

Global Transformation?

A Meridian Dialogue

By

David Wasdell

**In Response to Ervin Laszlo's:
'Macroshift'**

THE MERIDIAN PROGRAMME IS HOSTED BY:
URCHIN (UNIT FOR RESEARCH INTO CHANGING INSTITUTIONS),
MERIDIAN HOUSE, 115 POPLAR HIGH STREET, LONDON E14 0AE,
CHARITY REG. NO. 284542

Web-site: www.meridian.org.uk

Preface

A Meridian Dialogue is an exchange of critical and creative ideas occasioned by the publication of a particularly important text which makes a significant contribution to the field in which the Meridian Programme is involved. It is not intended as a summary or review of the book concerned, and it is hoped that readers will be encouraged to read the full text and be familiar with its contents before engaging with the Dialogue.

The format is one which allows me to react, to raise issues and questions, to contribute ideas and contents of my own and to initiate ongoing collaborative work between myself and the author concerned. There is no attempt to produce the text as a polished final version. It is more of an open window into thoughts-in-becoming, a textual workshop at the edge of my conceptual development. As you share in this conversation it is my hope that you too will be encouraged to engage in the debate and take your place in the ongoing task of seeking the possible understanding of the issues addressed.

**David Wasdell
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[The following are notes on ‘Macroshift’ by Ervin Laszlo, the Official Report of the Club of Budapest, published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc, San Francisco, 2001]

I am convinced that the agenda addressed by Ervin Laszlo in this official report of the Club of Budapest, is absolutely critical for human survival in tomorrow’s world. Where criticism of his proposals for action seems necessary, I have made my points clearly, forcefully and repetitively, because I believe passionately that we need the best possible approach to problem-solving in our current crisis. In this response I shall not be restating Laszlo’s arguments in detail nor summarising his text. It is assumed that the reader of the response is already familiar with Laszlo’s writing and able to dialogue with it.

Erwin starts his preface with the words:

‘In the opening years of the twenty-first century we are launched on a process of profound and irreversible transformation. The problems and crises we have been experiencing in recent years are driving past the tolerance threshold of nationally based industrial societies towards a borderless world where information is the key resource and communication the key to making use of it.’ (p.xv)

‘A macroshift’s unfolding is never predetermined: it is sensitive to human perceptions, values, and actions ... today’s macroshift harbours great promise as well as grave danger. It could lead to a more humane and sustainable civilization or to a series of crises that lead to catastrophe.’ (p.xvi)

Laszlo’s understanding of macroshift is somewhat akin to Toffler’s understanding of a wave of civilisation transformation (see my paper ‘Beyond The Third Wave’). Toffler’s use of fluid dynamic symbolism tended to treat the human element as a particle within a fluid medium, passively subject to the transformative tsunami which it had inadvertently initiated. Laszlo on the other hand sees the human participation as profoundly conscious, choice-making and active, able to influence and navigate the macroshift and therefore open up the possibilities of so engaging the process that its outcome can indeed be optimised, while realistically grounded in the extraordinary convulsions of human history. Laszlo’s treatment is profoundly hopeful in that he offers real possibilities of so engaging our own dynamic intervention capacity as to be able to modulate and transform the turbulence of the macroshift and the form of civilisation which emerges beyond it.

As Albert Einstein indicated, the task we face is the transformation of human consciousness, the emergence of global wisdom, the imperative of which has been

clear for half a century. The timescale, however, is now so foreshortened that immediate action is critical.

Laszlo notes that:

Processes of rapid and fundamental change in complex systems are known as “bifurcations” ... A macroshift is a bifurcation in the evolutionary dynamic of a society.’ (p.9)

The behaviour in this supersensitive state, the state of chaos, is driven not by non-linear linkages as in the dynamics of complex systems, but by the emergent characteristics of systems of complexity, made familiar through chaos theory. Navigating such a state of complexity as a macrosystem is a process for which our species has little preparation. We have mathematical models and sub-system examples. We have historical periods of macroshift but without the coordinated, choice-making, navigational skills required to affect outcomes. So this is new territory.

Laszlo differentiates the behaviour of human societies from the mathematical models and Toffleresque wave patterns in the words:

‘Human societies are complex systems made up of the relations of individually conscious humans to each other and to their environment. The presence of human mind and consciousness complicate the evolutionary dynamic of these systems. The evolution of natural systems usually can be described with differential equations that map the behavior of the systems in reference to the principal system constraints. This is not the case when it comes to human societies. Here the consciousness of the society’s members influences the system’s behaviour, affecting the evolution of the system in a variety of unforeseen ways.’ (p.11)

He goes on to assert:

‘If we are aware of this power in our hands, and if we have the will and the wisdom to make use of it, we can become conscious agents of our society’s bifurcation - that is, masters of our own destiny.’ (p.12)

It is difficult to reconcile the two viewpoints. If the effects of human consciousness are unforeseen, how can they also be controllable and if there are no known linkages between changes in conscious behaviour and the outcomes in the systems of complexity, how can the human agents also be masters of their own destiny? I begin to wonder if Laszlo’s profound knowledge of the dynamics of systems of complexity is not to some extent being influenced by the projection of wishful thinking which blurs the fundamental understanding of the inherent unpredictability of their behaviour and the de-linking of causal leverage between intervention and system outcome. I would like to believe Laszlo but this is a fundamental paradigmatic problem that lies at the heart of his analysis. While the rest of this response paper follows Laszlo’s own position, it must be recognised that there is a profound problematique here which must eventually be addressed.

Laszlo goes on to assert:

The macroshift moves towards a successful conclusion if, and only if, a critical mass of people in society evolve their mindset. They must generate and embrace values, worldviews, and ethics that mesh with the conditions that were inadvertently spawned by the technological innovations of their predecessors. How soon and indeed whether a critical mass evolves its values, worldviews, and consciousness is not written in the stars. It depends on the creativity of the people and the flexibility of the dominant institutions.' (p.15)

What constitutes a critical mass within a social population? How can it be catalysed? What kind of evolution of mindset is required? How can that transformation itself be so engaged that the critical mass develops? These are some of the questions which Laszlo's work poses. In previous experience of transformation in social systems, critical mass is reached by a proportion, a percentage, of individuals beginning to behave in new ways. The word 'mass' itself belies the amorphous non-connectivity of the volume of human actors. However, if those involved in the evolution of consciousness can evolve a neural meta-net, i.e. a network of networks of conscious evolution, a second order learning domain which achieves societal coherence in resonant and accelerated network behaviour, then the achievement and effective impact of the mass is massively enhanced. Here we begin to see the possibility of harnessing new institutional designs, based within the discipline of complexity, as means to the desired end with far greater power than the accumulation of a disconnected percentage of human operatives.

At the end of that page, Laszlo notes:

'A macroshift is a transformation of civilization in which technology is the driver and the values and consciousness of a critical mass of people the decider.' (p.15)

Navigating that form of transformation requires the harnessing of sub-systems of complexity to engage as an intervention within the macro system of complexity. In this sense the shift is not just a level shift in consciousness but a shift from a non-evolving consciousness into a second order domain of accelerating and continuing consciousness evolution.

We move on quickly through Laszlo's review of macroshifts in history, his overview of the elements leading to the current macroshift and his analysis of the choices and possible outcomes, driven by a set of environmental and social unsustainabilities. He goes on then to outline the choice between the breakdown scenario and the breakthrough scenario as the two basic families of potential outcomes from the period of social turbulence or complexity which we are now entering. The imperative to which he draws our attention therefore lies in the capacity for choice making that affects the outcome. Quite apart from the difficulties stemming from the problematique of the unpredictability factors in systems of complexity, his approach also seems to be based on an over-optimistic valuation of the rational decision making and altruistic nature of human consciousness. Throughout his writing there is almost

no awareness of the underlying levels of unconscious material which powerfully invade, control and disrupt the rational conscious choice-making capacities of human agents.

Another difficulty emerges in his words:

‘Our world has enough, as Gandhi said, to provide for people’s *need*, but not enough to provide for their *greed*.’ (p.51)

Gandhi of course lived and thought in an era before our understanding of limits to growth was emergent in the public domain. His worldview still assumed an adequately resourceful environment with human consumption well below the support capacity of the ecosphere. Whilst it is certainly true that the world does not have enough to provide for people’s greed, we now face the stark reality that there are so many people living off the limited resources of the biosphere that the world’s capacity to sustain survival at even minimalist levels of life quality is being called in question. It is not just a question of dealing with greed, though that is essential. The problems we face are now more profound than Gandhi ever dreamed.

The question of greed is, of course, quite fundamental and Laszlo notes that:

‘In the industrialized parts of the world greed is now dominant.’ (p.51)

Traditionally greed is seen as one of the seven deadly sins. Psychologically it is understood as a compulsive drive to accumulate as a defence against anxieties with their roots deep in the insecurities of the paranoid position. The greater the levels of social insecurity and the more intense the experience of social paranoia, the more profound is this obsessive and compulsive activity, in other words the more intense the dynamics of greed that are unleashed within our system’s behaviour. In the past, the phenomena were treated as instinctive and part of the human condition. Today’s advances in psychodynamic research open up the possibility that these behaviours are in fact learned in conditions of early resource deprivation and in that case are open to transformation, leading to dramatic reduction in the emergent behaviours of resource accumulation, even under high anxiety stress. [For a beginning of this analysis see my papers: *Systems Analysis and the Roots of Poverty*, and *The Psychodynamics of Capitalism and the Free Market Economy*] Change in the dynamics of industrial society and global capitalism cannot be achieved by cosmetic attempts to change the presenting values and behaviour of institutional leaders. The unconscious roots which drive this topology are far deeper and require a much more profound analysis and an opening up of an intervention strategy that has the capacity for metamorphic change. This is one of the areas in which the Club of Budapest needs to enlarge its multi-disciplinary matrix to include those working on the leading edge of the psychodynamic analysis of complex systems.

Moving on then beyond his description of the current situation to the second part of his work Laszlo opens up a set of ‘new imperatives’. It includes the deconstruction of a set of malign myths which have much in common with the set of ‘foetal assumptions’ noted at the end of the presentation on ‘Psychodynamics of Capitalism and the Free Market Economy’.

His chapter on learning to live with diversity develops the dynamics of differentiation, whilst the subsequent chapter 'embracing a planetary ethic' complements it with the capacity for integration at macrosystems level. At the end of that chapter he reaffirms:

'Only if a critical mass of people of the contemporary world adopt a planetary ethic do we have a realistic chance of creating a world where the right to life and well-being is assured for all and the human impact on the environment does not exceed the self-regenerative capacities of the biosphere.' (p.87)

Without the achievement of that critical mass of actors with totally different ethical values, overall systems understanding and fundamental behavioural change, the catastrophic scenario as an outcome of the macroshift is inevitable. If Laszlo is right that the coherent behaviour of a critical mass of people adapting very new ways and behaviour patterns can indeed influence the outcome of the transformative phase of turbulence in a global level system of complexity then there is perhaps some hope still available to us. It is, I suggest, our only hope even though the fundamental problematique of his analysis may still mean that even if a critical mass is achieved, the required outcome may still not be forthcoming. At least this window of possible opportunity demands exploration in the most competent and effective way.

Laszlo is clear that one of the key elements is the emergence of responsibility in human behaviour, rather than the irresponsible opting out and the abandonment of moral obligation. Outcomes for others must be acknowledged as exercising constraints on the behaviour of the self, whether that is personal, in business and management, within the body politic or in relationship to the environment. Long-term outcomes must also be taken into account. We must recognise that the stakeholders of today's businesses include the future generations of the as-yet-unborn, to whom we have a proleptic responsibility, whilst they themselves have as yet no voice.

In the third and final part of the book Laszlo addresses 'The Way Ahead'. The primary condition of forward movement is affirmed in the words:

'The next advance of humankind must be governed by a new rationality. The obsolete and increasingly counterproductive mechanistic rationality of Logos must be replaced by a new holistic rationality of a yet-to-be-born civilization.' (p.107)

Laszlo argues for the replacement of one form of rationality by another. However, the behaviours of social systems during the period dominated by what he describes as 'the counter-productive mechanistic rationality of Logos' cannot be explained simply on the basis of rationality itself. The dysfunctionality of systems behaviour even in this period is profoundly traceable to the levels of non-rational, irrational or unconscious dynamic which play such a major part in historical motivations and the psychodynamics of historical systems. It is clear that the last half century of psychodynamic research into the behaviour of large groups has much to offer that would greatly enrich and deepen the quality of analysis offered by the Club of Budapest. It is a domain of understanding and information that must be harnessed if Laszlo's work is to be seen as anything other than psychodynamically naïve.

The inadvertent double entendre of the phrase 'yet-to-be-born civilization' is interesting. The surface meaning obviously has to do with the civilisation which has not yet come into being but at another level his phrase could be taken to refer to a civilisation of the as-yet-unborn, a perseveration in the future of precisely those regressive dynamics which underlie the anxiety defences at the root of the unconscious irrationality of systems behaviour.

As Laszlo moves on to explore the change in the nature of social evolution, he describes the current situation as characterised by the dynamics of conquest, colonisation and consumption, while noting that in the needed and new form of evolution

'the ends and means are very different. They also can be grasped under three headings: connection, communication and consciousness' (p.112)

The quantum level of inter-connectivity is indicated by contemporary physics as the multi-dimensional ground of the topology of the presenting wave-front of energy emerging from the singularity. The condensation of this wave-front constitutes precisely the experienced and observable universe of which we are a part. Grounding human consciousness in this matrix of connectivity provides a fundamental foundation for our future evolution. So Laszlo notes:

'These embracing connections evolve rapidly, and it is one of the ends of intensive evolution to order them, creating coherent structure in place of random proliferation.' (p.113)

Intense research into interpersonal and group behaviours using matrix structures of interconnectedness and multi-channel communication processes (see 'Experiential Learning for Tomorrow's World' and 'Prenatal Experience as the Ground of Group and Social Process'), offers some practical examples of ways in which such coherent structure can be catalysed and intensified, ways which could quite easily be replicated to reach large populations in short time spans.

Moving on beyond connectivity to communication, Laszlo writes:

'The second aim of intensive evolution is directly linked with the first. It deepens the level of communication and raises the level of consciousness of the communicators. Communication unfolds on multiple levels. First of all, individuals need to communicate with themselves, caring for and developing their inner being. People who are "in touch with themselves" are better balanced and more able to communicate with the world around them. Individuals also need to be better in touch with those who make up the immediate context of their lives - family, community, and work or profession. Still wider levels of communication are equally necessary: communication between people, whether near or far, in their own country or in other countries and cultures, as well as communication with nature, both metaphorically and literally. Intensive evolution means inner-directed

development that evolves people's consciousness and helps them find themselves within their social and natural milieu.' (p.113)

Human beings who are developing increased coherence in mental state would appear to be quite able to coordinate that coherence with other human beings and generate what Laszlo describes as 'subtle yet powerful technologies of transpersonal contact and communication'. It is a level of interpersonal connectivity which is really at the edge of current consciousness even though some level of awareness of the phenomenon has been around for millennia. At the more traditional levels communication needs to embrace not only verbal but also symbolic, visual, somatic, body language, affective and emotional channels. Any blocking or repression of communication capacity in any of these channels disrupts coherence and dampens the quality of consciousness that is emerging. The levels of aggregation of communication commence at the intrapersonal. The openness and level of consciousness of the inner world is an essential but not sufficient criterion for the evolution of interpersonal and system-wide development of the new forms of consciousness required to catalyse the macroshift. So Laszlo notes the levels of communication of inner being, interpersonal, group, community, organisational, institutional, societal and global, as well as the essential element of human-to-environment interconnectivity and communication.

Laszlo goes on to examine the third element of the new kind of evolution, namely consciousness:

'Communication between humans involves *consciousness*. The full potentials of human communication unfold only when people apprehend the strands of connection through which they communicate. A high level of communication calls for a high level of consciousness to enable the communicators to make use of the many, sometimes extremely subtle, strands of connection that bind them to each other and to nature. Consciousness of these connections is an important factor in our evolution, for it lifts people's thinking and values from an ego-, local community-, and nation-centered orientation to a wider culture- and ultimately species- and planet-centered dimension.' (p.113)

Consciousness is not a self-evident domain of meaning. Someone suffering from concussion after a road accident may 'lose consciousness' and then a few minutes, hours, days or even months later 'regain consciousness'. Here the word simply refers to the standard level of awareness, mental functioning and relatedness of everyday life. Laszlo's meaning moves us beyond that simplistic level, with its quality of being either 'on' or 'off'. The second domain could be characterised by the words of 'awareness' or 'sensitivity'. Here lies a set of meanings which enables us to engage gradation of the phenomenon. Someone can be more or less aware, more or less sensitive. Awareness can be blunted under certain circumstances and enhanced in others. We may remain unaware of certain facts, information, objects, qualities, relationships until they come to our attention by processes of learning. This domain seems to have more to do with Laszlo's meaning and indeed the word 'consciousness' could well be replaced by 'awareness' without detracting from what he is trying to say. So the macroshift requires that people become 'aware of the different, subtle,

strands of connection that bind them to each other and to nature'. Here awareness is dynamic - it is not just information about, it is familiarity with, active engagement in their utilisation in the process of communication.

There is, of course, another domain to the meaning of 'consciousness' in which it is contrasted with 'unconsciousness' at a psychological level. This is a level of discourse which is not engaged by Laszlo. It is, however, a world of understanding which is essential if his aims and objectives are to be achieved. Within this domain of meaning, consciousness is enhanced in so far as that which is as-yet-unconscious becomes consciousness. Unconsciousness becomes the boundary constraint on the consciousness of the subject and therefore a limiting constraint on the quality of communication and connectivity, which the subject can engage. If we seek to enhance the quality of consciousness then we must understand what makes people unconscious and how such levels of unconsciousness can be engaged and released. Unconscious domains of human behaviour are the source of the dysfunctional, the irrational, and the destructive. They detach awareness from reality-testing and engagement with the information resources required for effective problem-solving and decision-making. The collusional enactment of unconscious dynamics drives the processes of conflict and religion, war and greed, dehumanisation, exploitation, scapegoating and abuse. Until these dynamics are effectively engaged and transformed, no amount of increased awareness of levels of connectivity can make a significant difference to our social process. Enhancing the levels of consciousness within the social system demands therefore a much more radical and effective analysis of the sources of unconscious behaviour, the development of strategies of intervention, resolution and integration of the material and the effective mobilisation of opportunities for such metamorphic change within our society that its effects can reach critical mass within the shortest possible time.

This is an agenda which the Club of Budapest must now address as a matter of urgency.

His tenth chapter draws attention to 'the quiet dawn of holos consciousness', providing many hopeful and substantive examples of shifts in values and their application in civic programmes and projects, emergent cultures and lifestyles and the growing proportion of cultural creatives within wider society. The core of the chapter is the section on 'The Rise of Spirituality' which he describes as 'the most promising element of the emergent cultures'. The arguments of this section are fundamental to the direction of Laszlo's thought for the rest of his book and will repay exploration in detail. He writes:

'Spirituality is a private matter, penetrating the relationship between the individual and the cosmos. Unlike religion, spirituality does not require a particular place for its exercise, nor does it require a priesthood. Its temple is the mind of the individual, and its altar is the state of consciousness that comes about through deep meditation and prayer. Its renaissance is not confined to the emerging cultures; concern with spirituality has entered the hallowed halls of higher education. Harvard and other major medical schools are giving courses on spirituality in medicine, and top business schools are offering seminars on spirituality in business. Public-spirited organizations such as the John Templeton

Foundation fund research, publications, symposia, and programs that bring together science, medicine, and spirituality. Avant-garde institutions, among them the California Institute of Integral Studies, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and the Schumacher College of England, devote entire programs to the spiritual tradition and its role in science and society, and some newly founded institutions, such as the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, are entirely devoted to the study of the mystical tradition, not as historical fact or anthropological curiosity but as a living force of direct relevance to society. (p.122-123)

If the word 'consciousness' confuses because of its multiple domains of meaning, then the word 'spirituality' is a shattered container. What does it mean to say that the 'altar of spirituality is the state of consciousness that comes about through deep meditation and prayer'? How is such a state of consciousness the place upon which sacrifice is enacted in the service of spirituality? The meaning of spirituality is not self-evident. It cannot simply be used as a universally communicating metaphor. To speak of someone as 'unspiritual' is to exercise emotional blackmail, while at the other end of the spectrum to describe someone as 'spiritual' may be to dismiss them as having no contact with reality whatsoever. The emergence of spirituality within the domains of business education may well be using the word to describe courses dealing with values and ethics from the humanist or secular standpoint, devoid of metaphysical context or content - a position which others may well deem to be profoundly unspiritual. Traditionally spirituality devolves from the encounter and experience of the other, the ontologically different, the domain of the suprahuman, sought and cultivated in the search for salvation.

'Avant-garde institutions' may devote entire programmes to the spiritual tradition, but what they mean by the spiritual tradition may be quite different from institution to institution. Indeed some elements of the mystical tradition in one centre may be seen as antithetical to true spirituality in another. The situation calls for profound qualities of discernment, differentiation and evaluation in a domain which is probably more dominated by splitting, bifurcation, alienation and conflicted sub-groups than almost any other field of human culture!

Laszlo takes his exploration of spirituality further in the words:

'This emerging spirituality is different from traditional religiosity, but it is not opposed to the religious tradition. At their origins all the great religions promoted spirituality among their followers. They were committed to the kind of experience William James described in his seminal work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. According to James, the hallmark of religious experience is a sense of union with something higher than oneself - a sense that one is part of a deeper, more meaningful reality. The founders of the great religions and their original followers must have had first-hand experiences of this kind. The visions of the Hindu rishis, the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, Mohammed's miraculous journey, Moses' vision of Jehovah in the burning bush, Jesus' temptation by the Devil and communion with God on the cross, Ezechiel's [sic] vision of the flaming chariot, and St. John's apocalyptic revelation on Patmos are examples of deep

spiritual experiences. The scriptures that followed from them were intended as records and reminders of them.' (p.123)

Within the highly differentiated topology of the meanings of spirituality, Laszlo follows William James in asserting an underlying unity of spiritual experience at the heart of all living traditions, namely 'a sense of union with something higher than oneself - a sense that one is part of a deeper, more meaningful reality'. As the mainstream religious communities evolved, this level of immediate experiential engagement tended to evaporate, leaving memorial shrines as scattered reminders of the vanished richness of existential experience.

'Direct access to a higher reality tends to be reserved for the priests, the appointed mediators between society and the divine. Monks and other members of the ordained priesthood still engage in practices conducive to the religious experience: intense prayer and deep meditation, fasting, silence, and some forms of physical deprivation. But, as Stanislav Grof remarked, if a layperson had a genuine religious experience in one of today's churches, the average priest would probably send him or her to a psychiatrist.' (p.123)

The core experience of what Laszlo means by 'spirituality' is again and again enunciated in the context of deep meditation and prayer. The emergent altered state of consciousness which ensues is interpreted as connectivity to the transpersonal. This essential state of wholeness at the heart of the needed evolution of consciousness is seen as an essential pre-requisite for the navigation of the macroshift.

The section on spirituality is completed by reference to the work of the theologian Thomas Berry in his attempts to reconcile the domains of inner spirituality and the new physics. This:

'new story comes to us from a reinterpretation of science's world picture. In this reinterpretation the divine is intrinsic to all things, from atoms to galaxies, and the cosmos is our true sacred community. The trends that bring a deeper understanding of ourselves and of our relation to the cosmos are the same trends that shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the sun and formed the Earth, brought forth the continents, the seas, and the atmosphere, awakened life in the primordial cell, and then brought into being the endless variety of living beings.' (p.124)

Philosophically, we need to recognise that such formulations come not from the domains of the new physics itself but from the attempts of those whose understanding of spirituality and the divine comes from elsewhere and who therefore have a priori reasons for applying their beliefs to the new domains of insight coming from cosmology and fundamental physics. This pattern of cognitive anthropomorphism projects onto the interconnectivity of quantum energy states the existential experience of self-awareness of the massively aggregated and interconnected complexity of the neural meta-net of human being. It is a quite unjustifiable attempt to possess and consume the same piece of cake! We need to look elsewhere for the roots and origins

of the ubiquitous sense of the living ‘otherness’ ‘consciousness’ or ‘divinity’ of our cosmic environment.

Current advances in psychodynamic research indicate a one-to-one mapping between recovered experiences of extremely early imprinting and the altered states of consciousness achieved through deep meditation, prayer, shamanic experience and the neuro-chemical effects of certain drugs. Coherent stimulation of one particular sector of brain tissue, naturally occurring in some forms of epilepsy, also generates extreme feelings of clarity and unity with the other, which characterise the experiences of many of the shamanic and prophetic ‘spiritual visionaries’ of the past. While immensely seductive, particularly in primitive societies, it is totally inappropriate to place our ontological understanding of the universe on the basis of such experience (see papers: ‘Religious Experience and Early Imprinting’, ‘Roots of the Common Unconscious’, ‘Psychodynamics of War and Religion’).

We are now on the edge of understanding the extraordinary ‘learning’ capacity of the massively complex construct of the single human cell, carried forward and enhanced through the multi-fold cloning bifurcations into the complexly differentiated colony which constitutes the single human being. Under appropriate therapeutic conditions it is quite possible to retrieve material from any stage of human development, whilst also recognising that such recovery is also spontaneously evoked in a variety of life situations without necessarily having any conscious grounding in the reality of the experience which gave rise to it. In these latter situations it is not surprising, therefore, that the experiences are attributed to some transpersonal realm of reality. It is an attempt to make sense of experience which would otherwise smack of madness in the absence of any suitable construct of understanding. So, while much of the dynamics of intense splitting, scapegoating, sacrifice, conflict between good and evil, idealisation of utopian environments, the mythology of the tree and the snake, can be grounded in the immediately pre and perinatal experience, other patterns can be seen as emanating from much earlier in our developmental psychobiology. Early embryonal states appear to be the generating grounds of much of the environmental animation of the world of traditional shamanism. The pre-nidation condition of the free-floating rolling sphere and even earlier experiences of cellular life (the momentous events of ovulation, spermatogenesis, journeying, fertilisation and initial cellular bifurcation), present in our adult consciousness as the grounds of cosmic awareness and the attribution of infinite, unbounded life form to the world in which we live and move and have our being. It is a question of scale. The imprinted formation processes of the tiny group of cells within an apparently infinite cosmos of the maternal environment, accessed through a variety of processes of intensive regression, map into an adult construct relating the size of the fully formed human being to a projective environment which matches the ground of its formative emergence.

Typically the experiences are of unity, oneness, inter-connectivity between self and cosmos, undifferentiated internal states, the ‘drop becoming one with the ocean’, the mergence of the self in the other in a dimensionless infinity and a timeless state of eternity.

It is totally inappropriate to elevate these primitive experiences as the goal, or telos, of human spiritual achievement. Their utilisation as a normative construct to provide

some kind of understanding of our adult social environment is profoundly pathological, even though the state of monistic detachment may have all the seductive attraction of experiences of bliss and unity, enlightenment, ego-extinction and detachment from the anxieties of engagement with current reality.

To posit as fundamental foundation for the navigation of the current macroshift a form of spirituality or consciousness mistakenly grounded in these experiences of pathological fugue regression is dysfunctional in the extreme. This is an agenda which must be addressed by the Club of Budapest with utmost competence, clarity and urgency.

In his final chapter 'You Can Change the World' Laszlo summarises and restates his position:

'If the critical chaos phase of this shift is to be brought to a humane and sustainable conclusion, our values, worldviews, ethics, and ambitions must change in line with our changing conditions. We must forget obsolete beliefs, learn to live with and make productive use of the world's persistent diversity, embrace a planetary ethic capable of guiding behavior that can enable all people to live on this Earth, and meet the responsibilities that fall to every one of us in the personal, business, and political spheres of our lives. Understanding these imperatives is essential, but if it remains on the level of the intellect, it is insufficient. A global survey of young people has shown that intellectual understanding produces better ideas, but not necessarily better behaviors.' (p.136)

In our previous human history, macroshifts have been transient phases of turbulence between eras of comparative stability. There is, however, some evidence that this macroshift is different. It may possibly mark the transition from the comparative stability of the dynamics of complex systems, albeit governed by a multiplicity of non-linear feedback processes, to a system of complexity, characterised for the foreseeable future by the phenomena of chaos and turbulence. In that case, the skills required to navigate the macroshift become the required skills for survival in the ongoing conditions of turbulence. If that analysis is correct, then it is inappropriate to speak of bringing the macroshift 'to a humane and sustainable conclusion'. It is an issue which requires further analysis.

Laszlo continues to bring out a series of imperatives to do with change in values, worldviews, ethics and ambitions, the forgetting of obsolete beliefs, the embracing of a planetary ethic and the take-up of responsibilities. Change in the intellectual understanding is necessary but not sufficient. What is also demanded is dynamic change in the enactment behaviours to bring them into consistent coherence with the emergent understanding.

Intervention at the level needed to generate change in such systems requires an analysis of the origins, functions and resistance to change of those dynamics which generate values, worldviews, ethics and beliefs. Here the report of the Club of Budapest needs major revision.

In an attempt to differentiate the slow pace of genetic mutation from the potential for rapid transition in the field of cultural change, Laszlo asserts:

‘The values and beliefs that threaten human survival today are under conscious, not genetic, control. We can discard obsolete beliefs and outdated behaviors and adopt new beliefs and behaviors. This process of “cultural mutation” is far more rapid and efficient than a mutation of the gene pool, which is a protracted process involving repeated trial and error, with the successive mutants exposed to the ultimate test of fitness to the environment - the test of natural selection. The mutation of the cultural information pool does not require the chance serendipity of success: it can be consciously planned and purposively promoted. Its conscious planning and purposive promotion have become a precondition of human survival in the twenty-first century.’ (p.138)

It is quite extraordinary that Laszlo limits alternatives to genetically coded or conscious control, while completely omitting the immense power of the non-genetic but unconscious factors which drive beliefs and behaviours in social systems. It is simply not true that ‘the values and beliefs that threaten human survival today are under conscious ... control’. They are not artefacts like a pair of socks, worn out and outdated, to be discarded and replaced with better hosiery. Beliefs, values, ethics and behaviours arise out of the collective symbolisation of social defences against anxiety and the evolving mythic structures of social dynamics, which are profoundly resistant to intervention and transformation. It is not appropriate to confuse the presenting conscious symptomatic topology of social values with some kind of easily transformable matrix, open to conscious planning and purposive promotion. It is quite clear that values and beliefs that threaten human survival today are not under conscious control but profoundly affected by factors which are deeply unconscious within the social system as a whole. Even if those beliefs and values threaten our very existence, it is quite possible that human society may choose to maintain the dysfunctional values and beliefs rather than undergo the radical process of transformation required for their resolution, integration and metamorphosis.

Laszlo warns of the dire consequences of such an outcome in the words:

‘If the consciousness of mainstream culture does not change, the threat to human survival will persist. Obsolete values and outdated beliefs will widen the gap between rich and poor and degrade the viability of nature. This will lead to deepening social, economic, and political crises, spreading destitution, increasing violence, and ultimately a collapse of the weakest populations.’ (p.138)

As he well knows, the scenario could in fact become much worse than that. The irrational unconscious processes at work in macro systems behaviour are quite capable of unleashing uncontrollable biological agents, or even of precipitating major thermo-nuclear exchange, leaving the world basically uninhabitable, not just for the weakest populations but for the strongest and most technologically advanced as well.

Perhaps the clearest statement of Laszlo’s diagnosis comes in the next paragraph:

'The threat to human survival has its ultimate roots in the outdated consciousness of a critical mass in today's world. If the obsolescence of today's dominant consciousness is the root cause of the survival threat, evolution of this consciousness is the way to overcome that threat.' (p.138)

The analysis must go deeper. Current dominant social consciousness, outdated and obsolete as it may be, is itself a symptomatic level of social behaviour, not the domain of ultimate root causality. To be sure, change in the presenting symptomatic topology of dominant consciousness is critical if the threats to survival are to be overcome and the capacity for sustainable long term evolution is to be grasped, but if that kind of transformation is to be achieved, it cannot be carried out simply at the level of symptomatic topology. It requires intervention at a much deeper level, with a much more profound analysis and understanding of the unconscious causal drivers, the conservative dynamics of change resistance and the potential intervention points with possibilities for dynamic change which can eventually generate the required symptomatic metamorphosis.

'Just how can you evolve your consciousness? First of all, you should know what is a more evolved consciousness. The simplest way to grasp it is in reference to the two frontal hemispheres of your brain, the narrowly rational one-thing-at-a-time rationality of the left hemisphere, and the intuitive, Gestalt-perceiving right hemisphere. The mythical rationality of ages past was right-brain dominated, while the rationality of the modern age is left-brain dominated - it is the rationality of Logos. A more evolved consciousness combines the clear-cut if simplifying linear reasoning of the left-brain with the spontaneous, deep intuitions of the right. It is a whole-brain consciousness: the consciousness of Holos.' (p.139)

Inadequate analysis leads to incomplete diagnosis and inappropriate intervention. The new consciousness is achieved not simply by integrating aspects of current consciousness, but by making conscious that which is still as yet unconscious. The insights from the leading edge of integrative psychology are an essential, albeit as yet missing, element in the proposals put forward by the Club of Budapest. It is, of course, essential to bring together into an integrative bicameral consciousness the resources of the left brain and those of the right brain, the analytic uni-dimensional capacities of the speech centres with the holographic multi-dimensional intuitive, symbolic creativity of the visual centres (to call them left brain and right brain is to elide the differences between dominant left- and right-handed people - a significant minority of human beings have the centres distributed in opposite hemispheres from those of the dominant majority, whilst still others may have them shared in more equal patterns between left and right hemisphere). To the analytic domains of the Club of Rome and the intuitive creativity of the Club of Budapest, must be added the psychodynamic competences of the exploration of the unconscious which underlies, drives and to a major extent controls, the outcome of both conscious hemispheres. Fortunately competences in this field are now available and structures already exist which are capable of applying and distributing the requisite dynamic learning processes through extremely large populations.

Laszlo opens up three avenues of approach to the development of the required new consciousness. There is the avenue of inner experience, that of art and the avenue through science. There is a world of difference between the dynamics of genuine psychological integration and the benign psychosis of idealised regression to an altered state of monistic unity. The two approaches are antithetically out of phase. The first generates a release of human potential, an enhanced competence of multi-dimensional problem solving and creativity, a dedication to reality testing and the deconstruction of anxiety defences, whatever their origins. It is characterised by capacities for minute differentiation and macro systems integration, of profound bicameral coherence, psycho-somatic integration and enhanced emotional intelligence. It recognises and works to realise the shadow side of human nature. Its learning agenda is that which is still unconscious. Mythological and symbolic constructs are grounded in the experiential and psychodynamic experiences whose reified projection drives the fantasy-production process. There is an iterative commitment to teasing apart the processes of transference and counter-transference, the deepening and intensifying reality-orientation in human relationships at all levels and in the continuum and connectivity between humanity and its holding environment.

While there may be some facets of similarity in the outcomes of those altered states of consciousness stemming from experiences of monistic regression, the two processes could not be more profoundly in opposition. The state of 'benign psychosis' is characterised by detachment from reality, a splitting off and elision of negativity, a uni-dimensional or even zero-dimensional state of trance-like dissociation, almost outside the realities of space and time. Within this undifferentiated unity there is indeed a kind of connectivity to all things and a subsuming of the one in the other, but it stems from an elevation of the experiences of cellular regression to the position of an adult Weltanschauung, which is quite inappropriate. There is characteristically a reversal of the time dimension away from the traumatic boundary of parturition into an idealised state characterised by post-trauma time and pre-trauma space. These patterns of psychotic defences against anxiety are ubiquitous and extremely well known and recognised in the domain of psychodynamics systems analysis. Reality testing and effective problem-solving go by default to serve the agenda of sedating anxiety and facilitating an illusion of inner peace and unity. Symbolic and mythological constructs are treated as having ontological validity, divorced from their grounds in psychodynamic projection, reified into mystical space and subjected to processes of reintjection, as if endowed with mystical reality, independent of the human species whose psychotic projection mechanisms and phantasy states have brought them into being.

The rising levels of human angst as the species comes face to face with the implications of the macroshift are generating a universal intensification of the psychotic defences against anxiety in an attempt to stay sane and to cope with the stress. The response is understandable, predictable and, in terms of enabling the species to survive and ride the turbulence ahead, catastrophic. The seductive nature of the process is profound, but critical discernment is essential if the Club of Budapest is not to lead the world into a dysfunctional response which vitiates its avowed intent of mobilising resources to navigate the macroshift.

Detailed study of Laszlo's section on the Avenue of Inner Experience provides alarming evidence of his confusion of spirituality and the new consciousness with the dynamics of psychotic regression. The four paragraphs of the section are quoted below in full, interspersed with brief sections of commentary:

'Psychiatrists and consciousness researchers know that a more balanced consciousness arises in those who have had direct inner experience of oneness with other people, and with nature. Individuals practising a deep meditative or prayerful state intuit oneness with other persons or with a higher presence, and those who have come close to death in an accident or illness experience life in a new light. Common characteristics of this inner peace include no fear of death, empathy with other people taking pleasure in simple living and sharing. Astronauts who have had the privilege of traveling in space and viewing the Earth in all its living splendor feel an intense tie to their home planet for the rest of their days.' (p.140)

The altered states of consciousness described are lumped together without discernment or differentiation. The inner state of oneness, awareness of a higher presence, the worlds of direct inner experience, near death encounter may all have these effects, which may or may not be an intensification of defences against anxiety, rather than a genuine process of integration and enhanced consciousness. In other words the people concerned may regress into a state of much deeper unconsciousness, splitting off, detachment or dissociation in the face of traumatic or out of ordinary experience. The event does not necessarily induce genuine integration and reality-orientation. The pattern of inner peace, the lack of fear of death and so forth may be quite unrealistic and the result of the splitting off of negativities from the defended consciousness, rather than an enhanced capacity to deal with reality as it is. The generalised clumping together of all psychiatrists and consciousness researchers is also quite inappropriate. There is absolutely not a universality of 'knowledge' here, but a widely differentiated and fractured set of disciplines, more or less caught up in collusion with the most profound and collective defences against anxiety.

'People who meditate or pray, those who have had near-death experiences, and those who have traveled in space have a fresh appreciation of existence and a reverence for nature. They evolve deep humanitarian and ecological concerns and find differences among people, whether in the area of sex, race, color, language, political conviction, or religious belief, interesting and enriching rather than threatening. They realize that they cannot do anything to nature without simultaneously doing it to themselves and that other people - whether next door, in distant parts of the world or of generations yet to come - are not separate from them and that their fate is not a matter of indifference. These people possess an integrated, holistic vision of themselves, of nature, and of the universe.' (p.140)

The development of mystical states of wonder, sensitivity and oneness are not the same as the evolved capacities for dealing with multi-dimensional complexity and the riding of potentially catastrophic turbulence in real time. For some people the near death experience, a mid-life trauma, loss of a loved one or a dramatic change in

circumstances, may precipitate a deeply transformative process of integration and the emergence of a much more profound level of consciousness, but it is not so in all cases. Clarity, differentiation and discernment are critically important here and are nowhere evidenced in Laszlo's work.

'Not everyone can be expected to engage in deep prayer or meditation, have near-death experiences, or be shot into space - yet a more evolved consciousness is needed in *all* people. Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof believes that this can be achieved: the states of consciousness required for it were common in times past, and can become common again in the future. In ancient and traditional cultures people regularly experienced nonordinary states of consciousness fostered by their socially sanctioned rituals. "Primitive" and traditional people could and very likely did have firsthand experiences of deep connections to each other and to all of nature. Shamans and medicine men seem also to have had encounters with archetypal beings and to have entered mythological realms. Not surprisingly, these cultures integrated people's altered-state experiences into their overall worldview.' (p.140f)

Laszlo is clear that consciousness development is a universal requirement (or at least is required in a critical mass of the population) for the successful navigation of the macroshift. However the Club of Budapest needs to explore very carefully whether the contribution of Stanislav Grof at this point is anything other than a seduction. His elevation as a model, or template, of those primitive states of consciousness associated with ancient cultures, shamanistic rituals and drug induced experiences in a universe animated by archetypal figures, mythological realms, suprahuman entities etc. bears all the hallmarks of benign psychosis and the intensification of collective defences against anxiety, whose adoption as a strategy would be catastrophic and dysfunctional in the extreme if it were to be applied to the human condition in its current predicament.

'According to Grof, the same thing is happening to contemporary people who have the opportunity to enter nonordinary states of consciousness. He has yet to meet a single person from our culture, he said, no matter what his or her educational background, IQ, and specific training, who had powerful transpersonal experiences yet continued to subscribe to the materialistic concepts that dominated the mindset of the twentieth century. Even highly trained psychologists, when they have experiences of nonordinary states or study them in others, shift to a vision of the world that integrates the dominant view of modern-age Logos with deeper cultural and historical perspectives. It is likely that if nonordinary states were to become generally accessible, today's dominant consciousness would shift to a new and more adapted modality.' (p.141)

There is indeed a tide of flight into New Age spirituality in the face of the unprecedented rise in social anxiety faced by humanity at this critical point in history, but to elevate that as anything other than an example of emergent social psychosis is to collude with its insanity. The outcome is in fact a destruction of consciousness, an overwhelming by unconscious processes, a withdrawal from reality-testing and

emergent competence in a sedated trance-state that is not limited by the class warfare implied in the 'opiate of the masses' but bears rather the marks of a contagious addiction to the 'heroin of humanity'.

If it is to play a realistic role in catalysing the capacity of human problem-solving at this critical point in time, then it is imperative that the Club of Budapest recovers from the collusion path of seduction into which it has apparently fallen and develops much clearer criteria of discernment and understanding in the delineation in the requisite change in consciousness as a necessary but not sufficient intervention within our global civilisation.

As Laszlo moves towards his conclusion he returns to the domain of the new sciences as the matrix of the evolution of consciousness. It is an awesome vision of a universe which:

'is a seamless whole, evolving over eons of cosmic time and producing conditions where life, and then mind, can emerge.

Life is an intimate web of relations that evolves in its own right, interfacing and integrating its myriad diverse elements. The biosphere is born within the womb of the universe, and mind and consciousness are born in the womb of the biosphere. Nothing is independent of any other thing. Our body is part of the biosphere, and it resonates with the web of life on this planet. Our mind is part of our body, and it is in touch with other minds as well as with the biosphere. (p.144)

These are insights which are powerfully developed in his Postscript, which speaks of the emerging holistic paradigm in science, in physics, in biology, and in psychology. Yet even here the main stream of consciousness research into 'transpersonal phenomena' uses that term in a very different manner from the mystical ontology of symbolic defences to which Stan Grof refers.

Right at the heart of Laszlo's description of quantum energy states and field connectivity the unconscious language of regression re-emerges in that strange sentence 'the biosphere is born within the womb of the universe and mind and consciousness are born in the womb of the biosphere'. In reproductive biology nothing is ever born *within* a womb. Birth is precisely the essential emergence from a womb within which the prenatal organism is formed. The affirmation of prenatal regression is doubly compounded as he speaks of mind and consciousness being 'born in the womb of the biosphere', so mind and consciousness exist in profound regression within the web of life which itself exists within profound regression within the universe. The direction of emergence is 180 degrees out of phase with reality. The negentropic envelope of the terrestrial surface is a context which has given rise to the extraordinary complexification which we call life. Over billions of years the biosphere itself has generated the emergent complexification, connectivity, enfoldment and coherence of mind and the emergent phenomena of self-consciousness. What is called for now is another stage of emergence from the as-yet-unconscious domain - with all its shadow behaviours, repressions, splits, regression and dysfunctional enactment - into a form of consciousness dedicated to the deconstruction of defence, the release of human potential, the integration of the

bicameral mind within its physical and emotional being, an emergent consciousness characterised by profound connectivity that is intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, collective and environmental, a consciousness whose Weltanschauung is coherent with the new physics, grounded in the new biology and informed by psychodynamic research.

It is quite inappropriate to project back onto the universe itself qualitative phenomena from the emergent states of extreme complexification.

Ervin Laszlo reserves the last word for Václav Havel, the Czech writer president, who addressing a joint session of Congress in Washington in February 1991 said:

“Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better ... and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed - the ecological, social, demographic, or general breakdown of civilization - will be unavoidable.” (p.145)

Without a massive deconstruction of the dysfunctional psychotic domains of the human unconscious the catastrophe driven by collective unconscious enactment is indeed unavoidable. It is a diagnosis which provides the absolute opposite of a sentence of despair. It provides a foundation for realistic hope, coordinated collective endeavour and commitment to a form of social metamorphosis which opens the door to forms of civilisation beyond the historic experience of our species. As Laszlo asserts, ‘Havel’s point ... is not a reason for pessimism. The breakdown of civilisation can be avoided.’

However, if human consciousness evolves in the direction currently endorsed by Laszlo and the Club of Budapest it could indeed become a stream of ‘consciousness that could swell into a mighty tide and change the world’ but the change that it generates will not be the change that is required for the navigation of the macroshift. Antithetically it follows the collusional seduction of regression and reified anxiety defence in the formation of a new spirituality, a global level of meta-religion whose addictive destruction of human consciousness will lead to an acceleration and intensification of the very catastrophe that it seeks to avoid.

Afterwords

Laszlo appends twelve contributions by Members of the Club of Budapest, several of whose comments indicate the level of collective collusion with the processes of psychopathic regression to which I have referred in the body of this paper.

Not that all comments by all respondents fall within that category, for instance **Peter Russell** focuses on the question

‘Why it is that one species out of millions ... can behave in ways that are clearly not in its long term self-interest? To realise that we are threatening our own survival, and that of many other species, and then to continue with the very activities that are causing the problem is nothing short of insane’. (p.147)

There is no attempt to answer that fundamental ‘why’ question. That it happens is clear. Its irrationality (indeed insanity) is also clear from one particular perspective. However, the analysis of the psychodynamic causes of this species-specific psychopathology must be effected if subsequently proposed interventions, designed to correct it, are to have a realistic hope of success.

Studies carried out over the last two-and-a-half decades in the field of pre and perinatal psychology appear to have identified the precipitating impingements giving rise to this dysfunctional behaviour in the ubiquitous and species-specific incidence of perinatal traumatising. Maintenance of the collective repression of this primitive material is so intense that human systems may well adopt behaviours which threaten their very existence rather than risk the emergence of transmarginal stress into adult consciousness. In that sense, therefore the dysfunctional behaviour, from the point of view of species survival, is a functional solution to the management of intra-psychic distress. Insanity is invariably a perceived solution to a life problem.

Without adequate access to this level of psychodynamic research, Russell’s diagnosis is inevitably limited to the superficial and the symptomatic:

‘The root of the problem lies in our thinking, our attitudes, and our values. We are stuck in an outdated mindset that tells us that if we are to be at peace we need to have the right things. Such an attitude may be important when individual survival is at stake; we need then to focus our attention on our physical well-being. But this not an issue for most people in the developed world. The world has changed beyond all recognition from preindustrial times, and most of our survival needs are now met. But because we have not changed our thinking, we continue to consume and despoil the planet in the vain hope that if only we had enough of the right things we would find fulfilment. Today it is our collective survival that is at stake - and it is our inner, spiritual well-being that most urgently needs our care and attention.’ (p.147)

The outdated mindset of individual competitive survival in an infinitely resourceful environment is totally inappropriate in our current predicament. But the generation of collective rationality and effective problem-solving in the new context cannot be served by facilitating regression to psychotic dependency on extra-terrestrial metaphysical entities of whatever shape or form to rescue us from our predicament.

Edgar Mitchell speaks from the point of view of a space traveller, bringing the sharpness and clarity of the ultimate ‘helicopter’ perspective in the penetrative paragraph:

‘From above the protective canopy of our atmosphere one can observe the progressive degradation of the ecological systems upon which all species depend for sustenance. It is clear from that view and with data from four decades of space activity that our burgeoning population has set a course that is not sustainable. We are a species that is incessantly in conflict over mundane issues while ignoring the chasm that lies ahead for us all. We argue from the point of view of our traditional cultural values, unwilling to look at ourselves from the larger

global perspective and to take the necessary steps to create a more tranquil and harmonious civilization for our mutual benefit - steps that include some hard choices about our lifestyles.’ (p.148)

That is a level of whole systems thinking, collective aggregation and mindset transformation that is critical if we are to ride the macroshift. Any unconscious resistance to its achievement stands as a threat to our very survival. The shift from the irresponsibility of ultimate dependency and all the seductive philosophical, cultural and religious constructs that foster and preserve it is now critically essential. Mitchell speaks of

‘our evolution as creative, inter-connected, and responsible humans with the fate of our world and all its species resting in our collective hands - dependent upon our vision and wisdom to chart a sustainable course into the future.

We have the knowledge, the wisdom and the visionaries among us to enable us to understand today’s critical issues. We must now find the collective political will to implement and accelerate the necessary steps on a global basis - or suffer the consequences.’ (p.149)

The basic formation structures capable of reaching critical mass within a short time span and sustaining a dynamic second-order learning system of evolving consciousness are the prerequisite matrix of any such emergence of collective political will. Their establishment and distribution is therefore a fundamental priority.

From a very different background, **Karan Singh** highlights the immediacy of the emergency:

‘Unprecedented human interventions in the environment have upset the delicate ecological balance that enabled Mother Earth ... to survive for billions of years and become a unique crucible for the evolution of consciousness. Ruthless exploitation of non-renewable natural resources has created havoc and, if allowed to continue, could result in a series of major ecological disasters that would disrupt life on this planet in the twenty-first century. ...

Knowledge proliferates, but wisdom languishes. This yawning chasm needs to be bridged before the end of this decade if we are ever to reverse the present trend toward disaster.’ (p.149f)

Karan Singh stands at the boundary looking back to the richness of different traditions and forward into the new circumstances so there is the plea that:

‘human survival involves the growth of a creative and compassionate planetary consciousness.’ (p.150)

and

‘We need the courage to think globally, to break away from traditional paradigms, and to plunge boldly into the future.’ (p.150)

But on the other hand:

‘The spiritual dimension must once again be given importance in our thinking, and for this we must draw upon the great reservoir of idealism and spiritual values provided by the rich religious traditions of humanity.’ (p.150)

There is some ambivalence here, that as we face the challenge of the future the initial response is to scrutinise the past for models or templates that can be used to create the future. The difficulty here is the disentanglement of the appropriate value systems from the structures of dependency and collective defences against anxiety which constitute the dynamic matrix of the religious traditions of humanity. Treatment of the Earth as ‘mother’, which implies the collective foetality of the species, or the assertion that ‘Planet Earth is a single living pulsating entity’ and ‘context of global unity’ are all ideas which have their roots in the Vedas but which do not do justice to the high level integration and differentiation of complex systems now required. To be sure, our understanding needs to move to a higher level of aggregation, but this is not achieved by regression to earlier experiences of unity. Karan Singh goes on to speak of his concern:

‘That the world’s great religions must no longer war against each other for supremacy, but mutually cooperate for the welfare of the human race, and that through a continuing and creative inter-faith dialogue the golden thread of spiritual aspiration that binds them together must be nurtured instead of feeding the dogma and exclusivism that divides them.’ (p.151)

Part of the dynamic of each of the world’s great religions is the symbolic enactment of collective defences against anxiety creating sacral internal space, intense splitting and projection across the boundary, with the negativities held in the environment. Such structures are inevitably in conflict with each other. The task is not the search for the highest common factor ‘the golden thread of spiritual aspiration’, a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* to create out of this warring set of defence fractions, some kind of globally satisfying defence construct, a set of fantasy-objects, structures, rituals, symbols and mythologies that would contain the unconscious processes of humanity and therefore inevitably perpetuate the dysfunctional acting out of the unconscious processes so maintained. The task, rather, is to recover from religion, to emerge from the immature dependency and defensive maintenance, indeed reinforcement, of psychotic process, into a much more radically integrated form of human consciousness.

Karan Singh goes on to describe his fascination by:

‘the amazing photograph taken from the moon showing our planet as it really it - a tiny speck of light and life, so beautiful and yet so fragile, ablaze with the fire of consciousness against the blackness of outer space. This Earth, looked upon in so many cultures as the Mother, has

nurtured the evolution of consciousness from the slime of the primeval ocean billions of years ago to where we stand today. Now, in a dramatic reversal, it is we who must nurture this Earth, to repair the scars that in our hubris we have inflicted upon her and safeguard the welfare of all creatures that inhabit her today and in millennia to come. This further evolution of our consciousness must surely be the guiding vision for all of us in the attempt to structure a humane society in the early twenty-first century.' (p.151f)

The reality of our planet is relative. From the moon it may be perceived as a tiny speck of light and life. From the centre of the galaxy it is virtually unobservable. From the point of view of an amoeba swimming in a pond, it is an unlimited and infinite cosmos, and from the quantum level of analysis the amoeba itself is breathtakingly massive in its complexity. Again we see the mind-view of reduction to a unitary point taking the place of the capacity for differentiation and integration in which many relative realities depend upon the points of view of the observer. It is this capacity for competence in holding both differentiation and integration together as a complex domain which is a critical faculty of the required emergent consciousness.

One facet of the macrosift which Karan Singh brings out evocatively is the watershed of dependency. In the language of his contribution, the earth as mother has nurtured her children. Today the dependency is reversed, not just that we become independent or interdependent, but that the 'mother earth' herself is now dependent upon the species she has spawned. Translated out of the symbols of collective foetality, we recognise the necessity to move against the dynamics of immature dependent regression and to foster the mature responsibility of those who, for their very survival, must now engage in the collective preservation and enrichment of the very environment upon which they depend.

The theologian **Thomas Berry** asserts that:

'The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience'. (p.152)

In an almost fractal pattern of linguistic articulation Berry repeatedly opens up the future in a dramatic way and then returns to the past in an inversion of the time dimension. He speaks of the need to

'reinvent the human because the issues we are concerned with seem beyond the competence of our present cultural traditions ... What is needed is something beyond our existing traditions to bring us back to the most fundamental aspect of the human.' (p.152)

Surely the task is not to regress to previous understandings of the human which have given rise to the topology of our current traditions, but to press forward into a new and more developed understanding of the human in its current collective context. So again he speaks of the need to:

‘work “at the species level” because our problems are beyond any existing cultural solution.’ (p.153)

and offers as a strategy:

‘We must return to our genetic coding’ (p.153)

On the other hand, Thomas Berry opens up the necessity for critical reflection and calls for the integration of creativity and discernment and criticality. He works with high levels of differentiation and integration, rather than the dimensional desert of unification and regression. He opens up the impact of the time dimension within the transformative matrix, moving it out of cyclic repetitiveness or eternity of timelessness into a vectored domain of emergent process. And then at the end of his paragraph on the time dimension he suddenly projects spirituality and culture back into the singularity with the words:

‘Not only our physical shaping but also our spiritual and cultural shaping begins with the formation of the universe.’ (p.154)

Then the spiritual animation of cosmology takes over, so that human consciousness is seen not simply as a development within a negentropic biosphere but a manifestation of the beyond. The contribution of modern cosmology to our understanding of our place within the universe is critical, so he speaks of the way:

‘We have moved from cosmos to cosmogenesis, from the mandala journey to the center of an abiding world, to the great irreversible journey of the universe itself as the primary sacred journey.’ (p.154)

His use of the word ‘sacred’ begins to alert us to processes of projection, reinforced by the anthropomorphic retrojection of his next sentence:

‘This journey of the universe is the journey of each individual being in the universe.’ (p.154)

It is not appropriate to project onto the cosmos as a whole the tiny fragment of conscious development of an individual being, as if our own egocentric existential experience is the template of the cosmos itself. Then he reverses the role of projection and reintjection in the phrase:

‘The great journey is an exciting revelatory story that gives us our macrophase identity’ (p.154)

It is a facet of social psychosis to project onto symbolic grounds the unconscious inner realities, to deny the connections between inner and outer, and then to reintject the symbolised ontologised environment as a revelatory experience. This is not an exposition of mature consciousness.

Just as in stages of philosophical understanding in which mechanics ruled the day and the argument from design elevated god as the cosmic watchmaker, so today we are in

equal danger of creating god in our own image as the cosmic dreamer. As Berry puts it:

‘The universe appears to be the fulfilment of something so highly imaginative and so overwhelming that it must have been dreamed into existence.’ (p.155)

He then, of course, has to deal with the problem of evil. The dream and its dreamer are imbued with benign creativity, so we then have to deal with destructive dreaming or entrancement which has:

‘lost the integrity of its meaning and become an exaggerated and destructive manifestation.’ (p.155f)

The problems of manifestations are generated by his theology, not by an engagement with the reality of the human condition. The split that he then offers is between benign dreaming and pathological dreaming and the therapeutic process is that of overcoming the malign pathology and the reinstatement of the benign creativity. Again, the understanding of the schizoid split into good or evil, the aspects of denial, destruction of evil and the assertion of good lie at the heart of the psychotic defence mechanism of bifurcation and repression which generates the acting out of the negativity in the attempt to elevate and preserve the benign. It is this kind of double think that is so difficult to break through. What appears to be a set of signposts towards new consciousness, on deeper analysis is seen to be a restatement of the most primitive mechanisms of bifurcation, idealisation, splitting, denial and regression. So Berry can write:

‘There is no dream or entrancement in the history of the Earth that has wrought the destruction taking place in the entrancement with industrial civilization. Such entrancement must be considered as a profound cultural pathology. It can be dealt with only by a correspondingly deep cultural therapy. This healing therapy can be successful only if associated with a creative vision capable of giving birth to a new more integral expression of the entire planetary process.’ (p.156)

Even if we take the domain of dreaming as given, then nightmares have their place. Certainly, the recognition of profound cultural pathology and the corresponding need for deep cultural therapy is critical. What is missing is the parallel recognition that the benign dream state is an equal and opposite entrancement requiring concomitant therapeutic intervention and deconstruction if emergent consciousness is to be liberated from the trammels of the pathology of splitting and idealisation.

In his final comments, Berry’s construct of dependency and regression is laid bare for all to see:

‘At such a moment a new revelatory experience is needed, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. This awakening is our human participation in the dream of the Earth, the dream that is carried in its integrity not in any one of Earth’s cultural expressions but in the depth

of our genetic coding. Therein the Earth functions at a depth beyond our capacity for conscious awareness. We can only be sensitized to what is revealed to us. Such participation in the realm of the Earth we probably have not had since our earlier shamanic times, but therein lies our hope for the future for ourselves and the entire Earth community.' (p.156)

The language of revelation is the construct of dependency. Human consciousness is not just asleep, requiring a revelatory alarm clock to awaken it to a new dawn and a universal acclamation of sacred qualities. The implication is that even in the awakened state we should be seduced into the trance of the dream, dancing to the tune of introjection of qualities of our own inner awareness projected onto the holding environment, with no further grounding in the matrix from which their reification emanated. And then right on the very end, the way forward is the way back: we have had this participation before in our earlier shamanic times and in that deep and distant past lies our hope for the future. Time dimension is turned back on itself in retreat from the trauma of future shock, seeking in the dynamics of regression the creativity, reality-testing and competent problem-solving for a domain of complexity for which we have no historic templates. This seduction of entrancement is a royal road to collective psychosis, not the opening of the door to developing consciousness.

Rianne Eisler sensitively opens up the critical agenda for further research in the words:

'If we are to effectively change consciousness in the direction needed for human and planetary survival, it is necessary to address the critical matter of how consciousness is culturally formed and replicated.' (p.159)

However, without going further in the exploration of the dynamics of consciousness development, she also picks up the metaphor of awakenment. The 're-emergence' of mythic primitive social values and institutions as a paradigmatic template for the engagement with tomorrow's world seems to beg the question of the understanding of dynamic processes by which consciousness evolves, which must inevitably also take into account the dynamic processes by which unconsciousness is maintained and perhaps, even more appropriately, how unconsciousness may itself be deconstructed.

So also **Ignazio Masulli** reflects on species consciousness with the words:

'The responsibility for evolution can no longer be left to the individuals' instinctive defense mechanisms, which are presently the sole foundations of our value judgements. This responsibility has become a problem of historical decisions that involve the entire species.' (p.163)

Current psychodynamic research sees individual defence mechanisms as learned responses to specific impingements rather than the unalterable instinctive domain of human being. This shift in perception opens up the capacity for the transformation of defence mechanisms rather than simply the development of coping strategies which leave the defences intact, while recognising their ubiquitous operation. The shift from individual defence mechanisms to those of the collective, emerges around those nodes

of multi-individual impingement, which set up the common and ultimately collective dynamics of multi-human resonance. The most common defence mechanisms drive the most powerful collective processes of our human civilisation, whilst also constituting the most heavily defended and occluded areas of the social unconscious. It is intervention at this critical zone, a turning of the most intense light on the domain of the densest darkness, that is demanded if the unconscious psychopathology of species-wide behaviours is to go through the level of transformation required for the survival of our current crisis and the navigation of the macroshift.

The final contribution is from **Gary Zukav** who writes of his perception that:

‘The human species has entered a period of profound, fundamental, and unprecedented change.’ (p.171)

But the change in his estimation is the development of perceptual capability beyond the five senses. Rather than working with the understanding of connectivity, resonant energy fields and quantum states, he chooses to impose a projective quality of ‘spirituality’, so for instance:

‘The universe is becoming visible ... as a spiritual enterprise rather than a material one.’ (p.171)

Here spiritual and material are placed as antithetical, whereas the new science expands the concept of material with a deeper level of understanding, rather than an abnegation in favour of the spiritual.

Zukav asserts:

‘Multisensory humans see themselves as more than minds and bodies. They see themselves as immortal souls evolving voluntarily in a special learning environment - the domain of the five senses. ... They see alignment of the personality with the soul as authentic power and responsible choice as the means of creating it. The evolutionary modality of the emerging humankind is the alignment of the personality with the soul through responsible choice.’ (p.171)

The domain of immortal souls, the perception of the material world and the domain of the five senses as a vale of soul-making (the alignment of the personality with the soul) is an a priori set of religious assumptions projected into the arena of the new science, without in any sense being derived from it.

Zukav’s cure for the current human predicament follows flawlessly from the assumptions fed in at the start. So he describes the:

‘unprecedented evolutionary transformation that is under way: [as] the expansion of human consideration beyond its own needs into the limitless universe of wisdom and compassion of which it is part. It is our emerging ability to collaborate, for the first time as a species, with non-physical yet real forms of life that are in advance of our own.’ (p.172)

There is a significant probability that other negentropic environments exist, scattered across the vast reaches of the universe within which evolving complexification into 'life forms' could be taking place and beyond that further levels of complexification in terms of self-awareness and even 'consciousness'. However, the basing of our hopes for future survival of the human species in the realities and physical environment of this particular planet on the establishing of some kind of esoteric contact with non-material life-forms in advance of our own is an invitation to regression into collective madness. We may or may not be alone in the vastness of the universe, but abdicating responsibility for current problem-solving in the face of macroshift to the domain of spiritual entities in a non-materialist environment is not the way to proceed. In today's critical context Waiting for Godot is a strategy of collective suicide.

David Wasdell
Meridian Programme
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