

Issues of Human Evolution into Global Community

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Asked to address the five most important issues we currently face, from good and bad news perspectives, I immediately think holistically: How can we separate the great issues of our time? Putting things in separate boxes for consideration has been one of our greatest blinders to seeing the whole situation we are in. From my vantage point as an evolution biologist, there is only one issue facing us:

The formation of a Global Human Community living in harmony with all other species.

Once this issue is named, it becomes easier to see its different aspects. But it also becomes obvious that this is material for an entire book, so it is a great challenge to summarize it in a single commentary!

First I must put it into evolutionary context. About two billion years ago, Earth's first inhabitants, the archebacteria, overcame a long phase of hostile creativity (warfare, colonization and competitive technological development) by cooperating to form huge collaborative communities that evolved into all presently existing biological cells other than bacteria, including those of our own bodies. They literally created "multi-created cells" that went on to evolve multi-celled creatures by shifting out of a juvenile competitive phase into a mature cooperative phase as I have pointed out before. This evolutionary pattern has been repeated by countless species, as well as by entire ecosystems, and is now on the agenda for our human species. We will learn to cooperate as a global community or we will live in increasing misery and perhaps go extinct in the not so far distant future.

Now we can proceed to a historical context. For some eight to ten thousand years up to the present, humanity has repeated the ancient bacterial pattern of "hostile creativity" characterized by empire building. From actual empires, we progressed to national expansion into colonial empires and more recently into multi-national corporate empires. All these phases have increased our technological prowess while also increasing the disparity between rich and poor that is now devastating the living system comprised of all humans as well as the ecosystems on which we depend for our own lives.

A healthy, mature living system (cell, body, community, ecosystem) is dynamically cooperative because every part or member at every level of organization is empowered to

negotiate its self-interest within the whole. There is equitable sharing of resources to insure health at all levels, and the system is aware that any exploitation of some parts by others endangers the whole. Clearly, internal greed and warfare are inimical to the health of mature living systems.

Therefore I see the formation of global human community, or true globalization -- including but not limited to economics -- as our natural evolutionary mandate at this time. If this essay were a book, I would call it *Glocalization: A Biological Theory of Globalization*. The term 'Glocalization' is meant to bring attention to the fact that local economies must be healthy in order to have a healthy world economy, just as each of our cells and organs must be healthy to have a healthy body.

Now let us look at the bad and good news concerning five critical aspects of this process of Globalization/Glocalization:

1. Worldviews: Scientific, Religious, Cultural and Personal

Bad News: Fundamentalism and dogmatism, religious, scientific, cultural and personal, continue to plague us in this time of transition. Social Darwinism -- the belief that there must be winners and losers in the game of life -- is as destructive as any religious or cultural dogma saying "Our truth is the Truth; believe it or you are our enemy."

Good News: For the first time in history we are becoming aware that each individual and each culture has a unique perspective on the whole of human experience in our world and cosmos, giving us a basis to move beyond tolerance into mutual respect without the requirement of agreement in our stories of How Things Are. We are shifting from the belief that there is One True Story to the understanding that a multiplicity of stories can co-exist if we agree on basic values, such as the perennial Golden Rule.

Science is making huge progress in its worldview. It is evolving beyond belief in a non-living, entropic, hopeless and valueless universe progressing toward heat death while accidentally evolving some temporary competitive life forms on one or more planets. Scientists are moving toward the view of a conscious, self-organizing, learning universe in which syntropy and entropy function metabolically in a process of creative evolution, especially on our living Earth where life evolves toward cooperative purpose and ethics.

The view of Consciousness as the deep cosmic source of biological evolution, rooted in many ancient cultures, brings science close to religion as religion also indicates its willingness to open to dialogue with other religions and with science itself. Many new religions (Unity, Religious Science International, Global New Thought, etc.) as well as the cooperative World Parliament of Religions and the United Religions Initiative are in deep dialogue among themselves and with scientists to discover their underlying common interests.

2. The Lure of Power: Economics, Currency and Warfare

Bad News: Empire-building economics have developed the quarterly bottom line focus on continual competitive growth to maximize profits -- a tyrannical mechanism preventing proper corporate accountability to people and planet. Further, empire building has spawned a debt-money currency that shifts wealth from the many to the few, promoting terrible economic inequities that prevent local economies from expressing their self-interests. Protecting empires has led to huge production and trade of arms, with one nation -- the USA -- now having gained 70% of the world market. All this leads to a highly unstable situation in which conflicts, often wrapped in religious cloaks though almost always economic in their roots, break out continually and lead to further domination by those with the most powerful weapons and further impoverishment and desperation of the already poor.

The great allure of power over others is difficult for me as a woman to comprehend. I have asked many men to explain it, and when they speak about it honestly, I see in their eyes how deep and real it is. The oil economy, with its attendant weapons economy, has become the single most dangerous obstacle to human evolution. It is controlled by a relatively small handful of men allied with each other behind the scenarios of opposing forces we see in the media they also own, just as it was during its inception during World War II, in the German/American oil business alliances revealed at the Nuremberg trials. The dangerous endgame of the human competitive phase is being played out right now around oil interests, and we must remember that the Stone Age did not end because men ran out of stones.

Good News: We have plenty of alternative energy sources to move "Beyond Petroleum" and the oil empires know they are the way of the future as many within them begin to plan accordingly. There are also strong movements promoting triple bottom lines, and many medium and small businesses are shifting to concepts of humane economic values and accountability to their communities (for example, Business for Social Responsibility, the Brazilian Ethos Institute, Social Venture Network, and the Japanese interests reflected in this newsletter).

Since seeing our Earth from space as a breathtakingly beautiful living planet, and as we grow increasingly aware that the economies of cells, bodies, families, communities and world are all living systems with basic principles in common, we can more easily think of ourselves as an economically linked global family that must live at peace with itself and with other species. Once we shift into this frame of mind we can see why every human community from family to global community must be valued and insured opportunity for economic participation, just as every species in a healthy ecosystem contributes to the well being of the whole.

Global travel, transport and communications systems, though invented during our competitive empire-building phase, are now available for cooperative purposes. Alternative currencies rooted in barter are mushrooming around the world as documented by Bernard Lietaer in *The Future of Money*. Living Economies is becoming a rapidly growing concept (see the article <http://svn.org/initiatives/livingeconomies.pdf> of which I am a co-author, and www.livingeconomies.org).

Besides these healthy directions, the global peace movement continues to grow with countless websites and organized events and The Cultural Creatives documented by Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson in Europe and America are surely matched in Asia, and especially in Japan. Deep dialogue among humans increasingly reveals our desire for peaceful cooperation and our belief that it can be achieved.

3. Governance

Bad News: While we hear a great deal about the spread of democracy around the world, all member nations of the World Trade Organization gave up their sovereignty in signing the agreement which said their laws could be overridden by WTO policies, which, as already demonstrated, do not often serve their self-interest within the global economy. In the US, as with other national governments, corporate empire lobbies and campaign finances determine government candidates and policies over the will of the people. At present, our very Constitutional rights are being hijacked and turned into weapons against us, eroding our civil rights, while in many nations people do not yet have them as they must if we are to survive and thrive as a species. These are examples of the endgame in which the old system of competitive empire economics works hard to protect itself against the evolution called for. As historian Arnold Toynbee discovered in seeking the cause of past human empires' demise, the extreme concentration of wealth and the refusal to change when change was called for were fatal.

Good News: Despite all its problems and shortcomings, the United Nations is a significant effort toward some kind of world governance. We see with increasing clarity that the governance of a living system must be in service to it -- to its health and well being. Distributed networks of leadership, as in the City of Curitiba, Brasil, and rotating leadership as in the Mondragon Cooperatives of Spain are positive examples, as are the redistribution of wealth in India's Kerala. The Internet is perhaps our greatest hope for democracy at present, as increasing access to it around the world brings people into dialogue on all the issues facing us and gives hope for creative solutions.

4. Technology

Bad News: Despite knowing of alternatives such as hydrogen, solar and wind energies, we continue to dig up fossil fuels over which we fight wars and devastate peoples and ecosystems from Afghanistan to the Achuar territories in the Ecuadorian rainforests. We clog our heavy roads with heavy cars, pollute our atmosphere and waters and soils with deadly exhausts and chemicals, misuse our genetic understanding for the sake of profits alone. Our technological societies continue to produce ugliness and poverty where beauty and wealth could be universal.

Good News: The book *Natural Capitalism*, several times cited here, demonstrates human creativity in moving us out of the heavy industrial phase of coal, oil and steel into technologies that are ecologically non-destructive, recyclable and sustainable.

Janine Benyus, also previously cited for her book *Biomimicry*, points out that while we "heat, beat and treat" hydrocarbons with 96% waste during the production of heavy products and further waste as these products go into landfills, Nature creates fabulously lightweight materials of great strength, flexibility, durability and amazing textures and colors, at ambient temperatures with no waste. We are learning to mimic Nature's micro technology just as we did the more obvious gross technologies of flying like birds, digging like moles, swimming and diving like cetaceans, etc. It is no longer difficult to envisage a future in which every man, woman and child can live lightly on the Earth in elegant simplicity, with great convenience and opportunity

5. Youth

Bad News: Our young people around the world, who are about to inherit it and run it, have bad role models. We tell them not to take from each other or beat each other up, while world leadership, both political and economic is engaged in doing what we say should not be done. We feed them on media assaults of violence, false glamour, sex and cynicism instead of on positive stories of human values, courage and creativity in service to planet and people. We encourage them to see money as the source of happiness and to seek instant gratification as consumers so they will not live in the fear and depression their world inspires. My own grandchildren face envy and hatred of their country as they travel abroad because we, their elders, do not take ourselves seriously enough as role models and do not stand up to right the wrongs done in our names throughout our lives at the end of the human empire-building era.

Good News: Many of us are gathering the courage to stand up now and be counted as the old system gives way to the new, and to help young people understand the transition. We must teach them not to hate the old system, but to honor it for bringing us to where we can see our unity with all life and evolve into cooperative global community. We see that most young people are moral and creative in positive ways, that they show signs they will not perpetuate racism, that they love ethnic diversity, that they identify with youth all over the planet, that they want to develop spiritually as they take on the practical tasks of cleaning up environmental devastation and learning to form global community. We need to encourage the young Emerging Leaders in all these matters, to listen to them, empower them, give them visibility and help them take on the responsibility for which they are ready. They are our hope and they still need us.