

Excerpt from the Book: *Vision – We Are Re-Creating the World: A Resource Manual “tool-box” for Revitalization and Empowerment through Grass-roots Strategies and Environmental Awareness* by Andrew N. Skadberg, Ph.D.

Chapter 2—A Quick Summary of My Experience and Some More Introductory Observations

“Even as the unwise work selfishly in the bondage of selfish works, let the wise man work unselfishly for the good of all the world.”

Bhagavad Gita 3:25

I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything.”

Abraham Lincoln

1809-1865, Sixteenth President of the USA

Some history and various thoughts and realizations— important concepts realized from my professional experiences

It would be difficult to provide any where close to a summary, or even to weave a story of the experiences and education that has led to my having the perspectives that I have. So much contemplation, personal growth and spiritual work, and worldly experiences that weaving the tale would lead you the reader down a path that would not be beneficial to either of us. The point of this book is to lead to an introduction to some practical, but theoretically supported concepts for developing new development strategies. However, it will be useful to provide a little more information about some of the experiences and how some of the people whom I have been so fortunate to work with, have provided inspiration, guidance and support.

Until this year for most of my working life, I have been acting, more or less, like a cog in the machine. Because I never saw anyone who did what I was compelled to do with my work and my vision, I never really saw “my art” or what my special talents or gifts to the world were. So I never took, or saw, the opportunity to venture out on my own. Nor could I readily find a place a place where I might fit, except those places that my life path had taken me.

I had in 2003 come to realize that I seemed to be here to “experience” as great of variety of things that life could offer. I also seem to have a special talent to understand the “bigger picture”, to be able to see a certain vision of the world, and what we might be able

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to do if we put our minds to it.

I also have a special insight into the human condition, both in understanding individual psychology and the collective. I have been called a visionary, and saw myself as one, but I also might be called a sort of futurist, but I never followed this as a career, or specific path. It is difficult to define myself by any group of words, much less in a single one. (note from author: of course this is really the case with every person, but our world seems obsessed with encapsulating people by labels. I think we should stop).

Even though this was the case, I had, without being really aware, been creating a “masterpiece”, my vision for the world. This piece of art is still in process, and I suspect it will be for my entire life. However, in 2009, I was challenged by a friend to give him a summary of what I did with “my work”. So, I prepared the 42 page document entitled “Vision to Transform the World” It was prepared as a sort Executive Summary of my vision and ideas, and it is included in this book in order to show that there appears to be a progression, or a result of all this experience and cogitative processes.

I believe this is one of my primary contributions to give in the world. Various parts of this “Vision” have been implemented. For example it was my work with a small team as a professor at Texas A&M that started the phenomena of wireless Internet and traveler information at department of transportation (DOT) facilities (rest areas) in the United States. The successful pilot project was called TexBox. If you would like to see a video about the launching of this in Texas go to (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMGu0efS6EI>).

I have big dreams. And I am still pursuing those dreams. It has been an arduous, but incredible process. Many people would judge me as possibly being a frivolous person who has had more than fifty jobs in my life. However, I have come to be grateful for these experiences (in many case menial jobs), and they have contributed greatly to my vision, and dream for my life and for the world. These experiences are the foundation of my appreciation for the world, nature and all peoples. They have also given me a vast array of experiences which have been necessary for me to get to the place of being able to “get the job done”, no matter what obstacles arise. In a simple way, I guess, I am learning that we must be like water in order to accomplish our objectives – persistence, flow, patience

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and carry with us the energy of love and life.

This following essay was written as a vision statement as I was considering applying for a position as a director of a regional extension program. I didn't actually apply for the position because I am not a full-professor so I wasn't qualified. However, I believe this document provides a good summary of one vision to transform one of the most important endeavors created in human history, the Land Grant University System (see John Campbell's paper in Volume II).

Some personal background of the author in the form of a “vision” letter

This letter is a statement of my vision for the challenges and opportunities that are available to the people of the world as we move into the 21st century. To begin, I will boldly state that I am a strong proponent of the Vision of John R. Campbell for Land Grant education as elaborated on in his book “Reclaiming a Lost Heritage: Land-grant and Higher Education Initiatives for the 21st Century”. I believe his book provides a strong argument for the grand vision of the Land Grant Model for education as proscribed in its inception, although I also see that there needs to be a major re-evaluation of the direction that extension has taken during the last decades.

Great opportunities and challenges are being presented for how education can be accomplished during these the dramatically changing times. Given the economic challenges that are being faced by all U.S. citizens, but especially rural places, new models for outreach and education, for supporting those systems, and for utilizing the under utilized natural capital that is available to enhance and empower these “new”, re-vitalized models for education, namely people, our natural and cultural heritage, and emerging technologies.

My perspective is entirely unique in an academic setting because I have spent considerable time in academia and outside. Having a certain entrepreneurial focus since about 1982, my life experiences have been a blending of a passion for education, and for how to draw practical knowledge out of those experiences in order to help people. In my view, this should be the ultimate aim of extension education. Since beginning my Master's degree in 1992, I have been focused with a “systems thinking” view of how to work with people, primarily in rural places.

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I believe I was influenced by my father who was an Extension Professor at Iowa State for 28 years. Just before he passed in December of 2006, I asked him the question, “Dad, when did Extension begin to take a wrong turn?” His answer was somewhere in the 1960’s when it focused almost exclusively on agriculture and not on other expanding domains of education that would provide for broader based economies.

The need to remake the model is upon us. The economic challenges that we face are demanding that we step back, and as Gharajedaghi says in his Systems Thinking book, “It is necessary to start all over again”, instead of trying to add a new component on to an old system.

One can easily see this situation from a “glass half full” or “glass half empty” perspective. And, given the challenges that we appear to be facing, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. However, I see that the opportunities are so tremendous as to be incredibly empowering. It is in the basic make up of America, that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. This has been my observation as I have been involved with national programs for entrepreneurial development. I was working with the National Tourism Group (centered at MSU) and was actively working with Jim Maetzold as he single handedly was coordinating information for rural alternative enterprise development for USDA. This situation, of there only being one USDA specialist working in the area of alternative enterprises was a total surprise to me. In fact I was astounded.

Our work in “nature tourism” with farmers and ranchers and rural communities in Texas indicated this diverse domain of alternative enterprise development was where these citizens, challenged by increasing economic pressures, had viewed there future to lie. Instead of one person, there should have been a major focus of USDA into these “new” domains (although in reality this are age old practices of diversified farming), especially since the demands were coming from the farmers, ranchers and rural communities themselves. In essence, they were moving on the lesson that diversification, adding new enterprises to their operations was their only hope, in some cases to keep their farms and ranches. It goes back to the old adage “don’t put all of your eggs in one basket”, much less to put “one egg in one basket”.

Additionally, I see tremendous opportunities related to the use of new technologies for

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rural development. As one of the original authors of the Texas Heritage Trail Program, and the instigator of the Wireless Internet and Traveler Information at Dept. of Transportation (DOT) facilities phenomena that is now being deployed in about a dozen states, it seems that the Internet is very much underutilized. As I have continued to push the development of these technologies and services in international places (Colombia, Jamaica), it appears that all of the tools that we need, technologically speaking, are laying at our feet. All that is required of us to develop whole new systems of information and service delivery, is to capture the content and present it to our constituents in a way that empowers them to accomplish the things that they are wanting to get done.

Keeping abreast of states that are implementing projects to launch DOT wireless projects, it appears that the total vision is not being realized. That is why these projects are making slow progress. It has now been over three years since Minnesota awarded a contract with no progress to date. This is because the current projects are only doing half of the equation (See the Experience Iowa Information case study in Chapter 9). Essentially their focus is on the technology and providing information to the travelers. This is understandable because it is easy to isolate the “services” side simply as providing information to the travelers, utilizing these “new” technologies. These technology companies have not had the experience of going to these rural communities and finding that they are desperate for solutions and resources to help them create new opportunities for themselves. As we conducted various workshops in Texas, and I presented at four conferences hosted by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, it is so obvious the people are looking for help. So, just one opportunity for regional extension is to create the other side of the “Community Information Network” and provide various educational tools, entrepreneurial training, etc. and fulfill the void of “education”. I have called this system, since I envisioned it in 2003 “the walking talking Yellow Pages”.

The best part is, if the right online business models are utilized, the system will be able to derive its own financial base into the future. The evidence to support this is as close as looking at The University of Phoenix Online, Google, Facebook, Amazon.com, etc., etc.

The above is only one example of the opportunity space that Extension education in the “higher education” and Land Grant Universities could pursue. And this is not to suggest a

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wholesale shift from the traditional models. What is required is a process of “going back to the drawing board” and making an assessment of the existing programs that are still serving important constituencies, but also to examine these whole new domains of education that are square in our face. Our work to develop the Nature Tourism Handbook in Texas was not a result of our staff’s incredible vision, but one that really was stimulated by the demand of the farmers and ranchers. We did see that alternative enterprises, such as value-added agriculture, and agritourism and nature tourism was a new opportunity space, but what really placed a demand on our getting something produced came from the people themselves.

Much of my vision for rural revitalization and empowerment has been written in the last two years since I have had more time to focus on further evolving this work. Previously I had to focus on specific pieces of the puzzle that have now become a strong component of my systems view.

For example, in my last role as a Research Scientist working for Dr. Richard Ewing the Vice President for Research at Texas A&M, my job was to create vision for a new institute that would utilize a powerful remote sensing technology called a hyperspectral sensor. This highly under utilized technology can provide invaluable environmental data for decision makers and natural resource managers. Specifically it has been utilized for precision agriculture, mining assessment and amelioration, forestry, etc. The vision of myself and Dr. Ewing, until his untimely passing, was to create a “Center of Excellence” that would “spin” out new technologies and especially services to a long list of clients that are clamoring for information to make more informed decisions. This model, similar to nature tourism and alternative agricultural enterprises, could create expanding opportunities in the realm of commercialization and education. My vision, was essentially based on the Land-Grant Model as I understood it from its original mission, but with a emphasis on extending what is learned, and also to make a connection via the provision of “services” to the public(s) at large. These services could then generate much needed capital to expand the programs being developed.

As you the reader might surmise, these ideas can only be briefly introduced which has now become over 600 pages (in two volumes). However, it is also important to note that our guidance for the future of the Extension education can also come from case studies, of

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existing projects that are really working. These “case studies” can come from many sources. Two I would like to mention include the SPREAD project in Rwanda. I was told about this project by Jack Dangermond who is the owner of ESRI GIS software company. Essentially, a single extension professor, from Texas AM University helped create a “grass-roots” effort to take the Rwanda coffee industry from paying the producers a few pennies per pound to several dollars per pound (I saw one auction brought over \$30 for a pound of coffee).

A second case is a personal friend who is growing bamboo in Brazoria, County, Texas. David Cater, an ex-landscape designer began producing bamboo for food about 3 years ago. He started on 24 acres and within a year was in making a profit with seven full time employees. Since then he is now producing organic vegetables and taking them into a farmers market in Houston, Texas but is also expanding his business into Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

These projects are the types of “stars” that we should scan the globe for and then to present through a “collaborative network”. Via the Internet we can support all kinds of case studies, testimonials, networking tools to help people find useful information, but maybe more importantly to connect up to like minded individuals to share experiences and assistance.

This to me is possibly the greatest opportunity space for the “new education models” (NEM). On a larger scale, a possibility exists to create a similar system as Dr. Ewing proposed for the King Abdulah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia. The concept, which focused on mathematics and computational science, created a network of scientists from around the world, to create a quasi “virtual institute”. Again the details are too extensive to include in this Vision statement, but we can draw from these existing initiatives for guiding the NEM into the future.

In conclusion, I had the great fortune to spend six hours with Norman Borlaug in 2006 in his home in Dallas, Texas. After learning about his life and accomplishments I spent some time contemplating and organizing a set of ideas from the two books written about him and our interview. As I organized these ideas, I realized that some of the greatest contributors to the world have really shown us ways to free ourselves from these

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collective conundrums, people like the Nobel Prize winners, Mother Theresa, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, John Kennedy just to name a few. Now it is true that our access to accurate historical information has been highly compromised through mainstream information sources, but the truth can be found if one is dedicated to finding it. I realized just a few years ago, what if we just duplicated these people’s models? So, that is what I decided to do with Norman Borlaug. Analyze his approach and try to replicate it. That is one of the purposes of this book.

So, as a conclusion to this introduction, and an introduction to the rest of this book, I present the outline I derived from Norman Borlaug’s profound accomplishments in his life. As I analyzed and learned the story from Norman in 2006, I did discover some weaknesses in his model. Namely, that he should have employed a more business minded model to support his foundation. At the time of the interview he was facing challenges in how his staff was handling long term benefactors, and was concerned about the future financial viability of endeavors to deal with future threats to global food systems. Additionally, I believe that his great work has been used by some of corporate interests to take control of food systems, and accomplish things that are way beyond the scope of this book, and would divert the discussion from the main focus for positive strategies. However, one example, I believe that companies like Monsanto have been trying to gain control of all of the food production in the world, and in many ways the efforts of Norman made that much easier to accomplish. Nonetheless, I believe that the people of the world are taking the power back, and ironically we can use models as created by Norman as the means to the end.

Before I include the very brief outline that I derived from an evaluation of Norman’s work, I want to include what I believe was the most important point of our entire conversation, after six hours of talking. Norman was the most gracious and patient, in fact, I had learned that Norman actually had cancer while I was meeting with him and his wife had passed just a few months before. He was really enthusiastic, and very humble, even though when we went into his home office I saw plaques for honorary degrees covering his walls. I understand that he had received something like ninety of them, and photos with presidents and important people from all over the world.

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At the end of the conversation I had one question. I asked him, “Norman, if you were to identify one thing that was most important to your accomplishing what you did, what would that be?” He did not hesitate one moment, and responded simply “young minds”. Then he said something about needing to get them into the context of the projects, and help them understand that academic specialization, which the students often arrived to work with him had, that knowledge only provides a part of what they needed to know. Often times, he said that the students would arrive with a certain “ego” about what they knew and he would quickly dispel that by putting them to work—and that means literally in the wheat fields working with the plants. His job was to orient them to the larger “context” of their overall project. But after that was accomplished, as Norman shared with me, he said “and after that you kind of get into the Spirit of the thing”. And when he said that, I felt chills run through my body. And I could see the fire in his eyes, and the passion he had for his vision, that had given him the ability to be credited for saving over one billion people. Norman’s vision was simply the idea that every person here on the planet deserved to have enough food in their stomach. So, with that, I share with you the outline of ideas from Norman’s work, that, to a greater or lesser extent, guide this work called “VISION—We Are Re-Creating the World”.

Norman Borlaug Formula – Our Key to Success

Primary Attributes:

Vision! Spirit! Humility! Persistence!

- Examine primary issues in problem within context.
- Develop common sense solution—create action plan.
- Implement plan—no matter what it takes.
- Recruit young scientists, specialization secondary, teach about context—instill the “Spirit of the Cause”.
- Grow effort, deal with obstacles, adopt and diffuse.
- Never lost sight of the end objective!!!!

This book is dedicated, in part to Norman who passed in the summer of 2009.

Thank you Norman!

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Chapter 3—Essays and General Comments Necessary for Further Introduction to the *Vision—We Are Re-Creating the World*.

The following materials are a collection of essays. Some were written during the compilation of this book. Usually these are ideas that have been in my mind for a period of time. Often times they have been discussed with various people or presented as concepts as part of a presentation, but had never written them down. Others, like the “larger questions” that I am introducing (e.g. “why did we make it like this?) have been in my mind for many years, but I just had no need to express them in writing. I share this because, apparently, there is need to further clarify the context and provide a “back-drop” for you the reader’s understanding. It is necessary to introduce these ideas to you now. Why? you may ask, and “How do you know?” Well, as I am working through the materials to refine them further, these ideas, inspirations, epiphanies are coming back to me, apparently as an important inclusion to create the more fertile space for your consideration and appreciation, in order that you understand the “bigger picture” of the “Vision” — *We Are Re-Creating the World*.

Ever since I was in college in the mid-80’s I had a realization that science, at least in the academic realm, dissects things. This idea came to me sometime in the latter part of my Leisure Studies bachelors degree. I had this epiphany that we humans are so incredibly

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fascinated with taking things apart and looking at the pieces. This to me is what the majority of science is doing. Essentially tearing nature apart into smaller pieces and examining the pieces. The extent of this “digression” can boggle the mind. Just the other day I saw a Discovery program about human reproduction and saw one of the scientists was a “sperm physiologist”.

Don't get me wrong, I do not think there is anything wrong with scientific inquiry to whatever degree that seems necessary, or that pleases the enquirer. But to me, at some point, we need to bring the knowledge back to inform us about the whole. We must try to put the pieces of the puzzle back together. The information or knowledge discerned of its own accord has little more than academic, or even entertainment value if left as scattered pieces. For us to derive the greatest value and benefit we need to bring what is discovered back to inform the rest of the “disciplines” of science of what was learned. For me this is one of the greatest failings of academia, specialization and the segregation, and even competition between the disciplines.

So far, science has provided the impetus by which to dissect the world, and in the main researchers and scientists have become isolated in their disciplines creating “cliques” of experts in their field, most often with very little knowledge of any work others are doing. In fact, institutions of higher learning support, and apparently encourage greater and greater specialization and almost discourage integration, or putting the puzzle back together. I don't believe these barriers were created intentionally, but institutionally they have become major obstacles for collaboration and the type of discovery that will help us solve the challenges that we face. This was one of Dr. Ewing's most important issues that he was working on, to create an environment of greater collaboration between disciplines.

How can this situation be illustrated more emphatically? A simple analogy that we could use would be of a group of people finding an automobile for the first time. They take it apart, look and study the various components, continuing to drill down deeper and deeper into the inner workings of the pieces. They might even go so far as to use a hammer to break apart the pistons to discover just what the thing was made of. At the end of all this inquiry they would be left with a bunch of junk - each part having absolutely no utility to them, because the utility comes from these various parts in combination,

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each functioning as part of the greater machine. And if we were not careful to keep the components in working condition we would never be able to put the car back together. The result would be that we would never discover what the true function, or utility of the “thing” (the car) was. Not recognizing that it was designed for transportation and convenience. I do not think that this is a silly analogy at all.

But in the world of science there are not very many leading scientists who have any idea, much less do they care, to learn how to put the car back together. One discipline that does this kind of generic integration of a variety of disciplines is Geography. Thomas Berry in his book “The Great Work” included an entire chapter to the topic of science needing Geography to re-integrate the various disciplines in order to fulfill “The Great Work”, that being to bring the world back from the brink of environmental destruction.

This is by no means intended as a “self promotion”, but the author of this book specialized in “Environmental Geography”. And I would wholly agree with Berry’s conclusion.

In truth I was not aware that the discipline of Geography existed prior to entering a PhD program in Texas. But after spending five years of study and gaining greater understanding of what the discipline entails, I learned that I really was a geographer at heart. Even during my Master’s degree, in which my major professor was only asking for an “economic assessment” of an alternative energy, agroforestry project, I was compelled to conduct a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary analyses which is one of the signature characteristics of geography. Geographic “space” provides the “context” for looking at a variety of phenomena whether they be human or natural, and their interactions are of primary concern to environmental geography..

In my Masters thesis entitled “A Socio-economic Analysis of Alleycropping Agroforestry System Utilizing Municipal Biosolids as a Fertilizer” (17 years before my PhD) I examined the project from a multi-disciplinary perspective. In my thinking, conducting an extensive examination and only deriving economic analysis, which was all my major professor asked me to do, would be acquiring only about one quarter of what was needed for decision-making. Thus a rudimentary decision tree was created that looked at measures including social, political and environmental impacts in addition to economics. In this research I first became cognizant that many decisions really are made from very narrow perspectives,

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many times often based simply on economic factors.

This situation must be rectified. As we look across the globe and see rampant social and environmental problems that have resulted from economically driven decisions, we can see in the end that rectifying, or “cleaning up” these problems is much more difficult than considering, or addressing, them in the planning stages. In most cases, alleviating these issues after the fact is far more expensive than the total economic benefit derived from the project itself. This is only in the case when we can actually rectify the problems. And in many cases, the human or environmental costs cannot be simply dealt with by putting a dollar value on them. In cases of loss of life (human or otherwise), how do you put a price tag on these?

Innumerable examples can be cited, but one quick one is the transportation sector. Not even to get into the topic of suppressed alternative transportation and energy at this point (this topic will be touched on in Section 4), we can easily see that the negative impacts, especially environmental and human health are huge. The oil and car manufacturing industries reap incredible profits, while the “external” costs are simply passed on to people and societies.

How are these costs being absorbed by us, the people? These costs are mostly being dealt with on a case by case basis in the terms of individual health, or sometimes in the case of significant concentrated environmental impacts, as in the case of the Exxon Valdez, or the BP incident in the Gulf. But as for the overall environmental costs such as cleaning up the air or water, these are not really being dealt with in any way. Yes, you might cite the various EPA Clean air laws, or the Kyoto Accords as being some kind of remedy, but these are like putting band-aids on systemic cancer. The only way to really deal with these problems is to include the “externalities” (externalities, in simple terms refer to costs that fall outside of traditional, or business cost considerations) into the formula and make those corporations who make the profit from the product be required to pay for the ensuing after math effects. Needless to say, this kind of cost accounting in business would totally alter the business landscape. Imagine if McDonalds had to pay for people to go out and clean up all of the trash that results from their business, or if they had to pay for cleaning up the toxics that enter the environment from their Styrofoam containers. Do you think that Monsanto could stay in business if it had to pay for removing all of the toxic

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substances from the soil, water, air, animals and people?

More will be presented along these lines in sections discussing Systems Thinking and in the case studies. Of any of the “Guiding Principles” of the Vision approach, “contextualizing”, or looking at the bigger picture is of the greatest import. The need for us humans to “step back” and gain new and broader perspectives on things will be paramount for our turning things around.

In Geography, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is a software that allows us to integrate various “layers” of data, or information, and overlay these on the landscape (layers of data are geo-referenced and can be stacked, with analysis being performed across the various data layers, you can see a conceptual diagram of this in the section on Environmental). Specifically this process is termed “spatial analysis” and is a very powerful tool to inter-relate different sets of information, whether it be social, environmental, biological, aquatic, etc. and “ask questions” looking for inter-relationships. For example we can begin to see patterns of interaction between patterns of urban development and the movement of chemicals into our aquatic systems. The possibilities are really endless. These ideas will be greatly expanded upon in the Case Study (Chapter 8) describing remote sensing and the hyperspectral sensor.

Ghararjedaghi in his book Systems Thinking, discussed in greater detail in the section entitled “Systems Thinking”, presents the metaphorical elephant story which is illustrative of our need to not only look at things from many angles, but after the different people look at the elephant and come up with their individual perceptions, they must “compare notes” and discuss their various findings. Thus creating a picture of the whole. This metaphor applies to us all. Then we can be much more prepared to reach consensus decisions about what exactly we are dealing with. How often have you been involved in any kind of endeavor where it was requirement for a holistic perspective? If we want things to change we must implement better models.

One final note for this section, as I told my wife about what I was writing here, who is an academic too, she said that to propose that “Geography” was the integrating discipline would of course result in objections from the other disciplines. That is to say, that of course individuals in the other disciplines would claim the same. First let me say that it

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was not I who proposed this idea, but Thomas Berry. I will defer to his life’s work and perspectives with a great deal more confidence than I could claim on my own, especially being a Geographer myself. Berry was not a Geographer. Secondly, this “infighting” characteristic of academics is another root of the problem. Scientists, and academics (I realize this is a huge generalization) have a strong tendency to become ego driven and to lose all perspective on things. As the world faces global environmental, social and economic collapse, we are arguing about who’s perspective is the “most important”! My friends, this is not the point. The situations we face require all of our energies focused in a positive way to successfully create new systems and share them with people facing critical living conditions.

As far as I can tell, we are at a stage in the “living” game here on Earth where we need to come together collectively “come hell or high water”. The time for debates, or intellectual “one ups-manship” is way past. We are at the stage where the boat is leaking from innumerable places and we need people to start to plug the holes, maybe even using our clothes as plugs, leaving any concerns of vanity or embarrassment behind. After we stop the boat from leaking then we can return to our competitive games, that is if we find it necessary. My hope is that, as we get together, and begin to think more with our hearts, rather than just with economic concerns as our prime motivator, or our selfish interests, that we will discover ways to prevent these problems before they occur. I am absolutely sure we have these capabilities, we just have to get together and work along the lines of Reverence for Life, and the Golden Law (discussed a little later).

Finally, we must not only engage our hearts, but learn how to become better “thinkers”. One of the best discussions on this topic is the book “When Love Guides Your Thoughts”. I would recommend this book, or the writings of Albert Schweitzer or Rabindranath Tagore for realigning ones ability to think.

Here begins a group of essays, or in some cases blogs, that I believe will further “prepare the garden” for an abundant harvest. The harvest being the creative consideration and potential application of the ideas presented in this book. I am fully aware that this book discusses “large problems”, or issues. I personally have made the best attempt to eradicate the word “problem” from my vocabulary and thinking. That is because I believe to mentally consider “problems” is to become negatively oriented. These days I try to

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replace the word with “challenge”, which instead puts me in a position to capitalize on opportunities. To be challenged is to face the “opportunity” to climb innumerable, metaphorical, mountains. The great thing about climbing mountains is that I gain greatly whether I get to the top or not.

The reader must recognize that I truly am an optimist. The reason that this book may seem overly critical is that I believe we have been living our lives much like the proverbial ostrich. Why would I make such a statement? Look around. There are far too many people suffering, and conditions are in such a state that do not match what the majority of us would have. I believe that at least 95% (or more) of the people in this world want the world to be different, but somehow the five percent that see that life on this world is about war, scarcity, suffering and pain are totally running the show. I know we can do better. But in order to find solutions and opportunities, we must pull our heads out of the sand, take the filters from our glasses and see the conditions as they really are. Otherwise we remain in the dark like the gentlemen in the “elephant story”.

This next section of essays is more personal in its perspectives. I include them to assist the reader in understanding some of my personal philosophies but also I believe these essays have some insights which might help the reader understand where I am coming from as I present the subsequent ideas for rural revitalization and empowerment. And, possibly these essays may trigger insights for you the reader, these writings came pretty much spontaneously from inspiration, so possibly the source is from something other than myself as eluded to previously.

Science, logic, universal mind, synchronicity

January 9, 2009

It is interesting to me how, when I begin to open my mind to "possibilities" it seems that I receive many messages, or signs that coincide. I believe this is the crux of the word that Carl Jung coined "synchronicity". I had delved into synchronicity in some depth after I awoke a few years back at 4:30 in the morning with the phrase "logical synchronicity" coming out of my mouth as I popped up in bed. I still haven't completely understood why this experience happened.

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Lately I have been immersed in a study of spirit, consciousness, life, the cosmic energy shifts occurring (see David Wilcock at www.divinecosmos.com for an amazing investigation of energy shifts occurring in just our solar system), while also dealing with shifts in my personal life experiences - my work, where I live, etc. I have received messages from many sources, especially via the Internet which has opened up a new Universe. I knew this was happening even a dozen years ago when I began looking at the Internet for my doctorate dissertation “Nature Tourism in Cyberspace: an Examination of Its Geography and Character in the Network”.

Today, it seems that the message has arrived from the past. I want to share a passage from an amazing book that magically came into my life, without effort. This resonates with an exchange that I had with a friend at an online network just yesterday about "big questions" - religion and science. To discover, once again, that there have been "awakened" souls here for some time, and that their messages can find their way to me in the most unexpected way. The old adage "when the student is ready, the teacher will arrive", comes to my mind.

For me these messages provide a validation for my path, which at times seems dimly lit. Now, my motivations to pursue these "truths" are not coming from outside, they're coming from within me. The challenge for me sometimes is to "keep the faith"; that is to trust the "program" (yes, comparable to a computer program), that I have recently really discovered that resides deep in my being. This program is what the Great Spirit, Source, the One (or God) put inside me - I've discovered it works perfectly. I only have to stop trying to measure it against what the "world" suggests that I do.

This quote came to me, it seems, from 1931, but applies today more than I could have ever expected. And how did this book come to me, a book in English, from the Colombian National Library? the only thing I can think of is synchronistically. This passage just struck me, so I thought I would share it:

". . .it must be admitted that even the impersonal aspect of truth dealt with by Science belongs to the human Universe. But men of Science tell us that truth, unlike beauty and goodness, is independent of our consciousness.

They explain to us how the belief that truth is independent of the human

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mind is a mystical belief, natural to man but at the same time inexplicable. But may not the explanation be this, that ideal truth does not depend upon the individual mind of man, but on the universal mind which comprehends the individual? For to say that truth, as we see it, exists apart from humanity is really to contradict Science itself; because Science can only organize into rational concepts those facts which man can know and understand, and logic is a machinery of thinking created by the mechanic man."

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*

Standing in line begging for money

February 19, 2010

This essay was written during the final compilation of this book. I guess I was not previously ready to share my thoughts. However, now I must include these ideas that have been floating through my head over the last several years. It has come to me that we have allowed money to become our God, or an idol to replace the One. We are totally obsessed, and it has become the main motivation, or driving force in our lives. All that we do is touched by whether or not we have cash in our pocket, or in our account. I don't really think that this is the only way that we could have done things. I believe Source gave us other options, but obviously this is the path we chose. I am ready to free myself from these shackles, and have been in the process for the last few years.

But the point of this essay is more to recognize how we have allowed the banks, politicians and government organizations to also become our masters. I first realized this as I was working as a professor at Texas A&M, looking at how we academics were required to find various grants to support projects and our research. The main sources for funding comes from various state and federal organizations such the National Science Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, etc. I can tell you it is a real game, extremely competitive. Finding grant opportunities requires great skill and completing the many different kinds of proposal requirements is even more difficult. Often it is not about the voracity or value of the project itself, but knowing the psychology of the reviewers in order to win the awards. In most cases these will be a group of men who have climbed the

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ladder of academic or institutional “success”. In my opinion these gentlemen most often are not up to date on current opportunities, much less open to new and innovative ideas, which of course might seem more risky.

As I pursued various grants from 1990 until about 2006, from all sorts of organizations including government agencies, politicians, corporations, non-profits and internal funding from the institutions where I was working, I realized that this is an incredibly competitive process. In some cases a group of us would spend weeks dedicating considerable time and energy to prepare a proposal, that we thought was fundable in the tune of, sometimes, millions of dollars, only to find out there was essentially no money. My experience with fundraising is quite extensive and varied including going to Washington DC and meeting with nine “program leaders” at USDA and five congressmen to discuss ways to fund some rural regional development initiatives. At that time, in 2006, I received wonderful kudos from these individuals about the merits of these projects, but blank stares or redirection to other people when it came to the conversation about money. All of the money in our government was going to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention other secret military expenditures in the tune of trillions of dollars.

I came away from these fifteen plus years experience realizing that us academics and agency people have been lining up competing for the hopes of gaining support, for many times really noble and important projects, to people who were managing “thimblefuls” of money. The agencies supposedly make significant funding available, but in reality the majority of funding that gets funneled to them is used up to keep the status quo programs going. All the while, in military, construction and security budgets money flies like dust in the wind. In most cases the chances for funding in areas other than defense is so small that the effort required is really wasted. In the end, the decision for funding is not so much on the merit of the project but more on the researcher’s ability to play the game, whether it be in writing to the reviewers biases or by using political connections.

It has been a few years since I had those realizations, but have now seen new ways in which we have been conditioned to “stand in line” at the banks, at government offices in the hopes that these people, who are often not qualified to be making the decisions, will “throw us a bone”.

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I have found over the last few years that many really great and good people who are wanting to initiate some kind of project are waiting to get funding. And always the topics of how we are going to get started, whether it is a business or a social development project or whatever, the first discussion, and ultimate stopping point is where are we going to get the money? In almost all cases the discussion then goes to banks, agencies, investors, etc.

I realized that we are acting like paupers. We have totally given our power away. We have allowed the bankers, government officials and politicians to condition us to think that they are the source of the money. Well my friends this is not the case. We collectively support the idea of money being a means of exchange, really an exchange system for services, or exchange of “energy”. It is a scientific, and metaphysical fact that there is no lack of energy, so how could we create something that exhibits the level of scarcity as the money system when there is no lack of energy, which is what it represents? The answer lies in our allowing ourselves to be manipulated and conditioned to believe something other than the truth. (see “Cracking the Money Bands”, in Chapter 13, Volume II). Somehow or other, over the last centuries or decades, we have been totally conditioned to believe that the bankers, politicians and government people are the authority for us to do the things we want to do.

We have been trained to write business plans, to get accountants and lawyers, to fill out forms, and then wait, and hope. All in the end, in most cases to be told “NO”. The thing is, as long as we stand in line and wait, and believe that they are the only source for support, then we are likely closing other channels. As we stand looking in one direction waiting for assistance, looking through the narrow channels that have been created and controlled, we could be missing many other opportunities that are coming to us from every other direction.

Don't get me wrong, I have not figured this totally out yet. But I believe this realization is a very important one, and is critical for us collectively to turn this situation around. The money is for us, the people. And if any entity(s) controls it, it is us, or God. And I don't think I have read anywhere in any holy book that God ordained to have bankers, government officials and politicians to be the decision-makers for our lives and our good works. I would propose that in the majority of cases they are not qualified to make such

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decisions.

I have been searching for various solutions, and have found that there are people who have figured out how to free themselves from this conundrum, whether personally or for their business and organizational efforts. And I believe sweeping changes across the globe are in the works as I write, but we still have to change our consciousness in order to be free from these “systems” that have been designed and sold to us.

I believe we have been following like sheep, never really thinking about what is going on. My realizations about this “standing in line” syndrome came about as I have been presenting and presenting to various government officials only to get smiles and promises. These experiences have caused me to “step back” and get a different perspective, and ask the question “what the hell is going on here?” These people should be lining up to work with us. My compatriots and I, with knowledge about alternative development strategies who are interested in helping people, are the ones with the knowledge to help them accomplish the things that they have been promising to do for “the people” who they are supposed to be serving, or who elected them. That is when I realized that I have given my power away. And that I would likely be standing in line for a very long time hoping that these people would comprehend what we were proposing that they support. The problem is, they will likely never appreciate the full context or potential impact because they only give a few minutes consideration. Given the character of how they conduct their business, giving consideration to many different things, they could never really appreciate what we are proposing. And it is not really their interest. Usually these people, bureaucrats and politicians, are mostly interested in keeping their job, and not really concerned, or interested in making new ways to help people. This is because to do “new things” is to take risky actions, which is contrary and not readily supported inside of established institutions and systems.

Of course, as I continue to propose and develop these ideas to help people and make the world a better place, I remain open to these traditional channels for support, but I have opened my mind to other possibilities too. I believe the source for everything to be the ONE, or God. And since I am inside, or part of the ONE then I am already connected to the source of the money.

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As for this book, one of the areas of critical need when we look at rural revitalization and empowerment is in the area of “economics” and I continue to stay open to effective strategies, sources and “tools”. To date I have found one man, John DeSantis who has proposed a very interesting solution in what he calls the “Public and Private Enterprise.” The idea is to, essentially, recognize that we the people created and print the money, and we can decide to create a supply of money that will support all projects that benefit people and the planet. A much longer summary and some excerpts from John are included later in Chapter 12 – Volume II, but for an introduction this should suffice. I have considered his proposed idea for some time now and I believe the concept is sound. If we make the money, why can’t we make enough to eliminate the problems that are being caused by not having enough money? Money is only scarce because some people are deciding to limit the flow. There will be more discussion on this later.

In any case, I believe money should really be viewed much like other things that exist in God’s creation, air, soil, water, sunlight. There is abundance! The challenge is to shift our thinking and beliefs about it. We have been thoroughly conditioned over many years and generations to think a certain way. But the model is not working. And if lack of money is the problem, then we need a new model.

A book that specifically addresses this, and is included in the Solomon Source series, is “The Science of Getting Rich” by Wallace D. Wattles. It is one of the most powerful and concise treatises on the topic of money and how as individuals we can relate to it successfully. And real transformation, in all respects, begins at the individual level.

Almost to the Vision

The next two essays present a very different set of ideas. These are the last two introductory pieces before we move into the Vision Executive Summary. These two essays really came to me as inspiration. As a result I have edited them very little, considering that maybe the message was divinely inspired. They are included here to share some insights from my experiences and hard work to understand some principles that I do my best to live by. These principles were not my own in any way, but my writing about them is to make them more applied, and pragmatic for my individual life. And possibly you, the reader, will benefit from this different way of looking at these ideas.

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Later in the details of the Vision we discuss in more refinement ideas about personal empowerment. This to me is key for transformation, both for individual lives and for the world. There are innumerable programs, books, tapes, workshops, courses, retreats, religions, etc., etc., etc. out there claiming to be “the way” for personal transformation. I am not claiming to have another. I am only presenting ideas that have come to me in the hopes that they might be of some assistance. What I have learned, at least as a personal truth, is that transformation is an individual process. I really am my own savior! I personally believe that this was the crux of Jesus’s teachings. There is ONE path to God, to Salvation, and it is my own path. No one can show me the way totally because it is through my own heart. This was also one of the most important teachings of the Buddha (and I suspect is the case for all the great spiritual teachings, although I have not verified personally, yet).

How the process of individual transformation and empowerment then expands to a collective experience is through Sharing of our own experiences with others and through demonstration. Here is an appropriate place for a quote of mine included in Chapter 5, Figure C5-16 “The Big Picture—in Simple Terms”, “We’re all in this together, we must save ourSelves and each other”.

How To Live.

March 26, 2009

Ok let’s face it all forms of government have failed to perform. All organized religions have failed. Economics, the money system works bass-ackwards. The idea of survival of the fittest is not how the universe operates. The forms of organized religion and governments have damaged the planet and allowed the majority of the population to live in squalor and misery. The rich have been miserable too, because living prosperously when others are suffering will not ultimately lead to a fulfilled life.

So what principles can we establish by which to create an ever expanding life? How can we turn things around? If we were to “go back to the drawing board” and start over, what could we do?

This idea came to me many years ago when I thought about personal responsibility inside

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of corporations. Ultimately, there is no “passing the buck” in life, even though “chain of command” has created this preposterous idea: that if someone is my master or boss, and they tell me what to do, I have no responsibility for my actions. This is worse than a lemming mentality. For example: my boss gets an idea that it is a good idea to jump off a cliff, so he tests the idea by telling me to jump off the cliff. He’s my boss, so I have to do it. What happens, I die, or am severely crippled for the rest of my life. Now in truth both of these possibilities are not as bad as we think. In fact, at least in this world, they can lead to great demonstration. However, the point of argument here is, just because my boss made the decision, am I not responsible for the action?

What happens to my boss, maybe he doesn’t die, but in a way, hasn’t he suffered a worse consequence? Isn’t that how it really works? That if I benefit at the expense of another, whether it be another person, another life form, or the planet, I ultimately lose out much more – because like the law of giving is multiplicative, so is the Golden Law, the retributions for ignorance, especially intentional, will come back around, multiplied. Cosmically, or some would say karmically, I will pay a price, some day. But this too is “bass-ackwards”, for the reason “not” to do something is not about saving my own hide.

However, beyond the potential benefits gained from passing from this life, or the powerful demonstrations that can come from people who overcome physical and mental challenges, the question remains did we come here to Live or to Die?, at least in this physical form. If we could learn the lessons of Love, truly, I believe that we would have to answer that we are born to Live, period. This conclusion is what Albert Schweitzer referred to as “will to live”. His simple but profound realization, that all life forms are born and have the creative source’s (ONE, God, Krishna, etc.) inherent aim “to survive”, to live a full life, then led him to realize the fact that, to live in absolute harmony with other beings, and ultimately with himself, he needed to establish a foundation, or “ethic” for his existence. His epiphany he called “reverence for life” – and that means all life – including insects and plants.

"So what is the point here?", you ask - "I don't see the “How to Live” 'in this" and "where is this all coming from?" I don't know, but it feels like inspiration. I woke up this morning, after a wonderful Facebook chat last night with a high school friend Tom Dooley who has been on a similar life trek as I. It’s as if he and I ventured out walking from Ames, Iowa, as

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high school acquaintances, to experience the world and life in all its trials and tribulations, and through some set of serendipitous circumstances found that our wandering, weaving paths, ended meeting squarely head-on again after thirty years.

I found myself all last night dreaming, but also half-dreaming, about some of Tom’s experiences and insights that he has come to. That Everything is only ONE! Everything is a mirror! But also as I was dreaming, and half-dreaming, I was scripting a message to Tom about my admiration for his journey. Acknowledging his accomplishments and dedication in pursuit of “the Truth”. And I’m not talking about the Christian truth, or the Buddhist truth, or the American Indian truth, or the United States truth, etc. – I’m talking about the One Truth – the One Truth that I think Christ realized, that Siddhartha realized, and that Tom Dooley realizes. There is only ONE thing here.

I also told him at one point that I have now realized that I had profound epiphanies when I was young. He said "Like what?" And on the spot I didn't remember this one about "personal responsibility", but this morning I did, and I became inspired to write this essay.

But what does this mean - the idea that there is "only ONE thing here"? How can this Truth, which many call love, which isn’t what it really is, because love is only a word, that has been tremendously misunderstood, but it comes as close as any word, be realized? How does one go about day to day, to make decisions in a backwards world, to move toward a world that reflects the Love of the ONE? How do we move from the world of wars, of suffering, of disease, of disharmony and pain to the world of love and harmony and peace and understanding? How do we move away from the “status quo” where people are searching for the truth outside only, instead of inside and then reflecting the beauty that they discover to the outside and then have it reflected back? How do we move out of the existing world we live each day where the economic system seems to be designed to destroy the very thing where the bounty comes from? “Modern” economics kills the geese that lay the golden eggs. And we blame it all on “greed”. The basic premise of Adam Smith’s economic model of scarcity, is the catalyst for greed which feeds “fear of lack”, that puts us in the modality of “get what you can for yourself and your loved ones, but damn the rest of them”. Who is responsible for all this stuff – these ideas, these theories, these beliefs, these excuses? We are! Each one of us. As individuals, we collectively contribute to the continuation of all the things we say or believe are bad. So

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that is where the solutions to these “apparent dilemmas” must begin. At the individual level. One person at a time. And the amazing thing is, that if I change my mind about these things that something magical happens: I will see the world differently, and subsequently the world will change!

These ideas of what is wrong or who is to blame are all based on a cop-out. If we say these things are “reality” we’ve given up: given up some of our greatest attributes and capabilities such as, imagination, agility, and adaptation. It’s not even about corporate greed or government’s incompetence or political corruption. Because in the end corporations, governments and political systems are composed of people, supposedly created and designed to serve the people. I think it comes down, basically, to personal responsibility. That I need to take responsibility, to the best of my ability, for every thought, action and deed. I would say simply that the world would change significantly if we guided our thoughts and actions by Love. At some level that should be enough. The seven “virtues of the heart” (ps): admiration, compassion, forgiveness, humility, gratitude, understanding and valor provide a wonderful “acid test” of our thoughts, actions and behavior. But how does that convert to practical methods? How do we convert the wonderful “ideas” of the seven virtues into a “practical technique” – maybe just by asking ourselves a few questions.

I suggest this list as a starting point:

- Am I being asked to do something that I would do if I had to take personal responsibility for the action – or if I were to receive the negative repercussions?
- Have I given some thought to how others might or might not benefit? – and this means as comprehensive a list as possible.
- Am I keeping secrets?
- Am I telling lies?
- Do I think I can pull the wool over someone’s eyes and gain personal benefit at their expense?
- Of all possible choices of action, is my action the best choice for other people, to nature, the planet, and myself?

(ps): The six virtues of the heart are from James with www.wingmakers.com, I added a

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seventh, “gratitude”.

- Am I constantly challenging myself to do better? This includes helping others raise their awareness of this level of personal responsibility?
- If I were being watched by a sort of “quality overseer” would I feel ashamed of my efforts, or would I feel that I have done my best?
- Am I trying to justify my actions or explain with excuses?
- Am I expecting someone else to clean up my mess? (this means in every aspect of my life).
- Am I willing to consider the application of “Reverence for Life”, in my life?
- Am I willing to take time to measure my thoughts and actions against the seven virtues of the heart: admiration, compassion, forgiveness, humility, gratitude, understanding and valor

And finally, do I realize that there is One infinite Loving presence that is overseeing all of this? So really there are no big deals. And all that I have written here doesn't matter much at all, in the whole scheme of things, but at least I did my best.

Of course all of these things roll into the “Golden Rule”, which I believe is really the “Golden Law”, but this short list of questions provides a practical way to evaluate any given action. The fact of the matter is, that inside each one of us, is the mechanism or guidance program that will answer each of these questions – perfectly – that is if we are clear with our feelings. It's been called “our conscience”, but it speaks to us through feelings – anxious, angry, painful or fearful (bad) feelings mean we're making a mistake. Smooth calm, happy, comfortable feelings mean it's a pretty good decision. The program associated with our heart feelings will guide us with absolute clarity, if we take the time to notice what they are saying to us. The questions provided here are intended to establish a means by which to measure the viability of each decision.

How do we simplify the model? - The Golden Rule, wait Law!

And when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others: then he goes indeed to the highest path.

Bhagavad Gita 13: 28

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When one looks at all of life’s situations they look so complex. Even this book is very long, with many pieces, and if taken as a complete seems overwhelming. The key is to take things one step at a time.

The best analogy is that of a mountain climber. He doesn’t take the whole trip in his head before he starts, otherwise he wouldn’t do it. He makes up his mind to go, takes the right tools, adapts, makes adjustments, in process, and step by step, one foothold and handhold at a time makes his way to the peak.

But what is our guide for our metaphorical journey to some desired destination. We have gotten so far off track, or down a dead-end road, that it is difficult to know what tools we have at our disposal to guide us toward a more harmonious world. Even our thinking is skewed. The knowledge, or what we know that *we are*, and what All That Is (the ONE, or God) is, is quite skewed. So how do we get out of this culdesac, this dead-end situation?

I think it is a matter of finding a principle by which we can guide our thinking and actions and move toward improvement of our situation on a day by day basis. As we look at the various systems that we have created, they do not work. The evidence is all around us.

Now we may envision a new reality, one that we might call *perfect*, but we are so far away from that reality that we lose all hope which we have seen is another obstacle for progress. We must not work against ourselves. We must not allow ourselves to create barriers for us to achieve what our desired outcomes are. So how we accomplish this is to develop ways by which we can move progressively out of our collective conundrum, but this only happens on an individual basis! So, by what principle can we guide ourselves? I believe it is the Golden Rule – but what I believe is actually the most important *law of the Universe*.

A digression might be to talk about how just using the Word “rule”, (very likely it was supposed to be law) has made us forget, or comprehend the true importance of this. The ten commandments were described as “rules” to live by. But as Emmett Fox wrote about in his book “The Ten Commandments” was the fact that they are actually laws. People have been inclined to break rules, because they really don’t understand that by doing things against rules they are really mostly hurting themselves. “Rules are meant to be broken” is a tongue in cheek saying, but who of us does not secretly believe this to be

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true. This may be a case where all of the things that we aren't supposed to do, actually become very attractive and we secretly do these things but pretend that we are not. We then begin to hide from ourselves, dishonesty sets in, and then we are down the slippery slope of how can a person base a life on lying to oneself. We can see the results of this erroneous thinking by what we see in the world, and in our respective individual lives.

So, back to the Golden Law. It is a law. If I hurt you, I hurt me—and you. But likely more me, because in the end, the universe cannot operate on “fuzzy”, happenstance, fickle, occasional, or alternating principles, or “laws”. For every action there will be a reaction. So if I steal something from you, at some time in the future I will pay that price (if not in this life, then in a future life). Most of us do not really understand the Golden Law. And it is not the point that a person follow this principle for selfish purposes, because if I am being considerate of others just to serve myself, not concerned about the impacts on others, that is another trap.

To move out of this “far from the desired situation” in the world, I believe the Golden Law is the foundation.

Let us continue with our analogy, and imagine that our collective being has truly taken a trip down a street and we took a wrong turn and found ourselves in a culdesac, or dead-end. And for several millennia we have been walking in circles in the cul-de-sac. The wrong turn in this analogy represents an error in our individual and collective thoughts, beliefs and subsequent actions. Some call this the “original sin” or the “fall of man” which is what we are addressing. However, the innumerable interpretations, and manipulation of the message, are a significant contributing factor to our confusion.

How do we get out?

The only way to get out of a dead end is to turn around and walk back out. We start to walk step by step out. But we need some sort of guide. How will we know if we have turned back around, and started to go back to the dead-end?

It is the Golden Law.

Albert Schweitzer called it *reverence for life*. This idea is that we do not harm any form of life. This includes other people, insects, plants, animals, the world. This also very much

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relates to Free Will. If we impose our Will, on another person’s Free Will, in the end, we are going to have to rectify, or deal with the repercussions.

But as one looks at the world, most of what we do ends up affecting something. This is the evidence of how far off track we have gotten. It seems that all of our “systems” hurt somebody or something.

As we come to really appreciate this situation we could become totally discouraged and not even want to start the journey back. But this is the wrong perspective. We must be like the mountain climber. Take the tools, how to think, common sense, our heart guidance system, our connection to the ONE and the Golden Law and begin the journey step by step.

In essence the Golden Rule becomes our measuring stick, our guide in the process. We can measure each of our steps, thoughts, actions against this Universal principle which was given to us by Jesus, and step by step, day by day begin the journey back to create the new world. This New World is the one based on Love, and aligns with the message of all the great teachers who have and were trying to show us the way. All that is required is the honest and sincere desire to take the journey. The Journey is the one, the metaphorical mountain, that takes us toward and existence and experience offered to us by the ONE infinite creator, which will fulfill all of our wildest dreams. It is the TRUE path to God—and it happens on an individual basis, and the guidance comes from our own hearts. As we go along we can know, that in fact we are being guided by the perfect “program” – our feelings. Also circumstance, or repercussions are a guide. They have always been here, but this is evidence of how misinformed we have been. We have not even known that the ONE (or God) had installed an operating system that guides us perfectly, constantly providing feedback in the form of “good” or “bad” feelings, or vibrational reactions showing us whether or not we are moving in the direction of what is in our best interest.

Self reflection is another key tool. We have to be able to look back on what we do and evaluate whether or not we are making progress. This should be a continual, on-going process.

Also, we need to be aware that our “knowledge base” and what we have to work with will be continually improving as we go along in this process. We will gain new insights, better

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understanding, better skills as we continually seek improvement and progress. We essentially tap into the Divine power of Love, and Infinite Intelligence, that will continually endow more of what we need to continue on our journey toward the perfect expression of the Golden Law. This is Law. And we cannot attempt to do something, with an honest and sincere *desire to do good*, and not be given, directly from ONE (Source or God) the tools, education, resources, motivation, etc. to move toward our goal—which is really the only goal, to return consciously into the ONE.

One of the most difficult issues in this Little world and “reality” is the principle of measuring, or judging our progress based upon the existing thinking and dualistic system that currently operates in our “human” thinking system. We have to be astute to watch ourselves from not beating ourselves up for not learning the lessons “we think” we should have learned. Feeling guilty, getting angry at ourselves, or others, again, is a huge sign that we are heading in the wrong direction. The key to the success of this process is to be gentle with ourselves and others as almost all of us have been battered by our own judgment of ourselves. We have become masters with a whip, constantly beating our own backs, having the mistaken belief that this might be an effective way to motivate ourselves, pushing ourselves along our journey in constant oppressive judgment of our progress. We are not pack animals (in fact this is not how we should treat animals either). This is the same method that was used to submit the slaves. If we are to become loving and kind to others, we must practice it first and foremost with ourselves. Of course, we must always practice this with others, the world, and animals as well. For all really is just ONE. This is the great truth contained in the Golden Law. What we do to others we do to ourselves, the others, to the ONE, or to God.

But we need not become discouraged when we see how far off the track we have gotten. This, apparently, is the whole point of the journey. This is what God wanted. Rome was not built in a day. A 1000 mile journey starts with one step. And with the powerful, and all present ONE, guiding us, and loving us while we utilize the Golden Law as our guide, we will find ourselves on a joyous journey, day by day to our vision. Our destination. But the point is not about getting somewhere, but the journey.

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Transition to Section II, some introductory concepts and principles

So, this book takes this simple concept of taking one step at a time, and having a clear vision to reach a certain goal, being guided by the Golden Law, and builds a step by step process by which to transform all aspects of our societies and civilizations. It is practical and based on common sense because whatever we do create must not be so complex that the people cannot understand it. One of the greatest forms of oppression is to create systems which govern the people and convince them that they are not capable of taking care of themselves. Additionally to create the mentality that only a few are capable of “guiding the masses” to our collective destiny will never succeed in the end. This is the form of governments that have dominated for millennia, and we can see how successful these models are.

The new models for education and governance must be based upon the principle as presented by Albert Schweitzer as “Reverence for Life”, or as just discussed above, the Golden Law. The rest of the principles, concepts, theories should be developed from a stance of common sense. Ideas and principles that result in helping people and taking care of the planet. Common sense is very much related to effective thinking principles. For a wonderful discourse on “thinking” please read “When Love Guides Your Thoughts” a wonderful book to read prior to the “VISION We Are Re-Creating the World”.

The complexity arises mostly in how to move out of the existing systems without a total collapse. These processes should and will be guided by effective thinking principles and practices, and ultimately be guided by the heart, or by love. In the end there will be no need to be alarmed because we are being taken care of. Evidence for this can be observed in every second. Who or what do you suppose is keeping the sun shining? How is it possible that we still have air to breath, or water to drink? Or even more amazingly the chemical, energetic systems of all of the organs of our bodies, or the exact harmonious and balanced movement of our planet, our solar system and galaxy throughout the cosmos? The same force that accomplishes and holds all of these things together is guiding us and will be supporting us as we develop human living systems that sustain life for us humans in a more harmonious fashion.

So the intent, and the guidance for the “VISION We Are Re-Creating the World” is the

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Golden Law. Each of the concepts, practical steps, and tools that are presented are given in a way to be a progression out of our existing conundrum, the cul-de-sac, towards new systems of living that will lead us to the desired goal of peace and harmony for all people, nature and Gaia. If this goal was not possible, we could not imagine it. In fact, this is one of the key issues of our conundrum, our thinking, or visioning process. How many times I have heard people say things like “war will always exist”. On the other hand we all seem to be “wishing” for peace. But if we make a statement, put it into words, hold in our minds the idea that “war will always exist” we cannot have anything else, and we will never reach our desired goal. But if we move from wishing, along a progressive path to change our deep set (and programmed) thinking and belief systems we will reach our goal. Examples of this fact are uncountable in the world we live in, in individual lives, but also in some of the great transformative movements throughout history. The problem was, the visions were stymied by the old systems that needed to be replaced. And how do we know which of these “systems” were the ones that stopped the process? The answer is in how do they align with the Golden Law, did they step on the Free Will of others?

The key is to begin the journey, with a strong Will to get to our destination, our vision of the world, and progressively, step by step, change the underlying systems that have locked us in, mostly in our minds, to the reality that we are living.

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