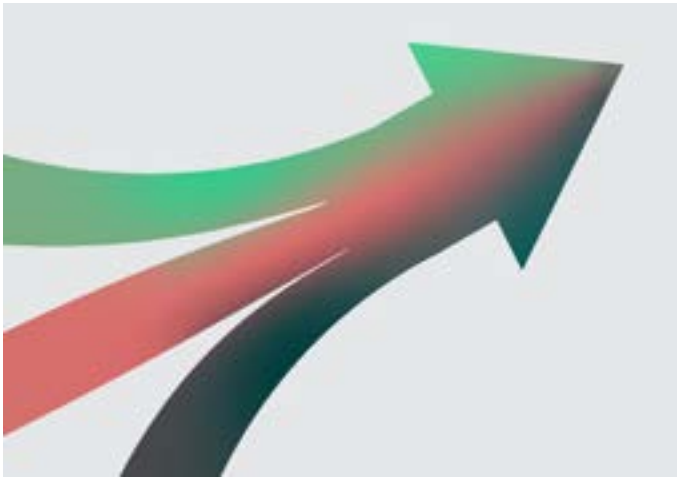
GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE
TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION AND PRAXIS

Convergent Journeys

May 2025

This volume is a component of the GTI Forum "Memoirs of Global Engagagement" on the forces and influences that shape our intellectual and political evolution. The forum opened with an essay by GTI Director Paul Raskin, *Encounters and Transitions: The Times of My Life*, which paints a portrait of our tumultuous era as refracted through his personal experiences. In this complementary collection of essays, diverse scholars and activists respond with their own unique stories that have been collected here.



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As an initiative for collectively understanding and shaping the global future, GTI welcomes diverse ideas. Thus, the opinions expressed in our publications do not necessarily reflect the views of GTI or the Tellus Institute.

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Biko Agozino

We nicknamed him Ogbuoge ("killer of time") for his long lectures and life lessons on the assembly ground at Awgu High School, Nenwe. He came to us as a new principal in our third year, and he quietly changed our lives in lasting ways. The former principal had divided our classes into different tracks according to the level of academic achievement after our first year, with a promise to keep doing so at the end of each school year. The top forty students were put into year two as 2A, and I found myself in 2B with a determination to rise to 3A. However, the new principal did not sort us again and allowed our mixed abilities classes to continue so that we could learn from one another.

That turned out to be a blessing for me because in year four, a nephew of the principal was admitted into our 4B class and was made to sit next to me for some reason. I quickly saw that the young man signed his textbooks with the titles of degrees he hoped to attain from top universities, and I copied the style immediately. Little did I know that the MA Cantab that I signed after my name on my *History of West Africa* textbook by B.I.C. Onwubiko would prove prophetic. I eventually obtained a Master of Philosophy from the Law Faculty of Cambridge, MPhil Cantab. I often wondered why the nephew of the principal was made to sit beside me in class, but now I know that I had a similar name to the principal, whose son was called Agodi Junior, meaning that my family name, Ago, was similar to his.

Another influence that Ogbuoge had on me was one of his lectures about the importance of drinking a cup of water on an empty stomach before breakfast. I continue to follow this habit, and I have now seen some research affirming the importance of adequate hydration as we grow older. I hope that observing this practice will make me look younger and remain productive, alert, and lucid, like our agile principal, in my older age. Just as he keeps writing books in his retirement, I hope to never grow tired of writing and publishing to help mentor future generations.

When he turned ninety-four years old, some of us old boys gathered on Zoom from around the world to interact with him, and we reminisced and collectively sang one of the time-killing songs he used to teach us endlessly on the assembly ground: "The First Noel." He must have seen something in our cohort to teach us a song like that which prophesied that greatness would emerge from the East while we were studying in the East Central State that was later split into two states—Anambra and Imo states—and later made up five states (Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, and Imo states in Nigeria).

It was wrong of us to think that he was killing time, for musical education is indeed a part of a well-rounded education that many of us did not receive in school, making us rely only on the informal self-taught performances of *Mmanwu* masquerades or the *Mkpokiti* dance troupe that he also established for us. Having two left feet, I never made it into the *Mkpokiti* dance troupe that my cousin, who was also the captain of the school junior soccer team for five years (based on size and not age), led for the school, but I went on to complete an album of my own compositions that is now on SoundCloud, while my cousin went on to become a Professor of Dramaturgy at the University of Abuja.

How could one man who did not even teach any formal classes end up having so much influence on our young minds? He answered this question for us by telling us that he had been awarded a scholarship to go abroad for further studies but chose to come to our school as a principal for a chance to influence our young minds. He told us that some of the students from the area may have opposed his tenure as the principal because they wished to have someone from the local area promoted to the post after the previous principal, also from Agba Enu like him, was not from the Awgu area.

Waawa people resented being seen as inferior to *ndi Ejekebe*. Some scallywags went to his residence and vandalized his car to try and scare him away from the school. Somehow, the vice principal, Mr. Obi Okafor, helped to identify the miscreants, and they caught one of them and drove towards the police station to report the vandalism. But when the car stopped on the way, the student jumped off and ran into the bushes, and they chased after him in vain. The principal was kind enough not to seek to criminalize the vandals or punish them further. Instead, he organized inter-house athletics competitions for us and sponsored the inter-school contests that taught us the value of team spirit and the need to shun superstition and instead train for success. He introduced us to volleyball and lawn tennis and electrified our campus.

Once, we heard that the principal had a car accident that plunged his car down a ravine. When people rushed to the scene, they claimed that there was no one in the totaled car. The man was rather seen walking to the car from a different direction. We believed that he had supernatural powers to fly away from an accident, but he did not encourage such nonsensical beliefs among us. Instead, he gave one of his time-killing lectures on the importance of training for success in sports rather than believing that native doctors have powerful *otumokpo*, or charms, that would help our teams to win without practice or coaching. Some students also believed that they could buy charms from India that would help them to ace exams without studying, but most of us knew better than to avoid studying systematically. Other teachers that he recruited for us helped to mentor us by teaching us mnemonic devices that helped us to achieve good results without the need to cram chunks of information.

I experienced his disciplinary style when some students from our school waylaid a luxury bus that was taking students from Rosary High School Awgu to St. Vincent Secondary School, Agbogugu. It was rumored that the girls' school refused our invitation to come and dance with us but accepted the invitation of St. Vincent's, maybe because they were both started as Catholic schools before being turned into public schools after the Nigeria-Biafra war, apparently to reduce the feelings of sectarianism. Some of the boys at our school gate pelted the bus with objects as it passed.

The side mirror of the bus was broken, and the bus driver stopped and drove into our campus to file a complaint against us. Our principal calmly asked for a list of the perpetrators and shared the cost of the repairs among them. It turned out to be expensive, and so they added other names to the list to share the cost, which was how my name appeared on the list. The principal also gave us a one-week expulsion and asked us to bring our parents or guardians to sign an affidavit that we would be well-behaved going forward. My mother and my elder sister came to sign for me, but the principal seemed to have forgotten about that part of the punishment. I learned the lesson anyway because my mother and sister told me never to make them walk the walk of shame again.

My second lesson in discipline from Ogbuoge was when he caned me in front of all the students on the assembly ground. My offense was that I wore milk-colored shorts whereas the school uniform was pure white. A former student handed down the milk-colored shorts to me, and my white cotton uniform was always turning milky and brownish due to the murky water from Omo River that we fetched for drinking, cooking, and washing. I got a warning earlier to stop wearing the milk color, but I

had no spare shorts to change into. So, I wore it to school again, and a teacher tore it up to my hips on both sides. I used a needle to sew it up and wore it the next day. That was when Ogbuoge intervened and promised to whip me the next day. Thanks to the advance notice, I packed cardboard sheets into my underwear to absorb the strokes. He gave me six lashes on my buttocks, and I took them without crying, making the whole school hail me for bravery.

The only other time he whipped a student was a student known as Power, who failed to show up for the assembly. While he was being caned, Power was shouting at the top of his voice that he was going to leave the school with a First Division grade, no matter what anyone thought of him. Power went on to make Grade One just as he promised, and I made the same promise to myself—but silently—while the old man was cutting my tail.

I was told that when the principal read the results of our 1979 West African School Certificate Examination results on the assembly ground, my name was the first to be called alphabetically among the six students who made First Division, and the assembled students went up with loud shouts of my nickname: "Hopeless! Hopeless!" A girl had called me that when I tried to chat her up with lines from Shakespeare, and the students tried to make it stick. However, I divided it into two words in my mind and called it "Hope Less, achieve more." If asked whether I would make First Division, I did not respond, “I hope so,” because I did! To discourage those who enjoyed calling me Hopeless, I called them Lucifer if they were male and Jezebel if they were female. They soon changed it to Hope.

I am often reminded that no one could have predicted that I would be an outstanding scholar, perhaps because I came from a peasant background with no books in the house, but I believed that Ogbuoge had plans. I went on to obtain a First-Class Honors degree in sociology at the University of Calabar. When I went to collect my high school statement of results, the new principal asked what I was majoring in, and when I told him that it was sociology, he said that he hoped that I would not specialize in the "sociology of women." “Why not?,” I wondered. I went on to write my doctoral thesis at The University of Edinburgh on Black women and the criminal justice system, and it helped to establish my name internationally as one of the founders of the decolonization paradigm in criminology.

We once had complaints from some students about the quality of food served in the refectory: *agwa utu mgbodu ume,* or beans with weevils that fill the belly. Our principal went to inspect the kitchen,

but there was nearly a riot when some students charged after him and threw some objects at him. He quickened his steps as if to run away, but other students shouted for us to protect him. As far as I know, no student was punished for that indiscipline. Some of us bought kerosene stoves and cooked some of the yam that we harvested from the teachers' farm that we helped to cultivate but which they sold to our kitchen instead of sharing with us.

Some of the teachers searched for our stoves and confiscated them while we were in class, but there was no further punishment. We were demonstrating that we knew how to cook as teenagers and that it was not theft for a child to harvest yam from his father's farm that he helped to cultivate. I now believe that the authorities were right in confiscating the stove with a full pot of yam that we cooked and planned to eat after school. Cooking in the crowded dormitory hall was a fire hazard and led to CO2 poisoning. Besides, obsessing about food would slow a student down in concentration and learning.

In my final year, I was nominated by a previous officeholder to serve as the Attendance Prefect, responsible for keeping records of class attendance and disciplining late-comers. I would go to the staff room and obtain the daily register of attendance to record it. But I never reported anyone for punishment. Only once did a day student refuse to obey my instruction to kneel down for being late. He said that he was bigger than me and would rather fight me. Little did he know that I was learning karate from other students, and so I shrugged and accepted his challenge to fight for it. He stretched out his hands like Egyptian mummies the way that Nenwe people did in their traditional boxing. I smiled and waited for him to make a move. I then countered with a dummy move with a leg that he went for, only for him to get struck down with the other foot as intended. The other students laughed at the student and his muddy buttocks, and that was it. No snitching and no further punishment.

We also had adventures going to Mgbowo town at night to dance until the early hours of the morning at weddings before sneaking back into the hostels. Our principal may have known about it but did not punish any of us. Instead, the principal brought science films to show us how plants grow (as if illustrating that he was planting seeds that would grow in our own minds). He stocked a bookshelf with the Rapid Readers Series, and I went through all the books on the shelf, with Jack London's *Call of the Wild* sticking to my mind. He allowed our bursar to start teaching us accounting, and although we had no Igbo language teacher in our final year, he allowed some of us to register for the subject in the West

African Examinations Council along with commerce and government, subjects that we were never taught. Ogbuoge was simply teaching us individual responsibility and the courage to face any situation with intelligence, morality, and civility. We quickly adopted his nickname for ourselves and decided to kill time while silently making plans for success because *Ogbuoge nwelu* ("Timekiller has") plans.

I applied this formula once when junior students wanted to host a party with a neighboring high school for girls. They called themselves the Young Christians Association and charged their members one naira each to fund the party. Two young boys who were born-again Christians refused to pay and said that their religion would not support dancing with girls. The leaders of the party organization wanted to beat them up all night, and I wanted to go to sleep. So, I paid two naira for the two boys. They protested and said that they would never pay me back. The next morning, I wrote a report to the principal and told him to put a stop to such extortion among students without naming the culprits. To my surprise, he called the students together that Saturday evening and read my letter without saying who wrote it. Then without seeking to identify the culprits, he asked them to refund the money they collected. They suspected that I was the one who reported them and started acting up around me, but I just smiled and accepted my two naira from those two students. No one was punished by our principal.

Today, as a sociology professor with a specialization in criminology and Africana studies, I am still applying this philosophy of justice with emphasis on reparations and healing rather than punishment. That was how African indigenous justice systems managed to go for centuries without building a single prison. The modern world could borrow this lesson of penal abolitionism that our principal managed to teach us from time to time. Thank you, The Right Honorable Chief Onyedi Onyedi, or Chief Live and Let Live, for being such a role model that helped to mold our young minds.

In November 2024, I was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Division on Critical Criminology and Social Justice, American Society of Criminology, at the annual conference in San Francisco. I was honored to visit my then ninety-seven-year-old Principal Umeukeje, who was visiting his son in the city, and I proudly dedicated the award to him, while other Old Boys joined us from across the world by Zoom.

Biko Agozino is Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies at Virginia Tech and author of Critical, Creative and Centered Scholar-Activism.

Vicki Assevero

I have finally finished reading Paul Raskin's "memoir" contextualizing how his personal history and background informed the creation of Tellus, its antecedents, and now its progeny. I wanted to share some reflections on the piece as well as some reflections about the seminal moments in my own journey.

I was particularly struck by the section on how "visionary scenarios [are] aborted" (p. 56). It made me think about the quote "It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism," frequently attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek but actually said by H. Bruce Franklin in response to the British novelist and short story writer J. G. Ballard, who wrote about dystopias both physical and psychological.

Right now, at the dawn of 2025, we are witnessing *Barbarization*, no longer as a scenario but as an actuality. The "martyrdom" of Luigi Mangione for killing Bruce Thompson in cold blood in the middle of Manhattan. Psychotic acts of violence in New Orleans and Las Vegas. Gaza, representing the impunity of barbarous revenge (for not preventing October 7) steeped in the trauma of a Holocaust, which is being repeated. Ukraine, reduced to rubble to fulfill the desires of oligarchic despots for affirmations of greatness through the resurrection of bygone Czarist empires. Haiti, a further descent into gun-fueled gang madness in a country that manufactures no guns. Sudan, growing starvation caused by tensions between non-Arab farming communities and Arab pastoralists and again trigger-happy pseudo militias. Ninety-two countries are involved in conflicts outside of their borders today.

Pundits say it is a backlash against "globalism" and global elites. But let's be quite clear: We live on one planet, one globe that we have named Earth, and for millennia humans have been "globalizing"—migrating, moving themselves, their cultures, their seeds, plants, and languages to other parts of the globe where they mutate, syncretize, and become something new. What is

quite unfamiliar is the newfound *speed* created by digital technologies, including AI. The problem with this exponential acceleration of everything is that human beings are physically incapable of keeping up with and managing such speeds, especially in information intake and processing. As a result, many people have become disoriented and alienated from themselves and others. Our attention has been commodified, creating torrents and floods of "information" competing for our limited capacity for sensory intake. A recent Yale study explained that air pollution from fossil fuels causes developmental delays in children and increases risks of dementia and cognitive decline as we age. The dysfunction becomes additive—with the ultra-chemically processed foods and microplastics in our blood. Someone coined a word for this: "techno-gigantism." The reactions across the globe have been to retreat, to try to go backwards in time towards some mythological simplicity, which in fact was only unawareness of history and our deep interconnectedness with the human and non-human living worlds.

If we are to make the "Great Transition" to a humane, peaceful, and verdant world, we must start with consciousness. Raskin's essay was very clear about the moral molding in his formative years. Nowadays, misinformation, disinformation, and deception—both intentional and unintentional—slide through our collective consciousness(es) daily and implant doubt and chaos even in minds that have been homed in critical thinking skills. Don't they call this gaslighting?

Paul rightly points out that there are millions of people and organizations trying to dislodge the now paradigmatic hegemon—structural late-stage advanced capitalism—which has cleverly clothed itself in shining democratic and human rights ideals. This capitalism is NOT the market or even the marketplace! We want markets; we need markets and places for the exchange of ideas, goods, and services. Although there is networking among these organizations and individuals, it is not sufficient to dislodge the structure in which we are all (mostly all) COMPLICIT in upholding. Allowing a corporation's foundation to ameliorate a bad situation in one place while continuing to do the same harm in another place just continues the creation of ever greater cognitive dissonance. Consciousness is clarity. Clarity is knowledge about the physics and biology of LIFE.

I believe that the work emanating from the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) is foundational for the new paradigm to emerge: "The Inner Development Goals Framework simplifies a complex field of human development to help us better identify, understand, communicate, develop, and integrate the inner

skills needed for sustainable development." The framework offers a guide for a skillset that promotes deep listening, self-awareness, empathy, and relationship-building that can lead to sustained action. Without this IDG training and continuous practice, we all default to the individualism, consumptive greed, and domination inherent in the existing structure.

Practicing the IDGs will inexorably lead to inclusive stakeholder collaboration and co-creation because the values embedded in the collective desire for peace and flourishing will form the basis for the shared "vision" that allows for concerted and transformative action in building new communities. I have to say that I don't like the shared "vision" wording and prefer shared consciousness. We all see things differently given our experiences—epigenetic and genetic. Our angles of perception vary. Our consciousness, however, resides in an infinite universe, whose imprint has stamped each of us with unfathomable connectedness. This consciousness must be the basis that informs and motivates the collective desire for wholeness. This may sound too philosophical or mystical, but you asked for my opinion and reflections.

Finally, I want to promote relocalization of food production as a pathway to the Great Transition. As I read Raskin's stories about LEAP and WEAP, energy and water, critical inputs for food, the energy all living beings need to survive. COVID taught us about the failings of the long energy intensive supply chains. To re-localize food production creates opportunities to practice the kind of genuine participatory democracy that naturally emerges from the IDGs. I believe these practices will give us back a moral sensibility based on closer observation of how the plant kingdom grows, organizes, and nurtures itself. We may call this biomimicry. A shout-out to Janine Benyus of the Biomimicry Institute and to Vandana Shiva for her book on *Earth Democracy* and her thoughts on quantum physics.

My experience founding and operating the Green Market Santa Cruz in Trinidad over the past decade has given me faith in the power of knowledge sharing, inclusivity, and listening to foster agency and confidence in "ordinary" people so they can act and build the lives, communities, and world they want and deserve.

I have been honored to be a part of these conversations about the possibility of a great transition, about how to get humans to a global well-being. As I say in one of my email signatures, "Let us strive for something better, something eternal. Let us live to create beauty and not wretchedness."

Some "Seminal Moments" in My Life….

The title already sounds like "some enchanted evening"!

I was born in Washington, DC, to Caribbean immigrant parents, at a time when DC was known as "Chocolate City" for the large percentage of African-American professionals who lived and worked in the city.

My father became a pediatrician and was taught by Charles Drew (the creator of the blood bank) at Howard University. My godmother was the first Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Oberlin College in chemistry and taught at the prestigious Dunbar High School. My mother was involved in many social and artistic clubs, including being a docent at the Corcoran Art Gallery. For my parents, *education* was the key to a good life. Service to others was essential, and good manners and comportment were equally important.

My first seminal moment was winning the French flag in third grade for being the best student in the class at our demonstration school, which was experimenting with teaching a foreign language at the primary school level. I remain as amazed today as I was then, that people in other places speak different languages and have different words for things that I know by other names. And sometimes, as I later learned, translations can only approximate meaning and ideas; cultures and other ways of being deserve respect, observation, and understanding.

I went to a posh private high school, where there were five blacks and five Jews in each class. The year I entered, the US president's daughter graduated.

My second seminal moment was going to live in France with a French family for a summer. My French improved.

Later, I returned to Paris as a consultant at the OECD after working at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration on issues related to personal privacy in electronic data. One evening watching the news with French friends, a clip came on showing Russians (or Soviets as they were) in their big fur hats strolling around Moscow. I was jolted. How could it be that I was seeing images of Russian people so easily? Had there been some kind of coup? My French friends were very puzzled at my startled reaction. I then realized that for my entire life,

anytime the Soviet Union was in the news, there was a still picture of the Red Flag and the Kremlin on the TV screen. I thought no one in the "free" world could film inside Russia.

In that extremely embarrassing moment, I realized that my government could lie to me. It remains the basis of my critical thinking skills. Question everything; know the sources of information; there is always an alternative and an alternative explanation but NOT "alternative facts"!

Being accepted to the second class of women at Yale and then to Harvard Law School was part of the trajectory my parents set for me and therefore not so seminal. (I actually wanted to be an actress and film director in Hollywood.)

Professor Roberto Unger introduced me to Jürgen Habermas's book *Legitimation Crisis*, which remains a conceptual primer for me. The trust deficit at the heart of democratic fissures needs repair.

Third seminal moment: The exasperated response from my corporate finance professor, Victor Brudney, in his crew cut, bow tie, and tweed jacket: "Miss Assevero, the ONLY consideration is profit!" And the rest of the class chuckled at my obviously naive postulation that a corporate board of directors should consider certain environmental and social issues and costs in making decisions. Embarrassed again! This was not the right profession for me. This legal training put me in accord with Boss Tweed's statement "The appearance of the law must be upheld, especially when it is being broken."

French saved me again when a DC law firm was looking to recruit a French-speaking associate for their office in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It is then that my professional life began. My learning about the rest of the world accelerated exponentially. I met wealthy, highly educated, entrepreneurial Africans. I helped establish the African Business Roundtable. I raised money for Africare and was mentored by the wonderful C. Payne Lucas. I met Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu.

I returned to the US and built a legal practice at a large law firm representing Francophone African countries in their relations with the US government and the multilateral financial institutions, which expanded to the Caribbean. I became a bridge-builder between unequal partners translating ways of being for often incredulous adversaries.

A big moment for me was representing the New York City Bar at Rio +20 in Brazil and learning about sustainability, regenerative agriculture, and climate change and returning to Trinidad to establish Green

Market Santa Cruz, a social enterprise, focused on SDG 12 ("Responsible Consumption and Production"), which I ran as an experiment for a decade and closed last year. We incubated many small- and medium-sized enterprises and educated the public on interconnections among ecology, agriculture, and human health. It was joyful and educational work.

Now, taking a lesson from my husband's classmate and dear friend Gus Speth, who introduced me to GTI, I am writing poetry.

Vicki Assevero is an international lawyer with a longstanding interest in sustainable development and the founder of Green Market in Santa Cruz, Trinidad.

Asoka Bandarage

Greetings from Sri Lanka! Thanks very much to Paul Raskin and GTI colleagues for the opportunity to join this conversation.

Although I have lived in the United States most of my life, the impetus and inspiration for my work come primarily from Sri Lanka, the land of my birth and upbringing.

I have explored the political-economic evolution of Sri Lanka in three books and many other publications:

- *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833–1886* (Mouton, 1983),
- *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (Routledge, 2009), and
- *Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World: Colonial and Neoliberal Origins, Ecological and Collective Alternatives* (De Gruyter, 2023)

While using Sri Lanka as a case study, I have sought to shed light on the broader processes of capitalism, Western colonialism, and global transformation. I have also explored the gender dimension of political-economic evolution in many publications, including *Women, Population and Global Crisis: A Political-Economic Analysis* (Zed Books, 1997).

The Buddhist culture, preserved in Sri Lanka since 3 BCE, is more relevant than ever in addressing the global environmental and social collapse facing the world. I have explored this in publications including my book *Sustainability and Wellbeing: The Middle Path to Environment, Society and the Economy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

My work synthesizes critical perspectives from the West, including Marxism, feminism, and ecology, with Buddhist philosophy originating in Asia. The presentation of critical perspectives challenging the political-economic and academic status quo has not been easy. Yet, I am deeply

grateful for the opportunities I have had to contribute to the consciousness and struggle for peace, justice, and ecology in Sri Lanka and the world.

The inspiration for my work has not come so much from external ideologies of Marxism, nationalism, or feminism as from inner conviction that one must stand for what is right, just, and sensible. Having seen and also experienced various forms of discrimination and oppression and seeing the increasing deception and suffering worldwide, I have felt compelled to work towards a universal ethical framework that upholds all of humanity and the environment.

In this effort, I have been inspired and guided fundamentally by the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha on developing awareness, equanimity, compassion, and wisdom. The Buddhist explication of the roots of suffering—craving, aversion, and ignorance—is valuable for understanding global and local systems of poverty, conflict, environmental, and social destruction. The Buddhist understanding of interdependence of all life and the mind-body connection has been invaluable.

The Buddha's explication of impermanence of all mental and physical phenomena has helped approach my work with a sense of detachment and compassion. I am grateful to S. N. Goenka for the training in insight meditation and to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha (lineage of the Buddha's disciples) for inspiration and guidance in life and work.

Asoka Bandarage is a Sri Lankan academic specializing in international development and the author of Sustainability and Well-Being: The Middle Path to Environment, Society and the Economy.

J. Baird Callicott

This is an excerpt from a longer piece, available here.

If I could successfully navigate the requirements for the BA, when I got to graduate school, only the language exams would pose a threat to earning a PhD. Or so I thought until I was disabused of my misunderstanding of what philosophy had become during the twentieth century. Coming from a regional backwater and educated at a small liberal arts college in that comfortable cocoon, I thought philosophy was what Plato and Spinoza had done. Indeed, all the way up through the nineteenth century, every form of learning was called philosophy—either natural philosophy or moral philosophy. But just as natural philosophy budded off into the specialized natural sciences during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the specialized social sciences began to bud off from moral philosophy in the nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, philosophers-sans-method found themselves on a fast-shrinking island. In response, some staked out a territory of their own—logic and language—logic being the rules of reasoning; nouns, adjectives, and verbs being the physical embodiment of concepts; and syntax being the pathways of the linkages among them. This materialistic turn was not only a product of science envy, but also of disgust with the excesses to which philosophers had taken metaphysics in the post-Kantian craze, culminating with absolute idealism. Philosophy thus became a narrow discipline among disciplines with its own methodology characterized by purportedly rigorous, but in fact merely tedious, step-by-tiny-step logical argumentation. I knew that I would be no good at that. In the 1930s, logical positivism—with its central doctrine that all discourse except that of logic and the empirical sciences is literally nonsense—had the new discipline in a chokehold. Even ethics consisted of merely "emotive ejaculations" in the ugly words of A. J. Ayer. Having banished normative ethics from philosophy, Ayer would only allow philosophers legitimately to engage in meta-ethics—the analysis of ethical discourse—while the empirical study of ethical norms and values belonged to social scientists.

Funded by a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, on the advice of my major professor, I applied for graduate study in the philosophy department of Syracuse University, which, miraculously, had not yet succumbed to the great analytic shrinkage. There, I could continue my education and avoid being "trained," a regimentation to which most philosophers submit and speak thereof with pride—as if such subservience were not something, rather, of which to be ashamed. I could focus my dissertation on Plato, my first and everlasting love, squeak through the French exam, and, hopefully, be allowed to substitute Greek for German as my other language of reading competence. And that window of opportunity soon closed, for just as I successfully defended my dissertation, the Syracuse philosophy faculty was stunned when the ratings of such—apparently a new thing—first came out. The department was not ranked toward the bottom; it wasn't ranked at all. They had to knuckle under and fast if they were going to survive in that increasingly vicious environment.

All That Jazz (and Grad School)

Ann Nelson "Nancy" Archer and I got married just a few days after we graduated from Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College) in 1963. If we were to live together without scandalizing our families and being denied housing by landlords, we had to be married—I barely twenty-two years old, she still but twenty-one. Nancy was an English major and had written her senior thesis on James Baldwin. She was also the niece of the president and eventual namesake of the college, Peyton Nalle Rhodes. We were headed north of the Mason-Dixon Line and saw it as an opportunity to get to live in a racially integrated society. So, we quite surprised a Black woman when we showed up looking to rent her upstairs apartment. As we sat in her living room, we explained our intent, and the kind lady said something like "Honey, let me tell you how it really is up here"—in a word, segregated, if not by law as in Memphis, then by convention in Syracuse, New York, which also had a sizable Black population.

We couldn't rent that apartment, but we did seek out Black friends, mostly through a mutual enthusiasm for live jazz and all the bohemian stuff that went with it. Jack Gregg, the bass player from Memphis and a friend of ours, had moved to New York City, and we visited him and his wife, Maxine, a few times a year. With Jack and Maxine, we got to hear the reigning cool cats, among them Thelonius Monk and Sonny Rollins, in the intimate setting of downtown jazz clubs like the Blue Note and the Village Vanguard. A time or two, we got to hang out with them for a bit after the last set thanks to

being in the company of jazz insiders. Incidentally, Jack and Maxine later divorced. Jack went to live as an expat bassist in Paris and, for a time, Beirut. Maxine eventually married a famous saxophonist and recently published a biography of her husband, *Sophisticated Giant: The Life and Legacy of Dexter Gordon*.

After three years in Syracuse, New York, I had finished my coursework, earned an MA, passed my qualifying exams, and served as the instructor-of-record for a course or two. Toward the end of the third of those academic terms, it snowed on my birthday, May 9. To some of my professors, my extra-academic social circle, which also included lots of irreverent medical students from The City, was beginning to seem unbecoming to a philosopher's way of being. So that, together with the cold, damp climate, offered a good reason for me to return to Memphis as an ABD and tackle my dissertation.

And the Livin' Is Easy

My parents' house was not far from Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis). I wanted to be notified of colloquia and public lectures sponsored by the MSU philosophy department. So, I walked over to campus and looked up the department chair to get on his mailing list. On the spot, he offered me a half-time job. That became a full-time job the following year. In 1966, universities were rapidly expanding as the Baby Boomers hit college age. As my case illustrates, faculty were literally hired off the street with only an MA and (informal, of course) ABD to their name. Having a teaching job slowed work on my dissertation but didn't stop it. I kept at least one eye on the prize.

Nancy and I moved into a tiny one-bedroom house that started out as a Black handyman's quarters on an eleven-acre property near Raleigh Springs, just north of Memphis. My father and my Uncle Bill had inherited it from their mom and stepdad, Michael Abt. There were two other houses on the property. One was my step-granddad's studio, to which my father and uncle added a kitchen and bath for their mother to live in after her husband's death. The other was the original family home, which started out as a plain and practical two-bedroom affair with no indoor plumbing or running water. Over time, Mr. Abt (as my dad called him) gradually improved it with a stucco exterior, an added bathroom, and an Italianate marble portico in front. During my last two years of college, I had lived in the "studio," and when the tenant in the "big house" (which was not at all big, but impressive nevertheless), moved on, Nancy and I moved in. Mr. Abt had continuously improved that eleven acres, thanks to the skills of his resident handyman and those of my dad, who put a lot of work into it. Eventually, the place was graced with a long one-lane driveway

of two ribbons of concrete gracefully climbing and winding around a wooded hill, a picnic grounds with a stone fireplace, a fishpond, and various outbuildings. It was our little Xanadu.

Mr. Abt was a Hungarian immigrant arriving alone as a child at Ellis Island. An anonymous benefactor put him through the Cleveland School of Art. Upon graduation, he and a fellow graduate took a sketching trip down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. About half the way from Cincinnati to New Orleans, he ran out of money, and that's how he got to Memphis. He found a job as a window decorator for a department store and married my twice-divorced grandmother, who also worked there. He went on to teach art at Memphis's Tech High School. And then he became Memphis's chief impresario with the patronage of Boss Crump, designing and building all the floats for the Cotton Carnival and Christmas parades. A provision of his art education was that he pay it forward, and his beneficiary was my dad.

Of course, Nancy and I fell in easily with local artists and musicians. It was a great life. I had started my academic career and was much liked by my colleagues and students. It was the mid-1960s, and the Great Transition was speeding forward at breakneck speed. We awaited each new Beatles album, for example, expecting the unexpected, and were not disappointed. I vividly remember putting *Magical Mystery Tour* on the turn table. The first line is "Roll up, roll up for the mystery tour." I took the needle off the vinyl and, as instructed, rolled a joint for the magical mystery tour. It surely did "take me away." The entire remainder of the album was a perfect rendition of the twists and turns of my high. The aptly titled "Flying" was that euphoric initial rush. Then, the philosopher I am was "the fool on the hill who sees the sun going down and the eyes in my head saw the world spinning round." That reverie was followed by a little torpor captured by George's "Blue Jay Way." I was in the paranoid phase just in time for John's "I am the Walrus," with its mention of "policemen" and its phrenetic, scary, cacophonic ending. Finally, the Beatles would "take me down" with John's "Strawberry Fields Forever."

I so greatly admired Jack Gregg that I took up the bass myself but never achieved jazz-level mastery. I was good enough, however, to get by in folk, jug band, and blues music. The Memphis Country Blues Festivals were organized by some East Coast musicians and musicologists who knew better than we White rubes what great artists were living in the city and down the river in the Delta—most of them forgotten, all poor, and some doing menial labor to get by. Bukka White, Gus Cannon, and Furry Lewis, among many others of their color and generation, came out of the shadows and onto the stage of the outdoor Shell in Overton Park during the course of a week in the summers of 1966, 1967, 1968, and 1969.

I played bass in the experimental Downtown Tangiers String and Drum band. And in the summer of 1967, I backed Furry Lewis at the country blues festival—a great honor, but no easy feat because Furry was completely unpredictable, with all sorts of acoustical tricks up his sleeve. I had to be on my toes to keep abreast of his sudden stops and key changes. "Furry Sings the Blues," a very unflattering tribute to Lewis by Joni Mitchell, may be found on her album *Hejira*.

Memphis State had only been racially integrated for a few years prior to my joining the faculty. And there was only a small contingent of Black students on campus. To have a formally recognized Black Students Association, they needed a faculty advisor. There were, by then, a couple of African American faculty members, but it seems—and I never asked why—none of them were acceptable to the Black students. Instead, one of my students, Willie Barnes, who had come up to the city from rural Mississippi, asked me to fill the role. Surprised but honored, I accepted. My service to the MSU BSA was pretty routine and mostly academic. Until, that is, the Memphis sanitation workers went on strike for better pay and working conditions. When I was growing up, they were known as "garbage men." We tossed our garbage into metal cans, many of which leaked. We did not take them to the curb. No, a garbage man walked to the side of our house and carried the can on his head to the street and emptied it into the back of the truck—driven, naturally, by a White man—and then returned it to the place he found it.

Walking in Memphis

The progressive White people with whom I associated commonly believed that Memphis was a model of progress in race relations. Hadn't Elvis popularized Black music and, in turn, created greater opportunities for Black musicians? Weren't Booker T. & the M.G.'s an egalitarian integrated band of two Black and two White musicians? Indeed, the core musicians of the Memphis Horns were Black and White —respectively Andrew Love and Wayne Jackson. That delusion was to be utterly shattered before the decade was over.

On February 1, 1968, two Memphis sanitation workers were crushed to death after having taken refuge from a rainstorm in the back of a compactor set off by a power surge. Fed up with abuse, scorn, and neglect, the sanitation workers simply did not show up for work on February 12 and the days following. Garbage accumulated. Newly elected Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb was infuriated and stubbornly intractable. The strike dragged on well into March.

Many clergy, Black and White, supported the cause. So did I in my capacity as faculty sponsor of the MSU BSA. Willie Barnes and I met with other supportive groups, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and organized campus marches and demonstrations in support of the striking sanitation workers. The strike began to make national news, and the strikers were joined by national union organizers—"outside agitators" to the benighted defenders of the status quo. They were also joined by national civil rights leaders, finally including Martin Luther King, Jr., who came to town on March 18. MLK returned ten days later to lead a march through downtown Memphis, which was anything but peaceful. Looters smashed the display windows of the businesses on Main Street. The police reacted with rage-amplified force, spraying the marchers, who were themselves innocent of vandalism, with mace, choking them with tear gas, and beating them with batons. There was also police gunfire, and one sixteen-year-old boy was shot point blank. I was at the back of the march with several BSA students, but seeing the way things were headed, we left before the mayhem reached our end of the parade.

On April 2, following the funeral in Clayborn Temple, the hub of the Memphis civil rights movement, of Larry Payne, the young man killed by a cop, a silent and peaceful march from there to City Hall commenced. Bill Cosby and other celebrities participated, and I completed this one.

Heavy rain accompanied by lightning and booming thunder fell ominously on Memphis the night of April 3. I knew that that MLK would be speaking at Mason Temple and considered attending. Nancy, however, was six-months pregnant. We drove to the church but ultimately decided not to go in due to the meteorological violence of the evening and her vulnerable condition. That was a choice that I now so profoundly regret. I could have attended MLK's final, most moving, and, unfortunately, most prescient speech. The next day, he was assassinated as he was leaving the Lorraine Motel for dinner at the home of Reverend Billy Kyles.

Riots erupted not only in Memphis but all across the United States. As I remember, enough calm had returned for an outdoor public memorial held near the government buildings of Memphis on Easter Sunday April 14. Jesse Jackson and other prominent civil rights leaders spoke. Nancy and I were there. It was one of those spring days during which shafts of brilliant sunlight poured down through partings in high cumulus clouds. I had a fraught relationship with Christianity and was far from a religious person of any ilk, but as the speeches went on, I continually glanced up at the sky half expecting MLK to return to earth as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He was about the same age as Jesus when Jesus was

crucified. MLK did not die on a Friday but on Thursday, April 4, which is pretty close. Could Jesus be returning—not accidentally on Easter Sunday—in his revived reincarnation as a Black prophet after things had settled down in Memphis ten days after his second death? Martin Luther King was not Jesus, as it turns out, but he was certainly the next best thing.

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Robert Costanza

I was born and spent the first eight years of my life in Donora, Pennsylvania—a small steel mill town on the Monongahela River thirty-nine kilometers southeast of Pittsburgh. Two years before I was born, Donora was the site of the first case of fatal air pollution in the US. From October 27 to 31, 1948, a rare temperature inversion trapped the hydrogen fluoride and sulfur dioxide emissions from US Steel's zinc and wire works in the valley. This created an acrid smog that lasted four days and was so thick that it looked like midnight at noon. The incident led to twenty immediate deaths, another fifty within the following month, and continuing respiratory problems for a large fraction of the population. My mother was six months pregnant at the time. She contracted pleurisy and pneumonia as a result of the incident and had a miscarriage.[1]

The results of this incident were far-reaching. Lawsuits were filed against US Steel. The event, along with others in Los Angles and London, triggered the clean air movement in the US, which ultimately led to the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Devra Davis's book *When Smoke Ran like Water* details the events leading up to the Donora smog and its local and global repercussions.[2]

When I was growing up in Donora, the event was little talked about. My mother had four married sisters, all of whom lived in Donora, so I was surrounded by loving aunts, uncles, and cousins, in addition to my three siblings. But the incident led to the eventual closing of the steel mill where my father (and a large percentage of the town) worked, so we moved to South Florida when I was eight.

The incident certainly made a lasting impression. It was the dawn of the "Great Acceleration" after World War II and the beginning of the Anthropocene epoch. Rapid economic growth in the US would continue for decades, but the Donora smog and many other incidents clearly showed some of the negative side effects of this headlong expansion. The creation of the EPA

and other regulatory bodies in the US and around the world was intended to curb these side effects. However, the single-minded focus on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and wealth accumulation in the hands of a few, which began in the post-WWII years, continued, and the environmental and social side effects have only gotten worse and more global.

We need to shift our societal goals to sustainable well-being to finally resolve these issues. To do this, we need to overcome our current societal addiction to mindless GDP growth and create the kind of world we all want to leave to coming generations—a world that is smog-free, prosperous, fair, and sustainable.

Fossil fuels have powered the industrial revolution and created enormous benefits. But we have had plenty of time to shift to renewable energy sources and create a sustainable steady state economy and society based on the fundamental goal of well-being rather than mindless growth.

Neoliberal economic thinking that ignores social well-being has led to massive inequality and decreasing quality of life for many, even in high-income countries. It also ignores the non-human environment and the benefits of the ecosystem services that underlie all economies and societies. We badly need a broader approach to understanding and managing the world to address these issues.

To get at some of these limitations of the conventional economic worldview, I, along with several colleagues including Herman Daly, helped to develop the transdisciplinary field of "ecological economics." The idea was to build a broader, whole-systems approach to understanding and managing our complex, interdependent planet. From this perspective, it has been clear for decades that our current development path is both unsustainable and undesirable. Economies have been growing in terms of GDP and material standard of living, but overall quality of life has been stagnant or decreasing, as the side effects of this growth are damaging our very life support systems and societies.

We have known about these problems since the beginning of the Anthropocene—and we have also known about many of the solutions. The main question is this: Given all this, why have we not made better progress? Why are we stuck in an obviously counterproductive way of thinking about these issues? The lens I use to understand this dilemma is the idea of a social trap, dilemma, or addiction. What solutions do we have available, and what does a societal therapy look like?

In 1982, when I was a young Assistant Professor at Louisiana State University, I was fortunate to be selected for a Kellogg National Fellowship. This was an amazing three-year "leadership" program that

brought together a cohort of thirty individuals from diverse backgrounds. I made some lifelong friends and experienced the power of informal conversations (often over drinks) to stimulate new ideas. And it is the discussions we had in this group that have stayed with me. We talked about the world's problems, and more importantly about how to fix them. The program funded a meeting of this cohort twice a year at various locations around the United States and the world. These meetings were focused on various topics, ranging from energy to governance, to health care, to environmental protection, and more. The program also funded a research project for each fellow. My research project was centered around "social traps" as a way of understanding the nuclear arms race. It led to a continuing fascination with why we fail to solve problems when the solutions are obvious. I concluded that our inability to resolve many of our current problems is due to these kinds of social traps or societal addictions.[3]

In particular, I became interested in "investment traps," where individuals, or whole societies, invest so much in a situation that they feel they have to continue in order to justify their past investments. It is a version of the "sunk costs" dilemma and underlies gambling addictions and many other investment traps. One simple but enlightening model for the study of the escalation process is known as the "dollar auction game." This game is a social trap that was designed specifically to simulate conflict escalation and investment traps.[4]

The dollar auction is just like a normal auction except that both the highest and the second-highest bidder have to pay the auctioneer their bids at the end of the auction, but only the highest bidder gets the prize.

The fact that the second-highest bidder has an investment in the process, one that will be lost if they drop out of the bidding, leads to quite interesting and unexpected behavior. It turns out that people will bid well over the obvious value of the prize once they get caught up in the auction. This is a totally irrational long-term result that is the product of rational short-term decisions. How does this happen?

Suppose I offer to auction off $10 with the following rules:

1. Both the highest and the second-highest bidder have to pay me their bids at the end of the auction, but only the highest bidder gets the $10 prize.

2. The minimum bid and raise amount is $1, just to keep things moving.

The auction starts off mildly enough with person A bidding $1. If no one else bids, A would net $9—pretty good. But person B raises to $2. Person C raises to $3. Then A to $4. Then C to $5. Then A to $6. Note that at this point the auctioneer is getting $11 and only having to pay $10 to A. Thus A is still making a net of $4 on their $6 bid if they win. But C is losing $5 and getting nothing. C reasons that if they raise to $7, they will net $3 if they win, which is far better than a $5 loss, so they raise to $7. Of course, A now raises to $8, C raises to $9, and A raises to $10. Now A is just breaking even if they win. C can either raise to $11 and lose $1 if they win, or drop out and lose their current bid of $9. Better to lose $1 than $9 so they raise to $11. Now the auctioneer is collecting $21 (the sum of A's $10 bid and C's $11 bid) for a $10 prize, so they are netting $11. Of course, now A reasons that if they drop out, they will lose their $10 investment and if they raise to $12, they will only lose $2 if they win. And so it continues to really amazing heights.

Individuals have been known to bid the equivalent of hundreds of dollars on a $10 prize. This is obviously irrational, but each step in the bidding is a rational step. The problem is that once someone starts bidding, they are trapped in the game's logic, and it is very hard to escape.[5]

This line of thinking has continued for me and expanded to look at how addictions work at multiple scales and what can be done to overcome them. A lot has been done at the individual level to understand addictions, but not much at the level of whole societies. If we think of our current situation as a kind of investment trap, or an addiction to growth, to fossil fuels, to social inequity—then what can we do to overcome it? What is the therapy? What can we learn from therapies that we know work at the individual or small group level?

Like any investment trap or addiction, the therapies are not simple or easy. Part of the reason that these situations persist is that simply understanding the problem, or knowing the solution, is often not only insufficient, but also potentially counterproductive. And yet, when it comes to our societal addictions, we continue to work ever harder to describe the growing problem in ever more elaborate detail, convinced that once the message is clearly understood, the solutions will quickly be enacted. If we can instill enough fear about the dire consequences of continuing the current course, then surely behavior will change. However, ongoing work on overcoming individual addictions clearly shows how ineffective this approach can be. We absolutely need to know the dire consequences of our behavior, but we must also understand that this is an addiction and that it requires a different frame for discussion to achieve

the behavior change we seek. We need to look both at understanding the system and where it is headed, and at devising therapies that might help to change direction before it is too late.

This is not to say that positive change is not already happening. There are a huge number of positive steps being taken, happening over a range of time and space scales. But there are also signs that these may not be enough or fast enough, and we need to bolster our strategies and hasten our actions to achieve the transition to a sustainable well-being future.

A primary lesson from addiction therapy, and behavior change in general, is that having a clear, shared vision of the desired goal is a key first step. Building on analogies with "Motivational Interviewing"—a very effective therapy at the individual scale—a societal therapy based on first building a shared vision of a positive future is necessary. The therapy is based on creating a shared vision of how the world works, how we would like the future to be, and how to get from here to there. That is much of what the Great Transition Initiative has been about. How do we build that shared vision, and how do we use it to motivate and facilitate positive change? It is a key element in the societal therapy that can lead to the great recovery we so desperately need.

Endnotes

1. Adela Damiani, *Seeing Through the Smog…Clearly! An Autobiography* (Outskirts Press, 2016).

2. Devra Davis, *When Smoke Ran like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle against Pollution* (Basic Books, 2004).

3. Robert Costanza, "Social Traps and Environmental Policy," *BioScience* 37, no.6 (1987): 407–412.

4. Martin Shubik, "The Dollar Auction Game: A Paradox in Noncooperative Behavior and Escalation," *Journal of conflict Resolution* 15, no. 1 (1971): 109–111.

5. Robert Costanza and Wesley Shrum, "The Effects of Taxation on Moderating the Conflict Escalation Process: An Experiment Using the Dollar Auction Game," *Social Science Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (1988): 416–432.

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Eileen Crist

But where is the leading actor that will drive a Great Transition? – Paul Raskin, 2024

Culture, family, peers: these social forces are formative of who we become as individuals. Yet I am convinced that another, more enigmatic element is at play in human life. It seems we come into the world not a blank slate but with *something*—a love, talent, curiosity—that is not easily ascribable to upbringing or genetics. I was born in love with nature and especially with animals. There was no discernible influence in my sensitivity. My mother tells me that from the time I was three years old, all the public library books I ever wanted to read were about animals. I found solace in the natural world, whether exploring the woods of Livingston, New Jersey, as a child or snorkeling after we moved to Athens, Greece, when I was ten. When I grew older, I became fascinated with human language and wordsmithing. But nonhuman nature nurtured my soul. I experienced it as a universe redolent with meaning that both transcended and grounded the human conceptual realm. While I always knew that nature was my soulmate, it would be decades before I realized it was also my calling.

I was born in 1961, making me twenty years younger than Paul Raskin. Yet reading his autobiographical *Encounters and Transitions*, I feel comfortably at home in the same generation. Many of my own social, cultural, and political experiences overlap profoundly with Paul's. While part of this is coincidental, the bigger part speaks to the times our lives intersected: a twentieth-century "last hurrah" of idealism, absolutely riveting to live through and, in hindsight, so fatally flawed.

I too was raised by leftist parents, which infected me with a lifelong attraction to social vision, historical consciousness, and the kinds of analyses capable of cutting through reigning appearances and ideologies to the deep-seated linguistic, political, cultural, and institutional structures that cement the status quo.

My Greek mother and grandmother, descendants of Anatolia, or Asia Minor, were dyed-in-the wool communists. Those were the tail-end times when the word "communism" still reverberated with positive connotations of peace, equality, justice, and brotherhood. The Greek communist esprit was especially heir to Europe's most brilliant resistance movement against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. That Greek movement was heroic and indomitable and partial to the yet-to-be-exposed-for-its-crimes-and-corruption Soviet Union.

My father was the son of my Puritan-Dutch chemist grandfather, Ray Crist, who had been part of the Manhattan Project at Columbia University. Though my grandfather quietly left the space after the end of the war as neither hawk nor dove, perhaps it was teenage rebellion that initially made my father a pacifist who would go on to become a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. Studying at a Quaker school, Haverford College, imbued his opposition to militarism with spiritual legitimacy and communal support. My father never wavered in his trenchant stance against all war to the day he passed away in October 2021.

Besides being seriously political, my parents were also humanists—lovers of art, literature, music, and poetry. My father became professor of English literature at the University of Athens. My mother (who met my father at a small college in Charleston, West Virginia, as her professor) started out as a stay-at-home mom. But she never lost her love for literature and eventually went on to write novels in Greek, which my father translated. My father was a philhellene—a devotee of all things Greek—and translated a lot of Greek poetry and literature into English. During my teenage years in the 1970s, our house in Athens was a veritable salon of Greek painters, poets, musicians, and novelists.

While the world of politics was the fire of our home, the world of literature was its heart, the spirit of secular spirituality that enveloped us. My father cultivated the art of poetry recitation, which he performed with just the right flair and drama. Reading us William Wordsworth, Dylan Thomas, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, and others, his eyes would moisten visibly, which was quite contagious to me and my brother. Great poetry is such a cohesive admixture of deep emotion and cerebral acuity that no connoisseur of verse would ever believe that there exists, or could exist, such a thing as "two cultures."

All these familial elements would have sufficed to turn me into a radical with bohemian tendencies. But additionally, I lived through the most amazing political experience of my life when I was twelve years old: the student uprising of the Polytechnic School in Athens. This is an event about which every

Greek knows and through which I had the privilege and heartbreak to live. Between 1967 and 1974, a CIA-backed military dictatorship was installed in Greece. In 1973, the students of the Polytechnic rebelled against the junta, occupying the university and appealing to all Athenians to flood the downtown in solidarity and opposition to tyranny. For three tense and exalted days, the rebellion melted the freeze of fear, censorship, and submission; it suddenly felt that we could breathe. The aroma of freedom flooded my twelve-year-old being—I experienced a sense of the sublime so tangible I might slice through it with a knife. I felt an awakening, as if reborn into another consciousness. My love for those students was transcendent, and my grief was devastating when the regime crushed them with military force. A tank was driven through the Polytechnic gate, and more murders and torture followed; that was the vile response of the thugs in power.

The Polytechnic students mentored me into the human spirit. The courage and sacrifice of their lives showed me what lives inside the human heart.

In the aftermath of that quelled rebellion and the fall of the junta one year later (to which the student uprising undoubtedly contributed), I became a communist. Along with many of my high school classmates, we read and debated Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Castoriades, and other theorists in our late teens. We were also reading Greek poets, such as Elitis, Ritsos, Cavafis, and Seferis, and listening to the revolutionary tunes of great Greek composers like Theodorakis and Savvopoulos. But my communist phase was short-lived. Soon I became savvy to the fact that so-called communist states, notably the Soviet Union and China, were just forms of state capitalism, and authoritarian and murderous to boot.

Without losing my idealism, I shifted allegiance to the diehards and the disillusioned. I identified with "rock stars" like Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Russian poet-comrade who committed suicide when he saw the communist dream turn into a nightmare. I also loved the Greek novelist Aris Alexandrou, who participated in the 1941–45 resistance as a communist fighter and eventually became a communist whistleblower. His novel *The Box* (which my father translated) is a Kafkaesque allegory about a box allegedly filled with valuables, entrusted to comrades to carry from point A to point B. After a convoluted journey, the box was safely delivered but found empty upon opening. "Fill it with my body!" shrieked the exhausted protagonist. "If you need something to fill it with—fill it with my body!" He might have been speaking for Mayakovsky.

I also remember in college reading Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* until I was the last student left in Haverford's library at closing time. I studied sociology there and also, as a grad student, at Boston University because I admired social theory. Social theory (and later philosophy) always felt to me to be imperative for understanding society, culture, and the historical forces that forge us into who we are, individually and collectively.

Fast forward to my 1997 appointment as assistant professor at Virginia Tech, in science and technology sudies, a discipline into which I transitioned via specializing in sociology of science. That is when I finally found environmentalism. I needed topics to teach, so I dove into environmental issues in connection to science and technology, as well as immersing myself in environmental philosophy and ethics. At that juncture came the "aha" moment of my adult life. I realized two things: one, what social theory and most philosophy had always been missing, and two, why leftist revolutions had invariably not only failed but recapitulated corrupt and despotic politics.

Nature was the "missing what" that had been left unthought. Nature had never truly entered social theory other than as the tacit stage for human history's march. I felt the earth shake under me. I saw all too clearly the game that is always been afoot, especially in the West but really in all stratified (nonindigenous) societies: That the very foundation of all domination—the source of wealth, power, and social stratification, the cause of nonstop wars, the driver of human expansionism—the *natural world* had been left unthought. With the foundational structure of inequality undisturbed, no wonder human inequity has continuously rehearsed itself. With nature ever the invisible ground of hierarchy, its human subjugation unquestioned, hierarchical discourse and action have remained robustly healthy. As an example of their insidious work in human affairs, comparisons between disempowered people and animals have always flourished. Indigenous author Vine Deloria points out that in the Western imaginary, indigenous people were wild animals (to be exterminated) and black people were beasts of burden (to be enslaved). And of course, women have always been regarded as closer to "nature" than men and thereby deemed innately inferior to them.

As I was coming into these mind-bending realizations, irony dogged my heels. For I entered academia as a professional in the 1990s with the ascent of postmodernism in full swing. Postmodernism emerged out of two streams. One was Michel Foucault, a strikingly original thinker, who took the social sciences and humanities by storm. The problem with Foucault, however, is that he was an inveterately

anthropocentric thinker whose analyses of power centered on humans-among-humans. The "Foucault effect" came at the worst possible moment in history: just when the ecological crisis was gearing up for acceleration and when critical theory (the Frankfurt school in particular) was shyly offering nascent thinking about the *domination of nature* as internal to social structure. But the ecological crisis got the back seat (in the social sciences and the humanities) and the dawning of radical ecological critique via critical theory got nipped in the bud. Academics jumped on the Foucault bandwagon and its jargon, while Earth was backgrounded yet again into oblivion.

The other stream that formed postmodernism, more fateful still, was the abandonment of truth as thought's lodestar—the rescinding of seeking truth in thought. Never mind that truth (as Habermas showed) is built into the very validity claims of language and speech, and that, in any case, we cannot function for a moment without it. Truth became passé with postmodernism. One of my academic pet peeves is that for years I had to endure the shibboleth that truth with lower case "t" was okay but truth with upper case "T" was not.

Unsurprisingly, academia's slide into sloppy thinking, imitative languaging, and careerism followed in the wake of relativism's slippery slope.

Like Raskin, I grew up in a time when idealism—its muscular thinking, rousing music, howling poetry —was full tilt, even as the Anthropocene's Great Acceleration was pushing the J-curves toward the tidal waves we ride today. When idealism touches the human heart, something indelible happens: like switching on dormant DNA, you become someone entirely different. You can never capitulate to cynicism or apathy. You can never decide to retire and chalk off your ideals to youthful folly.

It would be desirable for the idealism that touched the twentieth century to find the twenty-first. But this time with knowledge of an indisputable truth: that at the very ground of all social hierarchy lies the domination of nature. Deconstruct that, and the entire edifice unravels. In answer, then, to Raskin's closing question quoted as epigraph of this essay, *truth* is the leading actor of the Great Transition. Truth has to dawn, because sooner or later it always does.

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Zillah Eisenstein

Paul Raskin's essay had me at "red diaper baby."

This was not a continual encounter in my life.

It meant being a young child and instructed to never answer the door to a stranger and never answer an FBI question, no matter what it was.

It meant growing up in a household where picketing Woolworth's was our—me and my sisters Sarah, Giah, and Julia—Saturday ritual.

We tried to not be frightened of the policeman's horses.

Living all this and becoming unafraid at an early age, maybe around age twelve.

Absorbing my parents—Fannie Price and Morris Eisenstein's—complete commitment to the civil rights struggle in the US *as* Communists.

Being taunted in elementary and middle school as a "commie Jew."

Learning that there was no one holocaust at an early age when I used the term after a school lesson and my father asked me, "Which one? Which holocaust?"

Being told that my whiteness was always a privilege of power whether I thought so or understood it as such. Not being allowed to attend a high school swimming party on the Northside of Columbus (Ohio) where it would be all white. Dad being fired quite publicly from Ohio State and because of Woody Hayes's campaign against him.

My father fought in World War II. He was a forward observer, assigned such as Jews in the US army were. Dad said the antisemitism was deep and the anticommunism deeper.

He helped liberate concentration camps at the end of the War. And he was then and always an anti-Zionist—he did not support the beginnings of the Israeli state. We were Jews and anti-Zionist. And today? I think about him and my mother all the time in these newest manipulations of history.

Our family table was always filled with friends and comrades for meals. It was never an all-white table. The food was delicious but not fancy because, as my parents were continually losing their jobs, money was scarce. But the camaraderie and friendships of people of every sort is what I knew best.

Later, when I was in high school, Dad taught at Atlanta University, and I was taunted as a "commie, n-loving Jew"…even though I was raised atheist. We lived in professor housing, so that meant we lived in the Black neighborhood where I was a "white b*tch" walking to school and once arriving, became a "n-lover." This was brutal for me, but I know it was everything now.

Did I say that my mother is the person that Barbara Streisand played in the movie *The Way We Were?* There were always rumors of this, but Arthur Laurents in his autobiography wrote about Fannie Price as the person who inspired the heroine in the film—Katie Morosky, the Communist Leaguer Fannie Price '37—"Peace at Any Price, Except Fannie Price."

My mom took me to the steps of Bailey Hall on Cornell's campus, where she gave her first speech, when she and my dad came to visit just as I had moved to Ithaca, New York, to teach at Ithaca College. (Dad couldn't believe the books in the bookstore for my course "Reading Marx.")

There is also college and labor organizing that I did. And, then, my deep involvement in the feminist movement of the 1970s, but the socialist feminist sector of it, not the mainstream. It is when I met bell hooks (glory and gloria to me during years of friendship) and Angela Davis and Barbara Smith. It was my friendship with Barbara that allowed me to push for the final writing of the Combahee River Collective Statement that had been delivered in the Marxist Feminist Speakers Series (at IC) and then published in my collection *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*. This CRC Statement is now acknowledged and used around the globe. So, I guess…I am back to my red diaper baby upbringing: risk everything to build the trust across racial lines, and amazing things will happen.

Looking back, life is a series of extraordinary and unexpected openings. I am remembering the incredible moment I attended the East-West Network of Feminists in Berlin. The Soviet Union had just fallen. Feminists across the East-West divide gathered to meet and speak with each other. Russian

women were quick to push back on a simplistic demand for abortion. They instead made clear that it was already too necessary and easy to get abortions. What they needed was contraceptives/ion to avoid the need. In this debate, I learned, again, how to always listen and hear.

And then there was the Vietnam War.

The Afghan War.

The Gulf War.

All the demonstrations.

All the feminisms we developed in these anti-war movements.

And the global connections and struggles with women in India, Chile, Germany, Iran, Syria.

Graduate school in political science would have been impossible without the camaraderie of anti-racist feminist struggles from outside this domain. It was and continues to always be my lifeline.

Life happens.

There is no road map.

You cannot get ahead of it.

But I try to not fall behind it.

This is my core that underpins my coalitions and encounters, and dialogues as we now try again to find and build a resistance with vision.

Genocide.

Fascism.

And the way misogyny threads through all of it.

In this moment of horrific genocide, I am reminded how today's crises are both old and new. And how honesty and integrity and listening and imagining remain key to my anti-racist feminist being.

Encounters. They come repeatedly.

Have I not mentioned cancer? Sarah and Giah died very, very young. My own body is scarred in and with it. It is my reminder that today matters.

My fabulous daughter, Sarah Eisenstein Stumbar (named after my sister), is a social medicine doctor in Florida, and teaches and provides anti-racist sexual health care in her mobile clinic—especially to undocumented and poor people. Her generation of doctors and other young people trying to save the planet continue to chart new ways.

Trump and his minions are all sexual predators and race haters. I dig deep and breathe in the history and find my way, once again, but newly.

This is a time of singularity—everything that has happened matters but newly. So, I am trying to find the new, with some of these old roots/routes.

Onward, together.

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Arturo Escobar

Let me start by saying that I very much enjoyed reading Paul's *E & T*. Its engaging writing wonderfully embodies and reveals the spirit of the age, including the passion for life, politics, and ideas that many of us who came of age during the short but intense decades of counter-cultures, revolutionary movements and ideas, utopias and dreams—and, indeed, disappointments and frustrations—had in common, though taking different expressions, in many parts of the world. The account was a joy to read, and I thank him for that. I start these reflections with some meaningful points of contact with my own history/story, to be followed by some comments on theoretical and political concerns. My reflections will be necessarily short.

I. Encounters: Points of Contact

I entered college in 1969 in Cali, Colombia. Universidad del Valle was by then, and still is, the main public university in the Colombian southwest. Starting in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, it saw a strong student movement that started a sustained wave of protest against the influence on research agendas of the Rockefeller Foundation, which was instrumental in funding our medical school since its inception in the early 1950s; this included projects related to the Vietnam war, which involved collaboration with US universities. The larger movement addressed issues of self-government, campus autonomy (the campus was occupied by the military police for several months in 1971; at least one beloved student was killed), and of course an overall anti-imperialist stance ("Yankees, go home!"), support for the Cuban Revolution, and intense denunciation of the CIA-backed coup against Salvador Allende of September 11, 1973 (the "other 9/11" in Latin America, still an open wound for activists of my generation). All of these were mainstay causes in Latin American public universities during the sixties and seventies.

While I was never a student movement leader, I was an eager participant, as I was also a passionate reader of Marxism, Latin American dependency theory, and the whole range of writers from the

Latin American "literary boom"—from García Márquez to Cortázar and the Cuban Alejo Carpentier. My generation was also avidly into *avant garde* cinema (the French New Wave and Italian filmmakers were favorites), Latin American theatre, and of course music, which included an entire range of genres, from the unusually rich repertoire of Latin American protest song to salsa, rock, and *avant garde* classical electronic music. Cali's passion for film and music was celebrated by the young writers of the period, and some of these novels and short stories are still read today. Of course, most of these engaging interests are gone from the cultural scene, or greatly subdued.

By the end of my undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering in 1975, it was clear to me that I did not want to work for one of the growing number of US or European multinational corporations, for which Cali was an attractive location. Fueled by development ideologies, MNCs were the beachhead of post-World War II Colombia's industrialization, and the main source of employment for the growing cadre of young Universidad del Valle engineers. Having become interested in food and hunger issues, I started a master's in biochemistry at the same university, and eventually got a scholarship to enroll at Cornell for a master's in food science. It was there that I veered from science and engineering towards the political economy of hunger and underdevelopment. In 1978, I started my PhD at UC Berkeley, earning a doctorate in an individual ad hoc interdisciplinary PhD program, which I named Development Philosophy, Policy and Planning (miraculously, the program still seems to exist, as most of the out-of-the-box initiatives of the 1960s, as this one was, had been dismantled by the 1990s). My interests and training at Berkeley were truly interdisciplinary, including political economy, anthropology, and philosophy. I audited Feyerabend's popular introduction to the philosophy of science, as well as graduate seminars on Heidegger and Foucault, and got to take Foucault's graduate seminar in Fall 1983, some months before his death. All of these inquiries and ideas somehow found expression in my doctoral dissertation (1987), which became *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995), and many remained influential in my intellectual development to this day.

My years at Berkeley were very happy and intellectually fascinating, enjoying the rich film and music scene (though very little in terms of American folk!), and of course student activism around solidarity movements with Latin American revolutionary struggles in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala and opposition to military regimes in the Southern Cone countries. As readers can see, and not to belabor the point, while a bit over a decade later, there are telling parallels and points of contact with

Paul's narrative, though differently lived and expressed given the different contexts, partially overlapping because of the importance of our respective sojourns through Berkeley. Which brings me to my second reflection.

II. Cosmobiography

In his "auto-cosmological" memoir, *Cosmogenesis: An Unveiling of the Expanding Universe* (2022), mathematician and cosmologist Brian T. Swimme makes a strong case for the fact that "[e]very adequate cosmology must include the story of the narrator." Tweaking the formulation, I would like to propose that every adequate autobiography most include an account—however brief—of how key moments in the author's life happened to fit into the story of the cosmos, perhaps even being its direct product, as Swimme daringly suggests. Throughout the book, Swimme finds moments of connection between the history of the evolving cosmos and what was happening in his own life, from the early realization that the universe "is breathing me" upon a reflection on the cosmic microwave background radiation, to the strange realization that "our awareness of cosmogenesis is also the work of the universe."[1] Inspired by the visionary work of North Carolina ecologist Thomas Berry (in turn influenced by Teilhard de Chardin's view of evolution as a creative process leading to the noosphere), Swimme is an ardent advocate of relearning to see our existence as taking place within the whole, complex, intelligent, living universe, following on the footsteps of the discoveries of quantum physics.

I find a similar notion in Mapuche indigenous writer and activist Moira Millán, whose recent book *Terricidio: Sabiduría Ancestral para un mundo alternativo* (2024) tells the author's biography based on the premise that the Mapuche people are the expression of the living cosmic force, and that their long-term profound awareness of this fact is at the source of their survival and struggle as a people.[2] Millán, one of the originators of the term *terricidio*, which refers to the killing of material, knowledge, and spiritual ecosystems, also describes *terricidio* as "the continued attack against the cosmic order." Today I feel—heeding Millán's call for the collective construction of a new civilization matrix—that we need to account for our personal and collective location and role in both cosmogenesis and terricide. I encourage readers to read Millán's compelling book, soon to appear in English and French. (There are, by the way, other parallels between Swimme's and Paul's cosmobiographies, which Paul might find intriguing, no doubt because of revealing points of contact—both cosmic and mundane—between the two of them.)

Reading *E&T*, I find at least a few instances where the cosmos appeared to presence itself in Paul's life, most clearly at the outset of the book, where he describes a fascinating and mind-altering epiphany upon seeing a sequence of images on his black-and-white TV, the first being "a crude depiction of planet Earth as seen from outer space. The second zoomed down to hover over North America. The third zeroed in on Southern California, where Los Angeles was marked by a big star *pinpointing the very spot where I sat*" (my emphasis). While he describes the 1950s images to explain how they led into his life journey, the epiphany, as the journey itself, could be seen as instantiations of cosmogenesis, as it landed in his living room and into his body. Other such instantiations might be growing up and living as a young man in California at the time he did, with her particular landscapes and socioecological patterns and formations (Christopher Alexander, the prophet of architectural patterns inspired by the organic order found in nature and in whose Berkeley house overlooking the San Francisco Bay Paul stayed for one summer, might agree with this suggestion).

III. Some Notes on Civilizational Transitions.

Ever since I read the Tellus Institute's 2002 inaugural paper, *Great Transition. The Promise and the Lure of Times Ahead*, I have been drawn to the GTI's powerful and elegant vision. I often used this paper in my courses and writing, and I assigned *Journey to Earthland* in my courses on Planetary Transitions during the final years of my teaching at UNC, Chapel Hill; these texts always triggered lively debates among the students, enriching their ability to imagine other possible futures for them, their communities, and the world at large.

The GT is one of the most compelling transition visions. Like other transition frameworks, it stems from the indubitable realization that the time for horizontal organizing for ending the socioeconomic orders premised on infinite growth, ruthless competition, and extractive capitalism has arrived. Many activists refer to this project as ecosocial, socioecological, or civilizational transitions. The most innovative transition proposals, including the GT, accept that the planetary crisis is inseparable from the dominant modern/Western socioeconomic model and civilizational narrative of life and the human.

I have long been inspired by North American ecologist Thomas Berry's eloquent formulation of the problematic of transitions: "*We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story.*"[3] The prevailing (Western)

story, he says, has become a dysfunctional and sectarian cosmology. Changing the foundational myths that silently but effectively have constructed much of the world, placing it at the edge of the abyss, has arisen as a crucial aspect of all transitions.

I am particularly interested in the transition visions being developed in the peripheries of global systems. In Latin America, they often emphasize the civilizational dimension of the transitions. Since 1992, indigenous people started to emphasize that we are confronting the crisis of a particular mode of existence: Western, patriarchal, capitalist, colonial. This mode of existence systematically destroys life. Latin American transition framings consequently aim to recenter human action on the care and reconstitution of life; they emphasize that more than ever, we need to overcome the inertia of acting out of the toxic loops in which we are enmeshed in capitalist societies. This is why many transition perspectives are articulated with concrete projects of liberation.[4]

This awareness happens at a time when most humans and the planet are being subjected to a staggering acceleration of the occupation and material occupation of people's lives and territories, largely for and through the large-scale resource extraction required for ever growing technological development and artificial intelligence. Climate collapse, obscene inequalities, the proliferation of wars, and the abhorrent Israeli genocide of the Palestinians of Gaza are conclusive proof of the utter inability of the world's economic and political elites to *choose life over death*. Coupled with the emergence of right-wing regimes and leaders in many countries, this intensification of exploitation suggests that the world is inching towards Barbarization, as Paul also suggests in the last pages of his text. To me, this all means that the façade of liberal humanism is crumbling once and for all; hence, the reconstruction of human consciousness and social worlds becomes imperative, and it needs to be approached from a multiplicity of perspectives. This also means that becoming *relational transitioners*, personally and collectively, is a call we must heed.

I would like to end with a few thoughts that I believe complement GTI's current collective vision, although perhaps in creative tension with some of its emphases. These concern whether what might be emerging is a single planetary civilization, or a pluriverse of worlds; the agent(s) of the transition(s); and the role of technology and AI in the transitions.

A Single Planetary Civilization, or a Pluriverse?

I believe transition thinking would benefit from a pluriversal perspective. By pluriversal perspective, I mean a praxis based on the acute awareness of the coexistence of a multiplicity of entangled but irreducible worlds, countering the assumption of what sociologist John Law calls the One-World World—a single world according to the rules of colonial, globalized capitalist modernity.[5] Adopting this perspective entails moving beyond the dominant modern paradigm and civilizational narrative by fostering a politics of life that challenges the universalizing understanding of the human as "naturally" individualistic, liberal, secular, competitive, and so forth.

Along with pluriversality, relationality and care are strongly emerging as a basis for rethinking the human and all social practices. Relationality means that all beings are radically interdependent: nothing exists by itself, everything is mutually constituted. This notion is proposed as the *real foundation of life* in many academic fields; it has been embraced by many Latin American indigenous and environmental movements, as rebuilding interdependence is seen as essential to healing the web of life. It counters the prevailing ontological binaries of modernity (the separation between humanity and nature, subject and object, mind and body, civilized and uncivilized); in other words, it is a response to modernity's pervasive anthropocentrism, rationalism, and ethnocentrism. The southern African concept of *Ubuntu*—I am because you are, I exist because everything else exists, including the entire range of non-human entities—is an apt description of relationality. And if everything is ineluctably connected with everything else through relations of interdependence, it follows that the only genuine social ethics is one or compassion and care for all beings. Conversely, a genuine ethics of care requires redesigning society on the foundation of the profound relationality of all existence.[6]

While the GTI vision involves a deeply pluralistic perspective, the concept of Planetary Civilization, I believe, evinces a lingering universality. Many Latin American Indigenous peoples also invoke the construction of a "new civilizational matrix," although this notion embodies a pluriversal dimension, albeit one that privileges indigenous cosmovisions for historical, decolonial, and political reasons. These debates could fruitfully become more present in the GTI fora and discussions.

The Agents of Transformation

Similarly, the agents of transformation must be seen as pluriversal. I wonder about the limitations of speaking of a single "global citizens movement." A growing trend emphasizes that transitions need to involve the horizontal convergence and articulation among multiple transformative alternatives, meaning by this those based on relational and pluralistic worldviews, particularly those arising from below. This might take the form of the creation of self-organizing meshworks among such alternatives; this issue is being tackled by a growing number of collective undertakings.[7] But I see this as a genuinely open question in both social theory and activist practice. By this, I mean that we must recognize once and for all the insufficiency of Marxist, liberal, and poststructuralist frameworks to give workable answers to the old question of "systemic change," and embrace the incredibly rich field of experimentation one finds at grassroots and regional levels in search of genuinely novel ideas and practices that problematize conventional understanding of scale and of what constitutes "radical change."

In other words, one needs to infuse the notions of "global citizens movement," "global community of fate," and "the new paradigm" with a pluriversal imagination, lest transition strategies end up reinscribing modern narratives of politics, institutions, social orders, and so forth. It also means acknowledging explicitly the amazing power and ontological unevenness of the planetary phase of civilization.

The Role of Technology in the Transitions

There is a vital question at present that oppressed peoples worldwide need to ask, also crucial for transition thinking: Who is doing the crucial cultural-political work of imagining the future? Today, the techno-patriarchs of new technologies are well ahead. Their patriarchal and capitalist imaginaries of leaving body, place, and even Earth behind, in an allegedly unstoppable march towards material and technological abundance and untold profits for the few, are most alluring. How to respond to them is one of the thorniest issues transitioners and activists must confront at present.

Today, the Planet is in the hands of an incredibly powerful elite, increasingly distant from the reality and the lives of everyone and the non-human world, with the power to destroy people and territories in pursuit of their interests. A global power structure—an assemblage of mega corporations, a hypertrophied cloud-driven financial sector, the most powerful nation-states and their militaries, and large media conglomerates—constitute the infrastructure of this New Order, buttressed by Artificial

Intelligence and the algorithmization of most dimensions of life. This infrastructure is enabled by seemingly infinite amounts of energy and intertwined with ever more callous criminal networks and cartels. The GTI has surely dealt with some of these issues, but the incredibly fast transformations ushered in by the emergent entanglements of power, technology, and politics require sustained attention.[8]

Let me attempt to bring these comments to a close by going back to some references in Paul's text, starting with a passing mention of physicist David Bohm. The task of resituating the human within a living Earth and an intelligent, evolving cosmos—Swimme's whole point in *Cosmogenesis*—finds in Bohm's dissident interpretation of quantum physics one of the most lucid statements. This is particularly the case with what he called "the unbroken wholeness of the universe" (as you will recall, Paul explored some of these issues under Feyerabend's guidance in his undergraduate thesis). Understanding the deep meaning of this expression involves conversations between science and nondualist spiritual traditions, notably Buddhism—as it did in Bohm's and Swimme's cases—but also, and with greater clarity than ever given the planetary conjuncture, indigenous cosmologies. This task is being pursued by a diverse array of actors at present, from scientists to environmental, indigenous, and feminist activists; it must be an important aspect of all transition thinking. Moira Millán's *Terricidio* is part of this exploration.

To me, this brings to the fore the personal and collective question of "Where has Life (by which I mean the living Earth and cosmos) placed us—me, each of us, our communities and struggles—at present? It seems to me that this is the deeper question inspiring Paul's cosmobiographical reflections, one to which he gives an exceptionally rich set of answers, as befits a life well lived, one aware of the privileges (personal, historical) that made it possible. I end with one of my favorite moments in the text to point to the political commitment one would hope such awareness would foster in each of us, as it did for Paul: his recollection of Pete Seeger singing "The Internationale." Today, in Seeger and in the famous anthem, one hears the call for more just social orders, yes, but also for a new ontology of the human and genuinely novel ways of dwelling on Earth.

Endnotes

1. Brian T. Swimme, *Cosmogenesis: An Unveiling of the Expanding Universe* (Counterpoint Press, 2022), 88.

2. Moira Millán, *Terricidio: Sabiduría Ancestral para un mundo alternativo* (Sudamericana, 2024).

3. Thomas Berry, "The New Story," in *The Dream of the Earth* (Sierra Club Books, 1988), 123-137.

4. For an evolving transition framework along these lines, see the Latin American Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South, https://pactoecosocialdelsur.com/.

5. John Law, "What's Wrong with a One-World World?" *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2015), 126–39.

6. The Zapatistas of Chiapas famously defined the pluriverse as a "world where many worlds fit." We deal with these concepts at length in a recent book with two dear colleagues, Michal Osteweil and Kriti Sharma, *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

7. See the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, a project focused on bringing together local and regional networks of radical alternatives (https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/); and Adelante project, which gathers many of these convergence spaces (https://adelante.global/).

8. Yanis Varoufakis vividly analyzes technofeudalism as a rising power regime based on cloud capital, with greater impact on people and the planet than ever before. See *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism* (Melville House, 2023).

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Richard Falk

A few years ago, I gathered together some reflections about my political, intellectual, and personal journey in my memoir *Public Intellectual: The Life of a Citizen Pilgrim*. I have included a few passages below.

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I discovered in work, activism, and even play those ideas, however compelling to the like-minded, do not affect behavior unless grounded in political reality. As I grew older, I felt that the scope of political reality did not accommodate the character and scope of postmodern challenges in the domain of my persistent concerns with militarism, predatory capitalism, nuclear weapons, environmental sustainability, climate change, global migration, and human rights. In this respect I felt discouraged by political trends that seemed reactionary and dysfunctional, and more recently reinforcing the most dangerous features and regressive forms of a state-centric system of world order. Such negativity also made sustainable peace based on justice and a spirit of equality and species unity seem unattainable for many unresolved conflicts around the world, of which the Israel/Palestine struggle has had the most personal resonance for me. Mainstream politics in the countries I knew most about seemed caught up in whirlpools of distraction and systemic disorder, while the progressive politics I was waiting for, receded over the horizon of plausible expectations.

The descent of my personal stature from a high pedestal followed a parallel trajectory as that of political trends. Throughout the Vietnam War I was treated as a legitimate and even promising young scholar, invited to many establishment venues, sought after by liberal politicians seeking to become president of the country, and viewed as a responsible participant in several elite political arenas. Such prominence was short lived. It quickly faded in my forties, principally at first as a result of my being (mis)characterized as a champion of the revolutionary movement in Iran. My value as a political commentator in public spaces endured a near death experience after my criticisms of

Israel attracted national and international notice. For the last twenty-five years, I was barely tolerated even within familiar settings, such as the Council on Foreign Relations or Princeton. At this point, even lax gatekeepers would be alert enough to keep me out of establishment venues if I was foolish enough to seek the sorts of entry earlier achieved without resistance, and with much encouragement, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

And yet, at the political margins, I find myself praised in recent years beyond my reality as someone who is brave and principled with respect to Palestine/Israel, geopolitics, and international law. In effect, as my mainstream credibility declined and disappeared, my life at the margins gained resonance, influence, and acceptance. The pattern was self-reinforcing, as I received no attention or invitations from establishment venues, while being flooded with positive feedback from the adversaries of imperial geopolitics. This shift in identities continues. I believe the quality of my writing and speaking has not declined, but its zone of relevance has contracted, shifting to the margins, visionary settings, principally in the Middle East and Global South.

Twenty years ago, I wrote opinion pieces with a reasonably good expectation of their publication on mainstream media platforms. Now it would be an exercise in futility, actually a waste of time, and so I do not even bother making submissions. Instead, I content myself with producing posts for my blog or Substack and doing at least one foreign interview per week. Of course, the picture is mixed. In many recent years, I have been nominated by the Nobel Peace Prize and find myself listed by a Norwegian Nobel NGO watch group, initiated by Fredrik Heffermehl, as among a small group of persons worldwide whom his organization deems deserving of such recognition, and was even declared deserving of the prize in 1973, as a preferred alternative to the actual recipient, Henry Kissinger.

I am not unhappy about this self-marginalizing dynamic that has overtaken my scholarly life, my identity as a public intellectual, and my comings and goings as an engaged citizen. In some senses, I am again as professionally almost as alone as when growing up in an unhappy household, but in other spheres of activity, I have discovered solidarities that are warm and sustaining even if disconnected from the power-wielders of our country/world. I suppose this trajectory combines the wider political trends away from my beliefs that have created more politically conservative world

elites, as well as my own choices that have moved toward a more radically progressive worldview. No matter. Throughout, I was never guided by concerns about pleasing this or that established order. (p. 404-405)

...

I heard one of Jacques Derrida's last lectures in which he compellingly argued that the most basic challenge facing humanity is how to live together on the planet in a better way. Of course, the word "better" is viewed differently by those who claim to be "realists." I write "claim" because reality is itself being tested in ways that seem to pose a bio-ethical-ecological challenge that has never before threatened the species as a whole, as distinct from particular communities and sometimes groupings as large as entire civilizations—but never before the human species, and never before the planet as an encompassing ecosystem. Whether this species challenge exists is itself contested, and its true extent unknowable, but the possession of nuclear weapons and the phenomenon of global warming are threats with risks of unknown and unknowable magnitudes yet appraised with growing alarm by relevant segments of the scientific community. The prospect of a worldwide famine in the aftermath of nuclear war is believed likely by experts as is the possibility that the planet becomes uninhabitable by humans if global warming should somehow pass beyond as yet unidentified tipping points.

To some extent, these normative ideas arise from preoccupations that have shaped my life to undertake direct engagements with the most controversial issues of the day. These issues reflect the specificities of time and place, and most particularly situate me here in the United States as reacting to national issues of global scope. I would put anti-war scholarship and activism during the Vietnam War in this category, along with my recent criticism of Zionism and Israel, not for their existence, but for their pronounced insensitivity to the rights and grievances of the Palestinian people, and an increasing unwillingness to compromise or accommodate, which in the pursuit of security will over time generate insecurity.

There have been other issues that have attracted my attention as teacher, scholar, and activist that have not been discussed in this memoir, including active opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa and to India's and Lebanon's political development; support for the basic rights of various captive nations such as Tibet, Western Sahara, Eastern Timor, and Catalonia; and prolonged advocacy for the basic rights of indigenous peoples and their humane treatment as long-subjugated nations.

These deeper normative impulses toward living together in better ways on a planet with limited carrying capacities overlap with issues associated with conflict resolution and human rights. I consider these normative proposals or ideas concerned with living together on a planetary scale to be both better responses to the present and improved ways of addressing the future. At stake throughout is the ancient inquiry into the human condition. It is a matter of whether to view our individual and collective beingness as shaped by largely unconscious aggressive and destructive drives, once influentially depicted by Freud, or whether the becomingness of humanity, as instrumentalized by radical technological breakthroughs, is a work-in-progress with no fixed endpoints. I subscribe to this latter view, which suggests the practical validity of struggling to achieve the best possible attainable future combined with a deep awareness of future uncertainty, a responsibility to engage actively, and not to give in by escaping, scapegoating, cynicism, and various forms of denialism or extremism. The great underappreciated benefit of the uncertainty surrounding the human future is that it is capable of creating and sustaining genuine hope-through-struggle as well as the possibility of achieving the desired changes. Sometimes I think it is a matter of choosing hope rather than succumbing to despair.

When I try to link these normative proposals with my personal struggle since adolescence to achieve an authentic identity, I am struck by two sets of considerations. First, to some extent, I have depersonalized the struggle by fashioning my own positive models, for instance, the notion of choosing to be a citizen pilgrim, that are in part nothing more authoritative than a private "invention" dependent, to be sure, on inspiration based on experience and the example of others. And secondly, the absence of either positive models or a rooted identity when I became an adult led me to endow my professional life almost from the beginning with a normative (legal, moral, and, later, spiritual) dimension satisfying to me personally yet at the same time marginalizing my work with respect to dominant professional and societal trends. Further in the background, but still relevant, is my ongoing unconscious drive not to act and think as an entitled top dog in the manner of my mother's family. I leaned toward solidarity with those who were vulnerable and victimized if they fell within the purview of my professional or citizen gaze.

It is this gaze, more distinctive and defining than fingerprints, that helps determine who we are and what we become. (p. 425-427)

…

With such reflections in mind, I am led to wonder whether my dual journey as public intellectual and citizen pilgrim should be dismissed as a jousting with fantasy or vindicated as a canary singing in her cage who not only warns, but for those with decent hearing sings a love song designed to awaken humanity to fulfill the ethical, ecological, and spiritual potential of the species. Before it is too late. Seeking a balance between imagining and worrying is what my journey as a teacher/scholar, advocate, activist, and citizen has been about, and I would not alter my engagement with life fundamentally if given a second chance. The journey is vague about whether or not a destination, it is a process of becoming, my way of being in the world and with others, self-vindicating if guided by good will, spiritual devotion, some luck, and love, self-destructive if not. The process is best measured not only by results but by endeavoring, and above all, by persisting. I acknowledge that the goals I most ardently advocated have not been reached during my lifetime, and indeed now seem less attainable than they were seventy-five years ago. But was it wrong to try?...

I need to keep reminding myself that this self-affirmation, and accompanying practice, would have been impossible without exceptional good luck with health, race, and class privilege, professional opportunity, adult family life, and fantastic gifts of love, intimacy, and friendship.

I emerged as a public intellectual in the primary sense of taking my concerns beyond libraries, journals, and academic lectures in the latter stages of the American War in Vietnam, that is, not until the late 1960s, when I was in my mid-thirties. It was not a matter of doing civil disobedience or protest marches, although these modes of expression were never excluded, but it mainly involved raising my voice in the public squares close to home and wherever opportunities arose. My early opportunities included testimony before Congressional committees, being an expert witness in anti-war trials, membership in international commission tasked with global policy issues, and writing controversial opinion pieces in mainstream venues. Once I became better known as a public intellectual critical of the hot button issues, but as my mainstream access began to dry up, I redirected by my energy to other modes of civic engagement. Despite the exclusions from mainstream media, my sense of commitment as an active participant in the political debates of the day increased over time. My views became more appreciated and known outside my own country than within it, and as a result my activism gradually assumed a more internationalist character, with a geopolitical focus on the Middle East since 2000, with especial attention given to the interplay of developments in Iran, Turkey, and Israel/Palestine.

In expressing views in public arenas my academic background in international law and international relations was often treated as the basis of my credibility as a commentator on world affairs. I tried my best to bring to bear progressive readings of international law, human rights, and UN authority to bolster challenges to warmongering and geopolitically motivated US global intrusions on the independence of sovereign states and the human rights of their populations. As a public intellectual, over the years I gave particular attention to two principal international concerns: (1) unconditionally opposing all geopolitical forms of intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states, including by covert means and by national sanctions; (2) unconditionally opposing nuclearism, including the possession, deployment, threats, development, and strategic doctrines justifying threats and uses in the war plans of governments possessing nuclear weaponry.

These views occasioned some blowback in academic and establishment settings. I sometimes remained an invited guest, but no longer seated near the head of the table. For instance, the American Society of International Law (ASIL), the leading professional organization of the bearing of law on the conduct and content of foreign policy, had early in my career besieged me with speaking invitations and opportunities for leadership roles within the organization. These entreaties disappeared later on when my views were regarded as controversial and anti-establishment. Of course, there was an interactive element. I no longer expected or sought recognition in such elite settings that brought together international law experts with high profile lawyers representing large companies, financial institutions, and legal advisors to governments. Yet I do not regret my earlier contact with these professional/political elites. I never fully subscribed to mainstream expectations and, despite my Princeton identity, was never regarded as a completely trustworthy team player. That suited me fine.

As long as I was within the boundaries of "responsible" dissent I seemed valued in elite communities. When I unwittingly started crossing red lines by urging criminal accountability for the leading perpetrators of the Vietnam policies or questioning the legality of American Cold War covert CIA interventions and political assassinations or upholding the claims of the countries in the Global South to exercise sovereignty over their natural resources at the expense of foreign investors, my welcome mat was gradually and often unconsciously withdrawn. When I made clear that I opposed the Shah of Iran as he faced a vast internal movement of opposition or leveled criticism at the Zionist consensus on Israel, I fully realized that my political and professional future would no longer be a matter of smooth sailing.

In sum, being a public intellectual was not the outcome of a calculated plan. It came about through a series of spontaneous impulses to carry my views on crucial international issues into political and civic settings beyond their normal academic and activist confines. It produced lasting friendships and valuable learning experiences, but also created adversaries, which sometimes made me a target of smears and denunciations. Activism brought me into contact with many people from around the world, broadened my horizons, sharpened my alignments, and taught me over time to accept the ever-evolving contours of my political identity. (p. 432-434)

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Gilberto Gallopín

Thanks, Paul Raskin, for your reflections on your life itinerary. I share some notes on mine, possibly another incarnate illustration of the concept of branch points and alternative futures.

Ecology, Socio-Ecological Systems, and Complexity: A Trajectory Punctuated by Surprises and Bifurcations

I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in Liniers (a lower middle-class borough); my father was a utopian socialist, and both he and my mother were non-practicing painters. Also, they were atheists, and, contrary to the traditions of the country, I was never baptized (on the basis that I should decide this when I had the use of reason). I learned from my parents to defend my ideas, but always in a nonviolent way. As a child, I was an eager reader. I spent hours reading an encyclopedia for youngsters, up to the point where my mother had to push me into going out to play. I remember being fascinated by reading the book *One Two Three...Infinity* by George Gamow, where I got my first glimpses of the wonders of mathematics, the theories of relativity and entropy, and a taste for science (and science fiction).

I initially trained as a biologist, earning a BS (1964) in biological sciences from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) School of Exact and Natural Sciences and a PhD in ecology from Cornell University, USA (1969). I hold Argentine and Italian nationalities.

My career has been distinctly interdisciplinary and inter-paradigmatic (partly due to autonomous decisions and partly due to unexpected events that became turning points in my life trajectory). Using a systemic approach in my research on the ecology of biological systems quickly led me to appreciate the need to consider not only the human actions exerted on ecosystems but also their underlying causes and the impacts of changes in biological factors on human components. This eventually led me to focus on the society-nature nexus and, subsequently, on the general

aspects of the relationship between environment and development, coining the term "socio-ecological system," which includes both biophysical and social components and processes, as well as the interactions between them.

My scientific trajectory has included everything from the ecology of biological systems to sustainable development. I have applied a systems approach in all my studies, seeking a relational and holistic understanding of the research topics. Methodologically, throughout my career, I have worked with analytical mathematical models, mathematical simulation models, and conceptual models; I have utilized experimental, field, laboratory, and statistical tools, Delphi techniques, scenario analyses, policy analyses, and epistemological approaches.

My main teaching activity has consisted of conducting intensive courses in Argentina (at universities and the Bariloche Foundation) and other countries (mainly Latin American courses for Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and European courses for the European Community and European courses for the European Community) and supervising thesis students, postgraduate students, and interns at the various institutions where I have worked. I have published articles in scientific journals and books.

The Beginnings: The Development of a Vocation

Long before entering University, I realized I was very interested in all kinds of creatures; I read natural history books and even dabbled in taxidermy (to my family's dismay). However, when I finished high school, I was unaware that a biology major existed (vocational guidance offices had not yet been invented). I leaned towards a chemistry major. This subject also interested me (though to a lesser extent). Luckily for me, it was taught at the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences. Mathematics, physics, climatology, geology, and biology were offered. Halfway through the preparatory course (common to all careers), I discovered that the topics I loved were legitimized and addressed in the biological sciences major, and I switched immediately. I realize now that this was my first branch point.

At the Science School: Training During Its Golden Age

I had the privilege of studying and serving as a teaching assistant in the entrance course, then Second Class Assistant, Graduate Assistant, and appointed Head of Laboratory during the golden age of the University (1957–1966). After a dark period, the School emerged imbued with a spirit of renewal,

critical thinking, and exploration of new ideas. That atmosphere, where many of us shared an intense institutional mystique working together (students, professors, and non-academic personnel) for the progress of knowledge for the benefit of society, marked me profoundly and indelibly. Even today, I want to believe that I maintain many of the values acquired during that time.

I had my first contact with ecology through a single class at the end of an introductory zoology course there. Although ecology was taught by a rather mediocre professor, I discovered that I had found my definitive vocation (though it continued to compete for a few more years with my alternative vocation, astrobiology, which I abandoned as hopeless when I listened to the wise arguments of a guest professor —it could not be said that such an orientation existed at the time, and I believe that even today it is a subject taught in very few places in the world). Furthermore, at the beginning of the Space Race, the possibilities to travel to space by a non-Russian or American were zilch. And I wanted to be a field astrobiologist…

My first individual scientific publication resulted from my internship in Dr. José Maria Cei's laboratory in the Province of Mendoza. The Department of Biology, through the contacts of Dr. Osvaldo Reig (professor of a course on vertebrates), sent me to train in the then-novel technique of electrophoresis as a tool to aid taxonomy. The work contributed to the taxonomic characterization of a subcomponent of the genus of frogs *Leptodactylus*.

I began my doctoral thesis on the trophic relationships of a population of tuco-tucos, burrowing rodents on the coast of the Province of Buenos Aires, under the supervision of Oliver P. Pearson, a specialist in rodent ecology from the University of Berkeley invited by the UBA, who also taught an animal ecology course at our faculty in which I participated as a graduate assistant (and simultaneously as a student of the course). This resulted in my first publication (as part of the student team) on ecology. I began to work on my thesis research. Oliver played an essential role in my formation, especially as a consequence of the animal ecology course, where he initiated all participants in the practice of scientific research. This was very welcomed because, at that time, it was usually expected that research was done only by senior faculty members.

The Military Coup of 1966 and the Night of the Long Sticks

On July 29, 1966, my trajectory (and that of the UBA and country) changed abruptly. A military coup

university locations. I was at the moment at the School of Science participating, as a representative for the graduates, in a meeting of the Council of Directors of the School, convened to discuss the intervention of the universities by the military. There the armed police threw down the doors and formed a double file into which we had to march towards the outside, with the policemen beating us with batons and the butts of their weapons, irrespective of sex or age, to be driven in police vehicles to jails. I had the privilege and pain of sharing with many professors and students of the School the impacts (physical and symbolic) of the repression. I resigned from my position in protest, along with more than a thousand university teachers, in protest against the military assault and the military coup. This was my second branch point.

Exile and PhD

A couple of months later, thanks to Pearson's generous help, I could travel to the USA and secured a spot at Cornell University, where I also had the help of my friend Jorge Rabinovich (now a prestigious Argentine ecologist) in the arrangements. Cornell granted me an ample scholarship from the International Institute of Education (IIE) that allowed me to finance my studies and stay, as well as that of my wife, Isabel. The excellent training the School of Sciences provided allowed me to pass the doctoral admission exam directly, without taking the preliminary exams or course requirements, so I could begin working on my new thesis shortly thereafter. My thesis supervisor was Dr. Donald Hall, a quantitative limnologist, who allowed me a lot of freedom to choose and develop the thesis topic. There, I built my first mathematical models, which were, to my knowledge, the first non-autonomous models (i.e., with an exogenous input variable) of populations published in the literature. The models described general population-resource systems; the thesis resulted in two publications in scientific journals. I also studied the mathematical properties of food webs using graph theory, which resulted in a publication (this work was later explicitly used as the basis for a seminal book on food webs by the prestigious researcher Dr. J. E. Cohen). I completed my doctorate in 1969.

Postdoctoral Stage

Upon completing my doctorate, I considered returning to Argentina. However, the military dictatorship was still in place. I had the opportunity to do a postdoctoral stay in the laboratory of Dr. C. S. (Buzz) Holling (founder of nonlinear ecology) at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, supported by a postdoctoral scholarship.

This two-year stay was extremely valuable for my training, as I expanded my experience from analytical mathematical models of ecological systems to numerical simulation models of complex systems and participated in the interdisciplinary team already working on a simulation model of the ecology and economy of the Gulf Islands off the coast of Vancouver. I also had the opportunity to contribute in a small way to developing the concept of ecological resilience, one of the fundamental ideas of modern ecology (which later extended to the Social Sciences), published in 1973 in a seminal paper by Dr. Holling.

The three major lessons from my stay in Vancouver were broadening my analytical focus from exclusively biological systems to socio-ecological systems (composed of human and biogeochemical components linked functionally), developing mathematical simulation models, and working as a member of an interdisciplinary team that included natural and social scientists. I also learned the value of the "simple simulation models" developed by Holling and collaborators used in the context of interdisciplinary intensive workshops. Years later, I used it successfully to assess some socio-ecological issues in Argentina.

The First Return

At the end of the two years of the postdoctoral fellowship, I received an offer from the University of Berkeley and one from Argentina. Since the dictatorship was already in evident decline, our desire to return to work in Argentina defined the choice. I accepted a joint offer from INTA (National Institute of Agricultural Technology) and the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) to act, in my capacity as ecological systems analyst, as a link between the Plant Ecology Group of INTA (led by Dr. Jorge H. Morello) and the Animal Ecology Group of the CNEA (led by Lic. María Di Pace). The return to the country was full of surprises: upon arrival, I learned that, due to institutional changes at CNEA, the agreement had been dropped (along with half of my salary). A few days after I was at INTA, the administrator on whom my position depended informed me that he had opposed my appointment as he believed INTA did not need ecologists. As can be imagined, the situation could only worsen from those beginnings, and a few months later, I submitted my resignation.

A Science Fiction Proposal

Since the university was not an option for me (it was still under the control of the military), I started to explore a verbal offer I had received from the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research (IVIC) with the idea of settling down, if not in Argentina, at least in Latin America. But then I received another surprise, this

time positive: Dr. Amílcar O. Herrera (a geologist and an academic highly regarded for his contributions to scientific and technological policy, with whom I later became best friends) contacted me to make me a proposal he described as a "science fiction project." It was to become part of an interdisciplinary team that would attempt to provide a response and an alternative proposal to the widely circulated book *The Limits to Growth* by Donella Meadows and colleagues, based on a simulation model of the world. According to these authors, the model "demonstrated" that humanity was inexorably heading toward a global catastrophe in the early twenty-first century due to overpopulation (specified as the leading cause of underdevelopment), the depletion of natural resources, and pollution associated with economic growth, and that the solution consisted of stopping population growth in developing countries and reducing industrial growth in developed countries, freezing the global status quo. As I have always been interested in bold and socially relevant ideas, I enthusiastically accepted, and this meant my incorporation into the Bariloche Foundation in 1972. This came to be my third branch point.

The Bariloche Foundation: Another Privileged Experience

My affiliation with the Bariloche Foundation (FB) was another transformative experience in my career. FB was a unique and pioneering institution at the national and international levels. It was an interdisciplinary institution in the broadest sense, including both Natural and Social Sciences, a computing center, a music department (which hosted the Camerata Bariloche, a renowned classic music ensemble), and a Transfer to Society Program. It was a private, nonprofit, research and postgraduate teaching institution. It had a level of international excellence and a set of institutional values of the highest ethical standard. The Board of Directors included some of Argentina's most prominent personalities in science, technology, and the arts.

My academic activity at FB focused on two main fronts: in the first phase, participating in the construction of the Latin American World Model (MML), and in the second phase, creating and directing the Ecological Systems Analysis Group (GASE) within the Department of Natural Resources and Energy.

The construction of the MML was a major intellectual challenge. The working team was led by Herrera, who convened a high-level interdisciplinary group with an Advisory Council composed of prominent scientific figures from Latin America. In the MML, I was part of the core group, which discussed the main strategic lines of the study, and I was also responsible for modeling the food sector. Our model (constructed and run on the FB's computer) essentially posited that the limits to human growth (in the

considered time frame) were not primarily physical (availability)—although it recognized that unlimited growth was not possible—but mainly socioeconomic (accessibility) and demonstrated the physical and economic feasibility of a desirable, equalitarian, and sustainable society. This project strengthened my interest in the problematic of science, society, and the environment. The model was very well received in international academic circles and fueled discussions about development and inequality. Inevitably, it also became one of the factors that contributed to the military junta's offensive against FB following the new coup d'état of 1976.

GASE was an interdisciplinary research group with ecologists, ecophysiologists, biologists, and computer scientists that covered various topics in field ecology, theoretical ecology, plant ecophysiology, and (after the separation from FB that I will comment on below) ecological foresight in Latin America and environmental macro systems analysis in Venezuela, among other supplementary topics. The Group directed doctoral theses (with FB scholarships) and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONICET) fellows. The main research area of the Group was the "Integrated Study of the Upper Manso River Basin" in Río Negro, which lasted several years and involved collaboration with external researchers and was abruptly interrupted in 1976.

At FB, I started as an Associate Professor, then a Full Professor, and later its Executive President.

Second Institutional Break: The Years of Lead

In March 1976, the bloodiest coup in Argentine history profoundly changed the country's trajectory and (in terms of what this review addresses) partially my own academic trajectory. Thousands of people were kidnapped and killed (the "desaparecidos" by the military government). The Foundation was under focus, and we received ideological accusations, mainly focused on some academic publications from the Social Sciences Department and the Latin American World Model. Simultaneously with this campaign, the military government canceled the annual subsidy that the Foundation received. In addition, it blocked all other contributions and project funding from abroad that required government approval.

Eventually, FB was forced to drastically reduce its size (by about ninety percent) and barely maintained a minimal structure (Executive President, Board of Directors, a couple of administrative employees) and a network of three Associated Groups, one of which was GASE. The Groups had to seek their own funds,

with the Foundation acting as the guarantor of principles and coordinator of financial flows to maintain a certain cash balance between the groups. Academically, a critical consequence of this situation was that the Groups had to survive based on projects funded by external sources, which were generally of a very applied nature (which had good aspects: diversification and the need to respond to concrete problems typically associated with policy decision-making research; and bad aspects: difficulty in maintaining
a long-term research line and the need to start a project as soon as the previous one was finished to finance the salaries of group members, with the consequent lack of time to prepare research results for publication).

This period includes the works of GASE related to the project "Environmental Macrosystems of Venezuela" contracted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) of Venezuela (which did not require approval from the Argentine government). During this period, I also managed to publish some works not associated with funded projects, such as my participation in the influential book edited by C. S. Holling, *Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management;* theoretical works on the relationship between technology and ecological systems and a work where for the first time, to my knowledge, the general relationship between environment, human needs, and quality of life was established. This was my fourth branch point.

The Definitive Return of Democracy

In 1983, democratic elections were held that marked the end of the most ignoble military dictatorship in Argentine history, and the country began the task of reconstructing institutions and the economy. The Bariloche Foundation received considerable moral support from official entities in this context. However, as with other private nonprofit research centers, it was impossible to recover regular official funding sufficient for the normal operation of the institution, and the Foundation and its Associated Groups continued to depend on project management funds for their research and survival.

This period also includes my main collaborations with official and provincial bodies, such as my role as a member of the Advisory Council of CONICET, Advisor to the Science and Technology Secretariat of the Province of Río Negro, and Member of the Research and Development Commission of the National University of Comahue. Some representative publications from this period included a document

on ecology and the country, directed to political parties on behalf of the Argentine Association of Ecology, and my participation in the document on food, an input for the so-called Brundtland Report, or *Our Common Future*, prepared for the United Nations, which led to the international agreement on the concept of sustainable development. I also published the first systemic definition of the concept of ecological niche. This period saw the first definition and characterization of the concept of a socio-ecological system in the literature in a paper authored by myself, Pablo Gutman, and Hector Maletta to denote the complex system composed of society and nature functionally interacting. My works on the human dimension of global change and on planetary futures, as well as the participation of GASE in the document *Our Own Agenda* (a report on problems and opportunities for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, published by the Interamerican Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme), also belong to this period.

In 1995, publications summarizing the results of GASE's largest regional project ("The Ecological Future of a Continent: A Prospective Vision of Latin America") appeared.

This period also witnessed a significant institutional surprise, this time of internal origin and not due to external threats. There was a power grab by one of the associated groups; in total disagreement with this situation and unable to change it despite my efforts and those of the other members of the institution, I resigned from my position as Executive President of FB, and, as this situation persisted and even worsened, I also resigned from my position as a member of the Board of Directors in 1989, along with other directors, including the founding members. Eventually, due to the negative outcome of an effort to raise external funding for an important project, insufficient national funding for research (or perhaps my ability to obtain it), the drastic national increases in the cost of living, and the new financial regulations of FB, GASE decided to dissolve, after closing our activities in the most orderly manner possible and completing previous commitments. GASE officially ceased to exist in April 1991, and fortunately, all its members managed to find positions suited to their skills. This closure was preceded by a severe health episode I suffered. This was my fifth branch point.

The International Stage: A Range of Perspectives

Unexpectedly and unconnected with my health incident, I received an invitation from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Canada to participate in a preparatory research project for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ("The Earth Summit") in 1992.

IIASA (Vienna, Austria)

The research would be conducted at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) near Vienna. After some hesitation, I accepted, and while still in recovery, I traveled to Austria (with a stop in Caracas to participate in an international meeting). The experience at IIASA was very stimulating. There, I developed the foundations of a systemic vision of the interrelations between social, economic, and environmental factors. I deepened my understanding of quality of life and its relationship with environmental quality.

The second part of the invitation involved leading a new poverty and sustainable development project at the IISD headquarters in Winnipeg, Canada. I worked there throughout 1992, developing a project on impoverishment and the environment that the Institute published as a book.

CIAT (Cali, Colombia)

While still at IISD, I received an invitation to apply for an international competition for the position of Leader of the new Land Use Program at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), one of the fifteen centers that make up the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), "a global research alliance that brings together organizations committed to research for a hunger-free future." I worked at CIAT from 1993 to 1997, a highly turbulent period due to the drastic reduction in funding across the system. During that time, the institutional structure was redefined several times, and managing the program consumed most of my time.

Among other research works from this period, I mention the work that introduced the concepts of intensity and technological quality in relation to the environment and a new conceptualization of development, underdevelopment, maldevelopment, and sustainable development visualized using Venn diagrams. In another publication, I demonstrated that contrary to what the literature had maintained until that moment, qualitative indicators are scientifically legitimate and can be as rigorous as quantitative ones; I also introduced the concept of situational indicators.

Around that time, I became entangled with an international small and informal group of scientists focused on ecological economics, post-normal science, and complex systems analysis, with people like Silvio Functowicz, James Kay, and others. We had many very stimulating discussions.

A significant development beginning in 1995 was initiated by Paul Raskin, whom I met at a conference in Stockholm, and who invited me to act as co-chair in a new and challenging project: the interdisciplinary and international Global Scenario Group (www.gsg.org), the precursor of the Great Transition Initiative. I gladly accepted as the idea aligned very well with my original scales of interest, and we worked together until the completion of the project, which generated three seminal reports. These scenarios were the source used by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to design its GEO (Global Environmental Outlook) program, which was also replicated at the country level.

Simultaneously with the institutional tensions within CIAT, the general situation in Cali was becoming very dangerous and violent. After a couple of serious incidents, my wife and I decided to move.

SEI (Stockholm, Sweden)

Fortunately, around that time, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), an NGO with much prestige in both industrialized countries and developing countries for its applied research in environmental and development decision-making, was seeking a director to lead a new program with a systemic approach, and Paul Raskin called this to my attention. I was invited by the SEI CEO to work as director of the new "Systems for Sustainable Development Programme," and in October 1997, my wife and I left Cali for Stockholm. At SEI, I launched and directed the Programme. Through the Programme, SEI won a bid to act as the Secretariat for a new international project that defined the first global water scenarios as part of the identification of the World Water Vision. My activities included defining and characterizing the scenarios and facilitating discussions among an international group of experts. The project concluded successfully with the presentation of the final report at the Second World Forum and Ministerial Conference in The Hague in 2000. Also, at the request of the Swedish government, I conducted a scenario analysis to support the country's climate policy. During this time, I deepened my research on the role and limitations of science for sustainable development. I participated in the seminal publication that defined the concept and need for "sustainability science."

Around this time, I received an invitation from the Director of the Division of Environment and Human Settlements of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to join ECLAC as a Regional Advisor on Environmental Policies, which was very tempting due to the prospect of returning to work in Latin America and very close to my country. After some brief negotiations to ensure that my

work would be research and training aimed at decision-making and not the administrative duties of an international bureaucrat, I accepted. We moved to Santiago, Chile, the headquarters of ECLAC, in mid-2000.

ECLAC (Santiago, Chile)

Returning to Latin America also represented my first experience working in an intergovernmental organization like the United Nations. At ECLAC, I directed a research project on the sustainability assessment of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (ESALC). The project produced a new conceptual framework and an integrated system of sustainable development indicators at the country level.

In addition to a regional meeting and several studies and documents, the project included intensive training courses for countries in the region on sustainable development indicators based on my research on the subject. One of the numerous by-products of the project is the first poverty map of Latin America at the departmental level based on national censuses, as well as a multi-causal interdisciplinary analysis of the sustainability of the "agricultural syndrome" in the Pampas region and a novel system conceptualization of sustainability and sustainable development. During this period, I developed and/or participated in several reports and reflections aimed at decision-making, such as alternative scenarios for Argentina (as input for the Medium-Term Strategic Plan for the Secretariat of Science, Technology, and Productive Development), a vulnerability analysis for the manual on natural disaster assessment by ECLAC, and an analysis of the implications of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment results for achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, published in the chapter "Ecosystems and Human Well-being."

I also deepened the epistemological study of the implications of sustainable development, which resulted in several publications.

At the request of the Argentine government, I provided technical advice for preparing the first system of sustainable development indicators (SIDSA) published by the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, which benefited from a surprising number and diversity of national government agencies. After the first report, the Argentine provinces showed interest and, through the Federal

Council for the Environment (COFEMA), requested training courses for them. In those courses held for all provinces (in four groups), I participated as an advisor and professor, with most of the classes taught by the national team that had already been trained in international courses and during the production of the national report.

The Definitive (?) Return to the Motherland

In May 2006, I returned to Argentina, where I remain (for now) scientifically and professionally active. That same year, I coordinated the preparation of alternative scenarios for INTA in Argentina with an interdisciplinary working group. In this latest phase, I acted as the principal advisor on scenarios for UNESCO in preparing the new global water scenarios from 2008 to 2012. I also taught some intensive courses on sustainable development indicators and classes in distance courses. I also worked as a consultant for various bodies and published several papers. Thus, we arrive at my current situation, operating as an independent researcher and sometimes as a consultant, through a pretty different trajectory and much more populated with unexpected bifurcations than I imagined in my early years...

Gilberto Gallopín is an independent scholar based in Argentina, Associate Fellow at Tellus Institute, and former Executive President of Fundación Bariloche.

Herman Greene

Influences on My Life

When I think of those factors that have most shaped my life, I think of being born in the American South of agrarian-based Baptist and Methodist parents; of my mother's illness and death when I was young; of a soul that has always been inquisitive, affected by suffering and injustice, and possessed of a large sense of calling; of sports, music, and church; of the "sixties"; of the Ecumenical Institute, the University of Chicago Divinity School, and Whitehead and Ogden; of law school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill followed by law practice on Wall Street; of divorce, uncertainty, and loneliness; of returning to North Carolina to live and provide legal services to technology companies; of my second marriage; of Thomas Berry and ecozoic studies; of studying for a Doctor of Ministry degree in spirituality and ecology and interreligious dialogue at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio; of Binkley Baptist Church, the Alliance of Baptists, and E. Maynard Adams; of the International Process Network, John Cobb, and global travels; and of developing Earth law—first with the Earth Jurisprudence Center at the law schools of St. Thomas University and Barry University in Florida, later with the Earth Law Center in Durango, Colorado, and most recently with work on establishing the Society for Earth Law.

College and Graduate School

(For a reflection on my childhood, find the excerpt here from an autobiography in the works. Now to jump ahead a bit…)

While I applied to and was accepted at Duke University and Dartmouth College for my undergraduate education, I did not receive financial aid. Given this, my father said I would need to attend the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, the town where I grew up. I had been a top student in high school, and I was invited to be in the Invitational Honors program. In a first-year

class of four thousand, there were only thirty of us in that program. UF was on the trimester system at that time, and by going three trimesters a year, one could graduate in three years. My father asked me to do that. I graduated in 1966 when I was twenty. I majored in political science. I do not remember my college years as being intellectually stimulating.

I applied to graduate school at Stanford University to study political science and was accepted. I was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship which covered my expenses. Stanford had an accelerated program for people to get their PhDs. After one year, a master's degree was granted without the need to write a thesis. I did receive that degree and graduated when I was twenty-one.

It was a very eventful year: I was exposed to the "sixties" in the same way that Paul Raskin described in his paper. I went from a university experience where there had been very little student activism to the cauldron of the Bay Area. I had chosen to complete the ROTC program at UF and was a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army Intelligence on deferment. The war in Vietnam was on in earnest, and New Left questions about the US role in the war and social justice in America pummeled me. It was my first time away from home. I was in an academic atmosphere far above anything I had experienced before. I wrestled with what I was going to do about my military service. I studied political science with the intent to shape public policy, but Stanford was leading the way in the empirical study of political science (such as survey research). Little attention was given to policy issues. Being church-oriented, I connected with the campus ministers at Stanford who were concerned with such issues. Ministers I admired, like Martin Luther King, Jr., led much of the Civil Rights Movement. I went to a retreat led by the staff of the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago (EI) where they talked about the church as social pioneer. I decided to go into ministry and applied for and was accepted at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

In the summer between Stanford and the University of Chicago (UC), I went to a training program at EI. EI was located in a low-income, African American community that had been an Italian neighborhood before white flight. Buildings in the community were run-down, and crime was high. EI, among other things, conducted a community development project there called "Fifty City." This was 1967, a time of great urban unrest. Riots occurred in many cities but not at that time in Chicago. Still, things were tense.

EI was an intentional community that lived a structured life, something like an urban kibbutz. It had taken over a small seminary campus after the seminary moved to the suburbs. One-hundred fifty people lived together as a collective. Some worked in paying jobs, and what they earned was pooled and distributed so that others could engage full time in the "mission," which at that time was working in Fifth City or working with churches around the United States on how to engage in the social issues of the time. EI had a student house of about twenty students, and I decided to live and work there while I attended UC.

As great as the intellectual experience was at Stanford, UC was even greater. The teachers I had there were the sharpest minds I had ever met. One stood out: Shubert Ogden. He taught me the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead's philosophy is called either the philosophy of organism or process philosophy. Classical Western metaphysics is based on "being" and substances, Whitehead's neo-classical metaphysics is based on "becoming" and relationships. Further, Whitehead held that things were not just externally related, but also internally related through experience or subjectivity. Ogden's class is the most important class I have ever taken. Whitehead's philosophy is at the base of my philosophy even today. I completed my studies at UC in 1970, when I was twenty-four. I earned a Master of Theology degree and a Master of Divinity degree.

The influence of UC on my life was more than matched by my experience at EI. There I learned to teach and to organize. I learned to change lives through applying phenomenology, which concerns probing the depths of one's own experience for the truth in it. We called our technique of transformative teaching "pedagogy" (a term of art for us). People who know me know that I ask deep questions about their experiences in life, mostly to good effect but not always. They don't know that I am being a pedagogue.

EI demanded total commitment. When I joined EI, there was one center in Chicago with, as stated, about 150 members—men and women, married couples, and children. I stayed with EI until 1975, and at that time, the one center I had joined in 1967 had given rise to thirty centers in the US and Canada plus centers in twenty other countries, with a total of fifteen hundred members. We taught a weekend course on the church as social pioneer to perhaps one hundred thousand people during that time. At the time of the US bicentennial in 1976 and a couple of years afterwards, EI led ten thousand town meetings. I wasn't there when all those meetings were held, but I was in the planning group for the meetings and led an early meeting in Bethel, Alaska, in 1975. I was in the main center in Chicago from

1967 until 1969 and then led a center on the North Shore of Chicago in 1969–70, in Cleveland in 1970–71, in Indianapolis in 1971–72, and in New Orleans in 1972–74. In 1974–75, I returned to Chicago to the new headquarters of EI. The insurance company Kemper gave EI its building in Uptown Chicago when Kemper moved to the suburbs.

This life-and-work was exhilarating and exhausting. I married my first wife, who was part of EI, and had a son while I was with EI. I knew I had to leave, though my wife did not want to do so. She did anyway. We moved to North Carolina, where we planned to spend a year in which I would apply for law school, which I did.

In 1976, I began the study of law at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. We were really poor. At EI, we had lived on a meager stipend but were given room and board. We left EI with no savings. We were able to get jobs in 1975–76, and we became residents for tuition purposes when I began law school. My tuition was only $400 a semester, quite different than the tuition at that and other law schools now. We lived in married student housing. I believe our rent was $140 a month. I went to law school with the intent of becoming a legal aid lawyer, a low-income housing lawyer, or another kind of social justice lawyer. I, however, took courses on finance out of a desire to know how the world works, and after my second year, I did a legal internship with a Park Avenue law firm in New York City. Toward the end of that internship, I wanted to see if I could practice with a top firm in the city. I arranged interviews with a few firms and was offered a job at Shearman & Sterling (now A&O Shearman), the largest law firm in the city.

I became an associate at Shearman in August 1979 and was assigned to the tax department. Jimmy Carter had opened up trade relationships with China, and China sought advice on its taxation of foreign companies from Shearman. My first project was researching what China's tax law would have to do so that taxes paid to China by US companies would qualify for the US foreign tax credit. Subsequent projects would be equally exotic and challenging. Later, I joined the mergers and acquisition practice of the firm.

I was a stranger in a strange land. My father took *Fortune* magazine and read an article in which Shearman was highlighted. He asked me, "How in the world did you get a job at that firm?" I wondered the same thing. After four years, Shearman, also, wondered the same thing and gave me pay for three months while I found another job. I did find another job, and it was with Mayer, Brown &

Platt (now Mayer Brown), a Chicago-based firm that had opened a branch in Denver, Colorado, to serve banks which had opened offices there to serve the burgeoning oil and gas industry of the Reagan years. My wife was from Denver, and we moved there. With Mayer I practiced bank finance. As the oil and gas boom of the eighties declined, Mayer's Denver business declined, and I moved to the Mayer office in New York to continue practicing bank finance, in particular large leveraged buyouts, which were in vogue at that time and continue today in different forms under the name private equity. Unfortunately, I left Denver without my family. My first marriage had ended at that time too, much to my sorrow.

My practice in New York with Mayer ended in the 1990 recession. Mayer let go of thirty partners, and I was one of those who won this lottery. So, I had to search for another job. I thought I found the perfect one: Director Public Responsibility of the American Express Company.

I got the job. But only for one year. I was in charge of what would now be called Amex's DEI program and also a program on aging. It was clear that the American population was aging, and I designed a public service program on the "Third Age" of life, a life that I am now living. I had a desk on the fiftieth floor of the World Financial Center (not the nearby World Trade Center) overlooking the Hudson River. I was part of the 400-person corporate headquarters for a company with 125,000 employees. It was heady stuff.

This turned out not to be my destiny. A year later, I was looking for another job. I had no family ties to New York City. I decided that there was only one thing I was sure of: I was going back to North Carolina. I wasn't sure if I was really fit for practicing law, but I had obligations for child support as well as self-support and law was my trade. I connected with a law school classmate who headed up a boutique law firm in the Research Triangle (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill), which served early stage and emerging growth technology companies. From 1992 until I retired at the end of 2018, I served these clients by providing tax, corporate, and securities legal services.

The Ecozoic Backstory

There was a backstory to my life throughout the time of my law practice (1979–2018). When I began at Shearman, my family moved to Park Slope in Brooklyn. It was a nice area: In Brooklyn, it was second only to Brooklyn Heights. We joined a radical Methodist Church. Only about fifty people attended services, but they were super socially conscious and the preacher, Finley Schaef, was way to the left. Finley got to

know Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest and professor, who was little known at that time. Thomas was prophetic. He was a cultural historian and an ecologist. He wrote a paper called "The Spirituality of the Earth." Finley obtained a mimeographed copy of that and shared it with me. It changed my life forever. Looking back, it is not surprising that Thomas came to call himself a geologian rather than a theologian.

Thomas understood and wrote about the Anthropocene *avant la lettre*. As he put it in 1988, "The anthropogenic shock that is overwhelming the earth is of an order of magnitude beyond anything previously known in human historical or cultural development. . . . We are acting on a geological and biological order of magnitude. We are changing the chemistry of the planet." In 1989, he coined the term "Ecozoic era." He understood humans were bringing about the sixth mass extinction in the history of Earth and that for the first time in human history, we were dealing with a disruption not only in human affairs but in the functioning of the planet. We were living in the terminal Cenozoic era. This meant disruption on the scale of other changes in geobiological eras. He offered the promise of a new era called the Ecozoic era, a time of mutually enhancing relations among humans and the larger community of life and life systems.

From that time until I ended my law practice, I was a lawyer by day and an ecologist by night. In the year 2000, I founded the Center for Ecozoic Studies (CES). It was and is a thought, imagination, dialogue, and action center for an ecological age, and its mission is to advance ecology and culture as the organizing principles of societies. CES's website is www.ecozoicstudies.org. We are engaged in publishing—at present an online magazine called *The New Ecozoic Reader* and a print *Journal of Ecozoic Studies*. We hold events, conduct educational programs, and lead study groups.

Another aspect of this backstory is the work I have done with the process philosophy community. When I read the "Spirituality of the Earth," process philosophy took on new meaning for me. It had an application, providing a philosophical foundation for the ecological movement. In 2001, I founded the International Process Network. I served as its executive director for its first five years and was on its governing board from 2001 until 2022. The process work I did took me to conferences in many countries —six trips to China, one to Korea, two to Japan, two to India, one to Austria, one to the Azores, one to Brazil, and many to the Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California.

In 2011, I began attending meetings as an NGO representative at the United Nations on sustainable development. With others, I formed the Ethics and Spirituality Initiative with the intent of making

spirituality the fourth pillar of sustainable development. I attended Rio+20 in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 and continued attending UN meetings until the Sustainable Development Goals were approved in 2015.

From 2006 to 2009, I was a consultant to the Earth Jurisprudence centers at St. Thomas University and Barry University. This occurred as the Earth law/rights of nature movement of the twenty-first century was beginning.

In 2018, I was asked to be an editor of a legal textbook that was published in 2021 called E*arth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law—A Guide for Practitioners*. It was and is the only textbook that provides a survey of the Earth law movement. I am currently working with others on a second edition of that book.

This book was a project of the Earth Law Center of Durango, Colorado. I am currently Thomas Berry Scholar-in-Residence of that Center. I have worked on many projects with this center and am now leading the effort to bring into being the Society for Earth Law.

Herman Greene is founder and president of the Center for Ecozoic Studies and co-editor of the textbook Earth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law—A Guide for Practitioners

Dorothy Guerrero

I really appreciate the invitation to share my introspection on my political, professional, and life journey so far and see many similarities with other reflections in this network. We are indeed fellow travelers.

I grew up in a sleepy suburban *barrio* (village) twenty miles north of Manila in 1968, the year many fellow travelers that directly and indirectly influenced my thinking and gave me a leg up in my international work later in life cut their own teeth on activism. My political awareness was shaped by key events under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos Sr., who was president from 1965 until 1986. After all, we are called the Martial Law babies. I was four when Martial Law was declared in 1972. My parents used to rush us home when we visited relatives or friends because civilians were jailed when caught outdoors between 10:00 pm and 4:00 am. I was eight when I first heard the term "desaparecido": a university student from a family my parents knew disappeared and was never seen again. Old families knew each other, and, in hushed conversations, people said he was an activist.

I learned about social class and consciousness from my parents, especially my father. My dad did not even finish high school and started working on jewelry at age fourteen at his uncle's goldsmith workshop. By the time he was sixteen, he was already an engraver and could carve letters and objects in jewelry by hand. He knew all the university emblems and could chisel them in class rings. My mom did a secretarial course but never got to work in an actual office, but her charm and her personality were invaluable in dealing with clients.

My dad explained to me at a young age that they did not have the capital to have a proper business and employ people. We lived a simple life; I knew we were poor but also observed that we were relatively more comfortable than many families in the village. My dad never smoked and did not like alcohol; his extra money was spent on two or three daily broadsheet newspapers and political journals in English—a luxury or oddity for many as Filipinos are a non-reading public. He taught me

that I should know what is happening in the country and the world and to ask why what happened happened. That way I could find my life's purpose.

I was 14 when I joined my first protest in 1982, a year after Martial Law was lifted and people were pushing the new political space. It was a protest vigil that lasted for many days to oppose the nuclear power plant, which was then being built in Morong, Bataan, some forty miles from our town of Meycauayan, Bulacan. I was with my dad. He joined a discussion about nuclear arms in the US military bases in two nearby provinces, and I went to a discussion about foreign debt and the economy. The speaker explained how the multi-billion-dollar project located in an earthquake zone was responsible for 10 percent of the Philippine external debt that taxpayers would pay for decades. According to the Presidential Commission for Good Government, which was set up after Mr. Marcos was driven out of power, he pocketed some US$80 million of the project's funds. That was my first lesson on power: how one man damned the country and generations of people who serviced that debt for decades. It was a disastrous project that should have never been approved as everything about it was wrong.

Senator Benigno Aquino, the leader of the opposition and a staunch Marcos critic, was assassinated at the airport in broad daylight upon returning from a medical operation and exile in the US in 1983. Massive protests shook the streets, and workers' strikes were organized to press for justice, civil rights, and democracy. Many worried that martial law would be declared again.

I took political science at university, despite well-meaning relatives and teachers who advised me to take a more practical course like accounting, which would offer more chances of employment. I was a university sophomore when Marcos called for a snap election. The Philippine Left, in which I was becoming increasingly active, was divided on whether to boycott the election or support Corazon Aquino, the martyr's widow and the unified opposition candidate. Marcos rigged the results of the election and was declared winner by the rubber-stamp Houses of Congress and Senate. During the counting of ballots, election officials walked out in disgust.

The country saw heightened waves of protests, and the military launched a coup d'état. I joined the two million people in the People Power uprising in Manila from February 22 to 25, 1986. For four days, members of the anti-dictatorship movement and religious groups were in the middle of Manila's main thoroughfare while on both sides the warring factions of the military, the Marcos loyalist

soldiers and rebel soldiers, armed to their teeth, aimed their guns and tanks to each other. We would not stand a chance had they fired, but we were there because we did not want the end result of that conjuncture to be claimed and shaped by the military.

When the Marcos family fled to Hawaii to live in exile, many of us in the anti-dictatorship movement had a short-lived euphoria. After two decades of struggle where many lives were sacrificed in the fight against military rule and economic mismanagement that saw our country plunged from being the second strongest economy in the region next only to Japan into abject poverty, the impossible happened: the dictator was impeached. Interpreting the February 1986 event, however, was a battle of narratives between the different actors and movements that made it happen. The opposition party claimed it as a successful election, which Marcos attempted to steal, so the people rallied to support Corazon Aquino's electoral victory in a peaceful uprising. The military claimed it as a successful coup d'état that people supported, and since they became even more politicized after 1986, they launched six coup attempts within the six years of the Aquino government. The church interpreted it as a miracle by the faithful. The cardinal of Manila himself called the Catholics led by nuns and priests to join the mobilization to stop the loyalist soldiers from firing at people and support the rebel soldiers when both troops were at the stand-off. We were there for the single purpose of demanding change. However, the Left was divided as it was seen as a reformist reform without a program to change society's power structure.

I consider myself lucky for being mentored by some of the most respected leaders of the anti-dictatorship and democracy movement who were released from detention a few days after that February uprising who formed the Movement for Popular Democracy. It was the first block to split from the mainstream Left after 1986. For those of us who joined the anti-dictatorship movement from 1983, we had more options and relative political space to pursue social transformation. We could adhere to Antonio Gramsci's ideas on the importance of the different nodes of power.

The divisions in the Philippine Left have deepened since 1986. Various groups started forming political blocs composed of social movements and NGOs. I joined friends and fellow members of the Youth Volunteers for Popular Democracy in urban poor community organizing in Manila. I lived in a slum in Quezon City for almost a year to sharpen my organizing skills. I witnessed the power of our popular education activities in transforming people's views. We applied the ideas

of Paulo Freire and Saul Alinsky in our organizing and mobilization work. I remember my parents'disappointment when I did not attend my university graduation because we were then in the thick of campaigning for the local elections in which some of the urban poor community leaders whom we organized and trained for leadership were running for local posts. I rationalized that making ideas which build movements for social transformation was proof enough that I applied the science of politics from university textbooks to the "university of life."

I moved to research and education work and joined the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD), a think tank set up to help strengthen social movements, in 1990. In 1991, I was sent on my first overseas work trip, a one-month visit to South Africa to establish South-South relations with the then newly unbanned African National Congress and get to know the country's social movements. Apart from Johannesburg, I visited many cities and was hosted by various groups. I gave presentations on our experiences in combining organizing, mobilization, political education, and alliance-building in different cities. I addressed the biggest Labour Day march I ever attended. The exchanges with fellow activists made me convinced of the importance of internationalism and South-South global solidarity work.

In 1993, I co-organized the Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET), held in 1994 in Manila to highlight the Timorese people's right to self-determination and consolidate support networks in the region. The coalition formed after the conference, also called APCET, became the regional support for the independence struggle of East Timor from Indonesia. In the same year, I spent almost a month in South Korea to help prepare the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum. Looking back to that period, what continually amazed me with the South Korean experience is the lasting power of street protests and social movements to solve political crises. That role of street protests to correct the system was seen again in the recent political crisis in December 2024 brought about by the few hours of martial law declared by now deposed President Yoon Suk Yeol.

The announcement and preparations for the first democratic elections in South Africa brought me back there in 1994. Two colleagues from our movement spent six months with the ANC Education Team to help them with voter education and election management. I arrived weeks before the election and was the youngest consultant of the Independent Electoral Commission in that historic event. I will never forget that midnight when the old South African flag was lowered and the new

the new multi-colored one was hoisted while "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" was sung as the country's national anthem for the first time.

In 1995, I received a full scholarship to do my MA in development studies with specialization in the politics of alternative development strategies at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Fifteen months of learning from academic experts and reading new literatures and books on critiques of development and various ways that communities are resisting and addressing their needs, many of which were not available in the Philippines, was pure bliss. My thesis was about the beginning of the transnational movement of movements against neoliberalism.

After my MA, I went back to my work in IPD while helping to establish the Akbayan Party, a social movements-based party. For three years, I travelled across the archipelago's different provinces and islands for party-building education work. I was not sure if I wanted to do full-time political party work or join friends to work in the few government ministries that former social movement people went to, so I decided to do my PhD studies in political science.

I was first accepted in Warwick University in the UK, but the scholarship I received was not enough to cover tuition fees and full living expenses. I was encouraged by German friends to go to Germany for its free education at all levels. They helped me find work with Asienhaus, a German network with organizations focused on Asian solidarity and education work then based in Essen in 2000. I did an intensive six-month course in German language to help with my work on Agenda 21 and my PhD work. The five-hour daily course gave me hope at first that perhaps, after a few years in Asienhaus and PhD in Duisburg University, I could read the work of Karl Marx in German, although my PhD work was in English. Instead of *Das Kapital*'s three volumes, the most I managed was the first three Harry Potter books in German! Apart from the opportunity to travel widely in Germany for my work on Agenda 21, I highly appreciated deep-diving into German political ideas and philosophy and understanding of environmentalism and feminism from the German perspectives.

Focus on the Global South brought me back to Asia in 2005. I was based in the regional office in Bangkok for ten years. I set up and managed FGS's China Programme from Bangkok and traveled frequently to China between 2005 and 2012. Understanding the Chinese political landscape and viewpoint was extremely fascinating and enriched my approach to political economy. Reluctantly,

we closed our full China work but welcomed the full shift to climate justice work in 2012, which I was already doing as part of my China work. Apart from my earlier work in IPD and FGS, I collaborated a lot with friends at the Transnational Institute (TNI) based in Amsterdam on projects focused on resisting neoliberalism. I also considered TNI as my political home. My engagement with the World Social Forum, China and BRICS work, the biennial Asia Europe People's Forum, and campaign on the UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights was all done jointly with TNI collaborators.

Work on climate justice was like bookending of my political journey. I started at the tail-end of the era of liberation struggles and found myself at the beginning of the radical era of global climate justice movement of movements.

I followed my husband when he got a long-term contract with the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) in South Africa in 2015. It was an opportunity to work with South African movements again. It felt like a homecoming, with old and new friends who made me feel welcome in their ranks. The stay in South Africa was cut short, and we moved to the UK. Shortly after, I started work as Head of Policy with the UK campaign charity Global Justice Now (GJN) in 2017. Campaign and policy work in the UK is quite different from my previous work, but also very interesting. My involvement in the Coordinating Committee of the COP26 Coalition, which organized the mobilization of the broad climate justice movement for the UN Climate COP26 held in Glasgow in 2021, gave me unique experiences in national and global engagement as an activist based in the UK. GJN is the UK organization of ATTAC network, and close work with French colleagues in organizing European events gave me a window once more to European campaign work. I find opportunities as much as possible to collaborate with TNI comrades and lately found new friends and allies in transform! europe.

I missed working directly with Southern groups and found the opportunity in working as a consultant in 2024. I am currently working part-time with Womin African Alliance, a Pan-African ecofeminist organization, and with London Mining Network, a UK alliance of human rights, development, environmental, and solidarity groups. For both, my focus is supporting movements in mining-affected communities in the Global South and raising awareness on the impacts of mining to climate change and the environment. Both organizations are exposing the barriers to a just transition and the need to resist "green imperialism" through control and exploitation of transition minerals.

With this new focus and work in the African region, I am deepening experience and expertise on fighting capitalism's injustices to people and the planet. Looking back on my journey that started with fighting national fascism then discovering its connection with global institutions and processes that makes and strengthen policies and laws that are trapping poor countries to subordination, there is a sense of déjà vu. This time however, apart from fascism that is growing global and deepening, we are also facing the existential crises of global heating and war. There is no option but to double down on organizing, writing about capitalism's hydra heads, and mobilizing people to resist new faces of imperialism.

Dorothy Guerrero is Head of Policy and Advocacy at Global Justice Now.

Tarık Günersel

Events and Their Effects on My Development

**Before my birth in Istanbul in 1953:*

The formation of the republic of Turkey thanks to the leadership of Atatürk in 1923, who, afterwards, got rid of the Islamic law, provided secular contemporary law and an alphabet suitable to Turkish, gave equal rights to women, and emphasized the importance of arts and sciences as well as environment.

***The effects: I was brought up in an enlightened cultural milieu. Practically no religious pressure either in the family or at school. My elementary school years passed with sciences, arts, math, world geography and history, opera, theater, literature, art exhibitions, Turkish and Greek mythology, and civics.*

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, announced in 1948, which impressed me in 1963.

***The effect: I remember writing the title meticulously. My notebook was published in 2017 as a gift to me.*

**After my birth:*

*The divorce of my parents when I was two.

***Effect: Nearly a split personality with inner conflicts.*

*1966: Reading Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*.

***Effect: Getting rid of the idea of God. More liberation.*

*1968: The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army, and the US bombardment of Vietnam, the Mai Lai Massacre. Becoming a world citizen.

***Effect: Alarmed regarding the ınternational conditions. Importance of democracy and peace.*

*1969: Neil Armstrong on the Moon.

***Effect: Joy. More enthusiasm.*

*1973: The US backed military coup d'etat against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile on 9/11.

***Effect: Strengthening of my anti-imperialism.*

*1980: The birth of my daughter.

***Effect: A revolution. Now there is someone for whom I could sacrifice my life. A shift of emphasis.*

*The military coup d'état in Turkey in the same year.
***Effect: Fear. Deciding to go to Saudi Arabia to work for ARAMCO as an English teacher, in order to make enough money to get rid of rent and spend more time on writing.*

*1986: The Chernobyl Nuclear Power disaster.

***Effect: Shock. Becoming more responsive.*

*1989: The Fall of the Berlin Wall.

***Effect: Hoping the Soviet Union would democratize without collapsing.*

*1995: The Internet.

***Effect: In 1996, initiating Poetic Space Lab, a global network. I also initiated World Poetry Day, which I presented at the 1997 PEN Congress in Edinburgh, later carried to UNESCO.*

*2001: 9/11 in the USA.

***Effect: I wrote an article and sent it to the White House: "Non-Muslim US Islamologists Have Misled the White House." I argued that this was the boomerang effect of the US empowerment of violent Islamists. As early as 1950, the USA demanded Islamic schools in Turkey for the Green Belt strategy against the Soviet Bloc. In 2007, I warned the US Consul in Istanbul against the so-called "Mild Islam" maneuver of the USA.*

*2012: The birth of my first grandchild.

***Effect: The thought about my death disappeared. I wanted to live longer. More fruitfully, the next year, in harmony with my desire of a classless world society in 1969, I wrote The Declaration of Earth Civilization Project and initiated the Earth Civilization Network.*

Tarık Günersel is a Turkish aphorist, poet, playwright, and translator and a f ormer board member of PEN International.

Don Hall

Thank you to Paul Raskin and everyone who has shared their fascinating stories so far! I have read them all with great interest and enjoyment.

Even though my story is not on quite as grand a scale, I have chosen to chime in here for a few reasons. For one, I already wrote a chapter on "My Evolutionary Journey" in my recently published book *The Regeneration Handbook: Transform Yourself to Transform the World*, and I am still in the process of shamelessly promoting it in as many places as possible. However, I also believe my story is worth sharing because I am at least a couple of decades younger than the other respondents and think the different circumstances we have grown up under are instructive.

Most notably, by the time I came of age as an activist, "sustainable development" was already broadly regarded as an oxymoron, and my faith in accomplishing large-scale reform through institutions like the UN, the World Bank, and the ivory towers of academia was basically nonexistent. This has led me to focus over the past sixteen years on solutions that exist almost entirely outside of the box of the Industrial Growth Society, such as local food systems, intentional communities, permaculture, and Transition Towns.

One of my great hopes for the future is that those even younger than me tend to see even more clearly than I do that business-as-usual is no longer an option and that radical, holistic change is urgently needed. Nevertheless, I think it is essential that those of us who have already managed to work ourselves into positions of influence in this movement of movements act as true elders to show them the way and provide them with at least enough credible hope to prevent them from sliding en masse into despair, apathy, and nihilism. Indeed, sharing stories like these is one great way to do so.

With that said, here is my contribution to this forum. I offer it both in humility of the impressive achievements of those who have come before me and as a potential source of inspiration for those who come after.

Don Hall is the executive director of Transition US and the author of The Regeneration Handbook: Transform Yourself to Transform Your World.

Al Hammond

I found reading Paul Raskin's piece very fascinating. I was at Stanford (nominally studying chemical engineering, but also doing a humanities honors program that turned into an essay on the nature of scientific thought) while he was at Berkeley. I, too, took a guitar to college (although my skill never came close to his—and I envy the summer he spent hunting up old musicians), spent nine months roaming Europe including also getting arrested at the Trevi Fountain, and finished a PhD in applied math at Harvard before plunging straight into science journalism writing for *Science*. I include here an essay on my career path, not nearly as interesting a tale as Paul Raskin's. It turns out we were both involved in the 2050 project: I ended up with the World Resources Institute's end of it and, not seeing any real interest at WRI, sent the money to the agent-based modeling group at the Brookings Institution, since I saw that as a possible analytical tool for the social sciences.

What catalyzed my interest in global development was, first, data about CO2 emissions that led to the first international comparison of such emissions (published in the World Resources Report), and, later, the transformational experiences of coming face-to-face with poverty in trips to Kenya and India for the World Resources Report. That prepared me for the work with Paul Raskin and Gilberto Gallopín on the Global Scenario Group.

I do think it is time for trying anew to find a path to a transformed world, but the catalyst may turn out to be a decade of disaster initiated by Trump in the White House.

Al Hammond is a serial entrepreneur, a widely published author, and a pioneer in market-based solutions to poverty.

Wendy Harcourt

Reading Paul Raskin's memoir, I realized how intellectual and political journeys are so much about the people you meet early on that determine the pathway you take. I was lucky to have been mentored by some wonderful people when I started out in my first job. I was hired in 1988 to be associate editor of the journal *Development* and coordinator of the Women in Development program at the secretariat of the Society for International Development (SID) in Rome, just as the multilateral world was gearing up for a series of landmark UN conferences beginning with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992.

My first encounter with many of my mentors was in 1988 in New Delhi at the triennial SID World Conference. It was a test run for the job I was to hold for over two decades. I was invited to speak at the preconference on women in development and also to write up the report of the main conference—a major global event in those days for development practitioners, politicians, policymakers, and academics to network. Two thousand people attended. I heard for the first time impassioned speeches about development as an aspiration and hope to end poverty, bring peace and prosperity, and advance sustainable development through UN programmes. In the process of writing the report of the conference, I talked with UN leaders defining policy on AIDS, child rights, labor rights, human rights, and reproductive health, such as Stephen Lewis, Mahbub ul Haq, Richard Jolly, Louis Emmerij, James Grant, and Nafis Sadik. Such was the informal atmosphere in those days that I was easily able to meet with them and chat with their staff. The conversations continued when I attended the round of UN events in Rio, Cairo, Vienna, and Beijing. In the New Delhi meeting, I also met with more critical voices of development, such as Smitu Kothari, Ivan Illich, and Gustavo Esteva, who wanted to push the development agenda from the grassroots and asked me to carry the flag of Wolfgang Sachs, who had edited the journal *Development* before me.

In the next couple of decades, I was able to crisscross the world of UN policy and feminist and environmental justice advocacy from my base at SID. I could attend events as a secretariat member of a large, well-known civil society network, or as a feminist advocate as part of women's caucuses or as a press member as editor of a journal. I was guided by many allies in the Women in Development Europe network (WIDE), Development Alternatives with Women for a New era (DAWN), and the Association of Women in Development. It was the period when civil society was emerging on the global arena and the term NGO was being used for the first time. Global connections were being made in new ways.

I learned so much from being part of debates and discussions where development policy was being debated and criticized and trends were set. I learned how to engage in different spaces, to push for feminist and other causes as someone both inside and outside organizations. I felt supported by older people who shared my values about gender, environment, human rights, and justice, and they created the space for me to engage.

During my time at SID (and as a member of feminist networks), I learned from people who were shaping development discourse at the border of academe/policy and civil society. In 2011 when I moved to become a professor at the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, I became aware that many of those mentors were also well known in the academic world. While I knew about how the global policy agenda for social, ecological, and gender justice was shaped, I did not know I was also a part of schools of thought such as postdevelopment and environmental feminism. I discovered that friends such as Wolfgang Sachs, Gita Sen, Lourdes Arizpe, Arturo Escobar, Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson, Diane Rocheleau, Bina Agarwal, Ashish Kothari, and Gustavo Esteva—my kind and encouraging mentors—were, as it turned out, also among the key names leading development critique in the academic world. This made for some interesting reflections in the classroom!

Wendy Harcourt is Professor of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Aaron Karp

I loved reading Paul Raskin's "memoirish" essay and the corresponding discussion of Great Transition Network members' intellectual and activist journeys. After learning about your broad interests spanning music, science, and activism, and how seriously you have pursued each of them, I see the type of personality that enables one to create the ultra-interdisciplinary Great Transition Initiative—it makes sense! You have lived an amazing life so far, and I was surprised and entertained by the musical odysseys you have experienced. I hope I can recall enough of my own life to write something like this at some point.

It is fascinating to learn about how others have arrived at their current worldview, and I suspect most of us would not be able to consciously articulate much of our own journey. We need more publicly available histories that trace the intellectual and political formation of GTN-types who tend to combine social change efforts with an intellectually active approach to analyzing our complex problems. Activists seem too sparsely represented in content that reaches everyday people (e.g., podcasts), and how their worldview was formed usually remains a mystery. This means that fewer people are aware of or inspired by this kind of life path, and lack guidance about how they could follow a similar path if they wish. In particular, I think we need more visibility for activists who deeply study and engage with the nuances of the problems they seek to address.

I would have liked to contribute a more memoirish piece to the discussion, but I am trying to channel my time into writing a guidebook series about how to cultivate the qualities we will need to achieve a post-growth societal transition. My contribution will have to be an excerpt in which I briefly reference my own journey. For context, this is from a chapter in which I explore the kind of value system a supporter of the transition might possess. Based on that exploration, I suggest that we should consciously commit to two kinds of goals: personal life goals and civic goals.

I suggest that our personal life goals should be to "lead an examined life and pursue long-term well-being for ourselves and our loved ones within ecological and social limits."

I suggest that our civic goals should be to "create ecologically sustainable, functionally democratic, and secure societies." Having provided that context, here is the excerpt:

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One of the crises this book seeks to address is the feeling that our life lacks purpose or meaning. I believe that pursuing these personal life and civic goals, particularly in combination, helps those of us who experience this feeling.

Researchers currently believe that three factors in particular lead to the sense that we are living a meaningful life: coherence (feeling that we can make sense of our experiences), purpose (feeling that we are guided by valued goals), and significance (feeling that our existence matters). The goals suggested above support each of these factors. Leading an examined life promotes coherence by prompting us to notice, explore, and learn from experiences that feel purposeful and significant. Striving for well-being for ourselves and our loved ones involves intrinsically fulfilling goals that can become our purpose. These personal life goals help us meet our basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which studies of tens of thousands of people have shown to be correlated with our feeling of meaning in life. And pursuing our civic goals can provide a strong sense that our actions matter to a project larger than ourselves, while achieving them would create needs-focused societies in which everyone could more easily find purpose and meaning.

The reason that I began actively learning about the world and working to address the climate crisis is that I was looking for a purpose. I was very fortunate to have supportive family members whose love filled my life with significant meaning, but I still needed a project to which I could fully commit myself. I have a restless mind that would frequently ask what I was doing with my life. When I heard someone speak about how severe climate change would become and that not enough people were working to address it, I realized that it could be my project. My contributions were needed. Since then, the goals I suggested above have become my purpose.

Working towards these goals has driven me to learn much more about myself and the world than

I likely would have without them. I regularly explore fascinating ideas and look for lessons I can use to help society to save itself. I have chosen my own course of study and civic action (autonomy), synthesized the lessons I have found and honed my ability to communicate this picture to others (competence), and along the way met great people who share my drive to create a better world (relatedness). I have found immense purpose in this work, but not because I am sure I will achieve these goals. That is unknowable, and some things we are working towards may never be finished. I pursue this project because I feel it is worthy of the one life I have to spend: it motivates me to grow, it empowers me to eliminate some unnecessary suffering, it teaches me to more fully appreciate what matters, and it allows me to help others develop their own autonomy. It is a worthy challenge, and it answers the questions my restless mind had been asking. Because I have this purpose guiding my actions, I feel like my life makes sense and that I am living it well. I reference these experiences because I hope to share this limitless fountain of purpose with everyone.

Aaron Karp is a climate activist who writes at freedomsurvival.org.

Kathleen Kesson

Thank you to Paul Raskin for initiating this collective autobiographical writing project. I am finding it fascinating to read your and other's contributions, not out of mere curiosity but out of a sense that this deepened "knowing" about our various life trajectories is a key to developing the kind of meaningful relationships that are too often missing from social change movements.

I first began my contribution by claiming that my journey was somewhat atypical. Then I paused. Upon reading further, it seemed we are all atypical. And yet here we are, linked by a set of shared values and purposes, despite the many different pathways we have taken to get to this moment.

I was born a year to the day after World War II was officially declared over, so I suppose that makes me among the first wave of the Baby Boomers. Our family had been many generations in San Francisco—my paternal grandfather was a Battalion fire chief during the Great Quake of 1906. I was born blocks from Haight-Ashbury, so I suppose that makes me one of the original hippies. My mother took me in my carriage daily to the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park, which likely accounts for my early love of all things Asian. At the tender age of eight, on one of our many trips to "Chinatown," I bought a golden Buddha with my allowance and declared my belief in reincarnation.

My parents had no problems with my eclectic spiritual interests. My father would not set foot in a church, but my mother did make sure she and I went to services on Christmas and Easter at the Episcopal church, her family affiliation. Aside from that, they encouraged me to explore the many religious options available in the Bay Area, which I happily did. My mom took it into her head when I turned twelve that I should be confirmed, so I attended classes for a few weeks in preparation for taking the wine and the wafer. I did not mind at all, for the occasion warranted a fabulous new dress, a cap-sleeved white linen sheath sprinkled with tiny embroidered pink and blue flowers. Even more wonderful were the accessories: a pillbox hat with a veil, white cotton gloves with a pearl clasp, one-inch high heels, and nylon stockings. This coming-of-age as a

Woman of the Episcopalian Church in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral was presided over by Bishop James Pike, who came to be known as a dangerous radical and something of a heretic for his unorthodox views on reincarnation and psychic phenomena (he co-wrote a book with his third wife, Diane, *The Other Side: An Account of My Experience with Psychic Phenomena*, which narrated his successful efforts to contact the spirit of his deceased son). Bishop Pike got lost in the Judean desert when seeking to retrace the footsteps of the historical Jesus, and died there. I never became a regular churchgoer, but I am convinced the good Bishop infused my wafer with his mystical leanings, as well as the anti-racism, feminism, and peacenik sentiments that got him into hot water with the mainstream Church.

Despite the political leanings of the good Bishop, my youth was totally apolitical. I basically assumed the whole of the country was like liberal San Francisco. My passion was dance, having begun lessons at the age of three, and I was working professionally as a "show business kid" before I even became a teenager. I auditioned for, and received, a scholarship at the American School of Dance when I was fifteen, and moved alone to Hollywood the next year to pursue intensive training and a career in opera, musical comedy, television, movies, and the lush grand showrooms of Nevada. I spent every spare penny of my measly dancer salaries on books at the local Pickwick Book Shop on Hollywood Boulevard and devoured them between shows in my various dressing rooms. I read widely in classic literature and across the spectrum of social and psychological theory, and in comparative religion and philosophy. No one had ever encouraged me to attend college or counseled me that one could make a living as a scholar. It was simply assumed that I would become a famous dancer.

While living on my own in Hollywood and training at the American School of Dance, I happened to be working on a movie set at Allied Artists Studios out on Sunset Boulevard. The stars of the movie (I was a mere extra) were all passing around a hefty orange book, *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, who was one of the earliest emissaries to bring India's wisdom teachings to the US. They invited me to have lunch with them at the nearby Self-Realization Fellowship, a temple founded by Yogananda, and there I ate my first soybean patty and brown rice. It was a gestalt moment. I bought the book, became a vegetarian, and began a lifelong study of Yoga, which to my delight turned out to encompass considerably more than a system of exercises for health and well-being.

I have been blessed or cursed (it depends on the day) with an overabundance of what Howard

Gardner, the theory of multiple intelligences guy, calls "existential intelligence." Long before the day I brought the golden Buddha home, I was obsessed with those ultimate questions that have no easy answers: *Why are we born? Where do we go when we die?* And the persistent one that used to drive my mom crazy: *How far is infinity?* Given my insatiable existential curiosity, it is not surprising that I was drawn to a spiritual practice with an emphasis on experience and exploration, rather than on authority or revealed truth. It did seem to me, though, that spirituality and politics lived in different realms of experience, and I was perplexed at how to integrate all I was studying—from Marx's *Das Kapital*, to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, to Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian* to the writings of the great Yogis—Krishnamurti, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, and others. Without an academic guide, I read promiscuously, allowing myself to be drawn to titles and authors that stimulated my intellectual antennae.

Fast forward many years—disenchanted with the decadence and the career possibilities of Hollywood, I left show business, which had constituted my entire life experience since my early days as a child performer. I was a bit lost about what to do with my life—a self-educated scholar and highly trained professional dancer with no skills in anything that might get me a job in the real world. So, I did what many of my peers did at the time: hooked up with the counterculture and its exhilarating social, spiritual, and political experiments. I edited and published an underground newspaper, started many food cooperatives, lived in various communes, organized midwives, taught free dance classes to poor children, choreographed and performed in an anti-war rock opera, worked with the University Without Walls to establish a free university with Native American activists, married a revolutionary of Cherokee and Abenaki heritage and gave birth to four sons with him, unschooled them, became a member of Friends of the Earth, and tried my hand at homesteading (I learned a lot but was largely unsuccessful), all while continuing studying, reading, and my Yoga practice.

In the 1980s having unexpectedly become a single parent faced with the necessity of supporting a large family, I applied for graduate school at a Department of Curriculum and Instruction where I had occasionally been a guest lecturer. I had already read most of the books that were assigned, and was fortunate to be hired as a teaching assistant and instructor right off the bat. I had amazing professors who enlarged my hungry intellect with studies in the philosophy of science, the Frankfurt School of critical theory, the new physics, and the emerging study of consciousness. And that is my roundabout way of becoming a scholar.

I feel like I have been navel-gazing for too many paragraphs now; the only reason I can justify telling such a personal story is that scholars in my field (curriculum theory), Bill Pinar and Madeleine Grumet, pioneered the notion of "currere"—the intersection of knowledge, lived experience, and autobiography as a method of inquiry in the early 70s. It has only been recently that I have felt comfortable sharing my unconventional life story, especially with folks who seem born to the world of academia.

I have recently retired from a 35+ year career in higher education, as an Emeritus Professor of Teaching and Learning. From years of study in my field, time spent in a multitude of schools, and working with hundreds of teachers and school leaders, I have concluded that we need to reconceptualize virtually everything that constitutes our educational theory and practice. My current thinking on this is synthesized in my most recent book, *Becoming One With the World: A Guide to Neohumanist Education* (Information Age Publishing, 2024). That book details what an education might look like that pays equal attention to the exploration of the inner worlds and the outer worlds, rebalances introspection and action, honors both Indigenous knowing and modern reason and science, and acknowledges the existential value of both human and non-human others. It proposes a radical departure from conventional education, but I am convinced that such "ruptures" are essential to the Great Transition. Tweaking the system or making incremental improvements will not accomplish what we hope for.

In one of those serendipitous events (that I am coming to believe are built into the structure of the universe), I wrote about what I saw as our collective options in an article in *Futures* journal entitled "Three Scenarios for the Future of Education in the Anthropocene" (regression/devolution, business as usual, evolution/revolution). It was after the publication of this in 2020 that I was drawn to the work of the Great Transition Initiative, and the similarities between my analysis of our possibilities and the work of Paul Raskin. Wow! Kindred spirits. Since that time, I have been grateful for the inspiring discussions and have learned so much from the participants in this group.

Kathleen Kesson is Professor Emerita of Teaching, Learning and Leadership in the School of Education at Long Island University Brooklyn and author of Becoming One With the World: A Guide to Neohumanist Education.

Evelin Lindner

I read Paul Raskin's *Encounters and Transitions* with great interest and admiration. What a life! So many gifts you gave to humanity!

It reminded me of a piece of my own in which I try to explain how my father's traumatic experiences of war and displacement motivate my life path. I wrote it in four languages parallel and attach the English version for you. My next book is titled *Letter to My Father*, and the first version shall be in Norwegian.

You can see all versions here. Below, I include a condensed excerpt.

How My Path Grew out of My Father's

I was born in 1954. I was born to a father who was an unwelcome displaced person after having lost his beloved homeland of Silesia, without any hope for return, having lost one beloved brother in the war in Italy and the other brother on the Eastern Front, and having lost his father who died out of grief over his lost farm. My father even lost part of his body, one arm. Having seen the atrocities committed in the name of Germany, he also lost his sense of belonging to any kind of German identity. Until his last day, my father would say, "I am a Silesian, I am not German. Germany has destroyed my life, Hitler has raped me."

When I was a child, I remember that he was quiet and introverted, sitting over history books in the early mornings before going to work, trying to fathom the terrible German trajectory and understand what made him resist it as much as was in his power from the time he was a youth. He wanted to come to terms with his own fate that he was thrown into at an age when he was not yet able to understand the bigger picture, let alone justify why he resisted. In the afternoons, he

worked in the garden with his one arm. He had a prosthesis, but he could not wear it because it was just a painful hindrance for him. The prosthetic technology was not yet evolved enough at his time.

There was no television in the house when I grew up, and the Internet was still many decades away. However, as a teacher, my father had access to a film screening machine and to celluloid movies that were used in the school lessons. During school vacations, he made the enormous effort of bringing this heavy machine and some of the films to the village where my family lived, and this despite the handicap of having only one arm and not having a car. These were profoundly thought-provoking films that deeply influenced the rest of my life.[1]

Many decades later, I came back to my father to interview him directly, to learn to see through his eyes how it was possible for the Nazi regime to take power in Germany. My aim was to get a sense of this historical tragedy as if I had experienced it personally.

Despite his physical disability, my father was psychologically the strongest in the family—in a way, he was mother and father in one person. My mother, also deeply traumatized by war and expulsion, was like his first child, before me and my two younger siblings.

My father read from the Bible daily. All over the world, uprooted people tend to seek refuge from their suffering in religious faith, and my family was not exempt—if dignity is absent on Earth, at least heaven can offer it. Sadly, what was meant to remedy primary war damage led to secondary and tertiary war damage. Four groups emerged in the family that hurt each other, sometimes deeply and existentially. On one end of the spectrum was a rather dogmatic religious group, in the middle a somewhat less dogmatic religious group, followed by an even less dogmatic group, with a somewhat uninterested group at the other end of the spectrum.

The first group was formed in Bavaria. My father's eldest sister had been an intelligence officer in Belgium during the war, and when the American troops arrived in Belgium at the end of the war, she worked for them, following them into the American zone in Bavaria. After the war, at first her whereabouts were unknown to the rest of the family, but in 1946, with the help of the Red Cross, she located her family members who had been deported from Silesia to northern Germany.

The eldest sister found lodgings for the younger one in the house of Jehovah's Witnesses, a choice she later bitterly regretted, as three siblings and the mother were successfully recruited into this sect. These siblings formed the first group, which ultimately meant the break with the rest of the family.

My parents formed the second group. Before I was born, my parents had been converted in a so-called *Zeltmission* (tent revival) and saw themselves as born-again Christians, which my mother, however, interpreted more dogmatically than my father.

As a child and adolescent, I formed the third group, alone, which put me into an extremely difficult position. It meant my psycho-social "expulsion" into extreme isolation, both within my family and outside of it—I was cast out not only from humanity but also from the kingdom of God, such was my sense of self. It was only in the cemetery that I felt at home, at least to some extent. I knew that even suicide would not offer a way out, as I would remain rejected by God even after death. One could call this ordeal a tertiary war injury. I survived my childhood and adolescence only with extraordinary perseverance.

So, where do I come from? Do I come from Silesia? No. Do I come from Lower Saxony? No. Do I come from Poland? No. Do I come from Germany? No. I come from expulsion, from my parents' expulsion from their homeland and from my own personal experience of psycho-social religious expulsion. I come from the stories my father told of his lost farm, of his family's lost agricultural lands and forests — until his last day, he yearned 'to go home'. So, where do I come from? I come from the deep awareness that nothing is certain, that war can destroy what seems to be sure in the blink of an eye. I come from multiple cross-generational experiences of humiliation, from a family who was considered less than human by some when I was young, from the sense that I belonged nowhere, that there was no "right to return" to anywhere.

I come from boundless grief over a world where competition for domination is being idealized, where mutual care matters little, a world, in which we, as humanity, squander our energy, enthusiasm, and creativity on fighting each other and fighting nature. I come from a deep desire to belong, to belong to people who look at this planet with awe, wonderment, and loving and tender kindness, to people who refuse to live for money or self-righteousness, to people who live for the joy that comes from seeing, nurturing, and taking delight in our existential connectedness with all life.

After graduating from high school, I continued with the geographical expulsion of my family—that is how one might call it—by moving out into the world. For many years, until I was forty-five years old, I did not feel that I was a "legitimate" human being, I did not feel that I had a place as a member of humanity. My failure to have children, as well as a chronic disease, compounded this sense. It was not until I had lived globally for more than twenty-five years that my sense of "belonging nowhere" slowly transmuted into "belonging everywhere."

Norway became especially important for me. I first came to Norway in 1977 and was later married to a Norwegian for a few years. I realized that the Norwegian cultural heritage of *likeverd* (worthiness) and *dugnad* (community responsibility)—both in the form of local and global responsibility (see Nansen Passport)—is my home. I learned to see that this cultural heritage is more valuable than all the oil Norway possesses. *Likeverd* and *dugnad* reflect the motto of the French Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—a motto that is also expressed in the ideals of human rights.

My life has turned out to become a project, a calling, a mission, a mission for equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity. I feel proud of all cultural achievements that humankind has ever attained, and at the same time, I also feel ashamed of all the atrocities humans have ever perpetrated in the world, be it atrocities committed by Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, or any other oppressor. I feel what philosopher Karl Jaspers called the metaphysical responsibility to work for "never again," and this not just in one locality, I feel this responsibility everywhere on our planet, and on behalf of all of humanity—never again mass destruction through systemic and systematic humiliation, be it through war on people or on nature.

After almost fifty years of global living, I feel that what I call big love is the only way out of the erosion of social cohesion and the destruction of ecosystems—big love meaning communal responsibility embedded in respect for equal dignity for all, in freedom to engage in mutual solidarity.

So, in the end, my various displacements have given me a home—I am at home in the values of community responsibility and solidarity, embedded in loving respect for the dignity of all living beings on the entire planet.

Just saying "never again" is not enough. What is needed is "wehret den Anfängen" ("resist the beginnings"); this was my father's continuous warning. It is too late when the "Hitlers" of this world, the ruthless dominators, have gained power. Their ascendance must be prevented, not just

individually but systemically. My global life arose from the insight that it is our responsibility to use the lessons of the past to do everything in our power to help the world turn around in the future. My father gave everything in his power, and he did not give up even though he was painfully aware that his efforts were insufficient. I follow him. I sacrifice my entire life, and I, too, continue even while being painfully aware that my efforts might be wasted.

Endnotes

1. These are the films that would deeply influence my entire life:

• *Der Schlaf der Gerechten* (*The Sleep of the Just*), a film showing how the persecution of Jews became "normalized," and how a butcher's wife tried to fight back. See www.imdb.com/title/tt0056453.

• *Meine Ehre heißt Treue* (*My Honor Is Loyalty*), a film showing the methods of the SS. See youtu.be/jsfn0YDa5jw.

• *In jenen Tagen* (*In Those Days*), the rise and fall of the Nazi regime told by following the owners of a car. See youtu.be/1DukQ5tlfGU.

• *Ein Tag* (*One Day*), a film about one day in the concentration camp. See youtu.be/94_gvbFGdg0.

• *Hunde, wollt Ihr ewig leben* (*Dogs, Do You Want to Live Forever?*), a film about the Battle of Stalingrad (August 23, 1942 – February 2, 1943). See youtu.be/SG98ZvMvuM0.

• *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*), a film about a school class who was ordered to defend a bridge in the last days of the war. See youtu.be/t-z0-dFst4c.

• *Die Wunderkinder* (*The Wonderkids*), a film about two schoolmates in the first half of the twenteith century. See youtu.be/SGBVB3KBPn8.

Evelin Lindner is the founding president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies and author of Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict.

Brendan Mackey

Paul Raskin's reflections on his extraordinary life—the people, places, and events that helped shape his values, worldview, and life mission—were both entertaining and truly inspirational. I was pleased to note that despite our very different backgrounds and upbringings, there are some substantive points of contact and convergence in our lives. For a start, I was also an IPCC coordinating lead author. In my case, the *IPCC 6th Assessment Report Working Group II Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation*. Secondly, I also have a Fender Telecaster and, in my youth, played in bands. Though I have, albeit belatedly and surprisingly, managed to find some of the popular success that has escaped Paul. A song I wrote and that our band (Mumbo Jumbo) recorded in 1986—"Wind It Up"—was recently discovered and released on a compilation album "midnight spares" by a DJ, and it has become something of a nightclub hit from Melbourne to Stockholm with over 1M plays on Spotify (I will leave for another time my assessment of the blessings and curses that particular platform has thrust upon us), and featured in soundtracks on a *Thrasher* video (ask your teenage child or relative to explain the significance of that one) and a feature film (*Birdeater*). The life lesson here is that, as with the Great Transition, one should never give up hope and miracles do occur (in this case, of being cool).

More importantly, like Paul, I also am where I am today, and to a significant extent who I am today, because of exceptional individuals who shared their personal experiences, insights, and wisdom, along with the texts and thinkers who had been their intellectual mentors. My life was first changed irrevocably at the age of fifteen by our neighbor, Prof. Kevin Lafferty. Kevin was at that time Director of the John Curtin School of Medical Research at The Australian National University. Kevin and Anne had a large family (eleven children if I recall correctly) but none of them took a great interest in science. So, I found myself frequently popping next door and a willing student at the feet of one of the world's great immunologists (Kevin came up with the idea for organ transplants of treating the organ to stop the T cells sending information to the recipient's body that it is a foreign

object, rather than pumping the body full of immune repressors). Kevin was the first person to treat me as an intellectual adult as he patiently explained to me the role of theory in the construction of scientific knowledge, how little we still understood about biological evolution, and the importance of paradigm shifts. He also put me on a very challenging reading program, which included Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* and Arthur Koestler's *The Ghost in the Machine*, as well as some cutting-edge thinking about epigenetics. Koestler's *Act of Creation* was also on the reading list. Those familiar with these texts will understand that Kevin was steering me towards a highly integrated and systems way of thinking about the world. It was the connections between things and the processes involved, that are important. The downside to this entrée into the world of integrated systems thinking was that I found the final years of high school rather (intellectually) mundane in comparison. The two exceptions were physics (another, very modest, point of contact with Paul) and poetry, both of which I saw as trying to speak to the underlying truth of things.

There are many other influential mentors (such as the great Australian rainforest ecologist Len Webb) and texts I could mention (for example, A. N. Whitehead's [1925] *Science and the Modern World*, where, among other things, he questioned the assumed chasm between living and non-living things), but as I do plan to keep my response to Paul's essay brief, I will now jump forward a couple of decades to my time as a member of the drafting team for the Earth Charter. The drafting and global consultation process was led by Prof Stephen Rockefeller—who conducted this grand project with the highest level of intellectual rigor, insight, humility, and compassion—under the leadership of the Earth Charter Commission co-chaired by Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong (both deceased), and ably supported by the amazing organizational and diplomatic skills of Mirian Vilela. The drafting and consultation process was held over a number of years in the 90s, culminating in the Charter's launch at the Hague Peace Palace in 2000. I learned so much from this process, including the importance of listening to diverse voices, the limitations of my own socio-economic settings in the global context, and the meaning and significance of social ethics. I had the privilege of meeting and working with some truly remarkable people, many of whom are still alive, such as Ron Engel (whose reading of the Earth Charter as a covenant remains its most potent interpretation), and some who have passed such as Kamla Chowdhry. The most important lesson, however, came from the text itself, including that the foundation of a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world is built on four ethical pillars: *Respect and Care for the Community of Life*; *Ecological Integrity*; *Social and Economic Justice*; and *Democracy, Non-*

Volence and Peace. The Earth Charter was born from the post–Cold War era where the hope for a "Great Transitions" future was high. Now, as Paul notes, many signs point to an unravelling of "Conventional Worlds" and a descent into "Barbarization." The widespread understanding and implementation of the Earth Charter's ethical imperatives is now needed, more than ever, to help shift our collective moral compass toward a Great Transition future and achieve the necessary cultural changes in our behaviors, institutional arrangements, and governance processes.

My current research is focused on addressing the climate crisis (yes, we still have one) which demands the highest level of integrative systems thinking and analysis, and which being a post-normal science problem (*sensu* Funtowiczi and Ravetz) must be framed by ethical values and principles to understand the consequences for humans and feasible nature of solutions and pathways. The collective imperative is to phase out fossil fuels and transition to clean energy sources for all, while simultaneously adapting to the escalating climate-related impacts and risks. To date, our responses have been far too fragmented, inequitable, and slow (we are not fixing the problems at a faster rate than we are causing them). A related (and another lifetime) focus of my research is understanding the role of natural forests and other ecosystems in Earth's life support systems and the search for a scientific basis to ecological integrity that can help guide how we (and the greater community of life) interact with and benefit from them. This requires a still-to-be-found synthesis of physics and ecology, cosmology, and evolution, along with a serious dose of economics, governance, and social ethics. A major barrier remains the one Paul mentioned being a factor in his parting ways with academia: our institutions of higher learning remain firmly entrenched in disciplinary ways of thinking, which build silos that are reinforced by, among other things, how research is funded and academics rewarded.

Reading of Paul's other lifelong mission to upend conventional interpretations of quantum theory also reminded me of my favorite teaching moment, which illustrates the need to avoid disciplinary hubris and just how much we have to learn from taking a more universal approach to learning and knowledge construction. I was giving the opening lecture in a first-year course at The Australian National University entitled "Blue Planet: An Introduction to Earth System Science." In the lecture, I was discussing how Earth can be understood and described mathematically as a heat engine, with solar energy reaching Earth in packets of energy called photons, and how a fraction of that incoming radiation is transformed into different forms of energy that drive various planetary processes. A student immediately put up his hand and said "Prof, that's a circular definition of energy. All you've said is energy is energy. You have not

told us what energy is. So, my question to you is, what is energy?" After pondering this for a moment in front of a class of over one hundred very bright first-year science students, I replied that it was an excellent question, and while I did not know the answer, I know who might, that being Aiden Byrne, who at the time was ANU professor of nuclear energy and Dean of Science.

At the end of class, back in my office, I emailed Byrne, writing, "A student just asked a very good question in my lecture: 'What's energy?'" Byrne quickly fired back this response:

> My, what a Pandora's box you have opened. Let me quote from Richard Feynman's *Lectures on Physics*. P4-2 Vol 1: It is important to realize that in physics today, we have no knowledge of what energy is. We do not have a picture that energy comes in little blobs of a definite amount. It is not that way. However, there are formulas for calculating some numerical quantity, and when we add it together it gives [a fixed amount] – always the same number. It is an abstract thing in that it does not tell us the mechanisms or reasons for the various formula.

I shared Byrne's response with the students at the next lecture, adding that not only do physicists not know what energy is, but they also don't care (intellectually) as all they "care" about is that the formulas work. The answers to such questions as "what is energy?" reside more in the realm of metaphysics and thus are the business of philosophers and theologians. The collective response was subdued and, I suspect, confused as I have no doubt they had been led to (falsely) believe that studying science meant learning an established, enduring body of facts and that science alone could always be relied on to definitively answer the question "Why is it so?"

As Paul notes in the conclusion to his reflective essay, we have much to lose from a descent into Barbarization and everything to gain from a turn towards a Great Transition and a New Paradigm. I concur with that prognosis and also endorse his clarion call to keep going on this journey, for as long as we are able.

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Rasigan Maharajh

Paul Raskin's *Encounters and Transitions: The Times of My Life* affords us all wonderful insights into and out of his various wanderings, wonderings, and learnings. As we venture further forth beyond the first quarter of the twenty-first century of our Common Era, it remains amazing that our species-being consciousness has yet to catch up with our shared humanity with the approximately 8.2 billion people and the wider biodiversity with whom we share our planetary home planet. Raskin's assertion that "life matters" is, in both thoughts and deeds, most relevant and pertinent to our contemporary conjuncture.

The images of Hollywood burning as the City of Los Angeles was engulfed by wildfires in January 2025 captures the traverse between the general and the specific as the polycrises emerging from the inherent contradictions of contemporary world systems add precarities to the longer list of material deprivations and morbid symptoms that characterize our current uncertainties. While "Outer Vulgaria" would surely evidence scorched scars, disentangling our ecological fate from the socio-economic and political vectors that have contributed to precarities being experienced, including the current genocide in West Asia, escalating violences in North and Central Africa, and ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe, seems increasingly impossible albeit absolutely necessary.

I initially met Paul Raskin on a bus at Launch Complex 39A in 2010. We were invited participants in an ambitious initiative which sought to connect cutting-edge scientific and technological development with persistent global challenges and specifically: clean, drinkable water. We have subsequently traveled very far together. I certainly benefited knowledge- and network-wise from being co-hosted at the Tellus Institute in Boston in 2014. Across our decade and a half of mutual fellowship, I remember hearing of some of the anecdotes which Raskin has now elegantly

combined into a cohesive, coherent, and cogent monograph. I am most appreciative of the historical narrative and the sense-making that Raskin has shared with us all. Isaac Asimov's famous quote that "The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom" resonates across the non-fictional account of the encounters and experiences collated and curated by Raskin.

While acknowledging that parallel lines should not intersect, I suggest that our parallel lives do interpolate notwithstanding the economic, political, and social segmentations and stratifications we imagine and are institutionalized through the global political economy and international division of labor. In Raskin's account, I find many points of convergences and dissonances that transcend our geographic and temporal segregations. It is amongst these mental intersections that our common humanity is often realized, and our species-level consciousness enabled. The complex yet discernible contradictions that prop up our contemporary conjuncture are being challenged by people's own lived experiences and the fraying social contract that has bound us within capitalist accumulation trajectories and consequent tragedies. The world majority is emergent, as presciently articulated by Raskin, but simultaneously remains constrained by the fetters of our historically determined material inequities and those profiting off its continuity.

Our scientific and technological progress undoubtedly informs the transformations currently underway in world systems, yet it is also becoming increasingly weaponized through enclosures in intellectual property regimes in the interests of maintaining and expanding the privileges of a few against the collective needs of the world majority. Such forces of endarkenment have sought to reduce cognitive dissonance by correlating their foresight premised upon idealized hindsight that neglects the impacts of our uneven yet combined developmental trajectories, the violences of colonial expropriation, the chains of imperial subjugation, the alienation of epistemicide, and the absolute lack of common sense.

Our planetary phase is, however, here, and the seminal work of the Great Transition has illuminated many progressive potentials while also noting the threats to realizing ourselves as "one global community of fate." Multipolarity is gaining traction as intergenerational learning expands. Agency and hope are not being exterminated by those seeking to hold back history in the making. Our survival from the viral attack on our species in combination with the almost universal condemnation

of genocide confirms our species-level solidarities and hopefully challenges the "endemic despair" experienced by many of us all. Our ecological precarity, now center stage, is, in both thoughts and deeds, catalyzing alternative pathways.

Many thanks again for sharing scenes from your incredible learning journeys. I sincerely look forward to our opening up of a multiplicity of pathways towards the realization of our shared and common destinies which build as we continue to walk together.

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Mary Mellor

Coincidentally, I have also been writing some autobiographical stuff. I have shared some of my reflections below.

Beginnings

I came to ecofeminism and ecosocialism via the peace movement. My personal politics had always been socialist and feminist, with my activism based in the labor movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. A pivotal event was participation in the Greenham Common women's peace camp in the early 1980s, opposing the siting of US nuclear cruise missiles. This changed my socialism and feminism to ecosocialism and ecofeminism.

Greenham was a demonstration of the strength of women-only organization (the original peace camp had included men). It was also my first introduction to women-only imagery represented by a large statue of the Goddess. Both reflected debates within the (re)emerging women's movement. Should it ally with existing male-dominated social movements (socialist feminism), or should it engage in a radical separatism of women from men?

I was torn between the two. As an ecofeminist, I was seen as essentialist by socialist feminists. As a socialist feminist, I was too embedded in gendered society for the radical separatists. The need to confront this dilemma and integrate these perspectives was explored in my book *Breaking the Boundaries*.[1]

I have always integrated my personal politics with my academic life. This led me to change the focus of my research from a long-time interest in the cooperative movement to exploring and building the links between feminism, ecology, and socialism. In the process, I joined with other people working along the same lines, particularly those associated with the journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism*.

I agonized over the subtitle of the book: Should it be green socialist feminism? Or social feminist ecology? In the end, I followed my long-term commitment to political economy as the focus of the theory and practice of social change—hence, feminist, green socialism.

Breaking the Boundaries introduces most of the key ideas I have developed in my later work:

- The position of "women's work" as the link between the life-work of the body and social structures such as the market that seek to transcend the limits of human existence in nature;
- The limitations and responsibility of human embodiment, to live within the restraint of ecological and biological resources and processes; and
- "Women's work" as an "imposed altruism" and its exclusion from gendered economic concepts and reward structures.

I have sought to distinguish this "materialist" perspective on the link between women and nature from essentialist claims to women's affinity with nature. My basic ideas of materialist ecofeminism were further developed in 1997 in *Feminism and Ecology* and, most particularly, the paper "Women, Nature and the Social Construction of 'Economic Man'" in the journal *Ecological Economics*, which set out the dualist model of "Economic Man" (who may be female) and "Women's Work" (which may also be done by males).[2]

The Dualist Model

"Economic Man"	Women's work
Market value	Subsistence
Personal wealth	Social reciprocity
Labor/intellect	Body/emotions
Skills/tradable knowledge	Feelings/wisdom
Able-bodied workers	Sick, needy, old, young
Exploitable resources	Ecosystem, wild nature
Unlimited consumption	Sufficiency

This model challenges the limited framework of the conventional concept of "economy." It opens up a wider debate about what should be "counted" as valuable to human and planetary existence. Central to that "counting" in modern economies is monetary value.

A major focus of feminism is that women's domestic work is undervalued in monetary terms, that is, it is unpaid or underpaid. An early feminist campaign by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James called for "Wages for Housework." A later campaign argued for the formal recognition in public accounting systems of the economic value of women's work and nature's resources. This was raised by Marilyn Waring in her book *If Women Counted* (1989).[3] In the following decades, feminist economists also sought to break down the boundaries of the monetized economy through broader concepts such as "provisioning" and aimed to harness the concept of economy for women's work as in the "care economy."

Similarly, notable ecologists such as Herman Daly and James Robertson argued that money values destroyed the real value of the natural world. Nature was being "externalized" in economic calculation, treated as a free resource. It was being destroyed in the search for profit. Ecofeminists such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva made the same connection, linking the exploitation of women, nature, and colonized people. Alternatives were explored such as rejecting existing monetary economies in favor of subsistence, re-establishing the commons, local money systems, basic incomes.

Challenging Money

My approach was to join a growing body of work that was exploring the nature of money itself. What is money? Where did it come from? Who owned and controlled it?

Orthodox economics did not address these questions. Money was seen as merely a reflection of the dynamics of production and exchange. Marxists saw money as a key mechanism in the development of capitalism, but largely shared the capitalist view that it was a secondary feature. This passive view of money was challenged by the much more visible role of money as economies became more globalized and financialized. Money itself became an active agent in economic life. It was a major source of profit as the financial sector grew. Debt had also become a key source of money in many societies: mortgage, consumer, student, business loans. Similarly, developing countries often found themselves burdened with unpayable debts.

The dominance of money with its related crises led me to join with the fundamental critiques of money that had begun to (re)emerge in the late twentieth century led by greens and heterodox economists. In particular, I sought to challenge a right-wing politics of money that was stifling progressive movement. I called this '"handbag" economics.

Rejecting "Handbag" Economics

The 1980s saw the adoption of an extreme form of market fundamentalism (neoliberalism) by Thatcherite Toryism in Britain. The Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, asserted that there was no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. Markets were the sole source of wealth, and states were seen as dependent on the market for their funding. The subsequent attack on public funding, particularly welfare spending, I named after Thatcher's ubiquitous handbag.

"Handbag" economics sees public spending as being analogous to a household budget. The size of the public sector must therefore be limited to what "the market" can afford. Welfare is a particular target for limiting spending, leading to austerity programs that have an impact on women, poorer people, and progressive proposals generally. Rejection of proposals for increased public spending is based on the claim that money is in short supply. Such proposals are dismissed by questions like "Who is going to pay?" and "Where is the money to come from?"

A major challenge to handbag economics was evidence that the explosion of financial activities nationally and globally had led to crises in financial systems that increasingly required public rescue. The financial crisis of 2007–8 saw massive state intervention in the financial sector and the use of quantitative easing (creation of new money by central banks) to keep the financial sector from collapsing. Even more markedly, the pandemic saw states rescue whole economies.

This raised the question of the public nature of money. What role did states play in the creation and circulation of money? Should this level of state activity not be democratized and put into the hands of the people?

This led me to develop a politics of money that stresses its public role, published in *The Future of Money: From Financial Crisis to Public Resource* (2010), *Debt or Democracy: Public Money for Sustainability and Social Justice* (2015), and *Money: Myths, Truths and Alternatives* (2019).[4]

Where Does Money Come From?

Contemporary theories of money have reached back to pre-neoliberal perspectives that saw money creation and circulation as a key aspect of governance. This has led to the identification of two sources of new money in modern societies: bank lending and state spending. This is "fresh air" money in that it does not come from anywhere else. Even key monetary authorities such as the IMF, and the US Federal Reserve, have admitted that banks are creating new money when they make loans. They are not lending money people have deposited.

What they have not acknowledged is how fragile that system is. The weakness is that a money supply based on the willingness of banks to lend and people/businesses/states to borrow is socially exclusive, ecologically unsound, and economically crisis-ridden. Crises in the money system, such as the major crash in 2007–8, underline the financial sector as increasingly having to be rescued by the creation of public money.

The new radical thinking about public funding sees "handbag" economics as having things the wrong way around. Money for public spending is not funded by taxes; rather, the money to pay taxes is created through public spending. The difference between money created by banks making loans and money created by public spending is that bank lending has to be paid back whereas public spending does not need to be repaid. However, a constraint on public spending is the danger of inflation, which can be controlled through increased taxation to reduce the money supply.

What becomes clear is that the creation and circulation of money is not a technical matter. It is a major political question in modern societies. To whom banks lend and what states spend should be subjects for public debate. I have argued that this evidence of the public economy (governments and central banks) being able to generate new money, must be used to enable a socially just and ecologically sustainable provisioning. This publicly generated money should be distributed by participatory democratic processes such as citizen's budgeting. Equally, to whom banks lend, and for what, should also be subject to democratic debate.

Public Money and the Politics of Care

In the past twenty years, I have aimed to establish a politics of money that will enable the development

of ecologically sustainable sufficiency provisioning. The concept of provisioning rejects the current boundaries of what is considered to have monetary value (wealth) in favor of a wider conception of what is valued as a contribution to human and planetary well-being (wellth). Sufficiency is the principle that everyone should have enough (within the limits of ecological sustainability) and no one should have too little or too much.

The key theme of care in feminism is central to the politics of public welfare. Welfare states are collective structures that take responsibility for vital aspects of human well-being (wellth). Often, this relieves women of unpaid work in these areas. Public welfare depends on public funding, and this, in turn, requires the rejection of "handbag economics" and the development of a democratic, public welfare economy. This would require a new way of measuring national "wealth." Concepts like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should be replaced by Gross Domestic (and International) Provisioning.

We can envisage a society where no one has too little or too much, where the welfare of each is the responsibility of the whole, and where people live within the limits of the environment. This would be the basis of a feminist, green socialism, fit for the modern age.

Endnotes

1. Mary Mellor, *Breaking the Boundaries: Towards a Feminist, Green Socialism* (Virago, 1992).

2. Mary Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology* (Polity Press, 1997); "Women, Nature and the Social Construction of 'Economic Man,'" *Ecological Economics* 20, no. 2 (1997): 129–140.

3. Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted* (Harper & Row, 1988).

4. Mary Mellor, *The Future of Money: From Financial Crisis to Public Resource* (Pluto, 2010), *Debt or Democracy: Public Money for Sustainability and Social Justice* (Pluto, 2015), and *Money: Myths, Truths and Alternatives* (Policy Press, 2019).

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Francine Mestrum

From Apolitical Youth to Global Activism

I gladly accept Paul Raskin's invitation to say something about my own—atypical—ideological, political, and activist journey.

About my childhood, I can be brief. I am an early boomer.

I was born in a Flemish village on the Belgian-Dutch border, along the canal that ran from the port of Ghent to the port of Terneuzen, leading into the Scheldt, the Channel, and the North Sea. Even as a child, I suffered from insomnia and would hang out of the window to watch the boats from all over the world sail by. I got to know all the flags and dreamed of that great unknown world.

We had a very typical acultural, apolitical Catholic petty-bourgeois family. My parents worked hard to provide a better life for the children. My two older brothers naturally went to university, but when it was my turn, plans changed. Girls especially had to marry "well." When I was eighteen, I mostly wanted to read and study, as I realized I had been kept totally ignorant at school. I started working at nineteen in order to finance my studies later.

It has been my successive partners who, after my studies, have brought me step by step to where I am today. I first learned all about religion and clericalism, which helped to throw it overboard. I received classes in sociology and learned about Marxism and social change. I was introduced to green thinking and linked that to social justice.

Meanwhile, I worked for the European institutions and learned all about concrete political practice.

At forty, I went to university again to study development thinking. With that degree, I then went on to do a PhD on the social thinking of international financial institutions. The friends I made during that period guided me into the World Social Forum and its International Council. And from there to

other social movements. I traveled around the world, out of curiosity, to see how people thought and lived elsewhere.

I had to turn forty-five before I fairly steadfastly found my niche. Not within some structure or party—that doesn't work after such a long and broad learning process—but as a radical leftist and as someone convinced that the key to social change lies with economic and social rights, with peace and social justice as the ultimate goal. That is incompatible with neoliberal capitalism.

My long years in all kinds of national and international movements have not changed my beliefs; they have made me realize that, above all, it is not easy to initiate a process of change.

Social Movement Experiences

I have already written at length about my experiences within the World Social Forum and what I think is needed to move forward. The main issues are the unwillingness and inability to really organize, the lack of interest in global problems, the lack of resources, the eternal struggle between egos, and, among the movements themselves, the inability to look and act outside their own field of action. My admiration and great respect go to the movements that are genuinely engaged in policy continentally or globally and which usually also have a research capacity. Sociological research on social movements, on the other hand, is not necessarily useful for practice. One goes to look at what is happening; the other categorizes. This helps to understand, but does not advance the movements themselves.

Too many movements are concerned with asking what is already given. They are not the ones setting the international agenda. It is international institutions that say they will provide poverty reduction and social protection, for example. The movements follow and commit to that. They rarely work on new and more far-reaching demands.

Finally, more and more, a deep fault line runs between the movements. The ecological movement and the post- and decolonial movement have exposed an insurmountable contradiction. At the risk of oversimplifying it somewhat, it involves, on the one hand, those who believe in one humanity with common characteristics and needs and strive for universalism from there, while of course respecting everyone's individuality and identity, and, on the other hand, the proponents of a “pluriverse” who do want to cooperate globally but without striving for commonality or mutual learning.

That fault line is reinforced today by the disappearance of everything that until recently was called "globalization." Many movements, by the way, had already begun to take a more inward-looking approach. The question is whether they are also definitively lost to a global movement.

What Future?

Let me mention here three more difficulties on a macro scale.

One, I don't know whether we need a global citizens movement or a movement of movements. They both seem to me equally difficult to achieve, unless some major orientations can be set out in advance. Knowledge of one another's objectives and strategies seems crucial to me.

Two, an entirely different point I want to mention here applies especially to the green movement, which is perhaps the most important of all today: a lack of concrete clarity about the world we want to achieve. Here are two examples.

First, the slogan is heard everywhere that climate justice must necessarily be linked to social justice. But how do you make that concrete in policy? I don't read it anywhere. I myself have tried to put some ideas on paper (www.socialcommons.eu), but are those ideas really relevant? I don't know.

Second, most movements rightly oppose extractivism. But how do you reconcile this anti-extractivism with the need for dauntingly large amounts of natural resources to facilitate the energy transition? And with growing energy needs globally? Can "less consumption" and "recycling" be an answer? And if so, what will the world and daily life look like? Although more and more movements recognize the problem, nowhere do I read anything about conclusive solutions.

The big environmental problems do not speak to the daily lives of ordinary people, I now read. True, but isn't that why it is really necessary to make everything concrete, down to the level of those ordinary people?

Three, it is harder today than ever to see the forest for the trees. There are the geopolitical shifts, the ongoing wars that show the many contradictions of the major powers; there is the growing realization that the many fine words of international institutions are nothing more than that, fine words. Think of the promises to eradicate poverty while poverty continues to grow just about

everywhere. Think of the promises to reduce CO2 emissions while they too continue to grow. There is, further, a shift in ideological preferences. With the weakening and neoliberalization of social democracy, today it is increasingly the far right that is favored by workers and minorities in East and West. The Left remains fragmented and almost always sees the great enemy in another Left. Credible alternatives remain absent.

Meanwhile, we live in a world where "barbarization" is rapidly increasing. Today, there are few reasons to remain optimistic, but like Paul Raskin, I too argue that all these questions continue to preoccupy me, and I will stay engaged with them as long as I am able. And I remain a globalist.

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Valentine M. Moghadam

Paul Raskin's impressive essay was a delight to read and quite inspiring. My story comes from a different place.

I cannot recall a time when my life was not defined by momentous political events—events that shaped the lives of so many others, for better or worse. My childhood was bookended by the US/UK-sponsored 1953 coup d'état against the government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and the Shah's 1963 White Revolution, the latter a series of reforms including female suffrage and land reform. From spending a few years in Cold War USA, a vivid memory is of being reprimanded by a primary school teacher because I had brought a magazine about the Soviet Union to the "show-and-tell" class. Back in Iran, I attended a private school with a truly international student body—a large number of fellow students were Iraqi Jews (several still my close friends, even if our politics diverge significantly on Israel/Palestine), and others included children of Iran's *haute bourgeoisie*, a nephew of the Shah, and children of foreign diplomats and businessmen from Japan, India, Yugoslavia, the US, and elsewhere. That part of my childhood seems to have shaped in me a certain cosmopolitanism—seen also in the Persian poet Saadi's famous poem from his collection *Golestan* (this is one of several translations):

> *Human beings are members of a whole*
> *In creation, of one essence and soul*
> *If one member is inflicted with pain*
> *Other members, uneasy will remain*
> *If you have no sympathy for human pain*
> *The name of human you cannot retain.*

From my father—whose own life had been shaped by his father's assassination and his own involvement in the extraordinary but short-lived Azerbaijan autonomous republic as well as the

later coup and then the White Revolution—I learned about the Cuban Revolution and the injustices (war crimes) of the American war in Vietnam. It was perhaps no surprise that when I finally left Iran and my family (which I had been reluctant to do) to attend university in Canada, I joined the local chapter of the Confederation of Iranian Students–National Union, which was then a fervent supporter of the *Sazman-e cherik-haye fedaee khalq-e Iran*, or Organization of the Iranian People's Fedayee Guerillas. In retrospect, I was more suited to a mainstream CP—in my case, the Tudeh Party—but there was no Tudeh group in the Toronto-Waterloo environs of which I was aware. The Confederation itself was remarkably disciplined and well structured, with a vertical organization whose top leadership had contact with the underground Fedayee guerillas, and with chapters throughout Europe, the United States, and other countries where Iranian youth had gone to study. Speaking of Iranian students, our numbers were enormous because of the vast development and modernization program that the Shah's government had launched in the wake of the White Revolution (under autocratic conditions), though an opposition had always been in place since after the 1953 coup. The Confederation's US section (ISA-US) was huge, and one year, I joined a small group from the Toronto-Waterloo area to attend one of the ISA-US annual meetings in Lansing, Michigan—an exhilarating collective event capped by a message from the *rofaq-ha* (comrades) in Iran, read by one of the ISA-US leaders. I was not old enough, or had not left Iran soon enough, to have attended the many annual Confederation meetings in Frankfurt, West Germany, but I did attend the last one, which took place in Los Angeles on the eve of the Revolution. It was memorable in many ways, not least because police tear gas, and a bloodied injury sustained by one comrade cost me my contact lenses and a scarf.

I would have returned to Iran, along with the numerous students who did, except for a serious case of a bleeding ulcer, for which I was hospitalized and given blood transfusions. Evidently, in addition to smoking too much and not eating properly, I had been working too hard on the local ISA-US chapter activities, which included lots of mimeographing, meetings, and speeches before various international left-wing groups based in the Washington, DC, area. I quite admired the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, led by Kwame Toure, the former Stokley Carmichael (who in fact had delivered a lecture at my university in Canada); he would visit DC from his home in Guinea to take part in the AAPRP annual meetings. If memory serves me, and I must admit that it is not always reliable, at one AAPRP annual meeting, I was introduced to—drum roll, please—Nina Simone, dressed in white like everyone else in the auditorium and seated at the front.

When news came of the first of what would become many arrests and executions, along with what the new Khomeini-led government called its own "cultural revolution," I enrolled in the PhD program at The American University in DC and put on hold my return to Iran. In any event, when I went to the embassy, still open at the time, to obtain a new passport—one that would replace *l'Empire d'Iran* with *Islamic Republic of Iran*, an official informed me that the embassy knew who the leftists in the area were and implicitly warned me not to return. And so, I did not. After the 1981 death of the Provisional IRA hunger strikers, including Bobby Sands, for which several of us at The American University wore black arm bands, I was pleased to learn that Churchill Street in Tehran had been renamed Bobby Sands Street. At least the new Islamic regime got one thing right.

Being a Christian in the Middle East is a singular experience. In my case, with Catholics and Church of the East on both sides of the family, I never experienced anything remotely discriminatory, perhaps because of the status of my family and my father's and uncles' professional positions and ties. (My late father, ever the fervent *Iran parast*, claimed never to have experienced discrimination during the years he lived in the Islamic Republic. But, of course, certain religious and ethnic minorities did, as did Muslim women, who begrudgingly complied with the new Islamic strictures on dress, comportment, mobility, and so on—much of which I have discussed in an array of academic papers.[1]) While still in Iran, and before I left to attend university in Canada, I had several post-mass discussions over Turkish coffee with our priest, Monsignor Sheikho, on issues related to religion and science. On my last summer visit to Tehran from Canada before the revolution, I looked for him but learned that he had retired to a monastery in Lebanon. My religiosity, quite strong previously, dissipated later in the US, when I encountered Christians who thought there had been nothing wrong with bombing Vietnamese peasants. It only returned decades later with Pope Francis's election. (I also had been impressed by Pope Benedict's erudition.) I have found no contradiction in being a Catholic and a socialist, and quite admire the Catholic Worker movement and Pax Christi. At Massachusetts Peace Action, where I have been a member for several years, we have activists who are religious and others who are non-religious.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Althusser, *Monthly Review*, the *New Left Review*—I learned so much from them, and they still populate my bookcases at home and my university office. Lenin was very much on my mind when I paid a visit to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, in January-February 1989, just as the last of the Soviet troops were departing. (I have a photo of myself and two Soviet soldiers at Kabul airport, prior to their departure.) The deeply disappointing outcome of the Iranian Revolution—Islamization, the

Iran-Iraq war, the awful executions at the start and the end of the 1980s—made me turn my attention to Afghanistan early in the 1980s, where a women-friendly socialist experiment had been in the making. But it could not last—there were internal party rifts, US and regional conspiracies, and a large rural population not yet ready for compulsory schooling (for girls!), women's rights, a program for equality of the diverse ethnicities, and land reform. I cried when I left Kabul, knowing that the experiment could not survive and wondering what would happen to the people I had met there—including a group of Iranian communists (Tudeh and Fadayee-Majority, to whom the Afghan party had provided refuge, housing, and jobs). I cried again, in 1996, while on research travel in Istanbul, when I opened a newspaper and saw the dead bodies of President Najibullah and a brother—the one I had met while in Kabul; both had been hanged by the Taliban after they had left the UN compound at which they had sought refuge in 1994, when the Taliban defeated the US-supported Mujahidin and assumed power. It is because of those murders that I initially welcomed the 2001 US invasion—though that sentiment passed soon enough. It is noteworthy that the Najibullah government and Afghan military held on for three years after the Soviet troops departed—quite unlike the US-backed government of Ashraf Ghani, which in 2021 collapsed even before the American troops absconded, leaving chaos and ruin in their wake.

My professional career has spanned academia (Illinois State University, Purdue University, Northeastern University) and the United Nations (UNU/WIDER in Helsinki, Finland, and UNESCO in Paris); the conceptual and methodological approaches of each have informed my research output over the years. It was perhaps inevitable that my most recent position would be in International Affairs, first as Director and now as Professor (Sociology and International Affairs). I draw on international agreements and norms to analyze sanctions, conflicts, and women's participation and rights, especially as they occur in the Middle East; and I draw on my sociological training to examine trends in economic development as well as collective action and mobilizations, whether in Iran and the Middle East more broadly, or with respect to transnational feminist activism.[2] With students who may be Jewish (sometimes half-Israeli), Arab (sometimes Palestinian), Ukrainian, Russian, European, and American from liberal or conservative families, my pedagogical approach is that the classroom must remain a safe space for student reflection, analysis, and the production of well-documented research papers (preferably without the grammatical, spelling, and citation errors for which I take off points). I am deeply preoccupied with Israel's ongoing genocidal war and a possible attack on the country of my birth, but these concerns are shared with fellow activists and my priests.

Thus far I have focused on political events and trajectories, and a bit about how they inform research, but culture also has played a big part in my life. My earliest memories are of being taken by my father to bookstores, museums, lectures, and concerts. A favorite became Iran's Archaeological Museum, in Tehran, where a paternal aunt worked in administration. (In the 1950s, because of her facility with Azeri Turkish and ability to converse with the visiting Turkish leader, my aunt was invited to Ankara on an official visit, where she met with members of the Turkish Republic's female elite, including Atatürk's daughter, a pilot. But that is another story—with photos to boot.) During the brief political opening in the wake of the White Revolution, the famous Soviet Azeri singer, Rashid Behboudoff, came to Tehran for a concert, which I believe took place at Tehran University. I recall going backstage with my father and the two of them speaking together in Azeri Turkish. Mr. Behboudoff then autographed a notecard for me in Russian —to *Valentina*, he wrote. I remember being curious as to why the first letter of my name looked like a "B," and I got a lesson in the Russian alphabet later. I still kick myself for having misplaced or lost the Behboudoff autograph, and I don't recall when or how that happened, because I did cherish it. Years later, the great Soviet Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian came to Tehran for a concert. I may be wrong, but I recall attending it, held at Roudaki Hall (renamed Vahdat Hall after the Revolution). In any event, at our home, when we were not listening to my father's favorite Iranian women classical singers on the radio or TV (or when my father was not surreptitiously listening to *Radio Peyk-e Iran*, the Tudeh Party station that came from—I think—Soviet Tajikistan), we played LPs of the Russian masters—Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Prokofiev, Rimsky-Korsakov. I discovered Shostakovich on my own and came to adore his Fifth Symphony, and still do. (I highly recommend the Seventh, as well.)

At the same time, I came to embrace American music—initially, blues, soul, and rock; later, jazz—and I still believe these to be the best features of American culture (unlike the gun culture, excessive individualism, and predatory capitalism). At the University of Waterloo, I was active in the campus newspaper, *The Chevon*, then led by a group of stern Maoist China lovers (very talented writers, though, I must say), but I found time to attend a concert by the brilliant Irish blues singer/guitarist Rory Gallagher, who left this world far too soon. I still have an LP of his at home. From my husband, I later came to appreciate another feature of American culture: public libraries, which we both frequent fairly regularly. If I introduced him to jazz, blues, and rock (together we attended one of Gregg Allman's last concerts, in London), my husband introduced me to the intense beauty and emotional resonance of Mahler's

symphonies. Boston is a wonderful city to enjoy performances of Shostakovich and Mahler, and other musical masters, at the Boston Symphony Orchestra, New England Conservatory, and elsewhere. This is what helps me survive the otherwise dismal political climate in the US and—especially since 2023—the Middle East.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, a recent article published with two Kurdish-Iranian sociologists based in Sanandaj: Sahar Shakiba, Omid Ghaderzadeh, and Valentine M. Moghadam, "Women in Iranian Kurdistan: Patriarchy and the Quest for Empowerment," *Gender & Society* 35, no. 4 (2021): 616–642.

2. For example, V. M. Moghadam, "The Gendered Politics of Iran-U.S. Relations: Sanctions, the JCPOA, and Women's Security," *Third World Quarterly* 45 no. 7 (2024): 1199–1218; "Women, Peace, and Security in the Middle East: An Agenda of Empty Promises?" *Journal of Peace and War Studies*, 5th ed. (2023): 36–59; "Gender Regimes, Polities, and the World-System: Comparing Iran and Tunisia," *Women's Studies International Forum* 98, no. 3 (2023).

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Ruben Nelson

Paul Raskin's reflections and the responses to them reinforce my long-held sense of thankfulness that I have been included in the community of scholars/practitioners who participate in Tellus's GTI project. Taken together, we have created a rich environment for deep personal learning.

Allow me to begin my tale with four images of my youth, images that offer clues to the person I am still becoming. My developing persona is important in order to understand the significance of why, in 1971, I was fired by Pierre Trudeau, then Prime Minister of Canada. The inability of the PM to hear, much less take, my advice bears on my understanding of the reasons why our Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) cultures are not yet on a path to Tomorrow Land.

- As an eight-year-old child, I would spend time looking at a map of some other country. Then, I would close the atlas and draw as accurate a rendering as I could of the borders of the country, its major rivers, and the location of its major cities. I would repeat this exercise until I had a reasonably good sense of these features of whatever country I was looking at. Then on to the next country. Yes, a quirk. Also, a clue that even then I was somewhat more mindful than most of contexts and relationships. This is one contribution to my long journey to becoming a reasonably good theorist of all things human from the uniquely personal to the civilizational scale. This is required if we are to make reliable sense out of human history. Our continuing difficulty as Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) peoples/cultures to do this is central to our continuing inability not only to see the need for a Great Transition, but to find reliable pathways to it.

- As an eleven-year-old boy, I recall playing spin-the-bottle for the first time in the basement of Raymond Pieout's home in Scarboro, then a middle-class district in Calgary. The interesting thing is that partway through the game I said, "excuse me" to my friends, then sat on the basement stairs watching them play this kissing game. Yes, a quirk. Also a clue that I was becoming somewhat more reflexive than most. Mother used to say, "Watch yourself," but never as a warning to be

careful. Rather, as an instruction to develop the critical self-conscious capacity to both act and watch myself as I acted. I tend to watch from over my left shoulder.

- I was a brighter than average boy at the time when modern cultures rewarded such males with more than normal attention, praise, and support. Given this, it is not surprising that at eighteen, I was Valedictorian of my High School class at Mount Royal College, Calgary, and at tweny-two was honored by Queen's University with the Tricolour Award, which admitted me into the Tricolour Society. Such outcomes are normal in modern cultures. They are also a clue that I was learning to handle myself as one who had been taught to believe that I rightfully belonged among the elites of at least some of our major institutions.
- At eighteen as a first-year student at Queen's University, I was introduced to John Macmurray's *Interpreting the Universe*.[1] His notion made sense to me: that, writ large, our universe, including life on this Earth, cannot simply be read for what it is. Rather, reality writ large is ambiguous enough that it allows more than one deeply coherent reading of what it is. Further, any "reading" of it is an interpretation guided by key underlying images and metaphors Only much later did I come to realize how profound a challenge this orientation is to the ontological and epistemological presuppositions which our Modern-Techno-Industrial (MTI) form of civilization unconsciously takes for granted.[2] I have come to understand that this first-year course was my introduction to learning to see, live in, and experience our MTI cultures as I have come to see them to be—just another set of cultures which are unconscious of the fact that that they exemplify a form of civilization, much less the MTI form; cultures which, even today, do not know how to see themselves as exemplars of the MTI paradigm or recognize that the MTI paradigm is just one among the three core paradigms that have come, to date, to define quite different forms of civilization in human history.

In short, when young, I was just another Canadian MTI male who had been set up to succeed as an up-and-coming young man in Canada's MTI culture. But I was not wholly "normal." It is clear that I had more than a normal willingness to follow what seemed to me to be interesting, if somewhat weak, signals to the edges of, and even off, the mental maps which define my/our MTI cultures and consciousness. I was willing to risk "falling off the edge of the MTI world" as long as I could see what appeared to me to be new and interesting territory beyond our MTI maps of reality—new territory I had not yet experienced or mapped. This developing capacity to imagine, think, and move beyond the well-established MTI world can be seen in these stages of my life:

• In 1960, when I was a third-year student of Philosophy and Politics, a colleague and I organized what may well have been the first formal futures conference in Canadian history.

• Over the 1960s, I became one of the leaders of the Canadian "student movement," such as it was. Being Canadians, we held student seminars and weekends on the history and future of the university. My colleagues at University of Toronto invented "teach-ins."

• In 1963, Heather and I sailed for India. I was to be a student of both Western and Indian theology and philosophy at United Theological College in Bangalore (now Bengaluru). I was taking the advice of the Student Christian Movement that it would be good for our souls to get outside Western culture to see what we looked like from a quite different perspective. This was before folks "went to India to find a guru." Also, before the war in Vietnam heated up.

• In 1968, I became the first director of MacEwan Hall, a new university center. The major task was to conceive a governing system for an utterly unique kind of center. We succeeded. There was nothing in the world quite like what we created. I discovered the thrill of making cosmos out of chaos, almost biblical.

• In 1970, I was called to Ottawa to do a job the then Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau (PET), wanted done. This is the story I have been leading up to.

Pierre Trudeau, PET as he was then known, was a deeply introverted intellectual who danced to music that, often, only he could hear. By the spring of 1970, he had noticed that what we called "social policies" were patches on patches on patches. Of course, given the history of social policies, he was quite right. Each initiative was conceived in a silo as a stand-alone action. If you were poor, homeless, unwed and pregnant, deaf, blind, or orphaned, there was at least one if not several programs for you. However, none of the tens of thousands of social agencies was able or even much inclined to see you, let alone cope with you, much less embrace you, as a whole person. The PM was offended by this state of affairs. ("Good on him," as our Australian friends say.) He charged us with the then wholly new work of creating a "conceptual framework" for the social policy of the Government of Canada. He gave us eighteen months. Total cost: $150,000.

Bill Dyson, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Policy, Health and Welfare, led the project. I was his assistant. Bill had the sense to observe that we needed a wise feminine person on the team. So we found

an exceptional person. (This was two years before *Ms. Magazine* was published.) Bill had also been wise enough to ask, "What is a 'conceptual framework'?" In 1970, we were told, it was a way of making coherent sense of all aspects of social policy. Besides, we were assured that the PM and his colleagues would recognize it when we produced it. (I see now, as you probably see if you have had any deep experience with governments bureaucracies back then, that failure was written all over this project. We did not see it back then.) So we went to work. Over time, we came to see that the social policy of the day was not an accident. Rather, it was the systematic expression of our modern, i.e., MTI, culture —a culture that sees parts, not wholes; a culture that sees functions, not persons; a culture that only sees communities as an additive function of several people. The implication became clear to us: if we created a conceptual framework for social policy that systematized our modern ways of seeing, thinking about and treating people, the resulting Social Policy would damage Canadians systematically, whereas now we only damaged them randomly. In short, for the sake of Canada and its governments, we must not do what the PM had charged us with doing.

When we reported in the fall of 1971, we said: *Sir, first, you are quite right that today's social policy is unacceptable since it is patches on patches on patches. Second, we have discovered that we can do what you charged us with doing—creating a coherent conceptual framework for future social policies that is based on today's widely shared understandings of persons and communities. Third, we have also discovered that if we do that for you, that the outcomes will not be what you intended. Rather, the new social policies will damage Canadians systematically, whereas now they are damaged only randomly. Fourth, the major reason is that our modern ways of seeing, thinking about and treating persons and communities is so deeply flawed that it cannot be salvaged. Fifth, this implies that Canada needs a fresh way of seeing, thinking through, and acting towards both persons and communities—one that is far more adequate and accurate. Finally, we have done enough work to be fairly confident that with another eighteen months' work we can develop the conceptual framework you desire.*

Ask yourself, in 1971 what are the chances that a small group of the most senior men in the Canadian government, men who by definition have been extraordinarily successful in our modern, then all-male, culture, could even hear, let alone act on, the suggestion that there is something about the routine ways our modern culture sees, thinks about, and treats persons and communities that is so faulty that it must be transcended, outgrown, left behind? These are men who do not even know, other than in the vaguest way, that they are modern men formed in and by a modern culture. None

could have written a five-page essay of what modernity means for public policy. In short, the discussion we were inviting them into was not a conversation they were attracted to or even saw any point to. Of course, even though we were only asking for 0.001% of the federal budget, we were fired. The project was buried so deeply not even freedom of information requests can find it.

My point in telling this tale:

- Forty-four years ago, the Canadian government was offered the opportunity to get a leg up on a conversation that, while still not well-formed, will come to dominate the second quarter of the twenty-first century: Is there something about the MTI ways of knowing, seeing, understanding, and responding to reality that is so inherently flawed that we must move beyond the very form of civilization we are now devoted to improving and extending in time and space? Must we outgrow it, leaving it as our past, not our future?

- In my view, the GTI project has danced around and at times illuminated this question.

- However, we have yet to focus deeply and consistently enough to make significant historical differences. We are still assuming that we can use MTI categories and logic to "solve" the problems MTI cultures have caused. We have yet to see the need for, much less explore, the categories and logic that will enable us to think more deeply and clearly about human history at every level from the uniquely personal to the civilizational. We have yet to see that our MTI ways of knowing, seeing, understanding, and responding to reality do not enable us to make reliable sense of the civilizational meta-challenge we face, much less the mess of living, complex messes in which we now find ourselves.

- In short, as was the PM of Canada in 1971, we are still trying to make our MTI ways of being and becoming work, to extend them and improve them. We have yet to face the need to abandon them.

Not good news for ten-year-olds.

Endnotes

1. John Macmurray, *Interpreting the Universe* (Faber and Faber, 1933).

2. I coined the term "form of civilization" in 2011 because I needed a new category that is a level of generality higher than "culture" and not the common meaning of "civilizations." If interested, see here and here.

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Helena Norberg-Hodge

Some truths are invisible from within the worldview we have been taught to trust.

I was born and raised in Sweden, and was educated at the top universities in Europe and the US. By every measure of my upbringing, I was set up to see the world through a particular lens: one that prized progress, rationality, and development. It wasn't until I found myself in the high desert of Ladakh, or Little Tibet, that this lens began to crack.

In this remote Himalayan region—where I first traveled in 1975 with a German film team for six weeks, but ended up staying for a good part of every year for more than four decades—my eyes were opened to a very different worldview. Suddenly, all the other cultures with which I was familiar seemed essentially the same. Ladakh had been neither colonized nor transformed by the Christian missionaries, who, in many parts of the world, succeeded in making indigenous, nature-based, and more feminine cultures feel inferior. In Ladakh, I met people with the highest self-esteem, a lightness of being, peace of mind, and an infectious joy and vitality. Their lives were rooted in a deep connection to the land, and a sophisticated web of intergenerational relationships. There was no pollution, no unemployment, and no poverty as we define it—just a strong sense of belonging, self-sufficiency, and mutual care. I fell in love with the people, left my job as a linguist in Paris, and started working on a thesis on the language, supervised by Noam Chomsky.

After spending time in Ladakh, I realized that my soul had always been yearning for a worldview that truly recognized the interconnectedness of life. I grew up in Sweden, with English and German heritage, and despite the lingering post-war prejudice, I chose to study in Munich. That decision sparked a lifelong fascination with different cultural perspectives and led me to learn six languages before the age of thirty. While studying in Germany, I fell in love with Goethe and Hermann Hesse, and found myself drawn to Buddhism, though never quite enough to pursue it in earnest. But in Ladakh, I felt as though I had finally come home. Interestingly, many of the women who visited

Ladakh in those early years expressed a similar feeling, saying it was as if they had returned to a place where they had lived in a previous lifetime. One woman, after reading *Ancient Futures*, my bestselling book about tradition and change in Ladakh, wrote to me saying, "Thank you for letting us know that our dreams are actually distant memories."

Over the next few years, I witnessed the dramatic effects of globalization in Ladakh. I saw how this monstrous, top-down system destroyed local businesses, economies, and self-esteem—both individual and cultural—through schooling, media, and advertising.

Observing this dramatic contrast between the old and new worlds in Ladakh convinced me that two fundamental shifts were needed in the West. First, conventional science had grown dangerously reductionist, blind to the interdependence, complexities, and changes of the living world. As Rachel Carson noted, we urgently needed to encourage more holistic, interdisciplinary knowledge.

Second, economic decentralization is necessary and can, in turn, enable political decentralization. It has become clear that we must forge more intimate relationships with nature and the people who help meet our needs. Decentralized, human-scale structures allow us to retain a sustainable relationship with the living world because we are forced to recognize, to feel, and to experience its infinite diversity, contradictions, and constant change.

With my eyes opened, I traveled throughout Europe and the USA. Year by year, I tracked how the global economy exerted extreme pressures, breaking down social cohesion, economic stability, and democracy, even in the so-called "rich" countries of the world.

Capitalism, from the outset, has been a global, top-down mission to conquer the world. Such a system is inherently destructive because it cannot respect diversity. Since Ladakh, I have witnessed how both left- and right-wing governments have promoted the rise of an ever-growing, monolithic corporate empire. In Sweden, socialist policies began supporting the increasing power of global corporations, and in the past fifty years, left-leaning governments—whether Labour in the UK or Democrats in the US—have gone along with deregulating and subsidizing global monopolies to strengthen their stranglehold on the world. One of the most damaging effects has been the imposition of an urban consumer monoculture worldwide. Economic pressures are driving people away from the land into urban environments, where they compete for jobs, and the bits of power and wealth distributed from above.

At MIT, I worked closely with Noam Chomsky. But while I admired his intellect, I was struck by the fact that he wasn't questioning the fundamentals of industrialism. He believed urbanization was a consequence of population growth, and he supported nuclear power. The deeper questions about cultural and biological diversity, scale, interconnectedness, and inner well-being were left unasked.

It was in the Systems Dynamics Group at MIT that I met a whole group of people with whom I had more in common in terms of ecological literacy. Dana and Dennis Meadows, along with others, connected me to an alternative world, one that was more deeply ecological and spiritually attuned to the inner needs of people. While many in this circle were not fully attuned to the structural political critiques emphasized by the left, they offered an urgently needed counterpoint to the dominant narrative of progress.

For decades, I traveled widely, speaking at conferences across Europe, North America, Korea, Japan, and other countries in Asia, closely connecting with emerging environmental leaders including Petra Kelly, David Brower, Lester Brown, and Amory Lovins. In the 1970s, there was broad consensus in the movement: real change required decentralization and more holistic, interdisciplinary thinking. Universities were beginning to reflect this shift, and I was fortunate to teach in several interdisciplinary programs, including the Energy and Resources Group at UC Berkeley.

From the 1960s into the early 1980s, the worldview in the West was not yet shaped by corporate interests. Rachel Carson warned in the 1960s about the reductionist ignorance that allowed the creation and widespread use of DDT, thinking we were killing a few nasty bugs when we were actually killing birds and harming ourselves as well. E. F. Schumacher, Erich Fromm, Ivan Illich, and others were challenging industrial paradigms and championing human-scale, community-based approaches. Their voices resonated with a growing awareness that our systems were out of balance.

By the mid-1980s, however, things were beginning to change, as powerful individuals in the corporate world were waking up to the need to respect environmental limits. One influential figure was Maurice Strong, a petroleum magnate who, influenced by his nature-loving wife Hannah, helped initiate several global environmental summits, including the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. Many still remember that gathering as the high point of the environmental movement. For me, it was the nadir!

I knew Maurice and other powerful figures in both government and business well enough to be absolutely convinced that they were not consciously trying to destroy the environmental movement. They were, however, comfortably unaware of the fact that it was actually global corporations that were the primary cause of the environmental crisis.

Sadly, by this time, both the left and environmental movements were also generally unaware of the role of corporate globalization in driving up pollution and poverty worldwide. The thinking in both the social and environmental movements was changing year by year, influenced by the effects of big money in both media and academia. Meanwhile, as the West's environmental discourse became more corporate, I continued returning to Ladakh. Each time I came back to Europe or America, I was struck anew by how drastically the worldview had shifted. By how far it had moved from lived experience, from nature, from community. Having one foot in both the so-called "developed" and "developing" world helped me stay alert to the deeper patterns at play: the rise of a corporate monoculture disguised as progress.

At the Rio Earth Summit and in the years that followed, the environmental discourse narrowed dramatically. The focus shifted to isolated symptoms—carbon emissions, endangered species—while the deeper structural causes of ecological breakdown were largely ignored. There was little mention of the need to rethink the foundations of science or to pursue meaningful decentralization. By the late 1980s, digital technologies like computers and the internet were being hailed as tools for grassroots empowerment. But rather than fostering decentralization, they quickly became vehicles for corporate expansion and cultural homogenization.

In 1991, I organized a gathering in Stockholm called *The Future of Progress*, bringing together colleagues from around the world to establish a collective voice to counter globalization. That meeting helped spark new alliances between environmental thinkers and activists—people like Vandana Shiva, Edward Goldsmith, Doug Tompkins, Martin Khor, and leaders of the Scandinavian anti-EU movement, who were deeply concerned about the ecological, cultural, and democratic consequences of economic centralization. This group evolved into the International Forum on Globalisation, which played a key role in the Seattle protests of 1999, an early flashpoint in the global resistance to corporate power.

The global system we have inherited was shaped by hegemonic forces emerging from Europe, aided by Christianity, which helped to dismantle land-based, indigenous cultures. These cultures, rooted in deep, experiential interdependence and reverence for life, were replaced by a worldview that elevated abstract thought, rejected the body, valued central control, and imposed a linear notion of progress. Women were burned as witches. Indigenous peoples were colonized, often violently, and their embodied ecological wisdom suppressed.

Living in Ladakh offered me a rare window into a culture that had remained largely untouched by these forces. It carried a sophisticated understanding of interdependence—not just with one another, but with the entire web of life. In Ladakhi language and philosophy, there were daily reminders not to mistake the separateness of words for separateness in reality. Language divides, but life connects.

These experiences reshaped my own worldview, but they also left me feeling profoundly out of step with the world from which I came. Returning to the West year after year, I was increasingly struck by the contrast: the pace, the pressure, the disconnection from nature, from neighbors, even from ourselves. I often felt like I was trying to describe water to people who do not realize they are swimming in it. There were moments of deep connection, of course, but also a persistent loneliness: it is not always easy to speak across such a vast cultural chasm, to ask Western audiences to question the myths they have inherited.

And yet, when I published *Ancient Futures*, and produced the accompanying documentary, I was amazed by the resonance they found. They were translated into more than forty languages and won numerous international awards. That quiet but widespread recognition kept me going. It reminded me that I was not alone, and that people across the world were beginning to sense the cracks in the dominant story and were hungry for alternatives.

One of the most persistent of those myths is the idea that humanity needs a single, global system to manage itself, a one-size-fits-all structure to keep our supposed innate divisiveness and greed in check. But my experience taught me the opposite: it is not our innate nature or difference that breeds conflict. It's the top-down systems that break down our human-scale structures of interdependence and force us into unnatural dependence on forces beyond our control. In both Ladakh and Bhutan, I saw how centuries of peaceful coexistence unraveled when people were moved into cities, pitted against each other for jobs, and made reliant on distant authorities. In some instances, this even led to bloodshed.

Chillingly, I recall a Buddhist grandmother once telling me, "We have no choice. We have to exterminate the other, or they will exterminate us."

So let me reiterate: the problem is not human nature. It is the unnatural nature of an inhuman, global system that developed hand-in-hand with reductionist science and centralizing technologies. The idea that we need to have a global system to maintain peace is only true in one very specific sense: we need to come together to create collaborative structures to break up the corporate empire. This is not in order to control a diversity of cultures, but to prevent the continuation or rebirth of a completely undemocratic, top-down global system. We need a global ceiling of protection—protection from the global structures that arose out of exploitation since the time of enclosures and slavery. Humanity does not need top-down, centralized structures to protect itself from "natural tendencies." What is needed instead is the right to rebuild the deep social connections and connections to the living world that we evolved with. And that requires decentralization.

But the demand for both decentralization and more holistic, interdisciplinary knowledge has been progressively buried. In its place, we now have a monstrous, blind system, an army of algorithms supporting a path towards the destruction of life. These algorithms are masters at manipulating our thinking, and one of their favorite tricks is to paint any steps towards decentralization as right-wing. The very global economy that has hollowed out local communities and eroded local livelihoods is also what has fueled the rise of leaders like Trump. When people feel underpaid, overtaxed, and culturally displaced, they blame the government. And they fall prey to the demagogue even more widely for the corporate empire.

Trump would have us believe that America is being "ripped off" by other countries. The real threat, however, is not coming from foreign governments, but from stateless global corporations that operate above the law. Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clauses in "free trade" treaties enable corporations to sue governments simply for trying to protect their citizens or the environment. From Germany to Thailand, companies have been winning payouts for lost profits after countries dared to ban toxic mining, raise minimum wages, or restrict harmful chemicals. In 2009, the Swedish energy giant Vattenfall successfully sued Germany for €1.4 billion after the government moved to phase out nuclear power. More recently, Australian mining company Energy Transition Minerals is suing Greenland for up to $11.5 billion—roughly ten times the country's annual GDP—over its 2021 decision to ban

uranium mining. This corporate overreach makes a mockery of democracy.

It is vital that we expose this system rather than get caught up in the political theater run by global media. In today's techno-economic suprastructure, life itself has become the enemy. Ecofeminists rightly see this as rooted in patriarchy: in a fear of life, of organic messiness, of complexity. But I hesitate to use the term feminism now, because today it is not only men who perpetuate this system, and some of the most powerful voices resisting it are male. Still, we must acknowledge its roots: in the silencing of women, in witch hunts, and in the rejection of life-honoring knowledge keepers like Marija Gimbutas.

True economic localization is not about borders or nostalgia for a mythical past. It is not about eliminating trade but eliminating dependence on a corporate empire. It is about reweaving the fabric of interdependence at the community level, supporting local food systems, face-to-face relationships, small enterprises, and shared cultural life. It is about reclaiming the real economy: care for soil, water, biodiversity, and one another. Economic decentralization is a prerequisite for scales that force us to respect both the human and ecological diversity that are a fact of life.

This transformation will certainly include cities, but instead of ever-larger megalopolis sprawls, we need to rapidly move towards smaller cities that recognize their dependence on the living world around them. Cities that breathe. Cities that allow us to come back in contact with wild biodiversity, and the cultivated lands on which our lives depend. This is the kind of liberation we need. Not a walling-off, but a coming home to the natural world in which we evolved.

We have an overabundant renewable resource: human beings. If we would shift taxes, subsidies, and regulations to support an artisanal, ecological way forward, the wealth, the beauty, and the health that we could restore is quite remarkable. This may sound utopian, but it is actually bringing us back to the reality of our dependence on the living world. The industrial machine has not eliminated that dependence, only prevented us from experiencing it.

Rural populations in China, India, and Africa—so-called "poor" regions—are still more independent of the global system and are more interdependent with nature and each other. This is a foundation for a healthier, more empowered life and one that respects and understands life—its ever-changing rich diversity. It is vital that we do everything we can to support those lifeboats of greater sustainability.

We need to do what we can to strengthen respect for farming and rural livelihoods, while potentially providing decentralized renewable energies. Importantly, we must link people across the rich country/poor country divide to join a global movement, one that also tries to help those wanting to opt out of the consumer culture in the Global North.

Throughout the world, there is a major rethink. Ever more individuals and groups are questioning the mainstream techno-economic "progress." There is no doubt in my mind that the main reason we are hurtling from crisis to crisis is that the 99% are unaware of the contours of the global empire and how they unwittingly support a system they do not want.

In addition, there are countless inspiring initiatives at the grassroots in the form of hidden, small, bottom-up initiatives, mainly started by women. This includes everything from natural birth to natural deaths to natural house-building, natural fibers, and natural food. Providing for our basic needs through artisan production would restore beauty, joy, and meaning to our lives. Of course, some technology could bring benefits. But by abandoning blind, polluting machines for basic needs, we would actually be producing more, while healing people and the living earth.

We have been told that modern agriculture is efficient and necessary on a crowded planet. This is a lie. Small, diversified farms can produce far more per acre than monocultures. Shifting the global food economy towards more localized systems is the single most strategic way of restoring both human and planetary health.

Every time I am in touch with the community-building around soil and seed, which I see in abundance around the world, my heart is full of joy. It is so clearly healing, and it is happening despite people having been trained into narrow specialization and pushed to go into the city to be "important" professionals. Despite enormous psychological and financial pressures in the opposite direction, there is a huge cultural turning of reconnection to nature and to others. And there are those who argue that it is culture that ultimately shapes politics and even geopolitics. That is what I am counting on.

Helena Norberg-Hodge is the founder and director of Local Futures and producer of the award-winning documentary The Economics of Happiness.

Richard Norgaard

I was born one year after Paul Raskin; my life reflections at eighty-one are also strong, especially in these troubled times. Raskin has organized his reflections into a powerful story. I respond simply to point out that our lives started quite differently, and then there are parallels, convergences, and crossings. Today, I find myself in a different place and draw different lessons than Raskin.

Rather than envisioning and hoping for a great transition of global humanity to a planetary phase, I expect our long-term systemic social and environmental systems breakdown will continue to modernity's total collapse. The co-evolution of life with the geosphere will go through a dramatic reset and then continue on. I am hopeful that enough people will survive and return to earlier cultural knowledges, different in different places while intertwining in others. In short, I hope for a great restoration of human diversity in a co-evolving quilt of co-evolving cultures. The question is, can we offer any helpful advice? I think we can, and I think such advice could also cushion modernity's crash. But first a bit of my own story.

I left the comfort of my mother's womb in Washington, DC, amidst World War II about two years before America's immoral atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My father, with a degree in chemistry, like Raskin's father, and experience operating a sewage treatment plant, worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers. He contributed skills to keep our troops' living conditions sufficiently sanitary so that they did not die because of their own excrement, now so prescient for fossil-fueled global humanity. My parents were moderate Republicans, descendants of a Danish tailor and a Norwegian cobbler who thrived in America until the Great Depression. My grandparents sought better opportunities in Southern California during the Depression while my parents moved to the San Francisco Bay Area after the war.

Like Dr. Raskin, I experienced the miracle of television's arrival, the proliferation of cars and suburban sprawl, smog in Los Angeles. Korean War news was on the kitchen radio as my mom

made breakfast and dinner. I remember Billy Graham preaching about godless communists and our God-given markets at the height of the Cold War. John S. Service, a Foreign Service Officer in China, identified as a communist by Senator Joseph McCarthy, was an in-law of my first wife. I went to Vietnam War protests, was surrounded by the Civil Rights Movement, was on the margins of the Free Speech Movement on the Berkeley campus, and was deeply affected by the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Rober F. Kennedy. I drove into Chicago for graduate school in a 4x4 pickup with a small camper shell as the 1968 Democratic Convention ended. The shell displayed Eugene McCarthy and anti-war stickers, and I wore a full beard. Strangely, I was repeatedly stopped by the Chicago cops, who most unpleasantly asked why I was still in town. Later, back in Berkeley, when Edward Teller, the father of the hydrogen bomb, walked the campus, I participated in discussions of mutually assured destruction with nuclear physicists from what was then called the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, or Rad Lab.

Like Paul Raskin, I applied to and was admitted to UC Berkeley as an undergraduate. Why not? It was a great school, and I could live at home. I started in mathematics, I soon found more interest in river rafting and environmental activism, and I graduated with a 2.23 GPA. Like Paul Raskin, I received D grades in ROTC before it was abolished by my second year. I also received an F in my second semester of German in the age when F grades could not be removed and were included in one's final GPA. I successfully repeated the course by earning a D and then earned another D in my third semester of German. In my final semester, I could graduate by taking five courses in geography, which I loved, or five courses in economics, which I despised, but I knew economics was more important to understand because it was a primary driver of environmental destruction.

Dr. Raskin had music and many famous acquaintances thereby. I had river running. I started rafting rivers during high school summer vacations and was hired to be a boatman the month I turned sixteen. The summer I turned nineteen, after my freshman year in college, I was the river guide to Sierra Club–organized trips of forty to sixty people through the Glen Canyon of the Colorado, one of the most beautiful places in the world, but soon to be drowned under its own waters by a Bureau of Reclamation Dam. David Brower, the archdruid of environmentalism, and Toppy Edwards, a *National Geographic* photographer, joined my second trip through Glen in June of 1962, at the end of my freshman year. This led to multiple trips with Brower, Edwards, and nature photographers Philip Hyde and Eliot Porter, and single trips with photographers David Bohn and Tad Nichols. An eye for

and love of natural beauty instilled by my parents deeply intensified. The loss of the Glen was very traumatic and drove me to help fight the proposed Grand Canyon dams and others later, raft rivers while I could, and barely graduate from Berkeley.

Paul Raskin knew music greats. I was a boatman or guide to some interesting passengers who were not famous photographers: Emilio Segre, Hans Einstein, Luna Leopold, and equally interesting but less famous people like Daniel B. Luten, Anne Brower (Dave's wife), river guide Georgie White, and Ken Sleight (canyon guide and basis of Edward Abby's character "Seldom Seen Smith" in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*).

After an agricultural economics master's degree at Oregon State University, I was admitted to the University of Chicago for a PhD in economics, beginning in the fall of 1968. I was an apostate in the cathedral of neoliberal economics, so I stood back and studied as an ethnographer might when interpreting a new culture. This worked: I was only eighteen months actually living in Hyde Park. I was hired as an acting assistant professor of agricultural economics at UC Berkeley in the fall of 1970, hired with a year on salary to write my dissertation because there were not yet other environmental economists from first-rate schools. As an assistant professor, in response to Rachel Carson and to the consternation of California agricultural interests, I conducted research on the economics of agricultural pesticide use, studied California water policy, fought dams, and helped start the Energy and Resources Group on the campus. We hired Sputnik-induced excess young physicists—John Holdren, John Harte, and Gene Rochlin—who, much like Paul Raskin, were seeking new paths.

The summer before arriving on the Berkeley campus, in spite of my one-year schedule for completing my PhD, I joined a twelve-person Ford Foundation interdisciplinary team to study the economic and environmental impacts of the Trans Alaska Pipeline for three months. Soon after, I was the economist who served on an interdisciplinary team to advise the Nixon administration on reducing agricultural pesticide use. These two team efforts initiated my lifelong learning through participating on state, national, and international interdisciplinary assessment teams, culminating in serving as the first chair of the State of California's Delta Independent Science Board. I learned that we understand whole systems through collective discussion among people with different knowledges and then humbly rethinking together, not through the advancement toward a unity of the fragmented sciences. This realization has major implications for the social and environmental polycrisis we created for ourselves. I became a methodological pluralist.

In 1978, I headed to Brazil for two years as a Research Specialist in the Ford Foundation's emerging program in environment and development. Knowing Brazil strengthened my awareness of cultural systems and extreme income inequality. Focusing my research on the Amazon and the bureaucratic efforts to plan its development was the kernel of my writing on currents efforts to push development, as well as human and natural history, as co-evolution between social and environmental systems. Awakening to a Catholic priest giving me last rights as I nearly died of kidney failure in a Catholic hospital gave me the good sense to live as I wanted to live. I thereafter confidently wrote in conflict with the narrow, atomistic-mechanistic reasoning of economists and gained the honor of being an associate professor for seventeen years.

Like Paul Raskin, I too admired Paul Feyerabend's critiques of methodology, read his books, and went to his lectures, but I never engaged in serious discussion with him. His fourth wife, Grazia Borrini, however, sporadically frequented my office to discuss complexity thinking and its ecological and social implications, a very pleasant connection to Feyerabend.

Through an interconnecting and diverging life, I have come to a different place than Paul Raskin. Here are my reasons.

During our lifetimes, new technologies have been developed for profit from the fragments of science and released into whole social and environmental systems with barely any systemic knowledge, let alone guardrails, of what their medium- and long-term effects would be. Corporations and the rich have prospered, and many people's lives temporarily improved. But in many cases, the consequences have proven socially and environmentally disastrous. Hunters and gatherers had superior systemic understanding relative to ours given the natural and social complexities and instabilities we have created. They certainly had low enough populations so that when natural disaster did strike, there were other places to which they could move. We have a planetary disaster.

Humanity's social resilience has also been destroyed. Knowledge is highly fragmented and attached to relatively few specific people. Now many people who are not in the knowledge system are denying science. Even some within the system are misusing their specialized expertise to deny scientific knowledge beyond their expertise or what systemic understanding we have gained through collective assessments. Markets have eroded earlier social connectivities and the trust in each other needed to transit out of market capitalism. We have long been a corporatocracy, not a

democracy, and now power is further concentrated among very few ill-informed, profit-seeking people.

For these reasons, I can neither envision nor hope for a great transition from our planetary predicament to a sustainable society that facilitates peace, justice, and meaningful lives. True, there are millions of people working toward such a transition. My sense, however, is that most are trapped into trying to save people and planet by doing what they had been doing before, trying to patch up particular problems, rather than attempting to fully reorient away from individualist, materialist modernity. I expect that market capitalism driven by individual greed will continue to morph until it completely crashes. Species will be lost and the geosphere will be transformed, but the co-evolution of life with its physical environment will make a big reset and go on. Chaotic economic degrowth will happen with little opportunity to foster good activities. I suspect there will be pockets of surviving people with different pre-modern traditions scattered around the world as well as places of intertwining cultures. May these differences continue and be cultivated. May there be a great restoration of the co-evolving cultural patchwork quilt of earlier millennia. Modernity arrogantly put all of humanity's eggs in one basket.

Belief in salvation through markets, science, and growth led us astray. New global tenets will be needed to assure that the future cultural patchwork quilt is globally sustainable. To start, may I suggest making life and diversity sacred? May modern people's sense that they can and should control nature and be liberated from each other be replaced with a sense of living in relationality with all species and the geosphere as well as with each other too. May learning and knowing be taken on by everyone and people's different knowledges, within and across cultural patches, be collectively shared. May our art, dance, music, and poetry joyfully and informatively bless and foster systemic relationality.

At the same time, may we globally save the modern sciences and technologies that can be helpful while powerfully monitoring their use to assure that they serve planet and people. Similarly, as publicly created entities, markets and corporations must serve the public good. This, of course, requires the restoration of the very concept of the public good and actively learning and institutionalizing what is good for living in relation to nature and each other.

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David W. Orr

Coincidentally, I am writing a quasi-memoir of our experiences in the 1980s. It is a reflection on the issues that motivated us to jump off a cliff and what has happened since. The evolving book has chapters on rural life, climate change, and technology based on our experiences on the 1500 acres of the project and our itinerant faculty that included Donella Meadows, Bill Clinton, Amory Lovins, Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, J. Weizenbaum, the Paul Winter Consort, and several hundred others.

I include the introduction below.

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"Introduction" from *A View from the Periphery: Eleven Years in an Ozark Valley* **(Forthcoming).**

This is my story about eleven years of living in a valley in the Ozark Mountains of northern Arkansas. Part memoir, but more important, it is a reflection on the ideas and forces that motivated us, that have grown more urgent and important with each passing year. It is also a late-life mulling over about the people, experiences, place, and life lived at the edge of American society in what was then the fifth poorest county in the forty-ninth wealthiest state in our troubled Union. The 1500-acre valley in which we once lived still comes back in my dreams, and I do not know why. Three-and-a-half decades later and despite preacherly inclinations, I have no grand conclusions to offer. The only advice I have is to pay close attention, take good care of each other, and some time or other do something wild and crazy, but look before you leap.

The title is the theme of the book. For a time we lived on the periphery of American society, and things look different from the outside looking in. Our ideas and convictions also existed at the periphery of national priorities and myths, somewhere on the continuum between common sense, quaint, and crazy. Our friends and neighbors were peripheral to the larger society that other measures success by wealth and status, not neighborliness and practical knowhow. I write, too, on the periphery

of my life and, in hindsight, many things look different. The time in which we live marks other and larger peripheries, the end of the Holocene and the onset of a hotter and more capricious climate for one. American Democracy to authoritarianism or possibly Fascism for another. We are also crossing another Rubicon of sorts—an irrevocable divide between the human era and one ruled in part or entirely by an inhuman, cold, contrived, but very efficient intelligence that will have no regard for mere humans with their strange brains made of flesh. It is all too much and too fast for a species still struggling to evolve from the Paleolithic. Time, however, does not stand still, and in one way or another, those choices will be made and determine the landscape of our journey into an increasingly precarious future.

The years considered here are those from my thirty-fifth to forty-sixth lived in the wake of World War II, the Korean War, the near miss of the Cuban missile crisis, the insanity of mutual assured destruction, the expansion of the American empire, the Selma march and the uncivil battle over civil rights, and our growing disjunction with Earth. The cozy certainties that once sheltered the white, middle-class, car-crazy, rock 'n roll America of the 1950s came undone in the assassinations, bombings, violence, and Vietnam War of the 1960s. Chrome-plated verities of national innocence, race, gender, sexuality, politics, progress, values, materialism, and morality collided with different realities. Writers including James Baldwin, Carolyn Merchant, Theodore Roszak, Charles Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Philip Slater, Susan Sontag, Christopher Lasch, and others exposed the tectonic flaws in our culture of racism, narcissism, misogyny, and consumption. Hippies and Woodstock opened a cultural chasm, and self-appointed defenders of the flag and the status quo rushed to fill the breach. Lewis Powell, a corporate attorney and later a Supreme Court Justice, provided the battle plan for the counterattack in his secret report to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Powell's Memo helped to embolden corporate resistance to change, deemed too costly, too progressive and therefore un-American. It also generated a flood of money for groups aiming to restore the tarnished respectability of Robber Barons and Social Darwinists, and inflate the anorexic vision of Calvin Coolidge. Movies portraying swaggering violence prone men carrying a grudge set the standard for manhood lived as a shootout. The National Rifle Association made a killing by hawking a mutilated version of the Second Amendment. In a requiem, Country singer Merle Haggard sang as an "Okie from Muscogee" and Hank Williams, Jr. assured his listeners that "country boys can survive." Full-on bubbafication. Ambitious politicians smelled opportunity and launched a cultural war against all manner of evils that continues unabated to this day. In the fever swamps of the right, conspirators were conspiring. On cue, Ronald Reagan promised to get government off our backs and reckon with "welfare

queens," but he said nothing about predatory corporations and built-in systemic injustices. Government, he thought, was the problem. It was morning in America again. In the wings, Donald Trump, an acolyte of mob lawyer Roy Cohn, busied himself mastering the art of the big con with a straight face and nursing his grievances, Timothy McVeigh was studying how to express volcanic hatred, Rush Limbaugh was making a fortune selling vitriol, while Rupert Murdoch was lighting a fuse.

This was the "age of exuberance," and speed, power, and accumulation were our long suite, giving thought for the morrow and the least among us, not so much. Whatever our faults, however, good things seemed possible and all problems solvable, mostly by better gadgets and an ever-growing economy. Having been born in the lap of good luck and tutored by Hollywood, white Americans tend to assume that the cavalry will always arrive on time, happy endings are our birthright, and tragedy is just a word in a literature class. Teetering on the edge of the irrevocable, we now live in the age of consequences—a crash course in reckoning with unsolvable (but perhaps still avoidable) dilemmas, full-cost, life-cycle accounting, injustices, and America's implicatedness in, well, just about everything good and bad on this third rock from the sun. When we arrived in Stone County, the CO2 level was around 340 parts per million. As I write in January 2025, the number is 426 ppm and rising faster than ever, and a rogue president with Fascistic tendencies who believes climate change is a hoax now presides over what we once believed was the land of the free.

Our response in the 1980s was to do that very American thing and start something different—a model of better possibilities at a scale small enough to be understandable but large enough to matter. Specifically, we intended to create an educational center on 1500 acres that would become its own curriculum and an incubator for better and more practical ideas of how to live well on less and a model of an economy fitted to its place. We believed that demonstration of possibilities could change the world. Unacknowledged, Don Quixote was our patron saint, and we, of course, were the first students of our own educational adventure. To call us naïve would be rather like saying water is wet. Most of it, however, was priceless, and all of it instructive.

Finally, this book is not a back-to-the-land memoir although it includes some of my memories of our sojourn and the people, events, and issues but mostly to illuminate a larger story. Neither is it a history of the 1980s, but I believe historians someday will regard events of that decade rather like the first pebbles in a decades-long avalanche cascading toward to a time of troubles. Long ago, even in Stone County

Arkansas, the cracks were beginning to show. My purpose, however, is less ambitious. Refracted through a fallible memory but with the benefit of knowing some of "the rest of the story," this is my attempt to make sense of it all, including a Civil War that never ended and has brought us to the edge of an abayss, another periphery.

David W. Orr is Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics Emeritus at Oberlin College and Professor of Practice at Arizona State University.

Heikki Patomäki

I read Paul Raskin's *Encounters and Transitions* with great interest. There is much in the story of how the Tellus Institute and the Great Transition Initiative came to be that I did not know, which is why the reading experience was both informative and enlightening. Among other things, it tells how the history of individual humans is intertwined with the great lines of world history. One tragic example of this is the fate of the Aral Sea and how the twists and turns of world history prevented it from being even partially saved.

It is also interesting how a broad interest in all levels of our being—starting with theoretical physics and cosmology—seems to be connected to planetary thinking. This has been the case at least since the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. Perhaps the most famous example of this is H. G. Wells, whose *Outline of History* is a description of the evolution of the universe and the history of humanity as a part of it. Wells was also the first to imagine the use of nuclear power as a weapon. For him, it was one of the reasons for advocating a world state.

Raskin's personal history is unique, and its context is the USAmerican history of the liberation movements and folk/popular music of the 1960s, the birth and rise of the environmental movement at the same time or soon after, etc. However, as in the case of Wells, his interests in the fundamental questions of the existence of the universe, the biosphere, and ethics and politics form a seamless whole. When reading comments on Paul Raskin's text, I noticed that many of us share the same orientation.

This is also true for me. In the early 1980s, my original ambitious dream was to continue Einstein's work and create a grand unified theory of the "forces" of the universe and the nature of space-time. However, reading world literature, following the news, and almost a year of obligatory military service near the Finnish-Soviet border during the worst moments of the Second Cold War, started to change my worldview and priorities. Just a month after I got out of the army in September 1983,

I took part in peace demonstrations that were being organized all over Europe. Somewhat surprisingly, I saw several fellow conscripts among the demonstrators. The concern about a possible nuclear war was overwhelming.

I started studying physics and mathematics at the university, but I was also interested in social sciences. After a year in a mathematics and physics department, and amid the second Cold War, I shifted from physics to economics, international relations, and philosophy while also becoming an activist in peace and environmental movements. The story of how this led to developing an approach called critical realism—which has grounded my subsequent transformative activities—can be found in a two-part interview conducted by Jamie Morgan.[1]

Despite this shift to social sciences, my interest in theoretical physics and cosmology has continued unabated. Lee Smolin's book *Einstein's Unfinished Revolution: The Search for What Lies Beyond the Quantum* is a comforting read in that it tells how slowly and uncertainly the continuation of Einstein's project has progressed—indicating that my choice was probably reasonable also in terms of substance, and not only ethically and politically. The main point, however, is that interest in the fundamental questions of our existence, which cosmology and theoretical physics, as well as, for example, astrobiology, seek to answer, seems to be closely connected to interest in planetary-scale ethics and politics.

Now, as a concept, global civil society emerged in the early 1990s. Since that time, I have been involved in such activities and, for a while in the 2010s, also in national politics, but my activism has largely been swimming against the tide. In 1993, I was a founding member of Radical Democracy, which became the Network Institute for Global Democratisation (NIGD) in 1997. The NIGD was one of the founding organizations of the International Council of the World Social Forum—an initiative to forge links and foster global solidarity between civil society groups around the world, which stands in counterpoint to the World Economic Forum.

Moreover, for two decades since its founding in 1998, I was heavily involved in the ATTAC movement, which was formed to develop and advocate policies to control and transform the power of global finance (beginning with the implementation of the "Tobin Tax"). Currently, I am a member of DiEM25, the trans-European movement party dedicated to democratizing European governance as an alternative to dissolution of the European Union; and the vice chair of the Euromemo group (European Economists for an Alternative Economic Policy in Europe), a network of European social scientists,

mainly economists, as well as political scientists and legal scholars. In these, we can see the embryos of a world party.

Already, the idea of Radical Democracy in 1993–94 was to form some kind of global political party. In the 2000s, I started to think about the idea more systematically, and in the 2000s, we received funding from the Ford Foundation through NIGD for a project on the topic of a world political party to transform and democratize institutions of global governance. The result was an edited book and, a little later, an article, which in turn led to Paul Raskin contacting me in the late 2010s and asking me to write a new, popular essay on the subject.[2] Since then, I have been involved in GTI and, a little later, also in the activities of the Tellus Institute.

Ethical-political orientation and the ability to influence the course of world history are two completely different things. Since the early 2000s, I have anticipated that what we are witnessing is partly analogical to the process that led to World War I while also involving traces of the 1930s.[3] However, I have been unable to do anything about such developments—thus failing on ethical and practical criteria of good anticipations.

Raskin's memoirs end with a call for greater solidarity and collective action while acknowledging that entrenched power structures, cultural inertia, and widespread despair pose significant obstacles. He argues that hope lies in the potential for surprise and the necessity of uniting catalysts to drive a transformative movement for a better future.

To be prepared for sudden and unexpected turns in history, we must have scenarios ready for different and emerging possibilities. Paul Raskin argues that the hope lies in the potential for surprise and the necessity of uniting catalysts to drive a transformative movement for a better future. Just as important as building a movement and a world party is the systematic analysis of possibilities for action and the forces driving global macrodynamics. This work continues through the dialectics of theory, practice, and world history.

Endnotes

1. For an interview published in 2023 in the *Journal of Critical Realism* covering all the main activities, themes, and works of my academic career, see Part 1 (from the 1980s to 2006) and Part 2 (since global financial crisis). "World Politics, Critical Realism and the Future of Humanity: An Interview with Heikki Patomäki, Part 1," with J. Morgan, *Journal of Critical Realism* 22, no. 3 (2023): 562–603, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14767430.2023.2188527; "World Politics, Critical Realism and the Future of Humanity: An Interview with Heikki Patomäki, Part 2," with J. Morgan, *Journal of Critical Realism* 22, no. 4 (2023): 720–766, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/ 14767430.2023.2188541.

2. "A World Political Party: The Time Has Come," *Great Transition Initiative* (February 2019), https://www.greattransition.org/publication/world-political-party; "Author's Response to GTI Roundtable 'Time for a World Political Party?'," *Great Transition Initiative* (February 2019), https://www.greattransition.org/roundtable/world-party-author-response.

3. See, e.g., the introduction to a collection of articles originally published in 2004–2024*: Globalizations: The Shape of Things to Come, Abingdon* (Routledge, 2025), 1–20, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386745392_Introduction_Critical_reflections_on_learning_about_the_dynamics_of_world_politics_and_the_driving_forces_of_global_history.

Heikki Patomäki is Professor of World Politics and Global Political Economy at the University of Helsinki and author of World Statehood: The Future of World Politics.

Kate Pickett

I appreciate this opportunity to reflect on how my own thinking and focus has evolved over time. I have shared such experiences in a few recent interviews (see here, here, here, and here).

When I went to university, I wasn't planning to become a social epidemiologist. In fact, I wanted to be an art historian. However, the art history course I wanted to take was not available my first semester, and I had to choose something else. I opted for archaeology and anthropology, and I fell in love with what is called biological anthropology, i.e., the study of the biological evolution of humans. How did we come to be anatomically and behaviorally modern humans? How do humans adapt to different climates, different altitudes? What are human diets like, and why are they like that? The field had connections to so many disciplines and piqued my curiosity.

After graduation, my intention was to become an international nutrition scientist. Given the lack of funding for postgraduate studies in Thatcher's Britain, I went to Cornell University, where I studied malnutrition and population health. I was fortunate to be able to take part in the Longitudinal Study of the East in Guatemala, also known as the INCAP study, which was set up in the 1960s to try to understand the nutritional aspects of child development and well-being. This was an amazing opportunity to be a part of a multidisciplinary team, do field work, learn a language, and publish a paper.

Although I had thought my work would focus on the Global South, it became clear that the problems I was studying were not confined to low-income countries but were also prevalent in lower-income parts of the US and UK. I went to Northern California—UC Berkeley—for my doctoral studies with an intention to focus on maternal health; however, Professor Barbara Abrams, who would become my supervisor, convinced me to study epidemiology instead because it would provide a methodology to study a wide array of research questions as opposed to confining me to a specific time in a person's lifespan. To this day, I am so glad that I let her talk me into it.

My research in social epidemiology led to my partnership with Richard Wilkinson (first research partner, now husband), whose work had focused on inequality in relation to life expectancy and mortality rates. Together, we began to work and think about a much wider range of issues and look at income inequality in relation to them. This led to our 2009 book *The Spirit Level*. We decided to write a book rather than a further set of peer-reviewed papers for journals because we felt we were sitting on a body of research that deserved to be more widely heard and known—by politicians, by policymakers, and by the public. Every day, we would hear about social problems in public discussion—from teenage birth rates to rates of imprisonment to rates of social mobility—but with no acknowledgment of the relationship to inequality. Our research, however, showed that income inequality is linked to a wide range of health and social problems, that the effects are large, and not only for the poor but also for the whole population.

Making a shift from being academics to being activists ourselves, we helped found the Equality Trust with a colleague, Bill Kerry, to campaign for greater equality and to educate about the impact of inequality in the UK. Public health has always been a campaigning discipline. Social epidemiology is the type of science that can produce evidence that needs political action.

Unfortunately, our book came out at the same time as a change in government in the UK, with the new Tory-LibDem government embracing austerity economics instead of prioritizing well-being and equality. What followed was a decade-plus program of cuts to public services and shrinking of the state, compounded by a global pandemic and, more recently, a cost-of-living crisis.

However, even though we have yet to see the fruits of our work in UK policy, there were signs that our research was having an impact. For the first time, every country made a commitment to reducing inequality in the form of Goal #10 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and Richard helped to shape the targets sitting under that goal. Many international organizations—the World Bank, the OECD, Oxfam, and Greenpeace for example—are focused on inequality as a problem in a way they were not fifteen years ago.

We published *The Inner Level* in 2018, which focuses on how income inequality undermines feelings of self-worth and damages mental health. We unpacked how popular myths about human nature and capabilities are used to justify inequality and explained how tackling inequality is essential to the transition to sustainable well-being. Last year, we have also published *The Spirit Level at 15*, an update

and extension of our earlier analyses that shows a sadly unchanged picture of inequality in rich countries.

My work has also developed to include local and regional research, as well as national and international comparisons. Following my work on a report with the British Academy on what localities could do to reduce health inequality, I have grown interested in the role of local government as an instrument for change. Through the research program Born in Bradford, I have been working with colleagues to develop Bradford, a diverse and economically depressed city, as a City of Research, one where citizens are engaged with research and local politics and policy is research-informed and evidence-based. I do feel it is useful to work at all scales and to think about where my specific skills and knowledge—the toolkit of social epidemiology—can be used to further population well-being and social justice.

Kate Pickett is Professor of Epidemiology at the University of York and co-author, with Richard Wilkinson, of the bestselling books The Spirit Level *and* The Inner Level.

Joe Ravetz

Seeds of a Global Mind Emerging from the Rubble: A Journey of Ideas into Action

Talking through the journeys of lives and ideas with the GTI community seems useful: experience shows the ideas of today are single threads in larger tapestries. So, to make space for ideas, this life story aims to be brief but also fun, with the parallel track of visual thinking or "visioneering."

Roots

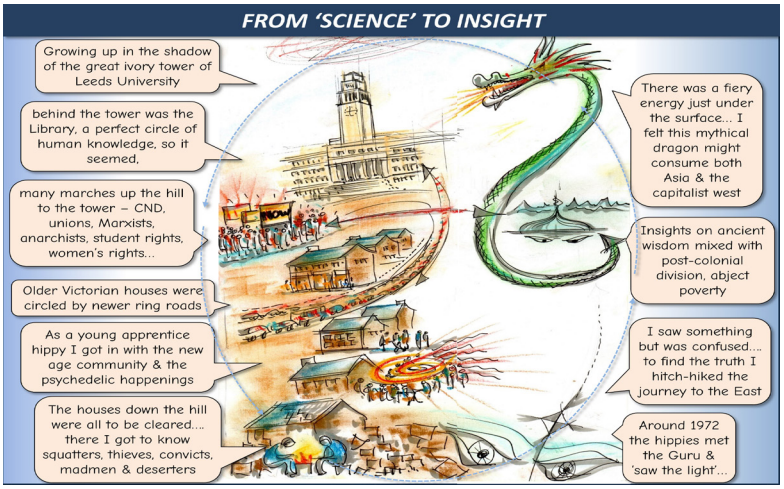
My mother Alison went to Cambridge (UK) as an idealistic young socialist from first-generation, middle-class London. My father Jerry went to Cambridge from a Quaker college in Philadelphia, and his father was a well-known union organizer, whose Jewish parents had migrated from Ukraine. In the polarized 1950s, my father was very keen to leave the USA and settle in England, where the best strategy was to marry and start a family, hence my birth in 1956 in a primitive miner's cottage in Durham. Jerry worked on "critical science" in its social context as a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) activist and, later, "post-normal science"— moving from socialism towards radical philosophy and mysticism. Alison worked on housing, planning, and community action— moving from socialism towards cooperative anarchism.

From "Science" to Insight

I grew up in the shadow of the great ivory tower of Leeds University, and the library just behind, a perfect circular sum of human scientific knowledge, so it seemed. But in the late 1960s ferment, there were regular marches up the hill to the tower, with CND, unions, Marxists, anarchists, students' rights, women's rights, and many local campaigns. As a young apprentice hippie, I passed straight through socialism and got in with the New Age community with psychedelic happenings and non-stop festivals. Older Victorian houses were circled by "urban development" of campuses and ring roads, while the houses down the hill were to be cleared, and at the bottom chaos

and degradation ruled. There, I got to know squatters, thieves, dealers, escaped convicts, madmen, deserters, and visionaries.

Figure 1

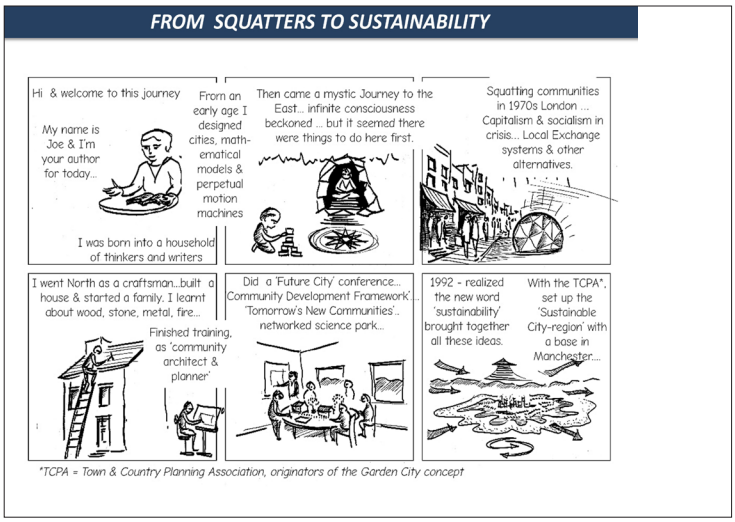


A Guru arrived at Glastonbury in the early 1970s, and many "saw the light." I saw something but was not convinced. To find out more, at age seventeen, I set off hitchhiking the journey to the East, to spend a year in Pakistan, Nepal, and India. Insights on timeless wisdom mixed with village animism, post-colonial division, abject poverty, and barely concealed conflict. I sensed a fiery energy just under the surface, and I thought the dragon would soon consume both Asia and the capitalist West.

From Squatters to Sustainability

Back from India in the mid-1970s, I went to London to study architecture at University College London (UCL), but it seemed architects were self-deluded servants of capital, so I moved into the squatters community of Tolmers Square and organized conferences on urban futures. Both capitalism and socialism, it seemed, were in crisis: we explored an emerging third dimension with creative activism, local exchange trading, urban gift economies, radical therapy circles, and so on. I took indefinite leave from UCL, went north, and set up as a craftsperson in the Calder Valley Free State ("of mind and spirit…"). I played flute and saxophone in various bands, rock, jazz, folk, and fusion. I built a house, started a family with the help of the village, and learned about wood, stone, metal, and fire.

Figure 2



After six years of material grounding, I felt more ready to re-climb the "cognitive ladder" through the professions and into policy circles. So I completed the seven years of training, and then practiced as social/community architect/planner, in the Northern England landscape of post-industrial unemployment and the right-wing politics of austerity and privatization.

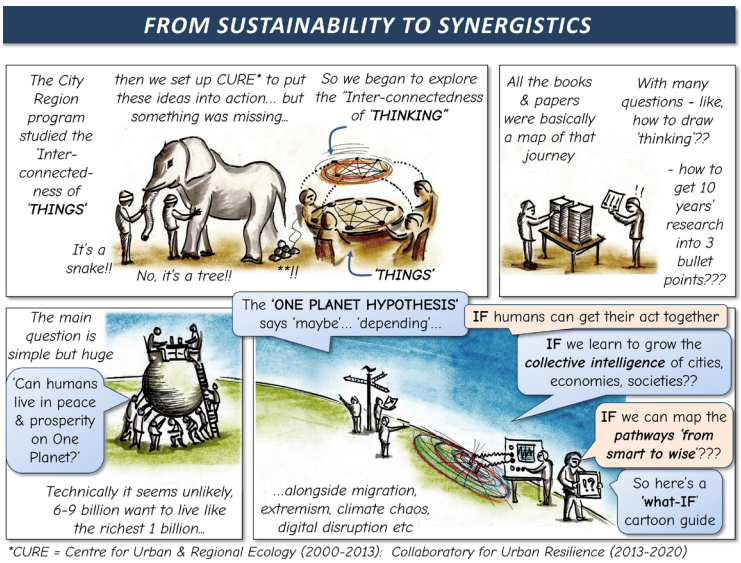
This led in the late 1980s to forming a national level "Community Development Framework," which aimed for multi-level collaborative governance, through both legislation and professional capacity building (it was due for national launch when the financial crisis of 1991 crashed the industry). Meanwhile, parallel opportunities came up: a post-industrial eco-village scheme for the "Tomorrow's New Communities" prize, and then an opportunity to put ideas into practice, as manager of a regional railway development company.

From Sustainability to Synergistics

From the Rio Summit 1992, I realized this magic word "sustainability" could bring together all of these ideas—social, ecological, political, and so on. With backing from the TCPA (Town & Country Planning Association), I set up the Sustainable City Region partnership with a base in Greater Manchester. The methods aimed to apply what was first sketched in the Community Development Framework: practical ways of "social design" with complex inter-connected systems for sustainability transformations. But—along with everyone else—we were complete beginners. With hindsight, this was a precursor to the

full synergistic approach two decades ahead, with insights to follow on co-evolution and collective intelligence.

Figure 3



*CURE = Centre for Urban & Regional Ecology (2000-2013): Collaboratory for Urban Resilience (2013-2020)

This program was basically a long-range "think-lab" on the "Inter-connected-ness of '**Things**'"— land, housing, industry, climate change, and so on. The Sustainable City-Region project produced a book (*City-Region 2020*), which helped to define a working agenda. Research funding began to roll, and we set up the Centre for Urban & Regional Ecology (CURE) to put ideas into action. Then after half a decade of running around projects and countries, I started to feel something was missing, and the gap between words and actions was growing wider. So we began to explore the "Inter-connected-ness of '**Thinking**'"—basically how organizations, institutions, communities, and cultures can communicate, learn, innovate, and collaborate for systems transformation.

Many questions came up, such as how to draw "thinking," or how to get ten years' research into three bullet points. But the main question is simple and huge: "Can humans live in peace and prosperity on One Planet?" Technically, it seems unlikely, as long as 6–9 billion people want to live like the richest 1 billion—even before the challenges of inequality, migration, extremism, climate chaos, digital disruption, etc. So this led to a "**One Planet Hypothesis**." This says "maybe"… "depending"…

- **If** humans can get their act together
- **If** we learn to grow the *collective intelligence* of cities, economies, societies

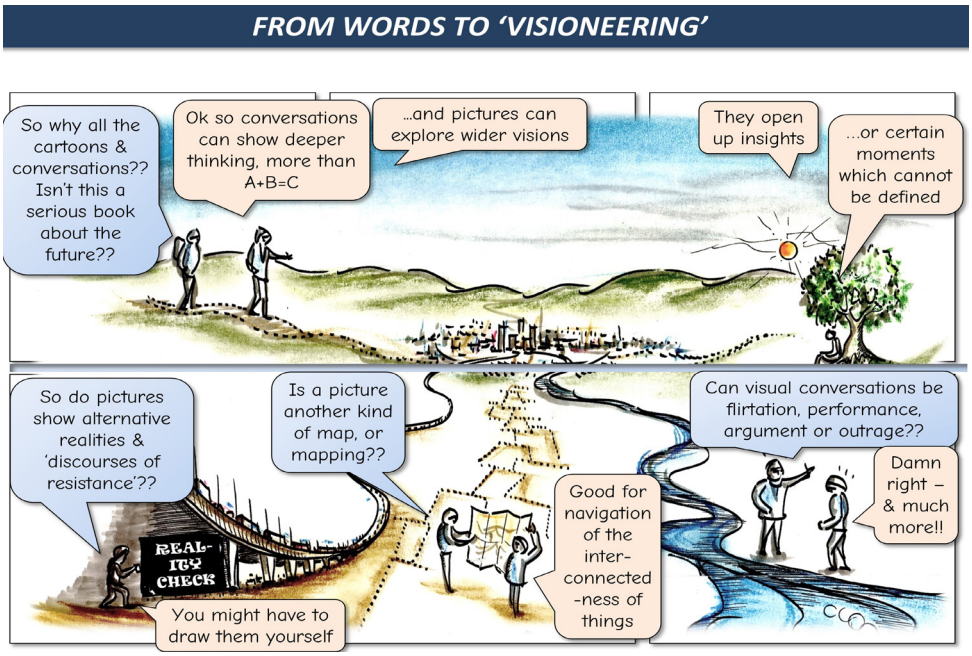
- **If** we can map the *pathways "from smart to wise."*

From there, the synergistic approach began to take shape, in many projects first around Europe, and then USA, Mexico, the Gulf, Russia, India, Australia, and so on. While the core principles began to emerge—engaging with a wider community of interest, with deeper layers of value, and further horizons of transformation—this was always fluid, entrepreneurial, developing the methods "on the hoof." But now and again something magic happened, with unique insights and synergies, and new opportunities opening up.

From Words to Visioneering

Along this journey, I grew a sideline of cartooning and graphic facilitation (a legacy of design practice). This became central to the synergistic approach for integrating knowledges, values, worldviews—and even more so the contradictions, dissonances, and conflicts. Visual thinking is one of the easiest ways to think out of the rational-scientific box (video, gaming, theater, or music can also work well).

Figure 4



Against the post-2008 rise of post-truth, populist science denial, and extremism, it seemed that visual thinking and "visioneering" was one part of a much bigger landscape. We could begin to see connections between foresight, visioning, gaming and role play, systems mapping, social design, and holistic therapy. In the Mind-Lab, or Laboratory for Collective Intelligence, we began to apply this as the "reality-mapping" method, to explore the "big bad world" of power, money, and ideology, along with the underlying dynamics of patriarchy, colonization, and capitalism.

All this was then amplified by a major life event, just after COP26 in 2021. Our son Dale, a talented writer, activist and "contra-preneur," died suddenly from leukemia at forty-two. Soon after, Russia invaded Ukraine; conflicts escalated in Gaza, Myanmar, and Sudan; and the world seemed darker every day. Somehow, some psychic doors beyond life or death opened up for me… with some insights which cannot be defined.

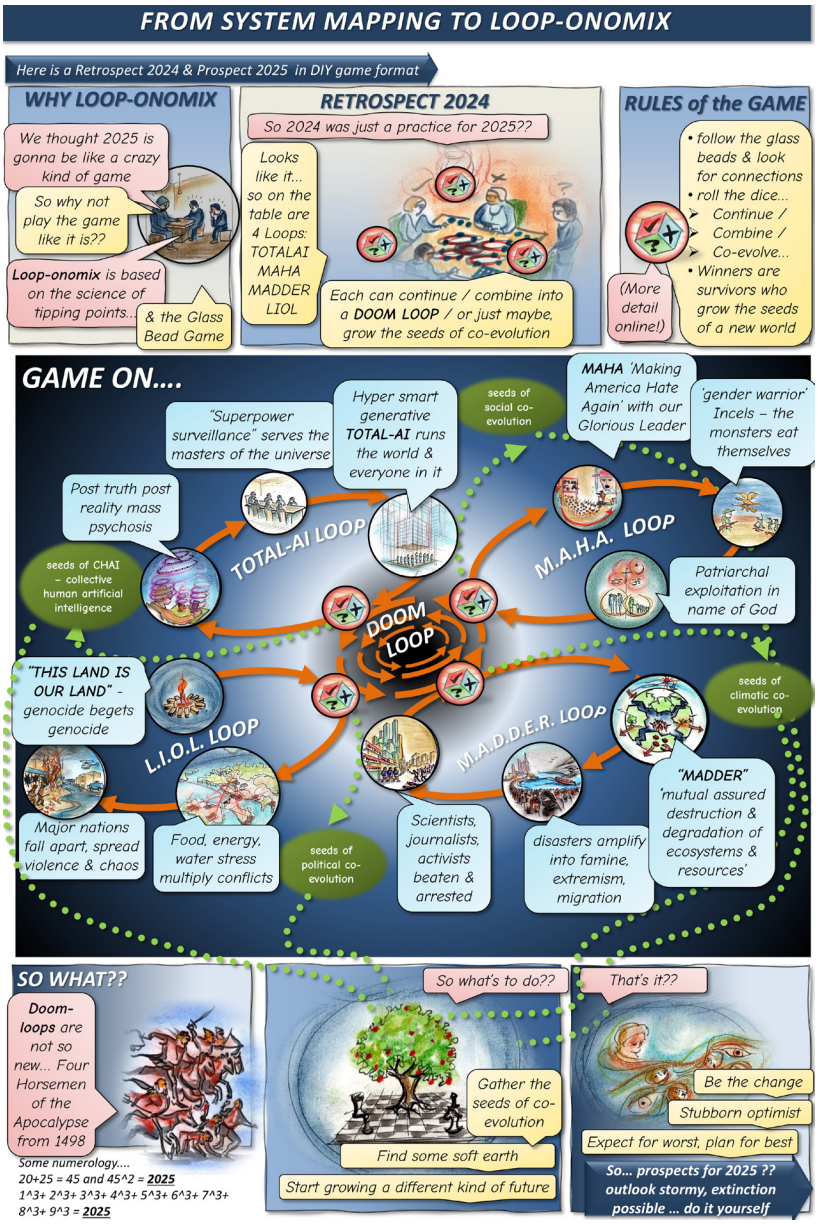
From Systems Mapping to Loop-onomix

Meanwhile, through the COVID period, we set up online dialogues and project forums to explore the growing uncertainties and existential conflicts. The "Loop-onomix" series emerged in response, sketching hugely powerful loops of self-destruction, such as these in early 2025:

- *T.A.I. – "Total Artificial Intelligence"*
- *M.A.H.A. – "Making America Hate Again"*
- *M.A.D.D.E.R. – "Mutual Assured Destruction & Degradation of Ecosystems & Resources"*
- *L.I.O.L. – "This Land Is Our Land"—where genocide begets genocide*

… and if these find ways to multiply into combined "Doom-Loops," the risks are total and existential. There's no way to forecast or model such loops, so maybe game play is another way to respond: the winners are the survivors who can co-operate to grow a new world, gathering the seeds of co-evolution, which scatter each time the dice is rolled. Maybe this is a kind of metaphor in response to the "One Planet Hypothesis," and the message from Buckminster Fuller—"the best way to forecast the future is to design it."

Figure 5



Post-Script

Through this journey, fundamental ideas and questions were forming—maybe all these political movements or sustainability methods were different angles on the same journey? Could we map such a journey, which connects the inner human experience to outer material realities? This is the journey of *co-evolutionary collective intelligence*, and the pathways "from smart to wise," beyond the self-destructive evolutionary capitalist-colonialist-patriarchal systems of today.

Meanwhile, some may notice a connection to my father, and I am pleased to flag that Jerry Ravetz and Silvio Funtowicz were awarded the Boulding Prize for their work on post normal science. This suggests a kind of family enterprise, which now points in my direction, to follow through on questions that PNS has helped to raise:

- If "truth" is no longer a hegemonic zone of scientific-industrial-colonialist "rationality"…
- Can interactive "multi-logue" between different worldviews provide a landscape of new pathways for collective intelligence?

The situation as of early 2025 looks more existential every day—with global trade wars, anti-science and anti-equality extremism, a politics of hatred and division, the threat of AI takeover, and, beyond the 1.5 degrees threshold, runaway climate change. These new pathways for collective intelligence have never been so urgent.

Joe Ravetz is Co-Director of the Collaboratory for Urban Resilience & Energy at the Manchester Urban Institute and author of Deeper City: Collective Intelligence and the Pathways from Smart to Wise.

Isabel Rimanoczy

Thanks for the invitation to reflect on the people and experiences that shaped my intellectual and developmental journey through these turbulent decades.

A child of the 1950s, I was curious about "flower power," women's liberation voices, May 68, and protests against nuclear weapons and the Vietnam war. My adolescence happened in Argentina, in the turbulent years of daily terrorist bomb attacks and kidnappings by leftist activists, then a populist government followed by a brutal dictatorship led by a military junta, with over 30,000 "suspicious" people erased from life. The departments of sociology and philosophy were shut down. Books by philosophers and intellectuals were banned and burned, and the owners transported to undisclosed detention centers. I was lucky to have read some of them before. They planted seeds in my mind, with ideas that were not very clear to me, but which would stay hibernating and sprout decades later. Teachers and college professors would no longer bring up perspectives that might risk everyone's life.

The 1980s brought back democracy and with it the fascination with globalization, free markets, progress through capital to finally "bring wealth to all," Reagan and Thatcher. I bought into this dream—the self-made woman, professional and independent, and dropped my work as a child therapist in a rural area to start building a successful practice as a consultant to multinational corporations.

The attack on the Twin Towers started a new era in my personal journey. My psychological background brought me a question that I was not hearing in the media: What must we (US Americans) have done to get these individuals so upset? I had by then moved to the USA and was on the path of becoming a US citizen, trying to learn to fit in, but the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq sounded so wrong to me.

An unexpected experience invited me to review my life from the perspective of purpose and values, and I found myself in a sea of confusion and foggy feelings. I began to let go of my certainties, and this opened the gate to many interesting, undecipherable encounters. In hindsight, I recognize it as the start of my spiritual life. The less I knew, the more I found.

The levies broke, and the tide brought into my life naturalists and poets like John Muir, Rainer Maria Rilke, Goethe, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, David Whyte, and Henry David Thoreau; Buddhism and spiritual teachers like Abraham Joshua Heschel, Gandhi, and Eckhart Tolle; spirituality researchers like Dannah Zohar, Sharon Daloz Parks, and Jon Kabat-Zinn; sustainability voices like Al Gore, Bill McKibben, Fritjof Capra, Clive Hamilton, and David Suzuki. Scholars questioning our worldview also came back, such as Gus Speth, Vaclav Havel, Iain McGilchrist, and Parker Palmer, and so did environmentalists like Rachel Carlson, Janine Benyus, Dana Meadows, Joanna Macy, and Paul Hawken. Likewise inspiring were feminist voices like Carol Gilligan, Marija Gimbutas, Susan Griffin, and porters of new models like Juliet Schor, Riane Eisler, and Helena Norberg-Hodge. Also shaping my thought were psychologists like Daniel Goleman, Peter Senge, and Otto Scharmer; development scholars like Robert Kegan, Bill Torbert, and Ken Wilber; and quantum physics teachers like Rupert Sheldrake, Einstein, Ervin László, David Bohm, and Erwin Schrödinger.

All these influences and some more merged as I focused on how to develop a sustainability mindset. The first book I published about this topic confused the publisher, who asked, "Is this about sustainability? Business? Personal development? Spirituality? Philosophy?" The answer was yes, and this was a challenge for someone who needed to classify a book into a given category.

One day, I created a collage, pasting on my shadow images of some of these intellectual shamans that shaped not just my thinking, but who I am.

Humans cannot help inspiring and being inspired by others we may never meet. Something not to underestimate.

Isabel Rimanoczy is the creator of the the PRME Working Group on Sustainability Mindset and author of The Sustainability Mindset Principles: A Guide for Educators to Shape a Better World.

Gus Speth

A Story of Political Transformation, from my memoir *Angels by the River*

I believe this story of my political evolution from mainstream environmentalism to fervent advocate of deep, fundamental change in our political and economic systems might be helpful to others searching for a way forward. I tell this story in my 2014 memoir, Angels by the River.

How did a nice, conservative, Southern white boy become a civilly disobedient, older, still white guy bent on transformative change to a new system of political economy?

The people I know with any ambition want to be successful at what they do—to feel they are accomplishing something meaningful. And so we accommodate in various ways to what is required to be effective in the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves. It's important, then, to try to stay in jobs or other situations where that accommodation is not too much of a stretch. If it is, unless we're unusually malleable, we're going to be either unhappy or ineffective or both.

I have been extremely fortunate in this regard. I've held both advocacy and management positions that allowed me to stay comfortably in my own progressive skin, with ample freedom to maneuver. That said, it is true that those positions have all been jobs within the American mainstream, and true also that I conducted myself to be effective in those contexts.

Thus it happened in 2004 that *Time* magazine would refer to me as "the ultimate insider." I had never thought of myself that way, but it stuck and was picked up yet again in 2012 by Wen Stephenson in the title for an interview he did with me in the online *Grist*, titled "'Ultimate Insider' Goes Radical."

. . .

The journey from "insider" to "radical" that Stephenson describes began when I returned to Yale in 1999. My decade long tenure as dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies provided me the opportunity to step back from the fray and do what professors are supposed to do: take a hard, searching look at what is actually going on. Subsequently, the Vermont Law School provided the same opportunity. At both I not only had the time to reflect but also the freedom and encouragement to speak out. That was part of the job, not a hindrance to it.

Shortly after becoming dean, I began looking at information on conditions and trends in the environment and, later, in other areas to see where America actually stands after several decades of much progressive effort and even more resistance. And the harder and longer I looked, the more I felt that I was being mugged by reality. As I noted earlier, after years of claiming this and that environmental victory, we find ourselves today fast approaching environmental catastrophe. More broadly, if one looks at where the United States stands among the 20 leading advanced democracies on 30 key indicators of national well-being—poverty, inequality, education, social mobility, health, environment, and on and on—you find that "We're Number One!" in exactly the way we don't want to be—at or very near the bottom. So I started organizing my thoughts, offering lectures, and then writing.

My first sustained effort to articulate my growing concerns was *Red Sky at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment*, published by Yale University Press in 2004. It grew out of a series of lectures I had given in a course for Yale undergraduates. For over twenty years prior I had worked to promote international responses to a series of pressing global scale problems: climate change, biodiversity loss, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, and more. By the time I took a group of Yale students to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the international community had in fact adopted an impressive array of treaties and other agreements addressed to almost all these challenges.

My first task was to assess how these agreements were working. I was prepared for some bad news, but it was worse than I anticipated—and not much has changed in the decade since 2004. As I wrote in *Red Sky at Morning*, "the bottom line is that these treaties and their associated agreements and protocols do not drive the changes that are needed. Thus far, the climate convention is not protecting climate,

the biodiversity convention is not protecting biodiversity, the desertification convention is not preventing desertification, and even the older and stronger Convention on the Law of the Sea is not protecting fisheries. Nor are they poised to do so in the immediate future. The same can be said for the extensive international discussions on world forests, which never have reached the point of a convention. . . .

Those conclusions forced me to ask *why*. What had gone wrong? ….There are deeper drivers of deterioration than our treaty regimes are addressing—the root causes that I mentioned. *Red Sky at Morning* identified ten: population growth, mounting affluence, inappropriate technology, widespread poverty, market failure, policy and political failure, the scale and rate of economic growth, the nature of our economic system, our culture and its misguided values, and the forces loosed upon the world by the globalization of the economy. This, obviously, is quite a list. Undaunted, I went on to propose an agenda for real change in global environmental governance, including what is needed to address these ten underlying forces. So little has since been done to adopt my proposals that, a decade later, they are for the most part still fresh as a daisy.

The book was getting attention, but I was not satisfied with my first effort to get to the bottom of the environmental problem, and I wanted also to broaden the analysis beyond the global-scale challenges and to focus particularly on the United States. When the opportunity arose to offer the DeVane Lectures at Yale, I accepted the invitation and decided to use the lectures as the means to explore these issues more deeply. There's nothing quite like the requirement of delivering a fresh, hour-long lecture every week for a semester in front of two hundred people to concentrate the mind, and in the winter and spring of 2007, that's what I did. *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, published the following year, was the product of those lectures.

In *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*, I summarized my conclusions in six points:

- The vast expansion of economic activity that occurred in the twentieth century and continues today is the predominant (but not the only) cause of the environmental decline that has occurred to date. Yet, the world economy, now increasingly integrated and globalized, is poised for unprecedented growth. The engine of this growth is modern capitalism.

- A mutually reinforcing set of forces associated with today's capitalism combine to yield economic

activity inimical to environmental sustainability. This result is partly the consequence of an ongoing political default—a failed politics—that not only perpetuates widespread market failure—all the nonmarket environmental costs that no one is paying—but exacerbates this market failure with deep and environmentally perverse subsidies. The result is that our market economy is operating on wildly wrong market signals.

- The upshot is that societies now face environmental threats of unprecedented scope and severity, with the possibility of various catastrophes, breakdowns, and collapses looming as distinct possibilities, especially as environmental issues link with social inequities and tensions, resource scarcity, and other issues.

- Today's mainstream environmentalism, as I described in the previous chapter, has proven insufficient in dealing with current challenges and is not up to coping with the larger challenges ahead.

- The momentum of the current system is so great that only powerful forces will alter the trajectory. Potent measures are needed that address the root causes of today's destructive growth and transform economic activity into something environmentally benign and restorative.

- In short, most environmental deterioration is a result of systemic failures of the capitalism that we have today, and long-term solutions must seek transformative change in the key features of this contemporary capitalism.

As with *Red Sky at Morning*, the larger part of *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* is concerned not with identifying the problems but with pointing to the solutions. In the case of *The Bridge*, most of the actions I urge are focused on changing our current system of political economy.

My analysis was getting sharper, but I was still not happy. It is clear to anyone reading the newspapers that America is beset by multiple problems—not just environmental but also social, economic, and political. Our system of political economy is delivering bad results not only for the environment but across the whole spectrum of national life. There are more big things on our national to-do list than we have fingers and toes. . ..I wanted to explore the linkages among these issues, to look more closely at our country and how we have come to find ourselves in such a sea of troubles, and to present a vision of a possible future that, while plausible, would be a place we'd be happy to have our children and grandchildren inhabit.

When the Vermont Law School invited me to give a series of public lectures, my next book, *America the Possible: Manifesto for a New Economy*, was launched.

…

America the Possible makes the case for driving system change so deeply that our country emerges with a new system of political economy, one programmed to routinely deliver good results for people, place, and planet. The idea of a new political economy is too big to swallow whole. System change can best be approached through a series of interacting, mutually reinforcing transformations—transformations that attack and undermine the key motivational structures of the current system, transformations that replace these old structures with new arrangements needed for a sustaining economy and a successful democracy.

As I wrote in *America the Possible*, I believe the following transformations hold the key to moving to a new political economy. We can think of each as a transition from today to tomorrow.

- *The market*: from near laissez-faire to powerful market governance in the public interest; from dishonest prices to honest ones and from unfair wages to fair ones; from commodification to reclaiming the commons, the things that rightfully belong to all of us;

- *The corporation*: from shareholder primacy to stakeholder primacy, from one ownership and profit-driven model to new business models and to economic democracy and public scrutiny of major investment decisions;

- *Economic growth*: from growth fetish to post-growth society, from mere GDP growth to growth in social and environmental well-being and democratically determined priorities;

- *Money and finance*: from Wall Street to Main Street, from money created through bank debt to money created by government; from investments seeking high financial return to those seeking high social and environmental returns;

- *Social conditions*: from economic insecurity to security, from vast inequities to fundamental fairness;

- *Indicators*: from GDP ("grossly distorted picture") to accurate measures of social and environmental health and quality of life;

- *Consumerism*: from consumerism and affluenza to sufficiency and mindful consumption, from more to enough;

- *Communities*: from runaway enterprise and throwaway communities to vital local economies, from social rootlessness to rootedness and solidarity;

- *Dominant cultural values*: from having to being, from getting to giving, from richer to better, from separate to connected, from apart from nature to part of nature, from near-term to long-term;

- *Politics*: from weak democracy to strong, from creeping corporatocracy and plutocracy to true popular sovereignty;

- *Foreign policy and the military*: from American exceptionalism to America as a normal nation, from hard power to soft, from military prowess to real security.

Here's the good news: we are already seeing the proliferation of innovative actions along these lines, particularly at the local level in our communities: sustainable communities, transition towns, local living economies, sustainable and regenerative agriculture, new regional and organic food systems, community investment institutions as well as innovative business models—including social enterprises, for-benefit business, and co-ops of several types (worker owned, producer owned, consumer owned)—that prioritize community and environment over profit and growth. We are also seeing the spread of new community-oriented and earth-friendly lifestyles. These initiatives provide inspirational models of how things might work in a new political economy devoted to sustaining human and natural communities. They are bringing the future into the present.

… Here is how it might all come together. As conditions in our country continue to decline across a wide front, or at best fester as they are, ever-larger numbers of Americans lose faith in the current system and its ability to deliver on the values it proclaims. The system steadily loses support, leading to a crisis of legitimacy. Meanwhile, traditional crises, both in the economy and in the environment, grow more numerous and fearsome. In response, progressives of all stripes coalesce, find their voice and their strength, and pioneer the development of a powerful set of new ideas and policy proposals confirming that the path to a better world does indeed exist. Demonstrations and protests multiply, and a powerful movement for pro-democracy reform and transformative change is born. At the local level, people

and groups plant the seeds of change through a host of innovative initiatives that provide inspirational models of how things might work in a new political economy devoted to sustaining human and natural communities. Sensing the direction in which the current is moving, our wiser and more responsible leaders, political and otherwise, rise to the occasion, support the growing movement for change, and frame a compelling story or narrative that makes sense of it all and provides a positive vision of a better America. It is a moment of democratic possibility.

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Peter Sterling

For decades, I explained in articles and talks that common mental disturbances are not brain disorders. Neurochemistry, imaging, and genetics reveal *no* "biomarkers." Disturbances are not distinct illnesses, and genetic contributions involve thouands of genes with mostly small effects. Genes associated with various diagnoses overlap greatly, and there is high "comorbidity." Thus, if you suffer one sort of disturbance, you will probably also suffer others. The strongest predictors of mental disturbances are adverse childhood experience and abuse. "*But why then*," I am often asked, "*do some people from 'normal families' become disturbed without apparent adverse experience or abuse?*"

Of course, "normal family" is a fiction. There are mostly Tolstoy families, each unhappy in its own way. So here I consider a *particular* family—my own—and one *particular* person—myself. Between the ages of thirty and sixty, my core adulthood, I suffered intermittent mental disturbances, including depression, marital conflict, extramarital affairs, marital collapse, cannabis intoxication, profound grieving on losing my father, and intense conflicts with my mother. I attribute these disturbances to specific difficulties in childhood. To these, I adapted effectively, but in early adulthood, my childhood adaptations failed. Then across three decades with substantial psychotheraputic assistance, I constructed a stronger framework and managed to reach the far shore.

Consider first that every unhappy family has an unhappy history. Dad's parents left Vilnius, then Russia, in 1906 to avoid being murdered. Thirty-five years later, all family members who stayed on were exterminated. Dad (Philip Schatz), reaching Ellis Island *in utero*, was reared in a Jewish ghetto in Cleveland, OH, where his father was a house painter and proud member of a Jewish union. Dad, a working-class youth, had no formal education beyond high school. Nevertheless, he became a

reporter and wrote essays, reviews, and short stories—often for leftist periodicals such as the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*.

Unemployed in the Great Depression, he was hired by the Federal Writers' Project (1936) where he met Dorothy Dannenberg. Born to a prosperous family of assimilated German Jews, she had been educated at Dalton, Wellesley, and Barnard. Thus began an intra-family class conflict: Dad, being poor and with less formal education, often felt one-down—to which he responded defiantly. Mom was oblivious to the problem, so their conflict played out over five decades. Sunday dinners were the worst: Mom would serve a roast rare, as preferred by German Jews, but to a Russian Jew, disgustingly raw. The quantity of tiles, plates, and glasses smashed in fury over a decade could have stocked a Pottery Barn.

While courting, Mom and Dad resolved to conceal their Jewish origins by changing Dad's surname to Sterling, and days after the decree in 1937, they married. But the camouflage failed. When Congress defunded the Writers' Project in 1939 as too "red," Dad was again unemployed, but soon Philip *Sterling* was hired to run a movie theater in Pelham, a small town twenty miles north of New York. There, a rental agent, glancing at Dad, asked if he was Jewish and explained that no one in Pelham rents to Jews. Mom, writing her memoir, told a friend, "*I'm up to 1940, pregnant, and hoping Phil will find a job*." Thus, already as a fetus, I was stressed by anticommunism and antisemitism.

What about parental attachment to their infant son? Mom wrote, "*Nearing 26, I felt no maternal urge, had never held a baby, but my conventional self said it's time*." Dad's home movies document her discomfort with holding me. Mom wrote that she had never considered quitting work (on *LIFE* magazine) and that after four months at home, "*Much as I loved my son, I was bored... eager to return to the magazine, politics, and recruiting members for the union*." Fortunately, I was rescued by my nanny, Annette Lee, who rubbed, tickled, nuzzled, and encouraged me from my fourth postnatal month through my tenth year.

When I was seven, in 1948, we moved from Queens to the town of Rye—still deeper into nativist territory—where my folks, along with a small group of comrades, had built a cluster of modern houses, soon known locally as Red Hill. Mom quit *LIFE* to write books. Money ran low, and in 1950,

Annette was let go. Mom wrote, "*When time came for us to part, I postponed the decision, terrified at the thought of starting to cook again...still dream of Annette's apple pie.*" Mom lost her pie, and I lost my most secure attachment. Where was Dad?

In "normal" families, the devil is in the secrets. My father had been married previously and had a son nine years my senior, William Shatz. Billy suffered from a congenital heart defect, and corrective surgery failed: he died in 1948 at age sixteen. So, while Mom was writing, and Annette was banished, Dad was awash in grief, guilt, and shame. Nearing forty, I wrote to Dad asking for the story of his first marriage and son. He never answered, but forty-four years later, I found his draft reply, including the line "*You never saw my cataclysmic pain or crushing guilt because somehow I succeeded in suppressing my feelings about that unhappy period in my life.*"

Dad's other burdens included September 1949 when fascism threatened. Dad attended a concert by Paul Robeson in Peekskill, NY, thirty miles from our home. After the concert, cars and buses were attacked by a mob, openly supported by New York State Police. Dad returned late, outwardly intact but inwardly shaken. Between 1948 and 1958, more than one hundred members of the Communist Party were jailed under the Smith Act (1940) and the McCarran Act (1950). Communists were interrogated before Congress; their passports were confiscated; they were fired and blacklisted. Dad's 1950 "Christmas present" from his employer, CBS radio, was a demand to fill out and sign "loyalty questionnaire" attesting that he was not a Communist—which, of course, he was. Across this decade, our spare bedroom (formerly Annette's) sheltered our county's CP organizer from the FBI and sometimes national CP officials later jailed under Smith Act. Dad, so profoundly burdened, was too preoccupied to attach.

How did I adapt to the loss of my primary attachments? By soothing myself with sweets and developing strategies to garner adult attention. Marian Hall, a classmate from fourth grade, later recalled me as "*a chubby, pompous 10 yr-old.*" "Pompous" probably referred to my eagerness in class. Teachers liked my energetic enthusiasm, hand waving wildly: *I know the answer! I know! Me!* The key to Mom's attention, I learned, was to join her myriad book projects: trees, bugs, ferns, caves, Harriet Tubman, and more. By the time I left for college, she had published nine books, and I had scouted them all with her and read every draft. I also became her empathic confidant regarding her own parents and husband.

Dad was too shut down to use me as a confidant. So I joined his adventures in empathic behavior. I spoke up for the downtrodden in school, joined the NAACP youth group, and volunteered at twenty for the Freedom Rides. For Mom, I could just listen, but for Dad, I had to risk my life.

I sought extrafamilial mentors to please with my youthful intensity: in high school, several summers on a small farm in the Hudson Valley with Les Rice—who wrote "Banks of Marble"—often sung by Pete Seeger. In college, I found Howard Schneiderman, a charismatic young professor of physiology, and plunged deeply into his courses, plus a research project in his lab. In graduate school, I found Hans Kuypers, a charismatic young professor of neuroanatomy, and embraced his projects on motor circuits, completing a PhD under his supervision. But then my childhood "mentor strategy" began to fail. For postdoctoral research, I joined a lab at Harvard Medical School, where my two "mentors" were on track for a Nobel Prize—and they were irritated by my eager pomposity.

My attachment strategy had another component. I married at twenty—pledging to cherish another twenty-year-old "till death do us part." She, too, was insecurely attached to communist parents. We supported each other well enough through grad school, then through my Harvard postdoc. Well enough to start a family; well enough to start my own laboratory at UPenn and buy a house. But without mentors to please and encourage me, I grew frightened and depressed. It grew hard to go to lab, hard to make decisions, assert my authority, or meet the many challenges that independence requires. Finally, it was hard to get out of bed.

I joined a neighborhood "men's group," at thirty-one its youngest member. These guys immediately spotted my babyish behavior and mocked it. When early on I criticized a group member for his affair, he responded: "*What are <u>you</u> afraid of?*" As it turned out, pretty much everything beyond the boundaries set by my insecure attachments. By age thirty-four, still depressed and anxious, I consulted a psychiatrist who wisely who prescribed readings beyond my Marxist cannon—including *Siddhartha* (life of Bhudda), the *Tao Te Ching* (truths of the Universe), *Zen and the Art of Archery* (power from practice), *The Book of Five Rings* (paths to courage), and *Joy of Sex* (paths to pleasure).

Over the next decade, I explored *physically*—running, trekking, skiing, wind-surfing. I explored *scientifically*, ranging far beyond my conventional laboratory training. I began to grasp how neural circuits for emotion regulate physiology and expressed this in a new concept, "allostasis." I explored

ethnographically, determined to see other lives. Initially, I devoured ethnographies but then began to visit indigenous communities in Central America, where I now live for half of each year.

By age forty, I was ready to re-commit to my marriage. However, my wife, engaged in her own parallel struggle, couldn't manage it. To bear my tension, despair, and rage, I used lots of cannabis. As we turned forty-two, our marriage collapsed—delivering me to the edge of true madness—as my then adolescent children could testify. That summer I read the magnificent stories of men lost in mid-life: Dante's *Inferno*, Goethe's *Faust*.

Then I found Genesis, which recounts the madness of the first Jewish families. Abraham's auditory hallucination—his "voice of God"—says, "*Take your second-born son Isaac to the mountain and sacrifice him.*" Isaac, craving attachment, climbs right up onto the altar to offer his throat. Isaac's mom, Sarah, noodges Abraham to expel his enslaved concubine Hagar and his first-born son, Ishmael. Suddenly, I grasped my family's madness as a wellspring of my own madness. I asked Dad if he had realized that my trip to Mississippi was our re-enacting Genesis 22:1–14? A moment of silence on the phone, and then his hoarsely whispered, "*Yes.*" I hadn't the heart to ask Dad about his Sara, Hagar, and Ishmael.

Dad died when I was forty-nine. Grieving deeply, I turned to another psychiatrist and recounted, between sobs my many efforts to embrace Dad's moral challenges, I found relief—but only now in writing, do I finally get it. My oceanic grief was at losing my last chance for paternal attachment. And Mom? We could not discuss my discoveries of the aboriginal self-absorbed, manipulative Jewish mothers, nor her role in banishing Dad's first son from our family's memory. As I grieved for Dad, she would complain to me of the burden he had been. I would firmly stop her, saying,"*He was your husband, but my* dad"—determined to finally abandon my lifelong role as her confidant. I began attending Jewish services centered on atonement. I remarried happily and faithfully.

My last mental disturbance occured when I was sixty and Mom was eighty-five. She asked what I planned as a wedding present to the son of my beloved cousin. I named a figure, kinder than she wished to be, and she responded: "*Are you crazy?*" Suddenly, I was crazy—fleeing her house in a blind rage, slamming the door violently. Back in the city, I felt ashamed. How could I still be battling with my aged, infirm mother?

The therapist, whom I had seen a decade earlier upon my father's death, handed me Alice Miller's *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, which explains that a mother who is emotionally insecure may depend for her narcissistic equilibrium on the child's becoming her confidant. The child responds intuitively to the mother's unconscious need, thereby securing her "love" and guaranteeing some existential security. Eventually such "mothers-of-their-mothers" develop special sensitivity to the unconscious signals of others' needs. Until at some point they may grow depressed or mad. Often, I learned, they become therapists.

Realizing that I had lived satisfyingly as a sort of therapist to my students and friends, I made a silent peace with Mom. When she died at ninety-five, I was able to write for her a respectful and loving obituary. A decade later, our family's five generations of wandering in the Gentile wilderness ended, when her great-grandson Sam was bar mitzvahed.

In my family, there was joy, laughter, and goodwill. But also stresses spanning continents, generations, social class, economic cycles, and politics. There were intra-familial secrets and extramarital dramas with ex-partners, stepchildren, guilt, and shame. There was parental anxiety, resentment, and quarreling that left children with attachment deficits and chronic anxiety. Children adapt—as I did—but as circumstances change, new adaptations were needed, plus help for the transitions—across the whole life cycle. In this context, named disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, and various psychotic manifestations, should be understood as signals that something is not working. Since my own disturbances appear as variations on common human difficulties, I have been eager to share them to foster broader understanding.

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Mimi Stokes

Looking at the state of the world, now, it may seem reasonable to fear that the Great Transition will never happen. It is barbaric out there.

I have a pattern of reversal in my personal life that makes me see things otherwise. I have never been more certain of the natural inevitability of a creative, transformational evolution to the planetary stage of Human Flourishing than I am now.

Let me share a bit of my personal life story to explain my optimism.

The pattern of reversal in my life was laid down at my birth. My mother was given a grim prognosis and tragic fate of death if she tried to have the daughter (me) she and my father wanted. She got a second opinion and decided to do natural childbirth, radical in the 1950s. I was the easiest and only natural birth of my mother's four children.

I carry the pattern of my birth of grim prognoses and tragic fates of death reversing into wonderful, natural births. Sometimes I frame my deep, felt sense of this pattern of reversal as the "original condition" that formed the living "Field" of my Self. With my background in improvisational theater, I mostly see Reversal as the rule for the improvisation of my life.

Cue: Viola Spolin, who plays a cameo role in Raskin's life story. To me, it is no surprise that the man who would envision The Great Transition crossed paths with the greatest improvisational theater artist of the twentieth century.

Improvisation is largely misunderstood. Improvisation is not anything goes, no rules, do whatever you want, spontaneous human creativity. The art of Improvisation has rules. Skillful improvisation in life also follows rules.

Artistic rules are facilitating rules to *create* a specific creative product. Sonnets have rules. The rules for creating a great sonnet never limited the creativity of Shakespeare.

Earth is a great, cosmic, Gaian improvisation of a biosphere, a planet able to support life, *within rules* of planetary thresholds and limits. Planetary thresholds and limits to growth (as capitalism narrowly defines it) do not limit the extraordinary creative spontaneity of complex autopoetic systems, or the wildly creative evolutionary adaptations of species to changing environmental conditions in the Great Drama of Evolution we are always acting in. A creative artist and improvisationalist like me does not see "limits to growth" as limiting my creativity. I see "limits to growth" as a facilitating, creative rule for the improvisation of endlessly growing and evolving Human Flourishing on Earth.

One rule in the art of theater improvisation is *Accept Whatever You Are Offered*. An actor must accept whatever your fellow actors offer in the improvisation, the lines they speak, actions they make, and play with the offerings, whatever they are.

I look at the global horrors playing out at this time, see the tragic global futures scenarios of Fortress World, Barbarization, and Conventional Worlds fusing together into a toxic, deadly synergy of sociopathic global capitalism and "mad" mutually assured destruction of people and planet, and I accept this fatally tragic insanity as what I, and we, are being offered to play with to improvise the Great Transition.

I see the rule at this specific moment, this point in the unfolding improvisation of sustaining humanity in the evolutionary drama of life, as the necessity to enact a sudden, dramatic reversal of a tragedy of human extinction into a "comedy" of human flourishing.

My father's life story, as well as my birth story, makes me believe this sudden dramatic reversal is possible to do.

My father was the former US Attorney General, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, who confronted George Wallace at the School House Door in a great act of civic theater, and got the Voting and Civil Rights Acts through Congress.

The event in my father's life that led to the role he played in American history was being shot down over the Mediterranean in World War II . As his plane was plummeting to the dark blue water below,

my father called out to a divine force he, an atheist, suddenly believed in: "You get us through this alive, and I promise I will do something good for others."

Not get me. Get us. That is a democratic soul crying out in extremis. A divine force must have wanted "something good for others" to happen, because the whole crew survived.

What happened after the tragedy of being shot down was pure comedy: The crew swam to shore, and found a small village whose reigning elder was a very old Italian general who thought it was still World War I. He greeted the Americans as his *fratelli*, and my father and his crew were celebrated as heroes. But a smart kid reported to the Germans nearby, and my father and the whole crew were marched off to a German POW camp. Reversals of tragedy to comedy to tragedy, and, once in POW camp, another reversal to comedy.

My father organized a theater group in POW camp. They improvised vaudeville skits and performed plays when they could get scripts, to make the Nazis laugh as much, and as loud, as they could, to cover the sound of the American prisoners digging an escape tunnel. My father was performing the American comedy by Moss and Hart *You Can't Take It With You* when—suddenly—the Nazis interrupted the performance, and demanded that the prisoners exchange their costumes for Nazi uniforms. My dad, a big guy, was playing the role of an aspiring ballerina to maximum comedic effect. Instantly grasping that the only reason Nazis would want to make the prisoners wear their uniforms had to be that the Allies were coming to the rescue, and the Nazis wanted to trick the Allies, my dad refused to take his makeshift straw ballerina tutu off. The Allies appeared on cue.

As I said at my father's funeral, the wild, improbable tragic and comedic events of my father's experience in World War II gave him a living experience, and unalienable sense, of history as made of unlikely events. History as made of wild cards.

I see the rule of my father's improvisation of his life as *liberation from tragedy is a good we do for others in democracies*. (Socialist democracies follow this rule by far the best.) In prison camp in World War II, my father used comedy as his strategy for liberation from tragedy. My father's confrontation of George Wallace at the School House Door was an improvisation of liberation of others from tragedy, in which my father accepted what he was offered to play with: the hubris of racism. His wild card move was to use the side door to take the two black students in, leaving Wallace at the front foot, perched on a

footstool to make him taller than my 6'1" father, utterly flummoxed.

My birth was a wild card, too, a statistically improbable event based on my mother's medical history. My mother's improvisation to liberate herself from a tragic fate of death was to trust nature to carry her, and me, through the birth process, alive and healthy.

My improvisation in my life is a combination of the dramatic reversal of my birth, and my father using comedy as a strategy for liberation from tragedy, to do something good for others.

For about twenty years (with many interruptions), inspired by my birth story, I have been on a dramatic, ecological quest for the dramatic pragmatics of how to do and enact a dramatic reversal of our tragic fate and grim prognosis of extinction, into the birth of humanity flourishing in a great revitalization.

Dramatically speaking, climate change is a "perfect tragedy." What we are offered to play with to improvise the transition to the planetary phase of Human Flourishing is a perfect tragedy. Inspired by my father's story, I have been on a quest to find the 'perfect comedy' that liberates us from it.

To my wonderment and surprise, I succeeded at my quest. I found a form of Comedy that has the enlivening power to suddenly dramatically reverse a tragedy of extinction into a great revitalization, liberate us from the perfect tragedy of fatal, catastrophic, climate change, and flourish forward to the planetary stage of Human Flourishing on earth.

In the next act of my lifelong pattern of reversal, at a time of life when most reflect back on their past and feel they are in the final chapter of their lives, I am directing my gaze upon the future, and am at the beginning of giving the fruits of my dramatic ecological quest to the world.

The desire for liberation from tragedy is the deep, universal desire of every human being on Earth. Framing The Great Transition as the future that liberates us from the worst tragedy in history has the potential to be a "great attractor" to a global movement to make that universally desired liberation happen.

Who, or what, is the leading actor of the Great Transition? The answer is in the question: *The Actor* is. The skillful, knowledgeable Actor in life who knows the dramatic acts to do that have the enlivening power to liberate us from tragic fates, and to create joyful, thriving, flourishing states.

The Great Transition has the potential to be the greatest liberation from tragedy in human history. I see The Great Transition as a wild card, but in my life story, wild cards are natural, and the grimmest tragic fate can dramatically reverse into the birth of a new living state.

Mimi Stokes is an award-winning playwright who focuses on the intersection of sustainability and drama.

Tobias Troll

I have to admit that I found it difficult to formulate my pathway and influences amongst so many eminent intellectuals and activists having their own Wikipedia entries and narrating encounters with other well-known peers. My own meandering experience feels mundane in comparison. Yet it is also the personal triggers and the unexpected and non-intentional role models that can shape life choices.

In my case, one of these people was Ruth Smrt, teaching student in Prague, farm maid in Bavaria, factory worker in Manchester, medical aide in Leicester. Her stepfather (my grandfather) sent her, teenage refugee from Sudentenland in postwar Germany, to Manchester to earn money in the textile industry, where they were looking for a cheap workforce. There she met a Czech boy, got pregnant quickly, and is still in Northern England today at ninety-seven, in a Ken Loach small town setting marked by cultural conflicts and economic hardship.

She is poor, not intellectual, but of remarkable resilience. And she gave me, the Bavarian country boy born in a meteorite crater, the sense of possibility beyond the narrow horizons of medieval ramparts and the hills at the edge of the crater.

Considering the imminent new phase of a GTI 2.0, it could be fascinating to play with new formats to cultivate that amazing community you have created over the years—beyond the established individual writing exercises, which require certain skills, ease, time, and stamina.

Could a podcast with interviews and conversations, GTN members speaking about their pathways, be an option? Or a mentorship matching scheme? "Pods" of five who come together in a more intimate peer learning setting? Occasional or regular physical meetings in various geographies, or even a global gathering…?

I believe there is immense potential to build and cultivate the power of this fascinating and rich community, which is not yet fully harvested through the established essay-based exchange format.

The conversation on *Encounters and Transitions*, gracefully kicked off by Paul Raskin, certainly was a beautiful segue into a more personal exchange. Let us continue to cultivate the connections and build the community!

Tobias Troll is Marine Policy Director at Seas At Risk.

Sandra Waddock

"Don't mourn. Organize." —Joe Hill's plea as sung by Earl Robinson, and cited by Paul Raskin

Paul Raskin's essay *Encounters and Transitions* comes as the Great Transition Initiative itself begins to undergo its own "great transition" to a more activist platform, so this compelling history and reflection is very timely. Though my own journey has not been nearly as adventuresome as Raskin's has, today it is also both intellectually and musically informed. Coming from a small town in the Berkshires of Massachusetts and being the first in my family to get a four-year degree (never mind two master's degrees and a doctorate...), I entered the urban world of Boston naive and generally uninformed. It has taken years of work, through earning an MBA and doctorate in business administration, meeting great mentors, and working through ideas that ranged from an only moderately critical approach to business to today's recognition of the need for whole system change today, offering an approach to catalyzing transformation that I could never have dreamed of years ago.

Unlike Raskin's "life" journey, mine has been primarily an intellectual development, for as of this time I have spent nearly forty years at Boston College's School of Management and, over the years, have been lucky enough to get to know many brilliant people both as scholars and practitioners who are working to change the world for the better and have provided inspiration for my own work. Some of them, including Tellus's own Allen White, have been recognized as *Difference Makers* in my book by that title for having worked to build a corporate responsibility infrastructure, and others, more on the academic side, as *Intellectual Shamans*.[1] There is a lot more, of course, that has involved what I have taught (strategy, social issues in management, leadership and systemic change, for example), people I have met along way particularly in different parts of the world, and what I have read and learned—am, indeed, still learning. All of that has currently culminated in work on processes for catalyzing whole system transformation, or what I call *Catalyzing Transformation*, built out of our

interactions with Steve Waddell's transformation and whole system transformation, or learning to actually (sort of...) sing and play the guitar, and bounce beyond initiatives.[2] All of this work and all of these interactions with amazing people have resulted in my growing recognition of today's polycrisis and the need for positive system change of the sort advocated by GTI. Finally, along the way, I revisited an early interest in folk music, learning to actually (sort of...) sing and play the guitar, and venturing into songwriting that currently emphasizes healing the world and protesting the worst of what's going on, some rough recordings of which can be found on YouTube.

What Raskin's essay does, for me, then is put the very difficult, problematic, and even civilization-threatening times we face into some helpful perspective. There have been highly problematic, violent, and disturbing times in the past—and somehow we have gotten through them, as we hopefully will this time, too. Things get better. Things get worse. Hopefully, the "better" gets institutionalized and lasts longer than the worse over the span of history.

Here is my advocacy: To move forward towards any sort of eco-social flourishing, many, many people need to construct powerful new stories that describe a world all, including other-than-humans, can live in equitably and convey those stories (narratives) through every means at our disposal. And work collectively and independently to achieve them. Might we collectively be able to agree on a set of shared values to provide some sort of foundation for the future? Frankly, I don't think there is an endless supply of potential values that might emerge as globally shared. My reading of the transformation literature and the work of Jonathan Haidt and George Lakoff suggests that sharing (progressive) values of equity, inclusion, justice, and eco-social flourishing and values of security and safety for all can potentially help unify people holding widely different value systems.[3] That, because I at least believe that all people want a better future for their children's children.

Going forward into the Great Transition Paul Raskin argues is already taking place, then, activists, thought leaders, and other influencers wherever they are can and must come together in new ways to unite behind that (...a) shared set of ideas and ideals that might otherwise get left behind in the coming chaos and dark days. They could then begin catalyzing transformative impact through those shared aspirations and achieving them, each of us, in whatever ways are open to us (and probably in some ways that we don't currently see). It is insufficient for progressive movements and ideas to continue in the state that Paul Hawken once called "blessed unrest" in his book by that name.[3] Yes,

we (progressives) value diversity but that doesn't mean that we can never agree on a set of aspirations that we can all work towards in our own ways—and be consistent about that. [4] And finally, finally we need to do so. Now.

Tellus, the Roman Earth goddess—Mother Earth, Gaia, the living Earth—is crying out for humans to change their ways. Shifting our relationships with Mother Earth to live with her in harmony and not destruction. Doing that regeneratively through our production, provisioning, and servicing practices. Yes, even controlling human population growth, difficult and fraught as that charge is. Catalyzing such transformation using every means at our disposal. Organizing coalitions of like-minded activists. Ensuring eco-social values are incorporated into education at all levels. Creating the Global Citizens Movement (bottom-up) that Paul Raskin advocates. In my view, it is all of these ways of moving forward and many more that can be invented that are now needed, sooner rather than later. See what can be agreed on—and stick to that agenda, which is already "out there," articulated in documents like the Earth Charter, the SDGs, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, among others.

In other words, it is time to stop talking, and to actually *get* to the "great transition" towards a viable, regenerative, flourishing human-nature relationship that is so needed, now more than ever. Achieve those aspirations that are inspiring, not dispiriting. And, yes, Paul, and as a fellow singer-songwriter—use music and all forms of art to help us all re-envision, re-imagine, and re-invent what the world might be. And bring everyone, in a very real way, every being, the achievement of those aspirations. Everyone can and needs to contribute, bottom-up, top-down, laterally through coalitions, and in any other way that makes sense. So many thanks to Paul for inspiring at least me to go forward and maintain a degree of hope in very troubled times.

Endnotes

1. Sandra Waddock, *The Difference Makers: How Social and Institutional Entrepreneurs Created the Corporate Responsibility Movement* (Greenleaf Publishing, 2008); *Intellectual Shamans: Management Academics Making a Difference* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

2. Sandra Waddock, *Catalyzing Transformation: Making System Change Happen* (Business Expert Press, 2024). Also influential was work with a global group of acclaimed scientists an IPBES Transformative Change Assessment (2025 in press).

3. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (Vintage, 2012); Jonathan Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," *Science* 316, no. 5827 (2007): 998–1002; George Lakoff, *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014).

4. Waddock, *Catalyzing Transformation*; Sandra Waddock, "Catalyzing Transformation: A Process Framework for Transformative System Change," *Cadmus* 5, no. 3 (2024): 49–78.; Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being, and Why No One Saw It Coming (Viking, 2007).

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Stewart Wallis

Two Turning Points

There have been two major turning points in my life which have shaped who I am and what I am trying to do in this world.

Both started with telephone calls.

The first was in July 1981 to my wife Dee from the surgeon/oncologist in Washington, DC, who had performed a biopsy on a small lump under her armpit. He informed her over the phone that she had malignant melanoma. Furthermore, it was a type of melanoma where the primary was unpigmented and therefore never visible. In other words, it had already spread. She asked the prognosis. He replied, "Don't buy any tombstones yet!" She asked when she and I could come to see him, and he replied that he had no appointments until the following Monday.

Not surprisingly, she rang me at work in a terrible state, and not surprisingly, I immediately rang the oncologist and demanded that he see us that day. This was the day when our world collapsed around us. The prognosis was that she only had six months to live. A sunny day in Washington like any other summer day and a death sentence out of the blue! In the end, though, she lived for fifteen more months, and during this time, she and I became incredibly close. It was simultaneously the worst time of my life and one of the most sacred and special. She suffered terribly through several surgeries and the most aggressive chemotherapy, but nothing approached the agony of knowing she wouldn't see our daughters grow up. At the time of her diagnosis, Emily was only four years old and Claire only one.

Even when you know somebody is going to die, part of you cannot comprehend it. We were fortunate in being able to communicate right to the end. We got closer and closer, and then suddenly nothing—the person you loved most in the world just vanishes. For two years, I raged at

the World and God (despite not being sure I believed in him). Why me? Why us? I managed to keep myself together for my daughters, but inside I was so angry and bitter. Up to now, I had deep down believed that if something was wrong, or somebody I loved was ill, if only I tried hard enough, I could change the situation for the better. That belief now lay shattered in tiny fragments!

Then one day, everything switched. I was lying in my bedroom listening to the birds in the trees outside. I still cannot explain what happened and why then.

I realzed that I couldn't change the past and that if I carried on being so angry, I would not only destroy myself but harm my daughters as well. I could, however, change the future and do something in this world that made a change for the good. That is what I dedicated the rest of my life to trying to do. And to do so with a sense of urgency as time was short. I had been given the gift of knowing how precious life is. This was the start of a journey that saw me move from business to Oxfam, taking my salary down by two-thirds, swapping my executive car for a bicycle, and increasing my well-being exponentially! I also married again, inheriting a stepson and having two more wonderful daughters. Dee would have approved!

The second phone call came in July 1994 while I was at Oxfam. My emergency director called me to say that a million refugees had just fled in the space of a day across the border from Rwanda to Zaire. The Rwandan Patriotic Front army was invading the country from the North following the horrific genocide, and many refugees fled to neighbouring countries. Oxfam was, among many other things, a specialist in providing water in emergencies, and we had already provided water to 200,000 refugees in neighboring Uganda and to 500,000 refugees in Tanzania. At this point, we had no money left and no water engineers.

"Stewart, you need to get out there." I was straight on a plane to Kenya and then paid in cash to sit on a bag of grain at the back of an elderly Antonov cargo plane going to Goma in Zaire. Last time, the Ukrainian crew told me, they had carried arms; this time, it was aid.

The situation in Goma was horrific. The million refugees had been forced onto a lava flow between two volcanoes about 30 miles north of Goma. The nearest water was a 25-mile round trip, and cholera had set in. People were dying at the rate of about 3,000 a day. This was one of the worst cholera epidemics in the twentieth century. The world's media were there as were specialists from the

German army, and the French army. These armies said they would provide the water, and initially we accepted this as a good solution as we had no money and no water engineers left. However, it became clear that these armies only had the means to provide high-quality water to a brigade of 20,000 men and no clue as to how to provide good enough water to a million people between two volcanoes in Mobutu's Zaire.

I have never seen a million people crowded together in a small space, and travelling amongst them was like a scene from an apocalypse movie. One minute, somebody would be walking along, and the next minute they would fall over dead. And of course, there was nowhere to bury them. Aid workers rushed around like headless chickens as people died all around them. MSF and other medical charities did their best but were powerless to contain the situation without clean water and decent sanitation. Meanwhile, back at the hotel where most aid workers were staying, waiters dressed in white served drinks, and the band played "happy days are here again." We had all arrived in Hell.

We talked as a team and decided that we would somehow have to try to provide the water. Nobody else was going to do it, but the risk of failure was huge. I got on a satellite phone with my director and chair in Oxford and persuaded them to put Oxfam into debt and our reputation on the line. We then went to the head of the UN and committed to providing the water within two weeks.

We got good enough water to the million people within ten days.

A UN-funded evaluation later stated that Oxfam's actions saved between 50,000 and 70,000 lives. Oxfam had put out a worldwide emergency appeal for funds that raised £22 million, water engineers had volunteered to work for us from across the world, the American Air Force flew all our equipment into Goma, and the media publicized our cause.

This was a turning point for me because it became clear that sometimes the seemingly impossible is actually possible. The cause must be just, and most importantly, collective action is crucial. Furthermore, it struck me viscerally that some of the most important things in life cannot be provided by our current economic system. There was no market for providing water in emergencies in one of the poorest parts of the world, and it was left to an NGO based over a dry-cleaning shop on Banbury Road in Oxford to not only provide water to those million people but to continue supplying water and sanitation services to them for a further three years.

I had already decided that one of the major causes of poverty and suffering in our world was our economic system, but these events led me to want to dedicate the rest of my life to changing this economic system. I remain absolutely convinced that this change is possible if sufficient people work together in a worldwide movement. This is what led me to move first to the New Economics Foundation and then to help set up the Wellbeing Economy Alliance.

Stewart Wallis is a co-founder of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) and the co-author of A Finer Future.

Victor Wallis

I appreciated the opportunity to read Paul Raskin's account of his life and times. I am struck, though not surprisingly, by the many parallels with mine.

In my recent book, I included a "political autobiography" in the introduction (see excerpt below), with further reflections available in an interview I did for an oral history of the New American Movement by Victor Cohen in *Works and Days*.

The big "non"-parallel is that I was not a red diaper baby. My family origins are also different. Although also Jewish, we emigrated from France in 1940, when I was not quite two years old. The family name was changed from Wallich, and when I was four (shortly after the birth of my brother), we were all baptized into the Episcopal Church. I did not learn of our Jewish origins until I was an adolescent.

It is good to have created a community around your work, but I am sure we both miss the existence of anything comparable on a broader scale. The idea of a "citizens movement" leaves me with the feeling that I am still wandering around, unsure where and how to focus my energies.

I think we are still wishing for the hegemonic political force that we would have liked to see created—not by us but by a much broader confluence of protagonists, brought together ultimately by the recognition of a common class interest. This may sound more like like Raskin's parents' world, but I wonder whether that opportunity reflected only a particular historical moment which by now has been irretrievably sidetracked by a complex mix of distractions, detours, and catastrophes.

And yet we must keep trying, as a matter of survival—if not for ourselves, for the species.

Anyway, thanks for your example, and let us hope there's still a bit of room for us to have a collective impact.

Excerpt from Victor Wallis, *Socialist Practice: Histories and Theories* **(Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)**

Having thought about or studied issues connected with socialism for most of my life (I was born in 1938), I can say that while my advocacy has been constant, the surrounding political environment has undergone major fluctuations.....

Long before I could imagine becoming politically active, I experienced the pall of the post-World War II repression that was unleashed in the US against any challenge to capitalist orthodoxy. This had several immediate effects on me during my teen years. It made me apprehensive about sharing my thoughts with anyone in authority. It meant that when I went to college I could not find any organized group of likeminded students. And it meant that my education proceeded along two largely separate tracks—one defined by formal course-requirements and the other by my political drive. The latter in turn was nourished, at that stage, more by theoretical study and book-learning than by practical experience. I felt myself to be cut off from ordinary humanity, especially because my anti-capitalism stemmed not—as would be "normal"—from personal material hardship inflicted by the system but rather from the malaise of seeing myself as the recipient of unmerited privilege.

Within this constricted framework, my readings broadened the basis for my opposition to capitalism but left me unsure about the alternative.[1] The Soviet model—especially what I could then see of it—did not inspire me, and the threat of war between the two great powers created a feeling of helplessness. The first hint at a way out, on the global canvas, came with the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Cuba signaled that a break with the rule of capital did not necessarily have to produce the same outcome that it had done in Russia. (The Chinese case was not at that time within the scope of my awareness.) Cuba's revolution was, at its outset, entirely self-generated—an unexpected intrusion into a hitherto bleak order, embodying the surprising (as it then seemed) assumption that every country had the potential to set its own course.

The opening created by Cuba told me that political reality was less resistant to change than I had feared. Other factors as well helped draw me out of my pessimism. During my last undergraduate year at Harvard (1959–60), I studied US labor history and wrote my Honors thesis on "Sit-down Strikes."[2] Just as I was finishing this work, which highlighted the factory-occupations of 1937, a similarly defiant action erupted onto the world stage with the first lunch-counter sit-ins of the US civil rights

movement. In those same months I discovered the *Monthly Review* (then in its eleventh year of publication) in the Harvard library. Here was a journal that conveyed a solidly grounded socialist perspective in a jargon-free style that could perhaps bridge the painful communication-gap that I felt in talking to people unfamiliar with my positions. Not incidentally, *MR* was the first US publication to give a full analysis of the political direction that the Cuban Revolution was taking.[3] It was at the suggestion of *MR*'s co-founder Paul Sweezy (in 1962) that I chose Latin America as the focus for my doctoral studies in political science. The year I subsequently spent in Chile (1966–67) strengthened my sense of being in tune with the majority of humanity, as I found myself for the first time at public events among thousands who resonated with the same calls that I did. By the time I returned home at the end of that year, I was able to enjoy similar occasions of solidarity in the US.

The leftist wave of the 1960s was what finally freed me of concern that my politics might be seen as arising from personal "deviance" rather than from a general commitment to human decency (amplified by the evident desperation of particular populations and by the permanent threat of catastrophic war). It now no longer mattered how I had come to my views; they would henceforward define me as part of a project much bigger than myself. Even so, however, my particular trajectory set me apart, during the 60s, from the newer cohort of activists, who were on average several years younger than I was. They were less restrained by the kind of fear that I had grown up with. They seemed to constitute a community, of which I was not a part. Although I had more background than most of them did in socialist theory and history, I was not well placed to apply my knowledge to their ongoing debates. I supported and even drew inspiration from the broad thrust of their efforts, but I played no leadership role, and I felt torn as the student movement—riven by conflict between direct-action and base-building factions—blew apart.

I carried my uncertainties with me when I joined the New University Conference in mid-1969, after my first year of college teaching.[4] This was a multi-tendency radical organization, which embraced a wider age-range than had the then-disintegrating Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I felt at home in NUC, which inspired me when I lost my first teaching job (in late 1969) to take my second one at a state university in Indianapolis, where I would remain (apart from three foreign stays) from 1970 to 1994. In this conservative city of the US Midwest, I was re-immersed in some of the repressive 1950s culture, though now less at its mercy. NUC dissolved itself in 1972, but not before having helped me acquire a public platform in Central Indiana as an authority on Latin American issues—which became especially relevant in 1973 with the US-supported military coup in Chile; again in the 1980s with US interventions in

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Grenada; and finally in the early 90s when the Soviet collapse prompted speculation that a similar fate might be in store for Cuba.

Through most of my time in Indianapolis, I continued my activities in the face of a largely antagonistic atmosphere produced both by the local media culture and by the national priorities of the Reagan/Bush era. But thanks to my experience of the 1950s, none of this really surprised me. I no longer enjoyed the political "high" of the 60s and early 70s, but I retained the benefit not only of having experienced that fleeting (illusory?) moment of collective empowerment, but also of having developed, during my earlier years of isolation, some of the intellectual tools I needed to resist the once-again dominant paradigm of repression. I was now helped in this by two unforeseen openings. One was my discovery (in Indiana University's statewide catalog) of a course-listing for Marxist Theory. The class was not being offered at my campus, so I was able without any formality to make it my own and, in so doing, to greatly expand upon my earlier forays into its subject matter. The second opening resulted from what I now view as a compensatory effect of being in a city where the Left community was so small, namely, that my Chile solidarity work brought me into contact with local prison activists, thus introducing me to a dimension of vital support work which would later mushroom in importance while all along linking me to a constituency of irrepressible revolutionary commitment.

Prospects remained grim, however, at the macro level. They suffered what seemed to many to be a coup de grâce with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the ensuing collapse of East European Communist regimes and eventually (1991) of the Soviet Union itself. Somewhat to my surprise, much of the US Left felt initially crushed by the orgy of bourgeois triumphalism that these developments unleashed. It was widely claimed that socialism and Marxism had been decisively discredited. I recall having had to argue in two organizations—successfully, as it turned out—against dropping the S-word and the M-word (respectively) from their names. I was sustained in my conviction by having lived through the earlier period in which those concepts had been targeted.

The general argument that I formulated in 1989 turned out to be my first contribution to the journal *Socialism and Democracy*, with which I subsequently worked editorially (from my new base in the Boston area), serving as managing editor from 1997 through 2017.[5] A major portion of my own writing during this period (for various journals) focused on the ecological crisis; this is reflected in my above-mentioned 2018 book on ecosocialism. My editorial work with *S&D*, however, required me to delve into a wide range

of other issues, as did also (1) the classes in Political Thought and Contemporary History that I have been giving since 1996 at the Berklee College of Music; (2) my participation, also dating from 1996, in the work of the Berlin-based Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism; (3) occasional commentaries on current issues that I was invited to write for online publications; (4) correspondence with prisoners and support of their struggles for basic rights; and (5) a lecture-series on US politics that I gave in 2018 at Renmin University of China.[6]

Endnotes

1. On my formative readings, see Victor Wallis, "Ecosocialist Struggles: Reminiscences, Reflections, and Danger Signals," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 25, no. 1(2014): 44.

2. Unpublished text from 1960 available at Harvard College Library.

3. Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution* (Monthly Review Press, 1960).

4. For more detail, see my interview in Victor Cohen, "Interview with Victor Wallis," The New American Movement: An Oral History, in *Works and Days* 55/56 (2010): 263–272, https://worksanddays2.net/2010/File19.Wallis. pdf.

5. See Suren Moodliar and Victor Wallis, "Socialism and Democracy: A Conversation," *Socialism and Democracy* 32, no. 1 (2018).

6. Victor Wallis, *Democracy Denied: Five Lectures on U.S. Politics* (Africa World Press, 2019).

Victor Wallis is chief editor of the journal Socialism and Democracy *and Professor of Political Science at Berklee College of Music.*

Allen White

The quality and diversity of responses to Paul Raskin's *Encounters and Transitions: The Times of My Life* is a testimony to the engagement and camaraderie fostered by the Great Transition Initiative for more than two decades. A shared sense of urgency and possibility permeates the journeys described by respondents. In a moment of profound anxiety and rising Barbarization, Raskin's reflections offer a rich, hopeful antidote for building a better world.

My journey is captured in part in an earlier memoir co-authored with my spouse Judith a decade ago. This brief piece focuses on the evolution of my transformation from a reformist worldview to the transformational perspective that lies at the heart of the Great Transition framework.

Like that of a number of contributors, my story begins with the arrival of my European (Russian-born) grandparents at the turn of the twentieth century. Baking, a small variety store, and later a wholesaler of toys and hardware in Worcester, Massachusetts, paved the way for my eleven aunts and uncles to attain middle-class status during the pre-WWII years. This, in turn, paved the way for the next generation of nineteen cousins, almost all wartime births, to continue the journey initiated by their immigrant grandparents.

The immigrant story set the stage for the emotional and intellectual sensibilities that laid the groundwork for what I term the "Power of Place." This concept refers to the intellectual and emotional power of places we experience both in-person and virtually through readings, storytelling, artistic works, and other media.

As a youngster, listening to my paternal grandfathers from the "old country" provoked images of faraway villages infected by ethnic repression and autocratic rulers and associated acolytes. On the positive side, such images flowed from my father's story of his 1926 journey to France at age fourteen, accompanied by my grandfather, to audition for admission to the Paris Conservatory

of Music. His prodigious clarinet talent lasted a lifetime even as the Great Depression derailed his aspirations for a full-time musical career. Nonetheless, the sounds of our home practice sessions and public performances of Gershwin, Mozart, Copland, and Goodman remain embedded in my soul to this day.

And he was not alone. Multiple uncles, aunts, and cousins pursued careers as musicians, conductors, and music educators. In the decades my peers were immersed in Seeger, Dylan, and Baez, it was the classical repertoire that nourished my soul, fostering a sense of connection with people and places around the world linked to the classical repertoire.

In addition to music, my early years were replete with maps, stand-up globes, and readings about faraway peoples, places, and cultures. "Where" was front of mind—on my bookshelf, in the movies I watched, and in my passion for travel. *National Geographic* was my Bible, travel documentaries were my preferred genre of cinema, and board games involving travel to distant lands were central to my recreation. In one memorable moment decades ago, I recall leaving my fellow gamers stunned when I unhesitatingly identified the capital city of Burkina Faso. Overall, I was intensely impatient to experience firsthand people and places that collectively constitute the mosaic of human experience.

From Day 1 of my higher education, geography was my calling. Urban, economic, physical, political, social geography dominated coursework, internships, and summer employment. Seeking real world exposure to the cosmopolitanism I embraced, I transferred from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, to George Washington University in Washington, DC. Within months, an Indian-born professor of geography quickly became my idol and mentor and remained so until graduation.

At the same time, civil rights unrest, anti–Vietnam War demonstrations, and the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King opened my eyes to the violence infecting the US body politic. Under the wing of my DC socialist Uncle Sam, a long-time civil servant, writer, and leftist intellectual, I —like millions of other twenty-somethings—aggressively sought alternatives to the failing status quo.

Unaware at the time, I was at the threshold of a decades-long intellectual evolution from the local to the global, the reformist to structuralist, the piecemeal to the integrated.

Crossing Boundaries

By late 1968, newly wed and anxious to explore new worlds beyond the confines of the US, I began two and a half years of humanitarian work in rural Nicaragua as a Peace Corps volunteer and trainer. The Somoza dictatorship, for years reluctant to risk young American idealists stirring social unrest, finally agreed to admit a first group of twenty volunteers to work in agriculture and public health. The embrace of farmers, educators, shopkeepers, and the resident Catholic priest exposed us to livelihoods and generosity that remains embedded in my psyche to this day. Two and a half years later, we departed in our VW minivan for a three-week journey back to the US.

Graduate studies in geography at Ohio State University provided the vehicle for a host of activities that fueled my intellectual re-creation. A Fulbright scholarship for PhD research in Peru in 1974–75 focused on the equity implications of urban fiscal consolidation supported by the leftist military government, a rare phenomenon in the long history of military regimes in the region. An attempted coup d'état and earthquake punctuated an unforgettable year of field work, collegiality, and learning. Living in Peru with my spouse and two young daughters was a profoundly formative experience—culturally, linguistically, and intellectually.

In the decade following graduation in 1976, I affiliated with various research institutions and universities, including Battelle Laboratories, University of Connecticut, Clark University, and Tufts University. Research and coursework spanned a broad range of topics from the local—e.g., locational conflict and justice in siting hazardous waste and nuclear power facilities—to the global—e.g., devising frameworks and metrics for measuring corporate social responsibility (CSR).

As an early advisor to the newly launched CERES, I helped craft a pioneering corporate environmental/social/governance disclosure framework aimed at investors, workers, communities, and other stakeholders. This effort in the early 1990s became the precursor to the formal 2002 launch, in partnership with CERES director Bob Massie, of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). It was my honor to serve as GRI's founding CEO for its first year of operation after formal launch at the United Nations. GRI continues to thrive today as the world's leading sustainability disclosure framework. It was my honor to become a 2018 Medal Laureate of the Society of Progress/INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France, for co-founding GRI.

My Great Transition

After stepping down from GRI, with time to reflect on both the successes and limitations of my professional endeavors, it became clear that the pathway of incrementalism was intrinsically deficient in addressing the critical challenges of a world fraught with inequality, conflict, and environmental degradation. This reality is evident in the character and structure of most government institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector institutions. As one who devoted years of effort to reforming corporate structure and behavior, I could not deny that all of my, and countless others', incrementalist efforts to reform corporate practices were doomed to failure amidst a world in polycrisis. More years of business-as-usual were incapable of reversing the ecological, social, and economic threats undermining the prospects for a livable world.

"What do we do next?" I asked myself and close colleagues in CSR and other circles. In short order, a partial response emerged. Tackle one critical element driving the planet toward crisis, learn from that experience, and replicate or modify a strategy for reversing the drift toward an unsustainable future. The Tellus Institute already was an active participant in building global scenario frameworks. How could I add value to this critically important work? My response: the 2006 launch of Corporation 20/20.

At the core of this venture was the belief that any/all efforts to redesign corporate conduct were destined to fail absent a fundamental shift in corporate purpose. This, in turn, would require aggressive advocacy and broad-based embrace of a set of "Principles for Corporate Design," which collectively align with the vision embodied in the Great Transition framework.

Following its launch, Corporation 20/20 participants published an array of research studies on the need, strategies, and tactics for repurposing corporations. The archive of research coupled with presentations at conferences and seminars remains one of the most formative and satisfying activities of my journey from incrementalist to advocate of systemic change that lies at the core of Great Transition theory.

Reflections

The drivers of one's worldview inevitably involve intentionality and happenstance, progress and pauses, missed opportunities and leaps forward toward an emerging model of global resilience and well-being. My trajectory is no exception. From the early years of security of small city/close family ties, to the socio-

political turbulence of the 1960s and onward toward an internationalism in personal and professional choices—my journey bears a strong resemblance to that of many colleagues in the Great Transition community.

Now, as the second quarter of the twenty-first century unfolds, the urgency of systemic change has never been greater. Absent a countervailing force, multiple overlapping threats to global well-being will create an unlivable future for billions worldwide.

This escalating, existential crisis elevates the urgency of a global citizens movement along the lines espoused by Great Transition theory. My story, like those of other participants in this forum, demonstrates that transformative thinking and action is possible. May this collection of stories help inspire a call to action among kindred spirits across the world.

Allen White is Vice President and Senior Fellow at the Tellus Institute and co-founder of the Global Reporting Initiative and Corporation 20/20.

Lawrence Wittner

I enjoyed reading Paul Raskin's fascinating memoir not only because it provides a colorful romp through decades of US political and intellectual ferment, but also because it parallels in many ways my own activist and intellectual development. Although, unlike Raskin, I was not a red diaper baby, I was caught up, at virtually the same time, in many of the same causes (e.g., racial equality and peace) and contexts (e.g., Columbia student life and protests, folk music performances on the guitar and banjo, purges of leftists from academia, and an assortment of efforts to change the world).

In retrospect, my trajectory should come as no surprise. As a bookish child in Brooklyn, New York, during the 1940s and early 1950s, I was influenced by my thought-provoking reading (e.g., George Orwell's *1984*), the liberal Jewish background of my family, my father's employment by the New York State Commission Against Discrimination (which familiarized me with racial, religious, and nationality prejudices long before most Americans were aware of them), and a general revulsion against cruelty and social injustice. As I began to attain political consciousness during the 1950s, I became increasingly disturbed by prominent aspects of American life: preparations for nuclear war, manipulation of public opinion by the mass media, the fear of "subversives" that stifled political discussion, and blatant Jim Crow practices in the South.

Thus, I became part of the burgeoning student movement of the 1960s. During my years as a Columbia College student (1958–62), I helped to establish the campus chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and, also, participated in my first demonstration—a picket line outside the Kennedy White House opposing the resumption of US nuclear weapons testing. In the summer of 1962, as my college roommate and I took a 13,000-mile *On the Road*–style trip around the country, it naturally included dodging arrest and racist violence to do voter registration work with CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Louisiana and Mississippi. As an

MA student at the University of Wisconsin (1962–63), I attended heated political meetings and wrote my thesis on the history of nonviolent resistance in the United States. When a PhD student at Columbia (1963–67), I alternated participating in demonstrations against the Vietnam War with writing my dissertation on the history of the modern American peace movement.

During my ensuing academic career (1967–2010) and thereafter, I continued much the same kind of peace and social justice activities. While teaching history at Hampton Institute, Vassar College, Japanese universities (under the Fulbright program), and the State University of New York at Albany, I served as a leader in the peace movement (eventually becoming co-chair of the Peace Action National Board) and experienced the thrill of leading the annual August 6 antinuclear demonstration through the streets of Hiroshima. In addition, I was very active in the labor movement (as chair of the statewide Solidarity Committee of United University Professions, SUNY's faculty-professional staff union, and as executive secretary of the Albany County Central Federation of Labor), and I was also active on occasion in the racial justice movement. My scholarly role meshed nicely with these ventures, including most of the thirteen books I wrote or edited—such as my *Cold War America* and my trilogy, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*—and my presidency of the Peace History Society (an affiliate of the American Historical Association).

Of course, not everyone approved of these activities. Despite my strong scholarly and teaching credentials, the Vassar College administration eventually got rid of me by denying me tenure. Also, along the way, I was teargassed, arrested twice during sit-ins (one as part of the Free South Africa campaign and the other to protest US intervention in Central America), and investigated by US intelligence agencies.

Throughout these activities, my political motivation was basically humanitarian. Unlike some left-wing activists, I didn't find Communist governments appealing or think that the United States was uniquely responsible for evil in the world. I opposed nuclear weapons because I believed they threatened human survival, and I protested the Vietnam War thanks to my disgust at the mass killing and to my anti-imperialist views. Moreover, in a world blighted by corporate greed and ruthless dictatorships, I believed in the democratization of wealth and power.

Basically, as I realized in my early twenties while listening to a speech by Michael Harrington, I was

a democratic socialist. As a result, I joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee shortly after its founding in the 1970s, and in the early 1980s helped organize and lead the Albany chapter of Democratic Socialists of America, DSOC's successor. On one memorable occasion, I led a DSA national convention in the singing of "The Internationale."

As I have always regarded nationalist biases as dangerous (and rather ridiculous), I have long had a soft spot for attempts to transcend nationalism and build a world civilization. Therefore, in recent years, I have become active in Citizens for Global Solutions, the US affiliate of the World Federalist Movement. If international relations were left to a world organization—for example, a strengthened United Nations—it would give the people of this planet a chance to end the dangerous arms races and deadly wars among nations that have disgraced human history. Furthermore, transcending the nation-state system would facilitate the adoption of measures for the sharing of wealth and resources in a far more equitable fashion than at present. In my opinion, the Great Transition, if it occurs, will require the establishment of One World.

People interested in finding out more about these and other avant-garde ventures in our tumultuous times, including vignettes featuring prominent groups and leaders, might want to take a look at my memoir, *Working for Peace and Justice: Memoirs of an Activist Intellectual*.

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