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CHANGING THE WORLD FROM THE INSIDE OUT

“Hear this, young men and women everywhere, and proclaim it far and wide. The Earth is yours and the fullness thereof. Be kind but be fierce. You are needed now more than ever before. Take up the mantle of change. For this is your time.” Winston Churchill

Our hyper-complex world is fraught with countless social and environmental challenges that fill us with anxiety and fear—for the present as well as the future. Most people wish to have a peaceful and compassionate world, but they are unsure what to do to create it and where to begin. Is entrusting external sources such as governments and social leaders the only thing we can do? Hardly so. Entrusting and enacting one’s own abilities brings far greater change than passively waiting for others to do it. We need to review who we are and of what we are capable. In order to do this, we have to start by reviewing whether the worldview that guides our life and our conduct is correct, because our behaviors are ultimately driven by what we believe about ourselves, each other and the wider world, and whether true or false. Behaviors have consequences, which ultimately shape our individual and collective lives. World events are mirroring our individual and collective behaviors, one may say the “agony of our unhealed psyche which awaits its healing.” (Currivan, 2017) Healing is possible only if we address not the symptoms but the root cause of the disease, which stem from our prevailing and predominantly, shared beliefs about the world as being fragmented, meaningless and dualistic.

There is today a greater awareness than ever before of the countless subtle ties that link diverse phenomena in the world, such as global warming, migration, world hunger, religious intolerance and social disturbance. Interconnectedness and interdependence are increasingly acknowledged, yet, their true meaning is not fully understood and taken into consideration for individual and social change. Interdependence and interconnectedness on the social level mean the support of all others for our own and everyone’s survival. Every single meal we eat, each item of clothing we wear, as well as where and how we live, results from and has consequences for other people as well as other species and nature herself. Because we are so dependent on others and the environment, individually and collectively we have to take care of the well-being of all people and all species so as to safeguard our own individual and collective survival.

A real social transformation is only possible through personal transformation. Change begins with ourselves, our way of life, our behaviors, aspirations and emotional responses to the issues we address. Changing the world has to be from the inside out.

The self-Interested Worldview versus the holistic Worldview

Self-interested behavior hallmarks the last few centuries. It stems from a worldview that alienates humans from each other, from nature and the cosmos. It considers the body as a machine in which organs and cells function as disconnected parts that can be replaced without affecting anything else within the body. It views the soul as a religious concept and sees the span of one's life as a finite and closed circuit. Selfish aims created consumerism; and selfish tendencies lead us to think that we are above nature and that our own belief systems are superior to others. This same self-centeredness created the desire for control over everything and anything. Nature is seen as a wastebasket - as so often we treat our own bodies - into which we dump things indiscriminately. Large corporations produce the goods that we consume; therefore we are a part of the problem. Why are we so surprised at where we have arrived? Earth is rebelling by producing climate change; nations are experiencing greater crime rates, gender and racial inequality, and increased social disobedience; ill-health is rampant; animals are hunted for trophies — and so on. Living driven by a self-interested worldview is self-defeating and endangers humankind as well as the planet.

I believe that “the universe is urging our entire species to a higher stage of maturational development” and that “the global systems crisis is an evolutionary driver in this process.” (Bache, 2017) In order to reach such level, we must surrender the beliefs and practices that divide us and replace them with new, more inclusive holistic ones. We must also replace a narrow definition of our self-interest for an enlarged sense of collective purpose, which is dominated by empathy and compassion. Chris Bache, author of the Dark Night, Early Dawn said in ‘Beyond Fear and Rage’: “In a time of accelerated change when old certainties are falling away, it is only natural that people would try to hold on to the past, that we would be drawn to leaders who promise to take us back to a more stable time and more familiar order. If we were desperate enough, we might even elect leaders who deny scientific consensus and reassert the old divisions of race and religion. But denial will not hold back the oceans and the racial stereotypes that lead to Auschwitz and Dachau.”

We are heading into unprecedented turbulent times. Are there any guidelines how to navigate in such challenging times? Futurist and humanitarian Robert Theobald offers the following:

- a) People are Ready. Our priority task is no longer to inform people about the need for change but rather to enable them to express their hopes. There is, fortunately, a rapidly growing awareness of the need to listen and work with those with whom one disagrees.
- b) Dream no Small Dreams. We shall only attract large-scale positive energy if we enable people to believe that their actions may make a real difference to their children and grandchildren.
- c) See the Whole Picture but Act on a Part of it. Big changes happen when a lot of people do a lot of things a little bit differently.
- d) Less is More. The threshold for involvement should be set as low as possible so people can start with small steps.
- e) Resilience. This is one word, of many, to express the core skill we need in the future. We must move away from brittle, overstressed systems to opportunities for people and ecologies to have time and space for good choices. This leads to co-intelligence rather than co-stupidity.
- f) Care for Others and Ourselves. The transformation now occurring is immensely stressful. We need to use spiritual practices to keep ourselves centered. This challenge is particularly great for those who are committed to being in the “empty center:” connecting people and groups but not controlling their actions. We must, in particular, be aware how our patterns of thought, meetings and actions can exclude others: we must constantly respect the different processes that a respect for diversity requires. ⁱ

“Extraordinary conditions call for extraordinary responses. Fear and rage spreading among wide layers of the population is an extraordinary response, but it is a gut-response and not a good response. Rage leads to deepening confrontation and ultimately to violence, and fear allows confrontation to blossom without doing anything about it. One is active and the other passive, but they have the same end-result: the situation gets worse.

A good response is not a gut-response but an informed response. There are sources of information that do not call for a graduate degree in quantum physics and mathematical economics to access”. (Laszlo 2017)

The insights offered at the cutting edge of science and Eastern philosophies provide such information. Both advocate a holistic worldview that considers all sentient beings and non-sentient things as part of a ‘whole’ that is

intrinsically and subtly interconnected, where each thing affects every other in an integral way.

According to Eastern tenets, humans are an integral part of the cosmos, and the human body is a microcosm, which is not only governed by the same laws, but is also animated by the same forces—the forces that drive development in the cosmos. Human activities, whether social or individual, model themselves according to that which takes place on a macro-scale, and development in the cosmos has a huge impact on humanity. Cosmic harmony can only be maintained by harmony in nature, in the state, in the family, as well as in the human body and mind. Damaging any of these harmonies risks causing disorder in the whole. In my view, it is not utopian to build unity within cultural and religious diversity. This calls for exercising mutual tolerance and establishing mutually beneficial modes of cooperation in order to create a culture of coexistence based on participatory and harmonious relationships.

Humanity can and must consciously guide its own evolution. This means shifting away from egotistic behavior towards all-inclusive humanistic-nature-planet-centered modes of action. In order to achieve global-scale social, economic and ecological transformation, the human community needs to transform itself, which can only be achieved by conscious evolution guided by an evolved consciousness.

Immortal consciousness and Conscious evolution

Consciousness is as fundamental as energy; the cosmos is psychophysical, characterized by its mental and physical aspects. According to Max Planck: “I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates of consciousness”. Consciousness is not material, it has no mass and yet through our consciousness we experience space, time and matter. Empirical evidence and clinical studies support the idea that consciousness does not reside in or is produced by the brain. The brain receives and displays it. The totality that makes up human consciousness is infinitely stored, holographically, in the deep, invisible dimension. Such information can be accessed in altered state of consciousness whereby the two hemispheres of the brain function in unison and quantum information can enter conscious awareness.

Researches of countless Near Death experiences, out of body experiences and altered states of experiences postulate that human consciousness does not perish at the moment of physical death, rather that consciousness is immortal. It is my understanding that the immortality of consciousness and the role it plays in human life expands the boundaries of science’s knowledge of the world.

Could consciousness be described as the core of the cosmos? Many philosophers maintain that there exists a cosmic order that originates from the deep dimension, which in-forms the manifest world. Consciousness in-forms the universe for order, for the universe to *be* and to *become*. Overall coherence in the universe leads to the emergence of complex systems such as those we associate with life. Coherent multi-scale and multidimensional connections maintain complex systems and ensure their coherence with other systems in the biosphere. Without such constant and active interconnection, life and evolution would not be possible. The evolution of life points to the coherence of living organisms with their environment. The deep dimension of the cosmos is a consciousness that creates localized but non-localized manifestations of itself. Human consciousness could be the vehicle through which cosmic consciousness recognizes itself.

The concept of the existence of a deep dimension of the cosmos has been affirmed for millennia. Greek metaphysicians affirmed a hidden dimension. Pythagoras explained an unbroken wholeness – Kosmos, Plato talked about Ideas and Forms, and Plotinus ‘The One’. Giordano Bruno claimed the existence of an infinite universe composed of an unseen substance he called aether or spiritus. Modern cutting-edge theoreticians suggest that space-time is not the ultimate reality, and that beyond there is a deeper dimension of which holographic projections are the emergent manifestations of all things in spacetime. Laszlo explained that cosmic or integral consciousness could be likened to what the Hindus called Brahman, or the Chinese philosophy Tao. Erwin Schrödinger argued that consciousness does not exist in a plural form and there is only one consciousness, which concord with Laszlo’s view that individual consciousness is a localized form of cosmic consciousness.

Humans have the privilege and responsibility of consciously directing their own evolution towards an optimally functioning society and environment. The worldwide shift towards global sustainability and wellbeing can be achieved by shifting from our current, limited human consciousness towards a more evolved, holistic consciousness. The shift of the individual’s values, ethics and consciousness to the global level is the path to survival for humans as a species.

Ilya Prigogine’s non-linearly bifurcating dissipative system theory explains societal changes and their possible outcomes. His work was focused on ‘open systems’, which exchange energy and information with their environment such as social and biological systems. Fluctuation within a system may lead to a bifurcation point or turning point, from which, progress is irreversible and its direction is hard to predict. The dynamic of the development is non-linear, alternating between states of stability and instability, order and chaos, continuity

and discontinuity. Systems science explains that so-called 'attractors' instigate change within a system.

Donald Trump is such an attractor. Not an attractive one may say! When a system is in a chaotic state, the adaptability of the system's parts or elements determines the outcome of its evolution. Many societies were not able to adapt to external and possibly internal attractors like the Babylonians, Easter Islanders et al, so they died out. The direction of evolution is unpredictable but at the same time controllable. Human consciousness is a unique trait that can influence the direction of its own evolution. Our destiny is in our hands; we need to regain our coherence with each other and with the world around us. By becoming fine-tuned again, we become a coherent system that is a functional part of a supercoherent system.

Community is important. Lets look at the sponge as a superorganism. To you and me, a sponge is quite clearly a single clump of squeezable stuff. But that singularity is an illusion. Take a living sponge, run it through a sieve into a bucket, and the sponge breaks up into a muddy liquid that clouds the water into which it falls. That cloud is a mob of self-sufficient cells, wrenched from their comfortably settled life between familiar neighbors and set adrift in a chaotic world. Each of those cells has theoretically got everything it takes to handle life on its own; but something inside the newly liberated sponge cell tells it, 'You either live in a group or you cannot live at all.' The microbeasts search frantically for their old companions, then labor to reconstruct the social system that bound them together. Within hours, the water in your bucket grows clear, and sitting at the bottom is a complete, reconstituted sponge. Like the sponge cells, you and I are parts of a vast population whose pooled efforts move some larger creature on its path through life. Like the sponge cells, we cannot live in total separation from the human clump. We are components of a superorganism. (Bloom, 1995)

A decade old research conducted in California showed that a great number of Americans who are diseased and killed by heart problems each year have a common denominator that seems to trigger their sickness, which is the lack of warmth and meaningful relationships in their lives. On the other hand, research in Europe suggested that kissing on a regular basis provides additional oxygen and stimulates the output of antibodies. Closeness to others can heal; separation can kill.

Kissing is not enough - hugging is a must too! James W. Prescott, founder of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's Developmental Biology Program observed that some cultures took great pleasure in 'killing and torturing' whereas others did not. What was the difference? Prescott said 'physical affection - touching, holding and carrying'. The societies that hugged their kids were relatively peaceful. The cultures that treated their children coldly produced brutal adults who are prone to physical

violence. Prescott studied Islamic society. He concluded that Islamic mothers tend to be warm and nurturing, but Islamic father treat their children harshly, acting cold, distant and wrathful. In much of Arab society, the unmerciful approach of fathers to their children continues, and public warmth between men and women is still considered an evil. Perhaps this is why a disproportionate number of Arab adults, stripped of intimacy and thrust into a life in which vulnerable emotion is a sin, have joined extremist movements dedicated to wreaking havoc on the world. (Bloom, 1995)

I believe that real social transformation is only possible when it includes personal transformation. In order to be most effective in our work in the world, we need to be willing to look within.

Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism are all advocates of the *discovery of oneself and of the experience of the infinite within each of us*. According to Lama Anagarika Govinda, "There are as many infinities as there are dimensions, as many forms of liberation as there are temperaments. But all bear the same stamp. Those who suffer from bondage and confinement will experience liberation as infinite expansion. Those who suffer from darkness will experience it as light unbounded. Those who groan under the weight of death and transitoriness will feel it as eternity. Those who are restless will enjoy it as peace and infinite harmony."

Mindful practices, yoga, meditation, tai chi, chi kung, and the study of wisdom traditions are among the many approaches towards self-discovery. It is important to recognize that it is not material goods or financial status, which make us happy or define who we are. The Karmapa stated "We do not need to buy or own anything in order to be happy. At any moment, we can access this sense of joy. The same interdependence that makes our consumerism so devastating for the environment can also make the natural environment a source of endless joy and wonder to us, without taking away anything more than a lungful of air. It just depends on how we choose to live our connectedness." In terms of the meaning of your life he said the following: "you offer joy and happiness to another person, and it reflects back into your own life. The meaningfulness of your life does not come from you as a separate individual. It does come from you, but only through your connectedness to others. In this way, your interrelatedness can give great meaning to your life."

Whatever work you do, you have to give yourself the opportunity to just be. Even if it is only once a day, you should find a moment to just be yourself in the course of each day. This could be through a short period of meditation or quiet reflection in the morning or in the evening, or in whatever way best suits you. The point is to reconnect with yourself. Otherwise, the whole day you are

running around and busy, and it is easy to lose yourself. To guard against this, you should make efforts to return to yourself and recollect what is essential for you. (The Karmapa, 2013)

Meaningful livelihood can be achieved by living consciously, based on wholesome intentions and altruistic impulses. All human action needs to benefit nature, society, and one's own self equally. To inquire into the workings of the world around us is just as important as inquiring into our inner world. I believe that there is a reason, a purpose for our existence, individually and collectively in this life. It is our task to discover and live up to that purpose. "The orienting principle of such discovery is love, embracing oneness in everything we think, do and feel." (Laszlo 2017) To know ourselves truly, we have to bring our hearts and minds together while trusting our wisdom within. "Spiritual discovery is not a matter of finding wisdom out there somewhere. It is a matter of discovering what already exists within us. Like cleaning the surface of a stone inscription, the more you clean it, the more the original carving becomes apparent." (The Karmapa, 2013)

As to the meaning of one's life, I read an article by Ta-Nehisi Coates about *There is more to Life Than Being Happy* in which he posits: "Being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself -- be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself -- by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love -- the more human he is. The pursuit of meaning is what makes human beings uniquely human. By putting aside our selfish interests to serve someone or something larger than ourselves -- by devoting our lives to "giving" rather than "taking" -- we are not only expressing our fundamental humanity, but are also acknowledging that (that) there is more to the good life than the pursuit of simple happiness."

As to what is the fundamental purpose of a human life – Laszlo's answer is: that you have the profound freedom to EXPLORE, EXPERIENCE, EXPRESS, AND EXPAND the profound GENIUS of WHO YOU ARE as a unique individuation of the WHOLE, on behalf of the SELF and the WHOLE. The Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi said that the 'entire universe is inside you'. Discover the beauty, the talent and the magic of the universe that is YOU! The changes you make in your universe affect other universes. It is up to you what you change, and how and when you change it.

Jean Houston said beautifully in 'Beyond Fear and Rage': "we are Gardeners who can farm the fields of space/time, the generative ground of our being, creating gardens of consciousness, landscapes filled with the blossoms of our minds and

spirits. Tending the gardens of your life involves a kind of cosmic yoga; you yoke yourself back to remembering that you are made of the same stuff as the Metaverse from which you continuously arise, second by second. You share its body, albeit as a manifestation of the Divine Spirit in the world; you are woven into the fabric of its infinite ecology; the productions of your hands and mind—even in the crucible of crisis and finance, are an aspect of its creation and live in eternity. You know yourself, then, as resonant waves of the original seed, an infinite being who contains in your body-mind the design of creation itself, planted in the field of this particular space-time and sustained by a dynamic flow-through of cosmic energy and the love and nurturance of the Divine Spirit.”

ⁱ Theobald, Robert. *Death and Rebirth: Explaining the Dynamics of Change*. 1999. Retrieved from <https://www2.gwu.edu/~y2k/categories/y2kstudies7.html> .

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