

Resistance to Growth is Futile

by Larry Gray

Up until a few weeks ago, the global consensus was that climate change is the defining issue of our time. Then came COVID-19. Of course, the two are not unrelated, but the global pandemic is an acute infection requiring heroic measures whereas the climate crisis is more of a chronic disease requiring ongoing management.

Like everyone else, I have been trying to make sense of the times we live in and to seek the deeper meaning of it all. I consider myself both a scientist (biologist) and a mystic and I see no conflict between these two perspectives. I see no conflict either between personal human experience and planetary experience. In this short essay, I will draw upon science, mysticism, personal and planetary perspectives in one of my many attempts to make meaning of COVID-19.

I'll begin with a cartoon. There are two lineups of people to get into two different places. There's a sign above the entrance to each place. One sign reads "Heaven". The other sign reads "Books about Heaven".

One of my dominant emotional patterns that came into the glaring light of consciousness during one of my periodic exercises in life review put me squarely in the line, "Books about Heaven".

What does that mean? It means rather than simply **DOING** something (writing an article, initiating a potential relationship with someone, beginning and sustaining a solid exercise regime, eating the kinds of food I absolutely know are right for me, etc., etc. ad infinitum), I have chosen to instead buy books (yes, lots of books) on writing, relationships, exercise routines, untold number of diets and so on and so on. Not just buying and reading books, but engaging in any activity that might fall under the category of "procrastination".

Why choose "books about heaven" over "heaven" itself? Well, the dynamic I uncovered within me and which I have since discovered is a universal energy pattern might simply be called **Resistance**.

In scientific terms – the terminology of physics – **Resistance** is "a measure of the opposition to current flow in an electrical circuit". As a product of developmental trauma, I know resistance well. I began blocking and distorting my own authentic energy flow very early on in life. It was my way of surviving an uncertain and confusing family of origin. That resistance to my own energy flow has been devastating to so many aspects of my life and my capacity to experience the full joy, the unbridled aliveness and authenticity of living fully.

So, as a result, my life (until I began my conscious eldering journey) has been I think unnecessarily stressful and painful. There's a huge cost to self-repression. Its stressful.

This brings me the next scientific term **Stress**. Again drawing on physics and engineering, **Stress** can be defined as "force per unit area applied to a material".

It was pioneering Canadian physiology and stress researcher, Hans Selye, who borrowed the term and applied it to the fields of physiology, medicine and health. Now, when we use the word

Stress in the way he used it, I think we can all relate – **Stress** is “the body’s reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response”.

We know that in response to stressors in the environment, organisms in Nature have a few options, such as fight, flight, freeze or even faint. My response to stressors (as learned and internalized in childhood) has been primarily “freeze”. In other words, shut down my energy flow. That’s pure animal survival instinct. Useful in certain moments, for sure. But completely detrimental and disabling when it becomes a lifestyle. Psychologists call it “learned helplessness”.

What, in any way, do these two stories (the heaven/books about heaven story and the resistance/stress story) have to do with the current global pandemic? Here enters the third scientific term – **Fractals**.

Fractals are “objects in which the same patterns occur again and again and again at different scales and sizes”. For example, the network of veins that move fluids around a leaf shows clear fractal structure. It is the same pattern as the tree itself.

Here is where science meets mysticism. I believe human beings are fractals of Earth itself. The same elemental energies that flow through the air, water and land are the exact same energies that course through our human bodies and minds and psyches. Humans and their societies and cultures are in, of and from Earth itself. We are individually and collectively intertwined with Earth’s elemental forces. This is reality, always has been and always will be. Ask any indigenous elder.

Can we see the dynamics of stress and resistance and fractality in the current global crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic? Can we see it the climate emergency (remember that?) or the current mass extinction of species? The answer, for me, is a resounding yes! And therein lies hope.

Humanity has been **resisting** change - changing the way we practice economics, how we consume resources, how we perceive our relationship with Nature and the biosphere, for example. Our collective **Resistance** has put the whole planet into a state of chronic **Stress**.

The first step in any program of change, personal or planetary – is awareness. As it took me the better part of a lifetime to become aware of these energy dynamics within myself, it has taken me a lot less time to become aware of their fractal counterparts in the bigger planetary picture.

If I can change and transform myself as a result of my growing self-awareness, of course, so can the whole planet. And this global scale change is happening – right now!

The Agricultural Revolution was a necessary stage in our species’ evolution. So, too with the Industrial Revolution. Both revolutions have given us much; both have also taken. But it is clear that the next revolution is underway – call it the Ecological Revolution or the Great Turning. The seeds of this revolution (already there in small ways before the pandemic) are now sprouting in an accelerated way. A new global, social, economic and natural order is emerging as surely as the butterfly emerges from the cocoon. Both involve resistance and stress.

Our global civilization is waking up – growing up. Awakening can involve pain and suffering (and that involves resistance and stress). It surely does at the individual level. I experience this pain and suffering in my own continued awakening. My struggles have been compassionately witnessed by many others during conscious eldering retreats, just as I have compassionately witnessed the struggles and transformation of others emerging from their cocoons.

I know I am healing when, more and more, I choose the “Heaven” door over the “Books about Heaven” door. My **Resistance** is melting. So is humanity’s.

As I contemplated all this a couple of days ago, I became aware of another dynamic within myself. I had learned early on to see myself as a helpless victim and I have spent my life looking for someone to take away my pain and suffering. Now that I am an “elder-in-the-making”, through my tears that day, I finally realized – ***I am the one I have been waiting for.***

Similarly, the current COVID-19 pandemic and related global ills such as climate change and mass extinction has surely woken us up to the fact that no one is coming to save us. Or to save the natural world of which we are an integral part.

As the wise Hopi elder has said – we are the ones we’ve been waiting for.

And there’s the meaning I’ve been looking for.

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