

Global Spiritual Culture – the Key to Humanity’s Future

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Humankind clearly faces both enormous challenges and tremendous opportunities at this evolutionary moment in our history. Our growing ecological and societal challenges are unprecedented as both our existing global civilization and survival as a species are now in serious jeopardy. Opportunities for large-scale transformation are also unprecedented being driven by on-going revolutions in spiritual understandings, universal values, scientific knowledge, advanced technologies, and global communications.

The challenges before us are both man-made and products of the modern age. The long list includes; nuclear war, terrorism, climate change, eco-system destruction, resource depletion, disease, pandemics and toxic pollution of our air, water and land. Increasing ecological degradation and resource exploitation go hand in hand with mounting insecurity and militarization, rising criminality and corruption, growing economic and social polarization and escalating religious and cultural conflict.

At the same time the promise of this new Century includes deeper understandings of the natural world, the Cosmos and ourselves together with incredible new tools: alternative energies, sustainable technologies, world communications, global information exchange, space exploration, biotechnology, nanotechnology, robotics, artificial intelligence and many others yet to be discovered.

Yet we remain in the midst of a growing global crisis as the large-scale negative trends interact with and reinforce each other. Regrettably the majority of citizens of Planet Earth are neither aware of this survival crisis nor of the major societal shifts necessary to address it. And especially in the shrinking time-frame that many scientists are now telling us may remain to do so before hitting irreversible ecological and societal ‘tipping points’. We may have perhaps less than five years and likely no more than ten years to accomplish the needed large-scale shifts.

Accordingly, the question for our time and generations is: *Will we be overwhelmed by the growing challenges confronting us or will we overcome them through collective leadership and collaborative action worldwide to enter a new era of human development and achievement?*

The global crisis confronting us arises out of actions and behaviors which are founded upon an older and outdated view of reality and the world. The opportunities before us result substantially from new insights about the natural world, its systems and processes and the powerful new tools we have developed over the last 100 years or so.

“Thought precedes Action”. This simple statement represents the greatest hope for our future. Our unique ability to think ahead and determine a course of action is what distinguishes us the most from the rest of the natural world. All other species are driven primarily by basic instincts and needs. They cannot pause to reflect and choose and utilize foresight. Only human beings can.

As “how we think” significantly determines “how we act” changing our current thinking is the key to changing our actions. And, changing our actions is the key to changing our future.

The ability to reflect, to think ahead and to choose actions in advance are the culmination of the evolutionary advantages our species Homo sapiens has developed over its 2.5 million year history. They arise out of two advanced human qualities: language and self-reflective consciousness. When these essential qualities are directed towards the future we call this ability ‘foresight’. Foresight enables us to imagine the future - to consider a preferable action, situation or scenario and attempt to achieve them.

The goals we desire or preferable future scenario we imagine is undoubtedly a reflection of our personal values and beliefs as well as our Worldview. These subjective and changing perceptions form the framework for “how we think”. Personal values and beliefs are mostly influenced by family and community views while our Worldview is formed collectively by society-at-large.

The main reason for our current dilemma is that the ‘worldview’ that gave rise to our prosperity is incorrect in its major assumptions, values and beliefs and this worldview has now been ‘globalized’ to every part of the world. With our old worldview and our new technological prowess we have managed to extract and convert the Earth’s natural resources to human purposes at an ever-accelerating rate, mostly over recent decades. The faster we do so the better it appears to us to be. As a result of this apparent prosperity many more people are born each new generation and many people are living much longer. However one day, and that day may be sooner than we think, the reckoning will come. Our “capital” will be all but gone and an inevitable civilizational decline and collapse will occur. Our “progress” is, accordingly, unsustainable and thus ultimately illusory.

While at the same time our current view of progress is an extremely limited one. It is limited only to material progress while humanity’s spiritual progress and connection with the Divine is not any part of our modern worldview. This essential aspect of our shared humanity is left in the past and disconnected with the present and future. That current scenario cannot support our evolution to a peaceful and sustainable world.

Humankind has thus arrived at its defining moment - the crossroads of history. It is a time of decision and the decision cannot be postponed any longer. We have evolved as a species to the point where we must now consciously chose the course of our future evolution. There are now two clear paths before us: the sustainable one, which can lead to unprecedented prosperity for humanity, and the unsustainable one we are presently on which may well lead to our extinction.

The collective choice of a positive path and future requires that we shift from our current solely material culture to a global culture where spiritual values and advancement are a fundamental principle and goal for all humanity.

History contains countless examples of civilizations that have destroyed themselves through violent conflict and/or overuse of resources. However, all previous civilizations were local or regional and not capable of large-scale global civilizational destruction. That is not the case today. To avoid this fate we must write a new chapter in human history and evolution, one that

transcends the past and shapes a positive future for all and based upon shared values and spiritual advancement.

To truly appreciate the incredible abilities we have developed and the tremendous responsibility we must now assume on behalf of future generations it is essential to understand our place in the Universe and in Cosmic evolution. We must understand where we have come from and what we are made of. We must know of the forces of Creation that have driven the evolution of Life on Earth for 15 billion years. And we must know of the many creative miracles that enabled a barren rock in a minor galaxy to burst forth with all the diversity of life we see on this our Earth. Only then will we be truly prepared for the great task now before us.

From the perspective of our on-going socio-cultural evolution, humankind appears to have crossed an evolutionary threshold in the middle of the 20th Century entering a period of greatly accelerated development. After the end of the Second World War, the complexity and power of human knowledge and tools began to increase exponentially. Almost every aspect of human life has been thoroughly changed over this period. At the time there was no mass media, television, personal computers, satellites, fax machines, cellular phones, Email, Internet websites, on-line Social Networking, etc. Man had not yet walked on the Moon in 1945 and humanity had not yet viewed the magnificent image of our own "blue planet" as seen from space.

The rapid societal changes experienced in the second half of the 20th century appear all the more remarkable when viewed against the perspective of historical time. The transformation of our civilization over those few decades has been all encompassing and there is no end in sight. Evolutionary change has now become revolutionary change and the pace continues to quicken. However, these years have also brought about some of the greatest challenges we have ever had to face. This is the great paradox confronting us today. Our foremost period of progress has also led to our most serious crisis due, to a major degree, to the subordination of spiritual values and advancement as fundamentally human and essential to our true progress.

Many millions of people around the world are now aware of our current precarious situation. After all, the alarm bells have been ringing for over 40 years. However, many people have responded to this awareness with undue optimism that a technological solution will save us. Others deny that we have any real problems perhaps because they share the current "aura of invincibility" permeating our civilization. For many the issues are too overwhelming and present an overload of information. Finally, to some our concerns appear manageable. This may be because we typically only address our challenges one at a time - climate change today, nuclear threats next month, overpopulation the following month, etc. The reality, of course, is that all our global crises are occurring simultaneously, continually interacting and reinforcing each other.

Technology does present great promise and will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping a preferable future. Technology, alone, however will not suffice. The powerful global macro-trends now in motion cannot be quickly reversed. Technology has also often proven to be a "mixed blessing" in the past, when not used wisely.

Universal Values and the related new societal organizations are equally crucial to our future. For the first time in our history, a global consensus on 'Universal Values' may now be capable of

being formed. This is due to our new understandings of our nature, the nature of the Cosmos and our abilities to share information and communicate globally. We would in essence be agreeing upon the collective wisdom of Humankind at this point in our evolution and this global consensus will give rise to new types of societal organization.

Existing societal institutions, which we would expect to look for leadership, have unfortunately failed us so far on this biggest of collective challenges. Our political leaders are too busy worrying about the next short-term election to think about the future 10 or 20 years from now. Business leaders have invested heavily in the current worldview and its related economic system. Our religious leaders seem to be mainly focused on the issues of the First Millennium not the Third. Educational leaders appear stuck in the past in preparing students for the future. While the mainstream media are too busy covering the important stories of the day such as the latest ‘celebrity break-up’ to address the growing ‘elephant in the room’. In general, all are preoccupied with lesser or even trivial issues and are therefore not seeing the ‘big picture.’

Fortunately there are those who are aware and actively engaged in this greatest of challenges and opportunities. It is the ‘People of the World’ who are primarily addressing humanity’s future with vision and action today. There are millions of people and millions of organizations working each day for a better world and a positive future. It is they who are leading the way to building a new global society based on shared values and goals. Millions of people today have realized that we must collectively adapt to changing realities and a changing environment by changing ourselves, our values and our consciousness. They have understood that our current assumptions about Nature and reality are erroneous - that the opposite of our older worldview appears to be true. They know that the decisions we make today will have a much larger impact on the future of humanity than those of any previous generation.

These millions of ‘Planetary Citizens’ are the evolutionary vanguard for humanity’s future. They are us. This is the work that we have come together to do and to lead by example through committed action in service to humanity and our future. The essence of our work is to co-create the foundations of a global humanity and a planetary civilization and to thus initiate the next phase in our socio-cultural evolution.

The opportunity to shift upwards to this next level of our collective development has been enabled by the recent and on-going revolutions in information and communication technologies. Our present ability to communicate globally across national borders and cultural boundaries gives rise to the opportunity to create a unified global consciousness based on universal spiritual values and shared concern for our children and grandchildren’s future.

There are two key elements which are, in my view, essential to the creation of a new ‘global humanity’ and a truly ‘planetary civilization’. The first is the ‘conscious evolution’ of the thinking of a sufficient number of people alive today to a ‘Planetary Consciousness’. This next evolutionary level of consciousness has been defined by Dr. Ervin Laszlo as: “A holistic consciousness with an integrated vision of people, society, life, and the Universe. On the personal level it is the consciousness where socially and ecologically destructive behavior is unacceptable. In regard to society, it is the consciousness that other people, whether they live next door or in distant parts of the world, are an integral part of the human family of the living

system of Earth. And in regard to nature it is the consciousness that we cannot do anything to the wider community of “Gaia”, of all things on Earth, without also doing it to ourselves.”

A second key element essential to the creation of a new ‘global humanity’ and a truly ‘planetary civilization’ is the widespread development and adoption of “Universal Values.” In 2010, the World Forum of Spiritual Culture produced its Declaration -“Towards a New World and its Creation through Spiritual Culture”. The Declaration contained a description of ten Universal Spiritual Values: Love, Virtue, Creation, Evolution, Spiritual Enlightenment, Benefit to the World, Unity, Justice, Universal Brotherhood, and Spiritual Culture.

In an article I wrote in 1998, I posited ten “Evolutionary Universal Values/Principles for Humanity’s Future” as follows:

1. Balance

There are always two or more interests represented in every relationship. These interests must be balanced. Balance in nature refers to balancing the activities of the diverse organisms and species in an eco-system so that all survive and thrive. Balance is also a dynamic concept. Constant adjustments and readjustments occur to maintain an overall equilibrium. Thus, balance leads to stability and longevity. In future, our focus should be on balancing just about everything in society; the interests of humankind and the Earth, self-interest and community interest, competition and cooperation, the public interest and private interests, the short-term and the long-term.

2. Harmony

Harmony is the diverse parts of a whole system acting together as one in an enhanced manner. The key aspects of harmony are synergy, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, and accord. In nature, harmony is found in an eco-system where every individual organism and species play a crucial role in the greater whole. The waste product of one species provides the nourishment for another in an on-going life cycle. In the human realm, it is in our communities and societies where the principles of harmony should prevail. Each member of society is a unique individual contributing his or her distinctive skills and abilities to the greater whole. Every organization can emulate the workings of harmony in nature. Eco-systemic harmony is innate and essential to natural systems. Human beings, however, must consciously choose to act in harmony and to create the social systems and structures necessary to sustain it. Such harmony is equally essential to human systems and societies.

3. Partnership

Partnership is the equitable sharing of both the benefits and risks of a collective endeavour. It is also the mutual acceptance of specific obligations and responsibilities to each other. It is based on mutual respect for the rights and interests of all the partners. In nature, partnership is inherent to the balance and harmony of a collective endeavour such as an eco-system. There are, of course, numerous examples of partnership in human society. Many are economic such as business partnerships and corporations, and more recently; joint ventures, alliances, consortiums, networks, etc. What is needed now are greatly expanded societal partnerships that go well beyond traditional applications; partnerships between men and women, between cultures, sectors and interests in society, between nations, between present and future generations. This would

lead to a "win-win" societal model being implemented over the "win-lose" model we currently follow. A culture of partnership is vastly preferable to a culture of conflict.

4. Sustainability

Sustainability is a very recent concept in our thinking which is becoming more important to humanity's future each passing day. Sustainability, however, has been a fundamental principle of success in nature since the beginning. Sustainability in the human societal context has been defined as: "A society that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations." Thus sustainability includes wise resource use and management, conservation and longevity. Eco-systems must be sustainable to survive. This means that each individual and species in the system interacts harmoniously and symbiotically both for its own benefit and for the benefit of the community. This approach greatly enhances the long-term prospects of the individual members, their particular species and the eco-system itself. Lasting sustainability flows naturally from balance, harmony and partnership.

5. Open to the Future

Today, our world is being reshaped at an ever-increasing pace. We must continually adapt to the changing realities by being open to the future. New realities demand new thinking and new approaches. To "live in the past" or desire a return to the past is to respond to former realities. The past limits and restricts as it can only be what is known to date. The future, however, presents new possibilities which cannot be definitely known in the present. The future is thus the world of unlimited possibilities.

6. Collaboration over Confrontation

The accelerating information and communications revolution is driving our current societal evolution toward the potential attainment of true global community. This revolution is leading to a shift from the national perspective to a global one. The ever-increasing worldwide exchange of information and communication has the beneficial effect of increasing understanding among individuals and groups which, in turn, can lead to choosing cooperation over confrontation. We now know that nature utilizes both cooperation and competition as evolutionary tools. A key to our success, then, is to balance the elements of competition and cooperation as is in nature.

7. Responsibility for the Future

Securing a positive future for all is based upon individual acceptance of responsibility for the future. Humanity today has the ability to solve all of our problems. This will become a reality when a new understanding of our true potential and our relationship to the Earth has replaced the current worldview. To a greater or lesser extent, we all share responsibility for the current state of the world. We also all share responsibility for the shape of the future.

8. Unity in Diversity

The interrelationship and interdependence of all life on Earth simply cannot be denied. Nor can we deny the interdependence of the human race and our political, economic and social institutions. The globalization of culture, technology and economics is proceeding at an extremely rapid rate. National borders, like many of the past walls between us, are being transcended. The major challenges we now face are global in nature and, thus, so must the

solutions be. The world of the future can be a world of shared vision, values and goals while embracing cultural diversity.

9. One World - One Future

As we share a common future, the concept of the common good must now transcend existing cultural, religious and economic differences. The narrower interests of each group, culture and nation must become secondary to the interests of all humanity and to that of the Earth upon which all life depends. Ultimately, we will all succeed or we will all fail.

10. Shaping Our Destiny

We can collectively make the choices and take the actions which will lead to the creation of a peaceful and sustainable global community. For this to occur all of us must now become leaders. Everyone can get involved in the campaign for a positive future. It will require true commitment, sacrifice and action. Each of us can do something meaningful to make a difference - whether large or small, and in thousands of different ways. For the sake of our children and future descendants we must successfully address the challenges before us and ensure our destiny.

If the above ten Universal Spiritual Values set out in the WFSC 2010 Declaration with the above ten Evolutionary Universal Values/Principles for Humanity's Future, which are based on natural world principles and new human understandings, were to be integrated we would have an outstanding foundational framework for creation of a new 'global humanity' and a truly 'planetary civilization'.

Such a Universal Values and Principles framework if adopted by millions of people all over the world can lead to this new humanity and new world. This values framework will underlie the evolution of a Global Spiritual Culture for all humanity.

A new global community of people worldwide who share these values is now being created as a self-organizing, evolving and sustainable virtual organism which is generating a world movement of planetary citizens towards a peaceful and sustainable future. This collaborative world movement will feature shared campaigns, World Days, global events, media and education as central elements in the months and years to come. Numerous global events that can engage millions worldwide are now being planned for December 21/22, 2012.

Everyone everywhere can join in this shared effort. Planetary Consciousness, Universal Values, and the worldwide collaboration by the People of the World across borders and cultures utilizing our new information and communication tools in the collective development by the people of the world of a Global Spiritual Culture is the key to our shared future today.

Acting today for tomorrow we can choose to apply our efforts collaboratively for the benefit of all Humankind. We will then begin a remarkable new chapter in Humanity's Evolutionary Story!

As an Appendix to this paper I am including the 'Worldshift Declaration' which was co-drafted by Ervin Laszlo and myself initially in the fall of 2008.

The WorldShift Declaration

A Declaration of Global Emergency and Emergence

(Co-drafted by Ervin Laszlo & David Woolfson, 2008/2009)

THE CRISIS AND THE OPPORTUNITY

There is no doubt that we are now in a state of global emergency. This unprecedented worldwide crisis is a symptom of a much deeper problem: the current state of our consciousness; how we think about ourselves, and our world. We have the urgent need, and now the opportunity, for a complete rethink: to reconsider our values and priorities, to understand our interconnectedness and to shift to a new direction - living in harmony with nature and each other.

Every person, community, and society in the world is already, or will soon be, affected by this global crisis, through climate change, economic breakdown, ecosystem collapse, population pressure, food and water shortages, resource depletion, nuclear and other threats. If we continue on our present unsustainable path, by mid-century the Earth could become largely uninhabitable for human and countless other forms of life. However, total system-collapse could occur much sooner caused by eco-catastrophes or escalating wars triggered by religious, geopolitical or resource conflicts.

These threats are real. The underlying causes of the present worldwide crisis have been building momentum for decades and could soon become irreversible. Estimates of when the points of no return will be reached have been reduced from the end of the century, to mid-century, to the next twenty years, and recently to the next five to ten years.

The window of opportunity for shifting our current path and breaking through to a peaceful and sustainable world may be no more than a few years from now. This timeline coincides with the many forecasts and prophecies that speak of the ending of the current cycle of human life on this planet, and the possible dawning of a new consciousness, by the end of the year 2012.

Today, forward-thinking groups and individuals all over the world are addressing the many opportunities presented at this critical time. Designs for sustainable systems, structures and technologies are being developed and implemented in all sectors, at all levels and in every society. This global awakening is a hopeful sign of the vitality of the human spirit and our ability to respond to the dangers we now face with insight and creativity.

The totality of our current efforts does not yet match the scope, scale and urgency of the necessary transformation. But if we collaborate and act with vision, foresight and commitment we can lay the foundations of a global community that is peaceful, just and sustainable. We may then ensure our survival and wellbeing, as well as that of future generations. As global citizens, our top priority is to accelerate our evolutionary shift to a planetary consciousness and, together, co-create this new world and a positive future for humanity - while the window of time is still open.

AN URGENT CALL

We accordingly issue this urgent call to all the people of the world to deepen our awareness of both the dangers and the opportunities of the present global crisis and declare our firm commitment to work together to bring about a timely and positive WorldShift, for the survival and wellbeing of the entire human community and the flourishing of all life on Earth.