



By Dana Lynne Andersen, MA

We are poised at the shimmering edge of a new world, vaster than we ever could have imagined. The dimensions of our existence are expanding exponentially. When my mother was in school, she was taught that the space we inhabited was the size of a single galaxy. Perhaps one day, her teachers told her, we might discover “another” galaxy. A mere handful of decades later, we aimed our Hubble telescope at the darkest part of the night sky, the seemingly empty space, and gazed with wonderment at thousands of galaxies dancing in the tiny aperture. And, as we peered into the microcosm, our gaze penetrated farther still, from atom to electron to quark, until we plunged into a quantum foam of virtual particles popping into and out of existence. Our foundational tenets quiver at these mysterious thresholds, where the world of matter dissolves to reveal an ocean of energy. Beneath the thin veneer of matter, the universe is immeasurably more immense, mysterious, and magnificent than we could have dreamed.

From cosmology to quantum physics, the world we live in has burgeoned in its dimensions. So, too, must our world view. For at this same historical moment of unprecedented discovery, we stand also at the brink of a world unraveling. The cumulative impact of an unsustainable way of life has wreaked havoc on the eco-system of the planet. In our unrelenting pursuit of opulence, the simple staples of life—clean air, drinking water, and wholesome food—have become a luxury. The pollution and pesticide poisoning of earth, air, and water have reached critical levels. Hundreds of species plunge to extinction; burning rainforests sear the lungs of Gaia; and entire eco-systems lurch out of balance, careening toward whole-system collapse. As our vision has expanded exponentially, so, too, has the collateral damage caused by our ignorance and hubris. The fabric of life is tearing. Life emerged on this earth 4 billion years ago, Homo sapiens some 200,000 years ago. Yet, in the past 50 years, in one generation—in a single lifetime—the earth has been more

A New Zeitgeist

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radically changed than by all previous generations of humanity.¹ Historical thresholds have come before, and yet, in our times, there are an intensification and a complexification that make this moment a watershed in the evolution of humanity.

“A global shift in world view, values, and actions is inevitable. Whether it precedes and redirects humanity away

from chaos or follows an epic global breakdown remains an open question. Either way, the shift is destined to come about.” *Edmund J. Bourne.*

We are in the gyre of old worlds dying and new worlds struggling to be born. We are not facing merely a change of social, political, or economic systems, but a profound transformation of civilization itself.

AN UNSUSTAINABLE MODE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

At these crossroads, we are entwined in problems that are complex and overwhelming, but they are also the interlinked symptoms of a single underlying orientation. The root cannot be found in one human enterprise or another, nor simply in our political, social, or economic systems. Our civilization itself is unsustainable because *the consciousness with which we approach the world is an unsustainable mode of consciousness.*² The essence of this consciousness is the perception of the world solely in terms of matter and form. The elements and life forms of the earth are seen as resources to be converted to economic products and consumed. The consciousness that orients to form and matter has generated a kind of life that is lived on the surface, a flatland world of consumerism. As Willis Harmon observed, the cathedrals of the modern faith are the towering high rises of the financial sector.³ Instead of economics serving the development of culture, all aspects of culture have been subsumed under the economic paradigm. The industrial world steers itself by financial signals that are treated as values. The dominant economic paradigm emphasizes continual production and consumption. This requires frequent superficial “fashion” changes to fuel the unrestricted expansion required by the

system. The GNP essentially measures how rapidly resources are made into products and consumed.

The implicit assumption is that the more we produce and consume, the healthier our economy and the happier our society will be. But the promise of “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage” has never been delivered. Even when there are two cars in a huge garage, refrigerators full of food, a TV in every room, and an iPod in every backpack, there is still not satisfaction—often, there is even more hunger. The delusion of materialism, and specifically consumerism, is that the more we consume and possess, the happier we will be. **The same material mode of consciousness that engenders the destruction of the natural environment also brings famine to our inner environment.** The over-saturation of material goods feeds an insidious despair. Mother Teresa once commented that the poverty of the West was more devastating than the poverty of India, because it was a poverty of the soul. A perpetual restlessness pervades an economy that depends on ever-increasing consumption fueled by the ubiquitous advertisement of a permanently unattainable perfection. When people are trapped in a pattern of insatiable desire for material gains that cannot feed the soul, there is widespread obesity, eating disorders, drug abuse, alcoholism, and depression. While obesity rates climb throughout the world,⁴ Americans alone spend 30 times more on diet products than the UN’s entire budget for famine relief.⁵ Materialism engenders hungry ghosts.

This flattened perception has brought us to the teetering edge of whole system collapse. The tapestry of our world is unraveling. In the foreground of daily life, there is increasing chaos. Every day, the news inundates us with images of escalating natural catastrophes—melting glaciers, rising oceans, tsunamis and hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes. Bees die in colony collapse disorder, while birds fall from the sky.

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Add to this the compounding human crises of escalating unemployment, failing banks, bankrupt states, housing crises, healthcare crises, political turmoil, world food shortages, escalating displacement, and diasporas. None of the old systems seems to be working. Everything seems to be falling apart. Though leaders in business and politics assure us that all is under control and soon it will all be back to normal, it doesn’t take much to realize there is no going back. Gale forces of change have been unleashed, and the old order is ripping apart. Threads that form the embroidered story of what is real have left the loom. From warp and woof, the strands of meaning fly loose in all directions, dissolving familiar patterns. As the age of Form unravels, we see through its holes, which are gaping wider each day. Yet, underneath the surface of a dissolving world, an age of energy is arising. If we peer through the tears in the fabric of the familiar, we can glimpse another reality taking shape.





A TURNING LENS IN THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF HISTORY

In the kaleidoscope of history, the lens is turning. The lightning pulse of the "Zeitgeist" is moving across the face of the earth, shifting the perceptions and priorities of our time. "Zeitgeist," a German word meaning "The Spirit of the Times," refers to the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of an era as a whole, the living pulse of the world. Every epoch has particular thought forms, archetypes, metaphors, and resonant images that inform the content and tone of the collective conversation as it ripples through literary, artistic, social, political, and economic spheres. Confusing when viewed through the lens of linear causation, the themes of a given historical period seem to erupt in a gestalt. A discovery in science, a new trend in the arts, an emerging political movement, a changing economic reality—it is often impossible to discern "which caused what." The sensibilities of a particular era, saturating the tissues of society, seem to change all at once. What is of riveting concern to one generation is extraneous to the next. Problems that seemed intractable dissolve suddenly in an incoming wave of new perceptions.

The Zeitgeist of the past several centuries has expressed a world viewed through the lens of the machine. The mechanical model of physics worked hand in glove with the factory model of industry. The "building blocks" of matter studied in science were isomorphs of the "unit" processed in the assembly lines of industry. As science deduced complex realities from simple theorems, industry built complex things from simple components. "The exaltation of the Industrial Age was the discovery and pragmatic application

of reductionism—the practice of analyzing and describing complex phenomena (including psychological, social, and biological) in terms of simple, fundamental elements."⁶ The model of the building block, the machine, and the clock invaded every aspect of life and modeled all aspects of reality in its image. The mechanistic paradigm dominated the whole of society and patterned our thinking for more than two centuries. We structured our society in accordance with its perspective. In every endeavor,

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we were looking for the "particle," the irreducible building block from which we could re-assemble the whole. This analytic eye in the Cyclops⁷⁸ of materialism shattered the world into fragments.

In this moment, the Zeitgeist is moving, transforming our vision of the world. **We are now moving from an age of matter to an age of energy.** We are entering a quantum era, shifting from a vision of the world as a machine to an understanding of a living cosmos—from building blocks and billiard balls to field and foam. If we stand back, we can see that changes occurring across diverse fields are the rippling edges of one wave moving across the landscape of a new millennium. New models are emerging that see an underlying wholeness, and these will pattern our world in entirely new ways. A holistic vision of reality is developing in many different disciplines simultaneously—in physics, biology, psychology and

medicine, in economics, and in business, art, and religion. In the emerging mode of consciousness, we are glimpsing a dimensional world that cannot be flattened. We are sensing a presence that shimmers in the entirety of the whole, a reality of intelligent organization that is more than the sum of the parts. The emerging model is no longer even "foundational." The basic orientation has changed from the "building" metaphor of "ground" and "foundation" with floors supporting the edifices of knowledge and enterprise, to a "growing" and "organic" metaphor of living systems, dynamic networks, and interdependent inter-relations. The movement is not "top down" or even "ground up" but, rather, multi-directional. Like crabgrass, this emerging perspective is sprouting everywhere at once, the tender green shoots cracking the sidewalks of the industrialized world.

THE AGE OF ENERGY

We are at last emerging from a long epoch of "matter consciousness." To see only the material world has constricted the immensity of our vision and capacities to a very narrow bandwidth. Inside a full spectrum of light and color, we have been wedged into a tiny slice of frequency. We flattened the portals of our perception to fit the dimensions of a material flatland. Despite a miraculously alive and sentient world around us, and a multidimensional kingdom within us, we opened our minds only to the thin horizontal plane of material body and form. We have been operating with a fraction of our capacities, our minds interfacing with a tiny shred of reality. The true dimension of the human being is infinite, and the true magnitude of our world is eternity. To perceive the Self only as a body, and to see the world solely as matter, is the root of an untenable way of life.

Collectively, we are at last acknowledging that the worldview of materialism is outmoded, and its central paradigms are no longer viable. **We are moving from an age of matter to an age of energy.** According to the wisdom of the ancient and enduring Vedas, we are moving from the "Kali Yuga" epoch of materialism to the ascending "Dwapara Yuga" of energy awareness. In the age of matter, human beings can perceive



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only the material surface of reality, comprehending the world solely in terms of outer form. In the age of energy, dawning in enlightenment and emerging in the atomic era, humankind begins to perceive the energy underlying matter and to comprehend the interior patterns that generate form.

When we open our eyes to the reality of energy and begin to perceive its patterns, a whole new world begins to appear. Beneath the tumultuous surface, there are deeper currents of increasing coherency. The Zeitgeist is moving us away from fragmentation toward wholeness. Entwined with images of crisis are images of our emerging global consciousness. A satellite view reveals a beautiful blue planet, her turning globe a seamless whole. We see ourselves now in entirety; the land and seas, from above, show no boundaries. From below, beneath the surface of the waters, glowing fiber optic cables reach across the seas to connect the

world in the neural network of a world wide web. Pangea is re-"membered," her sundered continents now sutured in threads of light. As Gaia grows her global brain, the lives of millions weave together in pulses of light. The "instant message" is of our entwined destiny. Satellites beam to earth a mirror of collective self-reflection; the camera follows us and we see ourselves en masse—competing and clashing, yet inexorably bound together. The broken strands of our unraveling "entangle" in the quantum field of inextricable connection. Words and images of hope strobe across the globe in flickers of light; a blessed unrest, an awakening; a lightning fast weaving of a thousand spinning threads interlacing us in a common humanity. From a distance, we see the swirling galaxies on tides of space. We see, as ne'er before, the preciousness of our fragile blue pearl . . . one planet, one world, one home.

(Endnotes)

1. John L. Petersen, Arlington Institute in *Models of Exponential Change*.
2. "This is the root cause of the global crisis; it is not our business ethics, our politics or even our personal lifestyles. These are all symptoms of a deeper underlying problem. Our whole civilization is unsustainable. And the reason

that it is unsustainable is that our value system, the consciousness with which we approach the world, is an unsustainable mode of consciousness." Peter Russell in *The Consciousness Revolution: A Transatlantic Dialogue*, by Ervin Laszlo, Stanislav Grof, and Peter Russell, Element Books, 1999; 2nd ed. Elf Rock, 2003.

3. This phrase, and the essence of this entire section, is drawn from *Global Mind Change* by Willis Harmon.
5. *The Chaos Point: The World at the Crossroads*, p. 18, by Ervin Laszlo, Piatkus Books, 2010.
6. Dee Ward Hock.
7. A race of savage one-eyed giants in both Greek and Roman mythology.

Dana Lynne Andersen is a multi-media artist, playwright, and teacher, with a Master's Degree in Consciousness Studies. Described as a "Vesuvius of Creativity," Andersen is recognized as a visionary for the consciousness community. Her epic, cosmological, and evolutionary artistic works are charged with a numinous quality and a sense of penetrating intelligence.

Dana Lynne Andersen has pioneered the use of Art and Creativity as vehicles for shifting consciousness, and has offered her acclaimed programs at schools, universities, and conferences, and through her Awakening Art Studios. For more information, visit Dana Lynne Andersen at www.awakeningarts.com.

CALL TO EVOLUTION

A NEW ZEITGEIST

1. We live in a bigger world- from cosmology to quantum physics, the worldstory we live in has burgeoned and transformed. Expand your worldview!
2. Stop pursuing outer wealth as an end in itself - it's a hamster wheel that never brings happiness. Honor the real luxuries of life - clean air, good drinking water, and fresh wholesome food.
3. Look through the holes in the tearing tapestry of the old world and see the new world arising. Train your vision to see the new reality emerging from the chaos.
4. We now live in an age of energy - stop basing your reality on forms and outer appearances. Look for the patterns of energy.
5. Energy has its own intelligence. Learn how to tune into the wisdom inherent in the patterns of energy.

