

## ***El Cortijo de Gaia - a sacred meeting place for human and nature.***

We gaze out to the Mediterranean Sea from the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Granada on a July summer's day. On a clear day you can see the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Our hosts, Shantena and Cruz, have generously offered us their cortijo above the beautiful village of Lanjarón in the Apuljarras Nature Reserve. Together we have wandered over their small olive estate, exploring a dream of creating a shared retreat space with a difference.

We would focus on human regeneration, now with the awareness of our intimate embeddedness in nature regeneration. We're looking at a redefinition of human co-creation with nature. In a world where the evolutionary process seems to be increasingly focused on emergent technology and the potential marvels of artificial intelligence, we are looking for something different. We are looking at a quality of human regeneration that resonates with the deep principles of life. One where the practice of the applied philosophy might rather appropriate technology to enable regenerative communities than enslave humanity to the proprietors of technology.

And so we begin to imagine sharing Cruz' dream of a place '*El Cortijo de Gaia*' where we together might come home to Her, to Gaia, as an integrated and intelligent living system. As Cruz expresses it '*...a place for the care of the soul of the world*'. And where we can invite Her to guide us again to our deeper quality of humanity. To reacquaint ourselves with the informed energy of her spirit from which we emerged and in which '*we move and have our being*'.

We imagine that a transformed quality of consciousness would be one clear focus for those coming on a retreat. A place where we together might re-examine:

- The new emergent science and the extent to which that can help remind us of our human potential
- Empowering practices to further actualise our potential through mindfulness, enhanced thinking skills, meditation, etc.

- A deeper understanding of how our language, the words and phrases we tend to use, not only influences what we perceive, but what we believe is possible.

But this on its own, my wife comments, might be rather too cerebral - too much abstract intellectualizing. Michelle points out that the heart might be the bridge to our next point of focus. Human potential actualisation requires in a healthy and enlivening milieu. They go together; our human nature and mother nature, and the coherence of the heart indicates that relationship. This is where new technology helps - it can graphically indicate coherence through measuring heart rate variability. Technology is not the enemy, but it needs to be the agent of our deeper becoming.

And so *El Cortijo de Gaia* is to enable a deeper Earth focus. So now we might re-examine and physically engage in:

- Place and practice - recognising the sacred livingness beneath our feet that gives us life - and the magic of photosynthesis that converts energy into our sustenance. To help people to return to simplicity and to a sense of fullness through solidarity.
- A shift from a mechanistic to organismic 'living system perspective' - and this to be enabled by engagement with nature and actively participating in growing.
- Creating micro-examples - offering opportunities to experience the many practices of olive growing; such as pruning, harvesting, producing olive oil, maintaining the old terraces, etc. where we might help the many people who remain stuck in the status quo - in old habits of the money economy and consumerism. Where we can encourage them to break their dependency on the destructive food system and begin to grow their own food, whether that might be mint or tomatoes in their kitchen window sill. To break the embedded belief system that the supermarket and the credit card is the only source of sustenance.

- And finally develop an understanding of carbon as a building block of living systems rather than a fossil fuel ecological problem. Recognising that whilst its creative work in the atmosphere is vital for photosynthesis, its generative role is critical in the structures of the living soil and the life-nurturing growth it enables.

The mountain above Lanjarón is a unique sponge capturing the moist updrafts from the Mediterranean Sea and gently releasing it from its snow caps and many springs. The existing acequia continue to sustain many livelihoods and households. But that gently bounty of clear water is threatened by climate change and global warming. Can we work collaboratively with that unique mountainside ecology?

The multiple ancient terraces on the slopes of the Sierra Nevada attest to the time when the mountain supported diverse communities. Can we restore those terraces and create water flows of beauty? Can we create pathways of beauty with quiet meditation spots to engage with the ancient spirit of place?

Can we generate a home of deep ecological co-creation to revitalize the roots of the deeper nature of our being - is it time for *El Cortijo de Gaia*?

*Claudius van Wyk - Devon - 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019*



Shantena, Michelle, Cruz, Agustín y Claudius