Elisabet Sahtouris on Ecosophy
by Awakin Call Editors

Dr. Elisabet Sahtouris is an internationally known evolution biologist, futurist, professor, author and consultant on Living Systems Design. She shows the relevance of biological systems to organizational design in business, government and globalisation. She is a Fellow of the World Business Academy, an advisor to EthicalMarkets.com and the Masters in Business program at Schumacher College, also affiliated with the Bainbridge Graduate Institute's MBA program for sustainable business. Dr. Sahtouris has convened two International Symposia on the Foundations of Science and written about integral cosmologies. Her books include A Walk Through Time: from Stardust to Us and Biology Revisioned, co-authored with Willis Harman, and EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution. What follows is an edited version of an Awakin Call interview with Elisabet Sahtouris moderated by Araye Coopersmith. You can read or listen to the full interview here.

Aryae: Elisabet, thank you so much for taking the time this morning to share with us what you have been uncovering about the wisdom of Nature. In terms of our conversation, I'm thinking of this in three parts. You talk so much about the story of evolution of all life and life forms on this planet. I would like to start by asking you to share with us a little about your own story -- your personal evolution to your life's calling and the work you're doing now. In the second part, I want to ask you to share with us your view of the story of life on our planet. In the third part, I want to ask you, "What are the practical implications for us from ecosophy, for how we might think about our lives and the kinds of choices and decisions we make?"

Let's start with your personal evolutionary journey -- your childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood and what stands out as key points along the way.

Elisabet: Let me say first that because I am a planet person, I am aware that here I am on the island of Mallorca, Spain in the Mediterranean Sea, the European Mediterranean, and "Medi-Terra" means "Mid-Earth." I've always thought of it as the Mid-Earth Sea, having lived in both Greece and Spain for quite some time. You are all the way over on the west coast of North America in California. Our technician, Amit, is on the east coast. So we're having a pretty planetary conversation here. I hope we've got people in lots of other wonderful places in the world. I'm on my way shortly to Hawaii to live, which is in the middle of the biggest pond of all!

As to your question, as a child, I was already asking the big, philosophical questions: "Who are we, where did we come from, and where are we headed?" By the time I was about eight or nine years old, I was interested in biology. I had the good fortune to grow up in the Hudson Valley. I was actually born in Athens, New York, and later became a Greek citizen (laughing).

I was free to explore Nature on my own. I got to climb high trees, to cross fences that said

"No Trespassing," and to walk on thin ice, with no grownups watching. I noticed that my own grandchildren didn't have that freedom in Nature, that they were always watched, and it drove me a little nuts at times. It’s not the same world. We can't trust our children to Nature in the way my parents could, when I was a child.

I wanted to study science. My parents, however, said science was a boy's subject. I finished high school at 16 and they said, "No, art school --- art and music and culture and things like that." I got myself a four-year room, board and tuition scholarship, so they had to let me go to a university. I did study art because my parents were still in control to some degree. Only after I got a degree in art did I go back to graduate school and become a scientist, as I always had wanted to. My art background serves me well now. I make beautiful slides to go with my lectures and have an artistic flair about what I do!

I became a scientist but I also got interested in spirituality, when I started to question whether science was the only possible worldview. I was very interested in what was going on in the world because I lived through World War II as a child. I was outraged by the injustices of it and swore that I would do whatever I could to prevent it from happening again. So I got into "How did economics determine politics?" and all of those questions.

My life has been about braiding those three things together --- interest in science, in spirituality, and in economics and politics. That helped me develop a big-picture, coherent worldview, because I always felt that whatever I learned in any of those three areas had to fit into a consistent worldview, so things didn't contradict each other. When I did have contradictions I learned to hold them and let them work themselves through and to see from higher perspectives, to view the relationship between things that are apparently contradictory. That's my trajectory, in a nutshell!

Aryae: As you speak about your life trajectory, I'm struck by how many places you've been and lived -- the Peruvian Andes, Greece, Canada, Mallorca. How did you go from graduate school in the U.S. to all these places around the world?

Elisabet: Somewhere in the 70's I felt that the worldview taught to me by science was a suit that was too tight. I had to break through it. I had the wonderful good fortune of meeting Henry Miller, the writer. Henry Miller was a rule-breaker, a maverick who had lived in Paris, an artist. We all read his smuggled books when we were young because they weren't available to society at large.

Henry gave me a taste for Greece because he had written a wonderful book called "The Colossus of Maroussi." He and I had time to have long, wonderful conversations while the person who had brought me to Henry was out researching in the library. That was a very influential time in my life. It was a short period, but I decided that I, too, wanted to go to Greece --- that I wanted to study ancient healing centers and interesting things far from science. I went to Greece saying, "I'm going to write novels to explain the human condition to myself, because science isn't answering my big questions." That's how I got to Greece.

I came back to the States. By the way, during the 60's I had been up in Canada and had study groups of people from all over the world, trying to figure out the human condition. So I had already had a background in foreign travel.

When I was in Washington DC, after I returned from thirteen years in Greece, I got the spirit call to go to Peru and decided to follow it. Ever since then I've occasionally gotten these very clear calls that come out of the blue, telling me where to go. If I am

impulsive and go, things work out, and sometimes I find out later how I was drawn to that place.

I have moved around and it's usually been in that impulsive way. Even though I raised two children and stayed put for their infancy and childhoods enough to get them into adulthood, I love traveling around the planet. Now, in my eightieth year, I'm bopping off to Hawaii on one of those spirit-calls. I'm already involved in a massive project for making Hawaii economically resilient in the spirit of Aloha.

Aryae: Talk about rule-breakers! I wonder who's the bigger rule-breaker, Henry Miller or you?

Elisabet: Somehow my life worked out, in order to have these amazing experiences and see from various perspectives. And that, I think, helped to expand my worldview, to be more tolerant of other people's worldviews -- to recognize eventually that we live by our stories and that we create our stories through our experience. I used to give workshops where I asked people questions like what they thought about religion and humanity at the ages of 10, 20 and 30. To give them three levels in their lives, to see how their stories changed. Then to look into, "Why did they change, what makes you change your stories?" More often than not, it's crises that make for big changes in people's worldview stories.

That's very interesting to me, because here we are, humanity as a whole, having created this perfect storm of crises, and we are having to change our story. We've been living by the Darwinian story of fierce competition, which Capitalism is based on.

When I looked back through evolution, I saw that that was not all of it; that there was another part to the story -- species are feisty and competitive and very creative in their youth, and then there comes a point where it gets too energy-expensive to keep bumping off all your competitors. It actually becomes less costly to start negotiating with each other and form cooperative unions that help get them to a mature phase in life.

I now see humanity right at that tipping point, where we're in our adolescence. We've lived by this "Hero's Journey" story, it's globalized us, and now we get the really interesting task of weaving ourselves together in cooperative ways, in a gifting society, that Nipun Mehta (founder of ServiceSpace) has so brilliantly pioneered for us.

Aryae: You talk about the human species having reached the point of adolescence that is resulting in multiple crises in the world and the opportunity to mature. In your various writings, you talk about how this has not only been the case with us, but it's been built into the evolutionary process of life itself. Can you say more about that?

Elisabet: Half of evolution was all about bacteria. They were the only life form on Earth then. I was very influenced by Jim Lovelock's books on Gaia, the "living earth" concept, and his partner in that project, Lynn Margulis, who looked into the microbiology of the first half of evolution.

To make a very long story (two billion years) short, microbes did a huge amount of creative, inventive stuff over that long period of time that actually rearranged the Earth's crust, created atmosphere as we know it, and changed the composition of the seas. They were so prolific and as the only life form on the planet, created global crises. They created the global crisis of hunger, for example, by using up all the free

sugars and acids that had formed as food for bacteria on the surface of the Earth. In solving the food crisis by inventing photosynthesis, a way of making food out of what was still left, mainly sunlight, water and the minerals of the Earth's crust, they caused a global pollution problem because their waste was oxygen. We're always talking about how we have to take antioxidants because oxygen is a very corrosive gas. It was killing off a lot of the bacteria. New microbes solved the problem by evolving respiration, a lifestyle based on using oxygen.

Eventually, what happened when the competition among the different microbes got too costly was that the ancient bacteria formed the only other kind of cell ever to evolve on this planet -- the nucleated cells that we ourselves are made of. We have a hundred trillion of them, in each of our bodies. Each of these cells were originally part of a bacterial cooperative, where different bacteria got together in a division of labor and worked out a way to give up some of their DNA to the central library that we call the nucleus. Some of the ancient bacteria are easily identifiable in our cells, such as the mitochondria, which make all our energy.

Lynn Margulis, who worked with Jim Lovelock, put together that story of the endosymbiosis of ancient bacteria in forming the cells we're made of. Once that cooperation happened, these cells were new on the planet, so they had to go through their own youth. It took another billion years before they went to the next stage of evolution, forming a new cooperative as multi-celled creatures. That's what we are.

These were the two biggest steps in biological evolution -- the formation of the nucleated cell by the ancient bacteria, and the formation of multi-celled creatures by the nucleated cells, the ‘protists’ as they're called, literally meaning "first builders", in Greek.

Again, it was probably crises that drove this cooperative evolution of multi-celled creatures. Humans are multi-celled creatures, so I'll skip over all the part of evolution biology that you all know, which is about creatures forming in the sea and coming out onto land. We learned that part in school.

Humans actually went through the same maturation cycle at the tribal level. We're just learning this now. We're just digging up the first cities, which are the equivalent of the nucleated cells. Look at any city from an airplane by day or night and you see that there's a sort of nuclear center and then all these things arranged around it -- the transport system, the energy, the banks. These cities are now being dug up in Central America and South America; in the Amazon, in the Orkney Islands, northern England and Africa. We're finding that, all over, tribes got together cooperatively, probably primarily for trade purposes, and built these first cities. Then, like the first nucleated cells, the cities went into the competitive process, which led to empire building. We're now in the third phase of empire building. In the first phase, emperors ruled the first cities and they expanded. They were acquisitive, just like all youthful species are. The second phase was national empires, and now we're in the corporate empire phase, which has globalized us.

We have to do it once more. We again have to drop our creative, competitive hostilities and form the kind of cooperative that the whole Earth is already. Humans have to create our cooperative within Nature.

Aryae: It is a mind blowing vision, Elisabet, to think of the level of complexity that you've described regarding our trillions of cells, and that what we need to do on a macrocosm level is the same as what happened on a microcosm level. This might be a

good point for me to ask you: what is ecosophy and how does that pull together a way to understand what you've been talking about?

Elisabet: Everybody's familiar with the terms "ecology" and "economy." Both of those words come from "ecos," which means "household," a word the ancient Greeks used for all levels of organization, from the family to the social to the cosmic household. When you put that household word together with either "nomos" or "logos" to make economy or ecology, ‘nomos’ is the rules of the household and ‘logos’ is the organization, the logic of the household.

We humans separated these two essential aspects of household and made our economies superior to Nature's ecologies. We see ecology or our ecosystems as a set of resources we usually call "the environment," an impersonal word I don't particularly like. An "ecosystem" is more inclusive -- we’re in it. That ecosystem has become subservient to the human economy. We've devastated our ecosystems. We've pillaged and plundered them in order to build a high-tech world in our youthful, creative expansion. What we have to do now is turn that around and learn how to live clean and green so we don't destroy Nature, because we still depend on it for our lives.

That is what I call ecosophy, the "ecos," the household, which is "sophos," or wise. The wise household is the one that does not separate ecology from economy. It's a term coined by several other people, including Arne Naess, the first person who used the word to get us to respect and understand the wisdom of Nature. There was a French philosopher who used it in a somewhat different way. All of that is explained in my Ecosophy article, which can be found online in Kosmos magazine.

Aryae: There's one thing I've been wondering about. When you're consulting with business leaders who presumably are driven by the bottom line and increasing shareholder value, what kinds of conversations do you have with them?

Elisabet: When I get business leadership in one-to-one conversations or in small groups, they can hear what I'm trying to say. For example, two years ago, I was in Istanbul with a very high level group of people from the boards and management of the biggest multinationals in the world, like Siemens, Shell Oil, BP, Ikea and Microsoft. What I said to them was, "Thank you for being the heroes of globalizing our world. That was a necessary step for humanity. Now I'd like to invite you to become the heroes of the next phase, where we level off and become sustainable." Then I apologized for my field of science not having given them a story for it. They were following the Darwinian story and were still in the youthful mode, while we need to grow up and mature. Then I gave them a one-minute elevator pitch about what it meant for us to be mature and cooperate in a world that is exploiting each other and creating these enormous wealth gaps.

They can hear you when you're up-close and personal with them. But when they go back into their own environments, that new story isn't supported there. That's the real hitch. I see this everywhere now -- that we are at a real tipping point; that people can't ignore what is going on any more. These big companies have to recognize that either they change and go with the new flow and work on clean, green energy or they're going to be out of business. I still have hope. But the important thing is ordinary people all over the world are getting it. Because we're in for a very, very devastating time, and we have to start working now, to at least create the sustainable pockets that can survive the disasters coming.

Aryae: This reminds me of your story of the caterpillar and the butterfly. Could you share

that story with us and how it applies here?

Elisabet: It's not my story. First and foremost, it's the butterfly's own story. Secondly I got it from a lady named Norrie Huddle, who lives in Ecuador now and who wrote a wonderful children's book called "Butterfly," in which she used this metaphor of metamorphosis for what's going on in our world. The caterpillar is a wonderful metaphor for our current economic system because it eats up to 300 times its weight in a day as it munches its way destructively through its ecosystem, then gets so bloated it hangs itself up to go to sleep and its skin hardens into a chrysalis.

Then while it's kind of dormant, there appear these little imaginal cells. Biologists actually call them imaginal because ‘imago’ is the biological word for the forming butterfly, but it's also nicely about our imaginations, about thinking up new stories to live by. These cells are like stem cells that have been folded within the skin of the caterpillar all its life and now come out and join up with each other and form the butterfly, literally as the caterpillar dissolves from within.

Here we are. We see these oil companies imploding. We're seeing Monsanto being exposed for toxins that are making us sick. All of these things are happening now and they are going to dissolve on us, because we're going to start living a different kind of future. It's a nice metaphor because it's simple, and because the butterfly lives much more lightly on the Earth than the caterpillar did. It's nice to see that as our new story -- that regardless of how destructive it gets inside the caterpillar, we are at the same time building the new world.

We used to think that we would be like the "phoenix rising from the ashes" story, where everything gets completely destroyed and somehow, something new arises from it. But it's not like that. We have to do both at once. The old and the new worlds are living side by side or within each other right now. If we want to have a better future, all we have to do is start to create it now by living it now --- it means each one of us lives the way we want people to live in the future, treating each other the way you want people to treat each other in the future, eating the kinds of foods you think will be good for people in the future, and taking care of your body in ways that you think will be good for people in the future. Then look around and see what previous generations did that you don't want to carry into the future. If one generation decides not to make war, war is gone. It's as simple as that.

I'll tell you a lovely experience I had this past year at a foundation meeting in Oslo when Lord Brown, who was head of British Petroleum and is president of this organization, heard me talking about this new story and saying that we've got to make it about the ecstasy of forming new community. His last line to a whole group of people, who really adore him, was, "And I loved Elisabet's concept of ecstatic community," which was a little bit of a twist on the way I used the words, but coming out of his mouth, they could hear it. That's what's so exciting. We have to give these things away and hope other people take them up.

Aryae: By answering my question, you're illuminating a path for each of us, what we can do in our own lives in our own ways. I wanted to ask, how pessimistic or optimistic are you that humanity can make this transformation in time? And why are you pessimistic or optimistic about this?

Elisabet: "In time" is an interesting question, because it implies there's some kind of a deadline, and if we do this before that happens, everything will be okay. It's not

like that at all. It's a transformation. It's a gradual process. The faster we build the infrastructure of the new society, the stronger it will be and the better it will last. It's up to us how well we survive.

My spiritual view of things is that I'm a believer in reincarnation. I believe everybody on the planet is here intentionally. I think we came for this roller-coaster ride and that many of us who are in this kind of group are the ones who really want to guide it as well as we can into a positive future. I think Earth is a learning-place in the Cosmos where souls come who don't all have good experiences and good intentions, but are here to learn something about it. I don't see us moving into "paradise planet." I do see us growing up as a species. That's what I'm most interested in, and that's what I'm optimistic about for the simple reason that countless other species before us have done it. I believe we have made a big investment in being humans and I don't want to see that experiment fail. I don't know how many of us will survive. I never get excited about population numbers because I think that's going to be taken care of, regardless of whether we pass out condoms, or whatever we do.

There's going to be disaster. That's the difficult part. 13 of the largest 20 cities in the world are at sea level. Scientists did not foresee how much moisture the atmosphere could hold. Already two years ago, there was 40 percent more moisture in Earth's atmosphere than the past average, and so we're seeing all those storms and dumping of ice and snow in New York, Boston and Washington, and cyclones colliding in Australia. All of these strange weather events are due to global warming even though people who are sitting in snowstorms say, "Ha! Everybody was wrong about that!"

But it's precisely because of the evaporated ice from the poles that these things are happening. If only one-third of the polar ice melts on Earth, the sea level goes up 100 feet. We know that from past geology. This has happened before. That makes New York a lake. In 13 of the largest 20 cities in the world, when the sea level does start to rise because spongy ice finally starts sliding off in domino sequences from Greenland and Antarctica, it will go fast.

The easiest way to tell people about global warming is without numbers. Just say to somebody, "Do you agree that the hotter it gets, the more ice will melt?" They're likely to agree with that. If you say "Do you agree that the more the ice melts, the hotter it will get, because there's less reflective ice to bump off the sunlight?" They'll agree to that. And then you say, "That is a positive feedback loop. The more the ice melts, the hotter it gets. The hotter it gets, the more the ice melts." It feeds on itself. It escalates. It turns into what we call a hockey stick curve that goes really slow for a long time and then suddenly leaps up.

That is what's going to happen. The sea level rise will probably be a few centimeters one day and maybe a few meters another day. All those cities will be hit at once. First the sewage backs up, then the airports and piers are wiped out and there are no supplies coming in. There will be massive refugees. Hundreds of millions of people will be evacuating because we're not relocating the cities uphill as we should be. No sensible business would be living in the risk we're living in now without doing anything about it. So, yes, I see terrible disasters coming, and yes, I see people who are on higher ground and learning to live sustainably surviving this.

Questions from other participants on the call follow:

Mish: First, I'd like to thank you so much. Listening to you has been a real

eye-opener and has made me look at things very differently. This might sound like a silly thing to ask, but living in New York City and being 67 years old, I'm wondering, when you talk about these coming disasters, is this something I'm going to see in my lifetime?

Elisabet: That's a good question, and a lot of people want to know when it's going to happen. What I like to say to them is, "We have a hard time predicting weather, but we can tell what the climate is doing because it's a much longer, slower curve, even though it's going fast now, in terms of the massive changes we've never seen in our lives before. But no one can say exactly when those ice chunks will start sliding in." We can say they will be doing it. We can say the sea levels are going to go up dramatically. But what we cannot tell you is whether that will be next month or whether it will be in 2 years or in 10 years, or in 20 years. I really doubt that it will take that long.

The reason I remain optimistic is because I see no payoff in pessimism. If you don't believe in life after death and you're very pessimistic and scared of dying, when you do die, you won't know if you were right that there wasn't anything beyond death. I'm not going to know it either, so I can't be proved wrong by being optimistic and saying, "Oh, yes, life after death is going to be wonderful." You have so much more fun as an optimist than as a pessimist. You just debilitate yourself if you're a pessimist, and if you're an optimist you'll do something.

Mark Dubois: It's great to hear you and I'm in awe. I'm a little taken aback about your scenario for what the next decade or two faces. What's your sense on why science has been slow, and has clung to the Darwinian perspective?

Elisabet: Mark and I last saw each other in Scotland at the New Story Summit up in the Findhorn Community this past September. We've known each other for a great many years. Mark is a very remarkable pioneer, crusader, fighter for Earth's health, and especially for saving rivers.

To your question: Science had been funded, since when I was a graduate student in the 50's and 60's, by the military-industrial complex; it shifted subsequently from the military to the industry part of that highly interwoven complex. That whole complex is rooted in the world economy that's based on the Darwinian theory. That economy is the "hero's journey" economy, the youthful economy, the competitive economy, and it doesn't want to be proven wrong. It doesn't want to move into its mature, stable, cooperative phase. So the money keeps going to preserving that worldview. That's the simple answer.

Amit: I read an article in the Associated Press by Greg Blustein entitled ‘Scientists Are Taking Cues from Nature’, which said every organism is designed to solve a problem. From your perspective, what would you say we were designed to solve?

Elisabet: One of the points of humanity is that we have the kind of mind that can pretend we're apart from Nature and superior to it. Then we can learn that this is a losing tactic and still save ourselves.

We have brought into the system really beautiful music, art, dance -- not that other species haven't done some of that. But another thing humans do differently from other species is that we've learned to communicate through complex languages, while other species and our own cells only commune. They do direct transmission of information to each other. We don't even give them credit for doing that because

Western science doesn't even acknowledge that Nature is intelligent, to start with. I distinguish between communion and communication, and communication in a more complex way than species such as whales, dolphins, birds etc., is something that humans brought in.

My basic law of the Universe, which I see as a self-organizing, self-creating Universe that's all conscious, all intelligent, is that anything that can happen, will happen. I think that's the only principal of Nature. I believe in observing regularities. But I don't see a law-giver. In the course of self-organizing, certain regularities have happened because they worked well, and they continue. Humans are some of the most far-out experimenters the world or the Universe has ever known perhaps. Maybe that's our claim to fame. We can push the boundaries further than other species and still recover from our transgressions.

Mark: Elisabet talked about how many things are going on in parallel to the old paradigm, that is newly emergent everywhere. I would offer that my sense is, what's invisible to most of us is definitely invisible to the media, but there is this collective emergence in evolution. My sense is that we humans are in the very process of slowly learning to connect the genius of half of our brain to our hearts and guts, and to the other half of our brain that knows we are connected to everything. And evolutionary maturity is learning how to put those in sync, so that we become more beauty, grace, elegance; dancing and living in resonance and harmony with a greater Universe that we've had our tuning cut out to, for so long.

Elisabet: He's so right, and I don't know how I managed to forget that, so thank you for the reminder that the really wonderful task of humans is to bring cosmic love, all the way down to our toes. To ground it, not just intellectually, and not even to the heart level, but all the way down to our toes. To bring cosmic love to Earth, fully embodied.

Amit: One of the things that you mentioned, Mark is this maturity that we have to gain. Is there a way to speed that up or does it end up just having to take its course?

Elisabet: It's speeding up. It's speeding up fast now. There's nothing like a good crisis to kick species into action. When you know things are this bad, you really need to get through. Let's ground that cosmic love!

Mark: I don't know if we're five weeks, or five months, or five years before the equivalent of the Berlin Wall falling, before apartheid ended, before the civil rights movement had a name, before the first Earth Day. Nobody could predict any of those things a month beforehand. They looked purely impossible. The old paradigm had such a grip. My sense is that our hearts know this is absurd. To me, we are so close to the living in fear, saying "I'm going to change you instead of doing my inner work." Service Space has been pioneering this inner work. It's time, to me, when we get to transcend living in fear, scarcity, and separation, and we get to live in this collaborative, cooperative beauty, grace and elegance. Thanks for pioneering it.

Elisabet: There's something called "black swans", when you can't predict them and suddenly we hear of them. Nobody knew that there were anything but white swans until somebody finally saw black ones.

The newest one to me is the finance minister of Greece. I've been following Yanis Varoufakis for the past two years. He's an amazing person. What he's role-modeling

now is a whole new kind of politician -- a politician who's totally transparent, who doesn't wear politician clothes, who just holds his ground and is so logical that no one can argue him down. It's causing such a flurry in the world for him to say, "Look, it's crazy to keep lending money to people and getting them deeper and deeper into debt.” And even though things are so deep into this debt and credit system now that he's had to make some compromises, he is rolling back austerity in Greece -- the first person who's been able to start that process going. He doesn't want to save just Greece, he wants to save the whole European Union. He is exposing the neo-liberal project, the whole project that in the U.S. was called the neo-conservative project, Reagan-Thatcher economics that privatized the world in this juvenile mode of fierce competition and set up these huge economic inequities (Update: Varoufakis was pushed out of his position in Greece, but founded a new Europe-wide political party DiEM25).

Amit: Virginia Levin writes in that she lives in a retirement community of a 1000-plus residents. She asks, "What gentle methods can be used to raise ecological consciousness? Our powers-that-be do much to encourage this area, but apathy is rampant."

Elisabet: The gentle ways are to tell new stories and to make sure our new stories really fire people with the ecstasy of forming true community and practicing that community on the most local level in your retirement home or wherever you are. In your community. The spirit of Service Space. Doing nice things for people. Random acts of kindness. Gifting. Not always looking for a return. It's living the future as if it is already here. The one you want. That's the gentle way. Because you can't change other people. You can only change yourself. You have to become an attractor. You have to become a role model. Most parents figure out sooner or later that you can't puff on a cigarette and tell your kids not to smoke. You have to role-model the things you're trying to teach. If you're ethical, if you're transparent, if you're kind, if you're loving, other people will benefit from that and get a little more loving and kind themselves. It is gentle in that sense.

Sometimes we have to be fierce and stand up and say, "No! You can't do this to me and my children and my grandchildren anymore." It takes all kinds. That's why I like to say, "However you want to change the world, make sure it's a way that makes your heart sing.” It has to be something you're positively passionate about. You waste your time pointing fingers at all the people doing things wrong. You waste your time trying to tear things down. It only makes sense to role-model and to build that butterfly.

Mind matters. Mind matters in the whole world. That again is what gives me optimism. I know that if I hang out with positive people, if I behave positively myself, if I talk in this kind of a group rather than with the CEOs and board members of the multinationals, which can be very challenging, I can feel the energy in this kind of group --- the energy of the future world we want.

Aryae: I want to go back to the early part of your story you were telling about yourself as a rule-breaker who would have these impulses to do things in a different way. Looking back over the past, from your perspective today, where did those impulses come from?

Elisabet: I think they're available to all of us. We sometimes call them intuition. By the way, in being a rule-breaker, sometimes I got fired from jobs and had to scrabble to raise my children. It wasn't always easy. I'm thinking of Ed Mitchell the astronaut, who on his moon trip had this epiphany that he was held in the arms of the

Universe and could not be lost. He lost all his fear of getting back into that tiny, little, tin can and having to ride all the way back to Earth after the last mission (Apollo 13) had gotten into such serious trouble. It's that feeling that we are permanently a part of this great eternal Now. None of us has any experience outside of Now. The whole Cosmos is all Now. I have this profound sense that we're here intentionally, we're immortals, we're part of the Universe that is much more fascinating than we dream of as humans, and that's what keeps me going.

Amit: It's been an incredible call. One thing we're going to take away is bringing down that cosmic love, all the way down to our feet.

Elisabet: That's right. And have a good time. You were meant to have fun on this planet, even if things are as bad as they are. It doesn't matter, you see. We are immortals. It's a challenge, and it's all here for us to learn from. The learning is love. "Whatever the question, the answer is love.” I love that song!