

DIETER DUHM

TOWARDS A NEW CULTURE

FROM REFUSAL TO RE-CREATION

OUTLINE OF AN ECOLOGICAL
AND HUMANE ALTERNATIVE

II - THE EXISTENTIAL QUESTION

VERLAG MEIGA

TOWARDS A NEW CULTURE BY DIETER DUHM

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More relevant to current events than ever, this book can become a source of inspiration and study-material for all who want to develop and co-create a peace culture on this planet.

The exchange of trendsetting thoughts of a real positive perspective is an important political act within the current worldwide protest against the global economic and political system. The question of a comprehensive alternative model to the actual lifestyle becomes existential for many people.

We hope that these thoughts will reach wide circulation and ever-increasing profile.

It is time for comprehensive socio-cultural cooperation between people from the most diverse movements and backgrounds. It is time to overcome the apparent borders on behalf of the co-creation of sustainable alternative models for the coming generations – guided by ethical principles such as respect, non-violence, truth, mutual support, responsible participation and a comprehensive vision of a new culture.

Our wish is for this book to meet open ears and hearts, and for its humanitarian and compassionate impulse to thrive.

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2 THE EXISTENTIAL QUESTION

BEHIND THE IDEOLOGICAL FAÇADES

There is so much sadism, so much fear of women, so many un-lived longings in the history of men, from the destruction of Troy to the neutron bomb. Why have we been able to cultivate war as a reality, but love only as a dream? There is so much hunger for a life never lived it has to be anaesthetised through alcohol, medication, or consumerism.

The inability to lead a fulfilled life leads to a loss of self-esteem. Through the loss of self-esteem we have lost a natural social integrity. humans today are adrift in the jungle of their own contrived forms of disguise and compensation. If more men were soulfully potent there would also be more women who were self-aware. The opposite is also true. Both men and women would like to love and surrender themselves completely, but to whom and to what?

The emotional structure of male culture today is a culture of seventeen-year-olds. Since the possibility of accepting woman as a partner has not yet been discovered, she is not taken seriously. Creating a fundamentally new intellectual, emotional, sexual, and social relationship between the sexes is the first necessary condition for the man to grow up and for the woman to be able to overcome her dependency.

The man's psychological power over the woman is based on his habit of indoctrinating her, ideologically and morally. The woman's psychological power over the man is based on his sexual fears and projections. As the patriarchal era had a habit of exorcising fears through indoctrination, the man won a shady victory in this power struggle.

A form of hypnosis and disorientation still dominates sexuality today. Sexuality devoid of fear and, therefore free sexuality, equals love; it does not have to be made into love

through morality, special gentleness, or personal guarantees. If sexuality is not experienced as love, then the cause does not lie in the essence of sexuality, but in the blockages and perversions that stem from repression.

If you have been straightforward with yourself and one day realise that you feel no fear or guilt, have nothing to hide, and do not need to lie, then you are free. The liberation from deeply ingrained feelings of fear and guilt is the first prerequisite for a creative, energetic life, for being at one with life. The principle of fear is the most destructive and paralysing antithesis to the principle of love. But fear can be overcome by love. Then the individual will be prepared to go all out in life when he has found the path of his innermost desires, the path of which an Eastern sage said: "Tao is the way that cannot be abandoned; the way that can be abandoned is not Tao." Finding and pursuing that path causes change to occur, a change that can lead one radically away from all old habits and fears, and can also change the relationship to one's own suffering. Every sprouting bean destroys its own house as it seeks the light. In the power of his growth and his "becoming", the convalescent does not care about the destiny of his own skin. It is from this depth that the culture and politics of today need to be drafted.

WANDERERS IN THE DESERT

It took three billion years for life to evolve from the cell to the human being. That process sheds some light on the magnitude of what we are dealing with when we try to see the human phenomenon in a natural framework. Where do we stand today in the mysterious arc of development in becoming human, and which act lies ahead in this drama of creation?

Through our historical past we see a wave coming towards us that is gaining momentum at a terrible rate. Created some

time around the seventeenth century, it is the wave of big industry, of population explosion, and of large technological wars. One could perhaps say that it is the wave of the globalisation of humankind in its first and most unconscious phase. Today this wave threatens to break. It has not yet broken, but may do so in the near future. Modern civilisation is reaching its boiling point. Further heating of its typical parameters of industrial growth, armament, environmental pollution, and emotional misery will result in a qualitative leap such as that which occurs when water transforms into steam. The evolution of humankind seems to stand before an imminent mutational leap.

History, in all its variations, has shown that when humankind embarks on a certain course, it goes all the way. This time going all the way would mean its own annihilation.

For the part of humanity wanting to survive in a humane and intelligent way, there is now one theme and one task: to co-create the transition from the cultural era based on the laws of profit to an era based on the laws of life. The two are usually diametrically opposed to each other. Therefore most of the institutions, organisational forms and habits of behaviour of the old era cannot be incorporated into the new one. On the contrary, overcoming these old ways is the pre-condition for a humane survival to be achieved at all. This need for change applies to the existing forms of economy, city planning, energy supply and landscape design. Furthermore, it applies to the whole area of technology, which with our already diminishing resources, will have to reorient itself towards entirely new materials and processes during the next 50 to 100 years. As a third and more important point, it also applies to the inner sphere of our lives, our emotional, sexual, and spiritual ways of living and our relations to each other. These are the areas where the human is directly connected to life from within.

How should this transition occur, and who will bring it about? Today, these questions have become so unanswerable that one could become cynical. What shall we do with the hypertrophied cities, the industrial monsters, and the traffic complexes if they are no longer needed in the coming era? Who – and with what political mandate – should build a decentralised ecological society at a time when the apparatus of production and distribution is more centralised than ever? Who should take power away from the mighty, from money, from corrupt “necessities”? Who will eliminate the power of social status, who will release us from the grip of our daily habits – including those of the so called opponents of the system?

Who? This question concerning the “revolutionary subject” can no longer be answered with sociological or political-economic theorems, because what needs to be revolutionised today is exactly that “inner part” of the human being and of society that can not be described in such terms. The necessary revocation of powers needed today is taking place in other arenas, not at those barricades where the political police and old-style revolutionaries bumble around. It is about the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and libidinous disempowerment of bankrupt ways of life. Anyone who can substitute something better to counter the system is contributing to this disempowerment. For these activities not to remain in the private sphere, for them to unite meaningfully with other such activities and ultimately create a formative force for the future, a generally valid cultural and political concept that includes an overall alternative capable of development is needed. All those who are actively giving thought to our present condition are beginning to agree that in reality nothing is more important than the development of a positive, encompassing alternative, connected with a comprehensive and convincing idea for a new culture.

True enough... but... Now as we approach the heart of the matter, we see that such positive comprehensive concepts are practically non-existent. The Marxists live on nostalgia; the tide of therapy has stalled in individual problem-solving; and spiritual innovators are often so bizarre that their behaviour suggests mental-spiritual confusion rather than salvation. The environmentalists and activists from the counter-culture, as a rule, know much more about what they fight against than what they fight for. Here we should not fool ourselves. Non-violence, grass-roots democracy, and decentralisation are slogans and not yet manifestations of will. What does someone who wants grass-roots democracy really stand for – what does he really want – as a human? In a later discussion of grass-roots democracy (in Chapter 4) we will see how necessary it is to pose this question and how fatal to ignore it. *Only when people know themselves so well that they can say with certainty what they as humans want, and when they have liberated themselves from their ideologies to the point where they can freely communicate this, only then can they formulate cultural and political concepts that do not side-step their own true motives.* As long as they cannot do this, they are like two wanderers dragging themselves through the burning heat of the desert discussing political (or moral, or religious) questions. Suddenly they come upon water, and run off and drink like animals. *That* was what they had been missing. This happened to some powerful comrades, who served faithfully in the Marxist left until they had the courage to go to Poona (an Osho community in India) or to Friedrichshof (a free-love community in Austria). The thirst for water is the thirst for basic life fulfilment, contact, Eros, adventure, breathing freely, a meaning and purpose, creative realisation and self-esteem and for a life one can wholly affirm. Where are the cultural visions and the political goals for this kind of thirst? *Only for them would it be worthwhile to make a wholehearted commitment.* Transforming

the elementary soul needs of the individual to the more general level of a new social and cultural concept is the most urgent task of our time.

Human and political comprehension is made difficult today mainly by the fact that we live in a hypnotic state. One example of this is our habit of giving false terms and explanations to matters that concern us in order to make them more socially acceptable. Added to that is our habit of believing those terms and explanations. One claims to move from the city to the countryside to escape the alienation and anonymity of the city. The truth is usually that our fears make us incapable of handling creatively the provocations and temptations of the large city. One pretends the need to be emancipated from social authorities and restrictions but there is only one true emancipation, and that is emancipating oneself from one's own insanity, projections and fears. One speaks seriously with indignation about the destruction of nature by humans, but suffers severely and lastingly from quite other things: problems of contact, an uncreative life, sexual difficulties, the inability to give oneself completely, depression, feelings of fear and meaninglessness, a lack of zest for life, and a constantly growing circle of psychosomatic illnesses with no specific causes. When developing a relevant cultural idea we must not let ourselves be deluded by the use of language designed to avoid real issues. We must be concerned, foremost, with providing an answer to the existential problems of present-day humans. *What is human, whatever that means concretely, is the true political issue of today.*

So we are concerned with existential matters. That is bad enough, because it has been about that before, and attempts to deal with existential matters have so often failed. There has probably been no time in history that needed this existential approach more than our time, and probably no generation that has rejected it as totally as ours has. When it comes

to existential matters we have been burnt. The last major attempt, after Christianity, to change the world in an existential way took place under Fascism. The result was so devastating that since then, among more sensitive people, every word reminding us of truly existential issues has been taboo. The international students' movement, which, of course, arose from an existential impulse, availed itself of the pseudo-arguments of a political-economic theory. These were pseudo-arguments since none of the millions involved actually took to the streets for political-economic reasons. In reality what the participants wanted was a sense of community, a feeling of being alive, of solidarity, the courage to resist, and the feeling of personal competence. What happened at that time could be described much better in a psychological-philosophical language (if there were such a language, and if its words still had any meaning).

So we are dealing with existential matters – that means basic changes in the emotional, sexual, and mental-spiritual areas. In order to achieve that change we need a new set of priorities for how we view personal needs, a new life practice and a new organisation of daily life. Who, among those over thirty, would be prepared to implement that change? Verbal criticism of the system commonplace in the intellectual middle ground of society usually goes hand in hand with a conventional lifestyle. Why is this? Because the critics of the system are tightly bound. They have settled for a certain dose of marriage, comfort or social prestige and, therefore, also for a certain portion of truth and untruth. Today, especially in intellectual circles, existential untruth is part of a gentlemen's agreement, never to be mentioned as it is taken absolutely for granted by those involved in the discussion. In discussions and conferences immunising strategies are used that serve to protect the participants from personal consequences. Robert Jungk, an experienced, well-travelled journalist, open-minded to the current

global situation, stated his assumption that there are around two thousand people on Earth who are sufficiently committed and free to realise a cultural project of the kind outlined in this book. However, if one could build a model community where the ideas sketched here were realised, it would have a unstoppable multiplying effect. The time is ripe for it, like an over saturated salt solution shortly before its crystallisation.

A DIFFERENT VIEW OF SUFFERING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

There are certain things that form the culture of a people and their way of life strongly from within. One of these is the way of relating to pain; bodily, emotional, and spiritual pain. A notable characteristic of our present civilisation is that we fear pain and take refuge in therapy. There have been other cultures, for example those of the Native Americans, that were directed towards overcoming the fear of pain. They did not do this in order to raise heroes but to make the human see. A Sioux chief once said:

“My people – there is no growth without pain, nor is there pain without growth. We do not hide from pain, death, or life. The Western people turn away from it; they get their meat wrapped in hygienic packages, cleansed of blood. They try to deny the holiness of the life they destroy when they kill a mosquito. Since we do not even hide from the smallest cry of pain, we will survive.”

Life creates the new by destroying the old. The seedling grows by bursting its pod. Every creative person has his ups and downs. Suffering is part of a creative life, since a creative life means overcoming the old, shattering old cages, crossing boundaries. Our age is so complicated and contradictory that the general ideal of a simple and calm life, free from suffering, hardly has any creative meaning. The richer a human is, the more he incorporates the questions, doubts, and contradic-

tions of his time. How could he be without pain? The human is, on all levels, a “becoming” being, anything in this process of becoming not yet solved creates friction, conflict, and disarray. So it cannot be simply a question of getting rid of suffering. We could develop a more conscious, quieter, more active, and more determined way of relating to suffering. Inner healing is a process through which suffering is transformed into consciousness, collectedness and energy.

To a creative person each serious and prolonged suffering probably has a creative meaning, though the meaning may at first be hard to define. Looking back at a later date shows what has changed: a more sensitive, firmer, more incorruptible face, an obvious growth of personality and spiritual substance, a keener critical sense, and a more balanced view of human values.

There are two types of suffering: the creative suffering associated with growth, and the pathological suffering that is associated with paralysis. In creative suffering there is an active life energy and an inner resistance to pain, stemming from an intact sense of identity. Pathological suffering describes the malady of our times: it takes the form of life that has not unfolded but is blocked and twisted from within. At the point where the elementary human drives and growth forces collide with social boundaries, the human splits into a “normal” part that conforms to social customs and an “other” part that keeps seething in the dark, irritating one’s daily life with agitating signals. Truly humanising the human world means redeeming the “other” from its repressed existence and integrating it, piece by piece, into everyday life. Anything that the human has not raised to the state of conscious action keeps pulling him down continuously; what we do not truly master, rules us. The repressed part of the human shows us its violated nature through the stranglehold of neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses. But what is this “nature” of the human being?

I am the hermit, crawling out of a cave, with the decision to see the world in which I want to live from now on with a non-judging interest and as it really is. Nothing would strike us as more monstrous, more contradictory, and more incomprehensible than the human being, if we were to no longer prematurely explain or define him with our embryonic powers of understanding. It is only about seeing, not about interpretations and judgements. If we make a cross section through our history to date, or through everything that is happening among people and between people and the rest of nature at this moment on our planet, including that between animals and humans, then there is only one limit to what the innocent eye can behold: the limit of how much horror it can endure seeing.

The human: it is he who built the pyramids, it is he who destroyed cities down to the last child and the last cat, who sang hymns and erected cathedrals, who roasted people with other beliefs over burning coal, and turned those of another race into soap. This human hated out of love and murdered in devotion, preached love of thy neighbour and produced Napoleon, loves peace and now prepares its own annihilation.

The inconceivable is demanding an answer. But let us take care not to provide any answers prematurely. We know and accept the correlation between repressed instincts and drives on the one hand and cruelty on the other. The discovery of this correlation is one of the greatest and most hope-instilling feats in the history of our culture. Freud and Reich are the pioneers of a more humane world. But we have reason to suspect that what characterises the human on a psychoanalytical and sexual-economic level may well, at the core, arise from a more fundamental pattern of our existence or our evolution, perhaps even of the universal process of "becoming". The Vikings, though they probably suffered little from the repression of their drives, nevertheless lived lives in which murder and

destruction were often a central part. It is this enigmatic tendency towards excess that lurks deep within the human and that has, repeatedly, turned the human being into a monster – or into a saint. *Excess, ecstasy, the crossing of boundaries, the dissolution of the “I” and union with “the other” shines through intoxicating or sacred manner wherever there is a sudden opening. This boundless exaltation of inner energies has been and remains the darkest of motives in human history.* It touches on all forms of horror, love, and religion. What do we know of the human, this germinating being? Measured in evolutionary terms its history has just begun.

Obviously something takes place within us which excites and touches us, through simply perceiving this world beyond the human one. We cannot fathom this reality, we find it is entirely different from what we had expected. There is an aspect of formidability that enters into all that is familiar as soon as we begin to know more. Matter and the immensity of nothingness, into which matter seems to dissolve when viewed microscopically. The living world and the enormous complexity represented in a single cell. Evolution and the gigantic theme represented in the time-span involved. The starry sky and the enormousness of its whole existence, represented in its dimensions. The domesticated cat and the colossal ancestry represented in its age-old eyes as a beast of prey. The formidability of what was done by inconspicuous family-men in Auschwitz.

Behind everything familiar there is always and everywhere the “other”, which enters our present from an unknown distance and an unknown past. Its threads of influence meet and unite in the cellular structure of the human and, under the surface, create an explosive mixture of crimes, dreams, and insanity, that influences our experiences, our humanisation and our character at least as much as all conventions of customs and morals have.

Here there is plenty of cause for suffering. The unfathomable appears threatening. Human life seems to be surrounded by an unpredictable horizon of catastrophes, as has always been confirmed when the dam of convention bursts open. We live in this formidable world, are surrounded by its breath and its vibrations. Life that has been shut out threatens us from “beyond”, that is, from the repressed regions of consciousness. Every attempt to shield oneself through repression is ultimately directed against life itself. The threat is in no way merely imagination. We are truly emotionally and biologically threatened as long as we try to exclude from life whatever appears to be demonic. The paranoia of our time is pointing out the facts; the ecological and human catastrophe that approaches is a kind of revenge of misconstrued and violated life. The new culture that needs to be created may no longer set up barriers against the invasion of living forces. Its essence is rather the cautious but radical inner opening, the transcending of all barriers, the continuous working on taboos, and the reforming of all life structures. Its psychic and social rudiments should give rise to a vessel that can accommodate the whole human.

All appeals to reason and morals sound like primary school verses when compared to the appalling formidability of the world. The promises provided by past religion and the present promises of therapy are like a narcotic that induces sleep but delivers us into bad dreams. By bringing about new personal experiences, therapy can help us to change track. What then follows is cultural work on ourselves and the circumstances of our daily lives. Our suffering is a signal of a life not lived. Healing consists of recognising, and living, that “unlived” life. To surmount our deeply ingrained restraints, our fears and weariness, our much too cosy humaneness, and our alternative gardens of refuge, we need an experimental milieu in which such a process of change is understood and wanted.

Our consciousness needs to be freed from its everyday limitations and yet remain rooted in everyday life, without mysticism, and without resorting to the substitutes of art, education or religion. What is true in mental-spiritual values must be understood and realised in everyday life. This “must” is not a random one; it is the condition for our humane survival. Religion and art, dreams and insanity, sadism and war, are all areas where our lives unite and collide with the unknown. A central area of collision is sexuality. Compare the repressed, demonic sexual forces that show themselves in fantasies or even in occasional excesses, with the timidity of our actual sexual advances. The genders, in reality raging natural forces, act like soulful sheep. A flood of sensual and creative power has been blocked by a dam of convention, caution and fear. What remains is a trickle that cannot quench the real thirst. Many hardly notice it any more, for they have learned to protect themselves from Eros – through sexuality for example, or what we commonly call sexuality.

Sexuality is only one example, though it may be the most fateful one. Anger has suffered a similar fate – the great biological anger that is brought forth by the unbridled forces of life itself within us, when life is trampled down or obstructed. So has curiosity, the passion for adventure, and any other form that our natural need for expansion takes. We have become too fastidious, too tame, too small. We are constantly holding back. That is the origin of our perpetual suffering with all its psychosomatic symptoms such as migraine, impotence, depression, and even cancer. It is the continuous depression of a life imprisoned in a ghetto, incessantly bombarded with impulses from the “other” world, the side representing the life possible beyond boundaries. This whole subterranean abyss between the potential that we have as cosmic beings and our guarded forms of interaction underlies the permanent irritation that is fashionably termed “conflict between mind and

body” or “not being able to let oneself go”. In the face of the actual theme we are talking about, the modern consciousness of suffering, coloured by psychology and therapy, is like an endless emotional chit-chat. It has become almost chic to speak of one’s own fears, back pain, or sexual troubles. Talking about suppressed emotions has developed into the most subtle bastion against a real understanding of the situation and real desire for change. The defamation of the intellect, so common today, has done the rest by switching-off the authority capable of giving us an overview: the head.

The suffering of our modern society is the self-paralysis of elementary life processes at the levels of sensuality, mind, spirit and soul. From a larger perspective this paralysis is the result of a falsely programmed system that creates and sustains the forms of our everyday life and social graces. They are too small; the human phenomenon does not fit into these forms. Beneath the layer of social behaviour is an immeasurable potential of vital, erotic, spiritual, and expansive energy that so far has found no space for free human and societal development. Behind the emotional and psychosomatic illnesses of our age lies the basic pattern of fear resulting from constriction. The old forms of convention and custom are too constricted, as are the old forms of marriage and the nuclear family, the forms of highly specialised division of labour, the forms in which new theories are developed and science is practised, and the forms of political practice in the subcultures of the left and the alternative movements. The “other” in life and the truly creative, whose objectives and source of nourishment is the new, the unknown, the highly tensioned, and the contradictory, does not fit inside of them. The principle of constriction and fear operates within. Therefore, in order to integrate ourselves into the Living we need an *inner expansion* of our lives to overcome our emotional and bodily armour, to open

the entire organism and centre our consciousness at a point of ever deepening identity. Inner centring and free communication outwards are two sides of the same process of expansion that connects us to the living world. Everything that follows depends on this process. To set this in motion we need societal and individual strategies for overcoming fears and constrictions. That is the key statement for building a new culture. It includes everything that can be done to create inner expansion: a new system for professional life, new architecture, new forms of living together and of raising children, new forms of love and sexuality, new methods in medicine, new possibilities in art and self-exploration. The creation of a culture in alignment with the laws of life, first requires the creation of a new social and psychic space where people can again learn to live and breathe freely. From such places the most dependable healing power against fear and hatred would arise – love.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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LITERATURE

The titles listed below are only those closely related to the development of a new cultural idea as outlined in this book. They have been selected because of their basic impulse, their originality and their overall message, rather than due to any close agreement with the details.

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Ernest Callenbach: *Ecotopia*

Friedrich Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morality*

Wilhelm Reich: *Character Analysis*

Wilhelm Reich: *The Function of the Orgasm*

Teilhard de Chardin: *Man and Cosmos*

only in German:

Dieter Duhm: *Der Mensch ist anders*

Dieter Duhm: *Synthese der Wissenschaft*

Hugo Kükelhaus: *Unmenschliche Architektur*

Hugo Kükelhaus: *Fassen, Fühlen, Bilden*

VERLAG MEIGA: BOOKS IN ENGLISH

Leila Dregger: *Tamera – A Model for the Future*

Dieter Duhm: *The Sacred Matrix. From the Matrix of Violence to the Matrix of Life. The Foundation for a New Civilisation*

Dieter Duhm: *Future without War. Theory of Global Healing*

Dieter Duhm: *Eros Unredeemed. The World Power of Sexuality*

Madjana Geusen (Ed.): *Man's Holy Grail is Woman. Paintings, drawings and texts by Dieter Duhm*

Sabine Lichtenfels: *Temple of Love. A Journey into the Age of Sensual Fulfillment*

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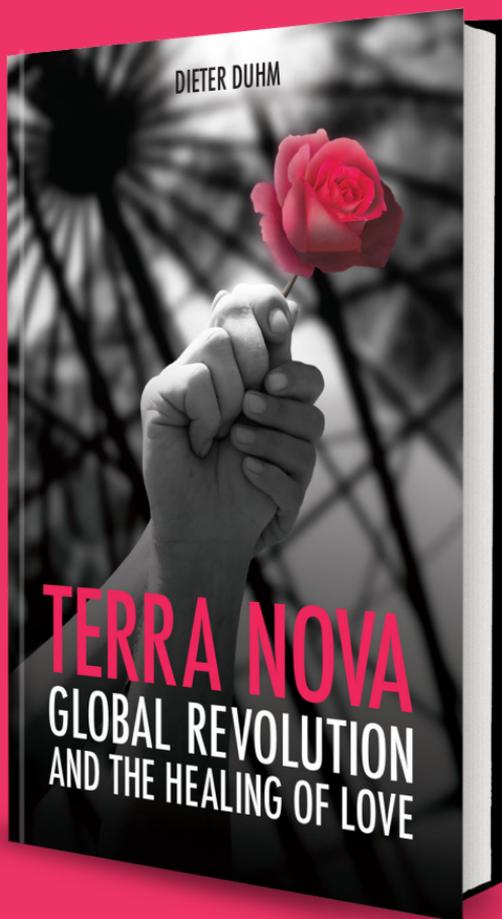
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