

Timeline

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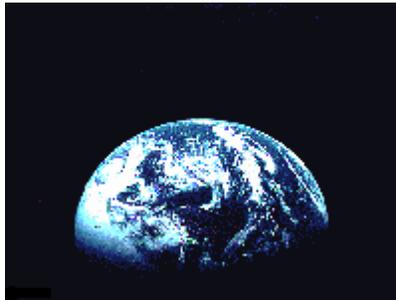
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Y2K: No Matter What Happens, It's an Opportunity

When the sun rises on January 1, 2000, will baffled computers cause havoc in airlines, banks, and electrical power stations? It's a possibility, many observers say, because most computer programmers have been using only the last two digits to designate years. Unless these date-sensitive programs are debugged, computers will think it is the year 1900 rather than the year 2000.

The Y2K problem is much in the news. *Time*, *Newsweek*, the AARP newsletter, 60 Minutes, all have explained how this insignificant-sounding error could affect computerized systems around the world. A typical example has already occurred when a store destroyed tons of food the computer thought were ninety-six years old instead of four. Some industries and agencies are reported to be on top of the situation; others, like the electric power industry, are said to be lagging so far behind in recognition and effort that some observers are concerned about whole power grids going dark.

Not to worry, say other observers. Most of the potential problems will be fixed, and even if problems do occur, you will still get your Social Security check, though it may be dated the wrong year. They're convinced satellites will still receive and relay information, you won't freeze or starve, and airplanes will still fly.

The reality is no one knows for sure what problems Y2K (K signifying 1000) will

cause, or how serious they might be. Businesses and government agencies are scrambling to rewrite the needed computer codes, replace older systems, and find the affected chips embedded in systems worldwide. John L. Petersen, Margaret Wheatley, and Myron Kellner-Rogers believe these embedded chips, which some sources say may number in the tens of billions, may be the hardest problem of all to fix. In their article, "The Year 2000: Social Chaos or Social Transformation," the authors note that chips "exist in traffic lights, elevators, gas and electricity systems...in medical equipment and military and navigation systems....The average American comes in contact with 70 microprocessors before noon every day." Some of these chips are date sensitive, the authors note, but engineers don't know for sure which are which.

All of this leaves the average citizen perplexed. What should we do? Nothing? Draw our money out of the bank and storm the supermarket?

Neither of the above, Petersen, Wheatley, and Kellner-Rogers advise. They see Y2K as an opportunity for people to get together with their neighbors and try to figure out what to do if serious problems arise. What should people do if the power goes off? What would be a suitable response if communications systems break down? What to do if there is a run on food by people who panic, or a run on the banks?

In other words, the authors emphasize, the problem is more than just a technological one. "We must address potential social responses. We need to be

engaged in this discourse within our organizations, our communities, and across the traditional boundaries of competition and national borders.” They add that leaders could be catalysts in bringing people together to assess where society is most vulnerable and to develop contingency plans, not only within individual locales, but also in geographic regions. Existing networks such as service groups, church councils, schools, Chambers of Commerce, or the United Way could begin the process.

So, bomb or dud, catastrophe or inconvenience, Y2K offers another opportunity to build community in an age when such efforts are to everyone’s advantage. What better way to bring in the next millennium!



Y2K: Coming Together in Boulder County, CO

Many organizations, church groups, and communities are using Y2K as a focus to prepare not just for Y2K, but for any kind of possible disaster. BCY2K, an informal group which has come together to take on different aspects of preparation in Boulder County, Colorado, is one example of such a community effort.

BCY2K began by holding a conference at the University of Colorado Boulder campus cosponsored by the City of Boulder, The University of Colorado,

and the Cassandra Project, an Internet-based network that promotes awareness of the Y2K “millennium bug.”

Within two weeks, a meeting was held with the county Multiple Agency Coordinating System which coordinates police and fire departments, the Red Cross, planning departments, risk management experts, the University of Colorado, and school districts within the county. Subsequent educational meetings have been held with growers and farmers, the religious community, Hispanic community leaders working to get information to local Spanish television and radio, hospitals, human service agencies, and youth volunteers. Now, citizen meetings in each of the county’s nine municipalities are taking place: orientations, neighborhood congresses, open meetings, and coordinator meetings.

Kathy Garcia, a neighborhood organizer for BCY2K, reported in the *Utne Reader* online magazine: “We are working with many others in Boulder County to create a more sustainable and self reliant community with Y2K as the catalyst. We work to transform fear and cynicism by reaching beyond personal differences in a spirit of compassion, respect, trust, and interdependence. Some wonderful things have happened here. The City of Boulder has joined forces with our preparedness group. ‘How To’ meetings are going on throughout the county. A town meeting was held that included representatives from utilities, the telephone company, City of Boulder, Office of Emergency Management, and Boulder Community Hospital. We have cooperation from our daily newspaper—not sensationalized

stories, but ones that will keep the community informed.”

BCY2K works on a task force model, with each task force consisting of a small group of volunteers to assist in the assessment, development, and implementation of sound contingency planning, covering utilities, food, water, sewage, emergency services and security, essential financial services, media and other educational materials, neighborhood and constituency organizing, psychology, vision, and the Y2K volunteer network.

No matter what Y2K brings, the cooperation, community building, and contingency planning that have taken place through this effort will benefit all who live in Boulder County.

Information about BCY2K is available at <http://www.y2kboulder.com>



Natural Capitalism: The New Business Logic

The fourth State of the World Forum held in San Francisco in the first week of November 1998 was attended by some 700 leaders from around the world. One of the plenary discussions, titled “The Greening of Civilization: Emerging Models of Environmental Sustainability,” included a presentation by Amory and Hunter Lovins. A husband and wife team, both are principals in the Rocky Mountain Institute, a 40-person resources policy center in Colorado.

Amory Lovins is a physicist educated at Harvard and Oxford, author of 26 books, and a consultant for governments worldwide. The Wall Street Journal named him one of the people in the world most likely to change the course of business.

Hunter Lovins is a lawyer with additional degrees in political studies and sociology. She is a former Henry R. Luce visiting professor at Dartmouth College and co-author of six books.

The following are excerpts of the Lovins’ presentation at the Forum.

There was a time when the scarcity of skilled labor was limiting economic progress. So we created machines to increase labor productivity, and we increased it a hundred times in the course of the first industrial revolution. Today, with something like 10,000 more people joining us on Earth every hour, it’s fair to say that people are no longer our scarce resource.

If anything, what’s scarce are the ecosystem services, the natural capital that is nowhere counted on anyone’s balance sheet, but that is worth more than all the financial and mechanical capital that is counted. Because it is not counted, you might say that capitalism is defying its own internal logic—not because it’s capitalistic, but because it is liquidating, not valuing, this more important form of capital.

We are now in a new era of scarcity, which calls for a new business logic, one that uses more people to wring more work out of the things we borrow from the Earth: the energy, the materials, the wood, all of the natural capital. This is the thesis of a new book we are writing

with Paul Hawken, called *Natural Capitalism*. It has four principles.

The first is to use the resources we have much more efficiently. Doing so will buy the time and save the money needed to carry out the other three principles. Our book, *Factor 4: Doubling Wealth, Halving Resource Use*, which has been adopted by the European Union as their new basis of sustainable development, shows that we can wring four times more out of our natural resources than we are doing now. In *Natural Capitalism*, we show, through many examples, that ten-fold or even hundred-fold improvements in efficiency are now practical and can be cost effective.

We're finding that efficiency in using resources is itself an expanding resource because we learn how to do it better even faster than we use up the opportunities. The companies that earn 100 or 200 percent on their energy savings per year, even at low American energy prices, are seeing that both their returns and their savings are going up.

This is due to revolutions in technology and design. Today we have buildings that need no heating or cooling in temperatures from - 47° to +115° F, and which are more comfortable and less expensive to build. We've had savings of 92 percent in industrial pumping, 90 percent in lighting, 97 percent in retrofitting commercial air conditioning. A new kind of car—an ultralight hybrid electric car we call the “hypercar”—is heading toward the market in the next couple of years. It uses 75 to 88 percent less fuel and will ultimately save as much oil as OPEC now extracts.

All of these are profitable today. And when you add to them the stunning advances that have been made lately in more efficient ways to convert energy and in renewable and other benign forms of energy supply (renewables are now the fastest growing energy source in Europe), and the rapid emergence of the hydrogen economy which can also be climatically benign, you find we have plenty of techniques available to meet and surpass the targets for CO₂ reduction agreed to at the Kyoto [international climate] conference—not at a cost, but at a profit because it's cheaper to save fuel than to buy fuel, let alone to burn it.

The vital task of convincing the U.S. Senate to ratify the Kyoto protocol will be made much easier by a rapidly growing trend in the business community to capture these efficiency opportunities in order to gain competitive advantage. Many smart companies are now behaving as if the protocol were already ratified. The more that do so, the easier it's going to be to get the ratification actually in place. Many of these companies are also finding ways to turn the long list of practical obstacles to implementing resource efficiency into business opportunities. This is only the beginning of the dematerialization in metals, in cement, in wood fiber, and so on that is going to further reduce stress on natural systems and improve the bottom line.

Often these results come about through a design synergy that multiplies benefits, as we see in the wonderful urban design success in Curitiba, Brazil. The more efficiently we use resources, the more we will reduce sources of conflict.

After resource efficiency, the second of the four principles of natural capitalism is to shift the structure of the economy from the industrial model to one based on natural and biological principles, so that we eliminate the concept of waste. Nature has no waste. Everything you might define as waste is a food for something else. The loops are closed; nature doesn't produce toxic materials that build up in society.

The "green" architect Bill McDonough and his colleague Dr. Michael Brownart from Germany were asked by the Steelcase company to design a new fabric, a "green" fabric. McDonough and Brownart said, "Fine, if we can also redesign the production process."

They went to Switzerland to the fabric processing facility and found that the edge trimmings of the existing fabric were a toxic waste. They then evaluated some 8000 chemicals, finding 38 that didn't build up in the food chain, weren't toxic, didn't cause cancer or mutations or birth defects, and weren't endocrine disrupters. Out of these 38, they could make all the colors that were needed. Steelcase found that this new "green" process was cheaper because they didn't have to pay for worker health and safety precautions—there were no toxics. The Swiss inspectors who came to inspect the facility thought the machines were broken: the effluent coming out was cleaner than the input Swiss drinking water—the cloth itself, an organic fiber, was acting as an additional filter. What they had really done was to take the filters out of the end of the pipe and put them in the designer's heads, which was where they belonged. This is a new model of industry.

The third principle of natural capitalism is to change the design of commerce from selling stuff—the episodic acquisition of goods—to a continuous flow of value and service in a relationship that anticipates and meets the customer's evolving value needs. In this way, both the customer and the provider profit from ever-greater efficiency. Interface, a company which makes floor coverings, has invented the idea of not selling you a carpet, but leasing you a floor covering service. Instead of tearing out and throwing away the whole carpet every 10 years because some bits of it are worn, they come periodically and replace the worn carpet tiles with fresh ones. It takes more labor but gives a better service at lower cost and higher profit. Interface has also developed a new material that works better in every respect and that can be completely remanufactured into an identical fresh product; then the mass flow of material to provide the service goes down 94 percent. Even though Interface is in the early days of deploying these concepts, just by focusing on wringing out wastes they have produced a quarter of a billion dollars of revenue with no additional inputs, their share price and revenues have quadrupled, their profits have tripled, and their employment has doubled.

The last principle of natural capitalism is based on the concept that any profit-maximizing capitalist invests in capital. We need to invest in our natural and human capital. Doing this can be profitable. There are growing numbers of what you might call "bioneers" who are using biological models to create more of our natural capital. Dr. John Todd uses plants in greenhouses to do

sewage waste treatment; again, no toxic chemicals. Jeanine Benius in her book *Biomimicry* talks about spiders which produce a compound stronger than Kevlar with no sulfuric acid and no boiling temperatures. Diatoms make seawater into glass. Trees make sugar and cellulose into materials with greater bending capacity than steel or aluminum. How do they do that? We don't know, but we'd better start finding out because it's going to be the basis for competitiveness in the coming decade.

Resource efficiency and natural capitalism are not simply a better way to make money. They also get at a lot of underlying social problems—deficits of work, hope, security, and satisfaction which come from the interlocked waste of resources and money and people. Those three kinds of wastes have intimately intertwined solutions. As soon as you start to reverse the waste, many of the vicious circles turn into virtuous circles and you start solving many problems at once without making new ones. At the most elementary level, a business which lays off its unproductive tons, liters, and kilowatt-hours has an opportunity to keep its people, who will then have more and better work to do.

In companies like Interface that get serious about eliminating waste and becoming sustainable, there's an incredible outpouring of energy, enthusiasm, and initiative at all levels of the company. The reason is very simple. We're removing the contradiction between what people do at work and what they want for their kids when they go home.

New Dimensions Radio Deep Ecology for the 21st Century

This is an original and dynamic 13-part series produced by New Dimensions Radio which explores contemporary ecological consciousness. It offers the hard facts about the condition of our planet, reminders of our deep interconnections with nature, and insights into what each of us can do for Earth. The series features dialogues with leading ecological writers, scholars, artists, and activists. Among those featured are Edward O. Wilson, Arne Ness, David Suzuki, George Sessions, Helena Norberg-Hodge, David Brower, Jerry Mander, Delores La Chapelle, Fritjof Capra, Theodore Roszak, Joanna Macy, and Edward Abbey.

You can help bring this series to your area by contacting your local public radio stations and encouraging them to air it. (This is a separate program from the ongoing "New Dimensions" series.) For more information, contact Jacqui Dunne at (415) 332-6854 or e-mail: jacquiDB@aol.com.



The Courage to Perturb the System

A Personal Perspective by Janet Boggia

This is the second year I have attended the State of the World Forum in San Francisco. The Forum is a world stage on which over 700 people from more than 100 countries and tribes gather to tackle global problems. Ideas and world views are exchanged, planetary solutions explored. But for me, the most memorable experiences have been personal conversations with people who shared decision points in their lives—decisions they made in moments of stress when it would have been far easier for them to look the other way.

One man with whom I talked for almost two hours was in his sixties, a senator from Pakistan. I realized during the conversation with this experienced and wise individual that until I met him, I had had negative stereotypes about people from his part of the world, and that, despite the fact that I had spent time nearby in India, I knew very little about his country or its people.

As we shared personal incidents and political views, a sufficient trust was built between us so that the senator told me in an almost offhand manner about a pending amendment to the Pakistan constitution. The amendment would require many fundamentalist Muslim beliefs and practices to become law. He opposed this amendment and recently let it be known, in writing, to the government. As a member of the ruling

party he is expected to vote with the government, not abstain or vote against it. However, in this case, he could not vote for the amendment. Now his wife is worried because he has received threats—his legs would be broken or he would be killed. But, he said, this is the test of his life and he will stand firm.

Another man I worked with on a team was from Ecuador. He had been asked by a corporation to arrange with a group of indigenous people from the Ecuadorian rainforest to allow mining and clear-cutting of their homeland. But after he came to know the indigenous people, he also met himself as he never had before, and was thrown into turmoil. It took him two years to work out a contract that will limit cutting and mining to areas away from those used by the people who live there, that will share the profits with the tribes, and that will return the land to the people after two years. Though he wonders if his tireless work to protect the land will add up and make a difference, he will not give up his efforts and will continue to act. This was the commitment made by each of us on our small team.

Someone I did not have the opportunity to talk with personally, but who impressed me greatly, was General Lee Butler. In his position as commander-in-chief of the U.S. Strategic Command, it was his responsibility to assure that our nuclear missiles would be launched if ever the moment should arrive. No matter what his personal feelings about weapons of mass destruction, Butler visited every person in his command, from the highest ranking member to the lowest, to make sure that this responsibility would be carried out. Only

when the Cold War ended, and he was no longer in the Armed Forces, was he free to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons. General Butler now devotes his life to this mission. He sees these times as a window in human history to restructure the way we view the world and each other. Whenever he experiences a moment of doubt about whether his goal can be achieved, General Butler says that he looks into the eyes of his little granddaughter, and knows that he can never give up.

Chaos and complexity theory says that when living systems are far from equilibrium—disorganized and chaotic—they have a built-in capacity to reorganize into a more complex, sustainable form. I believe humans have this adaptive, self-organizing capability and that talking and listening can change one's perception, inspire new ways of viewing the world, and change one's behavior. As small parts of the system change and the change is amplified, the larger system is perturbed, and the whole system in time will evolve.

The personal courage of these three individuals demonstrates to me how every individual can be a change agent with each act, with every choice. These seemingly small choices are the ones that eventually define history.

Janet Boggia represents the Foundation for Global Community in the State of the World Forum's initiative, "Our Common Enterprise."



After Two Centuries, It's Still Not Clear Whether Malthus Was Right

by Donella Meadows

The year 1998 marked the 200th anniversary of a small pamphlet that people are still arguing about. In 1798, the Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus said forcefully that the human population tends to grow to the point where it impoverishes itself and starves.

Both Marxists and capitalists energetically bash that idea. Marxists don't believe people can ever be in excess if the economy is organized to use them properly. Capitalists mock Malthus for not foreseeing the progress that now allows us to feed six times as many people as there were in 1798.

But to update a quip by Garrett Hardin, "Malthus has been buried again. This is the 200th year in which that redoubtable economist has been interred. We may take it as certain that anyone who has to be buried 200 times cannot be wholly dead."

A new publication by the Worldwatch Institute is full of facts that show Malthus to be not dead, not wrong, maybe not right either. The patterns by which the human race reproduces itself are changing. Over another few decades, we will probably put old Malthus to rest at last. It's up to us to decide whether he'll rest triumphant or discredited.

The most striking global change is that population growth is slowing. The growth rate peaked in 1964 at

2.2 percent. In 1998 it was 1.4 percent. That's an amazing drop. The average number of children born to a woman in India has gone down from 5.3 to 3.6. In China, the average woman bears just 1.8 children, fewer than the average in the United States.

In 32 countries, including Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and Spain, population growth is at or near zero. The populations of Germany, Italy, Russia, Hungary, and Ukraine are actually shrinking. Another 39 countries, including China and the United States, have average families of fewer than two children, but will go on growing for another few decades because they have many young people about to enter their reproductive years.

These slow-or no-growth countries contain 2 billion people, about one-third of the world population. They are either rich industrial countries, or past or present communist countries. What they have in common is not wealth, but education.

That's one-third of humanity proving Malthus wrong. Not only did he not foresee our productive technologies, he didn't foresee our reproductive technologies, our widespread availability of birth control and our education, employment, and empowerment of women.

But the other two-thirds of humanity is chillingly close to proving Malthus right. These are the countries we like to call "developing," where virtually all population growth is now happening. Birth rates in most of these places are dropping, too, but slowly. They are

growing by 80 million people a year, the equivalent of a whole new Mexico every 14 months. The United Nations expects them to add another 3.3 billion people over the next 50 years.

The Worldwatch booklet makes that forecast look impossible. It points out that the world fish catch per person has been stagnant since 1968, and that many great fisheries are now in active decline. Global grain production per person has been dropping for 14 years—the world's farmers are constantly more productive, but they're not keeping up with population growth.

Irrigated agriculture is particularly threatened as aquifers are overpumped and water tables fall. If the rising population and declining groundwater trends continue, Worldwatch calculates, by 2050 there will be only one-fourth as much fresh water per person as there was in 1950.

A British study estimates that forest harvests around the world are already on average 25 percent above sustainable rates. World oil production per person peaked in 1979 and has since declined by 23 percent. Estimates from many sources predict that total oil production will start declining by 2010 or 2020 as wells run dry.

If more than 3 billion more people are still to come, they will need jobs, but almost 1 billion of us, one-third of the global work force, are already underemployed. The new folks will need housing, but 1.6 billion of us now have no decent housing. They will need schools, safe water, sanitation, health

care. One does not want to think about what will happen if they don't get them.

Worldwatch does think about that, pointing out places where Malthus is tragically right, where in spite of all our global progress, death rates are rising. AIDS is a major cause, though AIDS is primarily a symptom of poverty and poor health care. Zimbabwe is expected to achieve zero population growth by 2002 because one-fourth of its adults are HIV-positive. Other African nations are moving rapidly in that direction.

About 840 million of us are still chronically hungry, about as many as the whole world population at the time of Malthus. Each day 19,000 people die from malnutrition, most of them children. Malthus said one thing that was correct then and has been ever since: "The pressure arising from the difficulty of procuring subsistence is not to be considered as a remote one which will be felt only when the earth refuses to produce any more, but as one which actually exists at present over the greatest part of the globe."

We can still prove him wrong. We know how to do it. We've already partially done it.

(Beyond Malthus: Sixteen Dimensions of the Population Problem, by Lester R. Brown, Gary Gardner, and Brian Halweil, is available for \$5 from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC 20036-1904; phone 800 555-2028; www.worldwatch.org)

Donella H. Meadows, a systems analyst, author, director of the Sustainability Institute, and adjunct professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College, writes a syndicated article each week to "present a global view, a connected view, a long-term view, an

environmental and compassionate view."

Timeline readers who feel that these articles deserve the widest possible distribution are encouraged to contact their local newspaper editor and suggest the paper carry them.

Meadows can be reached at The Global Citizen, Box 58, Plainfield, NH 03781.



Wasteland and Grail: A Planetary Story

by Jean Shinoda Bolen

Jean Shinoda Bolen is a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California Medical Center and the author of six books, The Tao of Psychology, Goddesses in Everywoman, Gods in Everyman, Ring of Power, Crossing to Avalon, and Close to the Bone. She has appeared in two widely acclaimed documentaries, the first of the Canadian Film Board's Trilogy on Women's Spirituality called Goddess Remembered and the Academy Award-winning anti-nuclear documentary Women for America, for the World. Her work focuses on the connection of all humans to the inner world of archetypes and myth, and the power of these to heal both the individual and the planet.

The following is from a talk by Dr. Bolen at the Foundation's Center for the Evolution of Culture as part of our continuing speaker series.

The Grail Story is one that applies to us all as metaphor. In it, there is the experience of the quest for the Grail. The most familiar Grail story is about Perceval, who leaves the forest and his

mother and goes into the world of knighthood. After he has won his knighthood, he remembers his mother and sets out to find her again. He arrives at an uncrossable river. On the other side is an enormous forest that stretches out forever.

He cannot see how he can possibly cross over to the other side. A fisherman tells him that there is no way to cross for a hundred leagues in either direction, but if he will go up on the far hill he will be able to see where he can stay the night. Perceval takes his horse up to the top of the hill where he sees nothing but trees in all directions. His first reaction is anger at being fooled.

Then, suddenly, comes that shift, that imperceptible shift that has to do with an inner change as to how you see the outer world. In the next moment, Perceval sees an enormous, beautiful castle in front of him. He thinks, "How could I have missed it?"

Perceval enters what will turn out to be the Grail castle. There he is greeted by the same man who was in the boat, who now appears as a King. It's a curious sort of greeting because the King does not stand up. It becomes evident that this is because he can't stand up; he has a wound that will not heal. But Perceval doesn't ask him about his infirmity.

The Fisher King invites him to stay, and Perceval is treated royally. During dinner an amazing procession goes by. At the very end of the procession, a woman enters carrying the Grail, which casts a glow throughout the castle. Though Perceval is in the midst of a wondrous experience, he makes no mention of it

and asks no questions about what he is seeing. He is following the advice of his mentor who taught him not to reveal his ignorance by asking questions.

After dinner, Perceval goes upstairs to retire for the night. When he awakens, everything is different. The building is barren and completely empty except for his armor and his horse. As he rides out through the gate, the drawbridge starts to rise and his horse makes a great leap across to the other side. The drawbridge closes and the castle disappears.

Lost in the forest, he comes across a woman who tells him that he had been in the Grail castle; that the woman in the procession was carrying the Grail; that the fisherman—the Fisher King—who was his host had a wound that would not heal and his kingdom would remain a wasteland until a fool came to court and asked the right questions. When this happened, the Grail could heal him; and when he was healed, his kingdom would turn green again.

Perceval wanders for years and years in the forest, seeking to find the Grail castle again. This time he would ask the right questions. The two questions that he came to understand he should have asked, but didn't, are very relevant both to the planet and to each person today. On noting that something was wrong with the King, the first question he should have asked was one of concern and compassion: "What ails thee?" or "What's the matter?" That would have led to some understanding of the problem and opened the potential for healing the wound and the wasteland. When he had the Grail experience, the second question he did not ask was:

“Whom does the Grail serve?”—or what is the meaning of this experience?

Perceval’s encounter with the wounded Fisher King is very much a metaphor for understanding the wounded patriarchy. Before there was a woman’s movement, there wasn’t the ability to name it and to see it and to understand how the patriarchy worked, and therefore how it might be changed. Here is the King, the representative of hierarchy, of patriarchy, and he is wounded. We all know it—whether it is our leaders that are wounded, or whether it is the whole structure of patriarchy—there is a wound that will not heal, and a planet that is becoming a wasteland. Only if this wound is healed will the wasteland be restored and turn green again.

As a clinician, I know the story applies to anyone, man or woman, who has been operating in the realm of power and achievement. At some point or another, you find that you are the wounded Fisher King. You have achieved a place in the world, you are somebody of importance, but at considerable cost. The legend says that the wound was in the King’s thigh or his genitals, suggesting that he has lost his connection with sexuality, sensuality, fertility, generativity, creativity.

In Greek mythology, there is a short myth about “Procrustes and his Bed” that applies to us. If you were on the road to Athens, you had to pass Procrustes and his bed. You had to fit the bed in order to go on. Any part of you that didn’t fit, he cut off: whack! Or, if you were too short for the bed, he stretched you, like on a medieval rack, until you fit. The road to Athens is a metaphor for the road to success or to acceptance by those we

aspire to join. Whatever is not approved of, whatever we are ashamed of, whatever does not fit the acceptable image, often does get cut off, on the road to “Athens.” While whatever it is about us that helps us get ahead—intelligence, competitiveness, charm, work—often gets stretched until it becomes who we are.

For the first half of your adult life, that stretch or dismemberment often becomes almost the whole picture of who you are. Then, along about midlife, when you—men especially, but these days women also—have achieved a seat at the Round Table and are somebody of importance, a certain woundedness comes, in the form of depression or in various forms of addiction that numb what it is you really feel. Whether it’s alcohol, or workaholism, or shopping, or watching television, or, these days, surfing the Internet—whatever it is, when addictions become the goal, you can be sure that any wounds you have are numbed.

It is at that point that an awareness needs to come in. And if you know that this is what you are doing, the first question really is: What ails thee? What’s the matter? What aren’t you feeling?

Then there is the remembering of the experience of the Grail, remembering and asking, “What does it mean?” Grail experiences in this life get forgotten, cut off, hidden in your own forest or in the underworld. Almost everybody has had at some point in life a truly mystical experience, a true sense of oneness, a true feeling that the underlying reality is spiritual, not material. You have a sense of being blessed, a sense that you are

connected with something in this universe that is beautiful and enormous, yet personally connected to you, because in that moment you have never felt so personal, never felt so much as if it matters what you do, that you have some purpose in your life.

These kinds of things are very common, actually, only people don't talk about it to each other. There aren't words for it. Often, the memory gets cut off along the road to Athens. What was your Grail experience? The lucky ones among us haven't forgotten. If you were lucky, your spiritual experience may have made you choose certain paths that, for other people, from another perspective, seemed a little strange. If you remembered all along, you stayed in touch with that insight and gained energy from that archetypal meeting.

But if you find yourself in a position of the wounded Fisher King, it's as if the wound is that recognition of having something that you are cut off from, something lost, something that you had to forget, repress, and disconnect yourself from. Yet nothing that you repress goes into the unconscious and is destroyed. It's just forgotten there, and there is the potential for remembering.

Perceval was advised, "If you ask questions, you will just reveal that you are foolish." You all know the masculine ethic: Don't ask questions. If you're lost, keep looking; don't stop at a gas station. Yet often, what heals the personal wasteland of depression, of addiction, of being the wounded Fisher King, is finding some part of you which is willing to risk being foolish, willing to ask questions, willing

to shake up the status quo. Willing to do what Perceval failed to do.

As Deborah Tannen found in her study on men and women in conversation, men grow up knowing that conversations are not for communication, but rather to ascertain where am I in relationship to you: Am I one up or am I one down? One way to be one down is to ask a stupid question. So better not to ask any questions, then nobody will suspect that you are stupid. Actually you are not stupid at all. You have the inquisitiveness to search out the voice of truth.

The Wasteland experience is gray. You might be very efficient going through the motions, but at some level you know that everything is gray, nothing is green, nothing is vivid, nothing is juicy. Hildegard von Bingen, who was an abbess in the 12th century, said that the only sin is the sin of dryness, of aridness. Her exhortation was to be green and juicy. That's one way to change your Wasteland.

Green and juicy: what does that mean? Well green has a quality of innocence, of newness, of not being an old authority on everything—of being open to being a fool, a beginner. To be juicy, you put your whole self into it. You know if you are really feeling anything, your juices flow. If you are grieving and mourning, your eyes water, you cry. They water when you are joyful, too. When you are sensual or sexual, your body fluids and lubricants start to flow. If you are in a truly creative, biological place, such as carrying a baby, the baby is floating in amniotic fluid. There is such a natural juiciness about the human body,

psychologically as well as physiologically. Green and juicy.

And you know that is true of a healthy planet as well. A healthy planet is not a Wasteland. A Wasteland is very different from a desert. A desert is a place where there are seasons, beautiful blooms at certain times, a close connection among the seasons and the rain and the plants and the animals. A Wasteland is where nothing natural grows. The feminine principle of the mother has disappeared.

So the story of the Wasteland and the Grail is the story that we are living out. It is the story of the wounded patriarchal structure that we have. Whether it is from pollution, whether it is from cutting down things, whether it is from nuclear waste, increasingly we are creating a Wasteland.

The Dalai Lama has spoken on compassion, saying that a person cannot be truly compassionate without taking action. We often think we are being compassionate just by feeling someone's pain, but his words challenge that. There are activists who get burned out and there are activists who continue on, and it has to do with whether the activism is based on anger or love. It has something to do with being willing to be a fool and believe you can actually change something, when the cynic in you wants to stomp on the little green shoots of your foolishness.

As a therapist, I have come to believe that when one person changes, it has a rippling effect. Remember the story of the hundredth monkey? It shows that if there is going to be a cultural change, there has to be a first monkey; there has

to be a 10th monkey; there has to be a 90th monkey before there can be 100—an entire culture changed. I'm speaking to you of an activism that brings the feminine aspect of divinity back into the culture. For the Goddess is the Grail that can heal the wounded patriarchy and restore the Wasteland.



Solutions for Creating a Culture That Is Whole

Excerpts from *A Call For Connection* by Gail Holland

People know the ugly side of human nature. We want to be shown beauty, what we can be. Good news isn't an escape from reality; it's the best way to improve reality. When we read about effective programs, we can replicate them. When we learn about ideas that could change life for the better, we can take action. When we hear about individuals who make a difference, we're inspired.

When I began my research, I was trying to find solutions to apparently separate social problems. I was surprised to discover a connection between these solutions. It is this connection that is creating the new culture. Initially, the current changes in medicine seem far removed from the reforms being proposed in schools, but in both areas the emphasis is now on taking care of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit.

During my interviews with hundreds of people from all disciplines, the theme of wholeness kept surfacing over and over again. Nearly everyone complained that society has become too fragmented and compartmentalized. Each group formed to tackle a specific problem—be it the ozone layer, unemployment, or overpopulation—finds itself in the position of having to compete against other groups for financial backing and public attention. In particular, people dwelt on what society lacks. They are disturbed about how the proliferation of special-interest groups causes profits to routinely come before principles. What is missing, they say, is a social conscience. What is missing from schools where students cheat on exams, and sell drugs in hallways, is explicit guidance toward social and moral development. In a society where child abuse hides behind family walls, and the bodies of the homeless block sidewalks, we're missing the firm safety net that compassion brings. Missing from the disciplines of both science and medicine is a complete composite of the human experience. Science too often ignores the spiritual dimension of life, while the mechanistic model of medicine treats the body as a machine without a heart. And let us not forget the arts. But whenever budgets are tight, the arts are quickly forgotten.

Missing in too many places is the best of humanity: our heart, conscience, and spirit. People feel society's increasing preoccupation with materialism is undermining our more noble values. A growing consensus says that we can't alleviate the social ills of this world by relying on more laws or more money. They are not enough. We are at last

acknowledging that our problems can only be solved if we ward off the worst in human nature by aggressively cultivating the best in us. Thus we see a call for connection—a connection not just between the different segments of our lives, but even more important, a call to reconnect with the best in human nature. We're crying out for wholeness; we're desperately trying to return the missing parts—the heart, human spirit, and conscience—to all areas of our lives.

Still, aiming for the best in us is obviously not a new quest. Great leaders and religious traditions have always tried to guide us toward justice and compassion. So why is today different? Maybe it is because we are fed up with the politics of negativity and divisiveness. Maybe it is because we are recognizing that violence, poverty, or drug abuse don't develop out of the blue; they result, in part, from seeing red! In short, anger, greed, and other human faults are the direct cause of each social crisis. Yet, by the same reasoning, we can also solve these problems. We just need the intent. The question becomes, how do you transfer talk to action? How do you achieve idealistic goals in a way that is practical, effective, and non-threatening to the general public, especially when goals and principles of this nature can easily be manipulated and misconstrued?

Modern research is coming to our rescue. The latest scientific findings are confirming the critical role the human spirit and heart both play in how we learn and how we heal. As a result, we have started to restructure schools and medical care to foster, rather than neglect, our finer qualities.

In many ways, whole-person medicine is transforming not just medicine but science itself. Rustum Roy, one of the leading material scientists in the United States, notes that for the last 500 years science was a slave to the reductionist model—the idea that the whole is merely the sum of its parts. However, as a scientist, he watched new ways of thinking in health topple the reductionist stranglehold on how we perceive life. Within the last few years, he says, millions of people have experimented with holistic healing therapies because they realize, through direct personal experience, that you can't treat the body without treating the mind and spirit. "What is happening is utterly profound," Roy told me. "These millions of individuals now know whole-person medicine works."

If reductionist medicine is on the way out, he adds, then so is reductionist science. People are now beginning to adopt a whole-systems approach to all disciplines, all reality.

The present search for solutions, with its emphasis on wholeness, is spiritual in nature, but the shift in values is not tied to any specific religion or political party. I stress this point because the concern has always been how to prevent one group of people from imposing their perception of morality and spirituality on everyone else. On the other hand, spirituality in its purest form is more about a way of being than a set of beliefs. The distinction is significant. Such qualities as compassion, love, and integrity are universal; they say more about how we live than what religion we follow.

The most encouraging news of all is that idealism is being expressed through pragmatic reforms. Business leaders, educators, and individuals from all parts of society are finding effective and practical ways to convert higher principles into direct action.

Most people remain unaware of the extent of this cultural transformation because we're witnessing a gentle evolution in human consciousness, not a revolution based on dramatic acts. Yet everywhere one looks, people are working on solutions to correct problems. In one corner the talk centers on how to prevent crime. Talk to others, and they highlight the movement toward sustainability....People promote other major movements, such as the interfaith movement or the movement to restructure health care or education. These movements may seem dissimilar but in the end each one represents a different finger on the same pair of hands trying to reshape the world.

Moreover, as we learn how our well-being is connected to love and the fullness of the human spirit, these lessons can be transferred to the workplace. The way we conduct business is connected to what we teach children, which is connected to the building blocks of science and the arts. In the long run, improving the individual and improving society are also intertwined. Environmental issues are tied to economic issues, and economic issues are tied to peace issues, and all these issues and dilemmas are inextricably tied to values—not dollar values but humanitarian values, which brings us back full circle.

Many of these new ways of thinking and acting, especially in medicine and business, have already been written about, but we keep looking at each subject in isolation. In this age of commercialism and sensationalism we expect everything to be “new” and “different”—but we don’t have to keep reinventing the wheel.

As we move into the next century, many of us are reevaluating our purpose on this planet. It is about time—for many say time is running out unless we change our ways. Even the life of democracy is at stake. Czech President Vaclav Havel warns that democracy arouses mistrust in some parts of the world because it lacks a “spiritual dimension that connects all cultures and, in fact, all humanity.”

“If democracy is to spread successfully throughout the world,” Havel said on a visit to the United States, “and if civic coexistence and peace are to spread with it, then it must happen as part of an endeavor to find a new and genuinely universal articulation of that global human experience, which even we, western intellectuals, are once more beginning to recollect, one that connects us with the mythologies and religions of all cultures and opens for us a way to understand their values. It must expand simply as an environment in which we may all engage in a common quest for the general good.”

The quest has begun in earnest. Pessimists may be correct that there is no magic formula for transformation, no absolute answers, flawless programs, or perfect individuals. Nevertheless, throughout society, legitimate guideposts are revealing the many paths we can take

to move us toward unity. The paths may be different, but the solutions we’re seeking in today’s world share a common concern: no matter what the discipline, no matter what the goal, regardless of politics, or the desire to make a profit, we can no longer afford to ignore the crucial role of the heart, conscience, and human spirit in everything we pursue.

A new way of living lies within our grasp if we are prepared to recognize and understand how these positive piecemeal changes fit together, and how they can be emulated. Then we can detect the vigor of unbounded possibilities. Then we can create a world that is more whole, compassionate, and balanced.

Excerpted from A CALL FOR CONNECTION by Gail Holland © 1998.

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The author is currently editor of Connections, a magazine of the Institute of Noetic Sciences.



Blips on the timeline

The term “blip” is most often used to describe a point of light on a radar screen. Gathered with the assistance of Research Director Jackie Mathes, here are some recent blips which indicate positive changes toward a global community.

New Life for Old Tires

A quarter of a million used tires are added to the dump heap each year in the U.S. Now researchers at the

University of Illinois have turned old tires into activated carbon and tested its ability to remove mercury and other contaminants from smokestack emissions. It has generally performed as well as activated carbon from other sources. The researchers note that, with all those old tires around, tire-based activated carbon should be inexpensive, save trees, and help rid the environment of a serious disposal problem, as well as an endangering pollution problem.

Electric Biking

According to Gary Coffrin, a bicycle-manufacturer analyst and consultant, “It’s pretty much accepted that electric bikes will take off here in the U.S. As the world gets more crowded and urbanized, alternatives to gas vehicles become more important. Also, as the population ages, a power-assisted bike has increasing appeal.” About 94 companies in Europe are developing electric bikes, including BMW and Mercedes. In the U.S., Zap Power Systems in Sebastopol, California, has been making them since 1994. Powered by a rechargeable lead-acid battery similar to a car battery, a Zap bike can propel a rider for up to 20 miles—range depends on how often the motor is turned on. Costs range from \$375 for an add-on kit to the firm’s top-of-the-line three-wheeler at \$999.

No-Nuke Millennium

A group of member countries at the UN is promoting a resolution that calls for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Ireland and Sweden have taken the initiative by announcing a joint declaration “towards a nuclear-weapons-free world.” The declaration was also

signed by Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, and South Africa. These countries called for the governments of the five nuclear weapons states—the U.S., Britain, France, China, and Russia—and the new nuclear states of Israel, Pakistan, and India to commit themselves to the elimination of their stocks and capability. Michael Hoey of Ireland said, “We are looking for a millennium free of nuclear weapons.”

Solving Two Sticky Problems

Top American candy executives and U.S. officials conferred in July with diplomats from Peru about creating a strategy for getting growers of coca for cocaine to shift to chocolate. Representatives from Hershey and M&M/Mars approached the Clinton administration with an industry-wide concern: The supply of chocolate is dwindling as markets grow and cacao trees in Africa and Latin America fall victim to pests, disease, and deforestation. Two years of fierce anti-drug efforts in Peru have wiped out 40 percent of the coca in production and left farmers desperate for a cash crop. With the help of U.S. relief and anti-drug officials, the candy companies are planning to set up workshops on how to grow cacao, and invest the money to launch the project.

Suggestions Invited

Thanks to Mrs. Al Atkinson for sending in “Solving Two Sticky Problems.” We are always on the lookout for interesting subjects for Blips on the Timeline. Readers are invited to send articles or clippings indicating positive change to Jackie Mathes at the Foundation. If we use your suggestion, we’ll automatically extend your subscription for a year.



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