

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* by Thom Hartmann  
Three Rivers Press, New York, NY, 2004

Reviewed by Dagny Mofid

It is a rare and wonderful thing when a book has the ability to change the way you see the world. It is even more of a surprise when mere words on a page can jolt one out of complacency. *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* written by Thom Hartmann takes a very ambitious and all encompassing look at how this planet has evolved and why humans seem bent on destroying it. While the book is very readable, it is not an easy read. Indeed, Hartmann forces the reader to look deeply into how and why humans are plundering this magnificent planet. He presents insightful explanations for our overuse of non-renewable resources like oil (a reserve of ancient sunlight), how our climate is being impacted by clear cutting forests, and how major aquifers around the world are at serious risk. The book, which was recently revised and updated, has become a bible for environmental activists and it even inspired Leonardo DiCaprio's web movie *Global Warning, The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*. In my opinion, however, it is Hartmann's comparison of Ancient and Younger Cultures and his unique understanding of our socio-political systems, the role of technology in our society, the impact of corporatism, and the meaning of wealth, that truly sets this book apart from other "save the planet" books.

Hartmann is certainly not new to writing. His books have been featured in *Time Magazine* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He is a sought after public speaker and award-winning author of over a dozen books. Through his charitable work, he has witnessed famine in Uganda, chaos in Russia and genocide in Columbia. He is also the founder of the Hunter School which is a school for children with ADHD. This is a man who has truly lived a life of action. He has thought about the most important problems of our time and presents hopeful and even pragmatic suggestions for positive change. Thankfully, the book does not offer the typical solutions to our environmental ills like recycling your Starbucks coffee cup. No, Hartmann's suggestions and ideas encompass broader solutions like re-empowering women, intentional communities, and looking into the face of God.

The book is divided into 3 parts and composed of 35 chapters of varying length. Hartmann keeps his reader interested by weaving into the book some of his personal life experiences. For

example, in the chapter entitled “A Visit to a Country That’s Planning How to Survive: China” Hartmann tells us about his visit to Tiananmen Square and shares his thoughts about China’s one child policy. In a chapter entitled “Lessons from a Monk” Hartmann relates a chance meeting with a Burmese monk in downtown Amsterdam that blossomed into a friendship and deepened his own understanding of meditation and the interconnectedness of all living things. Rather than distracting the reader, these stories create richness and help round out his important message.

Now, I have to be honest, this book does have a dark side. The first half of the book describes in great and vivid detail the environmental destruction we “civilized” people are responsible for. Thus, you may just want to jump off a bridge before you get to Part III, which Hartmann has rather modestly named “What Can We Do About It?” In my view, however, it is really the second half of the book that represents the apex of Hartmann’s thinking. So if you are able to dog paddle through the depressing reality of the first half of the book without drowning it is certainly worth swimming to the end. For it is at the end that you will find out why the Ancients knew something worth remembering and how our thoughts might just be able to nurse this yellow planet back to health.

### **About the Reviewer**

*Dagny Mofid is a writer and ghostwriter and the owner of Clarity Express, Inc. [www.clarityexpress.com](http://www.clarityexpress.com). She completed a Bachelors Degree in Political Science from the University of Toronto and a Masters Degree in Political Science from the University of Waterloo. Although she was born in Montreal, Canada, she currently lives in Texas.*