

# Read: global consciousness needed

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of potentially-truly global consciousness: of epic struggle between ecology and destruction. To vary Oppenheimer, varying Krishna from the *Bhagavad Gita*: we are become death. To stop our polis becoming a necropolis, we must find a way of thoroughly embracing a new humility. We simply must recognise, in our politics and economics, the reality of planetary limits to growth. We must abandon the currently-dominant fantasy of growth without limit, and the utter hubris and ecological illiteracy of projects of geo-engineering or of space-colonisation. Instead we should allow ourselves to re-enchance our world; we should return again to recognising the glory and sacredness of it all.

This is something like *pantheism*. I believe that pantheism is the coming meta-religion of and for our time. If we are to be *for* life, *on the side of* life, then we need to find ourselves feeling that *everything* is sacred. *Everything* is God.

## ‘Avatar’ as proof

Are there any signs that this is any more than just my personal dream? There certainly are. One striking sign is the fact that *Avatar* was recently nothing less than the highest grossing film of all time (and this, even despite the biggest country in the world, China, having effectively banned it. The Chinese government recognised the potential power of the incendiary message of the film: its defence of the land against the military-industrial complex). And the world of *Avatar* is (and this is essential to the film’s marvellous neo-mythic plot) thoroughly *pantheistic* (Or rather, strictly speaking, *panentheistic*: in *Avatar*, God is literally earthly and is *in* everything). Its tremendous resonance around OUR world offers hope.

And now here’s the curious and rather wonderful thing about pantheism and panentheism: they bear some striking similarities to animism. In animism, each thing is in a way a special mini-god. Animism gives us, as it were, the God in everything. Once again, this seems *right*: this is what our time needs. Again as in *Avatar*: we are living in a historical moment when, if we are to survive at all, let alone to flourish in the true sense of that word, we need to some extent to go full circle. We need to cease our rapacious Prometheanism, we need to learn from the indigenous peoples of the world, we need to reduce our collective impact and to leave real room for nature. If the coming religion is a little like animism, that suggests we may be heading in the right direction: ‘back’, as well as onward.

## Global consciousness needed

Pantheism/neo-animism, will be truly global, as well as locally rooted. The parochialism of animism and of most polytheism has something important to teach us about rootedness, but it isn’t enough. Nothing less than a global consciousness, and a consciousness that re-learns truly long-termist thinking, will be enough. And thus the contemplative tradition in all religions is now of great value. Above all, perhaps, Buddhism, a non-theistic practical spirituality for our time.

Contemplation without denial of the body or denial of the world: that is now the great challenge before us. The religion of our time,



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After the death of God, the Epic of Creation and an associated religion of nature can provide human kind with one such new story.

– Andrew Brown

this pantheism perhaps taking shape right now, will be world-respecting, world-preserving, and thus (in relation to our existing, grossly-deficient institutions) *world-changing*, as well as thoroughly grounded in the present moment and in the wonder of our physical being. In short: It will be *engaged*.

If I am at all on the right track here, then I have great hope for the future of religion. And a good thing too: for it would be *reckless* to allow secularism to take over our world completely. For we simply do not know whether it is possible for we humans to live in balance with our world *without* religion. We do not have good evidence that it is possible. A properly precautionary attitude would urge us not to prematurely cast religion onto the junk-heap, even if God is indeed dead. Instead, let us make religion fit our time. Let us choose life; let us have faith in ourselves-and-everything, in this amazing Universe ... as Romanticism and science alike, properly understood, help us to do. (Though nothing could be further from what we need than *scientism*: the *worship* of science. Such worship disenchant the world and leaves us with no bulwarks with which to resist the industrial-growth juggernaut nor the delusion that technology will save us).

## Fundamentalist or post-theistic belief?

The choice before us is between a more complete take-over of our world by the fundamentalism that is materialistic individualism, with its pseudo-religion of the self and its cult of Mammon (NB this fundamentalism helps *breed* opposed ‘religious’ fundamentalisms, such as the Islamo-fascism of IS) – on the one hand – and the alternative now taking shape, an alternative that owes a debt to Spinoza, that draws on the best of post-theistic Christianity, of mysticism, of Buddhism, and most certainly of inspired social and political engagement with the world – on the other. This pantheism is rising, and at the same time returning us to the source that we first found when the great drama of religion began, with animism. This sense of the sacredness of everything – this ecological pantheism of connectedness in action – is a worthy replacement for theism. It is nourishing. It is hope. It might yet enable us to do what seems otherwise so unlikely: to save us from ourselves and from the machines and systems we’ve created that are killing our kin and finishing our future – and instead to give our children’s children a meaning, and a life.

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