Chapter 15 of *Matters of Consequence* by Copthorne Macdonald

Doing What Needs To Be Done

Before we consider issues of process and opportunities for action, let's reflect for a moment on our wide–ranging exploration of reality to this point. We began with a look at the enduring primal reality, which creates and progressively elaborates an ephemeral, informa-tion–based relative reality. We saw that this process of informational evolution creates increasingly complex structures and functions, and that this complexity emerges as a hierarchy of holonic systems. The holons at any level in the hierarchy start cooperating with each other and become components in the more complex entities of the emerging next level. This approach has been successful, because the evolutionary process has found ways of fostering and harnessing *cooperation* among self–interested entities. Unless the entities at one level cooperate in the specific ways needed for next–level systems to function, those systems will not emerge. And when next–level systems are created, the cooperation must continue or the systems will self–destruct. Cooperation is essential for continued functioning at all levels of existence.

Because primal reality is proto-mental as well as proto-physical, properly configured physical systems can exhibit useful mental characteristics. Human beings are extremely complex systems capable of highly sophisticated sensory, emotional, rational, and intuitive mental processing. In **Part III**, we explored some significant aspects of this. We noted that human mentality has some troublesome limitations, but that each human being's higher mental capabilities are progressively developed during a lifetime of intellectual, moral, and psychological/spiritual advancement. Individual circumstances can strongly influence the pace of this development, which can be accelerated through the use of self–directed learning in its broadest sense—including not only intellectual learning, but also involvement in psychological therapies, spiritual practices, and creative/expressive/exploratory engagements with life. In the advanced stages of this developmental process, the ordinary sense of separation between person and cosmos disappears, identity expands to include the infor-mational All and the underlying One, and the universe is seen to be playing *the* great adventure game of all time.

We were exposed to the idea that exploring reality deeply with a quiet, receptive mind—a mind that *really wants to know the truth* about a situation—can lead to insights concerning what is wrong and what must be changed. In reviewing the situation here on Earth, we a saw a world in need—a world headed for big trouble, unless we transform in major ways the social, cultural, political, and economic systems we humans have created. We came to understand that the present world economic system does not currently operate in the best interests of the great majority of people on this planet—and in the long run, in the interest of no one.

Among the deficiencies we identified are:

- The global market system cannot benefit those who have insufficient purchasing power to participate in it.

- Share price has become the overriding corporate value.
- International economic interests frequently determine small–nation policies.
- Inequality in income and wealth is growing in the United States and many other countries.
- Speculative finance has negative consequences.
- Democracy is undermined when large amounts of corporate money pour into election–campaign war chests, the lobbying of politicians, and the funding of law suits that benefit corporations.

It became apparent that the values driving the transnational economic system and its alliance with political systems are at the root of many of our present sociological, cultural, and ecological problems. Instead of this economic–political reality existing for the purpose of equitably and sustainably provisioning all the world's people, its most basic operating rules ensure that its focus is, and will continue to be, that of increasing the wealth of a relatively small number of people.

We noted that industry, commerce, global trade, and their financing are not the problem in any *intrinsic* sense; humanity needs to be provisioned, and provisioning requires enterprise. Rather, the current *modus operandi* of these institutions is the problem: the existing rules of internal functioning and external engagement. Cliff Havener speaks of the original "spiritual" purpose of organizations and how that purpose frequently gets lost as the organizational focus shifts to efficient functioning. We need a respiritualization, in Havener's sense of that word, of economic institutions worldwide. The tasks before us are to shine the spotlight of public attention on the original purpose of economies as servants of humanity and to transform the functioning of economic institutions to conform with that purpose.

Along the way, we saw that ethical sensibility and psychological/ spiritual development go together, and that ethics are not arbitrary or relative. Human ethics have an objective basis in facts and their relation to context, and in holonic relationship. The past several centuries has also seen a gradual but unmistakable rising of the ethical bar. Exceptions do exist, of course, but in general, people today draw the line between ethically acceptable and unacceptable behavior at a higher level than in the more distant past. The electronic and print media have facilitated this by making us much more aware of what is going on around the world and introducing us to at least some current injustices.

As the world's people develop higher levels of ethical sensibility and as we increase our factual understanding about humanity's situation, dissatisfaction with the status quo rises. None of us is going to single–handedly transform all that needs to be transformed. But each of us can participate in the transformational process. Each of us can take steps to reduce our contribution to the world problematique and to increase our contribution to its resolution.

COMBINING PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL
TRANSFORMATION

Once we see, what do we do? Yes, we can recycle, live simply, and make our personal lives saner. And that's all to the good—necessary, we might even say, *but not sufficient.* As we become clearer about the nested contexts in which our lives are inextricably meshed, we come to see that personal fine–tuning within the present systemic arrangement is not enough. Massive systemic change is also needed, and restricting our field of action to the cocoon of self, family, and friends is not going to bring that about. The ability to enthusiastically leave that cocoon and apply our energies to the needed transformation re-

quires senses of identity and compassion that extend beyond our normal small group. Fortunately, if this broad focus does not yet exist, we can develop it.

Out of four decades of experience, the transformational community has come to realize that effective societal transformation in our ultra-complex world requires wise agents of change. It has also become clear that the needed wisdom is most likely to arise from the seamless integration of personal growth *and* social change, in lives dedicated to both. As Rudolph Bahro put it: "*There is no path to [societal] salvation which avoids individual transformation. At the present moment the most important social process is the growth of this movement, the stimulus and encouragement to more and more people to pursue a path of intensive self–knowledge.*"[1] (Emphasis his.)

Michael Lerner put it this way:

The globalization of Spirit requires that we overcome the false dichotomy between changing ourselves and changing societal structures. At times we may be inclined to say, "I need to work on my own head first, then later I'll try to change society." But this strategy can be the beginning of a slippery slope toward narcissistic self–absorption, just as the "I'll change society first and then worry about inner life" strategy can be a slippery slope to the insensitivity and spiritual obtuseness of most contemporary political movements."[2]

Let's consider three variations on this theme of integrated personal/societal transformation: Michael Lerner's, Ken Wilber's, and then—in somewhat more detail—my own.

Michael Lerner's Approach

In his book *Spirit Matters*, Michael Lerner identifies the central problem of our time as the *globalization of selfishness* and maintains that the only serious alternative to that unhappy state is the *globalization of spiritual consciousness* and the development of *emancipatory spirituality*. Lerner is a psychotherapist as well as a rabbi, and his research with thousands of working people convinced him that the desire to feel connected to Spirit is a basic need. Unfortunately, we live in a Spirit–denying society, and we spend much of our lives in society's schools, workplaces, and other Spirit–denying institutions. The general consequences of this are feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and the loss of any hope for change.

Key elements of Lerner's spiritual alternative to old–style social change include:

- Celebrating the wonder of the universe
- Recognizing the Unity of All Being
- Cultivating our capacity to see each other as ends, not means to some end
- Affirming the equal worth of every human being
- Seeking the healing and transformation of the world in ways that enhance peace, tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, ecological sanity, social justice, and celebration of the grandeur of the universe
- Cultivating the capacity to transcend our individual egos, so we can experience connection to the Oneness of All Being
- Developing mindfulness, a form of alert attention to each act and experience
- Developing an ability to sustain a connection to Spirit, even through periods of adversity and pain
- Enhancing our ability to play, to experience joy and pleasure, to honor our emotions and the emotions of others, to educate the next generation in love and compassion, and to experience solitude and silence

- Engaging in non-goal–directed aesthetic creativity in all forms of human artistic expression
- Affirming pleasure and sexuality, while rejecting all attempts to separate Spirit from its embeddedness in body
- Encouraging an overwhelming feeling of love toward others and a respectful caring for their needs, without forgetting our own needs
- Cultivating a desire to live ecologically sustainable lives and to create human societies that are environmentally sustainable and embody respect for all life forms
- Deepening our intellectual capacities, so they can be directed toward ensuring the survival and spiritual flourishing of the human race
- Seeking the integration of our many capacities and strengths, both on the individual and global levels, without abandoning uniqueness
- Supporting a change in society's bottom–line ethos from selfishness and materialism to love and caring
- Encouraging the spiritual evolution of the human race toward higher forms of knowing, loving, sharing, and rejoicing.[3]

In *Spirit Matters,* Lerner also suggests that we engage in a number of "spiritual exercises." These include writing the story of one's own spiritual evolution; looking at individual people and seeing them as embodiments of God; each day, doing something kind for someone you barely know; and three exercises that involve taking time to contemplate the pleasures and abundances of life, their source, and the cooperation it took to create and maintain them. His suggested objects of contemplation include natural and manufactured things, our food, and our bodily functions.

Ken Wilber's Approach

Ken Wilber has called for an *integral practice* to augment the integral vision. He says: "The integral vision helps provide us with insight, and thus helps us overcome dissonance and face toward our own deeper and wider opening. And integral practice anchors all of those factors in a concrete manner, so that they do not remain merely abstract ideas and vague notions." Wilber's integral practice would exercise "physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual waves in self, culture, and nature." Regarding the *self*, he suggests "physical exercise (weightlifting, diet, jogging, yoga), emotional exercises (*qi gong*, counseling, psychotherapy), mental exercises (affirmation, visualization), and spiritual exercises (meditation, contemplative prayer)." Moving to *culture*, he suggests getting involved in community service of various kinds as well as making use of "mutual respectful dialogue" and relationships, in general, to further individual growth and the growth of others. In the arena of *nature*, Wilber suggests getting involved in activities that respect nature, such as recycling, environmental protection, and nature celebration—activities that both honor nature and promote our own capacity to care.[4]

The Deep Understanding Approach

As you know by now, I consider a deep understanding of the human situation to be the key to both personal fulfillment and global transformation. I share Maslow's conviction that when we see clearly what *is* with a quiet receptive mind, we then see what needs to be done. It is also my experience that when we see what needs to be done, we are often motivated to participate in the doing—and opportunities for meaningful activity and significant living reveal themselves to us. Because the quality of our doing cannot exceed the quality of our understanding, many who care about righting societal wrongs are today getting involved in

activities that help to develop a deeper understanding of both the world around them and their own mental processes.

I have explained that deep understanding combines breadth of intellectual knowledge with deep emotional/intuitional/spiritual knowledge—knowledge that involves perspective and identity, and therefore, is largely nonverbal and nonintellectual. Both types of knowledge are essential, and to develop both we need to adopt a two–pronged strategy: On the one hand, go *outward* and acquire relevant intellectual knowledge. On the other, go *inward* and find intuitive self–knowledge and a quiet mind.

Developing the Intellectual–Knowledge Aspect of Deep Understanding

What intellectual knowledge is relevant? Where do we start? Much depends on our formal education and the additional knowledge we have acquired since school days. Many of us are exploring the "new disciplines," including the sciences of energy, complexity, and information; systems and the evolutionary process; consciousness and the workings of the human brain/mind system. Many of us also want to learn more about human cultures and economic systems. Then, assuming we want to change what needs to be changed, we also need to understand ethics and techniques for changing ethical perspectives; probability as a decision–making tool; the techniques of conflict resolution and effective persuasion; and current transformational activities and proposals.

Our individual preferred learning styles will influence how we go about acquiring this knowledge. Reading is the answer for many people: books, articles, the Internet. Others prefer to learn in the more structured environment of a course or workshop. Some are attracted to audio/visual media, such as television, documentaries, or CD–ROMs. Still others like the interpersonal stimulation found in topic–focused discussion groups.[5]

Since you are reading this book, I assume that reading is one of your learning styles. In APPENDIX A, I have listed some books, articles, and other resources that communicate their messages particularly well and represent good starting points for further exploration. These are arranged in four categories:

1. Physical/biological reality and evolution
2. Mental reality—brain and mind
3. Social/cultural systems and their evolution
4. Sustainability and Economic Transformation

Internet addresses are given for those articles and books that were available on line at the time of writing, and the list—complete with clickable links to the resources and any updates—is available on line. Go to: http://mattersofconsequence.com/outward.html.

Developing the Self–Knowledge/Intuitive Aspect of Deep Understanding

As I see it, the primary objective of the inner work (psychological therapies and spiritual practices) is to move us through the stages of consciousness from *ordinary* (lost in our personal dramas) to *mindfully detached* (able to observe ourselves and our immediate situation in a caring but detached way), and then to *Spirit–identified,* or *compassion–imbued,* (seeing inner and outer reality from the vantage point of Spirit itself—living *as* awareness; *as* compassion; *as* love; *as* Spirit). People can only speak with intimate knowledge about the practices they have used in their own development, and it is impossible to know multiple paths from beginning to end.[6] In following any psychological/spiritual path, insights come, shifts of perspective happen, and openings to absolute reality may occur. But each breakthrough moment happens only once. You can't rerun things using another practice, because you've already seen, you're already different. For that reason, I haven't attempted to provide a

wide–ranging survey of spiritual practices, but have simply touched on what has worked for me, in the hope it might strike a responsive chord with others.

My approach to inner development is summarized in MATTER OF CONSEQUENCE 10, **Developing Deep Understanding**, and I suggest you re-read that chapter. In *Toward Wisdom,* I go into additional detail, and if you are drawn to this approach, you might also want to read that book.

We could call the starting point for advanced work *responsible adulthood* or *mature ego.* A person at this stage is free of psychoses and crippling neuroses and has developed emotional control and empathy to an ordinary degree. In 1977, when I was at this stage in my own life, I was introduced to mindfulness (vipassana, insight) meditation in a twelve–day silent retreat. I found it the most difficult experience of my life—and the most rewarding. As you may recall from MATTER OF CONSEQUENCE 10, mindfulness meditation is a practice that helps us develop the ability to detach from our ordinary "lost in my personal drama" mode of consciousness and to start investigating how our minds work. After three years of this practice (forty-five–minute sittings each morning and one or two nine–day retreats a year), I had my first nondual opening, my first brief shift to the Spirit–identified perspective on reality. This happened while paying attention to the self–sense, or "I am," feeling, and it is described briefly in MATTER OF CONSEQUENCE 10 and in more detail in chapter nine of *Toward Wisdom.* (That chapter—now available at http://mattersofconsequence.com/twch9.html —focuses on broadening awareness and shifting identity, and might prove helpful.) Ongoing daily sittings and additional retreats led to more insights and nondual openings. In the 1990s, I began to sit quietly *as* awareness (that is, *identified with* awareness). When I mentioned this to my vipassana teacher, he suggested that I investigate Dzogchen, a Tibetan Buddhist practice. One of Dzogchen's purposes is to take the practitioner to their first nondual opening; another is to help the practitioner solidify that perspective, making it always accessible. Having already had my initial openings, the value of Dzogchen practice for me has been its role in making the nondual perspective an increasingly central part of my everyday life.

APPENDIX B contains a list of books on inner work that I have found helpful, a number of Internet resources, and some leads to vipassana and Dzogchen retreat centers and teachers. The same list, but equipped with clickable links to the resources, is available on line at http://mattersofconsequence.com/inward.html.

Deep understanding is not society–transforming action, per se, but it can imbue personal transformative action with wisdom and make it maximally effective. When we engage in transformational activity, we are involved with two iterative processes. Growing/doing is an iterative process in which inner development and outer activity feed back on each other. Growing and learning lead to higher–level doing, and significant doing teaches us new truths and deepens our understanding. Ideally, the process continues in an upward spiral throughout our lives. The second iterative process involves the interaction between the personal and the societal. All societal transformation comes about through the collective and cohesive actions of its individual members, and as the society becomes transformed, it stimulates and supports personal transformation.

PROCESS ISSUES

One thing worth keeping in mind is that action in the world is strictly personal. Each of us is in charge of our own life, and we must each arrive at our own decisions about how to live it. My purpose in writing this book has been to help you better understand the world and yourself, not to tell you what to do with your life. I strongly believe that as we deepen our understanding, we broaden our sphere of caring and identification, and increasingly act in

ways that benefit others. But the amount of time and effort a person chooses to devote to that, and the actions they decide to take, are up to them.

It is also helpful to think about our capabilities. What skills can I bring to the transformational party? What kinds of leverage? (Knowledge? Money? Special respect? Power of persuasion, perhaps in the arts or mass media? A leadership role in government, business, or a nonprofit organization?) Where am I able to exert influence? (Politics? Business? Education? An organization? The general public?) What skills might I want to develop further? (Writing? Speaking? Conciliation?)

When we first feel the urge to *do*, we sometimes know exactly what form our doing should take. At other times, we don't know. In either case, it can be helpful to find out what others are up to. With regard to transformational activities, the easiest way to learn who is doing what is to visit the websites of some of those NGOs and INGOs on the forefront of change. APPENDIX C contains a list of more than seventy organizations working toward a sustainable and more equitable world. The list is in no sense complete, but because many of these websites maintain links to the sites of kindred organizations, they seem a good place to start. This list also appears in clickable form at http://mattersofconsequence.com/ngolist.html. Browsing the list is click–simple, if you start from there. If you don't have access to the Internet, you might want to check out the sixty-seven–page catalog of economy– and community–related organizations in Michael Shuman's book *Going Local: Creating Self–Reliant Communities in a Global Age* (New York: The Free Press. 1998).

We'd all like to get paid for doing what we'd most like to do. Unfortunately, there aren't many paying jobs with titles like World Transformation Agent or Savior of the World from Its Own Foolishness. A few thoughts about this: Sometimes paying jobs of this kind *really do exist*, but with less glorious titles and more narrowly focused mandates. At one point in my multifaceted working life, I ran a governmental energy conservation program. Later, as a freelance writer, I got paid for writing about energy conservation and energy alternatives. In both situations, I was getting paid for being part of the solution, and it felt good.

If you fail in your attempts to get paid for saving the world, maybe you can do something for pay that at least does not harm it and still leaves you time and energy to devote to what you most want to do. Many creative people end up with a "day job" to pay the bills, but still manage to spend a significant amount of time doing what they love. Artists do it. Actors do it. Writers do it. And change agents can do it too. During my write–for–pay years, the best I was ever able to do was to spend about half time writing to pay the bills and the other half writing about what was most deeply meaningful to me. A related approach is to save up for time off. Several times in my life while working at conventional jobs, I intentionally cut back on expenditures and saved, so I could then take off a year to pursue some close–to–the–heart activity.

What if we hit a brick wall? What if it becomes apparent that the course of action we have been following is not going anywhere? What then? There is no pat answer, of course, but I can tell you about my own general strategy. First, whatever happens, it helps to remember that we have not failed. Each course of action in life is an experimental endeavor. Sometimes we get the results we hoped for; sometimes we don't. If the result is unsatisfactory, do we then try a modified version of the last experiment, or do we try something entirely new? The answer to that question can come only from the workings of one's own creative process. Here, I use the same approach I use for other creative challenges: Gather all the information I can; then quiet my mind. (See the section below, Engaging in Social Invention, which discusses this process in more detail.) Even if a complete answer does not emerge, insight into the most appropriate next step usually does.

SOME ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

There is no shortage of significant tasks awaiting people with wisdom and focused energy. Our personal challenge is to find the ones that fit our capabilities and visions, and draw us to them. A few tasks that strike me as especially important are:

- **Creating transformational community**. Helping others to realize they are not alone in their concerns and in their desire to create a sustainable and more equitable world
- **Informing and educating**. Doing what we can to increase people's knowledge about matters of consequence, helping them understand more deeply, and fostering their psychological, spiritual, and ethical development
- **Transforming politics**. Reforming election financing, making voting fair, bringing the focus back to significant issues, reforming political parties from the inside, encouraging politicians to do the right thing, and giving them positive reinforcement when they come through
- **Engaging in social invention**. Working with others to find new mechanisms for bringing about change: practical ways of getting us from the unsatisfactory present to a satisfactory future—ways that actually work and get us past current impasses
- **Engaging in active protest**. When outrageous things happen, action may be needed here and now to stop them
- **Staying in touch with the whole**. Not getting lost in the details of our chosen tasks, but frequently stepping back to renew our view of the big picture.

Let's consider these critical tasks one at a time.

Creating Transformational Community

We have a problem. The research done by Paul Ray and others tells us that many tens of millions of people in North America and Europe have transmodern values and a transformational mindset. I'm one of them, and I bet that you are too. Yet, this has been a well–kept secret. Until recently, most of us have not thought of ourselves as being part of something so massive. For reasons that include geographic dispersal, differences of personal focus and interest, and the constant flood of influences from mainstream culture, many of us have felt pretty much alone. Changing that perception is an important action opportunity. We will not be a powerful cohesive movement until many more of us wake up to this reality, communicate with each other more extensively, coordinate our varied capabilities, and apply them to significant transformational tasks. We are, for now, largely the *hope of* a movement, the *potential for* a movement, and the *precursor to* a movement.

Informing and Educating

I've noticed that when people learn something of value or get passionately involved with something, they almost always get the urge to communicate this interest to others and to educate them about it. You may recall David Roodman's contention that nongovernmental organizations wield power through education and that "*the fundamental challenge of building a sustainable society is one of education.*" If our passion happens to be societal transformation in any of its myriad forms, then this urge to communicate, inform, and educate is especially important. We should honor it, if we possibly can. Among the possibilities open to us are:

- Tell our friends.
- Organize a local reading or discussion group, or participate in an online group.
- Call talk radio shows.
- Write letters to people who need to know.
- Write articles and books.

- Create CDs, websites, and online networks of people.
- Think up new effective ways of bringing others up to speed about our reality, its problems, and explorations toward solutions—especially explorations toward solutions.

Transforming Politics

The challenge is not only to restore democracy and make government once again the servant of ordinary people, but also to replace ideology-based confrontation with a cooperative search for solutions. This will not be easy. With few exceptions, today's politicians are not open to new ways of seeing the world. On their way to power, almost every one of them has adopted a rigid political and economic ideology. Each politician sees the world through the filter of that ideology. It influences their response to situations, and if it is challenged they vigorously defend it. This closed-mindedness prevents politicians of various stripes from coming together in a joint search for the truth about a situation and for the most appropriate course of action. Instead, they debate using ideology-based arguments, and often respond to situations in ways that fit the ideology but not the situation. Examples include the IMF's one-size-fits-all economic approach to developing countries, and George W. Bush's misguided answer to the question Why do they hate us?: "They hate…a democratically elected government…. They hate our freedoms…" (The truth, of course, lies elsewhere—as anyone who undertakes a sincere and open-minded search for the answer will discover. Yes, terrorists and their actions must be dealt with, but as experience in situation after situation has shown, focusing solely on terrorist behavior and not at all on its root causes does not make terrorism go away.)

Transcending the current ideology-based insanity will not happen overnight, but there are positive steps we can take and worthwhile things we can do to help things move in the right direction. Among the many possibilities are:

1. **Work on election finance reform.** To restore real democracy, campaign spending must be reduced to low–enough levels to create a level playing field of public exposure for even modestly funded parties. Many corporations and industries make large contributions to both major parties and to candidates of both parties—thereby assuring allegiance from whoever wins. Big spending must stop, but the details of a workable approach have yet to be worked out. Prohibit all gifts from the business sector? Drastically limit gifts from individuals? Answers must be found.

2. **Make voting universal and fair.** The 2000 U.S. presidential election highlighted the problems that need fixing. Beyond this, consider pushing for *proportional representation*, a more equitable voting system that is now used in many countries.

3. **Find ways to bring campaigns back to policies and issues, and away from personality, image, celebrity, and gossip.** This might involve insisting on clear policy positions from candidates and then presenting those positions to the general public in a comparative way. The League of Women Voters began doing this many years ago. By interviewing candidates in penetrating ways and repeatedly presenting their policy positions, the mainstream media could serve our need for important information, instead of pandering to our less–elevated interests in gossip and celebrity.

4. **Work to reform the structures and values of political parties from the inside.** Picking up on those suggestions from Václav Havel and Rudolf Bahro, we might consider getting involved in politics, even though we hate the very thought of it. We might join a party; work to change attitudes within the party; work to get wise people

elected to party leadership positions; and attempt to get the party to offer wise and knowledgeable people as candidates, rather than candidates with the drives, personalities, and value systems of the traditional "politician."

5. **Contact politicians.** One way of exerting influence is to write letters and email messages to decision makers about significant issues, and to visit them when that is possible. I suggest not delivering belligerent rants, but rather to present in a calm, reasoned way the factual and ethical aspects of the situation as you have come to understand them. (Obviously, the deeper that understanding is and the more clearly and sincerely you can present it, the greater your influence is likely to be.) We can take a cue from Gandhi and approach those in power with the expectation that they will do the right thing, with the desire to help them understand what the right thing is, and with the willingness to help them take the necessary action. That might even mean helping them save face—which is fine, as long as they do the right thing. Just as important is taking the time to reinforce right action when we see it. When people in power take risks to move things in a positive direction, they often act with some ambivalence and discomfort. They want to do the right thing, but it's scary. Expressions of appreciation, thanks, encouragement, offers of help, and other forms of affirming feedback can embolden politicians to rise to the high moral ground more often.

Engaging in Social Invention

We need to invent new systemic arrangements in politics, society, and material provisioning—arrangements that meet the inner and outer needs of everyone on the planet, equitably and sustainably. To meet the inventive challenge, we need to figure out how to harness the vast creative potential of Americans, Canadians, Europeans, and everyone else who shares the vision of such a world.

A major part of the challenge is to invent mechanisms that get self–interested people to cooperate in new ways. Evolution values cooperation, because it is through cooperation that new patterns of complexity are able to emerge and to be sustained. With the simplest systems—atoms and molecules—cooperation happens automatically, via built–in algorithms. But when systems get more complex, things get trickier. Cooperation is still needed, but it is no longer automatic. Then, not only does evolution need to produce the system itself, it also must come up with ways of inducing system components to cooperate and ways of managing the cooperative process. Trial–and–error evolution came up with biological mechanisms that prompt cells to cooperate in forming organisms and with biological mechanisms that prompt social insects to cooperate in forming insect societies. But where human societies are concerned, mechanisms that manage cooperation must be created by human beings, preserved by human cultures, and implemented by human societies.

Patriarchy provided one mechanism for inducing cooperation among large numbers of people. It and other forms of absolutism worked, but at great cost to the individuals who were forced to cooperate. Democratic governments achieved similar results at less cost to the person, but in many countries today, powerful institutions have undermined democracy. We also have persistent problems that existing organizations have been unable to solve. Humanity is currently casting about for new cooperation–management mechanisms that will solve (or otherwise eliminate) those problems. In the past, we focused on problems and their fixes in narrow, piecemeal, situation–specific ways. Today, creative people are attempting to transcend problems by creating new systems which ensure these problems don't arise in the first place. The goal of smart system design is having the design itself eliminate the problem.

It is only through collaboration and cooperation that things successfully progress, get more complex, and get more interesting. So in one sense, the major creative challenge of our time is simple: Invent effective new mechanisms for fostering cooperation. But in another sense, it is very difficult, because those mechanisms are rare beasts. More specifically, we need to invent new systemic arrangements in politics, society, and material provisioning (economics) that meet the inner and outer needs of everyone on the planet, equitably and sustainably.

We can approach the search for new solutions, mechanisms, and arrangements in a couple of ways. The first is to search for answers on our own, to create and invent independently. This is the way I go about it:

1. I gather information about the problem, involve myself directly with it, if possible, and try to understand it in the greatest possible detail and depth.

2. I quiet my mind. Our conscious, egoic, intellectual mind has a behind–the–scenes partner: the subconscious mental process that gives rise to intuitive insights, to Aha! and Eureka! moments. Mental silence facilitates communication between this sub-conscious process and our conscious mind. It allows us to hear what our wise but soft–voiced partner is trying to tell us. To quiet my mind, I increase the amount of time I spend meditating. When facing a major creative challenge, I have sometimes followed up the information gathering with a silent retreat of a week or more.

The second methodology is the kind that Doug Hall has developed to both a science and a high art. Here, the synergistic interaction of a group of creative people ends up creating higher–quality ideas than those same people would be able to create in isolation.[7] I have seen it happen. And I have no doubt that if arrangements can be made to bring together small groups of bright, knowledgeable, psychologically mature, ethically grounded, and spiritually aware people—in the right environment and with the right focus—exciting ideas for all–win and minimum–loss ways of doing things will come out of their interaction.

Many tasks and subtasks warrant our creative attention. This book is full of them, and there are a great many others. (See, for example, the "world problems/issues" and "strategies/actions" online databases maintained by the Union of International Associations at http://www.uia.org/services/databases.php.) Less clear is where the support for this kind of creative activity is going to come from. Personal sacrifice? Far–thinking governments? Progressive corporations? Philanthropists? Colleges and universities? I don't know. Finding sources of support could be one of the first creative challenges we need to address.

Engaging in Active Protest

Outrageous things continue to happen, and when faced with the outrageous, many choose direct action of the nonviolent kind pioneered by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Fiona, a college student, made this kind of choice. After spending a day at a threatened green space near Manchester, England, she decided to join the others who had taken to the treetops to prevent the trees from being destroyed. In reflecting on this, she said:

> *You just have to try one small thing. Just do one thing, and you'll see it work. And it will encourage you, it will give you spirit. And you'll know that you're on the right track. All I did was come here for the day, because I felt an urge to do it, a pull—and I've been here three months, and I know what I want to do with my life. The easiest thing is to think about your children and what they are going to say to you. It's as simple as that: "What did you do, Mother?"[8]*

Ever since the 1999 Seattle WTO demonstrations, protests have taken place at almost every meeting of global leaders. Unfortunately, the violent and destructive activities of a few hundred male protesters (and sometimes a violent overreaction by hyper–zealous security forces) have overshadowed the peaceful activities of the nonviolent majority— 30,000 from North America in Seattle, 50,000 from Europe in Genoa. The violence and destruction dominated media coverage of the events, undermined the legitimate message of the many, and made it easier for supporters of the status quo to brush off the protests.

The Internet has played a major role in both the anti-globalization protests and the protests against the 2003 Iraq war. It allowed large groups, small groups, and individuals to rapidly and efficiently join forces to organize rallies and vigils and non-violent civil disobedience. The Internet also allowed group tactics and overall emphasis to be quickly changed. For example, the New York Times reported that during the second week of the Iraq war "the most influential antiwar coalitions…shifted away from large–scale disruptive tactics and stepped up efforts to appeal to mainstream Americans."[9]

In this area of protest against the outrageous, the unconscionable, and the just plain wrong, much creative effort is needed. New strategies that prevent legitimate protest from being overtaken by destructive, counter–productive elements are needed. In addition, we must seek opportunities to move beyond protest (which tends to focus on preventing things from getting worse) into creative, transformative action that actually improves things. We need to look for opportunities to participate in integral approaches and in cooperative/collaborative searches for optimum solutions.

The very good news is that tens of millions of people are unhappy with the way the world is currently being run and want massive changes. Their demands for sustainability, economic justice, and the peaceful resolution of conflict are grounded in wisdom, morality, and good sense. Moreover, the numbers signify real power. During the lead up to the 2003 Iraq war, Patrick E. Tyler of the New York Times said: "The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge antiwar demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion."[10] Harvard's James F. Moore put it this way:

> *There is an emerging second superpower, but it is not a nation. Instead, it is a new form of international player, constituted by the "will of the people" in a global social movement. The beautiful but deeply agitated face of this second superpower is the worldwide peace campaign, but the body of the movement is made up of millions of people concerned with a broad agenda that includes social development, environmentalism, health, and human rights. This movement has a surprisingly agile and muscular body of citizen activists who identify their interests with world society as a whole—and who recognize that at a fundamental level we are all one.[11]*

Staying in touch with the whole

There are some people whose life work keeps them focused on the big picture most of the time. Among them are spiritual leaders such as the Dalai Lama, globally-minded political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Gro Harlem Brundtland, leaders in the transformational community such as members of the Club of Rome and Club of Budapest, and a host of scholars who try to make ever-increasing sense of the great complexity in which we humans are immersed. The rest of us have chosen to focus on narrower, more specific transformational tasks, and that is totally appropriate. Most action must, by its very nature, be local. That said, we must be careful not to get lost in the details of our tasks to the exclusion of the whole. The purpose of our activity is to uplevel, improve, and better the whole. So we need

to step back frequently from our doing, broaden our attention, and take in the big picture. We need get in touch with both the underlying ONE (out of which everything flows), and the super-complex ALL (which the ONE has brought into existence). Doing this keeps us in tune with existing needs, and helps us know when it's time to switch tasks or add another one to our list.

Before human beings evolved, the evolutionary situation here on Earth was that shown in Figure 1. Spirit, Energy–Awareness, the primal ONE, created the informationally complex lithosphere/hydrosphere/atmosphere/biosphere through the guidance of intrinsic laws-of-nature algorithms.
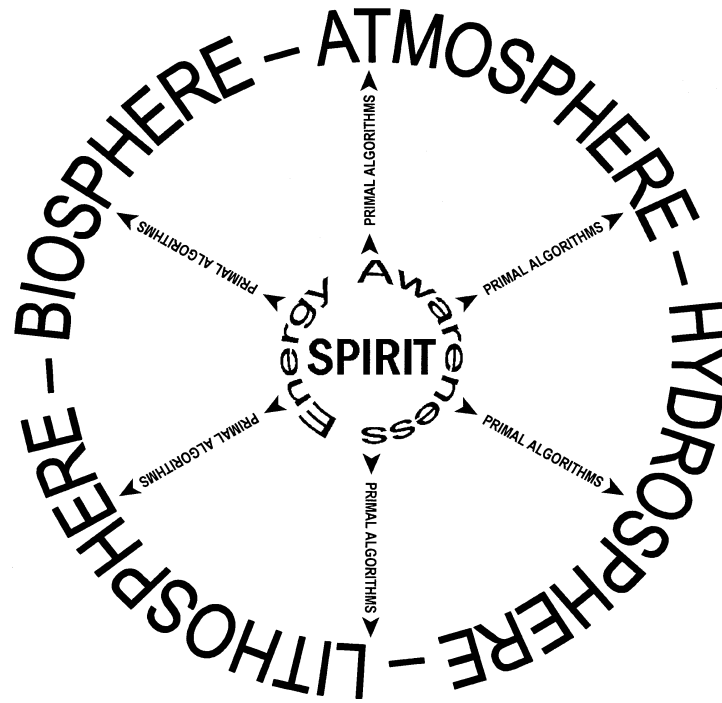

Figure 1 — Algorithm–Directed Evolution

When human beings evolved, things changed in two ways. First, a new sphere of activity—the human sociosphere—became intertwined with the other four at the surface of the Earth. Second, the dominant form of evolutionary guidance began to shift from intrinsic algorithms to human values. During the twentieth century this shift accelerated. As the century progressed, more and more evolutionary decisions were made by humans. And many of the guiding values were destructive ones such as acquisitiveness, comfort regardless of consequences, and out and out greed. The result is the world as it now exists.

BIOSPHERE – SOCIOSPHERE – ATMOSPHERE – SOCIOSPHERE – HYDROSPHERE – SOCIOSPHERE – LITHOSPHERE – SOCIOSPHERE

HUMAN VALUES

Staying in touch with the whole

Creating transformational community

Engaging in active protest

SPIRIT
Energy · Awareness

Informing and educating

Engaging in social invention

Transforming politics

Figure 2 — Mind–Directed Evolution, and Our Transformational Challenge

Figure 2 presents, in graphic form, the transformative challenge that humanity faces today. As in the twentieth century, human values are guiding the changes. What is different are the values themselves. Instead of the informational elaboration of the world being guided by greed and acquisitiveness, the transformational activities of Figure 2 are structured around values such as sustainability; economic equity; psychological, spiritual, and ethical development; true democracy—and a deep appreciation of the big picture, the long view, and our place in the scheme of things.[12]

LIVING AS SPIRIT

In his book about finite and infinite games, James Carse called attention to two interesting things about infinite games. First, the only purpose of an infinite game "is to prevent it from coming to an end, to keep everyone in play." Second, "There is but one infinite game."[13] The Existence Game is that game. Spirit in all its forms plays it. And the core objective is to keep the game going. We see this in the natural world. Wherever things can grow, they will grow: The biosphere recovers from massive extinctions. Ravaged forests eventually grow back. Grass takes root in pavement cracks.

People—Spirit in human form—also play the Existence Game. They can't help playing it. And, like the grass and the trees, most play it unconsciously. People, however, have the potential to wake up and play with awareness and conscious intention. Clearly comprehending what *is* leads to a vision of what *should be*. And for most who come to that kind of deep, clear seeing, also comes an urge to act, to make things right, to *implement* the vision.

We are Spirit in human form, and since the evolutionary refinement of physical/mental complexity is clearly Spirit's central project, it is also *our* project. When we carry the process of inner development to the point where our sense of self includes the ONE and the ALL, that old sense of separation between personal and universal disappears.

Personal purposes align with cosmic purposes, and we become cosmic adventurers and conscious agents of evolution—appreciating what is, up–leveling what is, and fostering betterment and well–being wherever we go.

We enter the cosmic arena with two melded identities: From the relative–reality perspective, we see ourselves as fallible, short–lived human beings—albeit, human beings with a much clearer–than–ordinary understanding of the game and of our roles as transformational players. When we flip to the absolute–reality perspective, we know we are Spirit and thus, simply, naturally, and unquestionably committed to Spirit's mammoth undertaking.

If you are not yet consciously participating in this adventure of all adventures, think about it, feel about it, and meditate on it. I encourage you to find and enter the arena of Spirit. There, the egoic search for success and significance ends—and yet, the most exciting game ever is still under way. Conscious players are needed. Come in, and play to your heart's content.

The Matters of Consequence website was established to facilitate our ongoing exploration of matters of consequence and our search for transformational solutions. Visit it at http://mattersofconsequence.com/.

Notes

[1] Bahro, 1994, p. 160.

[2] Lerner, 2000, p. 273.

[3] This list is excerpted from Lerner, 2000, pp. 167–73.

[4] Excerpted from Wilber, 2000d, p. 138.

[5] Reworking Tomorrow is a discussion–focused Australian organization, which has created an excellent guide to organizing change–oriented conversational groups of many kinds, including focus groups and study circles. The guide, *Clues on Conversations*, is available on line at http://www.resilientcommunities.org/articles/clues.htm.

[6] Macdonald, 2001a [1996a 1993].

[7] New product ideas is the creative focus of Doug Hall's Eureka! Ranch in Newtown, Ohio. There, employees of large corporations interact with other creative people in a high–stimulation environment and come up with ideas having a higher–than–average probability of success. It is his *creative methodology* that I find attractive and am suggesting be applied to the very different task of societal transformation. Information about Eureka! Ranch programs is available at:
http://www.eurekaranch.com/.

[8] CBC Radio *Ideas*, 1999, Episode 8.

[9] Zernike and Murphy, 2003.

[10] Tyler, 2003.

[11] Moore's article, dated March 31, 2003 and titled "The Second Superpower Rears its Beautiful Head," was read on May 2, 2003 at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/ jmoore/secondsuperpower.html.

[12] Heiner Benking (http://benking.de/index.html) is a connector of people, a facilitator of dialog, and an expert at helping people comprehend through visualization. Upon reading the manuscript for this book, he felt that the

first five transformational tasks outlined in this matter-of-consequence should be complemented by two things: 1) a sixth task that focused on the big picture, and 2) a visual device of some sort that would relate the individual tasks to the task–as–a–whole, to the entire earthly happening. We discussed the matter at some length, and Heiner introduced me to several "wheels of transformation" (http://www.open-forum.de/wheel.html; http://www.wova.org/who/wheel.html; and http://www.consciousevolution.net/peaceroom/ innovations/index.jsp) that became the inspiration for Figures 1 and 2. In all of this, Heiner's counsel was highly valuable and much appreciated.

[13] Carse, 1986, pp. 6–7, 149.