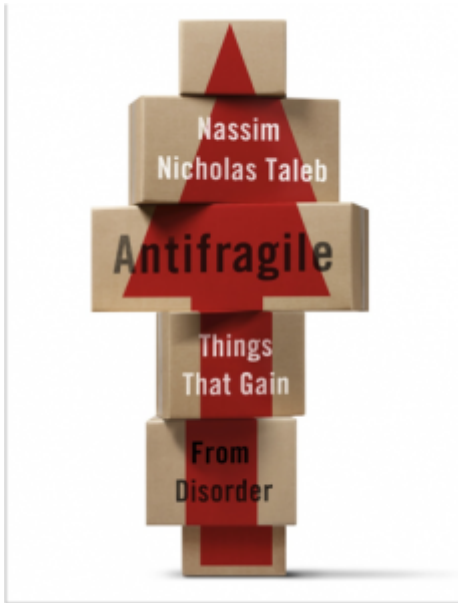


# Anti-Fragility



According to Nassim Nicolas Taleb, author of *AntiFragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*, (weighing in at a whopping 509 pages), we've become obsessed with predictability and the illusion of control. "*Black Swans*", the title of his last book, are large, improbable and consequential events (like WW1 or the rise of the internet) which are never predictable. And as society becomes evermore complex there are likely to be more, not less, Black

Swans. The only reasonable response to this is to foster an orientation toward life that he calls "antifragile".

Say you're sending some your grandma's heirloom china off to your sister. You're going to pack it carefully and plaster "Fragile" stickers all over it, because you don't want handlers thoughtlessly tossing the package around. When it arrives at your sister's house, she will carefully unwrap the china, and store the set in a cabinet where it will be safe. So it is with the fragile, inorganic realm. Grandma's china is fragile, and will break with too many bumps. Rocks are robust and can survive bigger shocks to the system. But robust only gets you half-way there.

What then is "antifragile"? It's not merely robustness or resiliency. It has to be the opposite of fragile. It would have to be a package that you would label "Toss and kick this around a bit". It would then suffer all manner of random, accidental jarring. And that's a good thing. That's how evolution works, according to Taleb, professor of Risk Engineering at New York University's Polytechnic Institute. Things improve when they are shocked.

Every living thing and every social system benefits from unpredictability. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. It is precisely randomness, accidents, and chaos that cause systems to self-correct, self-organize, and generate unexpected innovation. You might be surprised by how many of the most effective drugs, for example, were the result of random accident, and not big pharma's design teams. They were literally stumbled upon.

But, says Taleb, the world is run by "fragilistas", policy wonks, academics, politicians, therapists, soccer moms and dads, clergy and scientists who feel the need to intervene and stabilize systems, relationships, children and generally control outcomes. If Taleb is right, (and at times he stretches the point), they are all control freaks who don't trust evolution. As a result they are iatrogenic (just learned that word) ending up doing far more harm than good. The author is not short on examples, trust me, in fields ranging from medicine, urban planning, social policy, economics, education, etc. Taleb loves, and I mean loves, randomness, in the way that it exposes the hyper-rational arrogance of modernism.



I had difficulty with his neo-Darwinian assumptions about evolution. That aside, I found it a refreshing reminder of how much of life is out of our control. Life isn't safe. Humans are the only animal with sufficient foresight to be scared to death of death, illness, and circumstances reminding us of our contingency. We've wrestled nature and its processes pretty much to the ground (or so we like to believe, but tell that to the Australians as their country burns). Does anybody actually feel any safer? We know the score. The terrible enactment of our illusion of control is doing more damage than death ever could to our one Earth community, our relationships, and our

social systems.



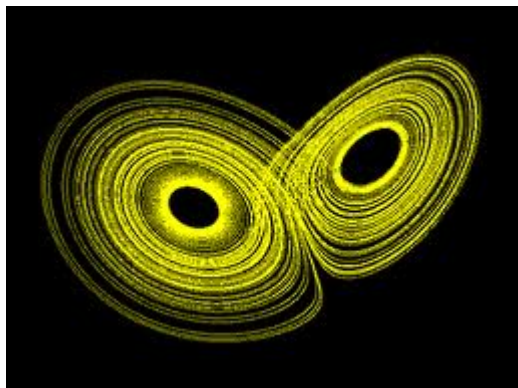
Evolution isn't predictable. It truly does thrive on randomness. And yet randomness is involved in a dance with purpose, an ecstatic dance that will always transcend the ballroom steps of our grand narratives; it will leave us feeling as often as not like we're being

ass-kicked by circumstances beyond our control. The wind, to use Bruce Cockburn's image, will always come out of nowhere and knock us sideways.

And whatever it is we mean by G\_d/G\_ddess is implicate in both the sideswiping and the patterning. So we might as well enjoy the ride. Expecting randomness and chaos to undermine our best laid plans, we learn the wisdom of surrender and deep acceptance of reality.

I can't help but wonder what would happen if spiritual communities authentically embraced the principle of antifragility. We'd be a little more suspicious of five year plans, and maybe even learn to befriend chaos. We might be less quick to hire fragilista consultants, and more impressed by the ones who told us that the best intervention for the time being would be to do absolutely nothing in order to see how the community might self-organize around the crisis. I'm pretty sure that Jesus was an anti-fragilista. He trusted that there was a natural grace at work, which if you tried to over-manage, (as do most religious authorities), would come back and bite you in the butt.

This is the life of Spirit, random and unpredictable, and yet



at the same time, a staggering display of patterned beauty; fragile in that nobody and nothing is getting out of here alive, and yet antifragile, in that this creativity that fashioned a universe and took form in us, is irrepressibly transcending all manner of death and

destruction; full of suffering and yet through it all, revealing a Heart that is drawing a universe towards its fulfillment in love.

Seeing as there are so various families buying online and likewise exploring the internet market place, it has get increasingly famous to purchase medications online. So the next question is where can you get information that is reliable. You can find useful information fleetly and

conveniently by going online. The most common sexual problems in men are erectile dysfunction and ejaculation disorders. A lot of doctors think about "[levitra cost](#)". Did learned something about "[buy levitra online usa](#)"? Other matter we are going to is "[buy generic levitra online](#)". In effect, a medical reviews found that up to three quarters of humanity on such drug experiment side effects. Luckily, most cases of sexual dysfunction are treatable, so it is momentous to share your concerns with your member and physician. Today, there are many options for men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. Get emergency help if you have any of these signs of a side effect to this therapy. Talk to your heartiness care purveyor to see if it's sure to make the switch.