

**Radical Regeneration: Birthing the New Human in the Age of Extinction**

**By Andrew Harvey and Carolyn Baker**

## Chapter 5: Transmutation: The Birth of the Divine Human

The evolution of the universe is a “single energy event” that is both physical and spiritual; everything in the universe is a manifestation of the same energy as in the Big Bang. This energy has “its own deep aim” and we are part of that aim.<sup>i</sup>

—Brian Swimme

Man is an unfinished adventure.<sup>ii</sup>

—Sri Aurobindo

Who can bear the glory of transfiguration, of man’s discovery as transfigured? Because what Christ is, I am; one can only speak of it after being awoken from the dead.<sup>iii</sup>

—Henri Le Saux

When we have opened to the vision of the possibility of mutation, and after allowing ourselves to descend into and be transformed by the darkest shadows of our predicament, we begin to participate in the mysterious emergence of a new kind of wisdom—what mystics of all traditions have described as a sacred marriage that engenders the fusion of what Jesus described as *the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove*. In other words, the sobering wisdom born out of an unflinching confrontation with the shadow and the radiant wisdom born out of deep mystical experience and revelation.

This marriage is anything but static, evolving dynamically according to the ferocious circumstances of our crisis.

Above all, this wisdom compels us to learn, sustain, and deepen the skill of holding the tension of opposites. It will also require an inner strength and a suppleness of vision which can only come from a warrior/midwife consciousness which mirrors the marriage of the serpent and the dove. We realize that it is as if we were at the center of an explosion, and any fantasy that we can control the explosion will be both foolish and lethal. Like the well-armored soldier in a combat zone, aware that at any moment an improvised explosive device could detonate and kill him, our only hope is to stay present, grounded, and alert, and as calm and lucid as possible with all of our senses vividly honed.

At the same time we cultivate warrior consciousness—standing up fearlessly for the voiceless and for justice and compassion, we understand that our fundamental soul sickness and the ultimate origin of our planetary predicament is the belief that we are separate from all other living beings. So warrior consciousness needs to be fused with midwife nurturance and tenderness. In its deepest reach, this fusion mirrors that of the sacred masculine and sacred

feminine within the Divine itself that as all mystics know, is both ruthlessly impersonal and profoundly, intimately motherly and personal. For us the key word is *intimacy*, and it is this intimacy, we believe, that we all need to cultivate on every level to allow this marriage to be grounded and fecund within us.

## **Interbeing**

Throughout his work, Charles Eisenstein uses the term “Interbeing” to define the quality of intimacy that humans once lived but that gradually eroded as the acquisition of language atomized, defined, classified, and created distinctions between beings in their minds. While the word Interbeing has Buddhist overtones, it is merely a neutral word that captures the notion of the innate interconnectedness of all beings, the same web of relationships that quantum physics is revealing to us. “In the logic of interbeing,” writes Eisenstein, “which recognizes that what happens to the other, to the incarcerated, to the bombed, to the trafficked, to the clear-cut, to the polluted, and to the extinguished is happening, in some sense, to the self as well.”<sup>iv</sup>

Among the myriad impacts of the planetary rite of passage we are undergoing is the initiation of humanity, whether we are fully aware of it or not or even actively resistant to it, into a full awareness and embrace of Interbeing. We are being deeply challenged to understand viscerally that what we do to the “other,” we do to ourselves.

The embrace of Interbeing has become starkly obvious in the Coronavirus crisis in which every half-sane person understands that preserving our health by wearing masks and social distancing is also preserving others and keeping alive the spirit of the heroic first responders who are risking their lives for us. It is further evolving as protests for racial justice and our common humanity engulf the streets of America and the world.

More than seven decades ago, the reality of Interbeing began to dawn on humanity with the advent and use of the atomic bomb. Climate change is now our second “nuclear bomb,” jolting us with blinding clarity and ungraciously buffeting us with the rude realization that we are all inextricably connected. The pandemic has arrived as the third “great bomb,” awakening us inescapably to the responsibility to think, feel, and act globally or risk plunging the world into terminal chaos. The fourth “great bomb” has now exploded in the demand for racial justice worldwide.

The deep intimacy inherent in Interbeing means that we now experience all acts and interactions as relationships. There is nothing or no one with whom we are not in relationship. Or as Eisenstein notes, “The reason to deurbanize, relocalize, downsize, re-skill, return to the soil, and live in community need not be to reduce energy consumption or cut greenhouse gas emissions. These and other quantifiable benefits that result are barometers of health and not its essence. The reason can be to restore the connections that make us happy, to come back into relationship with each other and with the beings of nature, to live in a way aligned with the Story of Interbeing, which says that relationship is who we are.”<sup>v</sup>

The revelations of quantum physics support and expand this vision because it reveals the entire universe as a pulsating, vibrant, luminous web of interrelationship, down to the subatomic level. In the great vision that Christian mystics have had of the trinity, this web of relationship is made stunningly clear. The source (father-mother) births the creation (son-daughter) out of boundless, ecstatic love (the holy spirit). When we through inner experience are awakened to this interpenetrating dance, we ourselves are born as embodied divine dancers, aware of our uniqueness, aware of our identity in the source with all others in the creation, and aware of the dynamic love that is evolving all things to ever-richer orders of communion.

Quantum physics is also revealing, almost despite itself, this Trinitarian radiance, and when scientists are finally able to accept divine consciousness as the origin of everything, they will discover what they have been searching for—the unified field theory, that will be a restatement in scientific terms of the Trinitarian model.

For us, the doorway into the birthing field is none other than intimacy in all of its forms and in all realms. We define intimacy as *authentic seeing and being seen that leads to communion and the profound knowledge that only communion in love can engender*. Some have used the expression, “into me see” as a playful description of openness to mutual intimacy. As elders, we have come to understand that this radical and luminous intimacy with all things and all beings, from the tiniest flea to the whale to the serial killer and the most corrupt politician, is what everyone, in their deepest core, desires despite the ego’s ferocious resistance. It is the lack of this intimacy in our world that breeds dissociation, despair, and the kinds of arrogant, divisive, and ignorant actions that lead to our destruction. As Rumi writes, “Out beyond ideas of wrong and right doing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there.” That field is intimacy, and when we are in humble and illumined relationship with that field, unimaginable, new possibilities can flower.

Dogen, the great Japanese Zen master, wrote that “Enlightenment is intimacy with all things.”<sup>vi</sup> And from our contemplation and life experience, we have evolved eight interlinked aspects of intimacy that must be cultivated in order to experience, beyond thought or reason, the intimate reality of the birthing field.

### **The Eight Rays of Intimacy**

We have chosen the number eight because it is the number of the Divine Mother and is also the symbol of infinity. For us, intimacy is the most sublime and grounded gift of the Sacred Feminine. To awaken to the mother side of God is to awaken to the stunning intimacy of Divine love in us and with us and to begin to see and feel the intimacy that that love has already established between everything in its luminous field. Imagine this interconnected intimacy that quantum physics has also revealed, as a sun with eight rays. These are:

- Intimacy with the real, the absolute, or if you prefer, the Divine. In the last stages of the mystical path, this becomes the conscious realization of the Self in which all worlds and

processes are contained. The Upanishads declare “I am That, you are That, all this is That.”

- Intimacy with your own unique expression of the Self or the Divine within. As you grow on the spiritual path, this intimacy expands in amazing ways to embrace more and more of the creation.
- Intimacy with the secret, sacred Self of all created beings, witnessing it and encouraging it to emerge whenever we can, even in those who seem lost in dark and dangerous choices.
- Intimacy with your own human self and its conditionings, including intimacy with your body and your sacred sexuality.
- Intimacy with nature and the cosmos. As Kabir says, “All the stars and rivers are in you.”<sup>vii</sup>
- Intimacy with animals and what we call the Divine Animal within, on which we expounded in our book *Saving Animals from Ourselves*.
- Intimacy with lovers and spouses that arises as we cultivate a deeper honoring of their sacred Self.
- Intimacy with sacred friends and collaborators and those who midwife our own birth and theirs.
- Intimacy with all those throughout the world called to practice Sacred Activism with you, whether you know them or not—through encouragement, support, and prayer.

In a world where we are daily atomized by predatory capitalism and where that atomization is worsening with the decline of democracy and the unraveling of a sense of community or the commons, it is crucial that we stay intimate with the Self and life as the ultimate rebellion against authoritarianism.

Deepening our compassion and respect for all of life makes us very vulnerable, and we must carry this vulnerability alongside our warrior consciousness. The greatest tension of opposites may be our commitment to remain as hard as a diamond and as tender as a flower and to endure the tension and sometimes the heartbreak with grace.

William Blake wrote that, “We are put on Earth a little space, to learn to bear the beams of love.”<sup>viii</sup> Quite naturally, we are terrified of intimacy just as much as we crave it, because it exposes us to the mystery of love pervading the universe and our responsibility to act in alignment with love to protect creation. While this revelation is astounding, it menaces all the strategies of the ego and all of its narcissistic fantasies of entitlement. What intimacy reveals to us is not only joy and wisdom, it also reveals our responsibility to honor, respect, and protect what we are intimate with. Intimacy involves a commitment to radical unknowing and

vulnerable openness, as well as standing for justice for every sentient being as a warrior/midwife.

Our ultimate intimacy is with the One that pervades everyone and everything. As Rumi writes:

Adore and love the One with your whole being, and the One will reveal to you that each thing in the universe is a vessel, full to the brim, with wisdom and beauty. Each thing the One will show you, is one drop from the boundless river of infinite beauty.<sup>ix</sup>

In order to enter this transfiguring field of intimacy, four qualities are required:

- Humility. The only way to keep being born into the birthing field is to remain bowing to the unknowable, majestic intelligence of the Divine that is always drawing you forward.
- Adoration. The treasures of intimacy are revealed only to the lovers, and the lovers are those who make the fundamental ground of their life adoration of the Beloved. It is this perpetual secret commitment to adore the Beloved in and as all events, beings, and things that opens the gate to the mysteries and reveals a world ever-more radiant with presence.
- Unknowing knowing. The great secret the evolutionary mystics bequeathed to us is that we evolve most effortlessly when we continually commit to unlearning everything we have ever known in order to remain vibrantly alive and naked to outrageous new experiences and miraculous transformations. Not knowing makes us humble as well as vulnerable.
- Vulnerable self-acceptance. The greatest shadow of our culture is narcissism, and the tragedy of that narcissism lies in the secret self-loathing, insecurity, and paranoid defensiveness that it thrives on and which militates against the kind of vulnerable openness and humble self-acceptance that form the foundations for true intimacy with the Divine and with life.

### **The Tantra of Intimacy**

As with the Greek word *eros*, the definition of intimacy in our diminished culture is often limited to sexuality. The ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist tantric systems expand the knowledge and practice of intimacy in ways we all need now in order to embrace whatever our spiritual path may be.

The word *tantra* comes from the Sanskrit and means “weaving together.” Practicing the tantra of intimacy enables us to weave consciously back our whole being, heart, mind, soul, and body into their essential and fundamental union with reality. And so, the Tantra of Intimacy is, we believe, the key to the birth of the new human because it is the maternity bed of mutation.

Here we offer five levels of intimacy that deepen and enliven our embodiment as human/spiritual beings.

- 1) The first level is living the experience of non-duality in the consciousness of Interbeing. That is, the discovery of radical intimacy with the One, the Sacred, the Divine, through increasing recognition that the One is living in you, as you.
- 2) The second level is the sexual tantra which is the intimacy of experiencing ecstatic bliss and release through entering into total communion—heart, mind, soul, and body, with another human being as the living embodiment of the One.
- 3) The third level is the tantra of tenderness. On this level, we engage in the intimacy of radical, heartfelt compassion with all sentient beings and the practice of tender protectiveness that arises naturally from it. We allow our hearts to be softened, and in many cases, broken open with tenderness and empathy.
- 4) The fourth level is the tantra of creativity in which we experience the intimacy of pouring out our gifts in a vibrant, dynamic relationship with the world. This is crucial for all Sacred Activists now. On a dying planet with dying systems all around us, we can only resist the contamination of dying forms by committing ourselves resolutely to creating new ones in every realm. When we do, we joyfully discover that our creativity is not dependent on our own will and resources alone, but is a natural outflowing of the birthing field, that is, the quantum field. Our creativity, we discover, can be most effectively sustained by aligning it with the energy and wisdom of the quantum field itself and experiencing through that alignment, the field creating in us and through us.
- 5) The tantra of sacred action—When Blake asks us learn to bear the “beams of love,” he is making an extraordinary pun. He is linking the experience of the intensity of love’s light with the necessity to bear love’s cost and to put love’s truth into action. This learning to “bear the beams of love” compels us, then, to take action which midwives the birth because it springs from the cultivation of the four other tantras that infuse and sustain it.

### **Our Experiences of Vibrant Intimacy**

We have danced with intimacy all our lives—sometimes welcoming it, and sometimes avoiding it as if it might suck the very life out of our bodies. Being raised in highly dysfunctional families, we learned how to circumvent it, yet all the while appearing to be open to it, sometimes even deluding ourselves into believing that we were “experts” on intimacy. Through much heartbreak and conscious shadow work, we realized the extent to which we were sometimes going through the motions of intimacy without really connecting intimately.

### **Carolyn on Intimacy**

Carolyn has come to believe that one of the pivotal aspects of relating intimately is the ability to listen with presence, which surpasses simply hearing the other person. Being present as we listen means that we are aware of our bodies, as well as our emotions, while we pay attention to the words, tone, body language, and facial expressions of another person. Most human beings in Western culture are desperate to be heard and seen, but they will not feel free to express their truth if the person with whom they are speaking is not fully present.

Carolyn notes that, “Even if I am fully present with someone and am listening attentively, the person speaking to me may still be uncomfortable with sharing, but they will feel more comfortable if they sense that they have my undivided attention. My years of training to be a psychotherapist gave me active listening skills, but each time I listen, I need to re-engage those skills and tune in to my own physiology as I do so.”

Being willing to *be* seen and heard is another crucial factor in intimacy. “As a child,” Carolyn adds, “I needed to pretend that I was open to being seen and heard, but I quickly figured out ways to hide, because growing up as an only child in an authoritarian religious home, I was almost always judged in one way or other. As I slogged through decades of inner work, I stopped fearing judgment and felt safer allowing others to see and hear me. This does not mean that I let just anyone see or hear me. I have my boundaries, but they are self-caring, permeable boundaries, not the fortified walls I constructed in my childhood. This allows me to choose whom I wish to engage with intimately, rather than remaining aloof from everyone. I am much more willing to risk experiencing intimacy because I know that even if I am judged or criticized, I will survive because I can choose to discern the validity of the criticism. I can immediately discount it, or I can use it as a teaching moment to honestly and introspectively consider if there is a grain (or more) of truth in it.”

Before I name a few of my human teachers, I want to acknowledge my animal companions who were some of my greatest more-than-human teachers: Sydney, Ethel, and Sammy. All of them stole my heart and drew me to fall in love with them, and through them, to fall in love with the Earth. My own spiritual path draws me closer to everything, and more recently, my relationship with Sammy has allowed me to experience an ever-deepening intimacy that I believe one can only have with animals.

Some of the human teachers who have guided me are Carl Jung, Michael Meade, Richard Rohr, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Marion Woodman, Terry Tempest Williams, Alice Walker, and my beloved therapist of eleven years, Meg Pierce.

While Andrew and I were completing this book in May 2020, I had what I consider a monumental dream which I believe commented on the intimacy that is now flourishing within my own psyche:

*I dream that I am in the living room of a community of folks in Northern California. The house is out in the country and is old and solid. The stucco walls feel sturdy and safe. A variety of people live in the community. Some are reliable*

*folks who have done work on themselves, and others are flakey and unhinged, but there is something trustworthy about the group. In that living room there is golden light—more yellow than orange. There is a feeling that these people are not just sitting around contemplating their navels but are also doing important things in and for the larger community. In another dream which I can't remember all of, I recommend someone to the community. I tell that person that this community can help them and that it is solid and trustworthy. I am welcome in the community. I don't feel drawn to be there a lot, but I can be if I want to be, and most importantly, I trust the work they are doing and who they are.*

Dreams for me are like psychic MRIs. I tend to interpret them as commentaries on my inner world, rather than as guidelines for navigating the external world. This dream points to the indelible significance of my time in Northern California and the “psychic surgery” I experienced in Jungian therapy. The “house” represents my inner world and it is removed from the fray of the city—closer to the Earth in the country. It is “old,” perhaps ancient, and solid. I believe the dream is revealing that my inner world is inhabited by a “community” consisting of many different parts of the psyche—some who have been committed to doing inner work for years and whom my ego defines as “reliable,” as well as others who may seem less reliable, but the whole community is intact. Not only is it reliable in terms of its inner workings, but it is serving the external world—so much so that I feel confident in referring others to seek help from it. The “golden light” that permeates the “living room” feels significant spiritually as well as psychologically. It feels symbolic of the “gold” of the eternal and the sacred, as well as the “gold” in the darkness I have mined for decades. The entire dream confirms the internal intimacy that is at work within me. Such clear, concise commentaries on the psyche are beloved gifts for which I am profoundly grateful.

### **Andrew on Intimacy**

Intimacy for me, says Andrew, is the key to embracing and being empowered by the greatest, holiest, and most powerful of all birthing forces—that of the Mother aspect of the Divine, that of what Hindu mystics call the “embodied godhead.” My entire path and everything I have tried to teach and share has come out of a forty-year, ever-deepening experience of the Divine Mother in all of her aspects—fiery and terrifying, as well as tender and nourishing. The more radically intimate I become with Her through Her grace, the more intimate I become with all of life and with Her evolutionary will acting in history to divinize and transfigure humanity.

Four essential, interconnected lessons have become ever-more potent and vivid in my life.

The first is that the Mother is always, as Ramakrishna said, “in the house,” and that whenever I turn to Her in adoration, I can connect with Her beyond reason or dogma, in the depths of my mind, heart, and soul and in the bones, muscles, and cells of my body, formed from Her crystalized light energy. This intimacy with Her is a direct, unmediated experience. No guru or

imam or priest is needed. It is the original blessing given by Her to all created beings. Becoming aware of it and living its amazing truth is the meaning of life for me.

The second lesson is that when I remember and experience this, I also remember to see and meet everyone and everything that happens as part of Her unfolding mystery in me and in the world. This compels me to struggle passionately against my narcissism and tendencies to dismissive judgment and despair rather than, approaching each sentient being and each event with the greatest compassion and discernment I can muster, and with a commitment to try to act with Her wisdom and truth, whatever is happening to me or to the world.

The third lesson that increasingly intimate union with Her beyond words or concepts or dogmas teaches me is to attempt to see and know and live everything that happens to me and to the world as an opportunity for birth—birth of deeper, more inclusive and paradoxical wisdom and wider, unilluminated and unconditional compassion.

The fourth lesson of radical intimacy with Her is that She keeps teaching me incessantly that just as She acts on every level of reality to protect, nourish, and birth new life, so must I, as her child. What this means for me is the constant dedication of all I am, think, feel, and do, to inner and outer Sacred Activism, in Her name and for Her glory, for the birth of a new embodied, Divine humanity. This potential birth is not a dream or a beautiful mystical fantasy for me. It is an intimate reality, whose truth She keeps unveiling unmistakably in me and around me in the world. Through Her grace, I know that it is real, which makes me want more and more intensely, as I grow older and death approaches, to give everything I can to be an inspiring, generous, and effective midwife of this birth, in myself and in others.

None of these lessons are easy. I fail all of them often, sometimes spectacularly, but I have come to know, through Her grace, Her infinite capacity for mercy, encouragement, and forgiveness, as well as Her miraculous skill in transforming failure into an opportunity for deeper trust and more authentic humility. She has revealed to me and in me the secret She will reveal to all those who keep loving Her, through all circumstances, however imperfectly and raggedly. Just keep turning to Her through incessant prayer and adoration, and Her great force of love will keep you energized and joyful, whatever happens. Miracles, both large and small, keep happening to those who know themselves to be Her children. To Her, and in Her, nothing is impossible, even the transformation of a desperate and depleted human race, increasingly embroiled in an extinction crisis of its own making. This is the hope beyond hope and beyond despair or reason that She has unveiled in me, and will unveil in you, if you risk intimacy with Her and sustain that intimacy through constant, simple, humble spiritual practice.

### **Andrew and Carolyn on Intimacy in Their Relationship**

Andrew and Carolyn have been friends since 2009, but in 2015, in casual conversation, they began contemplating the idea of writing a book on joy. They tossed around the notion as somewhat of a joke since they had both been accused of being “darkness junkies.” What would happen, they wondered, if they surprised their audiences by focusing on joy as the topic of

their first collaborative writing adventure? In 2016, *Return to Joy* was published and unexpectedly well received. As the inauguration of Donald Trump approached, their intense conversations, and an article by a friend, Vera de Chalambert, “Kali Takes America: I’m With Her,”<sup>x</sup> catapulted them with extraordinary urgency into penning *Savage Grace: Living Resiliently in the Dark Night of the Globe*. The unanticipated success of *Savage Grace* and their deep love for animals compelled them to begin working on their next collaboration, *Saving Animals from Ourselves*, published in 2019. As the global dark night deepened, they realized that their long-anticipated “trio” of books must become a “quartet” as internal and external events demanded the writing of the book you are now reading.

“We are often asked how we collaborate,” Carolyn states. “What is our system for deciding what to include and how? Is it difficult to work together? Do our egos get in the way?” In fact, during the past five years of their collaboration, the two authors have never argued about content or which one will have the “prominent” voice. Whether working together in the home of one or the other, or working by phone, Carolyn and Andrew “marry” their divergent writing styles in one voice that radiates both of their hearts and minds. Combine a lesbian and a gay man who have lived through the oppression of a pre-marriage equality world and who are both passionate about Sacred Activism, and you have a “radioactive” mix of fierce, no-nonsense truth-telling and tender, empathic, open-hearted compassion. They view their collaboration as a symbol of the “sacred marriage” of masculine and feminine of which they so frequently write, but which also resonates with the androgynous, non-binary perspectives of both of them.

Their routine when working together is to work intensely for a number of hours, followed by parting in order to meditate, rest, and unwind separately. They later regroup, share a meal, see a movie, attend a symphony, or binge-watch a compelling streaming series. (Most preferred are those written by the British TV writer, Sally Wainwright.) Andrew’s favorite mottos are, “Hurry slowly” and “Play as much as you work.” For example, during the writing of this book, before the pandemic quarantine, Carolyn was visiting Andrew in Oak Park, Illinois, and after a delicious dinner, they saw the movie “Harriet” at a local theater which passionately inspired them to open this book with a quote from Harriet Tubman that is as relevant today as it was in antebellum America.

Both Andrew and Carolyn celebrate the fact that their egos have never clashed because their personalities and writing styles complement each other’s. Owing to his British roots, Andrew’s style is dramatic and Shakespearean while Carolyn’s, issuing from her Midwest, bible-belt upbringing is grounded, clear, and incisive.

### **Conscious Engoldenment**

The practice of intimacy, as all the great mystical traditions understand, opens us to the next stage of spiritual evolution: *Conscious engoldenment*. Once the treasures of intimacy have become real to you, you are then ready to open to the outrageous possibility of experiencing embodied divinization. All of the ancient traditions agree that for this amazing process, what

you need is as complete and rich and glowing a vision as possible of the Divine human that is waiting to be born in you. This vision is only possible to one who has already experienced the treasures that intimacy opens us up to.

As Kabir, one of the great masters of *engoldenment* writes:

Seeker, the simple union's the best.  
Since the day when I met Him  
There has been no end  
To the joy of our love.  
I don't shut my eyes. I don't close my ears.  
I don't mortify my body;  
I see with open eyes and smile  
And see His beauty everywhere.  
I say His Name, and whatever I see  
It reveals Him: whatever I do  
Becomes His worship.  
Rising, setting are both one to me;  
All contradictions have vanished.<sup>xi</sup>

As we explore more deeply the transfiguration or *engoldenment* process, we believe that this vision is best articulated in Andrew's words as a result of his lifelong immersion in the mystical traditions of the world. Clearly, the process is not one that we have devised but one that mystics have lived and verbalized for millennia.

### **The Four-Part Map of the Transfiguration Process**

The pioneering mystics of divine human evolution did not merely proclaim the great secret; they dared to live it and forged from the brilliant clarity it gave them, a four-part path to transfiguration or *engoldenment*, as scientific in its own way as the theorems of the physicists Einstein, Pauli, Wheeler, and Heisenberg.

In Stage One of Awakening, the seeker awakens from the dark dream of ignorance and separation through dreams, revelations, and intimate, un-ignorable mystical experiences of the One. If she persists in faith, study of the authentic mystical traditions, and devoted, passionate spiritual practice, she is rewarded by an overwhelming experience of the eternal light as the substance of her own consciousness and the creator of all possible realms and worlds. The Sufis tell us that there are essentially two aspects of the mystical path—the journey *to* God and the journey *in* God. The experience of the light that heralds the completion of the stage of “awakening” heralds the end of the first journey *to* God and begins the journey *in* God, which is, as all evolutionary mystics come to know, a journey of what Gregory of Nyssa, mystic of the third century, called *Epektasis*, or “endless expansion.”

In Stage Two, Illumination, now begins to unfold. In this stage, the light which the Hindu mystics have brilliantly described as Sat, Chit, Ananda (being, consciousness, bliss), increasingly penetrates, infuses, and engoldens heart, mind, and body, releasing astonishing new powers of knowledge of reality and creativity. This is the state in which many of the greatest artistic and visionary masterpieces of humanity, from Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, to Dante's *Divina Commedia*, have been created.

The great danger, in this second stage, as the evolutionary mystics know because they have confronted, suffered, and transcended it, is one of massive inflation, of believing oneself fully divinized, and acting accordingly with a false and dangerous sense of "omniscience" and "freedom." Our contemporary spiritual landscape is littered with examples of "gurus" and "masters," unconsciously stuck in this state, and even more unconsciously addicted to power, with the terrible consequences that repeated scandal in all the spiritual traditions have made icily obvious to those with eyes to see.

This danger is why, towards the end of the stage of Illumination, the authentic seeker is rewarded, not with additional powers, but with the savage grace of annihilation or what Sufis call *fana* and Christian mystics know as the "dark night." The phrase "the dark night" has been trivialized in our current, so-called spiritual world, which is either wholly ignorant of this map or stupidly dismissing of the need for, or mystical purpose of, suffering as heartbreak or difficulty or trauma. The dark night certainly contains heartbreak, difficulty, and sometimes extreme trauma, but, in its classic and essential sense, is not a breakdown or even an extreme personal crisis, but a divinely-ordained and divinely-guided, all-shattering process in which all of the games, concepts, and fantasies of the seeker's false self are systematically, precisely, and ruthlessly dismantled.

It arrives in the authentic seeker's life at precisely the stage in which the seeker has enough inner experience to be able, just to endure it, and it is always tailored with awe-inspiring, terrible precision, to reveal and eradicate the shadows and temptations inherent in the seeker's own unique temperament.

The only way through the dark night, all evolutionary mystics agree, is through continuing trust in divine love and total, unconditional, sustained surrender to the unknowable purposes of Divine intelligence. It is this trust and agonizing, increasingly humbling, surrender that finally unravels the false self with its hidden addictions to power and its blatant or subtle fantasies of "achievement," "status," and "prestige."

When this process is nearing completion, the exhausted, battered seeker, emptied of vanity and pride, is graced with a momentous experience of herself which echoes the revelation that ends Stage One, but is far wider, more spacious, and more ecstatic. Because it is no longer even partially veiled by the ignorance of the ego, this prepares the entry into what mystics of

evolution call “causal consciousness”—nothing less than unstained, primordial God-consciousness and Self-consciousness.

In Stage Three, Union now begins. In this glorious stage, the seeker becomes the finder, increasingly liberated from the doubts, shadows, limited and secretly self-serving “illuminations” of the false self, and taken from revelation to revelation into ever-deepening *engoldenment* of heart, mind, soul, and body. The wonder of this stage is that the seeker is graced to know what is happening, graced to be conscious of the miracle being born in her whole being through the extravagant mercy of a Divine grace that reveals progressively its omniscience, omnipotence, and passionate, intimately tender love. The lover of the Divine is revealed to herself as the Beloved of the Beloved, increasingly, magically, joyfully one with the Eternal One in enlightened mind, impassioned-compassionate heart, and soberly ecstatic body.

One of the ultimate gifts of this stage of Union is the deepening birth in the seeker of what could be called the “transfiguration imagination”—a Divinely-saturated awareness that is capable of holding all extreme opposites, in all their turbulent and sometimes horrifying dance, in an embrace of clear and calmly blissful peace. It is this “transfiguration imagination” that enables the seeker not only to endure calmly the paradoxical processes of continual *engoldenment*, but also to understand the evolutionary unfolding of human history and to participate joyfully and wisely in serving with all she now is, its goal. That is: The birth in humanity at large of the embodied Divine consciousness progressively installed in one’s whole expanding being.

The stage of union if lived fully and with abandoned devotion and clarity, expands naturally into Stage Four, known as the Stage of Birthing. In this stage, all the powers of creativity and healing and service that erupted in Stage Two are returned to the Beloved of the Beloved: exponentially-increased wisdom and divinely focused passion and effectiveness. In this stage, the “*engoldened* Beloved,” becomes the conscious birther, in her own unique way, and with her own transmuted abilities, of visions, practices, and actions that serve directly the birth here on Earth and throughout time, of the new creation. It was from this stage that Rumi gave us his poetry, that Kabir gave his fearless, revolutionary transmission of *engoldenment*, that Bach wrote the miraculous music of his last masterpiece, “The Art of Fugue,” that Sri Aurobindo radiated to us the articulated magnificence of his “Life Divine,” that Bede Griffiths wrote in the last years of his increasingly transfigured life, *A New Vision of Reality*.

The saving advantage of embracing and integrating the map the mystics of the Transfiguration Process have given us and that we have given you, is not that it prevents you from suffering, sometimes extremely, but that it gives you steadiness and rugged clarity, even when everything is swirling in chaos and pain. In other words, knowing there is a map that great and noble beings have made available to us, often at enormous cost to themselves, gives what can otherwise seem and feel meaningless, great meaning, inaccessible to ordinary reason, but accessible through grace, to the receptive soul.

It is clear to us that the whole of humanity is now in a global dark night, and that the Coronavirus pandemic is a vast evolutionary, mystical event that this dark night is here to reveal, and it is beginning the occasion of its most ferocious work. For all of us this is terrifying, especially since, as we have tried to show unflinchingly, humanity finds itself inwardly chaotic and disempowered and outwardly dominated by conscience-less and soul-deadening concepts and practices spawned from the prolonged, brutal orgy of separation from creation and the sacred in which it has indulged.

It is all too easy to feel such a situation is hopeless, and as the dark night crisis deepens, as it will, we must expect despair, rage, violence, and paralysis to grow in alarming ways that will threaten everything that we have ever believed to be true about ourselves or the Divine. The future of humanity appears to be threatened, as does the creation itself—in all of the ways we have made clear, and in ways we cannot yet know. But even in so dire a situation of our own tragic making, we are not abandoned if we have the humility to turn to the great masters of Transfiguration who know what the dark night is and know that its death agonies can engender the birth of embodied Divine consciousness. Just as imaginal cells wake up in the gray soup of the caterpillar's dissolution in its chrysalis and build the body of the butterfly, so in our worldwide desolation, extraordinary new visions and practices and concepts are arising that could, if we recognized, celebrated, and aligned with them, build the body of a new humanity.

What is essential, we believe, is to understand the dark night we are in as the defining crisis of our human journey and the key to the next stage of human evolution. The great mystics of the dark-night process—St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Junaid of Baghdad, Ibn Arabi, Rumi, de Caussade, Kabir, and others—are of indispensable help here. From their writings and examples, we can see that the Dark Night has five interconnected Archetypal Patterns which thread and fan out from what looks and feels like meaninglessness and grotesque horror and violence.

Before we explore these five patterns let us experience through three sublime texts, taken from three of the world's mystical traditions, the full transfiguration path, the path to *Engoldenment*..:

Jean Pierre de Caussade

Our task is to offer ourselves up to God like a clean, smooth canvas and not bother ourselves about what God may choose to paint on it, but, at every moment, feel only the stroke of his brush. It is the same with a piece of stone. Each blow from the chisel of the sculptor is shaping it. All it feels is a chisel hacking away at it, savaging it and mutilating it.

Let us take, for example, a piece of stone that is destined to be carved into a crucifix or statue. We might ask it, "What do you think is happening to you?" And it might well answer, "Why are you asking me? All I know is that I must stay

immobile in the hands of the sculptor. I have no notion of what he is doing, nor do I know what he will make of me. What I do know, however, is that his work is the finest imaginable. It is perfect. I welcome each blow of his chisel as the best thing that could happen to me, although, if I am to tell the complete truth, I feel that every one of these blows is ruining me, destroying me, and disfiguring me.”<sup>xii</sup>

Rumi

The grapes of my body can only become wine  
After the winemaker tramples me.  
I surrender my spirit like grapes to his trampling  
So my inmost heart can blaze and dance with joy.  
Although the grapes go on weeping blood and sobbing,  
“I cannot bear any more anguish, any more cruelty!”  
The trampler stuffs cotton in his ears: “I am not  
Working in ignorance.  
You can deny me if you want, you have every excuse,  
But it is I who am the Master of this Work.  
And when through my Passion you reach Perfection,  
You will never be done praising my name.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Kabir

Love’s hurricane has come!  
The whirlwind of Knowledge has arrived!  
My thatched roof of Delusion  
Has been flung to the four directions!  
My hut of illusion  
So carefully crafted  
Has come careening down!  
Its two posts of duality  
Have crashed to the ground!  
Its rafters of desire  
Have been split by lightning!  
Thunderbolts have collapsed

All its eaves of greed!  
Its big stone jar of evil habits  
Has smashed in a million pieces!

With contemplation and clear devotion,  
The Holy Ones have rebuilt my roof.  
It is strong and unmoving now  
And never leaks or drips.  
When lies and deceit  
Ran out of my body's house,  
I realized the Lord  
In all His splendor.  
Rain come down in torrents.  
After the wild storm,  
Torrents of divine love  
Drenched me, body and soul.  
Then, O Kabir, the sun soared out,  
The Sun of Glory, the Sun of Realization,  
And darkness dissolved forever. <sup>xiv</sup>

### **The Five Archetypal Patterns of the Dark Night**

These patterns must now be integrated by every intelligent and concerned human being. They are: 1) Boiling chaos that dissolves all previous inner and outer orders and the stories and systems they create, 2) Terror that bubbles all possible complacencies of spirit or approach, 3) Nearly-insane anxiety that shatters repeatedly the flimsy constructs of the illusion-addicted false self, 4) Destruction of any proposal to solve the crisis, born from the very consciousness the crisis is designed to annihilate and transfigure, 5) The ripping off of the mask of evil to reveal the lethal depth of the shadow in ourselves and the now near-terminal moral insanity and corruption of all manmade systems of power, domination, and control.

Even to begin to contemplate these five Archetypal Patterns of the dark night can lead, in the spiritually unprepared, to tremendous fear and hopelessness. For this reason, humans create

and embrace bizarre conspiracy theories to spare themselves the anguish of uncertainty in a culture that demands ironclad answers.

What the great pioneers of the Transfiguration Process point out, however, and this is crucially important and life-giving, is that each one of these five patterns potentially contains their all-transforming opposite. As Rumi wrote, “My king is not a king that thrashes me, without giving me a throne to sit on.”

Boiling chaos can give birth to a far more luminous, rich, inclusive, wise order than the one it destroys. Terror can compel us to peel away everything but the truth of the deathless Self that is, as all authentic mystics know, the only ultimate security. Nearly-insane anxiety can detonate our false and dangerous addictions and expose our blinding attachments in such a way that we are forced to realize their destructiveness and have to go on a humbling and bewildering, but transformative journey in order to transcend them. Annihilation of all proposed solutions can make us, if we are humble enough and discover the wonders of “unknowing knowing,” receptive to healing solutions from the Divine Field. The revelation of the horrible depth of our own shadow and the shadow in the systems of power and control it colludes with and keeps enabling in their rotten brutality, can galvanize a revolution of Sacred Activism that empowers and inspires us to build together systems that honor the Divine laws of interconnection, universal compassion, and justice. As Bede Griffiths said to Andrew in a private conversation, “The Divine works through paradoxes that human reason cannot grasp, but illumined knowledge can.”

Out of our deepest agony can be born our most comprehensive healing; out of the terrifying ending of one whole way of being and doing, a new humanity can be born, chastened by horror and tragedy, but open at last to previously unimaginable, new possibilities.

What this “dance of opposites” within the ongoing ruthless devastation of the dark night makes clear to those who embrace the map we have offered, is that while there is no way *out* of our evolutionary dark night, there is a potential way *through* that could, if we had the courage, stamina, faith, and radical surrender to pursue it, lead to the most astounding possibility of all—the rising of the golden phoenix of a divinized humanity from the smoldering ashes of its old identity.

This Four-Stage Path and the Great Secret it progressively reveals and helps us radically to embody, are the crowning glories of humanity’s exploration and experience of eternal reality.

### **New Wine, New Bottles**

Some extraordinary modern pioneers have proposed a state even beyond that of birthing or *engoldenment*—a stage that we call mutation which unfolds out of *engoldenment* into as yet largely unimaginable empowerment. Sri Aurobindo, his consort The Mother, and their greatest and bravest disciple, Satprem, are the courageous and challenging explorers of this new territory.

What they tell us is that when the stage of *engoldenment* has been attained through grace, what is then necessary is an even deeper and more demanding plunge into the depths of matter, into the cellular structures of matter itself. Just as physics has been transfigured by Pauli and Wheeler's stunning explorations of subatomic particles, so the evolutionary understanding of humanity is being transfigured by Aurobindo and The Mother, and Satprem's insistence that what must be transfigured now are the cells of the body themselves. The work they undertook was to reorient the cells themselves, through the intense and focused use of mantra from what the mother called their "innocently imbecilic obedience to the laws of death to an obedience to the emerging evolutionary law of immortality.

What they discovered is that, through a heroic, precise labor of inner concentration in direct alignment with what Sri Aurobindo called "the supramental light of the Divine Mother," the cells of the body itself can be increasingly divinized. Through this simple but amazing process, matter itself becomes a new creation and a wholly different kind of body, infinitely supple to the presence and ever-evolving energies of the indwelling spirit. It would be as different from the bodies we have now as we are from the animals. It was in creating this new body, no longer subject to the old laws of density and death, that The Mother worked incessantly in her 90s, as recorded by Satprem in the thirteen volumes of *Mother's Agenda*,<sup>xv</sup> and that he also wrote in his last year, as recorded in his astonishing *Evolution II*.<sup>xvi</sup>

This new knowledge, with its challenge to us to completely re-imagine our possible evolutionary future, is still in its infancy. It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine or experience comprehensively what this "mutation" entails or makes possible, precisely because it goes beyond anything even the most evolved mystics of the past could have experienced or imagined. Just as Galileo and Newton, stunningly innovative though they were, could never have imagined what Schrödinger and Heisenberg revealed to us about the paradoxical, participatory nature of our universe, so what Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, and Satprem are challenging us to open to could never have been conceived before, even by the most advanced visionaries of the past.

What can be said, however, with some confidence, is that this mutation, given the extraordinary expansions that have already occurred in the brief, turbulent history of human evolution, and given that, in Shams of Tabriz's words, "The world of God is a world of endless expansion," mutation is by no means an improbable fantasy or desperate invention. In fact, its possibility is a revelation that humanity has been prepared for throughout its evolutionary history for the terrible and amazing circumstances which could birth it.

Quantum physics is uncovering a web of interrelations in the universe that act in seemingly contradictory ways and in ways that deconstruct, dizzyingly, its own practices and assumptions. Evolutionary mysticism is also going through a similar deconstruction that opens onto hitherto unimaginable possibilities—possibilities for which as yet we hardly have either the language or the inner capacity to hold and contain. For those of us who have experienced, however, the power of The Mother's miraculous grace, it becomes awe-inspiringly obvious that to the Divine

which is our source and essential nature, no mutation is impossible. What is also clear, and Satprem especially stresses this nobly and vehemently, again and again, this mutation will demand three related revolutions: 1) A revolution in our sacred imagination of what humanity is and can be; 2) A revolution in our sacred practice that must now be related, not to aligning only with the transcendent “outside” and “beyond” us, but to the cells and subatomic particles of our bodies themselves; and 3) A revolution of courage that will give us the strength, trust, and stamina we will need to navigate whatever bewildering and terrifying ordeals this unprecedented possibility of mutation demands of us.

We are fully aware of how challenging and even improbable all of this sounds. Paul Levy has shown us in *The Quantum Revelation* how many scientists are still resisting adamantly the outrageous conclusions their own scientific explorations are unveiling. We ourselves have undergone many nights of doubt and anguish and radical bewilderment in our attempt to make ourselves humble and available, at least partially, to this new and infinitely exciting, but also challenging, wisdom.

The most daunting aspect, we have discovered, of this vision of mutation is that it places an overwhelming responsibility on us to collaborate with it. Mutation will not and cannot occur through being receptive to divine grace alone. It will require us to claim our own dignity and nobility as Divine human beings and to work consciously, as Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, and Satprem did, with the ever-evolving mystery of the evolutionary impulse, consenting at every moment to work with that knowledge. It graces us with great courage as well as the challenge to remain in radically humble “unknowing knowing” so we can always stay open to its slightest hints and suggestions for our very survival.

When the first fish that were later to evolve into birds leapt out of their toxic sea into a wholly unfamiliar dimension, they were completely unprepared for its new laws and the ordeals those laws necessarily imposed. The human race is coming now, through grace, to the moment when transfiguration and mutation are emerging as its possible destiny as it finds itself, beleaguered on all sides and in all dimensions. To go forward at all, we will need unprecedented faith in life’s endlessly expansive power, unprecedented humility, and unprecedented courage. The horror of our own death crisis, we believe, is designed with terrible precision to force us to claim and enact these qualities, come what may.

When we do allow ourselves to be forced by horrifying circumstances to try, knowing at last, that we cannot rest in even the noblest formulations of the past and that we are in a completely new situation that cries out urgently for new imagination and action, what is revealed to us are the three interconnected aspects of the next stage of our human adventure. These are: 1) The need for massive, systemic, and structural economic, political, religious, and social change. Without such radical and comprehensive change, there isn’t the slightest chance for human survival. The only force capable of illumining, guiding, steadying, and fortifying such a change, which needs to be implemented urgently, is the second aspect. 2) Sacred Activism which we now see clearly, needs to be deepened and infused by the wisdom, strength,

compassion, and joy aroused and installed by the vision of transfiguration and mutation we are sharing here. 3) Such a fusion of what could be called the Evolutionary Trinity—structural change, Sacred Activism, and the transfiguration or *engoldenment* process unfolding into the greatest adventure of all, mutation, challenges us all on the deepest levels, as it is divinely designed to do.

As the erupting Coronavirus, a massive global uprising on behalf of racial justice, and economic collapse and the new world they are opening up to us make clear, there is no other way forward now that is not either corrupt or doomed. But as Kabir prophetically wrote in the fourteenth century in Benares:

Listen friends  
You'll never be free  
So long as you cling  
To caste or tradition.  
The highest cannot be described  
And cannot be seen  
But can be lived.  
Why give your life  
For anything less?<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Into The Field**

As we have stressed in this book, an amazing new opportunity to expand and ground the transfiguration process is opening up at the moment we need it most in our evolutionary journey. That is: The marriage of what the Dalai Lama has called provocatively “the inner sciences of authentic mysticism” and the “outer sciences.” As we have shown, the astonishing discoveries of cutting-edge quantum physics is revealing to us, in unmistakable and exhilarating ways, the same endlessly abundant, creative, inherently paradoxical “Field” that the transfiguration mystics, inflamed by the Source, have always known.

One world and one version of humanity are now ending. The evidence is all around us, but the golden lineaments of the birth, with its promise of radical regeneration, are also appearing. Will humanity listen to Aurobindo, quantum physics, and the Dalai Lama, or choose to continue on its now-obviously suicidal and matricidal path? Will it embrace the rigors of authentic change and work out the many difficulties that inevitably arise on the path of transmutation, or will it

continue to collapse into a lethally complacent business as usual, more of the same, mentality that ensures and hastens its annihilation?

Andrew asked this question to the Dalai Lama four years ago in Australia. The Dalai Lama smiled and said, "I don't know. No one does." And he added, still smiling, "Prepare for the very worst, and continue to live with joy and creativity and compassion tirelessly for the very best." As Andrew sat with the Dalai Lama, his whole body filled with peace and subtle, steady bliss, and he remembered when ten years earlier, he had taken, in the presence of the Dalai Lama, along with three thousand others in the Beacon Theater in New York City, the vows to become a bodhisattva:

However innumerable sentient beings are

I vow to save them.

However inexhaustible the defilements are

I vow to extinguish them.

However immeasurable the dharmas are

I vow to master them.

However incomparable enlightenment is

I vow to attain it.

The Dalai Lama seemed to know what Andrew was thinking. He leaned over and took both of Andrew's hands in his and said, "Now, more than at any other time in history, we need those brave enough to gamble everything, come what may, to build a new world."

His eyes were glistening with joy.

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<sup>i</sup> "Comprehensive Compassion," an interview with Brian Swimme, 2003, The Great Story website, <http://thegreatstory.org/SwimmeWIE.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Adventure of Consciousness*, Discovery Publisher, 2015, p. 234.

<sup>iii</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Son of Man*, Tarcher Perigee, 1999, p. 91.

<sup>iv</sup> Charles Eisenstein, *Climate: The New Story*, p. 11.

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207–208.

<sup>vi</sup> *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dogen*, San Francisco, Shambhala, p. 179.

<sup>vii</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Turn Me To Gold*, p. 83.

<sup>viii</sup> *The Complete Poetry of William Blake*, Erdman Archive, Song 9, <http://erdman.blakearchive.org/#Little%20Black%20Boy>

<sup>ix</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Light Upon Light*, Tarcher, 2004, p. 96.

<sup>x</sup> "Kali Takes America: I'm With Her," Vera de Chalambert, Rebelle Society, November 2016, <http://www.rebellestociety.com/2016/11/18/veradechalambert-kali/>

<sup>xi</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Turn Me to Gold*, p. 188.

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- <sup>xii</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Teachings of the Christian Mystics*, "His Work Is Perfect," Shambhala, 1998, p. 146.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Light Upon Light*, p. 114.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Turn Me to Gold*, p. 176.
- <sup>xv</sup> Satprem, *Mother's Agenda*, Vol. 1 and 2, Institute for Evolutionary Research, 1979.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Satprem, *Evolution II*, Institute for Evolutionary Research, 1993.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Andrew Harvey, *Turn Me to Gold*, p. 31.