICTED

I'm embarrassed to say that I think I'm addicted to your magazine. I await the arrival of each issue and then plough through it from cover to cover, putting everything else in my life on hold! There is a delicious satisfaction in reading and digesting this content.

Reading your magazine is like sitting in a very different kind of classroom of higher learning. I feel like I'm even more connected to that which is mystery, invisible to the eye in the material sense. I also feel connected to an "invisible, integral community," which only accentuates this "invisible connection" of which I am intuitively a part.

*Anonymous  
Sonoma, CA*

## CREATION IS REVELATION

Thank you to Ross Robertson for giving me the chance to think about what I really think. I've also asked myself whether "emptiness" is just nihilism.

I pondered your question, "Without anything higher or absolute to affirm, what's left to live for? . . . To feel reverent about?" After much thought

I wrote in the margin, "life itself?" With a leap of joy I found that I don't see any conflict between materiality and spirituality. A tree, a person, clouds, cats, and rocks are at one and the same time "just" lowly material *and* a divine revelation. That's why, I believe, scientists often say that the more they study a natural phenomenon, the more mysterious it becomes. Creation is the revelation, the "higher" "truth."

I think "meaning" comes from the willingness and effort we muster to see through the materiality of creation to its spirituality. It comes from our effort to, as Deida suggests, live *as love*.

*Joan Jaeckel  
Studio City, CA*

## SEXUAL EVOLUTION

Thank you for your thrilling and illuminating issue on sex. As Ken Wilber so aptly points out, prana moves up through the chakras in the course of evolutionary development—both socially and personally—and when one chakra has been surpassed, the identification with that area is broken. But on that lower chakra development keeps going on.

For example, as early humans grew out of animal instinct, they became identified with the sexual, which they expressed through things like primitive collective sexual rites. Passing on to the next stage, people clung to harsh collective sexual mores, laws, and decrees. In our time everyone is responsible for his or her own sexuality. The essence of development is

ever-growing sensitivity and vulnerability. The goal is total openness to Spirit, not another exciting ego trip.

It seems to me that sex without karma can only happen when you are moved by Spirit, no longer by selfishness. For Spirit to enter, one must be totally open, sensitive, and vulnerable. I have not reached that goal and can only speak about the process. This is the nitty-gritty of evolution—slowly and often painfully becoming a more conscious, civilized, and free person. All sexual practice, "tantric" or otherwise, that leads to sexual invulnerability must be counterproductive to that sort of development.

*Lisette Thooft  
Netherlands*

## I'LL TAKE MY SEX WITH KARMA, PLEASE

Andrew Cohen's article "Karma-Free Sex" implies that karma is only bad or at least not good. Not so. Karma means action or doing. The law of karma is universal and is understood by any physicist worth his/her salt: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." Therefore, why would anyone truly want "karma-free sex"? I, for one, want the good karma of loving, spiritual, and mutually enjoyable sex with a partner I know, love, and trust. I do not take issue with the point of Cohen's article but do urge all evolutionaries to recognize that everything we do and say and think can create karma. The question is, what kind?

*Dharmatma  
Espanola, NM*

*Continued on page 111*



## Are We Aging Ourselves to Death?

by Peter Ragnar

**WHILE THE HANDS OF** the clock spin the same for all, not all of us age the same. I've often said, "Time is not toxic." "Outrageous!" you may retort. "Look at your face and body a decade from now and say the same thing!" But what is often overlooked is that negative aging is nothing but physical deterioration. This basically means you've got to get sick before you can die, and to get sick, you've got to deprive your body of its essential elements of life. And this deprivation must begin long in advance of the onset of illness.

This loss is much like today's modern farming practices, which deprive the soil of needed minerals and organic matter. In essence, it's not farming but mining. While debate rages over what essential elements are most important, anti-aging medicine and theoretical gerontology agree that the rapid decline of anabolic hormones is a leading cause in the development of old age.

Stress, as an example, is catabolic. When stress hormones prevail, cell proliferation and tissue growth are retarded. A cell cannot defend itself and grow at the same time. One process must prevail, and environmental conditions must match as well. By that I mean you cannot

physically prosper under the burden of oversecretion of stress hormones. As one small example, look at how rapidly our presidents age after just a few years in office.

In fact, age-related changes do not occur at the same rate or intensity in all individuals. There's an exciting new book on the market, *The Blue Zones* by Dan Buettner, that explores pockets of longevity and youthfulness around the

world—places where folks live as if they are ageless. When we observe the similarities, we find common threads among them: relaxed lifestyle, fresh air, exercise, and healthy food. It's an obvious contradiction to our harried, stressed lifestyles, with stale indoor air, lethargic habits, and fast food. We do not all age at the same rate simply because the clock ticks. Time is not toxic.



**PETER RAGNAR** is a natural-life scientist, modern-day Taoist wizard, author, and self-master par excellence. A martial arts practitioner for more than fifty years, he is renowned for his teachings and writings on optimal health and longevity. His latest book is *Serious Strength for Seniors—And Kids Under 65*.

So what happened to that vital young adult so filled with energy and zest for living? One thing is certain in the minds of endocrinologists: it has to do with a decline in anabolic hormones. Hormones like DHEA, growth hormone, melatonin, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, and others decline from the youthful peaks that occur in our early twenties. Well, doesn't the same thing happen in longevity pockets around the globe as well? Yes, but to a much slower degree.

Take a man or woman with low stress and a vigorous lifestyle, be it working in the field picking tea leaves or making wine. Lifestyles with plenty of exercise are anabolic. In our modern society, just going to the gym for a workout will raise the level of secretion of human growth hormone and testosterone and will allow for a good night's sleep, which entails melatonin as well as other vital hormones.

Recent studies at the Yale University School of Medicine indicate that estrogen replacement therapy can prevent heart disease by fifty to seventy percent. In our modern culture, that could save half a million women's lives. And look at how many people who suffer from age-related Alzheimer's disease could be saved, for example, if the studies on DHEA prove correct. Alzheimer's sufferers were found to have forty-eight percent less DHEA in their blood. When ovarian production of DHEA slows with menopause, the drop in DHEA leads to osteoporosis. DHEA also increases testosterone production, which halts andropause in men. Why don't seniors have the same strength and lean muscle mass they had in their athletic prime? Again, hormones. It has been proven over and over that by increasing your human growth hormone production, you can take at least twenty years off your biological age. Yes, you'll reverse the fat-to-muscle ratio and appear



younger—and stay younger—longer.

So are we aging ourselves to death? I suppose it's based on how you live and who you are. I think our unquestioned belief in aging and death is killing us by draining us dry, not only of hormones but of spirit. *Aging: A Natural History*, a book by Robert Rucklefs and Caleb Finch, states, "Next to the miracle of life itself, aging and death are perhaps the greatest mysteries." Yes, aging appears a mystery, because science can't

find a single reason for it except gross neglect for a lifetime. That's the only way to age yourself to death.

From my personal perspective, each day as I get younger, stronger, and more vital, I'll thank the role that supplying the essential elements of longevity plays in youthfulness. You do not need to age yourself to death; perhaps, in the words of Ray Kurzweil, you can "live long enough to live forever." ■

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### SWEDENBORG'S GENERATIVE ORGANS

I was interested to read Gary Lachman's article on Emanuel Swedenborg, "The Buddha of the North," in the last issue. While Lachman refers to Swedenborg's late work on sex and marriage, *Conjugal Love* (1768), it is much less well known that earlier in his career (1743) he wrote another treatise on the subject of sexuality titled *The Generative Organs: Considered Anatomically, Physically and Philosophically*. This book was the third in a series of studies about the organs of the human body in which he synthesized all of the anatomical and physiological knowledge that was available to him at the time. Swedenborg left the genital organs for last, because he considered them to be "organs of a more perfect nature; for they are the exercise grounds of the loves, and the very native land, or Cyprus, of Venus, thus

the Olympus of all delights," whose description should be left "until we have come to a knowledge of superior things, and have grown a little older in the knowledge of things, imitating in these nature herself who teaches us the way."

As this Baroque language shows, Swedenborg's book is no dry academic treatise but that of a man of real feeling who insisted that the roots of sex, as of every other human activity, are spiritual. *The Generative Organs* was first translated into English in 1852 by a London doctor who considered it to be "one small step on the way to a greater liberty of thought on sexual subjects."

*Richard Lines*  
Secretary of the  
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### PASSING JUPITER

I have had several transcendent experiences during sex like the ones described in Elizabeth Debold's interview with Jenny Wade, "Transcendent Sex." The following is a poem about one of them, which was experienced as real, not as fantasy.

We woke in the night  
to make love  
seals slipping into the sea

the universe  
floated in through our window, stirring  
the curtains, arranging planets

and moons on the ceiling  
In the blue velvet spaces  
between worlds, I asked

do you know we are just passing Jupiter?  
yes, he said. (He comes along  
on these trips, who knows how)

and he named the galaxies  
I carry in my body  
with his hands he named each one

that night when the universe  
came in through my window  
I understood the unsayable.

*Mildred Tremblay*  
Nanaimo, BC, Canada

# Evolutionary Enlightenment



## Spiritual Self-Confidence

by Andrew Cohen

**IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE** self-confidence. It's even more important to have *spiritual* self-confidence. Spiritual confidence is that unique and palpable sense of absolute conviction that cannot be affected by external or internal fluctuations. It's being absolutely sure. It's knowing, before you know, that you know. It's the highest gift and blessing that comes only from the deepest insight into the true nature of things. It can also be the most precious jewel that is freely transmitted from the awakened heart and

nocentric pride. It's a confidence that comes from a desire for power and an aspiration to dominate. The kind of spiritual confidence I'm speaking about comes from a very different source and from a very different part of the self.

Some people claim that absolute conviction of *any* kind is dangerous and should never be trusted. But the kinds of people who make those assertions are hypocrites. They are hypocrites because they stubbornly express an absolute conviction in

kind of confidence in times like these when there is so much turbulence and individual and collective insecurity about survival. Without this kind of confidence as a constant reference point, we may find ourselves at times without the emotional, psychological, or spiritual resources to fight the good fight. And those who care more than anything else about the perennial quest to transform the world into a powerful reflection of that which is sacred cannot afford to allow even a moment of doubt or fear to overshadow their soul. Why? Because that may be the one moment that counted the most! In other words, we can't afford *not* to have spiritual self-confidence if we want to change the world.

The kind of powerful conviction that I am referring to fills one's heart with a love that is not dependent on external circumstances for its fullness. It's a love that is unshakable, unmoving, and indestructible. Such love—a love that transcends yet simultaneously embraces the world—is what compels human beings to evolve, from their own deepest depths, and to become better citizens of our world and our cosmos. Knowing the mysterious source of that love is knowing before thought that life is good. That inherent goodness is who we really are. And that's what we discover in deepest revelation.

Have confidence in that and change the world.

Spiritual confidence is the heaviest anchor in the midst of the unending storm that is life and death. It is an unshakable confidence in the inherent rightness of *being here*.

mind of a true spiritual master to any and all who would receive it. Absolute conviction destroys existential doubt and frees the human soul.

The Eastern traditions say that doubt is one of the biggest obstacles to the profound discovery of enlightened awareness. The sparkle of ecstatic conviction in the eyes of a saint expresses the liberating joy and fearlessness that are testimony to powerful spiritual self-confidence. Unfortunately, madmen, monsters, and megalomaniacs from the East and the West also gain their power from absolute self-confidence. But that's not a confidence that comes from knowing that mystery which is ungraspable. More often than not, it's a confidence that comes from fear, from overwhelming arrogance, from the puny ego, or from eth-

their own perspective while simultaneously proclaiming to others the futility of such a position!

Spiritual confidence is the heaviest anchor in the midst of the unending storm that is life and death. It is an unshakable confidence in the inherent rightness of *being here*—confidence in the rightness of finding oneself in the very middle of the life process, even in all its chaos and complexity. Having this kind of confidence is of the utmost importance for anyone who is convinced that they deeply care about the way things are—and even more so for the bold and courageous warrior who wants to create something truly new, who would dare to be the one to step forward, to stand for and bear witness to that which is higher.

It's especially important to have this



Explore the evolutionary philosophy of spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen through a complete series of articles, audios, and videos at [enlightennext.org/cohen](http://enlightennext.org/cohen)