

**WATERSHED COMMUNITIES:
A guide to an uncertain future
© Charles A. Metcalf 2010**

INTRODUCTION

PART I: BUILDING A CONCEPTUAL BASIS pg. 10

Are You Human?

**Life-positive social strategies
The doctrine of market determinism
Defining the economic commons**

The Nature of the Challenge

**Political organizing for new progressive agendas
The contemporary global impasse**

A Closer Look at Human Organization

**Cooperation, competition, and organizational motivation
Organizations and the individual: escapability/ inescapability
Organizational scale, hierarchy, and public participation
Universality to multiplicity
Organizational roots in nature and evolution
Organizational power structure: *Arch-orgs, plut-orgs, and dem-orgs*
Hunting the elusive Dem-org**

Loci of Power: Political, Economic, Military, and Collective

**The two existential power bases
Six basic organization-based power centers
Eight basic progressive political agendas
Pursuing the eight progressive agendas
Conclusion**

Facing the Sources of Societal Dysfunction

**Money
Land
The evolution of Land as property & Money as wealth
Corporations**

Information, Logic, Emotion, and the New Progressive Agenda

**Invented Reality
The Internet**

Summary

Conclusion: The Basis of the Watershed Communities Proposal

PART II: WATERSHED COMMUNITIES.ORG pg.71

Watershed Communities: Reorganizing our Resources

The Watershed Communities viewpoint

Integrating environmental and social concerns

Ten Premises: The base of Watershed Communities

Understanding the Watershed-Communities concept

Building the Watershed Communities National Organization

Could the Internet enable a civil-society Dem-org?

Dem-org-net design considerations

Required web-site design personnel

Assembling a Watershed Communities design team

Watershed Communities design and launch

Building the Local Watershed Communities Organizations

The role of local Dem-org-net initiators

Building local community

Membership criteria

Raising local environmental awareness

Creating a Local-To-National Coordinating Network

Established local Demorgs community and environment activities

Work-Hour barter, neighborhood security, and land-use integration

Watershed Communities avoid list

Revisiting the Ten Premises

PART III: CREATING A WATERSHED COMMUNITY PILOT PROJECT

Introduction

The Pre-conditions of a Successful Pilot Project

Ten Pilot Project Premises

The Basic Economy Concept

Work-Hour barter: the Basic Economy's medium of exchange

The ten necessities of the Basic Economy

The ten necessities tetractys

How a Watershed Communities Basic Economy Might Function

Food

Housing and clothing

Healthcare, communication, and transportation

Education, capital, culture, and security

The Relationship of the Basic Economy to the Money Economy

The Present System's Inherent Inability to Achieve Harmony with Nature

Watershed Communities: Not a Welfare State

The Transition to Sustainable Harmony of Humanity with Nature

Watershed Communities and the Land

Creating a Viable Commons

EPILOUGE to Part III: Technology, War, and Population

PART IV: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Questions And Answers About The Detailed Operations Of The Basic Economy
And The Work-hour As A Unit Of Wealth**

PART V: ANSWERS TO ARGUMENTS pg. 132

**Answers to Arguments Attacking the Validity or Utility of the Concept of a
asic Economy:**

APPENDIX I:

What and How Do We Know; Should We Believe What We Think We Know?

- 1. Embracing the Power Of Collective Consciousness**
- 2. Tri-phasic Analysis.**
- 3. The Basis of Morality**
- 4. Morality and the Commons**
- 5. Morality Versus the Doctrine of Market Determinism**

WATERSHED COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION:

When I was in 3rd grade, my non-religious parents trotted me off to Sunday school in a local church, thinking that it would be unfair of them to shield me from an important aspect of American life. At some point I came to my father saying something like, “Dad, I can believe in the Golden Rule and loving your neighbor and that stuff, but I wonder about all the magic in Jesus’ life. Why should I believe that there was magic back then when we don’t believe in magic now? And should I believe that I will go to heaven if I believe it or to hell if I don’t? And do you believe we go to either heaven or hell when we die?” My father answered me, “Son, those are things every person must decide for himself.”

In retrospect, this brief conversation set me on my life’s path. Forever afterwards I have been curious, not so much about the way things are, as about *why* they are the way they are, and why people interpret things as they do. When I entered adolescence, intense introspection gained me a personal belief structure about life and death, but I found myself increasingly dismayed at the discrepancy between the beliefs that people expressed and the actions they accepted as normal human and institutional behavior. As I entered the university, this had become so extreme that I approached young adulthood with such an attitude of near complete cynicism about my fellow man that my social relations were sometimes severely strained. What I failed to realize was that, socially, complete cynicism is tantamount to complete naiveté. People perceived me as, on the one hand, untrusting, and on the other, gullible. Worst of all, my outlook prevented me from being secure in my own identity. It took me a decade of real-life experience, and a certain amount of interpersonal wreckage, to develop confidence in who I was and where I fit.

My existential perplexity prompted wide reading in philosophy, Eastern religion, psychology, sociology, economics, history, and the politics of the day. The belief structure that I was able to cobble together in the decades immediately following WW II incorporated the empiricism of the scientific method, the virtue of technology, the imperative of democracy, and the essential equality of free individuals. These existed in the context of an over-riding appreciation of the mysterious grandeur of Nature and the transcendent glory of Charlie Parker and Frank Lloyd Wright.

As could have been predicted from my naïve cynicism, I also developed a dis-belief structure. Dis-belief in the accumulation of money and the inevitability of war seemed obviously foundational to me. Dis-belief in the virtue of inherited wealth, unearned income, social class, corporate power, totalitarianism (and therefore, Marxism), and the institutions founded on these practices and objectives were corollaries to my financial and military aversions. Had I been more astute, my belief in the virtue of technology would have joined their company.

Those Americans who achieved maturity during the Cold War or later can have little empathy for the public mood in the 30s and 40s. The depth of the Great Depression, and the rise of Hitler, Mussolini, and the USSR created a backdrop of novel challenges to American democracy and its free enterprise system. There was a sense among the populace at large that those who proposed radical revisions to our accustomed ways deserved a respectful and analytical hearing; that the modern world of streamlined technology implied complementary innovations in governance and economics. I remember vividly my uncles and grandfather (who was old enough to remember the heyday of Populism) sitting on my grandmother's porch steps heatedly arguing the virtues of socialism and fascism and everything in between as if it were all possible. Then as now, those whose interests lay with the status quo held the upper hand, but vigorous and unapologetic debate in the general population proceeded on the assumption that a free people could, and should, move—through representative government—to remedy social injustice and economic dysfunction.

The end of WW II saw the drive for progressive change give way to the Cold War and the postwar economic boom. Although Buckminster Fuller captured my admiration for his technology-based radical-change proposals, the decade of the fifties would have to pass before the forces opposing racial injustice, the reign of nuclear terror, and the Vietnam war coalesced to fire an upsurge of protest against the militarist, racist, sexist status quo. But the long-standing dread of socialism held by the business community grafted on to the anti-Soviet Cold War patriotism insured that the emergent New Left largely avoided calls for fundamental economic or political change. Although calls for social justice created substantial change in the 70s, the resultant backlash put New/Fair Deal Democrats on the defensive and splintered the various rights-advocacy alliances.

I felt a great hope for progressive change from the legislative response to the uprisings of the 60s, but in the 70s I began to focus on a more fundamental issue: the long-range global-scale dangers of technology to Nature exacerbated by exponential population growth. By this time I had already embraced the opinion that American capitalism, despite its burgeoning cornucopia of techno-goodies, was flawed by inherent instability, unequal distribution, and indifference to Nature and humanistic values. Human culture is a human invention; a better way must be possible, I thought. The mixed socialist-capitalist systems of Northern Europe seemed to me to point the way. But my new appreciation of the unsustainable load that a growing industrialized population was beginning to place on the earth, as revealed by the Club of Rome's 1972 report, *The Limits to Growth*, and others, called in to question even this most advanced and rational of social and economic platforms.

As the 70s came to an end, the ideas that later came to fruition as Watershed Communities started to germinate in my imagination. Meanwhile, the liberal narrative in place for a half-century lost steam in the face of military humiliation, oil shocks, and stagflation. Thus the 80s began with the Reagan revolution reasserting the primacy of the conservative narrative. Carter's solar panels came off the White House roof, and the

country's direction veered toward the agendas of the corporations, the military, and fundamentalist religions.

During the 80s, my dismay at this development (together with my own travails and a year living in the Netherlands as a jazz musician) stimulated my search for a more sustainable and equitable social and economic construct. I read as widely as time would allow looking for these answers from others, but found much expert analysis, but no comprehensive proposals that avoided unintended consequences in externalities. Since we had achieved relative affluence, why was it not possible for that affluence to be shared equitably and sustainably within a beautiful built environment harmonious with Nature? None of the experts dared venture such a proposal whether for lack of imagination or fear of loss of their professional credibility. The history of brilliant analyses of the defects of industrial capitalism with no solutions (or solutions worse than the problem) goes back at least as far as Karl Marx. The New Age crowd dared to predict a mass spiritual awakening, but this solution failed the challenge of my well-practiced cynicism.

In the early 90s I found myself living in a windowless basement in Seattle with only my Amiga computer for company. With the assistance of my friend from college days, Walt Tianen, I produced the first iteration of this book in 1993. Because it included designs for eco-cities, personal transportation, and other fruits of my widely ranging imagination, its quest for comprehensiveness ended in loss of focus. I realized that with general distribution of the personal computer, it was only a matter of time until they were hooked up to telephone lines. The imminence of this technological advance figured vaguely in my thinking, but I had no inkling of the nature of the Internet revolution just around the corner. Lacking confidence that the ideas I had developed were anything more than a science fiction fantasy, I let the manuscript marinate in its own juices for the next few years.

During that time, when I witnessed some intractable travesty on the news, I thought, *If Watershed Communities were in place, this problem would be solved, or wouldn't exist in the first place.* I pulled key chapters out of the original manuscript and worked them up into essays. The various disasters and outrages of the conservative governments of this time prompted me to write new essays. As the Internet developed, I realized that here was a tool that could make certain aspects of the Watershed Communities concept practical in the real world. By 2008 I felt ready to integrate out-takes from the original manuscript with the new things I had written, creating the manuscript which became this book.

No work of this kind can exist without standing on the shoulders of others whose research, ideas, and innovations provide the truly seminal concepts. The ideas of the late 19th century thinker Henry George, expressed in his book *Progress and Poverty*, are crucial to the Watershed Communities take on land ownership. Where I part with fundamentalist Georgists is in his failure to place rent on money—interest—in the same category he places rent on land. Also, a hundred years ago he could not have predicted the environmental crisis we face today. Today, he is remembered—if at all—as the proponent of the Single Tax—of rent on land—also outmoded by the events of the 20th century.

The monetary proposals contained herein originated in the equally seminal books by the contemporary economist, Thomas Greco, Jr., beginning with *New Money for Healthy Communities* in 1994 and continued to be influenced by his newer *Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender*, 2001. I was also aware about that time of the Ithaca Hours experiment, a work-hour bartering project in the 1980's. As with all the contemporary authors that I'll mention, acknowledging influence does not imply endorsement by them. I have not sought endorsement from any acknowledged authorities, nor do I intend to.

Although not influential in the writing of this book, I feel I must mention this year's *Peak Everything* by Richard Heinberg. His explication of the imminent global malaise parallels mine almost exactly, but backed by extremely useful wide-ranging research for which I lacked the time and resources. He also poses solutions—ones different from mine—that merit serious consideration. The annual analysis of Lester R. Brown, beginning with, *The State of the World 1984*, has been a valuable resource. Finally, there is one recent book that has caused me to alter some of my text because it revealed to me my naiveté about the creation and ongoing evolution of the Internet. That book is Jaron Lanier's *You Are Not a Gadget*. For a list of the many authors who have provided everything from my basic belief structure to bits-and-pieces of information and innovation, please see the bibliography. In addition to those whose contributions I have become aware, there are surely others that predate what I have written of whom I have not been aware. This was brought forcibly to my attention just yesterday when I tuned into Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" in the middle of her interview with the Chilean philosopher-economist, Manfred Max-Neef. His inspiring message led me to the web where I found his concept of the basic necessities of human life (one with a more humanistic focus than mine) that differed from mine, but was not inconsistent with it. I found it very validating that such a deep and creative thinker had found it important to define a taxonomy of basic human necessities. I look forward to investigating his work in greater detail.

* * * * *

In an ideal democracy the ordinary citizen has the right, even the duty, to put forth opinions and proposals—radical or not—directed toward the betterment of the general welfare. Understandably, the sweeping nature of the reforms I am to propose here will justify the critical reader's suspicions of authorial megalomania. I hasten to reassure such a reader that I have no emotional attachment to widespread acceptance of the concepts herein. It's just that as I revisit them time and again in my imagination they retain their appeal.

The other danger here is the germination of yet another ideology. Ideologies, like music theory, exist only to be flouted. Taken too seriously, they create conflict even if they are intended to resolve it. In spite of this disclaimer, a new ideology of sorts does adhere to any belief structure that departs significantly from the conventional wisdom. I suppose that the substitution of the primacy of cooperation over competition, the denial of the inevitability of war, the efficient production and distribution of the necessities of life to

all, the reestablishment of neighborhood community through public education, and the remediation of Nature at the local watershed scale, taken together, could be construed to be an ideology. Although I believe passionately in all these goals, rigid attachment to them and demonizing those who disagree is not the result I seek. In my view, cultural memes evolve similarly to genetic evolution: organically, gradually, but in fits and starts. In the process I hope that many minds will be involved; many modifications and deviations will ensue.

Part I of this book is dedicated to providing the conceptual basis for a new kind of civic life, one that heals the land and empowers localized communities. It examines and rethinks how we own and use land and money, and examines the elements of a new progressive agenda that would move us as human beings toward a more just society.

In Part II, I lay out the first phase of the proposed Watershed Communities organization, acknowledging that no change will occur as a whole package, but according to an organic, gradual process. The first phase establishes an online network that accepts all individuals committed to environmental remediation along with the health and independence of residential communities at the local level so that these local efforts are linked continent-wide. Avoiding top-down direction, those committed to healing the land and building community would find from the Watershed Communities internet network support, tools, and information-sharing in achieving their goals. In this initial organization-building phase, Watershed Communities proposals for land and monetary reform would be brought forward for discussion as practical local responses to community-wide suffering from un-employment, poverty, environmental threats to health, rural depopulation, urban decay, food shortages and the like. If the goals of ecological and community survival are found not able to be met by the means at hand, the more extensive Watershed Communities proposals give local populations a potential alternate option. Only then should local members try to build consensus around ideas which the corporate-indoctrinated public would find initially counter-intuitive. The participant in such an endeavor could be assured of doing no harm, with the possibility of going much good, even if eventually overwhelmed by the corporate juggernaut.

A potential second phase, the concern of the remainder of the book, imagines the fully realized Watershed Community concept: Internet-linked local communities with a basic-necessities economy based on labor-hour barter and rent-free land-use abiding by the wisdom of local resident Watershed Stewards.

My hope is to persuade you that this is something more than a utopian dream; we're not at a point in history where any kind of utopia is possible, anyway. When I began thinking about this, one of my central concerns was a more equitable division of affluence. Too many mouths to feed with too few resources has altered that goal to include the possibility of a long period of economic contraction. The Watershed Communities concept seeks to provide stability under both circumstances.

I wish for you and your progeny a future that preserves the laudable achievements of our civilization, particularly its arts, science, cultures, and humanitarianism, in the context of harmony with Nature.

PART I: BUILDING A CONCEPTUAL BASIS

Are you human?

Are you human? Of course you are. Your annoyance at being asked such an absurdly provocative question proves it; unless of course you are a robot with Artificial Intelligence or an extra-terrestrial.

So who are we, then, we humans? Looking for the answer in the bathroom mirror, I see someone (in most respects) very like you, but someone unique whom I would never mistake for you (or any other). I see someone who, like you, is possessed of a consciousness that not only interprets the meaning of the image on the other side of the glass to be further evidence of an entity separate from the rest of existence, but someone who has access to tools that allow that consciousness to model the infinitely small microcosm of the sub-atomic world as well as to reach back in to the vastness of space and time to the very beginning of the Universe.

Other animals have organs of consciousness that, in their own way, ask questions such as what, where, when, and who, but not—as near as I can tell—why. It seems to be the nature of our consciousness that you and I can—in fact—we *must*. And just as we can mentally re-create aspects of our lived experience, our imagination can as easily create mental images of things that not only have never been, but never could be. So when we have occasion to ask *why* and are unable to find the answer out of the data of our lived experience, our imagination can create a fiction that can—depending on circumstances—be either our salvation or our undoing.

Assuming we are doomed to questioning our assumptions, the most fundamental question we can ask is why the Universe exists at all. If *nothing* were all that ever existed, or ever could, the answers to all questions, not only fundamental ones, would be greatly simplified. But so compelling and universal is this probably unanswerable question that very nearly all known societies have a Creation Myth to fill the void. But what if—as in Hindu cosmology—the material universe is actually an illusion fostered by deities on a higher plane? One is still left with the question: where did these deities come from? The origin of the deities then becomes the occasion for further brow-furrowing.

The very existence of the Universe, then, is an inexplicable miracle. On that miracle rests another—the *capacity for inorganic matter to manifest life*. This mystery should one day yield all of its secrets, but for now, the question remains: What is it in the atomic elements that allows life-forms to defy the third law of thermodynamics? On the second miracle

rests another—*the evolution of human consciousness* that can embrace a concept of the Universe as a whole, as well as a way of being that can lead to Enlightenment. We are one miracle within a miraculous Worm of Ourobus. The Universe (of unknown provenance), supports Life, which supports us, who devour the Universe with our minds.

However, we are blinded to the underlying miraculousness of ordinary experience by its continuity, its coherence, and its concreteness—in other words, its very ordinaryness. Our experience can easily become like a surveillance video without interest except for extreme events. Though meditation, prayers of praise and gratitude, and days of rest and remembrance can all be useful reminders of the miracle of existence, consciousness of this miracle can also—with diligence—continuously inform every moment of living experience.

Human incarnation, however, is a miracle with apparent defects—principally our mortality—but also our inherent fallibility, the inevitability of experiencing pain, our vulnerability to greed, and our tendency to resort to violence. Are you human? Then you have either felt or seen the horrible things that are visited upon us by those we hope would love us unconditionally—each other and Mother Nature—but don't. Without reciting the gory details, the logic of our position seems to lead to a realization that, eventually, all possible variations of painful experience will manifest themselves in human lives. What sort of miracle is it that enshrines unavoidable suffering?

Life-positive social strategies

Mother Nature offers no free lunches. She nourishes us but sees to it that we pay the bill. Suffering is the price we pay for our conscious endowment. Worse yet, suffering is distributed inequitably among our numbers. But its opposite—exaltation—is also unevenly distributed. Mother Nature's disorderly balancing of these polarities, together with our sense of free will, drives us to identify as our central purpose in life the erection of bulwarks against pain and loss enhanced by an ever-expanding understanding and exploitation of all aspects of nature, including our own.

There comes a time in every life when one's purpose—if dominated by personal fight with (or flight from) real or imagined dangers, together with aspirations for achievement—becomes trumped by the inevitability of our ultimate death. Then, a deeper purpose for one's life—*being a link in the chain-of-being of the human species, or of its evolving cultures*—begins to reveal itself.

The ineradicable necessity of ancestors to our individual existence, and that of ours to any progeny we might have, should demonstrate to us beyond dispute that the individual existence we perceive ourselves as inhabiting is but a link in a particular location within Nature's web. Further, our individual transitory existence is made possible by a host of essential micro-organisms we are born with. Whether we people Nature's web with our children or not, we contribute to the continuity of our host civilization and its ongoing cultural evolution that—since created by our species—is an aspect of Nature. With this change of focus comes the realization that cultural evolution leads in many other

directions than individual survival and the mastery of Nature, and indeed, can seem to be out of harmony with Nature.

The central purpose of this book is to shed light on which aspects of our various cultures have life-positive tendencies harmonious with Nature (and which don't), and then to invent ways to facilitate those ways that do and phase out those that don't.

Why should dedication to the web of human life-positive goals be our common paramount purpose, even when threatened by the exigencies of personal existential vulnerability? My answer is that the strength and fecundity of one's link to the total human organic process determines the ultimate meaning of one's life. If one accepts this conclusion, the question then becomes, "How are we to focus our energies toward becoming productive human links in a harmonious chain of sustainable organic process?" Not only how—but when, where, what with, and with whom.

At this time there are threats to human existence that are unprecedented in our history. Interconnected global populations are growing faster than Nature's supports. Large-scale pollution and energy consumption are negatively impacting Nature and its resources. The individual—acting alone—can have little effect on these emerging global challenges. The individual, then, faces a fork in the road. He or she can choose to cope with these challenges only as they have personal impact, and to otherwise simply go along as usual. Alternately, he or she may seek to join a group of like-minded others that attempts to address the looming challenges preventively.

When one chooses the active role, several things become immediately clear. Whatever group chosen will be a minority of the general population, the majority entirely focused on the near-term and the personal. The majority will resist substantial change in their neurally hard-wired default ideological positions. Further, our society is owned and operated by a privileged white male patriarchy that places priority on the protection of its own power and property. A successful populist violent revolution is neither likely nor productive of solutions to our self-created social and environmental crises.

The doctrine of market determinism

More controversial as obstacles to be overcome are certain ideological tenets embedded in the conventional wisdom. The most stealthily subversive among these mental obstacles is the *doctrine of market determinism*. This headset guides the deployment of the market's monetary and land ownership constituents as incarnated by corporations and their governmental charterers/enablers.

The doctrine of market determinism has become the touchstone of contemporary public policy even though the "market" thrives on war, pollution, disease, and derivatives. Further, the market's profit-motive priority fails to facilitate the provision of a broad range of human needs, to say nothing of environmental remediation. The doctrine of market determinism holds us hostage to the outcome of competitive games played by wealthy elites wherein our participation as workers and consumers is essential, but in which we

function not as stakeholders, but as commodified pawns. We passively allow “owners” to tell us what to do and how to do it in such a way that they become ever more wealthy. As wealth concentration to the few accelerates, freedom for the rest slips away. As the economy mindlessly grows, Nature withers. Few stop to ask why.

Many of those entrusted to solve the world’s problems are tied to the ideological position, *Let the free market decide*. Has this not become, in actuality, an abdication of responsibility for the creation of a looming dystopian future? As I write, there is general agreement that things must get worse before they can get better. Ironically, the material basis for continued prosperity hasn’t gone away (although it has started to erode). However, the protocols for the accounting and distribution of wealth—entirely human inventions—have evolved to such a point of non-functional ethereality that their trustworthiness is now of general concern, even to those who profess to understand them.

The current lack of confidence in the global financial system is unprecedented in the history of capitalism. No matter what is tried in order to try to restore the system, any and all remedial actions will have uncertain outcomes with undesirable side-effects. The “masters of the universe” have been brought face-to-face with the fact that currencies (backed only by a country's taxes on their citizens), that are used to pay the debt incurred by currency issuance, are essentially unstable. A system based on interest on debt inevitably becomes increasingly leveraged, thus endlessly compounding debt until, as in the present circumstance, debt outruns any possible material basis. The financial powers are faced with the task of restoring stability at the same time that the tools necessary to the task—new regulatory powers—are mired in a legislative debate that will ultimately fail to produce meaningful reform. Further complicating the picture, multi-national corporations with supra-national powers, and multiple global currencies (with inter-related financial soundness) impact each other. Coping with these dysfunctions is like wrestling with an octopus.

Elevating the market to the status of ultimate virtue creates two salient corollaries. First, the ultimate value of anything becomes its value in exchange. Second, the medium—money—that is devised to accomplish that function by embodying an abstract numbered scale of account becomes, unavoidably, itself an ultimate value.

Classically in the form of gold coin, money’s essence relies on its universal acceptance in the marketplace—the physical realization of the abstract notion of credit. Also, since its value renders it prey to theft, money must be constantly secured from predation.

The functioning market, then, requires a marketplace, a means of exchange, and a government with police power to insure the safety, integrity, and orderliness of the ongoing process.

There are two implications of this analysis, one for the conventional wisdom about free markets, and the other for its application to arenas other than the marketplace. First, the conventional wisdom about markets. The only thing free about markets is the freedom of the buyer and seller to opt out of making a deal. In addition, orderly markets with a

multiplicity of actors require obedience to rules (and the coercive muscle to enforce those rules) that limit the participant's freedom. Also, the starving man and the grocer, although on a level playing field according to the system, in reality, are not. Further reflection suggests an inbuilt advantage to those who own and run markets over those who buy and sell there, as well as to those who have drained off for themselves a personal pool from the onrushing stream of exchanges.

Second, arguments advancing market-like functionality in non-market arenas abound. A case can be made that Nature en toto is the ultimate free market. All species compete for an ecological niche and prosper according to their viability while exchanging energy and territory with their proximate neighbors. The commonplace phrase for this concept is 'the law of the jungle,' not one generally thought to be a salutary description of human behaviors. Are you human? Then you experience yourself as having a free will that needs not respond solely to personal survival and niche protection, but will put those aside to pursue higher values such as morality, esthetics, love, compassion, and enlightenment. Even with survival issues, the human ability to imagine the future causes us to balance short and long term outcomes, invent technology that alters natural balances, and evolve cultures that turn their backs on Nature.

The market, although an inevitable human expression rooted in Nature, is—if not regulated—at war with free will, moral responsibility, and (ultimately) our survival.

In the present economic crisis, the exposure of free-market capitalism's Wizard of Oz secret has created a sense of urgency for a more fair and stable system in greater harmony with Nature.

Mother Nature's web—the global biosphere—manifests a kind of integrated homeostatic intelligence. Where nurtured by the elements, she multiplies species and ecological niches as well as individual organisms. Where not, she retreats. The human cultural evolution of agricultural markets mimics nature's constant self-directing recycling with exchanges between humans that naturally promote a growing economy with increased cultural niches. What began as barter of agricultural products facilitated further cultural evolution that nurtured artisans, scribes, and all manner of other occupational roles. The diverse exchanges the marketplace initially made possible benefited increasingly specialized producers of goods and services until the advent of a merchant class whose main function was distribution. Since merchants can sustain themselves only by the inherently risky activity of buying cheap and selling dear, monetized transactions replaced barter in order to provide greater liquidity and a store of value, causing the accumulation of money—the symbol of real wealth—to be valued for its own sake. The marketplace—which began as an informal barter-exchange commons—became a competitive arena for individuals whose sole occupation was buying and selling.

Defining the economic commons

The marketplace is not usually referred to as a "commons," a term contemporaneously applied largely to entities that have experienced tragic outcomes. Perhaps attempting an

all-embracing definition of the concept of the commons, if a bit of a digression, might be useful at this point. “A digression from exactly what?” you might ask. Patience, please.

In wild Nature, everything is the commons. Those organisms that have a need to defend a territorial niche against incursion in order to survive will do so. Other than that, nothing in Nature is ‘owned’ by any particular species. The concept of ownership awaited the evolution of an animal endowed with tool making ability, the ability to domesticate fire and other animals, and a brain capable of inventing concepts like the wheel.

Are you human? If so, you probably feel that the concept of personal property is so hard-wired into your brain that it must be a fundamental guiding principle of the Universe.

Rather, it is the commons that is more fundamental; the human invention of private property is the special exception that proves the rule.

Is the commons, then, all that which is not private property? If my understanding is correct, a more precise definition of the basic nature of the commons would be, ‘a social convention for the individual human being’s interface with Nature that allows all residents of a particular territory equal access to the land.’ Those who have thought deeply about the subject seem to agree that if the human population is small enough and the common territory extensive enough, the holding of territory in common is a viable protocol. Where these conditions do not obtain, it is not. Individuals will then use more than their share and leave it to others to clean up their messes.

Common ownership among humans seems to be a natural protocol for the air (unavoidable), water (highly desirable), land (when sufficient), wilderness, and aquifers. Human technology creates other categories of common utility such as roads, monetary instruments, intellectual property, the Internet, and the like. Where private land-ownership is the norm, there is a tendency to consider private ownership appropriate to those techno-economic commons created by human effort. This practice even extends to certain useful non-human-created aspects of the natural world such as subterranean resources (oil, mining), the electromagnetic spectrum, and the genetic codes of other species.

Since we are living in a time of unprecedented—and still growing—population, the challenge to the continued viability of the commons—over-use and under-maintenance—will be ever-increasing. Scarcity of supply translates to unmet demand which turns the formerly “free” commons into a potentially commodifiable, and therefore profitable, arena. If there is no countervailing social agreement, then some will be unable to pay the price and will go without. If the commons in question is breathable air, potable water, or productive land, then the commodification of the commons is a potential death sentence for the non-included.

There are three main outcomes to the commodification of the commons. We can let nature take its course, leading to chaos, mortal combat, and starvation. Or, a government—which has already claimed sovereignty over the affected territory—can ration the formerly free commonly held resource according to a scheme of its own

devising. Or the resource can be considered potential private property to be sold to the highest bidder. You might call these the anarchist, socialist, and capitalist solutions.

None of these scenarios is attractive. They all assume that people and their organizations will seek their own benefit without concern for the common good. This assumption is sustainable only in an expanding economy. Further, even in an expanding economy, unchecked private acquisitiveness inevitably creates imbalances such as poverty and environmental damage. But now the material basis for continual economic growth is no longer a given. In order to maintain the common good through a prolonged period of unavoidable economic contraction, a non-coerced reevaluation of what is most valuable in civilized life—and what can be done without—will be needed.

Now that there are so many of us, and now that we have evolved such a high level of individual and social consciousness, and if we can shape our technology to soften Mother Nature's tough love, the major problems confronting us will stem from our protocols and practices of social interaction.

The nature of the challenge

Global humanity is racing toward total disaster. Humanity's two most pressing (and negatively synergetic) problems at the start of the 21st century are: *the overuse of the earth's resources by the industrialized peoples and exponential population growth by the indigenous peoples.*

The situation must (and will) become much worse before the American public is forced to look our dead-end agenda of global financial, military, and cultural domination in the eye. Born of the emergence of American world domination following the end of the Cold War, an international network of interdependent corporations now determines in secret the parameters within which all nations and their citizens must operate. This is not the international democracy that the founders of the United Nations envisioned, much less the founders of the U. S. A. This is an ad hoc plutocratic oligarchy that severely undermines the original promise of American democracy. Corporate blindered focus on money and power slights human welfare and ignores the imperative of survival.

A tiny minority of greedy control-freaks determines our destiny through our willingness to be dominated by the threat of physical coercion and kept in scarcity by their economic hierarchies. The agencies of military aggression and domestic repression—in league with global corporate-financial wealth concentrations—have attained unshakeable domination of the political institutions charged with the protection of the public welfare.

As long as the long term prospect of increasing pollution, decreasing resources, and dwindling food supply is neglected as an externality by corporate economics, short-term pragmatic solutions will continue to result in a ravaged environment and the impoverishment of those most at risk. As the members of the international corporate network compete with each other for the control of natural resources and populations out of their grasp, the risk of violent conflict will be ever-present for the foreseeable future.

Modern attack-oriented technological warfare is potentially genocidal—even ecocidal. Wars no longer have any benefit to the populations of combatant nations; they are fought (even by democracies) for the right of a tiny minority to either retain or gain control over power and wealth. Modern technological warfare decimates victorious populations, as well as those vanquished.

Without remedial action, major population die-offs from hunger, disease, or war seem certain. A series of last-minute techno-fixes is not beyond possibility, but reliance upon them becomes ever more naïve as the scale of challenges to the status quo ramps up. Besides, all technologies carry with their use the certainty of unintended consequences that require more quick fixes in a never-ending succession.

Unless our leaders find a way of changing course, the civilized world will probably be reduced to isolated pockets amid subsistence-farming indigenous survivors. What will remain of the global techno-structure is uncertain. What is certain in the US is that the military and corporate interests have a lock on the democratic process. Their agendas are ineradicable givens in the political discourse, and will continue to be so.

Facing this prospect—and given the enormity of the forces in play—we can passively resign ourselves to the inevitability of disaster, or we can actively seek to reshape that which humanity has set in play. In order to consider taking the active path we must have at our disposal conceptual tools that enable us to take a clear-eyed view of the inter-relatedness of the problems that confront us. The following is an attempt to sketch a birds-eye view of what the inter-relatedness of these forces and processes might be.

Political Organizing For New Progressive Agendas

We as individuals are powerless before the enormity of the looming global challenge. Obviously, we must organize if we are to confront it. The decision to organize, however, carries significant hazards. Existing organizations already are addressing sustainability, global cooperation, and local community. Can we depend on a multiplicity of well-meaning efforts to produce large-scale synergetic results? If existing organizations seem to obey pre-existing ideological imperatives, is a new ideology required around which to organize? But what would that ideology be?

Since we live in an electoral democracy, is attainment of the political power to shape government policy the necessary task? If possible, that would be desirable, but that's an awfully big if. Progressive political movements in the US—by their own self-definition—have always had the progress of the welfare of the majority of the people at heart, but have seldom achieved power. Why? My list of major barriers are these:

- Progressives have failed to achieve broad-based consensus among themselves because of warring ideologies, fractious special-interest constituencies, and distrust based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, and other differences.

- The two-party system tends to disenfranchise minorities and the poor, giving progressive initiatives little place to gain a toe-hold.
- The government has become the servant of large concentrations of capital.
- The people choose survival-driven co-option to the interests of employers and landlords over an uncertain future.
- The police and military, despite being working-class, don't shrink from violent repression in defending the interests of property.
- In the face of seemingly insurmountable property/government economic and coercive repression, the people become apathetic.
- The issues have just become too complex for the uninitiated to grapple with.

Considering this dreadful scenario, do progressives have a prayer of success? I would love to be optimistic but success so far has been uneven. Eventually, however, government will be forced to bend human priorities to the will of Nature. Whether this will occur by a soft or a hard path is anybody's guess at this point.

Finally (for now), can we organize to address these new global challenges in such a way that the means do not subvert the ends? Let's assume an optimistic attitude. Let's assume that we can. Before trying to zero in on a coherent viable local organizational response, however, let's take a brief look at the nature of contemporary global power struggles.

The contemporary global impasse

International war sweeps all human and ecological welfare considerations before it. We have ample evidence, as this is written, in the generous funding of our Middle East conflicts while our citizens are losing their jobs and homes. Warfare also threatens Nature at a time when even peaceful human activities are running out of space and commodities. World peace is a precondition to sustainable civilization.

When applied to nations, the doctrine of market determinism that enshrines competition guarantees the conditions of scarcity and contention which in turn lead to war. Since the military/economic-driven concentration of power by the contending global oligarchies increases with conditions of open hostility, the power-elite are actually motivated to exacerbate those conditions unless their economic interests or the compliance of their populace are endangered. Only if the people can fully and finally be persuaded that exploitation and war serve no one's interest, and in any case, are unsupportable in the long run, can progress toward the just peace that nurtures a sustainable civilization begin.

My hope is that the people will embrace a new paradigm that rejects all nations' (and by logical extension, all organizations with international reach) right to wage aggressive warfare. Such a new paradigm can only be put in place under freely-elected *democratic*

governments charged with the tasks of commanding a military committed exclusively to national defense, a police respectful of individual civil rights, and the regulation of economic organizations' impact on the people and their environment.

Religion, education, privilege, intelligence, and capacity to excel are areas of universal human concern over which struggles from petty to cataclysmic will forever erupt. Gender, race, and ethnicity also create conflict and struggle. Maximum tolerance of others' differences, coupled with coercion against violence, theft, and fraudulence, will always have to be employed to secure sustainable peace with social stability.

Realistically, since cultures are based in ineradicable identifying characteristics typical of their members, culture clash (both inter and intra) is a permanent element of the human condition. Any new paradigm hopeful of achieving broad consensus must be solidly principled and rigorously even-handed in its address to cultural issues. That means that it must not be about *who we are*, but about *how we organize* and *what we organize to do*. It must be based on allowing everyone the freedom to be who they are in equality with all others.

The pursuit of these particular goals by political actions and organizations is nothing new. In fact, progress toward their achievement is a primary measure of the advance of civilization. Why are they, then, opposed? Because they threaten existing concentrations of economic and coercive power whose domination is thought necessary in order to maintain order in a world thought to be inherently unjust.

In America, the citizen in general agreement with progressive goals currently has little opportunity for effective political expression. Elected representatives belonging to the Democratic Party have become a millionaire's club more worried about social acceptance by their mostly right-wing peers than the real long-term interests of their constituents. They would be a centrist party if there were an effective party or coalition on their left. Since the entrenched two-party system has defeated third parties so far, the concerned voter must either make a compromised choice for the Democrats or an idealistic but quixotic choice for a tiny third party.

The churlishly deadlocked character of the two-party system is only one of the many accumulating defections from the ideals of American democracy. The Constitution—a two century old experiment in governance without precedent at the time of its inception—has come to lack resiliency in the face of a change in the human *scale* of the nation of several orders of magnitude, the change from a rural to an industrial economy, the autocratic counter-example of government power exerted through the military and police, and in the corrosive and ossifying power of large capital concentrations to corrupt the political process. Also, the two-party system's winner-take-all operation has been unkind to minorities. Taken together, these departures from fairness and the expression of the public's well-being show that democratic governments must be tended, mended, and defended.

Perhaps the most destructive influence on the practice of political democracy has been the adoption of commercial advertising as the key shaper of the interface between the voter and the elected representative. When reasoned discourse is supplanted with manipulative rhetoric, half the electorate votes for the least-bad and the rest boycott the process. The doctrine of market determinism holds as central the concept of the “rational actor”. The Founders of our democracy embraced this same view of the voter. The rational actor voter has been replaced by the ad-duped voter.

Even if all these problems were rectified one insoluble anomaly remains with democracy: voters are likely to be unequal in their wisdom, and the least wise in any population are likely to be the more numerous. But for the danger of the creation of an elitist establishment, the tendency of poorly informed electorates to elect bad officials could be ameliorated by a professionalization of political aspirants geared to meritocratic governance as is already practiced in the civil service. If most individual citizens were to enter adulthood with a firm internalization of civic responsibility to exercise informed participation in the political process, the quality of governance could be much improved. Universal public education can best prepare the young for civic responsibility if charged to do it. Despite its lapses, democratic government of some sort has an unchallengeable ultimate legitimacy when premised on individual liberty, equality, and security.

At this point those who see eco-destructive industrialization and exponential population growth as the pre-eminent global threat have little power in the political process other than talking to each other and demonstrating in the streets. For now, education and civil disobedience, rather than electoral participation, seem the sole productive avenues.

The situation must and will become much worse before the American public is forced to look our dead-end agenda of global financial, military, and cultural domination in the eye. Those who wish to prepare for that time must continue doing what they're doing right now: identifying the issues, staying informed, and tenaciously defending their right to speak their minds in opposition to violence, exploitation, and ignorance, while developing a coherent vision of what is needed to reverse the downward spiral.

The ordinary people in the heartland of America must somehow be made to see that we are already in the spiral, and have been for decades. Global warming, smog, oil-dependency, deindustrialization, boom and bust, depleted fisheries, deforestation, falling water tables, terrorism, and war are all currently visible evidence of the spiral. This information is crowded out of the landscape of the ordinary American by the hubris of American triumphalism, omnipresent advertising, televised infotainment, and government propaganda. Greater creativity must be brought to bear on finding ways to get the ordinary person who just wants to do the right thing and lead a normal life, to confront the realities that our leaders refuse to acknowledge. Then they must be shown a convincing alternative that doesn't just stress the negativity of reform but shows pathways for the exertion of productive energy.

Manifesting such a paradigm would not produce "the end of history," but would, instead, place intractable conflicts out of bounds to technologically-enhanced mass violence while

these conflicts work themselves out as cultures evolve to cope with the sustainability imperative. Why can't the urgent need to renew the earth give birth to a full-employment economy? Reasonable courses of action have been proposed that jiggle a little with the political and economic operating system's structural organization in order to direct human energy into environmental remediation, building community, and guaranteeing equal rights to all people. These are practical, evolutionary proposals that are finally beginning to enjoy mainstream debate

We may be entering a unique period in history where individual humans may *only* prosper by peaceful and non-exploitative cooperation with each other and the earth.

The foregoing is my rough sketch of the inter-related changes in direction we need to pursue as we nevertheless continue collectively to inch the marshmallow ever nearer the coals.

A Closer Look at Human Organization

To discover effective organizational paths that lead us in new directions, it would be prudent to try to understand the sources, intent, scale, and power of existing human organizations. There have been numerous academic studies of the sociology of organizations, but the picture I have undertaken to paint here draws on colors from the palette of commonsense contemporary understanding of organizations, their origin and function.

What are the roots of people's decisions about whether to compete or cooperate in a given situation? What are the results of competition? Of cooperation? When is one appropriate, and not the other?

Cooperation, competition, and organizational motivation

Human beings are, at once, different and the same. Among the first habits of thought of the developing child—one which that child may modify, but never lose, in later life—is continuously to track personal conformity to the appearance, behavior, and expression of proximate humanity. As the dynamism of the personal self emerges, a second universal characteristic manifests itself—the comparison of self to other. Thus we come face to face with the nearly universal human desire to think of ourselves simultaneously as the same as, and better than, others.

The universality of this paradoxical self-conception gives rise to the eternal human fascination with games, whether of our own invention or as a test of our prowess in coping with the proximate universe. Although games such as solitaire or slot machines are designed to be playable by lone individuals, they are generally seen as a poor substitute for games that require opponents. Social games with rules of engagement that require opponents join competition to cooperation at the most basic level. Their recreational nature enables a kind of purity that results in a clear win, lose, or draw with the promise of a return engagement. As such they are not only benign, but often regarded

as one of life's premier pleasures. The game-nature of real life competition, on the other hand, although often rule-bound and non-lethal, can be fraught with mortal consequences. The more destructive competitive games of larger organizations, which we are about to examine, are of this potentially lethal type.

Generally, we group ourselves into organizations on the basis of perceived similarities. But those similarities need to be in contrast to others who differ. To my knowledge, there is no International Alliance of Two-Legged People (IATLP), www.leftright.org. Our perceptions of what we have in common with and how we differ from any particular group of people, and how those in our group differ from outsiders, are crucial to the formation and functioning of human organizations.

People form organizations to cooperate with one another in the pursuit of a goal or set of goals. Depending on the goals and the bias of the participants, their having organized tends to pit them in competition with others. Then, unless constrained by rigidities such as hereditary succession or a strict meritocracy, members compete for leadership within the organization. In addition, organizations have varying degrees of cooperation with other organizations with symbiotic agendas.

The operative conventional wisdom holds that only the carrot (greed) or the stick (fear) motivates people to act. This view, to the extent that it is indeed the operative one, results in a society where people compete with each other for the carrot, and for the right to wield the stick rather than feel its blows. This view denies altruism, by redefining it as greed for the good opinion of others. It also chooses to ignore that people will compete, even in life-threatening contests, simply because playing games is entertaining. The conventional wisdom also holds that people accomplish more through competition than cooperation. This view rests on a prior conclusion that only the sin of greed can rouse humans from the inertia of sloth.

All of this, as a cursory perusal of any daily newspaper will amply bear out, produces a bewildering variety of shifting alliances of organizations engaged in petty to genocidal conflicts of short to millennial endurance. Whole cultures rise, develop, and fall to exalt and/or suppress the imperatives of organizational viability. Times of peace and stability are characterized by a cooperative relationship amongst society's organizations, or competitive relationships restricted to negotiation in a framework of mutually agreed rules and procedures. The lack of a peaceful conflict resolution structure, or the need of one organization to achieve total victory over competitors, produces times of instability and conflict.

Finding ways to implement structures that downplay and contain organizational conflicts, as well as to support and augment altruistic cooperation, is the motivation behind the analysis attempted herein.

Organizations and the individual: *escapability/inescapability*

The human organizations and conditions-of-being with *universal* and *inescapable* power over the individual are of two kinds, as follows:

1. Conditions-of-being that adhere to people as individuals by the mere fact of their humanness. Although they are universal, their particular nature depends on historical and cultural setting. These conditions of being, from small to large in scale, are:

- Family (nuclear)
- Family (extended)
- Tribe or neighborhood
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Civilization (overlays ethnicity with mass cultures)

2. Four culturally derived types of organizations, also inescapable for every member of civilized societies

- Economy: (business, corporations, and unions)
- Government: (community, town, city, state, and nation)
- Police: (private guards; city, county, state, and national law enforcement)
- Military: (army, navy, marines, air force, coast guard, and immigration)

In contrast, there are other organizations with *non-universal* or *escapable* power over the individual. Examples are:

- Cultural institutions
- Mass media
- Educational institutions
- Organized religion (in non-theocratic societies)

Organizational scale, hierarchy, and public participation

So far we have identified organizations according to the types of activities that exist in civilized societies. Let us shift our focus from activities or functions to consider *organizational scale*. The family is the smallest organizational unit. Reproduction, physical survival, continuity of language and culture are accomplished within the *family*, as are the provision of clothing, shelter, and health care in non-industrialized rural populations. With the tribe out of the picture in civilized societies, the next larger social grouping is the *neighborhood*.

What organizations typically exist in their functional entirety at the *neighborhood scale* (up to approximately 2,000 persons)? These would appear, first and foremost, to be the *family* and its dwelling. In addition, we typically find the *elementary school* and (in mono-faith settings) the parish *church*, one or more small family-owned *businesses* such as a grocery store, and voluntary *neighborhood civic organizations* such as the PTA, a

neighborhood association, a tenants union, condominium owners association, and the like.

The neighborhood scale is the scale at which democracy can be practiced with the greatest and most effective citizen input. And yet, the school, the church, and small businesses are typically run as authoritarian hierarchies. Only in voluntary community interest groups do members choose their leaders democratically. *With the lack of any comprehensive democratic organization at neighborhood scale, the potential for people to wield democratic power at the scale where the needs of community and the environment can be addressed by direct citizen input goes unrealized.*

At the *town* scale (approximately 2,000 to 20,000 population) we find the smallest comprehensive, self-contained unit of *government*. This hybrid democratic/authoritarian organization has elected officials, staff, the power to tax, and a local constabulary with powers delegated to it to enforce the law with coercive measures. Also at this scale we find one or more *secondary schools* together with an elected schoolboard, perhaps a public library, healthcare facilities such as clinics or a hospital, a fire department, public utilities, and local public transportation.

If one equates town scale with secondary school size and population, the *city* relates to the *university*, not only in terms of the next larger order of physical size, but in terms of origin and character of population. The city, like a university, draws its population from a larger source than its geographic penumbra. The city has major significance to its *region*. The activities carried on in cities determine the present character of the civilization.

In larger cities one finds the home offices of organizations fundamentally different from those found in smaller cities and larger towns: *corporations*. The city will have media outlets (newspaper, radio, and TV) and will function as a hub for various transportation modalities, all of them being corporations

In the U.S., corporations are licensed by the *state*, the next largest geopolitical unit. States (as well as their subdivisions, counties) are contained within arbitrary boundaries that often cross the natural divisions of watersheds and urban metropolitan centers. At the scale of the state, we see organizations dedicated to the public welfare run by government or non-profit corporations that replace the market-place as the arbiter of price and resource deployment with charity, taxes, and edicts enforced by potential reversion to coercive means. Functions necessary for people's survival that are unmet by the private sector are most often funded and administered at this level.

The *national* level, in addition to providing these state-level functions, also defines financial practices by minting money and providing a militarily secured homeland in which to establish businesses. At this scale, the major new additions to the list of organizations whose influence cannot be avoided by the solitary individual, are the *central bank* and the *military*.

At the birth of civilization, tribal raiding parties morphed into organized armies centered in the city-states of the time. These armies—organized as an autarchic hierarchy—established their supreme leader as a demi-god sovereign with absolute authority. Over the centuries the absolute power of individual sovereigns has eroded as civilization's governing functions evolved in complexity and became secularized.

And yet the concept of national sovereignty endures. The nation is defined by that geographic area in which one particular military establishment has legitimacy. As a result, the citizen's patriotism focuses on the nation's military. If all wars were only in defense of a nation's borders, international war would cease to exist. As our world becomes more crowded, national borders become more settled leading to fewer wars over border disputes. The remaining border disputes and threats of civil war now justify with some credibility the retention of military establishments.

And yet, with the advent of ever more sophisticated technological armament, our world experiences the greatest militarization in history. Military invasion followed by occupation and subjugation has become no longer practical; the reasons for militarization lie elsewhere:

- The existence of nuclear-tipped ICBMs.
- The aftermath of the Cold War.
- Post-colonial dislocations.
- Backup for far-flung corporate commercial interests.
- Protection of resource importation, particularly petroleum.
- A bulwark for the national economy.

Those who realize the self-fulfilling prophecy of militaristic paranoia deserve to prevail over those who propagate fear and those who profit from it. The localized efforts to build community and remediate Nature to be proposed in Parts II and III would depend heavily on the absence of war and the de-emphasis of militarism.

Universality to multiplicity

Ancient nature religions arose among the widely scattered tribes of early humanity. Coming into being in isolation from each other, and in differing environments, they exhibit both conflicts and congruencies which provide an amazing window into the fundamental nature of humanity, as well as the natural world from which we spring. In ancient times the tribe was guided in its relation to the natural world by the intuitions of the wisest elders which in turn were created in the context of the tribe's received mythology. At this cultural level, religion and knowledge form a continuum embedded in the tribe's oral tradition. With the advent of a written tradition, religion and knowledge start to disentangle into discrete areas.

The religions spring from the experience of spirituality. The spiritual quest gives rise to questions such as: What is the origin of life? What is its value? What is my purpose? How will things end? What is right livelihood? These issues have been (and will always be) of fundamental concern to humanity as a whole. Although universal to everyone,

they reside in the psyche of the individual. Thus they close the circle of humanity considered en toto from the world population to the lone individual. If all humans could be united in their answers to these questions, perhaps there could come into existence an organization to express and conserve and propagate those answers, but observance of past and present human behavior argues against such an organization ever coming into existence.

Nevertheless, it may be useful to entertain the possibility that the major organized *religions* are the most ancient and widespread examples of universal organizations founded as a response to the universal human condition. They were not formed for competitive reasons, but solely to facilitate the creation, proliferation, and preservation of culturally integrative belief systems. Such organizations challenge (complementing as often as transcending) ethnicity for geographic extent. They are central to, if not co-terminate with, the major cultures. However, their diverse ethnic roots alone make any one of them an unlikely candidate for universal acceptance.

Although not specifically organizational in nature, universality has been more nearly achieved by the secular consensus regarding our relationship to the world around us. Here we see examples of universal social organization (if not one specific organization) such as the Christian calendar, divisions of the clock, the system of latitude and longitude, universal standards of weights and measures, and so forth. With the advent of the Internet, these universal knowledge-based intellectual conventions were joined by a multiplicity of organizations of universal scope, but limited focus pursuing humanitarian concerns, environmental information sharing, and the like.

The United Nations is the first entity which has attempted unitary universal organizationhood. In attempting to follow the political route to universality (if, indeed that was the intent of any of its founders) it has not attempted to subjugate national sovereignty, and therefore hasn't achieved universality. In the meantime it has provided a home for many of the humanitarian and environmental organizations mentioned above.

A truly universal organization couldn't exist without complete globalization—a condition yet to be achieved. Some argue the Internet promises this. Even if so, the fulfillment of such a problematical prospect lies considerably in the future. Now all global scale organizations of whatever kind exist as one of many.

We are left with the conclusion that *organizations exist for the purpose of banding together with a number of our fellows in activities that define the organization as separate from (though not necessarily antithetical to) others.*

Organizational roots in nature and evolution:

Nature dictates that reproduction as a species takes the cooperation of two people, which automatically brings into being (no matter how ephemerally) the *family*. For human beings, a group effort is required to wrest sustenance from nature. With elaboration and codification over time, this leads to the second inescapable form of organization, an

economy. The twin imperatives of inherited and earned status demand a functional structuring of societal order such as that accomplished in modern times by *government*. The need of government to render the individual unable to avoid government's laws and rules gives rise to the fourth and fifth unavoidable organizations: the *police* and the *military*. Their power over the individual is unavoidable because of their unique socially legitimized use of coercion to constrain the actions of the individual.

To digress for a moment, it must be noted that there are fundamental options available to people in their power relations to one another other than cooperation and competition. Socially, we emerge into life from a unity with our mothers into an individuality that only gradually learns to differentiate self from others. Adults may regain the infant's sense of unity by achieving *loving fusion* with the other through sexual union or mystic trance. Short of the experience of fusion, love may be expressed by *nurturing*, or at a less intimate distance, *empathy*. Where this relationship is practiced beyond the family, it becomes *service*, or *charity*. The defining characteristic of this type of social relationship is a devotion to the welfare of the loved-other over devotion to one's self. When our relation to others becomes one of joining together with equals to accomplish a mutually beneficial purpose, we practice *cooperation*. We nearly always find that in order to accomplish the group's purpose we must have direction and functional differentiation. We thereby create leader and follower roles (with attendant status rankings) for the constituents of the group. The individuals within the group must then be in *competition*, (unless the group is guided by an egalitarian philosophy as many humanitarian groups are). Competition for status can lead to social stratification so severe that—when combined with coercion—domination leads to *slavery*. Slavery is the opposite side of the coin to charity. Where pure charity is willing to give everything to the nurtured-one short of the nurturer's own life, slavery takes from the enslaved individual everything *but* the individual's life. The final condition is one in which the group hates or fears an individual so much that it destroys or confiscates that person's property, inflicts incarceration, or at the extreme, performs an execution. The elimination of the other through *murder* is the opposite face of the "loving fusion" coin.

To continue with the analysis of the roots of human organization in nature and evolution, one has no choice but to be a product of the natural evolution of the *culture* in which one was born. The family imprints the most indelible cultural stamp, but it is usually the tribal level, or larger, that is the least common denominator of cultural differentiation. Currently, human cultural evolution is arguably the most dynamic phenomenon in the biosphere. Recent brain research suggests that cultural norms are only one generation deep. As a consequence, traditional unitary cultures develop diverse defenses, each of which demands its own organization in order to further its agendas. Thus, the resulting "culture wars" need to be seen in the context of their tribal origin, as does the reverse side of the coin—cultural authenticity. Although the basis of culture is inbred (and therefore ineradicable by individual choice) the power of the individual to identify with a particular current cultural trend or not, comes with freedom of choice.

In culture, we find the first and most highly globalized universal organizations based on the human condition. I have often heard it said that Americans have no real indigenous

culture. This opinion is based on a definition of culture as “the artifacts, beliefs, and practices that people create for themselves locally with tools of their own manufacture, and in accordance with an ancient belief system.” A consumerist society at the center of a global economy such as contemporary America has a culture of consumption that tends to put the participant at a remove from the essential cultural creative process.

This might be a good place for a reminder that the reason for this examination of the many aspects of organizations is that if we are proposing to organize to rescue civilization from unsustainability, we will be well advised to avoid the characteristics of organizations that are contributing to that very unsustainability.

Organizational power structure: arch-orgs, plut-orgs, and dem-orgs

Arch-org is a term I have coined to denote *all human organizations based on a hierarchical paradigm kept in place by institutionalized coercive threats administered top-down by self-selected rulers*. The earliest models in human evolution for this form of organization are tribal war and hunting expeditions. The pure example of this form of organization requires one individual, functioning as an autocrat, exercising unchallenged leadership at the top of an authority pyramid. Since that person has historically been male, I shall refer to him with the masculine pronoun. The autocrat delegates his authority to his immediate underlings on the basis of the job at hand, and at a scale that allows him to make credible the threat of discovery and punishment of disobedience. Information flow downwards is in the form of orders, directives, and requests. Information flow upwards consists of reports of mission status, field conditions, and the like. Authority allowed underlings varies with conditions and leadership style, but is generally limited to field decisions that must be made immediately, enforcement of previously determined routines, requests for permission to institute non-mandated actions, and the transfer upward of information from the field.

This pattern of authority and information flow is replicated, as arch-orgs grow larger, creating a pyramidal hierarchy. The military is the archetypal arch-org. All task-oriented organizations tend to adopt it as the most practical, efficient model—one which everyone understands from personal experience. Not all tasks undertaken by arch-orgs are competitive ones. An exploratory expedition, for example, may joust with a small corner of the uninhabited universe. Or an arch-org may exist for the purpose of glorifying a single individual, such as a potentate's harem.

Arch-orgs provide participants with the conformity that most people require in order to feel connected to the group. They also provide participants the opportunity to compare themselves favorably to the others in the group as they rise up the hierarchical ladder. Of course, these benefits can have their dark side. When an individual is unable or unwilling to conform to the prescribed model, or when the arch-org refuses to confer the advances in status necessary to that person's need for recognition, the benefit to that person is seriously compromised.

Even without out-of-step individuals, the arch-org typically has a tendency to dehumanize its participants through limiting the individual's self-expression and the objectification of selfhood. Also, at the top of the pyramid, there is a tendency toward de-humanization through self-deification. The resulting distortion of interpersonal communication can be harmful not only to the participants, but to the success of the arch-org's mission. The petty tyrant patriarch of a dysfunctional nuclear family is an example of this tendency at the smallest possible scale. Large scale examples abound in history from the Egyptian pharaohs to Nazi Germany under Adolph Hitler.

The succession of power in arch-orgs is also problematical. The success of hereditary succession is dependent on the qualifications of the heir. Dictators seem to have poor judgement in appointing successors. Selection by consensus of the general staff, chief ministers, or the College of Cardinals is fraught with palace intrigue.

In the 18th century the excesses, brutalities, inequities, and inefficiencies of monarchic governments finally empowered the democratic impetus first articulated in ancient Greece. Other than the obvious resistance of the arch-org's aristocracies to the pruning of privilege, the drive to democratization faced resistance because of lack of faith in the capacity of the people as a whole to govern, as well as a perceived need for efficient, coordinated, and timely action thought possible only through centralized authority. Therefore, the hierarchic pyramid of authority was retained, but with the king and the aristocracy replaced by an elected president and legislature or parliament/prime minister. These hybrid dem-org/arch-orgs are what pass for democratic government today. To my knowledge, a pure dem-org—a large-scale organization completely devoid of hierarchies backed by coercive power—has never been defined, much less given an experimental trial.

An important variation of the dem-org/arch-org is the plut-org. Here, the democratic "one person, one vote" is replaced by "one dollar, one vote." The directors of corporations are selected by this method. The board of directors then sets policy and hires management on the basis of the democratic "one director, one vote." The management then administers the corporation as an arch-org. As plut-orgs gain ascendancy in our society in the economic sphere, they seduce governments into mimicking their model. Since both arch-orgs and plut-orgs are, by design, predatory, the democratic impetus is under constant, if subliminal, challenge.

Nor (if I may be excused a brief self-parodic interlude) is the plut-org the only possible variant of the dem-org/arch-org dichotomy. Oligarch-orgs (though marginally distinguishable from autarch-orgs) perhaps merit notice, while the unearthing of anarch-orgs (notwithstanding oxymoronic implications) may well deserve the kind of devotion lavished by nuclear physicists on the quark.

More to the point, at least for progressives, would be an examination of the concept of the dem-org. Progressives favor the evolution, widespread institution, and survival of increasingly democratic forms of government. Some would assume that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the U.S., as amended, are the final destination of

this historic tendency. A useful perspective on whether or not this is so might well be provided by a theoretical analysis of what constitutes a pure dem-org with all vestiges of coercive hierarchical features removed.

Hunting the elusive dem-org.

How would a pure dem-org be organized? Do extant examples exist? One definitional characteristic of a pure dem-org would seem to be *free association*. As a condition of survival practicality, *non-competitive cooperation with proximate organizations and sustainable homeostasis with the earth (and the balance of its human population)* would also seem to be required. Let us see if harsh reality entertains such a possibility.

What about Civil Society? As usually defined, “civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values.” In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family, and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors, and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

The organizations listed above certainly seem to be headed in a dem-organic direction. Just as clearly, their incorporation of hierarchies disqualifies them from exemplifying the dem-organic ideal

It would seem that the chances of a pure dem-org surviving in any kind of currently conceivable macro-environment are close to nil. However, if one looks to a micro-environment, examples immediately come to mind.

Following the method employed earlier, the smallest possible organization should be examined first, both to provide orderly procedure and to prepare a basis for the inevitable complexities introduced by added participants. The obvious first choice—the married couple—presents curious difficulties with the parameters above. Free association implies free disassociation, which marriage vows prohibit. Even national citizenship, which one is born into without choice, may be negated by emigration with the full and free consent of everyone concerned. Divorce, although accomplishing disassociation, is not necessarily consensual. Furthermore the organization ceases to exist. Not only does this point up the difficulty of democratic decision-making where only two opinions are involved, voluntary obedience (when the other party is the balance of the organization) and equality (when, in cases of disagreements, one opinion must prevail in order to take action) are also called into question. Business or common interest partnerships are similarly challenged in the adoption of democratic procedures, so defined. Apparently, then, it takes a minimum of three people to form a dem-org.

At neighborhood scale, we start to see a great variety of organizations based on mutual interest that are either examples of dem-orgs in action, or could plausibly function as ones. I would have preferred to pick an elementary school-related organization such as the PTA or school sports teams as an example, but both contain hierarchical elements; teachers must participate as part of their job, and successful coaches don't run their teams democratically. To reiterate, a pure dem-org is free from authoritarian hierarchy, as well as member obedience through the threat of coercive measures, with the possibility of its continuity in time un-imperiled by the loss of a particular member.

A bird-watching group such as a local chapter of the Audubon Society (although more likely to exist at town scale than neighborhood) could serve as an example, however. Joining and resigning are voluntary. All members are equal in power. Meetings are scheduled for times when everyone is available. Officers and expedition leaders are chosen by election or by taking turns. Little is required in the way of individual obedience to the will of the group other than continued participation and a willingness of individuals to do their share of the heavy lifting. Since birdwatchers are definitionally environmentalists, conflict with proximate others is limited to habitat-destroyers who are resisted through cooperation with other environmental activists. As long as people are interested in watching birds, and there are birds to watch, the group has a good chance of surviving.

Why might such a group disintegrate from within? Since there is no particular reward in money or status, the leadership of such local voluntary associations is poorly compensated. The time and energy required to coordinate the group's activities are, like virtue, their own reward. With no coercive goad, the followers are free to be passive in their participation. Or, if they are frustrated leaders, they are free to make life difficult for the elected leaders. Since these groups aren't dealing with life or death issues, they are vulnerable to all manner of subversions by disaffected contrarians within their membership. People tend to bring a more authentic side of themselves to non-authoritarian social environments such as these. The lack of pretense is good, but the complexity inherent in interactions between highly individuated people can be destabilizing.

Outside forces are by far the largest hazards to micro-dem-orgs. The purer the dem-org, the more diffuse is its power to protect its own interests, and the more vulnerable to hierarchically delivered power unless the dem-org is involved in the provision of a necessity of life. In that case, members motivated by life or death issues may wield power out of all proportion to their numbers and wealth. But it is hard to find a micro-dem-org delivering a necessity without some aspect of hierarchic organization.

One example of a functioning dem-org at the scale of the city or the large town might be a semi-pro ten to twenty piece jazz band. Here again we have an organization that is voluntary, egalitarian (if meritocratic), where leadership (which is more a chore than a perk) appeals only to the most energetic or ambitious for local celebrity. Here an organization exists for the purpose of producing the highest possible quality "product"—a musical performance—in which actions in precise unison take place alongside actions

partially and wholly improvised by mutual agreement to follow certain common practices. The role and style of the leader must receive tacit approval of the other musicians or they drop out. Rehearsals are at consensually approved times. Performances are marginally or non-remunerated.

The glue that holds these organizations together is love of the music. The members may be viciously contentious and competitive, cynics and pranksters, but their joy in cooperative music making not only over-rides their human fractiousness, but usually results in a characteristic sort of bravadoistic camaraderie. When the band goes professional—or when anyone involved starts to make a major portion of their living off it—all this tends to change.

So what we have seen so far in the search for a working model of a pure dem-org has been limited to organizations small (and/or local) in scale, and focused on a voluntary recreational or civic betterment activity. No matter how altruistic their purpose or egalitarian their members, all geographically extensive organizations concerned with providing a necessary good or service seem to rely in some degree on hierarchies, monetary motivation, the conferring of internal status, and the fending off of competitors and enemies externally.

The one possible exception may turn out to be the Internet. But it is questionable whether the Internet is an organization in the usual sense. No one says, "I belong to the Internet" or "I work for the Internet," and yet it fulfills many of the functions of an organization. Interestingly, its participants must be organized like a dem-org in order to function efficiently and universally. Both the corporations and the national governments are struggling to bend the soul of the Internet to their purposes. In both, the ubiquity of advertising and proposals for censorship we can see the shape of the arch-organic threat to the democratic integrity of a still evolving communication modality.

During the time I was mulling pure dem-org possibility I came upon something from out of left field that seemed of possible relevance. I had long been aware that Alcoholics Anonymous has a Twelve Step Program, but was unaware of their Twelve Traditions, which are, I discovered:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are to be trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. ought never to endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. A.A. should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. A.A. has no opinion in outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

A.A. would seem, on face, to be about as pure a dem-org as one could imagine. It is 100% cooperative and totally non-competitive. Its sole aim is to assist individual members in their personal determination to abstain from alcohol. Since only the individual can accomplish abstinence, the functioning group is necessarily restricted to a small local scale where each individual's contribution may be felt, tracked, and appreciated. Membership is voluntary, all members are equal in their vulnerability and fallibility in the face of alcohol, consequently there is an absence of hierarchy within the group—leaders serve rather than govern the group—and no need for hierarchy among groups, decision-making is consensual. Since no one has a handle on giving orders, obedience is a non-issue. What organization does exist is solely for the purpose of accomplishing the communication necessary for keeping the movement coherent, and is therefore kept to the minimum.

In addition, A.A.'s requirements of self-support, non-institutionalization, avoidance of "problems of money, property, or prestige" or "public controversy" merit attention.

This model has apparently served its members well for fifty years. Although AA only serves a limited population for a limited purpose, its function has resonance for the larger population who will face similar personal problems in coming years as a consequence of withdrawal from fossil fuel addiction.

To generalize from this model, one must ask how much of the success of the model is tied to the particularity of alcohol addiction, how much the longevity of the program is due to a continual new supply of alcoholics, and whether the program's reliance on the postulation of an abstract (and anthropocentric) deist authority is necessary or appropriate in a wider context. Certainly the stress on anonymity is only useful in a voluntary addiction abatement program. Pursued in any other setting, such a requirement would be tantamount to the creation of a secret society.

Other questions could be raised. Abstinence, being entirely passive, is infinitely simpler than accomplishing anything which requires conscious and coordinated planning and execution. (To say that it is simpler is not to imply that it is easier or that the internal processes of the abstainer aren't complex.) Doing almost any task which has as its goal the production of a good, the provision of a service, or the completion of a group activity

involves organization, planning, money, property, risk of controversy, and praise or blame depending on the outcome. Only doing nothing avoids these risks. Oddly, "doing nothing" has important significance for sustainability.

Much could probably be learned of relevance to the creation of a pure demorg. from a detailed study of charitable NGOs such as Doctors Without Borders or Habitat for Humanity if examined from the standpoint of their mix of demorgic and archorgic organizational models. Both of the NGOs cited are practical, on-the-ground, organizations providing basic necessities through a gift economy put in place by volunteer effort.

The question then becomes *how can a dem-org with a productive mission be made stable in a competitive environment?* Unless competitiveness is eliminated from the organizational mix (a not necessarily desirable and in any case improbable development), any organization thought to be worthwhile running as a pure dem-org would require insulation from outside predation as well as spirited support and defense from the populace at large.

Loci of Power: Political, Economic, Military, and Collective

Having looked at the global sources of and the varieties of organizations, we may now shift our focus to an examination of *organizational power*. Since there is a vast amount of power invested in maintaining the status quo, the desire to cause change must eventually draw to itself the power to do so or remain locked away forever in an alternate universe.

The power of organizations over individuals rests ultimately on the power of coercion. Police power, military power, or the power of a bandit holding a loaded gun is power of this kind. We see that even in a peaceful democratic society there is a coercive element without which the law apparently has no power. Physical coercion is power in action. For our purposes here, both the threat and the act of coercion are significant.

The exertion of power by governments requires weapons and dependable weapon-wielders, both of which must be purchased. Therefore, the exertion of government power requires money. No coercive agency can have power without the money to pay for it. Thus, coercion through threat of force is preceded or accompanied by threat of fine, giving rise to the immortal phrases: "Your money or your life, sir" or "fine and/or imprisonment" depending on which side of the law is speaking. In either case, if the coercive agent is speaking from coldly considered self-interest, the fingers of power will lighten the purse in preference to turning the key, for the former increases power, while the latter expends it.

A third aspect of power is intellectual and emotional: the power of pure ideas informed by feeling to initiate and direct action. Leaders gain power to lead by the force of their ideas if they have the personality to present them persuasively.

These three aspects of power: physical, monetary, and persuasive relate directly to the three fundamental moral and ethical evils: violence, theft, and lying.

In all societies some people have more power than others. Anarchists hold that this should not be. But if an anarchist society were instituted, you may be certain that—since all is permitted—that someone would think it a great idea to hold a beauty contest. Next, someone would institute a lottery. By then, someone would have made a trade that disadvantaged the other trading party. Lacking recourse to legal restitution, the cheated party might retaliate violently. Very soon, some would have more power of various kinds than others. Curiously, the same scenarios could play out in a strictly egalitarian law-enforced society.

At the largest scale, power is manifested through our *economic, political, and military* institutions. Our economic institutions channel, organize and control it through the creation and exchange of property. The political and military institutions seek to channel, organize and control our power over one another through regulation of violence. Our educational, religious and communications institutions seek to channel and control our mental, emotional and spiritual power into the service of the corporate-military agendas. If they fail to fulfill these functions they are effectively consigned to the same externality status to the councils of the powerful as the natural environment and the welfare of the poor.

Economic power is exerted through the possession of either *land, capital* or the capacity to perform *labor*. Capital considers any wealth created in excess of labor's survival needs to be a just reward for its investment. Each one of these economic functions is performed by three occupational categories: the landlord, the laborer (or worker in the broadest possible sense), and the entrepreneur (owner of a business, accumulator of capital, and formulator of business plans). Each category has inherent powers.

The landowner has power due to owning the most valuable, productive, and desirable land. As the demand for valuable land is greater than the supply, the law of supply and demand dictates that the income from rents or capital gain upon sale has an inexorable tendency to increase with increase in population.

The entrepreneur, or the accumulator of capital, has the power to determine what is produced or not and risks profit or loss in the marketplace on the basis of what is sold or not. The laborer, or worker, has no power per se as long as another worker possessing similar skills is available to take the job for the money offered. In practice this means, since no one is indispensable, that there is constant pressure on wages to descend to the level of bare survival. Therefore, the power of the worker is best realized through workers gathering together on an industry-wide and world-wide basis. Another source of worker power is the need of the entrepreneur (and the landholder) for a stable and truly productive work force. In the modern world this cannot be provided without a living wage, a wage which will provide not only the necessities of life but some economic externalities: leisure time, etc.

In the "natural" economy, then, the rewards inevitably drift towards the landowners, investors, and entrepreneurs. Thus, as societies have evolved from tribal to feudal to capitalist, a varying mix of political or military intervention has always been exerted so that the bulk of the population may survive in servitude with at least a marginal sense of equity, while the privileged remain in control.

Our political institutions, premised as they are on political democracy and free enterprise, must of necessity deal with the status quo of the distribution of power and wealth. In regard to this there are two opinions (and a middle point mentioned below). One is that the status quo is justified; that is, those who have more power are justified in having it, and that those who have less power are not unfairly deprived of it. This we generally call the *conservative* viewpoint. That viewpoint holds that if there is to be change it should be a gradual giving of more power to those who already have more power and less power to those who already have less. Further, the politically conservative viewpoint tends to approve of the status-quo in the economic and military spheres, as well. Thus, political conservatives tend to support the agendas of the wealthy and the military. These agendas now control the world's destiny.

There is a middle point that holds that everything should go along exactly as it is. This is the *centrist* position. In the present situation—where the conservative viewpoint holds power—the centrist viewpoint supports conservatism. On the other side of this middle point is the *liberal* position, which is that the gradient of power should be gradually leveled so that those who are presently less powerful should gain power at the expense of those presently more powerful. None of these positions advocate the use of force or the changing of the rules of the game or the institutions which are used to promulgate the rules of the game.

On either side of these two positions are two more extreme positions. To the left of the liberals are the *radicals* who believe that power needs to be given to the dispossessed to a greater degree than the liberals are willing to grant, and that in order to do this, institutions (and the rules of the game) should be changed by coercive measures if necessary. To the right of the conservatives are the *fascists* who hold that the dispossessed need to be prevented from taking power into their own hands by coercive measures. They hold that the rules of the game are subject to being overturned by force if it suits the needs of the ruling faction.

Both fascists and radicals hold in common the characteristic of desiring power wielded by a minority through coercion rather than democratic process. If the minority is even smaller, the commitment to coercion must be even greater so that on the right of the fascist we have the *criminal* and the left of the radical, the *terrorist*.

The circle is closed with the pure *anarchist*, the minority of one, with whom (in direct opposition to the centrist for whom there is *only* political process) political process of any kind becomes a logical impossibility. Both anarchist and centrist are rare birds in their pure forms. This characterization of the anarchist as the violent loner, although the popular one, is at variance with the actual self-image and reality that characterizes

political anarchist's as they exist in present-day (for them) oppressive societies. I resort to the popular definition because, logically, absence of all laws would permit violence.

Each of these eight political orientations has a characteristic relationship to the military and economic levels. Concerning military power, the conservatives, centrists and liberals all support the legitimacy of the existing army and police. The fascists and radicals tend either to attempt to take over the military or build a revolutionary army. Terrorists and criminals are more committed to violence organized by a small band designed, in the case of terrorists, to empower a larger group of dispossessed, or by criminals to benefit a very small portion of the population—themselves.

Economically, the conservatives, representing the wealthy, tend to be fewer in number, but more powerful and focused, while the liberals gain their economic power through the concerted efforts of the greater number of those who are less well off, but fragmented.

Radicals are usually poor, as are fascist troops, although circumstances vary. Ruling fascists have no counterbalance to their increasing wealth except the poverty of their domain. Historically, radicals, when empowered through revolution, have put in place governments not essentially different politically from fascism, resulting in a similar movement of power (if not necessarily of wealth) to the ruling oligarchy at the expense of the populace.

In practice, the eight-fold division of the political spectrum advanced here is not nearly so clear cut. Various economic, religious, and other viewpoints and agendas—to say nothing of intellectual inconsistency—can result in either the hodge-podge of the two-party American system, or the shifting coalitions of many parties often found in European parliaments.

The analysis of power presented so far has taken as its key the homeostatic-seeking metabolic cycle or organic micro-cycle characteristic of all life. The present analysis assumes that human political arrangements and processes are informed by this underlying basis. In addition, different but no less important forms of power assert themselves at the level of the macro-cycle (the entire life of an organism). These are: sexual, age related, and the various kinds of status conferred or deprived by family, clan, community, nationality, ethnicity and race. These powers cannot be gained by coercion, nor can they be bought or sold, nor can they be voted in or out. They can be voted upon, favored, or repressed, however, and therefore vary from society to society and era to era.

The historical subjugation of women has become one of the major issues of the present time. That no ideologically consistent stand is taken here on the many issues raised by contemporary feminism should not be taken as a denigration of the importance of the issues raised. My personal view is that as long as there is a general specialization in sex-roles in society, there will tend to be sex-based allocations of power and that the biologic fact of female child-bearing and suckling makes some degree of specialization unavoidable. If this is so, it would point to the inevitability of at least some degree of ongoing power struggle. And if this is the case, equity demands a level playing field free

of coercion and, particularly, the threat of violence. Further, if the eons of male dominance have produced dangerous imbalances in the human impact on Nature, the survival of the species may depend on the reintroduction to a place of power for feminine wisdom.

The Judeo-Christian tradition enjoins us to honor our mother and father. Reverence for ancestors is a keystone of the Confucian ethic. Parents must have power over their children to insure their old age. In essence, age-related power relationships are independent of politics, economics, and agencies of coercion. In the reality of the fragmentation of contemporary society they are, more often than not, honored in the breach. Equitable and function-oriented age-related power distribution would seem to me to be the natural condition in a prosperous, well-ordered society since there are no in-built irreconcilable conflicts from group to group. We all have been children and, if we survive, will all grow old.

Questions of social status are not so simple a matter. My view is that human nature dictates status as an unavoidable arena of human conflict. In a just society, status will not be enforced militarily, supported by theft, or advanced through fictions. Wisdom, while acknowledging the ubiquity of status, downgrades its importance.

This analysis reveals a great complexity in the sources of and the manifestation of human power one over another. At that, it is an over-simplified view. The categories chosen to facilitate analysis are not airtight but shade one into the other. Location on the political spectrum of right to left doesn't always match up with cultural and class positions to say nothing of the complexities introduced by inclusion of macro-level whole-life considerations. But most importantly, by neglecting to consider the aspects of power on the personal and environmental levels (only on the social level), the parameters and possibilities for the development and expression of social power are also neglected. Inclusion in this analysis of the individual's power of self-realization and the varieties of the natural world's response to humanity's needs and assaults would overburden an already dauntingly complex picture.

Because of the great complexity and interlocking accommodations of social power relationships, the individual concerned with facilitating constructive change is faced with an extremely discouraging prospect. "You can't fight city hall." And even if the quixotic course is chosen, there is all that "water" out there that's already sought its own level. The advocate of social, political, economic, and environmental causes must possess patience in great measure.

On the other hand, the interlocking power accommodations of mature societies develop a rigidity lacking resilience to changed conditions. In our financial, military, and environmental behavior such paralysis has become painfully apparent. Lack of resilience already subjects our society to cascades of crises originating in micro-events. The progressive advocate must be constantly alert to the opportunities and dangers of such cascades.

The formulation of ideas and the dissemination of information are the keys to starting the metabolic wheel of social change to turn. There is no shortcut without backlash. In fact, our most severe current and future crises are, or will be, the result of heedless actions put into motion by concentrations of power that neglect the integrity of organic Nature's metabolic cycles.

As I sit here working on this manuscript, it has no social power whatsoever. If the manuscript sees the light of day, then it will start to exert power over the minds of others to the extent that it alters their thinking, feeling, or actions. It can only begin to exert power on the physical level if a great many people accept its analysis and prescriptions as their own, compatible with others that they believe. This alteration in thinking is the way new institutions and practices—whether of those to be outlined here, or those of others—could be put in place organically.

Territoriality will always be the major barrier to the widespread acceptance of any proposal to increase peace, freedom, democracy, and equity. Indeed, this is the impulse underlying the continuous power struggle characteristic of land-based animal organisms. The amount of productive land is limited. The dominant males of the species wrest and then defend it from the others. The human version of this story constitutes much of what we consider our history.

Modern land ownership characterized by fences erected over an abstract web of legal property lines is thought to be an advantage over possession through exertion of force. It certainly is, to the degree that it limits violence, even given the fact that police and military are considered necessary to enforce the "rights" of land owners. Where the untrammelled right of private ownership fails is, first, with unequal distribution amongst the populace and, second, with incongruence with natural features of the land and the survival needs of the other indigenous species. We tattoo Mother Nature against her will.

My proposals (yet to be made in detail here) are that the concept of land *ownership* be replaced by *usership*, and that existing political boundaries could be overlaid with boundaries based on *watersheds* and patterns of human habitation such as *elementary school districts*. These proposals challenge conventional wisdom. A deep atavistic resonance with instinctual territorial insecurity would thereby easily be aroused. Territorial struggle in its many guises—nationalist, market-share, ideological, sexual, generational, spiritual—gives central meaning to the lives of many people. The next plateau of human evolution is dependant on the elimination of the threat of violence due to territorial struggles, however achieved and wherever encountered.

Before proceeding to the attempt to identify viable strategies for inducing the social metabolic cycle to shift to a progressive direction, it will be useful to lay out in greater detail the nature of the major centers of power and their inter-relations with each other.

The two existential power bases

Let's get down to basics. For most of our existence as a species, we existed in small tribal bands of hunter/gatherers with a power relationship only to our kin and the elements of the environment that impinged on us. As we grew more numerous, developed tools and language, and became more culturally complex, we gradually developed human organizations that employed tools and language in such a way as to become power centers in their own right. Tools and language gradually attained the power to influence the course of people's lives as much as their social milieu and their physical environment do. Nevertheless, in the ongoing story of our species survival, our relation to our environment is critical and precedes and over-rides all other considerations.

Therefore, political power begins with *people*. No people, no politics. The existence of *people* depends on the supportive platform of the biosphere of the *earth*. No *earth*, no *people*. This is the fundamental synergetic power polarity—the arena of the political game.

Six basic organization-based power centers

Now, the people may have government or not, but if not, their politics tends to be more like a continuous argument in a dysfunctional family. We (popularly and incorrectly) call this usually theoretical condition Anarchy. The more people involved, the more some sort of organization wins out over anarchic fragmentation. We call this organization *government*. If governmental organization is so complete as to control the populace completely, we call this condition Totalitarianism. Anarchy and Totalitarianism are the theoretical poles between which the various *styles* (as distinct from political *philosophies*) of government position themselves, but the horrors of Totalitarianism incline most folks to go along with Thomas Jefferson's minimalist prescription for the role of government in our lives.

Further, the people establish governments on the specific *territories* they inhabit on the earth. To secure its territory from competitors, government creates a military establishment, drawn from its people, that it empowers to use violent means to repel invaders, and maybe in its spare time do a little invading itself.

Now, the voice of the people is at all times saying, *I wanna*. The voice of government is at all times saying, *Ya gotta. I gotta? Who says? The police*, says government, *and don't you forget it!* Government, to be effective, relies upon the threat of institutionalized violence to enforce the execution, incarceration, or property confiscation of people unresponsive to its governance. The *police* perform this function for government, until the people start seriously disrespecting government authority, at which point the government augments the police with the *military*. In some countries (fortunately not ours—presently) the military and police function as a monolith.

The people have evolved a complex system of tools, protocols, and modalities for gaining their sustenance from the earth, to wit—the *economy*. The economy has life and death

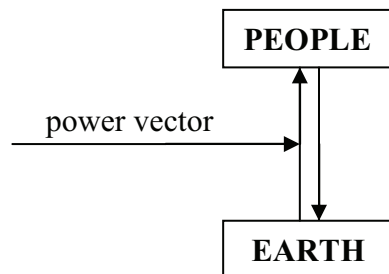
control over the people (no economy gaining sustenance from the earth, no people) and therefore exerts a fundamental power over the lives of the people.

Education is somewhat of a catch all term that I feel forced to use rather than the “secular consensus” which I would prefer, but which would not be meaningful to many people. I mean education to encompass science, the arts, publishing, academia, media content providers and the culture and technology which they invent and employ in order to produce cultural artifacts. Education enables the individual to exert power through knowledgeable communication with others.

Finally, people equipped with the power of knowledge gained through education may still lack a sense of their own long-term personal purpose. Since information and knowledge are inadequate by themselves to provide this direction, our species has universally responded by encoding the wisdom of the philosophy of the elders into *religion*. Even those who deny the claim of religions on their belief system make thereby a power-directing decision in the area of human existence which religions address.

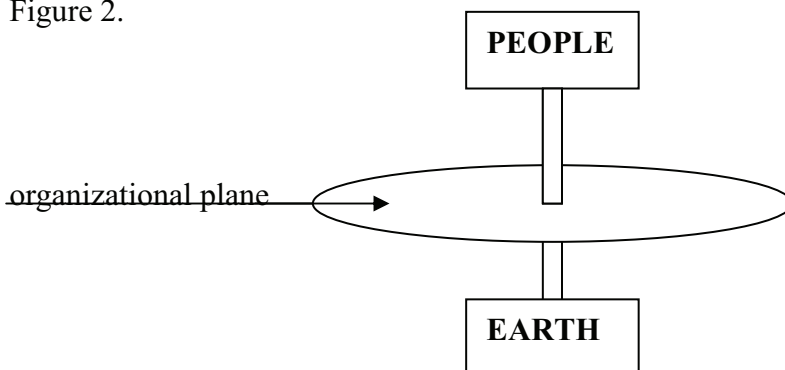
At this point you must be saying, "Where's he going with these obvious pretentious generalities?" Okay, to begin with, I want you to visualize *people/earth* as a vertical (fundamental) power vector

FIGURE 1.



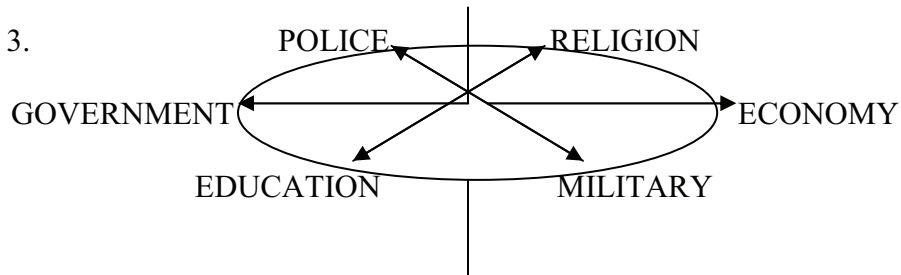
Next, please visualize a plane at right angles to the page on which *organizations* mediate the relation of *people* to *earth*, and the power relations of the constituent organizations to each other.

Figure 2.



Next, please visualize three vectors on that plane: *government/economy*, *military/police* and *education/religion*.

Figure 3.



People/earth is the stage on which the drama is played—thus the conceptualization as a single vector at right angles to the several vectors resulting from social interaction. At any one time, there are a finite number of individual human beings with their collective needs, aspirations, and skills and finite terrestrial resources from which these needs may be gained. Though the people’s needs and wants are infinitely complex, the earth’s resources may be usefully categorized as *earth*, *water*, *air*, *energy*, and the *web of life*. *People/earth* power relations are pretty much givens. Earthquakes, tornadoes, droughts, and famines are insensitive to our pain, and we will ravage the planet in the pursuit of short-range goals like avoiding starvation and putting gas in our SUVs.

Economy/government is the carrot vector. The motivation (power) to provide the goods and services we produce for each other is in-built in the satisfaction we get from consumption and the reward we expect for provision. The motivation to respect governmental edicts springs from a need for stability in our relations with each other and our homeland, and is also in-built. To this end, nations and their constituent localities license, regulate, tax, and protect economic enterprise. Productive enterprise ensures the viability of the state. The power relations between these symbiotic organizations are similar to those between the populace and nature. Either can swallow the other, but in our system, they are thought to function best in balanced separateness.

Police/military is the stick vector. Government credibility demands coercive capability. The people must be restrained from their regrettable tendency to periodically murder, burglarize, and defraud each other. The economy must be kept safe from looting by the people (as well as various economic entities looting each other) and vice versa. This requires *police*. Also, credible government dominion over a particular territory of the earth in the face of potential challenge from other nations demands coercive capability—the *military*. In fact, the fundamental definition of nationhood (which I hope has at least mildly troubled some subscribers to *The Nation*) is “that territory in which a particular military establishment has a legitimate presence.”

The *education/religion* vector is the vector which tells us whether it’s okay or not to dangle the carrot in front of the donkey’s nose and to beat its ass with the stick, not vice versa. The categories of education and religion were chosen to represent, on the one hand, the sources of *objective* knowledge and information that create and maintain the

secular consensus, and on the other, the organizations that channel the *subjective* experience of individuals into shared spiritual and ideological commonalities.

So what's wrong with this picture? Leaving aside its debatable usefulness for the moment, I can see a valid quibble with the formal relationship of the power vectors, one to the other. Although the *earth/people* vector, and the *economy/government* vector both connect symbiotic polar oppositions, the military and police elements of the stick vector are opposed only in the directions that their power is aimed. In other words, unlike vectors connecting opposite polarities, they are a vector that proceeds in opposite directions from a point (the line of, actually) on the countries border. Although this may be esthetically unsatisfying, there seems to me no danger of anyone being misled by neglecting this diagrammatic complexity.

The critical reader should, rather, fear being misled by such massive generalizations, no matter how represented. As expected, exceptions to every categorization can be easily found. Powers (and central functions) can easily leak, or be imported, into another as when private businesses take unto themselves minor police powers by employing security guards. The question here, I think, is: *are these leakages so numerous as to invalidate the integrity of the category?* It seems to me that each of the three polarities modulate power expressions (religious faith/secular consensus, money/votes, coercion/liberty) so inappropriate to the others that excessive leakage (when it occurs) is generally seen as a problem.

A more important objection is that people exert power on each other in a variety of ways. And they organize themselves to do it in large enough numbers to challenge not only my simplistic categorization of power-wielding organizations, but those organizations themselves. I am thinking charities, labor unions, non-profits, organized sports, minority group advocates, organized crime—this kind of list can get extensive. For simplicity, I have chosen to lump these kinds of organizations together as elements of the voice of the people.

The earth, the economy, government, police, military, education, and religion all exert their powers *universally* and *continually* over a nation's people. Non-government and non-corporate organizations can wield considerable (even though contingent) power over the people. But when they really need to have their way, they hector government or the economy to provide the muscle or resort to information gained from education or wisdom gained from the philosophical conviction gained from religion. Name me another power source from which no citizen can hide, and I will cheerfully alter the schematic to include it.

Indeed, the schematic is different in other societies. In the Soviet Stalinist model, government and the economy become one, yielding a two-dimensional diagram. The classical anarchist scheme eliminates the police/military vector, yielding a one-dimensional diagram.

In Part III, I will put forward a proposal for a Watershed Communities pilot project that would alter the diagram by creating a new element within the civil society, which would have as its mandate the provision of the people's basic needs through a separate economy as well as the provision of those needs which are problematic for government. If the pilot were worthy of replication, a constellation of such organizations could result in a civil society network that would be equally responsive to the input of the *people*, *government*, *the economy*, and *the earth* Stewards. I propose placing such a new organizational entity in the exact center of the eight-vector power diagram. The name I have chosen for such an entity is the Basic Economy Network.

It is important to recognize that the categories at the ends of each vector also have power relations to each other. Decisions that take these relationships into account will have a better chance of avoiding unintended consequences.

Please note that it would be a mistake to categorize *individuals* as creatures of only one power center or another. One and the same individual could be a Protestant graduate of Notre Dame, an ardent environmentalist, ex-military, political appointee to directorship of the FBI, who has had to put a large stock portfolio in a blind trust.

Likewise, it would be mistaken to assume that the identification of power centers and their vectors give an accurate picture of “the way the system works.” The scale and diversity of contemporary society absolutely preclude any useful and universal generalization of this kind. Even with such a highly simplified and generalized scheme, the power relations within and between the six organizational power vectors are quite complex. Rather than attempt to list, define, and describe them all, I invite you to peruse the diagram (and the ones to follow) so that you may refer back to them, if necessary. This evasion on my part will enable me to more quickly see if it is possible to define a new progressive political stance of clarity, integrity, and practicality for a government that would truly unite and serve the interests of the people and the earth.

But we're not quite there yet.

Eight basic progressive political agendas

At last, I can now ask you to consider what should be the new progressive agenda for each of the six power centers. But first, let's consider the opposite face of the coin—what I shall call the *regressive* agenda. The regressive's desire for the largely corporate economy is profit/growth, and for the earth, a source of extractable real estate. His agenda for the military is victory; for the police, the citizen's obedience; for the government, plutocracy. And for the people, the regressive desires exploitability as consumers, labor, and cannon-fodder; for education, the inculcation of regressive ideology; and for religion, state-sanctioned fundamentalism.

The regressive viewpoint is quite self-consistent. It springs from the notion of *competitiveness* as the first fact of human existence, from which it postulates the primacy of acquisition of money and power as everybody's proper (and unavoidable) first priority.

As salutary an agency for the curbing of sloth and complacency among the general populace as this mindset is, and as effective as it is in sweeping all other agendas aside, it is beset with certain problems. Carried to its logical extreme, war, slavery, and widespread poverty are its inevitable consequences. Also, apparently, bad art and stretch limos.

On the other hand, the enhancement of cooperation should be at the heart of all new progressive goals. The eight new progressive goals ought to be:

equity to all participants in the *economy*;
sustainability for the earth's biosphere;
disuse of military force, a condition known as *peace*;
minimum *policing* in a context of maximum *freedom*;
government by *democracy*;
the *people* engaged in the pursuit of happiness;
education engaged in the pursuit of truth;
and *religion* focused on the spirituality of the individual.

The cooperative ideal taken to its extreme in any one of the eight arenas can have negative side effects in the other seven. We are only one of Nature's creatures. If we look elsewhere in Nature we see cooperation and competition inextricably bound to each amongst all species at every scale of every ecological niche. If cooperation is yin and competition is yang, then balance should be the goal. The new progressive viewpoint is that, in our yang dominated society, the balance is tipped too far in the yang direction.

Unfortunately, the goal of minimum policing is contradictory, at a certain point, to the goal of maximum freedom. The release of the individual from the fetters of social constraint would appear to be at odds with the goal of increased cooperation. Some individuals so released will be heedless of their neighbor's interests. Others will tend to gravitate toward extreme expression of Dionysian energy. Regressives deeply fear these impulses and would put us all in stocks before allowing it free rein. They not only seize upon it as a contradiction in the progressive stance, but point to it as the inevitable destination of progressive reforms, and demonize it as moral depravity. What they neglect is that this kind of chaotic energy is inherent in humans—if pushed down here, it pops up over there. Under regressive regimes, it pops up as brutal violence. Thus, regressives equate Dionysian energy with violence and believe that hedonism pursued to its extreme inevitably ends in sado-masochism. Progressives need to stand firm in their belief that although the chaotic impulse will find violent outlet in a repressive society, in a more peaceful open society it will find expression in benign ecstasy-producing activities thereby providing relief from the dullness of an otherwise placidly cooperative society. But not on company time, or in the Oval Office, please.

The regressive agenda based on power is already in place. It is concrete, easy to understand and to communicate. Progressives have a more difficult task of getting people to see what is wrong with the present and envisioning a different social organization. As a consequence, the new progressive would be well advised to consider the mutual compatibility of the eight progressive goals one with the other. At first

glance, they seem abstract and diffuse compared to the regressive's concentrated materialism of money and power. Historically, the left has foundered on internecine dispute. My hope here is to contribute to an understanding of where goal-incompatibility is most likely to undermine the sort of emergent consensus required as a basis for effective political solidarity.

Pursuing the eight basic new progressive agendas

Any action taken in any one of the vertices of the eight-pointed model has the potential for unintended consequences in any of the other seven. If one wonders why so many government programs produce unintended consequences, my answer is that the deliberations about the programs use the regressive opposition to look for undesired outcomes. In the political process, the political opposition is relied upon to predict politically unpopular unintended consequences. These are then focused upon by the sponsors, defending or modifying the proposal. The sponsors have no motivation to look for further potential problems hidden in their proposal that affect other programs. Finding problems is the job of the opposition. So, sponsors, feeling successful in implementing their proposal over their opposition's objection, then find they have shot themselves in the foot by causing unintended problems for one of their other agendas. Thus the unity of the eight-agenda model may be of great utility should progressives actually have a chance to run the government.

Let's begin with the necessity for achieving *sustainability* in our relation to the earth. This would, it seems, require a group of full-time professionals—stewards—whose only agenda is discovering and implementing sustainability measures. Such people already exist, but too few in numbers, and too often sponsored by organizations dedicated to a sustainability-independent purpose, such as recreation.

Stewards, to be truly effective, would have to pre-empt a certain amount of the power of eminent domain traditionally reserved to the state, potentially causing wide-ranging side-effects. Their edicts would be unresponsive to the purse of the corporate economy, but they would rely on the coercive power of the police to keep the populace at bay. Thus their edicts would cost the people some of their freedoms, inhibit to some extent their pursuit of happiness, while requiring them to pay taxes to support the steward's activities. Of course, the deterioration of the environment is so far along that some unpopular environmental restrictions obtain already, but are presently far from adequate to ensure sustainability, although onerous to many of the people and much of the economy. Therefore, a political alliance truly committed to sustainability must push for a way to establish effective stewardship, sell it to constituents who feel disenfranchised and impoverished by it, and then sell it to the people over the objections of the regressives. I'm reminded of a t-shirt I saw recently with the legend: help the environment, kill yourself.

But in today's world, establishing effective earth stewardship is the most essential need of the eight new progressive goals. Must the effective pursuit of this goal appear fascist to freedom-lovers, constrictive to business, insensitive to labor and the poor, unresponsive

to the democrat, a threat to "national security," and a big drag to every red-blooded consumerist American? Progressives, environmentalists, and humanitarians need to resolve these contradictions in order to present a unified program to the electorate, and to establish widely understood agendas and ground rules in case they should one day achieve actual political power. Otherwise we will continue on, as now, with ever worse rape of the environment.

By contrast, the fostering of *democracy in government* provides no comparable internal frictions for a new progressive alliance. There are, however, severe problems with American democracy. One is that its intractability to radical change makes it slow to respond to novel threats to the welfare of the people and the earth. As valuable as the stability provided is, the result continues to be institutionalized privilege for wealthy white males and the corporate sector. To reverse the current slide into deeper plutocracy, serious changes in the rules of the game (even by amending the Constitution) need to be made in several areas: taxing the wealthy, reforming campaign finance, de-funding political advertising, instituting proportional representation, deinstitutionalizing the two-party system, achieving greater voter participation, fostering local self-government, defining civil rights as adhering to individuals only, among others.

Also, we should have learned the lesson (hopefully we have) that effective democracy is not always just electing officials, but sometimes requires local civil society initiatives, peaceful civil disobedience, strikes (both labor and rent), and boycotts.

Another problem for the integrity of contemporary American government is posed by certain laws the police are required to enforce, notably related to drugs, immigration, prostitution, and gambling, which seem to invite corruption and violence. As destructive to the integrity of law-enforcement agencies as these tasks are, police integrity is equally challenged by the laws they aren't required to enforce: corporate pollution, much of the underground economy, tax evasion, and their own behavior, for example.

The current problem for progressives in furthering *democracy in government* is wresting public opinion away from regressives on the whole range of progressive issues to the point of being able to elect officials, pass referendums and—necessary, in my view—Constitutional amendments. The Constitution comes from a time when the U.S. population was less than 1% of that of the present, slavery was legal, and corporations were a state-sanctioned, time-constrained novelty.

The *military need for victory* in all of our wars (whether hot, cold, or imaginary) also has undermined democracy in government, distorted our economy, ravaged the earth, and killed many of our people. The "failure" of the Great Society was due to the unwillingness of several administrations to tax the people to pay for military adventures. As long as the military is tied to the government (and how can it be otherwise) the guns/butter tradeoff can always compromise the humanitarian goals of government social programs.

Equity in the distribution of the economy remains a definitional progressive goal. Heretofore, progressives have quarreled only with the inequality-perpetuating profit half of the regressive profit/growth priorities. The demands of the earth now call exponential growth of the economy into question. We decry the ubiquitous poverty of the world's billions, but have no answer to the certainty of increased devastation to the earth's ecosystems by a widespread increase in the standard of living of the poor. The current generation of media-hypnotized young adults, struggling to maintain a middle-class existence in two-earner families, buy the corporate religion of growth uncritically. Many see becoming expert marketers as their salvation—as if everyone could become a shopkeeper. This headset bodes poorly for any environmentalist call by progressives to re-orient growth in the interest of sustainability. This rock and hard place between which progressive policy wonks now find themselves (whether they're willing to face up to it or not) requires major head-scratching if economic reforms advancing equitability are to have a chance of being enacted by democratic means.

The problem of growth vs. sustainability aside, there remains the in-built structural inevitability of increasing income disparity under our present system of corporate capitalism. The drain of interest, rent, and taxes from the individual to corporations and government (if not balanced by some re-distributive agency) drives down wages and saps individual entrepreneurs. The upshot guarantees bankruptcy for some, poverty for many, in the context of a boom and bust business cycle. This will not change so long as fiat money (created by banks out of thin air) lent at interest must be repaid with real dollars, where socially-generated land values are realized only by landowners, and where taxes go to corporate welfare and bloated armament expenditures. The task for new progressives in fashioning viable alternatives to the present grossly exploitative system, agreeing amongst themselves, convincing the corporate-oriented electorate, electing officials committed to reform rather than defending the narrow interests of their constituents, and effecting reforms without the unintended consequences of major disruptions, is the mother of all daunting prospects.

Finally, *the people engaged in the pursuit of happiness*. We are a fractious lot. We all, with little persuasion, can visualize ourselves as disadvantaged minorities, even those of us so unfashionable as to find ourselves in the category of aging white male. But clearly, some of us have been put upon more than others: racial and ethnic minorities, women, homosexuals, immigrants, disabled, and the terminally weird. Are you human? New progressives should emphasize that, since we are all human, we are all equal in our capacity to feel joy and pain, to think and express individual ideas, and to determine our actions. We therefore deserve equal treatment from social power structures. This presents no contradictions to the progressive stance relative to the other seven power centers. A hundred years ago, the populist movement, though progressive for its time, was heavily racist and sexist. Although the various isms are still, sadly, with us, progress has been made, and the various minorities have political platforms in place for working toward equality. Today, inflated postures of victim-hood (and minorities making support for their cause be everyone else's litmus test) pose major political challenges to any united movement. There needs to be a clear realization that freedom entails the

acceptance of diversity of opinion (whether rational and compassionate or not) that will not always favor the interests of the particular group with which we identify.

New progressives should unite to oppose overt, harmful actions and discriminatory practices in the economy, unfair laws by government, brutality and civil rights violations by the police and imperialist military adventures. Education and increased familiarity can be used (and supported through personal effort and voluntary agencies in the civil society) to reduce unfair and hurtful discriminatory opinion. Many have held that the progress of the people is contingent, not upon successful political struggle, but upon our general and universal spiritual growth. The practical progressive can point out that the two means to the same end can be symbiotic, and then acting in ways that support that hope.

It seems to me that the essays I have read that attempt to define and promote contemporary progressivism fail to focus on the problems and possibilities inherent in the task of organizing a synergetic and effective new progressive alliance. It is my hope that working toward a more cooperative and less competitive society that manifests peace, freedom, equity, and democracy will enhance people's possibility of living purposeful, positive lives on an earth with a stable biosphere.

Conclusion

The new progressive political activist's most immediate goal should be the shaping of public opinion according to a new narrative powerful enough to displace the conservative narrative huckstered into place by Reagan. Presenting a coherent yet rigid-ideology-averse image to the electorate is essential, as is being unafraid to identify and excoriate regressiveness. Focusing this information on the young will excite a resonance in some of them, and more will join when general conditions worsen. Although never having experienced anything other than life under a biased conservative media, they haven't the investment in the conventional wisdom afflicting their elders. They can be led to reflect on whether they want to spend their lives putting a hypocritical bright face on the mean-spiritedness inherent in enforced competitiveness for money and power.

For right now, progressives need to do a lot of homework. They need to have the courage to face up to the catastrophic problems looming over the horizon, before which our present leadership capitulates in advance. A new narrative of national purpose is needed by a populace now wedded to the mindlessly optimistic imperialist/exceptionalist hubris. As long as the poor are not actually starving, as long as we choose to ignore American soldiers coming home in body bags, people feel no need to rock the boat or change its course. Election of progressive-minded officials in the corporate-dominated national media environment will remain difficult and infrequent. If elected, they are forced to compromise with impregnable corporate/military power.

Our present course, however, is clearly unsustainable. The longer it continues, the greater the inevitable catastrophe. In my view, at present new progressives can most effectively focus their efforts by concentrating on local issues and constituencies, braving

oppressive tedium by getting on school boards and city councils, and by continuing to educate themselves and others. But here, the intrepid activist risks the bad luck of lacking neighbors like those they would have in Lake Wobegon where “all the children are above average,” but may face instead those who are sunk into varying degrees of sloth, nihilism, and bigoted self-hatred—and that could be the sanguine assessment. We must learn to expect the unexpected wherever human social interaction is involved. Emergent facts may open closed minds and soften hardened opinions. The capacity for resilient response must be cultivated.

In the longer view, as progressives understand how corporate and military agendas dominate national government, they can search for ways to weld the appropriate elements of civil society into a locally-based yet nationally networked (but non-governmental) means to promote human welfare and ecological sustainability programs. The problems with governmental solutions to these problems are the result of give-a-little get-a-little tradeoffs couched in terms of monies taxed or disbursed and police-backed directives. Local civil solutions, on the other hand, would be more amenable to hands-on democratic negotiations on specific actions such as how much and what kind of food (and to whom) should go to anti-malnutrition efforts, or how to implement conservation/reforestation plans. Government (or corporation) money from distant impersonal sources gets raked off by administration or profiteers, while punitive laws set avoidance games in motion. Human welfare and sustainability will be better served if ways could be found to target specific local concerns in harmony with regional guidelines, democratically negotiate those concerns, propose and negotiate solutions, and then configure the energy to implement them. These negotiations should be insulated from arm-twisting by non-resident corporations and landholders. As the crisis deepens, the constant pressure of local civic consensus will become more effective in promoting earth-friendly and community-fostering initiatives than threat of fine and imprisonment from afar.

This is not to say that political activism at national scale is a waste of time. Indeed, the greatest threats to environmental health and human welfare posed by the web of global government/corporate oligarchs can *only* be met at the scale at which those threats are being imposed. It *is* to say that the current probability of these forces being beaten back in time to prevent catastrophe seems slim. The global/national environmental/progressive agenda must be reinforced by initiatives at the local level—particularly educational, communitarian, and environmental ones—in order to have any hope at all for achieving sustainability at whatever the level of government/corporate activity will allow.

In the meantime, life goes on. Closed out of the national political arena, some progressives seek to realize their aspirations as best they can within the belly of the monster by embracing a variety of cultural pursuits: local activism, working for non-profits, artistic lifestyles, applied Luddism, voluntary simplicity, boycotting no-choice elections, sexual adventuring, breaking down racial and gender barriers, and piercing their bodies in places offensive to the squeamish. As worthy as alternative and radical culture is in actualizing freedom, the advancing hold of corporate culture on the fabric of the people's lives most characterizes these times. Both curbing our self-indulgent

individualism, and satirizing and debunking our Dilbert-ness, should be continuing projects.

The effort I am trying to make here in the cause of sustainable civilization seeks to unearth the deepest roots of our problems with Nature and each other, and then to imagine cooperative organizational initiatives that are free from these impediments. If one is to embark on such an ambitious path, one needs to feel confident in one's information sources, one's logic in performing analyses and constructing syntheses, and one's moral foundation. Consequently, the reader has a right to expect a window into these processes. I would refer such a reader to Appendix I

Facing the Sources of Societal Dysfunction

Too many of America's young seem oblivious to the true challenges of our era. They seem hypnotized by the lure of personal fulfillment in a virtual world populated mostly by virtual-world playmates much like themselves. No matter their real-world condition, they seem disconnected from their virtual-world's origin in the real-world of hard, sweaty labor. Meanwhile, their elders escape in their SUVs to the golf course. For all of us, young and old alike, surviving indigenous societies provide a useful experience of what real life was like up until the last few hundred years. If we are truly to embrace a path to local community based on the commonality of basic human need and a sustainable balance with Nature, we would be well advised to seek guidance from surviving indigenous cultures, while avoiding the temptation to either emulate or "civilize" them.

In the last few hundred years an already highly advanced level of human cultural evolution served as the foundation for an ever-quickening crescendo of scientific and technological discovery and innovation. This symbiotic, progressive harnessing of humanity's intellect and skill had no counterpart in the vastly slower rate of human genetic evolution. Thus, technology became a spear in the hand of a cave-man body dressed in a business suit. With virtual sight and sound, technology embraced the function of sensual gratification as well as those of weapons and tools. Again, this to a body and brain of unchanged ancient origin.

We humans apparently differ from all known animal species in having a recursive sense of our own personal identity as separate from our surroundings. With this comes the sense of our own mortality, and with that, a tendency toward anxiety about the future resulting in speculative planning and the asking of unanswerable questions. The nature of our social relations spring not only from our genetically in-built survival and reproduction drives, but from the specifically human sense of personal responsibility for our own actions (or the denial thereof) toward others. The volatile nature of the interaction of these forces within the human psyche makes for an unpredictable actor in social relations. Gandhi and others have stressed the need for general human evolution (rather than any plan devised by the intellect) in order to achieve stable and non-violent human social relations.

Failing this, we have institutionalized regulation of our relations with each other. Unfortunately, the social institutions set up by humans tend to enshrine violence, greed, and ignorance in the process of channeling them.

Money

Take money, for instance. Money (as presently created and used) is a figment of the imagination of the wealthy. Those who create and own it define it in such a way as to benefit themselves. The public—utterly dependant on commerce for survival—view the stability of the store-of-value function of money with some anxiety, as something outside their control. In actuality, the public trust, an abstract shared concept, is the foundation of monetary value.

The necessary invention of a medium of exchange has given way to a medium for the automatic increase in the value of money by those accumulating an excess amount of it. Money is a device invented for the quantification of an abstract concept—credit—that freed exchanges of goods from the shackles of barter (see Greco). Credit is further abstracted by governments that issue money based on nothing but their own fiat. Counterfeit is just as real until caught out. A young person who is raised to believe in this kind of money is already in a virtual world.

Money was invented to replace barter in the exchange of goods. Goods are valuable objects, generally symbolized by nouns. Productive labor, on the other hand, is humanly expended effort over a period of time, generally symbolized by verbs. Money grew from the need to facilitate the barter of goods. Only much later did money come to be used to compensate labor. Since the kinds of values inherent in useful objects and useful actions are inherently different, the introduction of wages immediately changed the social contract. But since the peasant and artisan were already at a disadvantage, wage-slavery was not immediately protested. When it was, the protest focused on wage rates and capital-ownership rather than the medium—money—which, when used to equate objects with human work-time, made exploitation inevitable. By equating human life with objects, human life is devalued to the level of exploitability deemed appropriate for non-human objects. What was originally devised to replace barter in the exchange of goods now equates objects (goods) with productive actions (hourly wages).

Over the course of time, a wild variety of monetary instruments have evolved. Metals, certificates of deposit, checks, stocks, bonds, debentures, futures, mortgages, IOUs, scrip, vouchers, food, postage and tax stamps, poker chips, subway tokens, tickets, rebates and discount coupons are all forms of money. Such proliferation suggests that monies are invented instruments; that they are not any kind of independent abstract form of measure, like the meter.

Were it not for the universal need of it, the credibility of money as it exists today would be seriously problematic. Most vexing, money is a rubber yardstick. Its actual purchasing power varies greatly over time, from country to country, class to class, and medium to medium (whether gold, paper or digital code). It depends totally on the

discipline, integrity, foresight, and expertise of the various public or private issuing and regulating authorities, all of whom are at the mercy of varying and differing agendas.

Economics is not a science. It is more like a church with many apostate factions, depending on philosophy and constituency. Sciences deal with objective quantitative information. Economics, like ethics and esthetics, deals with values. Values are qualitative and subjective. The vast amount of quantitative economic statistics, no matter how scrupulously gathered in terms of scientific methodology, serves only to put a hard objective surface on a very slippery subjective core.

Monetary practices have evolved to suit the needs and agendas of those who coin, hold, and use money—historically, the ruling classes. Today those classes are composed largely of the gamblers in the global financial casino and the leadership of the trans-national corporations who effectively control (if not outright own) the marketplace where they will live or die on the strength of their leveraging and marketing skills.

Thomas H. Greco Jr. in his excellent book, Money and Debt, puts it this way:

"The present global monetary system has institutionalized usury and put the money issuing power into the hands of a small banking elite. Money, in most countries, is based on nothing of real value. The central banks limit the amount of money (actually credit) in circulation and manipulate the interest rates which are charged for 'borrowing' it." (pg. 14). "It is impossible for the people, in the aggregate, to ever get out of debt, for to do so under the usury system would require the payment back to the banks of more money than there ever is in existence, and would, furthermore, leave the economy without any medium of exchange. The result is a virtual economic serfdom..." (pg. 16)

Land

Money mercilessly mandates the primacy of price. Take land, for instance. The power to deprive others of occupancy gives land monetary value. The degree of willingness by others to either rent or purchase land sets its price. Ricardo's Law of Rent states: "The rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use." The 19th century American economist Henry George pointed out that if all the land on which a society resides is owned by only a portion of that society, and if all the rest must pay rent to occupy it, then the landowners, as a group, possess a monopoly on the fundamental precondition of life itself. The collection of rent on that land constitutes an unproductive tax on both labor and capital.

Land so valued needs to be enclosed with a fence, much as a tomcat marks his territory. In addition, the fence must be defended by the police. The value of land depends on a functioning infrastructure of institutionalized coercion, as well as the soundness of the currency that value is measured in.

The protocols surrounding the division, possession, and use of land descend from military conquest. Even though individuals are persuaded that they can "own" land, the state

retains eminent domain and makes continued possession contingent upon payment of taxes. In the final analysis, the state—the successor to the original conqueror—allows us the illusion of private land ownership only as long as it suits its purpose. To be born in this country gives one no special claim to occupation of any part of it that is not secured through tax-validated purchase or rent.

The evolution of Land as property & Money as wealth

How did this come to be, this invisible web of Euclidian lines over the land held in place by equally ephemeral monetary numbers? Not so long ago, most nations were ordered on a feudal basis. Because of its ubiquity, feudalism must be considered a way station on the path of cultural evolution from tribalism to modern civilization that is deeply rooted in human nature. The ruling lords held dominion over their lands and all its occupants by virtue of hereditary title gained by the most recent successful invading or defending military leader. The peasantry had their assigned plots that came with the duty to pay taxes and serve in the lord's armies. This arrangement assured that the peasants—the majority of the population—lived at subsistence level. The only escape was to join the merchant and artisan class in the towns and cities or to become a retainer to the aristocracy. Occupancy of the land was at the whim of the lords and taxes were exacted in coin or produce. Because the illiterate peasantry had only the power of their productivity, revolt against the lord (who was, after all, their protector from invasion) was doomed. Feudal societies of this kind were more or less stable over hundreds of years. However, they were economically stagnant because of, among other reasons, the use of precious metals as currency which the lord's taxes diverted to warfare and aristocratic luxury. In addition, pre-Renaissance Europe abided (mostly) by the New Testament's ban on usury. There was no escaping the unforgiving calculus of growing enough food in order to have a surplus to bring to market to earn enough coins to pay rent and taxes. It may have been a harsh regime, but its elements were entirely and inescapably palpable to its participants.

The Renaissance was fueled by a growing merchant class that was itself fueled by increasing use of credit in monetary transactions. Similarly, the Industrial Age was fueled by the expansion of credit instruments and the codifying of corporate business models. The present era extends the ephemeralization of money to the point where trust becomes crucial. In an environment where trust is in doubt, the monetary system could conceivably collapse, indeed, would have very recently had the government not intervened. What began centuries ago as a very solidly "lived-reality" sort of Nature-rooted medium of exchange has ended in a mist of abstraction, estimates, projections, tax-incentives, extrapolations, and leveraged securities.

One characteristic that has remained constant as monetary systems have evolved is the search for a monetary equivalent to the miracle of Nature's growth processes. The farmer plants and reaps but the crop does the growing, blooming, and fruiting itself. The expectation of this kind of fecundity has always been part and parcel of any kind of credit. The extension of credit depends on the lender's willingness to absorb risk, which

is dependent on the lender's assumption that the borrower will put the money to profitable use. This justifies a fee on the lender's part that can be defended as a fee for service rather than usury in the biblical sense. The problem with this is that eventually the rate of interest becomes the obsession of those controlling the flow of what started out to be a medium of exchange. When interest and dividends become the primary good in the system, the function of money as a medium-of-exchange commons in the society becomes not the basis, but a manipulable consequence of exchange. The reality is that the growth of monetary values unconnected to actual products and services only produces debt, not the hoped-for magical fecundity of Nature.

Another constant characteristic of monetary evolution has been the continuous utility of money and its protocols to serve as a bulwark in the maintenance of class distinctions. Although the institution of political democracy has shorn the aristocracy of its hereditary right to rule, its extensive rentable land-holdings—continually more valuable as population increased—combined with its inherited, continually interest-augmented, financial wealth enabled its leading families to retain self-perpetuating control over their host society.

Corporations

In the capitalist world corporations are the major player in the economy—so much so that just one of them can determine not only the economic welfare of its host city, but can exercise national and international reach. If corporations were set up for the purpose of ensuring the welfare of all citizens as well as the health of Nature on which we all depend, there would be less reason to object to their power. But they are not. The ubiquity and immense power of this form of organization demands detailed examination.

The corporation's sole *raison d'être* is growth and profitability. Service to the public and fair reward to employees are among the costs of doing business. The lack of personal accountability (other than capital risk) of the stockholder, and limited responsibility of the hired managers creates an entity with huge power in the marketplace (which it also tends to own) without being charged to take responsibility for its actions other than to keep honest books, avoid criminality, and to conform to such other strictures as the various agencies of government may enact.

And enact strictures government has: anti-trust, truth-in-advertising, minimum wages, the legitimization of workers' right to organize and strike, pollution penalties, to name but a few, are safeguards used by the public to protect itself from the corporations' immense power divorced from responsibility for the consequences of its exercise.

Even with such safeguards as these in place, the ability of corporations to set the direction for the entire society solely on the basis of their bottom lines has been accompanied by the introduction of the following characteristics into the fabric of contemporary life:

1. The devaluation of human labor through fragmentation, routinization, and automation.

2. Gross inequity in the distribution of income as the rewards flow to the owners of real and corporate property.
3. Achieving the power to control governments for their own benefit at the expense of—and against the wishes of—the electorate.
4. Enlisting the consumer as an unpaid member of the workforce.
5. Refusing to accept responsibility for harm caused by corporate actions unless they result from illegalities, in which case their redress is fought tooth and nail in the courts.
6. A contentious atmosphere surrounds all productive enterprise. Business fights governmental regulation. Corporations attempt to starve and devour each other. Management employees claw their way to the top, as workers (seeing their real wages declining) either organize against management or kill themselves in an effort to be more productive than their co-workers. Consumers attempt to gain recompense for deaths, injuries, and poisonings. Companies hire ever more security guards to protect against shoplifting and looting.
7. The elevation of money, as the symbol of wealth, to the status of ultimate value in which all other values are soluble.
8. The perpetual anxiety experienced by property owners and wage-earners alike over the ups and downs of the business cycle.
9. A financial establishment whose mechanisms of credit and exchange dictate the enslavement of millions in life-long debt.
10. The growth of multi-national corporations spreading the corporate power of the host nation into foreign nations, exporting corporate risk globally, and promoting tax avoidance
11. Hiding funds in foreign tax havens
12. The human misery and environmental destruction caused by the neo-colonization of equatorial peoples.
13. Indoctrinating the public with the fraudulent notion that all new technology is an unalloyed good.
14. Indoctrinating the public with the fraudulent notion that maximal employment of technology will lead to (at some undisclosed point in the future) a shorter work-week with no loss of pay.
15. Reliance upon, and consorting with, the military for mutual growth.

16. Readiness to enjoy the profitability of the weapons trade in peace and to equip opposing armies (often both sides at the same time) in time of war.
17. Removing the direction of the country from democratic control.
18. Relieving the government of its right and responsibility to effectively charter and regulate corporations.
19. Corrupting the regulatory and procurement functions of government at all levels.
20. Pollution of the land, water, and air.
21. Indifference to irreparable topsoil erosion, deforestation, and species extinction.
23. Participating in the starvation of public education.
24. Shaping of education to fit corporate agendas.
25. The demise of the extended family, historically; as well as current attacks on the integrity of the surviving nuclear family (such as the necessity for bi-spousal employment, TV Pied Piperism, money-problem divorces, promoting worker mobility, child-targeted advertising).
26. Creation and control of mass media as a vehicle for advertising corporate wares.
27. Cultural de-evolution, i.e., "no-brainer" and grand-guignol entertainment, resulting from corporate mass-marketing displacing ancient artistic traditions.
28. Using mass media to, if not actually glorify violence, to pander to the mass public's fascination with its depiction.
29. Muzzling or buying out of intellectual and artistic creativity contrary or unrelated to corporate agendas.

If the above depiction of the negative influence of corporate culture seems excessive, consider how ubiquitous is the image of the corporation as the source of all things desirable in the daily blizzard of advertisements and media hype. In fairness, many of the phenomena listed above are as much caused by technologization as by corporate fiat, although the two are nearly always intertwined. Also, the willingness of the public to be seduced by disguised appeals to carnal appetites must not be neglected in any fair-minded assessment of corporate culpability.

All of these characteristics are morally questionable either because they are violent in and of themselves, or because they create conditions destined to promote violence down the road. They do this by institutionalizing the predatory aspect of human nature at a time

when humans gain sustenance increasingly from each other rather than directly from Nature. They do this by pursuing activities unsustainable in the long-run. They do this by placing greater value on property-owning than wage-earning; on marketing than producing.

These, then, are the by-products of a form of organization whose stated justification for existence is its proven ability to most efficiently provide the range of goods and services required by modern civilization in the context of a marketplace where Adam Smith's "unseen hand" will determine the exchanges whose profitability will determine the neo-Darwinian survival of the fittest.

Clearly, the corporate mission must be widened to include the welfare of all of its stakeholders in order to meet the goals of economic justice and respect for Nature. As long as corporate lobbyists retain their stranglehold on democratically elected legislatures this remains an unlikely development. Progressive reform proposals such as stakeholder boards of directors, anti-trust enforcement, the civil rights of personhood adhering only to individuals, and time-limited national chartering—all continuing to have an important place on the political issues spectrum—will continue to lack backers with the power to effect their implementation for the foreseeable future. Progressives can hope for voluntary reform springing from internal realization of the merits of including stakeholders in corporate decision-making. Progressives should not give up the fight for reform, but nobody will be holding their breath. In the meantime, on the organizational spectrum, predatory corporations rule.

The anthropocentric worldview that gave rise to Nature-domination as the central secular ambition has tended to produce economic arrangements founded on greed. The resulting lack of moral integrity in our economic system (false theories, predatory practices, indifference to suffering) threatens its collapse, at the same time that the system's inborn character seems ill-suited to emerging challenges such as rebuilding, sharing, and protecting our commons. The commons collapses under the onslaught of greed. The only non-coercive alternative we have to guilt as the common's protector is individual and social altruism. Altruism—and (if altruism should evaporate) guilt—must replace greed as the motivation for productivity in our economy if our civilization is to survive. Civilization's processes for gaining sustenance from nature are a common enterprise. When viewed from the perspective of the commons, the concept of individual liberty carries with it the concept of individual responsibility. There can be no true individual freedom without the individual's acceptance of responsibility for actions taken. Thus it makes it the moral duty of every individual to contribute to the common welfare. This conclusion is at the heart of the Watershed Communities concept.

To the extent that governmental edicts are backed by coercive threat, government laws and directives are outside the bounds of the present discussion. The information behind laws and directives may be judged for authenticity, but the edicts themselves possess automatic credibility—independent of their content—because they are backed by the threat of coercion. Only if government agencies lack coercive credibility do its edicts

loose their status as premises beyond contention. (If morality addresses the heart, government addresses the bone and muscle. Only the brain values pure information.)

Information, Logic, and Emotion, and the New Progressive Agenda

The logical validity with which information is joined into arguments should determine credibility as much as the source. For instance, I may think of the present effort as philosophical exposition because of the subject matter, degree of abstraction, and reasoned argument. You, on the other hand, may find it to be a string of unsubstantiated statements, uber-generalizations, and invented co-relationships, fashioned into a narrative with a predetermined end—a mere fantasy, even if a rather elaborate and generally rationally coherent one.

But then, *all* plans plunging into an unavoidably unknown future are fantasies. The reader is encouraged to judge the credibility of the current concatenation of conclusions in the context of his or her subjective lived experience. Unfortunately, if that experience is contextualized by the corporate media or fundamentalist dogma, multiple logical disconnects must be anticipated.

The logical travesties common to political debate (according to Wikipedia) such as: name-calling, equivocation, straw man, ad hominem, appeals (bandwagon, authority, genetic, antiquity), change of subject (red herring), “two wrongs don’t make a right,” irrelevance (novelty, pity, popularity, poverty, wealth, power) need not concern us much here. You are not being hectored to come down on my side of any of my arguments. I simply state my conclusions as elements of a world-view that I have acquired. These conclusions are quite outside the current conventional wisdom. They put forward generalities that reasonable people will not buy into, therefore, without first checking their inner compass.

Of greater concern should be flaws in conceptual integrity and linkage brought about by (again, according to Wikipedia) false analogy, generalities (glittering, sweeping, or hasty), tautologies (conclusion contained in premise, false dilemma), half-truth, neglect of scale (human, physical, energetic, spatial, or temporal) division/composition, “true till proven false,” probability errors, causation errors (naturalistic/moralistic assumptions), neglect of proven unintended side-effects, false consequence, correspondence/causation (cum hoc/post hoc), slippery slope, and neglect of environmental, health, and personal cost premises. A tendency to err due to lapses in these kinds of logical formulations would seriously compromise the credibility of a work of this kind. There are many clever ways to be mistaken.

In order to be truly credible in the sense of “could this really happen?” or, “is this anything that I would want to actually see happen?” any scheme for coping with an unknown future must also measure up to our moral and esthetic values. In order to embark on a path with constancy of purpose we must be emotionally convinced that we are doing the right thing and that when we reach our destination it will please us.

The same enshrinement of greed that dictates that the rich must get richer for commerce to go forward, or that dictates that the money-less be deprived of the aboriginal commons selects those who rise to the top of government and industry. As in film and fantasy, the mythic man of action—rather than the virtuous esthete—establishes the tone and sets the pace. He weds cold reason to bold action in the heat of the moment, let the chips fall where they may. If his actions were to spring, instead, from ideas drunk from the well of compassion, the resulting compromised competitive edge would surely be his undoing according to the patriarchal stereotype of the American zeitgeist. But this stereotype is less and less able to cope with the reality it has created.

In the past we modeled our world according to a hierarchy wherein God ruled man, the most powerful men ruled society, and mankind ruled Nature. In the present this hierarchy is under attack from many quarters. As a result, there now exists a complete disconnect between major actors in the public dialog, and between these actors and present-day reality. In the future—when the dust settles—the hierarchy will be reversed; Nature will be seen to rule humanity; social needs will precede personal goals; and deities will be recognized as cultural artifacts. This will not be so because we will it. Our survival instinct will force this reordering upon us. Many have embraced it already.

Pain and dislocation will be unavoidable in a transition to a Nature-dominated rather than an anthropocentric world. We have entered an era calling for leaders in whom deep compassion for the human condition informs daring ideas, judiciously executed.

Although I state these conclusions as facts, they do not at present coincide with the conventional wisdom. Therefore, many might find it of interest to delve further into the ways by which one can arrive at conclusions of this kind. Those interested in the personal processes that have led to these conclusions can find them in the Appendix.

Invented Reality

If the credibility of the various mediating sources of our experience of the material world is so various, what can be said of technological mediation? Is “virtual reality” so utterly ineffable as to verge on the oxymoronic? I speak here not of the high-tech replication sought with holographs and AI programming, but of the everyday information transfer experiences involving only invented content electronically transmitted and displayed. Our technology has given us devices that overlay authentic organic experience with another layer of visual and auditory electronic analogical simulation. No matter that these devices produce the analogical illusion digitally; with high resolution, the illusion is seamless—if two-dimensional—except for the devices and their tangles of wires.

Although the actual event of human/device interaction is authentic reality, the audio-visual content is synthetic and therefore a mediated abstraction of reality. However, live telecasts are minimally mediated and therefore are of maximal credibility. The camera and the microphone give two-dimensional analog-like access; the computer codifies it; the telephone lines either transmit it directly or to broadcasters; and the screen and

speakers reconstitute it. As soon as information streams are edited (mediated), credibility starts to erode.

So what then of invented information streams that are mediated from the outset? Except for live footage of un-staged events, nearly all virtual “reality” is of this kind. Because we experience this input as a component of our authentic experience, it takes on a certain claim to reality depending on its resonance with previous experience. Constant repetition—the advertiser’s Pavlovian stock in trade—provides that resonance. The assumption that this same input is being simultaneously ingested by millions of others adds weight to what is (at least partially) illusory information. As a consequence of this, things are widely believed for which there is little evidence. This is especially so if the public illusion serves the existing power structure.

In America, the greatest part of that illusion is grounded in unstated, unproven premises. Some of these are:

- America (and Americans) define the good; we are therefore justifiably self-righteous.
- Normal Americans have jobs, shop at giant super-markets and malls, own at least one car, patronize professional sporting events, prefer rock, rap, CW, R&B, funk, and disco, attend church, celebrate Christian holidays, and feel empowered to deny personal responsibility when things go wrong.
- All foreign nations are actual or potential enemies.
- All wars involving the American military must be fought on foreign soil.
- American military personnel, by putting their lives on the line, defend the freedoms which we otherwise would not have.
- One dead or missing American is worth more attention than any number of foreigners.
- National security, defined militarily, is of first priority.
- Becoming wealthy is a universal desire; possession of wealth an absolute good.
- The elitism of esthetes and intellectuals is pathetic and deserves derision.
- A growing economy benefits all participants.
- Government is less efficient at providing goods and services than the private sector.
- The free market’s unseen hand distributes goods better than any contrived system.
- Lower taxes are an unqualified good.
- Fear of monopoly is trumped by need for economy-of-scale and/or risk management.
- Freedom is an absolute good that should be extended to business, media, and religious organizations to the same degree as it is to the individual.
- American Judeo-Christian religious institutions are normal. All others are not.
- The profession of atheism, though a protected right, is the kiss of death for political aspirations.
- The concept of freedom excludes individual sumptuary freedom.
- The public would rather be entertained than informed.
- The important things about politics are the “fight,” the race, and who wins or loses.

One would hope that there would be some mechanism in place that would allow these media narrative premises to be debated. Rather, they lurk as the sub-text of every news

event reported by the corporate media, and all of its editorializing. Also, Luddism and Malthusianism, long excluded from serious public debate, now emerge as relevant topics for reasonable people to consider.

Viewed from the standpoint of homeostatic cyclical vectors, mass-media information is uni-directional. If the medium is television, the information flow is not only uni-directional but is a bi-sensory simulation of authentic experience that discourages critical thinking in the viewer any deeper than a visceral urge to click the remote. Ads and information content radiate outward and are reflected only marginally by subscriptions and letters to the editors, but mainly as purchase of advertised items. Publishers, editors, and advertisers deduce from these revenues the appropriate response in terms of future editorial content and ad placement.

Of equal importance are the potential information streams *excluded* by editorial fiat. The decision to establish profitable private business enterprises supported by advertising revenues as the sole outlet for broadcast mass-media resulted in an unavoidable pro-wealth media bias. By design, the whole enterprise became advertising driven; content functioned to deliver the audience. Content editors could not afford to sneer at their boss's pandering to advertisers. In fact, over time they have been forced to become competitors in stridentness and entertainment value for the listener/viewer's attention, no matter the challenge to credulity. All corporate mass-media content is generically highly suspect.

Not that state-sponsored and controlled media would have necessarily provided more reliable information. For self-serving hidden agendas, the propaganda of totalitarian regimes puts the commercial advertising and business-friendly editorial content of the corporate media to shame. However, the non-commercial BBC and NPR are generally thought to be more reliable because they attract an educated audience that values credibility.

The Internet

The observations made here so far have been focused on the pre-Internet mass-media. The advent of the Internet has changed everything—except that the same players and their agendas are still in place. Major—and epochal—changes have resulted from an order of magnitude increase in information quantity combined with the Internet's inherent interactivity. The Internet's interactivity renders information flow bi-directional. The previous electronic communication innovations increased the speed and reach of corporate and government sponsored information. The Internet has altered the way in which business and politics are actually done, further entrenched the conventional wisdom, as well as broadening the reach of the secular consensus.

The potentially infinite increase in sheer volume of information has enabled the widespread dissemination of information of psychotic lunacy as well as valuable well-proven facts that otherwise would languish in obscurity. So far, the spirit behind advocacy of free expression has been strong enough to counter calls for Internet

ensorship. The Internet came into being driven by the urgent need of scientists and military professionals to share data broadly and instantaneously. It would have probably remained the tool of those privileged few regarded as essential to national security were it not for its obvious appeal to commercial interests. As it had been with radio and television, it was decided that the use of the Internet by the public at large would be financed by commercial advertising. All considerations of 1st amendment rights aside, its utility as an advertising medium (together with the sheer volume of increased advertising content) dictated that censorship was off the table. As a result it carries every kind of pornography, major subversions of intellectual property rights, abundant tools for identity theft, spam with enormous band-width appetite, and all manner of viruses. Not only must the individual protect him/her-self from fraud and dis-information, but the society must protect itself from possible Internet sabotage due to our newfound dependence on an advanced technological tool.

We are no longer at the beginning of the personal computer/Internet revolution, but we are a long way from its end. At one and the same time, many innovative possibilities await exploration while that which now exists begs for rationalization. Now may be as good a time as any to contemplate Internet use from the standpoint of organizations. Do the users of the Internet constitute a membership of an organization? Certainly not in either the usual sense or the senses that I proposed in introducing the concepts of arch-orgs and dem-orgs. The term “Internet super-highway” has lapsed into the disuse fated to all over-used cliches, but its two components do have relevance to a controversial theme in contemporary political polemics: the commons. All fundamentalist privatizers to the contrary, roads are a territorial entity held in common by the public. The functional essence of the Internet is its commonality to its users. And yet the owners of ISPs, servers, telephone lines, cable companies, and all other actual technological entities are private for-profit businesses—the whole enterprise financed by advertising. Many of these businesses have monopolistic market-share and pricing power, and some are multi-nationals. Thus, in practice, a newly essential synthetic technologized public common space has been originated as profit-driven private property. Rather than an organization, individual Internet-users have become, essentially, tax-payers to the corporate-arch-org owners of the information commonality. These owners find it profitable to define progress as the continual addition of bells-and-whistles and other entertainment values requiring ever-expanding band-width. Thus the use of the commons for the common good, while left intact (and probably actually growing), is marginalized under the weight of digital schlock. As I write, corporations are trying to increase their control over Internet use by blocking or slowing down access to sites that don’t contribute to their profits. On the one hand, Internet-owner corporations must feel that since they own it, they ought to be able to deliver it to the public on terms rewarding to them, and on the other, that profit earned by poorer service will come back to haunt them.

The trajectory of this argument requires reiteration of the importance I attach to recognizing the varying characteristics of *individual* human beings, their *society*, and their *environment*. As has been previously observed, the world’s air, water, and land—our aboriginal environment—constitute a natural commons. As civilized societies evolved, dependence on our natural environment has been gradually augmented (and/or

replaced) with human innovations that mandate interdependence of individuals one with another. All of these innovations, whether technological or institutional, have required human effort and ingenuity to create and maintain. Both the original and continuing effort of this ongoing process prompt those doing the work to claim ownership of the resultant material and intellectual capital goods. On the face of it, these claims would appear to be justified not only as due recompense for past performance, but as a profit-extraction motivator for the future.

However, my non-ownership view of your ownership of the necessities of my civilized existence should be tolerated by me only if you take a corresponding responsibility for my welfare. Slave-owners were motivated to take responsibility for the basic welfare of their human property because failure to do so diminished their capital. Wage-slaves and agribusiness-fed consumers, though enjoying “freedom,” do not share the same level of concern from the owners of the means that satisfy their essential needs.

The implementation of the commercial Internet has resulted in transactional efficiencies of such magnitude that older forms of communication are being discarded. For business, Internet dependence has become the norm in a mere decade. At the same time as creating the transactional commons of the virtual marketplace, the Internet has created an informational commons without precedent. As Jarod Lanier has pointed out, many in the computer and software engineering community have recognized the inherent commonality of the digital programs central to Internet functionality by advocating free access to program’s source code. At the same time, the creative engineers are the only ones with the depth of knowledge and expertise to defend the net from the most sophisticated hackers. On at least one emergency, they have done so without informing their “bosses.” Who owns the Internet? The providers of its technology and infrastructure would like to, but cannot because the Internet is dependent on a vast number of freely provided contributions originating in the analog processes of individual consciousnesses and freely shared among creators and users. The technological providers, because of the vast—potentially universal—scale of the Internet, are large corporate organizations that can seek to influence individual decisions but are unable to control them. Central control kills interactivity. Ironically, profit-motivated investment aimed at extending corporate control over civilized life has invested in a communications revolution inherently antithetical to the corporate agenda of complete risk-free control of their cash-cows, if not antithetical to their profits. Later, we will look more closely at the commons/private-ownership divide in other areas of humanly created commons.

As well as creating a beneficial new tool for interactive communication, the Internet has fostered activities with darker implications. Despite the virtuous counter-example of a new infusion of vigor into politics, the explosion of the Internet has revealed, once again, the full extent of human culpability. The more we change, the more we reveal our essential nature. That the development of computer programming should be followed so closely by hacking, viruses, and election fraud should tell us something about the ineradicable nihilism lurking in our natures. It appears that for every thing built up, there is someone right there waiting to tear it down—especially so with systems. For every delectable new technological miracle there is some teen-age boy ready to pour sand in the

gears. Jarod Lanier adds to the list of negatives an unintended consequence of digital dependence: the tendency to subjugate human values in order to conform to the computer's inherent under-representation of reality. He further decries the mean-spirited "trolls" and the troll packs they form emboldened by the anonymity of their posts. Any Internet presence established for the purpose of being the voice and/or modus operandi of a dem-org is well advised to formulate itself so as to defend against these behaviors.

Personal computers connected by telephone lines promised information communication at the credibility level of pure mathematics. Strict obeisance to the warning "garbage in, garbage out" could enable widespread dissemination of an ongoing widening and deepening of the secular consensus. At present, that kind of information is growing (witness Wikipedia—although Lanier disparages the editorial anonymity), as a needle somewhere in a mountainous haystack.

In its present state of development, the Internet's promise of a secure, unadulterable, useful and reliable information commons is denied us by attacks both from within and without. Revisiting the three-dimensional diagram of organizational power vectors, we see that the line carrying the vectors between the *people* and *education* (I would prefer the term "secular consensus" for our common belief system and its propagation) has been infiltrated and co-opted by the power games of the *economy-government, police-military*, and organized *religion*. The need for us to buy from and work for the *economy*, and to vote for and be ruled by the *government*, trumps the need for us to have uncluttered access to the dependable information we need to shape our lives. Of course, the secular consensus has a penumbra of detritus from the conventional wisdom, and trendy (but untried or unproven) innovations fashioned to meet real or imagined future challenges. Nothing in life is pure, and censorship in the service of flawless information would never achieve its goal—as well as unacceptably hobbling freedom of expression. At least, most profit-motivated, or politically biased, or fear-and-anger-motivated religious, anti-crime, and anti-foreigner covert manipulations are easily detectable by reasoned inquiry.

SUMMARY

I began this meditation by juxtaposing the miracle of our very existence with the growing threats to that very same existence. Organizing to meet these threats seems a quixotic endeavor in the face of ossified power structures with an economic base in thrall to the doctrine of market determinism. Sold on the notion that we are best served by letting the markets determine our future, our leaders are in denial and the people are unquestioning.

The marketplace is a human-created commons. A commons is a social convention allowing all qualified individuals equal access to a territory or utility. Some commons are essential to life. Letting the corporate domination of the commons of the markets determine our collective future appears to be leading us to a disastrous outcome. However quixotic, trying to find a comprehensive way of organizing to meet the growing danger is the most important active way that we can be a link in the chain-of-being of our species and its cultural evolution—indeed, its survival.

It would seem obvious that the first business of any determined, realistic, and humane global effort to address our population and environmental challenges would be the abandonment of technological warfare. To accomplish this we must not only put aside our belief in the inevitability of war, but must put on hold the primacy of our nationalistic identities, and other divisions attendant upon our various conditions of birth. We must focus on finding ways to supplant the entrenched power and wealth of corporate/military patriarchy. Patriarchal power is manifested through hierarchical organizations, so it is important to understand organizations, as such, so that we don't replicate this form of domination in another guise. In order to attack our species' global threats we must form organizations based on *cooperation* rather than *competition*.

I next classify the evolving characteristics of human organizations from the standpoints of several critical concepts: *universality-dictating inescapability* for the individual, *cooperation and competition* for groups of individuals, and human organization's their *origin in, and sustainability within, Nature*. The human organizations with universal and inescapable power over the individual are: family, tribe (in tribal societies only), ethnically exclusive groups, government, business (the economy), police, and military. Organizations with non-universal or escapable power over the individual are: cultural institutions, mass education, and organized religion. Also, the character of organizations varies with geographic and economic scale. Organizations are normally formed for competitive purposes and therefore can achieve universality only by vanquishing their competitors.

Cooperative organizations, conversely, can potentially achieve universality while allowing self-determination to its component parts. Although charitable organizations come close, no realized model for this exists because of predation by competitors. I make distinctions between arch-orgs: ruled by coercive hierarchies, plut-orgs: ruled by wealth hierarchies, and a theoretical construct, dem-orgs: ruled by a reverse hierarchy. I hypothesize that civil society has the potential of being organized as a dem-org if certain conditions are met.

As it is, power is manifested through our *economic, political, and military* institutions. Economic power resides in *land, capital, and labor*. Political power is manifested in so-called democracies through a spectrum of political opinion ranging from that favoring concentration of power by a preferred elite (arch-orgs), concentration of power in the wealthy (plut-orgs), to that favoring spreading of power to the general populace (dem.orgs).

Military and police power are exerted by the threat of coercion through state-sanctioned violence. Also, the power of *social norms*, though highly variable, cannot be ignored. Patriarchal territoriality informs all of the manifestations of power described above. As it is, the collective power of people as individuals, the powers of their various competing organizations, and the power of Nature are all locked in a formation determined by the interaction of their various vectors. The solution to global challenges posed by over-

population, resource-depletion, and global warming require this power gridlock to be freed up.

The eight new progressive goals that I propose in order to prioritize these vital concerns are:

equity to all participants in the *economy*;
sustainability for the *earth's* biosphere;
disuse of *military* force, a condition known as *peace*;
minimum *police*-ing in a context of maximum *freedom*;
government by *democracy*;
the *people* engaged in the *pursuit of happiness*;
education engaged in the pursuit of *truth*;
religion focused on the *spirituality* of the individual.

By contrast, the regressives desire a different set of goals: for the largely corporate *economy*, *profit/growth*; for the *earth*, a source of extractable *real estate*; for the *military*, *victory*; for the *police* the citizen's *obedience*; for the *government*, *plutocracy*; for the people, *exploitability* as consumers, labor and cannon-fodder; for education, the inculcation of *regressive ideology*; and for *religion*, state-sanctioned *fundamentalism*.

To right the imbalances created by the power struggles between existing organizations, civilized humanity needs to reconnect with its original nature. Addiction to the profit/power-oriented invented realities currently dominating our information technology distance our genetic heritage from its connection to Nature. This addiction also damages the potential of advanced technologies such as the Internet.

Our uniquely human sense of reality distances us from Nature by mediating our experience of Nature with anthropocentric concepts. Thus we have come to view land as property, not earth, and come to view the accounting of our transactions with each other as wealth, rather than the actual goods and services bought and sold. The illusion of private land ownership descends from military conquest by the state to which the “owner” must pay rent in the form of taxes. Money has become a figment of the imagination of the wealthy who not only define and create it to benefit themselves, but pool it in giant corporations that control the direction world’s economy.

We have inherited a conceptual hierarchy wherein God rules man, the most powerful men rule society, and mankind rules Nature. In the future the hierarchy will be reversed; Nature will be seen to rule humanity; social needs will precede personal goals; and deities will be recognized as cultural artifacts. In the meantime, rather than the truth, the corporations give us advertising, public relations, and news-lite, while the government gives us propaganda serving hidden agendas. As a result, the public becomes unable to form reliable fact-based opinions.

How do I know all this when all human knowledge—including mine—is fallible? Our direct experience of the world is shaped by external social input. It is useful to distinguish

between authentic personal subjective experience and impersonal objective knowledge. The existence of each depends on the other, but neither can be trusted absolutely. The one gives us the truest picture of the personal moment; the other records the sum of these personal moments and abstracts from them the verifiable knowledge I refer to as the *secular consensus*. Mathematics is the most reliable (and most abstract) component of the secular consensus. As areas of knowledge approach the realm of human concerns, they tend to incorporate a more personal component. Regrettably, dependable knowledge on which to base decisions relating to human social relations is the most difficult to come by of all. Although it may seem that the current secular consensus has replaced Myth with Reality, our Reality is actually only a newer Myth with greater credibility.

The arenas of human individuality, human society, and the proximate Universe (on which we depend) can be usefully compartmentalized from each other on the basis of scale, function, and moral concerns. This means that knowledge valid in one arena is not necessarily so (or relevant) in another. Similarly, individual moral concerns are not necessarily congruent with the morality of societies as a whole, while morality is found nowhere else in Nature. With careful attention to the integrity and interconnectedness of the whole, these kinds of distinctions appear to be useful in harmonizing individual and social behavior with Nature.

All mass-media content is generically highly suspect. Government, the corporate economy, the military, Judeo-Christian religion, consumerism—and the media itself—all dictate protocols of self-serving acceptable expression for media content that place a wide range of contrary opinion—and facts—out of bounds.

The increased volume of information and addition of interactivity manifested by the Internet has changed this assessment simultaneously for the better and the worse. The Internet has altered the way in which business and politics are actually done, as well as broadening the reach of the secular consensus. At the same time it is awash in information pollution. Rather than either being members of an organization or users of a true commons, individual Internet-users have become, essentially, tax-payers to the corporate arch-org owners of the information commonality.

Nevertheless, the Internet exhibits fundamental characteristics that are in sync with the theoretical dem.org model.

CONCLUSION: The Basis of the Watershed Communities Proposal

I have come this far hoping to lay a groundwork for organizing to meet the coming challenges to our very existence that also meets the multiple challenges of organizational malfunction so evident today. I have concluded that what is needed is a *civil-society dem-org with universal potential*. Such a social utility must *reconnect civilized humanity to Nature*. It must do this on three levels. It must facilitate *positive purpose, practice, and peace of mind* in the individual. It must facilitate *cooperation in and between those organizations* dedicated to the welfare of the individual that are beyond the capability of individuals acting alone. It must *prioritize the health of Nature* over all but the most basic

human needs. The recognition of and respect for the commons underlies and facilitates all three of any projected universal civil-society demorg's functions.

For the individual, a universal civil-society dem-org must guarantee equal access to the basic necessities of civilized existence to all. It must strike a balance between the incompatible areas of positive and negative individual liberty, ceding to democratically elected governments the task of enforcing laws that ban, theft, harmful prevarication, and the causing of physical harm. The information used by such a demorg must be grounded in a secular consensus derived from universal public education that is confirmable by the individual in actual experience. The individual's spiritual quest and convictions form an essential aspect of individual liberty that must be insulated from the demorg in the interest of individual equality.

Human society as a global entity must abandon behaviors characteristic of nation states such as warfare—particularly technologized warfare—for the establishment of sustainable civil society demorg's to become possible. The global secular consensus must come to incorporate the realization that human over-population, its energy footprint, and the resultant pollution require immediate peaceful countermeasures as a first priority. The threat of resource wars cannot solve these problems; it can only exacerbate them.

Historically, patriarchy has provided the fundamental organizing principle for civilization. Patriarchal power is manifested through hierarchical organizations—archorgs—that guarantee a competitive gridlock among themselves. The solution to global challenges posed by over-population, resource-depletion, and global warming require this power gridlock to be freed up. Organizations based on *cooperation* rather than *competition* are required to accomplish this. Although a high degree of cooperation has been required for civilization to go forward, relegating competition to only those areas where it is productive in meeting the challenges of the coming era will be a radical but necessary departure in order to prevent a global slide from competition into conflict into warfare.

It is ironic in the extreme that during a historical era in which abundant natural resources have been joined to fossil-fueled technological innovations to produce unparalleled wealth that an economy of scarcity was in place to produce and distribute that wealth. As property, the most productive land acquired scarcity value. In order to function as a store of value in addition to functioning as a means of exchange, money naturally has scarcity value. The corporations that have concentrated capital for large undertakings make capital scarce for the individual. The irony is compounded by the immanence of a new era of actual scarcity in which a sharing economy must be contrived if we are to prevent deadly conflict and the disintegration of civilization.

How likely is it that the countries running on the most advanced technological infrastructure will make fundamental synergetic reforms to their economic, political and military practices? They have finally begun to attempt to cooperatively cope with climate change, financial instability, and the possibility of nuclear terrorism. But the underlying

political and economic institutions continue to evolve in a direction antithetical to the emerging needs of the new era.

Hope for fundamental change would be laughable if humans were capable only of instinctual behavior, but we as individuals have imagination and free will, and as societies of individuals can accomplish vast undertakings. So the question becomes: what can we imagine that we can all agree to do, and can we invent and install the institutions to do it? The urgency of the present situation coupled with institutional resistance to change argue persuasively against timely fundamental reforms such as a universal civil-society demorg. Nevertheless, the attempt to imagine what that might be can serve as a guidepost for those working at the local level to create sustainable community.

If, then, we are to be faced with food and energy shortages compounded by the unknown disruptions of climate change, it would seem prudent to organize for a personal survival that carries with it the best and most sustainable aspects of our highly evolved technological culture. This is the direction that Watershed Communities seeks to explore. What does this entail? First and foremost, an emphasis on local self-reliance and resilience. This requires a new sense of community at the neighborhood level. It requires education that preserves the best civic traditions of the past combined with teaching new skills relevant to sustainable survival. It requires giving primacy to the needs of Nature. It must be accomplished with freedom from coercion and with freedom to create.

In the mean time, the heads of the largest multi-national corporations set the agenda for the government and have been given new powers to influence elections that will install even more politicians in thrall to corporate lobbyists. They have a greater concentration of wealth than ever with which to focus on countervailing efforts. For the residents of local communities to threaten freedom from corporate control of the necessities of life through a separate civil society institution would draw corporate resistance of the most determined kind. However, the web of corporate control is dependant on technology that is dependant on fossil fuel energy and many interdependent systems. Failure in any one of these can have severe effects on vulnerable corporations whose mal-functions could then topple the whole economy. Since the probability of some sort of chain-reaction event is very high in the long run, the citizens in their communities would be wise to prepare.

The ordinary citizen can have no better shield against concentrated wealth and power than to join with neighbors at the local level to promote a self-sufficiency that will keep the wealth in the community and concentrated power at bay. Watershed Communities proposes such an organization. To accomplish this, the need for social coherence that only equality guarantees dictates democratic leadership, no matter how inefficient.

PART II: WATERSHED COMMUNITIES.ORG

In Part I, I put you to the task of sharing my misgivings about humanity's present dread prospects. I prognosticated that the powers and paradigms that have gotten us into this mess leave a slim possibility of extrication. I proposed the necessity of forming an organization to work toward the prevention of such outcomes and to also cope with the results should all preventive actions fail. With a thumbnail analysis of organizations, I explored the roots and nature of their power, and the degree to which they are complicit in the present impasse. I hold that a better understanding of organizations is essential if we are to avoid repeating past mistakes.

With the foregoing as a basis, Part II proposes a new organization to cope with these challenges: **Watershed Communities**.

Watershed Communities: Reorganizing our Resources

By headlong exploitation of human and environmental resources, the US competition-driven productive capacity has produced material riches unrivaled in the history of the world. This productive capacity is far in excess of actual need, yet many live in poverty in desolated landscapes. Watershed Communities seeks to balance this self-expanding surfeit of scarcity-driven economic activity with cooperative nurturing, sharing, and healing activities at Neighborhood and Watershed scales.

Our moment in the history of our species and its cultures marks the point where seeking to master Nature must give way to acknowledging Nature's primacy. Humanity is but one species of many that share symbiotic interlocked connectedness. For any to survive, most must survive.

The cardinal guiding principle of Watershed Community's answer to this challenge is that, in the context of abundance, the equal value of each human life to every other dictates that the necessities of civilized life should be denied to no one. Watershed Communities is unique in its definition and categorization of the necessities of civilized life. Watershed Communities recognizes the limitations of the Earth to provide an ever-expanding source of wealth and sink for waste. The realization that today's abundance must not compromise our progeny's lives places the criterion of sustainability at the center of all our initiatives. The Watershed Communities initiative takes the optimistic view that, with diligence and care, abundance can be maintained. If circumstance should

offer a different outcome, the Watershed Communities initiative creates a template for sharing during emergencies, as well.

Watershed Communities embraces exclusively non-violent, democratic agencies of change. The hope that democratically elected *governments* could institute fundamental changes has foundered on the reality of preserving order through the threat of coercion while negotiating accommodations between competitive elements of the population. The worth and freedom of the individual—and consequently, the welfare of the community and the land—become by-products of economic and political competition for money and power. Since not only people's cultural practices and evolution, but their very survival has been made to be dependent on who wins this competition, there presently exists no legitimate direct way to significantly alter the course of this juggernaut. Even the most carefully crafted initiatives tend to make the public fearful of potentially destabilizing changes when people are already living in an unstable, out-of-control environment.

Watershed Communities supports the efforts of those organizations seeking positive changes within state and national governments, but has no wish to become one of them. Those suffering potential loss of power and income are, by definition, in a better position to protect their interests from changes enforced by the threat of government coercion than are those who hope to reorient those interests. The best that those hoping to effect humanitarian and environmental change at the scale of the whole system can do, in these circumstances, is to organize to become one of the competing forces.

Watershed Communities seeks to unite people around a paradigm of harmony with Nature which includes (since humans are an integral part of Nature) harmony with each other. We seek to do this by focusing our efforts on a human-scaled area of human habitation—the *elementary school district* (or in an indigenous society, a small village) and the natural unit of the land—the *watershed*.

Watershed Communities seeks to empower local communities with an interactive information network that gains sustenance and context from Internet interconnection. People should not be vulnerable to mis-information from those who seek to manipulate and profit from them.

The Watershed Communities Viewpoint

We seek a world without war, led by democratic governments regulating a truly free market economy that puts a floor under poverty, with all people guaranteed full human and civil rights, so that people can lead meaningful, purposeful lives that avoid causing further environmental degradation.

Watershed Communities proposes a basic rethinking of *land* and *money* as the ultimate necessity in reversing unsustainable contemporary trends.

Watershed Communities proposed rethinking of land-as-property and money as fiat currency turns two of capitalist society's most treasured premises on their heads. They

are so entrenched that a direct assault on them could not possibly succeed. Therefore, Watershed Communities proposes more moderate initial goals that gradually introduce these new premises to the public.

First, we must learn to recognize and respect territorial boundaries determined by *watersheds* and *human population patterns*. Existing national and other political boundaries bequeathed by military conquest must be overlaid by the fundamental boundaries determined by the land itself and the patterns of existing human communities. We must shift from the fallacious concept of land “ownership” to the more realistic concept of land “usership.”

Second, *money* must eventually be rethought to become independent of interest so as to regain its primary function—a stable medium for accomplishing free exchange rather than a means of entrapping people in the slavery of debt. The institution of a locally-based labor-barter medium of exchange geared to guaranteeing the necessities of life to all could accomplish this goal.

Although not a contender for government power or perquisites, Watershed Communities supports the notion that freely elected democratic governments ought to be charged with the tasks of securing the people’s need for full civil rights, chartering and regulating commerce from a position of power, providing people with lives free from coercion and poverty, while converting resources to the healing of the earth.

Analysts who have looked this situation squarely in the eye generally see two global scenarios. One scenario predicts endless resource wars benefiting corporate agendas resulting in total militarization, corrupt fascist government, and accelerated ecological disruption. The other predicts a foreign policy of international cooperation devoid of military threats, a domestic strategy giving biospheric remediation priority, a re-localization of agriculture and commerce, and alternatives to the economic growth imperative.

Although the second global scenario would be preferable, the individual would be well advised to choose a personal path that is viable in both scenarios. The *reanimation of local community*, including the re-localization of agriculture and light manufacture, promises to be a reliable, energy efficient alternative whatever the future may bring.

In too many communities individuals have become isolated from their neighbors. Their automobiles and communication devices tend to ground their social life in their work, their affinity groups, and their far-flung families. Local identity comes mainly through local businesses that promote the idea of the neighborhood as centered on the local business district. Many of those businesses are corporate franchises or are threatened by outlying mega-stores with automobile-only accessibility. The community-building efforts of local churches, sports teams, and other volunteer groups need to be assisted, augmented, and coordinated. Watershed Communities is dedicated to creating a dem-org that gives such individuals and groups encouragement, introduction to their like-minded

neighbors, and coordination around the interlocking themes of *peace*, *education*, the *environment*, and the *essentials of civilized existence*.

Integrating Environmental and Social Concerns

At heart, humans are hunter-gatherers who view their local environment as a gift to be exploited and domesticated. Mother Nature has tolerated a good deal of this incursion into her ecological web, but has become so over-run and battered that she is demanding consideration for her welfare. At present there is no integrated, comprehensive agency promoting and knitting together the many existing local efforts to represent the interests of Nature in human councils.

To link *society* to the *environment*, we need to respect the land not so much in terms of private property or political boundaries, but in terms of the natural boundaries of the land itself—the *watershed*. I have chosen to name the projected Internet and place-based organization Watershed Communities.

This dem-org will promote and sponsor local Watershed Stewards along with those concerned with building community through an emphasis on meeting people's basic needs. An important function for the dem-org-net would have to be to provide a forum for the creative resolution of conflicts between community and environmental interests. The results of these negotiations would be made available through the Internet to similar localities in order to share information and set more general voluntary standards.

The means to building community lie in voluntary *cooperation* at neighborhood scale. The interest-prioritized medium of exchange presently in use (i.e. legal tender currency) constitutes an important (and generally unrecognized) underlying impediment to neighborhood cooperation. When profit comes before people, a certain level of conflict is inevitable. In addition to more obvious community-building efforts, an Internet dem-org opens the possibility of avoiding the money trap through different protocols of exchange that link the individual to society in a way that guarantees more fair exchange

Many popular Internet sites, such as Facebook, GeoCities, and MoveOn.org have built large affinity group communities around peer interests. Sites such as these demonstrate the viability of a project such as Watershed Communities as well as serving as possible models for aspects of its site design and organization building.

Ten Pilot Project Premises

What can we assume to be the bedrock of this new organizational response? Here are ten proposed premises.

1. It must prioritize the welfare of local citizens and Nature in the local watershed.
2. It must be open to all citizens of all residential neighborhoods.
3. It must be local but linked inter-regionally.
4. It must be as free as possible from internal contradictions.

5. It must balance freedom and responsibility.
6. It must be constructive.
7. It must be cooperative.
8. It must be morally grounded.
9. It must be pragmatic.
10. It must be practical.

Understanding the Watershed Community Concept

The paragraphs to follow seek to amplify and clarify—still at a very general level—some salient points of the Watershed Communities proposal

- Watershed Communities seeks to create a nationwide network of dem-organic organizations consisting of two synergetic parts grounded in two interlocking local territorial domains: one, the terrestrial environment as determined by *watersheds*; and two, human habitation patterns as determined by existing *public school districts*.
- The ability of existing governments and corporations are in a period of obsolescence and decay, hamstrung by outmoded competitive ideologies. Watershed-Communities seeks to meet these challenges by growing a *new civil society dem-organic association* at a local level more responsive to public input.
- Membership in both the Internet web-design team and the developing neighborhood dem-orgs would be open to *individuals* only—not other organizations. Watershed Communities would not be in competition with other environmental and community organizations. On the contrary, it would serve as a vehicle for the expansion and integration of specialized environmental and communitarian initiatives, while serving as the creator and integrator of a more accurate environmental and community information data-base, as well as providing a flexible source of on-the-ground activists to address local problems and opportunities as they arise. Once established, it can seek to expand to serve all willing participants in the community.
- The developing neighborhood Watershed Communities should define themselves as “*voluntary associations*.” Membership dues collected locally would be spent locally except for the amount necessary to maintain the main web-site and the national coordinating network.

Building the Watershed Communities Organization

The initial purpose of the Watershed Communities web-site is to develop and disseminate a proposal for the two interlocking ways of looking at the land: an integrated, detailed, and comprehensive picture of *watersheds* as the basis for environmental remediation, and a similar elevation of the neighborhood elementary school district to primacy in advancing the goal of *community*. Then, from the vantage-point of the synergy between

these two fields of local action, individuals could locate and democratically organize themselves and like-minded others into a permanent civil society presence. The following process is proposed to accomplish this on the ground:

1. Web-site design (including programs for local users).
2. Site launch.
3. Attracting potential and committed members to local associations
4. Creation of the initial local dem-org administrative bodies.
5. Completing local elementary school district and watershed surveys.
6. Identifying, contacting, and assisting compatible ongoing local environmental, educational, and communitarian activities.
7. Urging individuals engaged in these activities to consider joining Watershed Communities.
8. Begin the process of replacing the initial watershedcommunities,org administrative body with a permanent dem-organic structure.
9. Begin to work on environmental, communitarian, and educational projects appropriate to the needs and capabilities of local communities.
10. Develop person-to-person contacts with members in adjoining school districts.
11. Begin to develop distinct network interfaces for those focused on Watershed Stewardship and those focused on the Community.

This list is the first of several that will envision real-time, on-the-ground activities by people who will have their own ideas about the critical path of organization. These lists are not intended as rigid guidelines but as starting points around which the actual participants can begin negotiating an agreed path forward.

Could The Internet Enable A Civil Society Dem-Org?

Internet integrity would be central to a continental-scale civil society dem-org such as I propose. When considered from the user's standpoint, the very nature of the Internet turns the typical arch-org organizational hierarchy on its head. Underlying premises must be manifested for the promise of an Internet-based dem-org to be realized. An Internet dem-org would have to be created on the premise of the possibility of unlimited membership within prescribed geographic boundaries. This unlimited membership would require universal availability of all the user-interface elements of Internet technology. Participation would require universal literacy, or at least, a way to avoid disenfranchising the illiterate. The *individual's* freedom of choice and speech must be guaranteed for any organization to qualify as a dem-org. Membership would have to be voluntary. If these conditions were met, the dem-org would have the possibility of functioning (without resort to actual or implied coercion) as a civil-society organization linking local communities together in a homeostatic relationship to the Earth. The integrity of the Internet link would have to be secure and the focus of the participants would have to remain on healing the Earth and building the local community.

The potential for development of a dem-org-net is further complicated by philosophical disputes among the Internet's system's designers. Internet theorist Jarod Lanier (2010)

speaks to these disputes in depth from first-hand experience. In the first place, the further development of the Internet itself seems open-ended and unlimited. All paths cannot be taken at once; the choice of one may preclude another later to be found superior.

Those with a passion for technological innovation naturally seek to realize all possible novel applications. This desire is synergetic with the entrepreneurial spirit springing from the corporate-capitalist growth imperative. More consumer attractive capabilities generate more commerce which requires more bandwidth which requires more infrastructure. These organic tendencies toward unlimited growth provoke the concern that the Internet could easily become another iteration of the Sorcerer's Apprentice myth. A dem-org founded in order to promote environmentalism and communitarianism in a climate of diminishing resources would be well advised to design in constraints to this tendency.

Only the uses of Internet anonymity required in order to protect normal privacy concerns need be retained, thus muting Lanier's concern about anonymity's de-humanizing side-effects. An anonymous community is an oxymoron.

The continent-wide creation of an Internet dem-org would inevitably create an information "cloud." The danger exists that those in the organization entrusted to manage this pool of information could use it for profit or for exploitation of the membership. On the other hand, the aggregation and analysis of this information could be of great benefit to members in their localities. Here again, the original design of the dem-org's software must take into account the need to be clear, transparent, and astute in shaping the tool to serve human needs rather than the other way around.

Demorg-Net Design Considerations

The creation of a dem-org-net holds the promise of becoming a vessel into which an individual could pour time and energy to a good purpose whether the original vision prospered or not. The times call for a form of organization that gives every individual the opportunity to contribute to the meeting of the emerging challenges our civilization faces now as well as the enormous ones ahead.

The Internet is an ideal vehicle for the expansion and communication of the secular consensus. Although this should be the bedrock of any true dem-org, this cannot by itself solve the problems prompting the formation of an organization dedicated to serving the land and the communities that reside upon it. The problem-solving systems people have in their local communities presently depend on decisions made far away by power, and/or profit-motivated organizations. A locally useful dem-org-net would require a simple comprehensible purpose beyond secular-consensus-oriented communication. The focus I propose is on *community* and *environment*.

The design team will need to create three net identities in order to isolate internal communication from general communication, and both from commercial activities. *Watershedcommunities.org* provides a home for the design team to develop designs for

all three sites. After site launch it adds to its design function the role of central coordinator of the organization's expanding membership and activities. To fulfill this added role, it needs to be set up to vet memberships, keep membership rolls, record and analyze input from local constituents, settle disputes, set voluntary standards, and issue directives. *Watershedcommunities.net* is the general access site on the Internet that informs the public at large about the goals, structure, and activities of the organization. It would contain a blog in order to attract ideas and opinions (whether positive or negative) from a broad spectrum of the public. *Watershedcommunities.com* would develop maps, CDs and DVDs, gear, literature, etc. that would provide a revenue stream and to which all tax burdens the organization as a whole accrues could be directed.

Required Web-Site Design Personnel

The realization of the initial website design will require varied technical expertise. People need to be recruited to fill job descriptions such as the following:

- Software engineers.
- Web-master
- Business manager (and coordinator)
- Graphic artists & designers
- Writers and editors (provide blog content, provide formats for local neighborhood sites and newsletters).
- Cartographer
- Videographers
- Financial & statistical analysts and researchers.
- Others determined as the work progresses.

At first I thought the function of software engineer could be handled by anonymous technoids just doing a job. I have since come to realize that the optimal realization of this function is crucial to the ultimate viability of the organization. The Watershed Communities web-site will need to start out as one thing and, as it matures, grow into something else. At the same time the web itself will be evolving as new hardware and innovative software come on line. There is a great danger of initial software that serves as a basis for future additions becoming obsolete. At the outset, a pivotal decision will have to be made whether the software enabling the original organization should be capable of accommodating the enlarged functions proposed in Part III for a Basic Economy Network pilot project. These challenges will require a software design team that does much more than just assemble code. Among the engineers there must be someone with a deep understanding of the evolution of the industry as a whole. There must be someone with an understanding of the differing philosophies among web designers. The site must be user-friendly in its text, graphics, video, transactions, vote-counting, security, transparency, and modifiability. The team must have a clear understanding of the projected nature of Watershed Communities and empathy for the philosophy behind it. This will not be easy given the bifurcated environmental and communitarian foci linked by the educational emphasis. What have I neglected? Something, for sure.

The complexity of the problems above (and their interactions) should be mitigated to a certain extent by the absence of a need to incorporate advertising and superficial or irrelevant content. Nevertheless, the project will demand a team of highly qualified, motivated, flexible, and innovative members. The next problem, assuming the team is successful, is the inevitable emergence among them of a proprietary feeling toward their creation that could impede transition to the dem-org ideal. I have come to see what I thought would be something that a bunch of out-of-work Silicon Valley types could toss off in their spare time as the hurdle at which this project would be most likely to come to grief.

Fulfilling these functions might initially require a hierarchical organization model typical of those needed for innovative enterprises as opposed to the kind of more dem-organic hierarchies (or anti-hierarchies) more appropriate to ongoing routine functions.

Also, the design group must achieve consensus on the conditions of recompense. There are two choices on this crucial issue: one, the normal way—getting outside venture capital through funding of some sort that grants ownership (or at least oversight) to an outside party, or two, self-financing through work-hour input which enables retention of ownership by the creators—in other words, the startup model.

Assembling a Watershed Communities design team

In the pages above, Watershed Communities has presented a proposal for creating two inter-related Internet networks to foster Community and Watershed health. The scale of such an endeavor is way beyond the informality of a local cultural affinity group. The level of effort required in order to bring such an endeavor to fruition would eventually merit, and indeed require, the rewards usual for full-time occupations.

Watershed Communities will provide two basic initial services. One is to provide Watershed and school district maps in a standardized, multi-media format. The other is to serve as the central data processing center for both the Community and Watershed Memberships. To accomplish these functions, technical personnel capable of bringing them into being need to be attracted on the basis of their commitment to the Watershed Communities proposal. In addition to monetary remuneration based on work-hours of effort expended, shares in the “ownership” of Watershed Communities.org (and any for-profit or non-profit businesses which might spin off from it) should reward the site designers.

Watershed Communities (the local organizations, not the design team) is intended to be a locally-based civil association composed of two cooperating Stewardships, one based on the Watershed devoted to healing the biosphere, and one based on the Community devoted to nurturing the people. These organizations are "owned" by their members, a group of self-selected individuals who each have one vote at their level of participation. Watershed Communities.org is the web-site that serves as the provider of the association's initial concept, its mission, and as the vehicle for its internal communications. Watershed Communities the local associations and Watershed

Communities.org the web-site, although in the beginning the same, become separate cooperating entities with the passage of time. This is because the Steward Membership is scattered far and wide in the field performing the function of actual Stewardship, while the creators and maintainers of the centralized web-site (although themselves physically also scattered far and wide) are mostly skilled literary, artistic, and technical personnel providing media services. However chartered, watershedcommunities.org (as distinguished from Watershed Communities the local associations) is an *enterprise* in which the participants are sought on the basis of specific abilities, and rewarded on the basis of their productive contribution to the web-site or its spin-offs.

Clearly, the design team should at some point be rewarded with a collective ownership stake in the three Watershed Communities domain names appropriate to individual level of contribution. Eventually (assuming the creation of an active growing membership) domain name ownership should revert to the organization. The precise division, allocation and timing of these conversions should be negotiated by the interested parties at the appropriate time.

Watershed Communities Design and Launch

Once the creative job of constructing the main web-site is completed, the public phase of organization-building could begin. Watershed Communities initial public focus should be limited to seven objectives:

1. Organizing local membership.
2. Building local community.
3. Raising local environmental awareness.
4. Creating a democratically structured local-to-national (or continental) Internet-based coordinating network.
5. Promoting the world peace imperative.
6. Promoting sustainable local land usership.
7. Promoting Internet-based local labor-hour barter.

People willing to give serious consideration to the Watershed Community proposals will be asking three questions: Can I agree with the thinking? Is this something I can develop an emotional commitment to? Once convinced and committed, what will I actually do? The list above is intended to be only the beginning of the process of integration, prioritization, and activation which people with various skills and enthusiasms will create in the real world.

Building Local Membership

Traditionally, sparsely settled rural communities have had at least the bare bones of community because people know their neighbors and depend on their help in emergencies. Thin populations provide privacy from neighbors by less frequency of contact as well as by dispersion. The need for the community building function envisioned for Watershed Community members is least in rural communities where community already exists. (That's not to say that rural people get along with each other

better than anyone else.) Nevertheless, in order to meet the coming challenges, rural communities will need to develop a sense of purpose around *essential needs*, *education*, and the *environment*. In such a community, a few persons can be the sparkplug that reorients the rest toward the knowledge-base that enables local self-reliance, smaller footprint, and environmental remediation.

With increasing urban density comes increasing neighbor anonymity. Where anonymity is the social norm, Watershed Communities sparkplugs have added community-building to accomplish before the real work can begin. They must begin with themselves. Central to this work is the proposition that Watershed Communities aims to be inclusive of all law-abiding citizens in the neighborhoods and watersheds in which it finds a home.

One can predict that the Anarchist—even if favoring environmental remediation and vibrant communities—would hold that the term “law-abiding” will automatically exclude him. Reflexive contrarians of this kind can be very useful in the local dialog. They are lightning rods for hypocrisy. They give us an opportunity to develop a nuanced view of how, and under what circumstance, we can be locally inclusive of them, as well as those more attuned to social order.

The ideal of personal freedom mandates the individual’s right to choose non-inclusion. The challenge here is to distinguish between those who are rigid ideologues who will never change, and those who are pragmatic in seeking new solutions at the local level in concert with global survival strategies.

The problem for all of us is coping with our fear and anger. With our sense of personal identity (and the sense of our own mortality) comes a tendency toward anxiety about the future, resulting in speculative planning and the asking of unanswerable questions. Our social relations spring not only from our genetically in-built survival and reproduction drives, but from the specifically human sense of personal responsibility for our own actions (or the denial thereof) toward others. Are you human? Then you will be a participant in this continually unfolding, always surprising, record of achievement and folly.

For Watershed Communities as visualized, all actors on the local scene must be recognized for their basic human rights which include the right to their own individuality. However, at present, the consciousness of these actors is largely shaped by the corporate media. A contrarian view of fiat money and land ownership will seem counterintuitive to most people. Any sparkplug that wants to open a dialog about these two concepts with a general audience had better be very well prepared, not only with a grasp of the concepts, but with a good guess about the receptivity of the audience.

The Role of Local Dem-org-net Initiators

Limitation to local neighborhood scale enables Watershed Communities activists to know each other personally. As soon as there are three or more, they can begin to build an organization appropriate to their real-time on-the-ground situation (which must include

their relation to each other). Internet relationships can carry personalization forward only so far.

The ideal of dem-organic organization should always be striven for, but the need for leadership must be acknowledged in order to accomplish tasks utilizing a multiplicity of actors. Once established, the local neighborhood group can begin to create roles for participants to enact.

Although membership activities are important, the determination of the membership's geographic neighborhood identity is equally crucial. Presently, neighborhoods tend to be defined by corporate-enterprise-dominated commercial districts that depend on automobile accessibility. Watershed Communities has chosen the elementary school district for its definition of the neighborhood because of its general walkability and the increased possibility of personal acquaintance with each other among its residents. Watershed Community's focus on communitarian and environmental education doesn't envision a formal link with the public school system. The school district's map of the local elementary school district should be used only as the default delineator of the neighborhood organization's borders. The great variations in residential neighborhoods and the educational institutions that serve them will require pragmatic adjustments to the default model that retain walkability and the possibility of long-term social interaction among the neighborhood's residents.

Once determined, elementary school district-related neighborhood maps showing individual residences, public school locations, and other community facilities need to be sent to the main web-site for use by the cartographer in beginning to assemble a comprehensive nation-wide Watershed Community map. Eventually, these would be overlaid with zoning maps showing commercial and other non-residential related land uses, all within existing political boundaries. The non-residential information could be obtained by the cartographer from the Internet to the degree that these databases are net-accessible.

Building Local Community

Getting to know your neighbors in some sort of positive context makes for a productive beginning.

Local Watershed Communities associations should be a laboratory of dem-organic organization. As they develop, regional coordinating councils should survey and categorize the various protocols developed with the goal of establishing national standards. Certain principles should be hewed to at the beginning, such as equality of rights and opportunities. Motivation needs to be fueled by cooperativeness, not competition.

The main web-site design team should have ready at launch a format for a standardized printer-friendly local news page that members would regularly update and forward to

sympathetic neighbors. Part of this should be an interactive bulletin board with all posts signed by their authors.

Members should seek to volunteer to enrich children's education—particularly with environmental information—in such a way that existing rules and social arrangements are not threatened. Where environmental and communitarian educational initiatives are already in place within the school district, members should volunteer to add their energy. Efforts to enrich children's education in the arts, civics, and economics should also be supported or initiated. These are synergetic with community building. More transformative initiatives, such as integrating children into the work of the community can be proposed at a later date, once the Watershed Communities leaders have established relationships of trust within the schools.

Members should support local existing and proposed businesses without partisanship or promise of patronage. Members should realize that local business persons are regarded as pillars of the community.

Maintain a low profile with existing distant corporate and government organizations as long as that is possible. When it no longer is, be prepared to deal with them as adversaries because, in all likelihood, you will be seen as threats to their power.

Membership Criteria

1. Membership is restricted to *individuals* rather than other organizations of any kind.
2. Membership in Watershed-Communities is granted via the Internet.
3. Membership could be configured variously depending on the individual's commitment and residency.
4. Membership is open to all legal residents of the neighborhood.

Raising Local Environmental Awareness

There is an interlocking synergy between watersheds and communities. Watersheds will be more appreciated and better cared for when communities educate their citizens to think of the land they occupy as a particular watershed, the boundaries of which they can roughly identify. Knowing that the "environment" (which is indeed a global continuum) can also be experienced as a local reality gives people a handle to take responsibility for their little corner of the world. It will reinforce a tendency for people to think far upstream and far downstream as well as over the ridge to the nearest town. It will enable cities on either side of major rivers such as Minneapolis-St. Paul and Portland OR-Vancouver WA to more easily identify themselves as unitary urban centers.

The ideal elementary school district is one in which the school is pedestrian-accessible. To the extent that the elementary school can be made to function as a civic center, the need for mechanical transportation can be downsized. The zero carbon footprint of pedestrian accessibility determined the choice of the elementary school district as the best basic social unit for a civilized human population.

The information footprint that Watershed Communities would hope to make in its host communities would include the production and distribution of watershed maps, CDs, a newsletter/blog with articles on subjects such as permaculture, reforestation, etc. The idea of local Watershed Stewardship should be floated as soon as the tide of public awareness rises.

At launch, Watershed Communities should have the major watersheds mapped including the division of river basins into upper, middle, and lower where applicable. Watershed boundary determination protocols need to be advanced for peer approval as far as topological consistency and comprehensiveness. Since some watershed boundaries are indistinct, the protocols should provide general guidance in their determination. Exact determination—as in a property survey—is beside the point in any case, because the area of concern of any one Steward need not be so rigidly defined where legal constraints are not relevant. Watersheds need to be grouped into Regions and defined bio-regionally.

Creating a Local-To-National Coordinating Network.

The Internet provides a global communication network that discovers and monitors new knowledge of all sorts. We are beginning to form global organizations that reflect that capability. As the importance of this knowledge as a guide for our actions dawns on those caught up in more parochial pursuits, these organizations become more and more central to decision-making. A supra-national institutional framework to achieve harmony with Nature could be developed through Watershed Communities that would be at once non-coercively integrative and responsive to the smallest ecological niche. The Internet has the capability of formalizing these functions into a global organization dedicated to environmental monitoring and remediation.

Watershed Communities community networks, on the other hand, would be contained within national borders. National Councils would be empowered to deal with issues that can only be addressed at such a large scale such as relating to national governments and multi-national corporations. Other than that, their function would be to set standards on the basis of information that would filter up from below, and facilitating communications and shared agendas at increasingly localized levels. These levels would be Regional, Urban, Town, and Neighborhood.

The Internet would be the medium through which a reverse hierarchy dem-organic organization would be established to collect information and desires locally to be processed and adjudicated at the next level of greater population where that information would be used to set standards, adjudicate disputes, and direct and modulate facilitating energy flows.

Established local Demorgs community and environment activities

Once membership reaches a level that makes activity in the community and the watershed practical, such energy might be effectively directed to:

- Build community, identify poverty, support necessity-oriented charitable initiatives.
- Support public education, environmental education, and extended all-age educational programs.
- Sponsor intensive pre-and-after-school programs in the elementary school district.
- Identify and find ways to fill shortfalls in civics, arts, and logical thinking.
- Participate in environmental remediation, develop Watershed Stewardship.
- Demonstrate responsible land usership
- Work for local renewable energy production.
- Facilitate training in the skills essential for effective local Watershed Stewardship.
- Propose and support earth-friendly, locally owned commerce and industry.
- Sponsor local indigenous artists and craftpersons.
- Sponsor or contribute to local festivals.
- Spread the idea of work-hour barter, and other moneyless exchange ideas.
- Develop ways to make community residency more secure.
- Encourage innovative educational programs tied to environmental remediation.

The list above is intended as a general guide to the focusing of member's activities into areas that are coherent with Watershed Communities objectives at the same time as being beneficial and non-threatening to the existing community. It will be up to the members themselves to decide on which activities seem appropriate, which will build community consensus, which will avoid loss of focus, and which will avoid cooption by regressive agencies.

Work-hour barter, neighborhood security, and land-use integration

Local work-hour barter creates wealth in the community and keeps it there. The underlying reasons for capitalism's growth imperative are the properties of the medium of exchange; properties invented and developed by capitalist financiers. Mediums of exchange are human inventions that—far from being fixed by immutable laws—are continually evolving. The present medium has evolved to serve the purposes of those who created it who seek to solidify their own power by enslaving people to scarcity and separating them from the earth. Like a Ponzi scheme, it must grow or die. Now that burgeoning industrial technology has become a global challenge to Nature, growth has morphed from a panacea into a Pandora's box. Under the developing conditions, new protocols for exchange will be needed. These protocols already exist, have been tested in limited local practice, and have demonstrated their viability. The Internet can be a tool for their widespread implementation.

The public perception of neighborhood land as a commons as well as one comprised of individual holdings, together with the perception of the land as a particular watershed with valuable features unrelated to human use, cannot fail to benefit local communities and their environments.

At the early stage of membership building, the Basic Economy concept laid out in Part III is not relevant other than as a hopefully synergetic grab-bag of ideas that give focus to

overall direction. To push the Basic Economy concept as an ideology would surely be counter-productive, as well as opposed to the basic dem-organic philosophy of Watershed Communities. Initially, efforts should focus on developing and nurturing a sense of neighborhood centered on the elementary school, getting neighbors talking to each other about local social, environmental, and economic problems, and identifying leaders.

Overcoming Neighborhood Communication Difficulties

If the Watershed Communities viewpoint makes enough sense to you that you have decided to participate with your neighbors in forming a local organization, the first thing you must realize is that the vast majority of your neighbors—even many liberal Democrats and committed environmentalists—will be opposed to, or confused by, some or all of the ideas involved. Immediately you will be saddled with an apparently major contradiction. You will be seen as an eccentric non-conformist conventional-wisdom-denier who is promoting democratic community consensus around a set of principles bound to produce conflict within the community. Presently, most people's consciousness of public affairs is shaped by the corporate media. If you are one who sees through this smokescreen of manipulative misinformation you are not going to be successful in building community if you begin by attempting to share your reality-based insights.

How can you cope with this disconnect? First you must realize that the Watershed Communities viewpoint attempts to be a comprehensive set of concepts that interconnects the imperatives of *individual* human survival with the cultural and technological characteristics of contemporary human *societies* and their place within *Nature's* cradle, all considered on a *time-scale* stretching far into the future. Such an ambitious generalization cannot possibly be expected to be a specific guide for every local community, nor is it intended to be a rigid ideology. Therefore to advocate some of the Watershed Communities viewpoints (such as the contrarian view of fiat money and land ownership) to neighbors whose beliefs and concerns are elsewhere puts the cart before the horse.

Rather, you, as a Watershed Communities advocate, will be well advised to seek out those needs, desires, and ongoing projects that are coherent with the Watershed Communities viewpoint and put your energies there. Taking a contributory role in local affairs will not shield you from conflict, however. All change discomfits someone. As was observed earlier, we all seek to be both similar to, and different from, those around us. In a free society the result is a high degree of unpredictable individual opinion. Further, many people presently cling desperately to beliefs contrary to their real self-interest. Promoting personal neighborhood communication will bring conflicting agendas out into the open. You will often be hard-pressed to cope with these situations in such a way as to avoid permanent rifts while maintaining your dignity and integrity. You must have faith that the unsustainability of the present path will eventually soften the ideologue's bias and awaken the slacker's initiative.

We must never forget that the diversity of knowledge, opinion, expertise, empathy, ambition, ethical standards, cultural backgrounds, and tolerance for that which is other are the signal characteristics that define our humanity.

These are tough times right now and those with power and wealth are not moving in ways to make the future any easier. In this environment, we must cope with fear and anger (our own as well as others) in order to begin to bring to the fore the kind of rational initiatives that Watershed Communities seeks to advance.

It is of primary importance to keep in mind the primary goals of Watershed Communities: The *reanimation of local community* through coordination around the interlocking themes of *peace, education, the environment, and the essentials of civilized existence*. To that end you should seek to provide a forum for the creative resolution of conflicts between community and environmental interests. You can make this a laboratory of dem-organic organization where everyone experiences equality of rights and opportunities and everyone who wishes will have a voice.

We all need to make sure that our motivation is fueled by cooperativeness, not competition. We will need to balance consensual cooperativeness with the recognition that dem-organic organization is not immune from the need for leadership.

Watershed-Communities Avoid List

Reach should never exceed grasp. But the mind's reach can exceed the hand's grasp if the mind can wait patiently while the hand strengthens.

In the local organization-building phase, initiatives should emerge from widely recognized problems facing the community, rather than radical proposals or individual causes. When Watershed Communities has been established as beneficial to the welfare of the community, more far-reaching initiatives may be successful.

Community organizers must establish among themselves a culture of respect for the privacy of each other and of those with whom they interact.

Community organizers should do their best to avoid political arguments with militarists, free market ideologues, anti-abortionists, and others in thrall to similarly regressive viewpoints.

Neighborhood members should neither provoke nor shrink from controversy. When one arrives at a worldview where everything falls in to place without facts having to be stretched to fit a narrative, there arises a great temptation to disabuse ones neighbors auto-victimized by the faulty premises of ideologies out of touch with reality. Attacking gut-level premises on a fact-based logical basis is a fool's errand. Opportunities to do so present a watershed for such a member because playing along with ideology-based narratives in the interest of neighborhood amity can feel like a self-betrayal.

The association must avoid becoming a vehicle for calls for social justice based on unavoidable conditions-of-being such as sex, race, ethnicity, and age. Individual members should be encouraged to pursue these usually social justice-oriented—but often divisive—agendas by themselves as a worthwhile contribution to the association’s general goal of fostering *equality*.

On the other hand, the association must be responsive to member complaints of perceived organization neglect of its responsibility to foster general equality. In communities with large minority racial or ethnic populations, these factors may be a non-divisive, central concern of people convinced of inequality based on prejudice. In communities where these perceptions appear to be demonstrably true on the basis of the facts on the ground, Watershed Communities must become an advocate for the victims of anti-minority prejudice.

The association must attempt to defer becoming a taxable entity at the local level until such a time as its growth demands engaging in activities in the economic sphere that are taxable in nature.

The association must avoid becoming a participant in party politics.

The association must avoid becoming co-opted by corporate interests.

In order to be free of accusations of attempting to take over the public schools, the association must be scrupulous in avoiding statements or actions that would provoke that fear in others. Seeking election to the local school board, for instance, would be a worthy action on the part of a member, but one that must be undertaken on that individual’s own volition without input or support from the association.

The Watershed Communities neighborhood and town organizations must avoid losing focus on the main goal. This is: **achieving the long term sustainability of the local human population and of the land on which it resides.**

Above all, the association must be committed to non-violence.

Revisiting the Ten Premises

I urge you, at this point, to reexamine with me the ten premises listed earlier in order to get a sense of concerns that will inevitably arise as Watershed Communities organization attempts to embody these premises on the ground.

1. It must prioritize the welfare of local citizens and Nature in the local watershed.

Clearly this has been made the touchstone of every subject touched upon. Questions remain. Will the people required to accomplish this goal be found in enough quantity in

enough local communities to make for a viable organization? If so, will they be able to keep to this focus?

2. It must be open to all citizens of all residential neighborhoods.

Do elementary school districts include all residences, some of which are very isolated? Some residents are transients, whether by choice or not. Should there be a length of residency requirement? Does the choice of the term “citizen” rather than “resident” indicate rejection of foreign nationals? It is meant to indicate the rejection of absentee landlords except in special cases. In my view the answers to these questions need not be uniform but should be open to local variation. Intra-neighborhood conflicts about these issues could be mediated by town, city, or regional councils.

3. It must be local but linked inter-regionally.

Universal Internet access is required in order to accomplish this goal. Internet problems in the government and corporate arenas become Watershed Communities’ problems. Also, the format, content, and delivery of the net linkage are far more important than the mere fact of linkage. The originating design-team must make good guesses about what will work for the individuals in the neighborhoods. Because these guesses might prove to be wrong, the software must be designed so that it is flexible and/or fixable.

4. It must be as free as possible from internal contradictions.

There is a fundamental contradiction built in to the Watershed Communities concept that announces itself with its very name. In the present situation, the interests of Nature (both globally and within the micro-watershed) are at odds with those of the residents in the communities that reside in the land’s watersheds. The large-scale organs of our society are frozen in a gridlock over this conflict, largely because Nature lacks a seat at the table. Even if she did, one-size-fits-all legal solutions are also problematical. Watershed Communities seeks to shift the major political battle from human-versus-human to one of humans—all in the same survival-threatened boat—versus Nature—itself threatened by humanity—at the local level where it can be addressed by a negotiated, consensual, coordinated, non-coerced effort.

Watershed Communities local-to-national Internet linkage concept relies on what would normally be considered a hierarchical pattern. If this hierarchy were reversed, as an ideal dem-org would require, situations that require coordinated leadership would face a cumbersome prospect. Who’s in charge? If everyone is in charge then no one is in charge. The workable resolution of this contradiction is the conception of the hierarchy as an analogue of animal’s blood circulation pattern where the flow of the arteries and the veins are roughly equal. Balance of the bi-directional flows becomes the dem-org’s yardstick.

There is a sense in which everything true, is also not true. Even if contradiction is universal we should at least not knowingly and purposefully create it.

5. It must balance freedom and responsibility.

Watershed Communities as envisioned goes too far in the pursuit of freedom from oppression, freedom of expression, and freedom to opt out. Leadership, cooperation, and loyalty are severely compromised by this excess except for the balancing effect of going too far in the excessive taking of responsibility. One is either a steward of Nature or not. One is either a builder of community or not. One is either an integrated person or not. Anyone for whom the attempt to fulfill these roles diminishes freedom unbearably will probably not become attracted to becoming active in Watershed Communities until the possibility of a personal payoff is perceived. By then, those who have gravitated toward Watershed Communities because it offered them an avenue to pursue the goals they believe in will have developed roles within their local community that will serve as role models of communitarian stewardship that balance personal freedom with the responsibility for actions with social and environmental consequences.

6. It must be constructive.

How can building community, healing Nature, and educating for those purposes be seen as anything but constructive—unless poorly done or co-opted by protest agendas.

7. It must be cooperative.

Competition to achieve wealth within this organization would be pointless. Watershed Communities is not about wealth concentration. Competition for status, for acceptance of one's ideas, and for being a decision-maker adheres to the human psyche (whether pointless or productive) no matter the level of idealistic altruism. In order to prosper and grow, every organization needs to attract leaders. The grinding of gears that accompanies competition for supremacy within the organization is as inherent to a dem-org as to an arch-org. It just shouldn't be the main event.

Competition from without is another matter entirely. Who can predict what form that may take? Survival in the face of external threats will depend on committed members with depth of awareness and timely resilience.

8. It must be morally grounded.

Watershed Communities is committed to being an organization that denies a double-standard of morality between organizations and individuals such as now exists between governments and individuals and between corporations and their stakeholders. That means no institutional violence, theft, or purposeful prevarication. Watershed Communities is not only opposed to war as an instrument of national policy, but pointedly refuses to employ coercive agencies at the local level where it seeks to advance its agenda through building consensus. Through a non-profit, transparent, and accountable organization, Watershed Communities seeks to ensure that the basic welfare of all the citizens in its localities is secured to the point where theft becomes pointless.

Human truths are always approximate, but—based on the logical, practical, and compassionate actions springing from the secular consensus—Watershed Communities has no impediment to achieving the highest level of dependable communication.

9. It must be pragmatic.

Trying to organize people according to principles such as basic morality, a just social contract, or the priority of Nature is the sort of idealistic, theoretical endeavor that flies in the face of pragmatism. Watershed Communities must balance its unyielding focus on its commitment to environment-friendly local community with the need to function within a real world that may be hostile to it. The dem-organic bi-directional information hierarchy with a multiplicity of local units at one end and a national center at the other can accomplish this if the local units are left free to reflect their unique local character while the central informational confluence holds fast to fundamental premises.

In this way wisdom and folly can sort themselves out by including everyone's ideas—seeing what works and what doesn't—without jeopardizing the stability of the whole organization. Then these experiences can be collated at the center and fed back as voluntary standards for localities to measure themselves against.

Presently, corporatism rules. Those committed to preserving corporate domination will move to destroy or co-opt any competing instrumentality. Only a pragmatically creative and vigilantly resilient approach to meeting such opposition can have any hope of success.

10. It must be practical.

A proposal such as Watershed Communities has no model by which to measure its practicality. When Adam Smith and his Enlightenment contemporaries outlined the philosophy of free individuals, free markets, and democratic rule that was to replace feudalism, they had a model already in place—the American colonies. Today's global impasse has no precedent, and therefore no model, for a coherent strategy to cope with it. The cultural and economic progress that the Enlightenment unleashed succeeded because it found practical application on the ground.

The purpose of Watershed Communities, an Internet based communitarian/environmentalist organization, is to work toward making a new progressive agenda a *practical* agenda for awakening people to the gravity of the situation. In the long run, there is nothing more practical than sustainability. But without clear models to follow, initial organizers may face a myriad of difficulties as they implement sustainability in a specific location with its specific local problems and conditions. Nevertheless, it is only when sustainability is realized in local practice, that people will embrace its agenda.

In Part III, we will turn our attention to a proposal that clearly lacks general practicality at the present time: a plan for a pilot community designed to function without an interest-based fiat currency, without economic injustice, without rent on residential land, without the capitalist growth imperative, without the loss of our highest achievements, or the abuse of Nature.

PART III: CREATING A WATERSHED COMMUNITY PILOT PROJECT

Introduction

What I have written so far assumes that the world as we can best understand it will proceed on its present trajectory without fundamental change to its modes of governmental and economic organization. I am persuaded by Richard Heinberg, () among others, that this trajectory is homing in on a catastrophic outcome. The corporatocracy (and the government that serves it) has both the power and the general acceptability to keep itself in place. The Internet organization envisioned in Part II is designed to prepare local communities to deal with worst-case scenarios with the tools at hand while functioning almost subliminally within the existing overarching power structure. The hard reality is that greed-driven and coercion-enabled profit prioritization in an economy coping with declining energy availability guarantees that the burden will unjustly fall on the middle class and working poor. As is already in evidence, the system's need to collect interest on money not actually in existence undergirds the profit prioritization that not only enforces poverty but generates continuing financial instability. The present system will remain in place unless a way can be found to implement a system that prioritizes work, sharing, and Nature nurture over greed and coercion.

In a democratic society, an economy that is “powering down” (to use Richard Heinberg’s term) can work if the people are committed to economic and social justice. Given adequate land, water, and a favorable climate, a society where the people possess a strong work ethic, a commitment to sharing, and proper respect for the environment can achieve sustainability under a variety of economic or political systems. The Watershed Communities agenda, as so far outlined, is designed to set the stage for the development of one such possible systemic transformation. Many of the elements of a physically realized Watershed Community already exist. The question remains, “How should these elements be organized and how should a Watershed Communities pilot project accomplish these tasks?”

The Pre-conditions of a Successful Pilot Project

Ancient wisdom conceived of the material Universe as existing in four primal states: *solid, liquid, gas, and fire* (what modern physics would call *energy* in the form of plasma, electricity, or combustion). Although modern science has outmoded these categories as an over-simplification of fine-scale energy states, their commonsense appeal to human scale perception lingers. Quite specific sub-sets of these energy states are required for the support of *terrestrial life-forms*. Terrestrial life-forms—in all their variety and interactive complexity—are required for the support of the one of their number for which we seem to have an abiding concern: the *human species*.

The human species requires *Land* (and all the heavier solid elements contained therein) both as a source to be mined and a surface area to be occupied. We require from liquid, *Water*, both to drink, and to render the land fertile. We require from the gaseous state, *Air*, both to breathe, and to circulate water from the oceans to the land. We require *Energy* not bound up in matter, of solar or geothermal origin, to nourish life in general, to warm us, and to power the machines that modern civilization needs to sustain human populations of the current size.

The absence of any one of the four basic elements banishes human settlement. The desert may have abundant solar energy and a long growing season, but with no water, humanity must import or vacate. In cities like Manhattan or Hong Kong, so much human population occupies so little land, *everything* must be imported. Thus they must export an equal amount to justify their existence. (Because of its extreme density and complete dependence on imported food, Manhattan is archtypically unsuited to the Watershed Communities paradigm, as outlined here. But for the paradigm to be universal, it must have the flexibility to incorporate all existing population and topological patterns.

The local availability of a sustainable supply of **harvestable energy** and the technology to harvest it is a crucial pre-condition to the viability of a self-sustaining Watershed Community. Although such a community could survive on imports, those imports would be a continual drain on the local economy requiring steady, dependable production for export. Therefore, any attempt to establish a Watershed Community pilot project must be preceded by a sustainable energy acquisition program, if not complete, at least under construction.

Early man received these elemental conditions of existence as a gift of Nature. Modern man must obtain, apportion, and maintain them by global-scale efforts. Like fish in water, *local communities* can only subsist through the provision of these elemental conditions of existence. Husbanding these resources at the local level can modulate and reduce the need for them, but local communities on an over-populated globe, by themselves, are at the mercy of the world at large. A properly functioning Watershed Community should be able to insulate its residents from global threats while creating a web of interconnection with other communities and preserving the local biosphere as a healthy element of its region.

*The crucial contribution that a Watershed Communities pilot project must produce is to prove the viability of its unique revision our address to **money and land**.*

What, then, is the best way to find out if the Watershed Communities concept is viable, and whether its actualization would be both desirable and durable? The best way to find out is to try it at a small enough scale that a minimum of capital would be at risk, but at a large enough scale that self-sufficiency in a capitalist environment could be attained. Two forms that such an effort could take immediately suggest themselves: either convert an existing rural small town to a Watershed Community, or build one from scratch. The former would require a functional consensus among existing citizens, but little immediate capital. The latter would be capital-intensive, but the brand-new population would attain consensus around the Watershed Communities model through self-selection. Because of the relative lack of conceptual complication in starting a new community, that option will be the one chosen for consideration.

The Basic Economy Concept

Each individual in a developed country ought to have the basic needs of a fully functioning human organism provided in a fair, orderly and continuous manner. Further, that individual ought to be assured a rightful and honorable place in society through the contribution of a fair share of the effort required to produce the goods and services required to fulfill those basic needs.

Consider the case of the lone shipwreck survivor washed up on the beach of an uninhabited island. For a solitary human to exist in a state of nature means that in addition to a body, or physical plant, a certain minimal amount of the conjunct universe is needed for working capital. Given the requisite land, then, the only other factor in the survival of a solitary able-bodied human is willingness to expend time and energy in going onto the land and procuring the food necessary for survival. Given the genetically in-built human instinct for survival, any human can be very reliably found to be willing, under these straightened circumstances, to do what is necessary, indeed *whatever* is necessary to ensure survival. Are you human?

There is a built-in poverty-potential in the unfettered market economy. What I propose is an economy based more on community need and less on entrepreneurial greed that thereby not only promotes equality but better reflects the various cultural elements of the community.

The following proposal assumes the successful cultivation of a willingness for people to see themselves as realizing their human freedom, not only as isolated individuals, but as responsible members of society. It likewise assumes that people can be persuaded that the prison of being obliged to labor a significant portion of one's life for the survival of the society as a whole is not constructed by man to enslave his fellows, but is imposed on us by Nature and can only be avoided by shifting that burden to others. Since the economy as a whole produces much that is non-essential, the Watershed Communities concept requires a means to separate the creation and exchange of necessities from the economy as a whole. We will now consider what that might entail

Before the widespread introduction of the computer, the complexity of the information required to determine minimum needs of differing individuals living in varied eco-systems made anything more than an approximate realization of this moral goal impractical. Currently, these kinds of minimums are indeed already in being—at a smaller scale—for special populations. People institutionalized by the state live close to the level of bare necessity. Although not exactly a democratic arrangement, agreement on what that is was achieved among those responsible for their care. Soldiers going into battle carry only what's necessary, and that's probably standardized. Wilderness backpackers don't overload themselves with stuff they won't use. The responsible parent assembles a store of food, water, and so forth (similar to that which would be needed for a few days of camping) as an emergency resource for the family. The point is, considerable precedent exists for people sitting down with each other and making a list of various kinds of common needs. The Internet yields the promise of extending this kind of resource to the local community as a whole, thus insuring that normally self-supporting victims of a natural disaster would receive the same sort of timely support as those normally unable to support themselves.

Determining our minimum requirements in some detail would have the important result of providing a benchmark **definition of the small ecological footprint**.

The quantification of the “small footprint” could have important significance. In modern times, we have not only the surviving historical records of the geographically limited ancients to guide us, but access to global communication networks that monitor and inter-relate ongoing discoveries of new knowledge of all sorts. We are beginning to form global organizations that reflect that capability. As the importance of this emerging knowledge as a guide for our actions dawns on those caught up in more parochial pursuits, these organizations become more and more central to decision-making.

Work-Hour Barter: the Basic Economy's Medium of Exchange

The Watershed Communities pilot project proposes the institution of a new means of exchange, locally-based *work-hour-barter* for those economic goods and services that constitute the *minimum* basis for the kind of life normal to the served community. The new economy created thereby requires different rules stemming from the nature of work-hour exchange and the character of the goods and services required for survival as contrasted with those which are entirely discretionary or are whole-system-related such as heavy industry and international trade. The provision of a specific set of necessary goods and services distributed by a work-hour barter medium of exchange constitutes the essence of *the Basic Economy*.

The work-hour medium of exchange in conjunction with a neighborhood-based Basic Economy should be easily comprehensible while accomplishing social goals relating to the measure and conservation of wealth and the equitability of exchange.

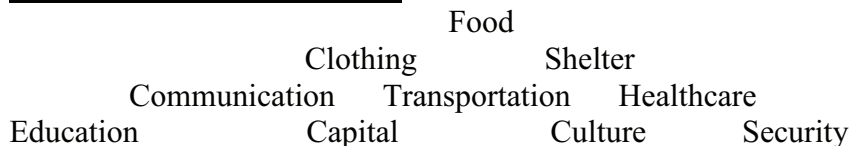
It must be said at the outset that the introduction of the proposed medium of exchange and its attendant institutions and practices is utterly dependent on near-universal literacy and the universal use of standardized workplace and point-of-sale Internet connections. The basic data to be processed by this system is *labor-hours expended* in the productive labor needed to deliver the *necessities of life* to all people in the society. A fundamental goal in the institution of such a network would be to *achieve maximal equity in the exchange of necessary productive labor*.

The Ten Necessities of the Basic Economy

Sustainable survival of civilized human populations requires that we produce and maintain a continuous flow of *ten necessities*. They are (along with some of the occupations that produce them):

- Food**, farming, fishing, livestock, distribution, retailing, garbage/sewage disposal.
- Shelter**, carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians, roofers, materials suppliers, etc.
- Clothing**, weaving, sewing, knitting, retailing, cleaning, recycling, etc.
- Healthcare**, healing arts practitioners, facilities, equipment, drugs, public health.
- Communication**, technology, installation, and maintenance personnel
- Transportation**, technology, roadways and right-of-ways, drivers, mechanics
- Culture**, artists, artisans, writers, scholars, performers, athletes, etc.
- Education**, teachers, clinicians, counselors
- Capital**, intellectual, social, and natural capital, tools, land, maintenance, administrators
- Security**, guards, firemen, other first responders

The 10 Necessities Tetractys:



The *first* level is the thing itself: the *human organism* in the process of surviving in the moment. This requires food, water, and air.

The *second* level refers to the most intimate environmental tools: clothing and shelter (which are both *human artifacts*).

The *third* level is a continuing flow of *specialized technological services*

The *fourth* level is the basis level for *whole-system sustainability*. *Education* carries present knowledge into the future. *Capital* acquires, processes, and maintains tools, raw materials, and land. *Culture* continuously defines and knits the society together. *Security* insures sustainability in the face of depredation.

The *individual* must have food. The *family* requires shelter and clothes. The *community* requires healthcare, communication, and transportation. The *society as a whole* is the repository for education, capital, culture, and security. Each level represents an increased time-span of consumer need and producer delivery.

As it is now, the setting of prices and the allocation of resources through supply and demand is most merciless in the area of food production. As a consequence, family farmers who make wrong guesses about the market, the weather, or credit conditions, are in continual danger of losing the family farm. This should not be. Also, food consumption divorced from food production is the civilized human's primary disconnect with Nature. Shielding food production from profit-driven multi-national agribusiness would promote localized farming.

How a Watershed Communities Basic Economy Might Function.

Food

We may be closer to serious food-supply shortages in the industrialized world than is generally realized. If so, our capitalist economy will respond with rapidly rising food prices that could drive the middle class into poverty and the poor to the edge of starvation or beyond. In this eventuality, responsible government would replace the market's unequal distribution with rationing, thus replacing the principle of competitiveness with one of sharing. Although validating the principles giving rise to the Basic Economy concept, rationing does not solve the underlying causes.

In order to replace the capitalist profit motive with the communitarian sustainable self-sufficiency motive, the need to cooperate in the face of economic and ecological challenges must be fostered in the local community. In an ideal Watershed Community, those foods growable in the local climate would be produced and consumed locally. Existing communities—suburbs or desert communities, in particular—would have a difficult time realizing this ideal. Although an existing small rural town would be an ideal place to begin a reorientation of the food production and consumption practices, the conservatism of the residents around money and property would make achieving a consensus around the Watershed Communities agenda unlikely until the ruling petro-dependent paradigm fails completely.

From the perspective of communitarian sustainable self-sufficiency, competition in agriculture gives rise to the inevitable quest for excessive worker productivity, resulting in rural depopulation, a rootless rural workforce disconnected from the land, pervasive corporate agri-business domination, polluted watersheds, and poisoned produce.

We now have the knowledge and skill-sets to produce and consume food far more healthily with far less strain on Nature. Experts agree this can best happen with local effort, but effective local effort requires education and example. Watershed Communities could provide a fast track to this kind of synergetic integration.

One of the central ways to this goal is a rural landscape populated with small family-run and owned organic farms, secure that one year's reverses won't lead to dispossession. The competitive market stimulates the production and oversupply of the least nutritious and most dangerous agricultural products. The institution of a necessities-based basic economy wherein everyone is fed without question isn't possible under the capitalist system, because of two major structural factors: land ownership practices and the design of monetary instruments.

In the present system, rural re-population would tend to increase rural land prices, producing a cycle of land speculation. Money, on the other hand, must be kept scarce for prices to remain stable. Money comes into existence with an interest price-tag attached. Only those showing increased productivity from year to year, will survive to pay the interest-encumbered money. The small organic farms are more labor intensive, therefore less competitive, and therefore less able to survive without subsidies under a capitalist regimen. Further, the financial capital that food production reorientation requires is choked off by agribusiness and centralized finance. Corporate agribusiness now has a stranglehold on the food supply, the most basic of basic necessities. Cutting this umbilical cord needs to be the first priority of a Watershed Communities pilot project.

Shelter and clothing

In primitive cultures, cooperation is still the modus operandi in level two of the Necessities Tetractys—shelter and clothing—because both are provided by the family, for the family. As society becomes more differentiated, specialists market these artifacts, and thereby introduce the factor of market competition together with reliance on the introduction of technology. At present, clothing is mass-manufactured in distant sweatshops for fossil-fuel-powered distribution. Harmony with Nature points towards the reintroduction of localized industry and some aspects of pre-industrial practice.

Housing

Despite the advances in living standards brought about by industrial technology, feudal conurbations tended to mesh more harmoniously with their landscapes than the industrialized cities that displaced them. The miniaturization and de-emphasis of technology could produce the best of both worlds.

Universal connection with—and guaranteed supply of—food, together with guaranteed housing that dictates an increase in the housing stock (as long as population increases at all) combine to increase the demand for land. Since increased land value is a function of society at large, these unearned profits should be returned to society, not kept by individual users. Wealth increases unrelated to work-hour expenditure would distort the Basic Economy.

Secure housing is essential to community cohesion. But when a family's residence becomes primarily an investment rather than a home, the banker's mortgages become the permanent residents of the community, not the people in the houses. The capitalist economy requires new households lacking inherited wealth to burden themselves with a mortgage for the bulk of their working lives. If they become unable to make the

payments, they're forced to move. Watershed Communities will seek out ways for the community to band together to make all residential land debt-free and keep it that way.

Healthcare, communication, and transportation

Level three of the Necessities Tetractys displays the highest level of technological development of the primal foundation of civilized life as compared with their antecedents in pre-industrial societies. Rather than adding to the burden on Nature, which these technologies continue to do, they must be downsized, made more efficient, and in some cases eliminated. This task also requires a reorientation in the way we live.

In the present economy, level three (healthcare, communication, and transportation) inevitably brings about more pervasive competitiveness due to technical specialization, and scale of capital investment. The Watershed Communities' pilot project's need for innovation in these three areas requires a distinction between those productive activities that are established *routine* and those that require the risk characteristic of competitive *enterprise*. Most Basic Economy functions are routine ones that have long precedent for labor-hours required for their provision. Proposed innovations around these routines need to be provided by absorption from the private sector or by the Basic Economy's capitalizing experimental applications and then incorporating successful ones into its routines.

Education, capital, culture, and security

Level four activities undergirding society as a whole (education, capital, culture, and security) tend to focus more on cooperation than on competition because they need to be performed by unitary entities in order to function comprehensively. Universal education imparting the knowledge necessary for the individual to cope with civilized life need not be competitive except as a goad for the individuals involved to seek excellence. Capital, in the sense that I mean it here, refers not to financial capital but to real capital (land and tools), social capital, environmental capital, intellectual capital, and harnessed energy. The nature of culture—being diffuse—requires nurture to survive, and fosters competition only to evolve. The provision of security should be integrated and not be profit-driven.

At present, under capitalist domination, economic capital—in terms of land and the means of production—tends to be centralized away from the local community. For a work-hour barter economy to function rationally, rent on land—since not the result of work-hours of labor—must be recovered by the community that has created the value by simply being in existence. The situation with productive capital, is not so cut-and-dried. It must be recognized by all local residents that profit to externally owned capital leaves the local community, whether deducted from a workers wages or added to the purchase price of externally produced goods.

If a society has such a strong economy that it produces more than the bare necessities, basic morality requires the guarantee of provision of those goods and services constituting the 10 necessities to all members. If that guarantee is fulfilled, then no one is *required* to compete with other humans for survival.

The relationship of the Basic Economy to the Money Economy

The Basic Economy encompasses only the capital, commodities, and hours of work needed to provide the 10 Necessities to all within its local residential domains. That leaves much of the economy out. Within communities there will be a need to trade various used, recreative and other non-essential objects that will best be served by some form of cash of which legal tender will continue to predominate.

Beyond communities, there are large scale operations such as extraction, heavy industry, and long-range transportation that provide the “raw materials” for the Basic Economy. If considered in relation to a pilot project, such operations would be sources of needed resources that would require payment in legal tender. This means that pilot communities could not boot-strap themselves entirely with their own labor, but would have to be capitalized. A community, once running sustainably, would need these resources only for maintenance. Considered theoretically as a component of a society where a Basic Economy was in place, it would expect the labor provided by its members to be paid at least in part with labor-hour credits. The money economy would continue to exist, but its ups and downs would be insulated from Watershed Communities residents.

Let’s hypothesize for a moment that something like the Basic Economy became the normal system for delivering services, and that the work-hour became its standardized unit of account. Economists in a fully developed Basic Economy would continuously monitor wage rates in the money economy. They would average these and perhaps adjust them for other factors to find the average (or alternatively, the mean) wage per hour in the money economy. This would then become the rate of exchange with the Basic Economy. The Basic Economy would thereby be immune to the fluctuations of the money economy by, once in universal use, continually revaluing its currency. The work-hour would then begin to replace today's spurious debt-created money as the fundamental basis for measuring wealth at the local level. Others (see Thomas Greco, again) have proposed important reforms to the global monetary system to remedy the inherent instability of the contemporary global casino. Reform of this kind is necessary and complementary to that proposed here.

The Basic Economy would use the Internet to facilitate work-hour barter and monetary exchange, and also function as an exchange between the two mediums. The Basic Economy would raise the funds necessary to back its interface with the monetary medium through local commercial and industrial land-use fees, a small adjustable point-of-sale "green-oriented" sales tax, and payments from those who wish to make use of the services of the Basic Economy without direct contribution of work-hours (who would then pay a surcharge for their necessities). The Basic Economy counts the population's commitment to future participation as work-hour capital and becomes a major source thereof.

Counting the population's commitment to future participation in the Basic Economy as capital is a controversial notion that requires supporting argument. The next few paragraphs digress for that purpose.

The value of money is dependent on mutual credit in exchanges between market participants. Mutual credit rests on unverifiable assumptions about the future. Capital that is based on money has many imaginary elements. The human need to provide for self and family is much more real. That includes, at the very least, the basic necessities of civilized life: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, transportation, communication, maintenance, and a few pennies in the pocket for some sort of recreation and personal development.

My understanding of the economist's definition of the word capital is: the monetary value of a business's tools, plant, land and all other things that are necessary to be owned in order for the business to function. That sort of capitalization alone has no liquidity, so businesses also need working capital which—if not already saved—must be borrowed against the company's assets or a line of credit.

Why cannot we argue, then, that every human will take the time to do whatever is necessary to insure personal survival for as long as circumstances will permit? And if that is granted, why should that time not be accorded a similar monetary value to other capital instruments such as gold, at least as far as working capital is concerned?

In other words, if people band together on the basis of their common humanity, such as a neighborhood or town and agree that they are willing to spend the required number of hours to insure the survival of the group as a whole, as is postulated in the concept of the Basic Economy, why couldn't that agreement have value for the purpose of capitalization just as the loan of saved money does? The risk in this basis of capitalization shifts from the willingness of the tax-base to pay interest on the national debt to the longevity of the Basic Economy's role in the economy as a whole.

Such a capitalization instrument would have several virtues. It would allow people to join together at an appropriate scale to accomplish mutually beneficial objectives. Unlike loans not backed by savings, it would not be inflationary. Community infrastructure improvements would avoid interest costs. Wealth created by local labor would stay in the community. Investment would no longer be dictated by the need of the wealthy to make money off of money regardless of the needs of the community and the sustainability of its interface with Nature.

The Transition to Sustainable Harmony of Humanity With Nature

In my long-term optimistic historical view, the 18th and 19th centuries were the centuries of transition from an *agricultural* to an *industrial* society; the 20th the century of transition from an *industrial* society to an *information* society; and the 21st will be one of transition from an *information* society to one characterized by a *sustainable harmony of humanity with Nature*. The agricultural, industrial, and informational activities must, of

course remain, but the level of importance and employment within them will recede as the focus shifts to achieving harmony with Nature. The number and priority of necessities will change little, but the society in harmony with Nature will be a new context that demands changes in their content, delivery, and distribution.

These changes will not by themselves erase the moral deficits of the past and present. If a society such as ours has such a strong economy that it produces more than the bare necessities, basic morality requires the guarantee of provision of those necessities to all members. The existence of homelessness and hunger testify to our society's moral lapse. If, in the pursuit of harmony with Nature (or in flight from Mother Nature's revenge), our economy should come to produce less than our accustomed minimum for the general population, the moral response should be a universal sharing of that shortfall. Instead, the present economic system is set up to meet such an eventuality only with monetary power in the market place. Indeed, most recent famines have been the result of lack of money, not lack of food. However, in the event of actual shortages in crucial commodities (food, energy, water, etc.) a responsible government would institute rationing and price control on a one-size-fits-all-basis in spite of resulting inefficiencies and poor response to variations in individual need. Even then, the power of the purse would rule the resulting black market—the only market left operating according to the principles of free-market economics.

When that guarantee is fulfilled to everyone, no one is *required* to compete with other humans for survival. The argument could be, and would be, made that there are people who, unless faced with the threat of a below-survival income level, will become indolent. Admitted. The question is: would there be more such people than now? My belief is: not if the level is kept low enough. Let's suppose for the sake of argument that there would be more people who would opt out of the wage-slave economy to pursue a parasitic bohemian lifestyle. The question then becomes: would it be more harmful to society to have an increased number of people of that sort, as opposed to the society we have now, which forces a great number of people to ensure their survival by accepting employment (whether meaningful to them or not) for the purpose of pursuing other's competitive objectives—not for the purpose of producing real wealth?

Capitalist economic theory makes the argument that the market provides the most efficient way to set prices and allocate resources. Market efficiency in setting prices is difficult to attack—at least in the economics textbook model. The market (if truly free) also is fair, democratic, and non-coercive as far as deal-making is concerned. The market's efficiency in utilizing resources is more difficult to defend.

Morally, since there are inevitably winners and losers in the market, the losers should not be denied survival as the result of the outcome of a game the losers had no choice but to enter. In practice, our society recognizes this need in an ad hoc way, but refuses to institutionalize it, because by society fulfilling this need through legal mechanisms, it says to the winners, "you must pay taxes out of your income to support the indigent whether you like it or not, or go to jail."

Watershed Communities: Not a Welfare State

You may ask, “Isn’t what you suggest here, merely what the New and Fair Deals were trying to accomplish?” My reply would be, “Yes—but in a very important way, no. Survival should be guaranteed to all classes of society, not only the needy.” The entitlements put in place in the ‘30s and ‘60s create the dysfunctionality of a middle class taxed to support the indigent, many of whom are their neighbors, friends, and family. Having to pay taxes to support the indigent while living next to their social problems drags the working poor down to their level. Only if everybody is guaranteed the necessities, can I, with a clear conscience, turn away a mendicant. As it is, those who opt to become beggars now realize that many among us can’t refuse a request for a handout with a clear conscience. Viewed from the standpoint of cooperation/competition, the provision of sustenance to another is a nurturing, cooperative action in which the thought of repayment—if the recipient is helpless—is inappropriate.

In order to justify the radical notion of a universal human-related Basic Economy, it is useful to consider: What are the virtues and defects of the governmentally sponsored welfare state presently employed to put a floor under the poor and deliver the social goods that the private sector fails to provide? If that—or its prudent expansion—is adequate to the task of putting a floor under all, and equally distributing the burden of doing so, then the kind of reorganization of the economic nature of the social contract that Watershed Communities envisions would not be required.

The population/environment crisis challenges the basis of the welfare state as we know it. The existent welfare state hypothesizes a continually growing economy in order to provide the tax-base to pay for itself. At the same time it provides no incentive to address the interlocking problems of too many people, too few resources, and too much debt.

Even before these looming threats to survival emerged, the welfare state's safety net has come under criticism. It encourages a culture of welfare dependency, and it does little to help employed families above the poverty line. Parents with problems spend their benefits foolishly leaving their children still impoverished. The self-employed have limited access to the safety net, and the well-off resent being taxed to ease others’ misfortunes. Government laws mandating redistribution of wealth are enforced by the threat of coercive action both against taxpayers and potentially fraudulent beneficiaries; nevertheless, a certain level of fraud attends the distribution of welfare money. Welfare creates many government jobs undisciplined by the market forces that tend to keep corporate bureaucracies lean. These arguments are not always borne out on the ground, but there is a grain of truth in all of them.

These unintended side effects of the welfare system result from grafting a system of redistributing wealth on to a capitalist economic system that is hostile to it, and then enforcing it with implied coercion to the taxpayer and invasion of privacy in the process of distribution to recipients. The concept of a safety net is not at fault. The Watershed Communities solution proposed here creates an automatic *safety net for all citizens* in much the same way that installing a new operating system in a computer can accomplish

tasks of integration that the old system was not designed for. The hardware is the same; it's just put to more humane and sustainable use. The old software can be accommodated. Sadly, to complete the analogy, here too it is "garbage in, garbage out." No amount of revision in the structure of the political economy can eliminate racism, sexism, and the other habits of mind by which we convince ourselves of our superiority by demonizing others. The goal of this proposal is a limited one: to create a system wherein all may reside with self-respect untarnished by poverty or lack of a socially valid purpose.

The present system does not provide an integrated safety net for all of its citizens. It has evolved into one wherein government officials are elected on dem-organic principles that are undercut by their need to secure the backing of corporate plut-orgs for their election campaigns. Once installed in office, they are besieged by massively funded corporate lobbyists. The overwhelming economic power of the corporations—many “too big to fail”—has enabled them to achieve dominance over the governmental entities charged with chartering and regulating them.

If corporations were set up for the purpose of ensuring the welfare of all citizens as well as the health of Nature on which we all depend, there would be less reason to object to their rule. But they are not.

Is an alternate delivery system needed? The agencies we now have in existence in the private sector to ameliorate the fallout from corporate domination are generally lumped under the designation “civil society.” In the civil society as it exists now, it seems there are no formal organizational links between the non-corporate, non-government providers of the basic necessities. Is this really true? In order to function they must compete with each other for the energy of the society. Given the competitive nature of organizations, is it a good idea to try to put the civil society into any kind of organizational format, or is it better to leave it in its present chaotic state? Chaos is a fertile environment for the exercise of freedom of choice, whereas order narrows choice. Any attempt to restructure the provision of the necessities of life must balance the danger imposed by unknown outcomes with the need for rational and humane order.

Watershed Communities and the Land

Money is a human invention; land is not. Money performs its function as a medium of exchange best when it operates by a set of simple, understandable, universal, enduring rules. The land, and the manifestations of Nature that reside upon it, makes its own rules. Nature's inscrutable priorities make it impossible for us to make hard and fast rules about our address to the land. The ruling paradigm—our desire to master and shape to our own needs that of which we are but a small part—has come face to face with the law of diminishing returns. Thus there are infinite local variations in the appropriateness of possible active or passive responses to any desire—should we have one—to balance our needs with those of Nature.

Nevertheless, we can settle one general principle: we do not own the land; the land owns us.

Further, there is one general observation to be made about the social nature of humankind: we are both territorial and nomadic.

Beyond these generalizations lie the complexity of individual human ingenuity brought to bear on an infinitude of local conditions.

If our goal is to live in harmony with Nature, it will be elusive as long as we regard the principal worth of land to be its value in exchange. No matter current practice, for consistency, the Watershed Communities concept must take the stance that humans (as a condition of their very existence) have an inherent unconditional right to occupy a personal space of land adequate for their survival needs. If there is such a concentration of population that the land cannot accommodate us, then we must live in multi-story structures or find a compassionate way of thinning our numbers.

The Present System's Inherent Inability to Achieve Harmony with Nature

The theory that the highest and best land-use is achieved through the operations of a free market comes a cropper of the market's requirement that the land's value must yield exploitability to its owner in order to justify its cost. The land offers only so much exploitability. From Nature's standpoint, the human reification of monetary profit from the land quickly becomes counterproductive to Nature's web of interconnected needs.

The land is not a "thing" (in the sense of the economist's "widget") and therefore should not be traded under the same protocols we have devised for the trading of things. Neither is it labor. Here is where the land "economy", as presently practiced, most conflicts with the concept of a work-hour unit of account as the basis for a labor-barter means of exchange that Watershed Communities proposes. If one must pay rent to occupy a piece of land, then this cost must be added to labor in order for a viable determination of value in exchange to be made. Therefore, the concept of a labor-barter medium of exchange is in sync with Henry George's assertion (in his magnum opus "Progress and Poverty") that land's monetary value is socially—not individually—created and should therefore be shared equally by all rather than borne individually as a cost added to productive enterprise.

That said, what would be needed for a Watershed Communities pilot project to isolate rent-on-land from a labor-hour-barter based basic economy? There are a myriad of potentially viable answers to this question. George's answer was land-value taxation denominated in legal tender. Henry George was a major contributor to the emergent populist/progressive outrage at robber baron/Wall Street capitalism at the beginning of the 20th century. He disputed the Marxist socialist criticism of the capitalist system. Instead, he blamed inequality of wealth on unearned income from rent on land. He (correctly, in my opinion) saw the expenditure of labor and capital as the source of real wealth and—most importantly—separated land from its inclusion as an element of

capital. Based on his perception of rent on land as unearned income, he proposed that it be taxed for the common good. At that time the cost of government was so low that it could have been entirely paid for by land taxation. He is mostly remembered today as the father of the “Single Tax” movement, which never gained much traction in American politics. However, the underlying economic theory, though consigned to history’s dustbin, has never been convincingly disputed.

Although George’s theory is central to the Watershed Communities concept, its realization in the context of a pilot project presents several problems. The present regime of state property tax would exert an external distortion on a labor-barter-based economy. The threat of eviction for tax delinquency conflicts with the goal of a stable community. Even if the pilot project were granted the responsibility—as a commons—to collect the property tax, it would thereby be undertaking the kind of governmental responsibilities Watershed Communities seeks to avoid. State laws tend to under-tax land and over-tax buildings. In the absence of Georgist legislation at the state level, the project’s need to enjoy the rewards of shared land-value taxation would require a governmental exemption allowing a different method for paying for the services that the state provides.

Land exchange protocols are mandated by two unavoidable conditions: land varies in its value to its residents; and residential mobility is essential to human freedom. Though Henry George recognized these imperatives, he took for granted the use of money as a medium of exchange. Although legal tender seems as well suited to the task of facilitating the exchange of land as any other means, it carries with it negative characteristics: interest-burdened indebtedness, land-use as a cash cow, a rentier social class, among others. The exchange of land for labor and things neglects the fact that land cannot be owned in the same sense that labor and things can. In an ideal Watershed Community, exchange of residential land should only be for other residential land. Any difference in value perceived by the exchangers should be the only thing to be settled by some form of money. Unfortunately, even in this limited role, money becomes once again the measure of land-value. At least the unearned income of rent on land would be absent from this equation; only change in value over time would constitute unearned income.

Another problem for Georgist theory in the contemporary era is that George dealt with the value of land only in monetary terms, not the values inherent to land *uses* and *environmental* values. Land use-value is on a vector (scale?) from extraction to occupation with agriculture roughly in the middle. Extraction (mining, lumbering), although essential to civilization’s artifacts, tends to make land uninhabitable. Residential and commercial uses tend to keep extraction (and much agriculture, for that matter) at a distance. Thus zoning has been employed in order to stabilize land value for these social uses and environmental laws have been instituted in order to curb extraction’s worst excesses. In most communities, zoning has been initiated on the basis of existing use, and then modified over time to suit the varying needs of residents and investors. Therefore, urban land values have not been left entirely to market forces, but entrusted to democratically-empowered civil bureaucracy’s determinations. As a result, varying governmentally permitted uses of urban land cause varying market determined land-values according to zone.

A Watershed Communities pilot project starting from scratch would not be exempt from these considerations. The design process would require land allocation for a variety of uses. As made clear (hopefully) in the exposition of the Basic Economy, the labor-barter medium of exchange would exist in tandem with legal tender. That this proposal seeks to hold residents free from eviction for non-payment of taxes does not mean that taxes not be assessed to non-residential uses. These uses should be taxed on the basis of their value to the community and the environment, as well as to commerce. I offer a preliminary matrix as a basis for design and as a basis for the pilot project’s municipal tax base.

Wilderness				X				public
Scenic Parks			X		X			public or private
Forest		X	or	X				public or private ecological preserve
Fallow & Reserve			X	X				private
Agriculture		X	X	X				“
Extraction	X							“
Manufacturing	X							“
Commerce	X	X						“
-(Private charitable)			X					“
Vacant (urban)	X							“
Residential (rental)	X	X	X					“
Residential (Owner-occupied)				X				“
Roads, Infra-structure						X		public
Public Bldgs.						X		“

There is an inbuilt conflict of interest between residents and investors—between those who wish to use the land to permanently enable and enrich their lives and those who seek only to profit from the land. Since territorial occupation—no matter how small—is a human imperative, zoning not only stabilizes land value but tends to create monopolistic values that increase cost to the point where it is usual for a resident to have to go in debt in order to acquire sole usership of an area of land. The general indebtedness for land

institutionalizes the negative characteristics previously mentioned. A Watershed Communities pilot program would need to find a way to avoid this condition.

Creating a Viable Commons

How could permanently debt-free residential land be realized by a Watershed Communities pilot program? Attempting transformation of an existing community that invariably includes an established network of human relationships based on varied land use would entail many complications depending on the nature of that community. So let's consider first the easier case of a pilot community created from scratch on land procured as an unencumbered single undivided entity. In order to meet the Watershed Communities ideal, "ownership" of the land would need to remain the "property" of the community as a whole that would then grant "userships" to resident participants.

In such an arrangement, the whole of the town's land is created as a *commons* containing residential spaces with individual control and responsibility, spaces devoted to social uses such as roads, parks, and schools, spaces devoted to commerce, spaces devoted to agriculture, and spaces devoted to wilderness. In other words, the actual uses would remain the same but decisions about the allocation of those uses would be founded in a community of persons entitled to residential uses rather than one conceived of as a collection of individually marketable plots.

The apportioning of land-use in such a commons must be determined by sustainability predictions, the occupant's democratically expressed desires, and convenience to commerce. Watershed Communities proposes a self-selected local group of Watershed Steward advocates for sustainability, as well as a democratically selected management of a basic necessities local economy.

Ultimately (in a non-fossil-fueled world), sustainability implies a return to the pre-industrial landscape. Then, the bulk of the populace (mostly subsistence-farmers) lived in hamlets and small towns to be within walking distance of their neighbors, while urban residents lived in multi-story row-houses for similar reasons. Only the aristocracy had grounds surrounding their residences and depended on servants driving them in horse drawn carriages.

The Watershed Communities concept depends on the advanced level of industrial technology of internet-based *communication* networks, mechanized *transportation*, and *health-care* that reside on the third level of the Basic Economy Tetractys. Restoration of the land-use patterns of the pre-industrial landscape require that technological innovation be redirected to create more walkable municipalities. As long as the automobile is normal and affordable, the market forces of a capitalist economy promote sprawl. Even though the American family is accustomed to the sense of privacy and dominion bestowed by the detached single-family residence, the success of this pattern has depended on market affordability. That appears to be coming to an end, even as I write.

Except for those already grown comfortable with living in a dense urban environment, greatly increased density of population will be resisted by democratic as well as market forces so long as it is equated in the public mind with being at the bottom of the class structure. However, unaffordable fossil-fuel energy will eventually force a return to walkable habitation as the norm. The volunteer inhabitants of a Watershed Communities project that starts from scratch must find creative ways to embrace and institute density of habitation without creating a reverse, but equally anti-human, 21st century version of Brasilia's auto-dependant open spaces. If successful, this would provide a pattern for others as the fossil-fuel economy becomes untenable.

Starting a pilot project from scratch will require the services of design professionals ranging from those with environmental conservation skills to those adept in designing built environments conducive to social harmony. The insights of the ancients and surviving indigenous cultures should not be neglected in this process. But most importantly, the prospective inhabitants must have a say in the planning process.

A sustainable, livable, more compact built environment will take many forms depending on the natural landscape and varying cultural ideals. They all must share the characteristic of being built to last. The towns and cities of the Old World, as well as surviving ancient indigenous cultures, would seem to be important models for new walkable built environments.

For a Watershed Communities pilot project, such an approach points to a higher level of capitalization than that expended on our "Kleenex culture's" built environments at a time when the availability of such capitalization may be running out. The assumption of impermanence due to technological obsolescence has limited the time horizon of cheap-energy-based capitalization. Old World cities and towns have neighborhoods hundreds of years old. Reproducing habitats with these same values, but incorporating the technology required in order to bestow the benefits to health, knowledge, and culture provided by technology should be the goal.

The picture of a Watershed Communities built environment has stressed only two of the three values traditionally expected of buildings: commodity, firmness, and delight (usefulness, sturdiness, and beauty). In the capitalist industrial city the prioritization of maximum economic return has resulted in vast swaths of unremitting ugliness. A new sustainable built environment meant to last must reverse this imbalance always and everywhere. If it's ugly, redesign or rebuild it.

Architects and city planners from Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Robert Moses through Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri have imagined new civic paradigms (mostly megalomaniac) to replace the manifold dysfunctionalities of the industrial city. It would fall to a Watershed Communities design project to have another go at this problem from the standpoint of local community, sustainability, and fair exchange.

Finally, the concept of humans populating a sustainable commons must consider land as the province of Nature. Watershed consciousness visualizes giving way to Nature along

the ridges and watercourses, returning to Nature its web across the land. Within that web nestles cultivated land that feeds and clothes its human communities. At present, economic competition guarantees that our need to eat, cultivate, and occupy will result in competition between the needs of wilderness, farmland, and cities. Watershed Communities sees these aspects of the land to be in continuous interdependent cooperation—the same relationships that characterize a healthy community.

EPILOUGE to Part III:

Technology, War, and Population

In order to get a better grip on the parameters of all proposed solutions to the complex problems facing us (along with their potential for unintended side-effects) I want to examine a three dimensional matrix around global humanity's potential response to the developing condition of our species' prospects. Another way of saying this is that I want to put three different head-sets together that bear on each other, although they have no necessary direct specific causal effect on one another. I have chosen one axis along the **Techno-geek/Luddite** vector, one axis along the **militarist/pacifist** vector, and one axis along the **pro-population growth/anti-population growth** vector. I have chosen these because they represent distinct takes on human survival strategy debates that prompt a range of opinions on criteria common to each other.

First, the population question. World population growth has become exponential in the last hundred years. Now our legacy balance with Nature is upset globally. Those who have sought to understand the nature of this imbalance question the ability of the earth's natural systems to support ever larger populations. Could the world's humanity begin to decrease its population right away? This could be accomplished only by more deaths or fewer births. Freedom from fear requires—along with international peace—living in a society that seeks to fend off death. That leaves cultural limitations on women's rights to bear children—with all its problems—the only peaceful remaining option. The more likely outcome is for hunger and pestilence to increase during this century, as women in poor countries bear ever more children to counter the deaths.

If we assume that peaceful population reduction can only be accomplished by women, worldwide, voluntarily deciding to limit themselves to no more than one child apiece, then population reduction will begin but will take decades to really kick in. That means that the assault on the environment must somehow be attenuated in the meantime. The extreme Luddite vision and the techno-fix faith constitute the two poles of the many approaches to achieving this goal. The one sacrifices all vestiges of technology to the needs of Nature, while the other seeks to maintain, refine, and develop as much technology as we can get away with. This is the coming fundamental polarity in political and economic debate when (and if) the coming challenges begin to be seriously addressed.

The Watershed Communities proposal is unsympathetic to dualities in general as non-representative of organic functions and breeders of us-vs.-them conflicts. Nevertheless, it

is reasonable to consider the Luddite/techno duality to be an ineradicable central constituent of responsible civic governance and sustainable economy in the coming days. (As an organization that rejects for itself the taking on of coercive capabilities, Watershed Communities opts out of assuming governmental function.) As with other dualities that are really polarities with a variety of positions in between, the extremes of these opposing directions will be attractive to only a few. Accustomed as we are to the insulation from the harshness of Mother Nature's tough love by the bulwark of civilization, few will opt to live in huts in the wilderness. The best efforts of the techno-fix faith, if the sole strategy, will be undone by declining resources and an exponential progression of fixes to the fixes.

On the other hand, the fascinating thing about the population question is the wide spectrum of address it inspires. Just in terms of the question of population itself, the Vatican actively promotes population growth, while others—in thrall to a perceived urgency—consider population decline by all means available an essential good.

But for extreme techno-geeks the human race is already doomed to zombie-hood as a transitional species that will evolve a reproducing intelligent robot to take its place. If that robot were developed by the Pentagon, it would make little difference to them. The hut-dwellers on the other end of the scale seek isolation in sparsely populated enclaves. They also have no address to the population problem other than to escape from it and the technology which exacerbates it.

The two “practical” extremes of the technoid/Luddite divide range from belief in the necessity of continuing technological progress on the one hand, to a nostalgic return to a relatively low level of technological utilization characteristic of the end of the 19th century on the other. The Watershed Communities concept is utterly dependent on the technology of the Internet for its full practical realization. Further, the third level of the Necessities Tetractys—transportation, communication, and healthcare—requires advanced technology. When one thinks of all the mining, capitalization, fabrication, and distribution that goes into the provision of these services, one becomes aware that it is highly desirable to keep as much of the basic industrial infrastructure in operation as consistent with the need to diminish its impact on Nature. Therefore, since Watershed Communities is at the rough midpoint of this very crucial debate, its position should be one of sympathy and reconciliation for both sides while being steadfast in trying to determine what of technology is essential and what is frivolous, as well as what can be downsized and made more energy efficient.

For two centuries technological progress has enjoyed free rein. Those making scientific discoveries together with those who invented the technology to implement them were lavishly funded and publicly praised. But the invention, introduction, and deployment of new technology has been guided by the goals of saving lives, winning wars, and making money—in other words—increasing friendly population, decreasing enemy population, and rendering both friendly and enemy populations economically dependent on technologies for survival without regard for the load those technologies place on Nature.

Many commentators, not necessarily Luddites, decry knee-jerk technological innovation as outmoded by the developing global situation. Scientific and technological advance is now being asked to address specific goals, renounce frivolous bells-and-whistles, and make less impact on Nature. But this formulation leaves out military technology. Historically, military technology has been one of the major drivers of technological advance. If our leaders think that wars are inevitable, that the only consideration is winning them with the least loss to ourselves, then increasing military technological development becomes a mandate.

The nub of all strategies designed to cope with war, resource distribution, pollution mitigation—where the goal is maintaining positive balances on a global scale—is the balance between **cooperation** and **competition**. Competition for scarce resources inevitably leads in the direction of war. The decision to cooperatively share resources can at any time reverse this direction. Competitive free market enterprise, by itself, must make profitability the goal of all actions. For that reason it ghettoizes cooperation within itself. Cooperation beyond that boundary can even be stigmatized as illegal restraint of trade. A Basic Economy work-hour barter system removes competition as the fundamental driver of productive activity and replaces it with consensual synergy.

Will individuals exercise their will to curb population and respect the commons? Will societies (and the nations that separate them) respond to resource scarcity by resorting to war, or by some scheme, to sharing? Will Nature give us time to make these determinations?

PART IV: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE OPERATIONS OF THE BASIC ECONOMY AND THE WORK-HOUR AS A UNIT OF WEALTH:

Q. Will you be answering questions about the operations of pilot Watershed Communities projects?

A. No. The following “answers” are hypothetical descriptions of what might occur if the pilot projects were to prove viable and efforts were underway to transition to the Watershed Communities model for the population as a whole. Many other factors would undoubtedly bear on these answers at that time: changes due to things learned in the pilots, degrees of public acceptance/resistance, technological innovations, erosion of resources, and others unforeseen. Clearly the answers proposed here reside in the realm of imagination. As I write, the only solid tangible proposal I have to offer is contained in Part II of this book. Part III is intended to give a focus and direction to the efforts proposed in Part II. Part III has been made as general as possible to allow for other’s contributions. Part IV presents my more detailed personal hypothesizing and is therefore presented in this pseudo-conversational format.

Q. Okay, then, how do you picture the very general way in which the nature, goals and limitations of the Basic Economy might be realized?

A. The task is the creation, at the smallest levels of society, of simple, comprehensible, geographically-based, social/economic units which are similar enough in scale and structure that they can band together to form regional networks while nurturing local diversity. The goal must be to create for the individual, the family, the neighborhood, the town, the capability of creating a third mode of socio/economic organization that would exist within the protective structure of the state without being an arm of “government,” at the same time creating economic structures that distribute to the populace at large the means of survival irrespective of profit to investors, rewarding human enterprise while respecting the limits to enterprise placed by the demands of environmental sustainability.

Such an economic and social structure would grow and evolve. It could eventually liberate government from all social welfare responsibilities and return it to its classical function of providing security, a legal system, the chartering and regulation of commerce, and protection from invasion. It would be a bulwark against externally imposed corporate exploitation. It would provide a locally determined framework for balancing human need with the carrying capacity of the land. It would provide an environment where people could pursue their interests (whether cultural, enterprise, or personal) with minimal constraint.

Q. Recap the pre-conditions for the “operating system” innovations that would be introduced by a Basic Economy system.

1. The general realization that there are intractable and exponentially worsening problems inherent in continuing on the way we are.
2. The realization that we require land for our survival, that access to the land is our birthright and should be ours along with citizenship and should not be conditional upon payment of rent (house: yes, land: no) but should be occupied conditionally on the basis of land "usership" not ownership. The land owns us, not vice versa. Precedent for this approach is already written into the Dutch constitution, and the underlying economic theory has been stated by David Ricardo, Henry George and others.
3. The elementary-school-centered neighborhood becomes the focus for habitation and land-use planning. The revitalization of the neighborhood community is the point, place, and time where democracy and ecology ought to come together.
4. The people in the neighborhoods make an inventory of the basic irreducible necessities of life and agree that they will see to it among themselves that all are provided with these.
5. The people must agree among themselves to provide the required labor to deliver these necessities and that that labor be apportioned equitably so that no one gets a free ride. After all, if you were on a desert island, would you not make the necessary exertions to ensure your survival? Why then should living in society exempt any capable person from this requirement? The "American dream"—never in actuality available to everyone—of siphoning off from the ongoing stream of commerce enough wealth to enable early retirement needs to be replaced with the more prosaic—but practicable—goal of embracing the responsibility to lead a productive life in a system that provides security to the young, the disabled, and the aged.
6. A new form of accounting based on work-hours will accomplish this end.
7. Neighborhoods make up the town (high-school district), towns (when contiguous) make up the **city**, all exist in the context of a Watershed and all of these boundaries should be the more or less permanent context within which the Basic Economy and the Land Economy function—while the national, state, provincial, and county boundaries in use by government remain.
8. Watersheds should have resident Stewards to ensure that economic activity not degrade the local environment.

Q. In your opinion, would the widespread adoption of a Basic Economy usher in Utopia?

No. Important areas of human conflict would remain. They are: *Sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, ageism* and other negative discrimination based on *condition of birth*. . See the analysis in Human Organizations on individual differences as *conditions of being*. Further, no organization, no matter how well conceived, can be made free from *internal friction*. In addition, certain anti-utopian characteristics common to social and personal life such as classism and existential/spiritual malaise seem wedded to core human nature.

Class, though not necessarily, is in many ways an operative condition of birth. The late-stage capitalist extreme concentration of wealth and power in the top 1% of the population is on the verge of creating a hereditary aristocracy. Since the Watershed Communities paradigm incorporates a capitalist economy for non-Necessities and enterprise ventures, those successful in these areas would be able to afford a more affluent life-style than those who limited their employment to the requirements of the Basic Economy. The retention of inheritance taxes would be necessary to prevent the wealth concentration of privileged families characteristic of the present system. Balancing reward for excellence of performance and quality of achievement with the general welfare will be an ongoing problem for any conceivable human society dependant on advanced technology.

As far as existential and spiritual malaise, people tend to abstract the notion of the self from the rest of the universe. Are you human? The self and universe are, in fact, inextricably intertwined, so that in a larger sense, self-awareness is an illusion, as is the perceived universe as we look out upon it from our self-imposed isolation. The special character of human joy and pain adhering to the isolated individual's experience of the unfolding of his or her life is—unlike a particular racial or sexual identity—a universal condition of being. But the character of emotional experience typical in a particular society at a particular historical time is modulated by that society so that some people are so connected to their kin and environment that they have little sense of individuality, while others feel that they are like a god of the mini-universe of their own body. Advanced technological societies such as ours—where personal sustenance is gained from each other and our machines rather than individually reaped from Nature—tend to produce more of the latter. Paradoxically, dependence on social interactions and technological artifacts tends to produce an insecure individual, one disconnected from intimate interaction with the web of Nature that is, in fact, essential to human existence.

The alienation and anxiety common in technology-based economies is then exacerbated by social policies stressing competition that promise rich rewards for the winners with no safety-net for the losers. The populace in such an environment seeks solace either in the continual circus of cheap technological mass entertainment (and/or the numbing of drugs) or faith in, and adherence to, the beliefs and rituals of organized religions.

Anxiety, alienation, and nihilism represent the endemic dark underside of humanity's stunning success in using its unique abilities to fashion a rapidly evolving culture of survival aids while rapidly increasing its numbers and impact on the rest of Nature.

As an antidote to the seeming inevitability of such a dystopian destiny, the utopian ideal seeks a society in which every member feels a sense of *purpose* to life, the freedom and opportunity to pursue and enjoy *pleasure* (so long as no harm is done to others), and the *peace of mind* which comes from physical security, mental clarity, and inner tranquility. The perfect realization of this ideal will always be frustrated until humanity as a whole evolves beyond its present genetic encoding which dictates that certain life-situations bring forth violent, predatory, and fraudulent behaviors. Watershed Communities does,

however, have as its goal the facilitation of lives characterized by purpose, pleasure, and peace of mind balanced by the need to be on guard against the more sinister tendencies of human nature.

The revitalized neighborhood community is the point in place and time where democracy and ecology could come together for a continuous fruitful dialogue wherein individual alienation and anxiety could be healed. Working toward the advancement of the Watershed Communities paradigm enables the individual to be (in Václav Havel's phrase) "living in truth."

Q. What would be the job description of the local neighborhood Basic Economy Coordinators and how would they be selected?

A. They must be local residents. They must commit to taking time out from their current occupations. That could possibly become a part time commitment as the BE settles down to a routine, but at first my guess is it would need to be full time.

Their first task would be putting the neighborhood BE communications network in place. This would involve supervising installation, establishing maintenance, interfacing with established modalities in surrounding areas and the BEN network, and instructing the people in joining and using the BE.

Their second task would be to begin scheduling work and recording work-hours.

Their third task would be to oversee the transfer of land-titles from state-sanctioned individual "ownership" to BE-sanctioned "usership."

Their fourth task would be to undertake the incorporation of the remaining nine necessities areas one by one (communication having been already dealt with), the most essential and/or doable first.

A fundamental aspect of their job would be communicating what they were doing to their neighbors and receiving feedback from them in return. Courses of action which turned out to be controversial would be debated on the communications network with systems put in place for the people to exercise continuous electronic democracy and provide them with opportunities to contribute innovations. The people-at-large in the local neighborhoods would function as an ad hoc on-going parliament having the possibility of redirecting the Coordinators efforts.

Q. Isn't the Coordinator's job all responsibility and no reward?

The Coordinator not only assumes responsibility but bears extra expenses. The Coordinator's work-hours would be rewarded plus a variable extra amount to all participants of the BE who are essential to its fulfilling of its function. Ask me later how I

think a reward system could be set up that mediates between hours worked and the degree of value of those hours to the community.

Q. Moving on, then, how would Neighborhood Coordinators be elected/selected?

A. The originating neighborhood BEN (Basic Economy Network) members would have to first locate their local dem-org on the majority/consensus spectrum of democratic process in order to select protocols for choosing Coordinators. The Coordinators could be chosen at yearly elections. The idea behind this proposed form of organization is to make the function of coordination open and attractive to as large a portion of the people as are competent to perform it, while balancing the need for continuity with avoidance of the creation of petty fiefdoms. Also, being a neighborhood Coordinator would be the pathway to becoming a member of the town council and so on into the national BEN.

At the neighborhood scale, political parties are irrelevant to the BE dem-org. Individuals would remain absolutely free to belong to the political party of their choice; but party affiliations within the structure of the BE are to be avoided (as are religious ones) in the interest of avoiding dispute irrelevant to the functioning of the BE.

Q. What is it that these "BEN Coordinators" would actually be coordinating?

A. At first, they would concentrate on two areas. One would be the collection of data leading to the establishment of the work-hour barter aspect of the neighborhood BE. The other area of coordination would be the conversion of neighborhood residences from "ownerships" to "userships." Escaping the dead weight of interest on legal tender and rent on land are the primary reasons for the existence of the BE, and should be pursued first.

The capital fund required for these conversions and the oversight of the citizen's work-hour accounts would require a small, new, separately staffed financial institution to handle routine business transactions and serve as an interface with the money economy. It would operate according to policy set by the need for standardized procedures and monitored by the Coordinators in accordance with existing applicable law.

Q. Isn't it unrealistic to expect workers used to varying wage-rates depending on diverse market factors to accept the uniform wage that the concept of work-hour barter implies?

A. Yes. Everyone agrees that certain jobs should pay more than others. Unfortunately, the unfettered market is a cruel environment for the wage-earner. When a real-life flesh-and-blood person is unemployed because of unmarketable skills, human suffering results. When a good is unmarketable an entrepreneur may or may not suffer depending on risk-analysis skill. Further, some very necessary jobs, i.e. farm laborers, are un-skilled and therefore poorly paid while others are entirely superficial to essential well-being but highly paid.

The work-hour concept provides an ideal platform for connecting wage rates to reality in a way that will insure reward for productive work while letting market factors determine the precise level of recompense. This can be accomplished with job-category multiplier factors with pre-set floors and ceilings.

Q. Who would set the multiplier factors and at what levels?

A. It could work like this. Let us suppose that at the time a BE actually came into existence, the average wage rate is \$10/hr. Applying a multiplier factor of .5 would yield a \$5.00/hr. rate—a minimum work-hour credit. Applying a 2.0 factor would yield the equivalent of a \$20.00/hr. rate—average for skilled labor. The BEN would set a floor and a ceiling for work-hour multiplier factors.

I would propose a .5 floor, except for unskilled jobs permitting multi-tasking (or certain apprenticeships) for which the floor would be .25. On the top end I would propose a 4.0 ceiling. In the money economy, most hourly wage rates higher than that are factoring in overhead or professional perks stemming from monopoly status conferred by government licensing.

Q. But how would the various occupations providing necessities arrive at multiplier-factor levels for each specific occupation?

A. The Coordinators would supply a daily up-dated list of all the Basic Necessities jobs available in the local BE. They would be listed at a high and low multiplier factor obtained by monitoring rates at which workers were hired in the recent past. The job would be offered at the low factor. If that resulted in a scarcity of applicants, the factor would increase slightly until balance was regained. In this environment, unskilled jobs would tend to sink to the floor. So would certain other jobs for which there exist widespread skills, job-based prestige, or enjoyment. Workers in these areas would be well advised to join together in unions to work for a rate that they think fair.

In jobs of this category, the Coordinators would be obliged to list the union rate as well as the maximum and minimums. The applicant must be a union member to be offered the union scale by the BE assuming there were other applicants offering to work under-scale. If a significant number of union workers accepted jobs below union scale, the union would be under pressure to lower its factors (plural because unions would represent several levels and areas of expertise) if its own members were unemployed.

Q. Wouldn't there be a need for all BE multiplier-factors taken together multiplied by total work-hours and divided by number of workers to average out at 1.0. If, for instance, the average were 1.1 wouldn't that be inflationary?

A. One possibility for avoiding this outcome would be for a running statistical re-averaging of multiplier factors at 1.0 causing all multiplier-factors to be reset periodically in the required direction by the same amount. In this way unions, or others pushing for higher multiplier-factors, would learn to expect criticism from lower-factor job

categories, when proposing raises. This would place a restraint on the monopolistic power of unions not present in the private economy and effectively prohibit wage-driven inflation in the Basic Economy.

Q. If "work-hours" can be converted to money in neighborhood banks, why go to the trouble of introducing what is, in effect, a separate local currency?

A. For several reasons:

The logic of using work-hours as an exchange medium dictates the use of different rules:

1. No interest. A work-hour earned today for providing a necessity will be repaid with a work-hour at a future time of need. Since there was no investment of personal physical wealth, only labor-time, nothing (no-thing) was risked and therefore there is no justification for the collection of interest. An hour of labor today equals an hour of labor tomorrow, except for a change in productivity. And if productivity rises over time (which is likely, given investment in tools and education) everyone benefits. The possibility of a sharply declining birthrate and/or rapidly rising child mortality constitutes the major threat of default; an unlikely event barring famine, pestilence, or war.

2. No international exchange rates or balance-of-payments threaten work-hour value. Work-hours are local in nature. Survival can only take place where the individual lives. Locally earned necessities credits tend to be traded where they are being consumed—locally.

Local BE banks joined together through the BEN would enable someone moving to another part of the country to transfer their account to a new neighborhood. Leaving the country would mean leaving the U. S. BE behind, barring international agreements.

In order to further customize the Basic Economy to serve the varying needs of different neighborhoods, work-hours could be recorded on two tiers: one which could only be earned and spent within the neighborhood and one which would be universal. Neighborhood work-hours would have to be non-cash-convertible.

3. Work-hours would be entirely recorded, saved and traded by electronic digital code.

4. When converting work-hours to cash at the neighborhood BE "bank," not only would there be limitations based on how many hours could be converted (depending on how many had been earned), but a service fee would be charged.

5. The individual's commitment to devote future time to the provision of the basic necessities becomes a source of capital for that individual and collectively for the community. Investment of monetary savings, which necessitates wealth accumulation before investment can begin (and is then conditional upon the saver's willingness to risk loss) becomes less crucial enabling communities to bootstrap necessary productive activity.

Q. How would people trade for goods and services using work-hours?

A. BE members would have a credit card that tracked two, possibly three, information streams: exchange entirely in BE work-hour credits, exchange in terms of legal tender values, and a basket of environmentally crucial elements and practices characteristic of the particular good or service being purchased. Having BE transactions entirely computerized avoids the use of any kind of scrip or physical means of exchange. Use of anything physical instantly promotes an underground economy. One great advantage that starting a new accounting has is absolute lack of corruption. By making all transactions through uniform data processing software, the whole system could be made accountable, secure, and open to audit.

Q. The multi-category bar-code, the variable mix of BE and legal tender constituents of prices, the determination of the degree of liquidity of the individual's BE account would seem to require a complex enabling program. How might this be realized?

A. Other elements such as sales taxes would also have to be accommodated. There would need to be a basic design of a standardized master program provided by specialized technicians in the central WC design team so that local BEs could integrate seamlessly with the BEN. In addition, there would need to be transparency at the local level where varying pricings and work-hour payouts would require public input to insure fairness. This input could either be received continually via the Internet or at regularly scheduled meetings.

Q. May we examine how the delivery of each of your 10 Necessities would be accomplished under this system? How, where, and between whom would these transactions take place? Let's take food, for example.

A. Existing privately owned groceries would install BE card readers. They would start using the BE bar code which would have both monetary price information set by the store and local work-hour contribution to the particular product. In the beginning, that contribution might be very small—especially if "local" meant a single neighborhood. In that case, it would only be the local labor cost of bringing the food to the market. In a rural small town, however, local farms would enter the picture and farm labor would then take the place, in work-hours of the remainder of the price, leaving a small monetary payment to cover the merchant's and farmer's overhead. The urban neighborhoods would be encouraged to produce their own food in small gardens and greenhouses, thus promoting local farmer's markets and local self-sufficiency.

Consumer abuse of purchases unlimited by cash on hand would have to be countered by a monthly limit on BE food purchases based on calories per person. This would not be rationing, but a shift from BE work-hour denominated payment to an all legal tender payment.

Q. Would all grocery items have a BE work-hour constituent?

A. Only if the community elects to consider them all a necessity. It could be rice, beans, corn, oil, powdered milk and little else. Or it could be a complete variety of foods. One would like to think that in most neighborhoods, given the choice to discriminate, alcohol, junk foods, candy, and soft drinks would not be included as a necessity, but the people should have ultimate say. If BE work-hour exchange were to become widespread, regional BEN statisticians would have enough data to establish standards that would allow for a variety of foodstuffs while recommending against the inclusion of some ingestibles proven to be detrimental to health or the environment. To the greatest extent possible, the BE work-hour constituent should include the cost of the foodstuff only and deflect the cost of processing or preparation to the money economy.

Q. *How about shelter?*

A. Initially, the main necessity would be to keep existing housing well maintained. In addition, low-energy-footprint retrofits should be given high priority. To the extent possible, the work force required for maintenance and improvement would come from the neighborhood or town itself. Where appropriate, competitive bids would be sought from local enterprises. Criteria would have to be set up to determine what is and what is not in the necessities category.

Q. *Would the Basic Economy service only residential usership?*

A. There are five major players in the town land-use equation: residents, businesses, government, schools, and common spaces. All land userships would ideally be granted by the BE in concert with the Watershed Stewards, including all zoning categories. Some usership categories such as streets, parks, schools, etc. might remain the responsibility of the town or city government to maintain and protect. More general land use parameters would be set by the Watershed Stewards.

Nothing in BE protocols should act to prevent residents from voluntarily moving to another home. If the departing resident agrees, the BE will pay the assessed value of the vacant home in the interest of retaining local usership. Some considerable portion of any profit due to escalation of land values should revert to the community, however.

Commercial and light manufacturing userships within BE neighborhoods would be granted by the neighborhood with necessary construction carried out as a BE approved project insuring local input on all intra-neighborhood facilities. This investment would be repaid from rent on these facilities.

The BE would also have responsibility for provision of energy (heat and lights) water and sewer to all neighborhood userships.

Q. *How then will the books be balanced on the extensive proposed real-estate acquisition without money since land-values are not created by labor (work-hours) but by the scarcity of well-located land?*

A. The fully developed WC neighborhood land-use paradigm envisages WC-BE unified ownership of all land within the neighborhood with individual userships guaranteed on the basis of prior ownership and residency. With this as collateral the BE could establish a non-interest-encumbered capital fund for use in gradually assuming title to all rental and mortgaged properties within its boundaries as these come up for sale. Occupants would continue to make monthly payments until their obligation is fulfilled which would enable the BE to repay the capital fund.

Q. *How about clothing?*

A. The way would be opened for a return to locally-produced hand-crafted clothes expressive of local traditions and ethnic cultures. Each neighborhood should have at least one thrift-shop for renewal, recycling, and the distribution of surplus. Stores signed up with the BE would price clothes made by BE work-hour compensated workers in work-hours. Other than that, clothes would be produced and marketed as they are now. One may safely assume that the evolution of energy markets will erase the competitive advantage of sweatshop-produced clothes over the long term.

Q. *How might health care delivery change in a Basic Economy Neighborhood?*

A. The practice of medicine as we know it today is largely a 20th century invention. Even the beginnings of contemporary medicine in the 19th century by such pioneers as Pasteur and others now seem primitive, few in number and simple to employ. The proposition that all the possibilities of modern medical care should be available to everyone (in a system where the patient is not required to bear the cost) should not be accepted without examination.

Provision of preventive and educational medical care is the most efficient means of raising the general level of health; and distribution is most effective at the neighborhood level.

Medical care needs vary greatly with the individual. Some need next to none while others have difficulties from birth that can be very costly over a lifetime. The cost of medical care in work-hours, then, should be averaged for the entire population and the cost distributed on a per capita basis.

Q. *May we move on to the consideration of transportation?*

A. Certainly. Transportation provision undertaken by the Neighborhood BE should be limited to that required for the individual to have access to the other Necessities. Since the BE creates a neighborhood infrastructure to provide most of these, access by foot or bicycle becomes the norm for the able bodied. Individual automobile ownership is no longer a necessity in the fully developed BE community.

In rural areas, school districts extend out into the countryside until they abut neighboring school districts or public (or other) lands that prohibit human residency. Obviously, the school bus will still be needed in certain districts.

Public transportation for dependant persons and access to the neighboring towns or cities would come within the province of the BEN as it matures.

Q. What about communication?

At present, corporate electronic communication is overloaded with commercial applications and modalities that far exceed the real needs of the people in their residential communities. Also, corporate ownership of the communication infrastructure cedes public control of functions vital to national and local security to profit-driven private decisions that can adversely affect infrastructure maintenance, uniformity of service, and the commons created by universal reliance on communication technology.

Ideally, the BEN would have its own integrated network that would serve only the needs of residential communities and the local businesses that serve them with ports through which the individual resident could filter or access the commercial web at his or her discretion. This would result in a great saving to the consumer, decreased energy expenditure, elimination of spam, and the transfer of entertainment content to pay-for-play.

Q. Moving on to the third and final level of the Necessities tetractys, what have Education, Culture, Capital, and Security in common that merit their inclusion in a separate category?

A. In a fully developed Watershed Community these four constituents of the Basic Economy have the most long-term significance, and therefore, are the most distant from pressing everyday community needs. Security, Capital, Education, and Culture will all tend to receive short shrift without a Basic Economy administration that appreciates their importance as an ongoing underpinning of all the rest.

As to Security, if a general mood of tranquility results from sustenance-security, police capability would tend to be reduced in accordance with the “best-government is least-government” criterion. However, crises of order and safety brought on by the over-population environment-degradation challenges that are unlikely to abate anytime soon would seem to mandate prudent pre-emptive preparedness.

The problems with accumulating Capital would seem to be two-fold. The first is clarity in definition of the elements of capital. Not only tools and infrastructure (and their required maintenance), but social and intellectual capital, as well, along with the administration to secure them. Natural capital, and care of the land would, one would hope, be in good hands with the Watershed Stewards. The second would be maintaining the political will within local communities to devote current energy to long term goals. One would expect that people would already be restive under the BE’s withholding of so much of the fruits

of their labor for the sustenance of the young, aged, and infirm without added capital costs.

The remaining two categories, Education and Culture, would seem to be synergetic, depending on the inclinations of the local people. In a free society, cultural norms and memes will always vary from community to community. Real culture has a strong local component, especially in the context of real community. Community-centered education will stress new real-time skills that will necessarily have a local cultural component. Lacking free technologically delivered mass-market lowest common denominator entertainment, as well as being freed from soul-deadening money-grubbing, people should be drawn to spending their free time educating themselves and following their cultural interests. Such a social environment should provide encouragement for those whose interests and skills lie in the arts, crafts, athletics, and creativity of all sorts to practice their skills while teaching them to their neighbors and the next generation. To the extent that people respond to examples of beauty, excellence, and quality, a rebirth of these virtues in the people at large could be realistically predicted.

Q. Would the Basic Economy take over the public schools?

The major significance of the elementary school district, at first, is in establishing the scale of the neighborhood unit. The elementary school district is ideal for this purpose when it is based on foot-accessibility. The actual districts often don't accomplish this purpose too well and so would need to be adjusted by plebiscite to fit the WC model.

Typically, public schools are insulated from undue influence from political, business, and religious interference or control. This must be accounted a good thing—except that it also insulates them from the communities that they serve, save for the kinds of superficial interactions exemplified by PTA meetings. Placing the schools in the care of the Basic Economy would require a giant leap of the public faith and considerable enabling legislation.

However, the logic of the Basic Economy concept points toward the eventual incorporation of at least K-8 education. Elementary education of children is clearly one of the key Necessities for a civilized life and universal literacy is essential to the functioning of the Basic Economy. Also, community solidarity is enhanced if most citizens know each other from childhood.

The present system is administered by a politicized democratically elected hierarchically organized bureaucracy at a remove from the neighborhood schools. Under this system, capitalization of school plans suffer in poor districts, and more relevant and effective instructional innovations are discouraged.

Goals, standards and policies are needed, but the participation of parents, and other relevant persons from the community, are crucial to developing community solidarity and environmental consciousness. Day-care, athletic and cultural enrichment programs, adult and senior education are all needs that can be met at neighborhood scale. Basic Economy

responsibility for schools could meet these criteria as well as accomplish other needed reforms.

Q. What is the justification for including Culture as a basic necessity of civilized life?

A. Of the ten necessities areas, culture is the catch-all since a great variety of things are covered under this category which could as well be called something like self-development, individuation, cultivating individuality, or simply recreation.

This need would be funded mostly in legal tender rather than in work-hours in order to give the individual maximum self-determination. It would probably be used most heavily by the disabled and would be unavailable to younger participants with a work-hour deficit wishing to take maximum allowable remuneration in cash rather than adding to their work-hour account.

It is unthinkable to lead a truly human life without culture and recreation. Are you human?

Q. How is neighborhood security to be provided?

A. Security forces would remain under the control of the national and state governments as presently constituted. Therefore, at the Regional, Watershed and civil levels, the function of security forces would be to preserve civil peace and cope with disasters.

Historically, security forces have been prone to corruption. The reasons are obvious. They must constantly deal with the most negative human acts: violence, theft and fraud. There is a natural tendency to fight fire with fire. The enforcement of sumptuary laws is fraught with temptation. The various forms of intolerance combine poorly with institutionalized coercive authority.

The workability of a community BE would be dependent upon the freely given participation of the populace. This cannot be achieved without institutions that are largely free of corruption—a thing heretofore rare in the history of man. Thus the attempt to distance the community BE from security forces. The local BE should expect to be taxed by the government level providing local security.

Hopefully, the general level of violence and theft would be at such a low level that the need (and therefore the cost) for security forces would be minimal. It would be, however, truly utopian to think that such forces could be avoided altogether.

Q. Finally, what about Capital?

The use of work-hour accounting solves the need for financial capital within the BE. The BE's need for financial capital in order to interface with the external money economy would be small. The capital referred to here as a necessity is real capital: knowledge, social, tools, raw materials, a healthy environment, and member commitment.

Q. How did you determine that there were 10 categories of necessities?

A. I started listing what I thought would be the minimum to support a totally disabled person in dignity. Others would surely add or subtract from my list. I don't see that as a problem for the Basic Economy concept if the constituents of the local BEs are similar enough to permit a simple network between communities. There ought to be variation from one neighborhood BE to another, if only to reflect the economic, ethnic, and other differences to be found there.

There is, however, an irreducible minimum to the Basic Economy concept. That is: local electronic communications network with locally elected people to run it, eventual local control over all the land in the BE neighborhood, and a secure means to see that all residents are fed and housed.

Q. Did you have a set of goals in mind when you began imagining Watershed Communities, and if so, what were they?

A. The escalating problems besetting society force us to ask, "What good is a system of social organization that not only discourages, but makes *impossible* a way of life in which people are in harmony with each other and with Nature?" Watershed Communities imagines a way that citizens, acting on their own initiative, could peacefully transition to a democratic, equitable, sustainable way of life.

Q. What do you see living within a Basic Economy Network would accomplish that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish in any other way?

A. The two greatest problems facing humanity at the start of the 21st century are over-population and an out-of-control growth-oriented technological economy. The two combined are already challenging Nature's carrying capacity. Poverty, famine, and war—in conjunction with a severe degradation, if not outright collapse, of our natural environment—will inevitably result from continuing on the way we are.

Watershed Communities Basic Economy Network (with local land usership authority) is designed to eliminate the growth imperative inherent in capitalist economies. If successful it would tend to change birthrate and immigration patterns in a natural response by non-coercive means.

By dividing the economy into a Basic Economy that is open to all and a discretionary (or enterprise) economy, the economy need not grow compulsively as it must now. In this way the poor will not be dispossessed and driven to starvation as the bitter fruit now being sown ripens. And yet the enterprising will continue to be motivated to create wealth out of remaining possibilities. Much cultural wealth now being overwhelmed might prosper in such an environment since it is less demanding of natural resources than technology-based mass consumerism.

Q. These are long term benefits hoped for as a result of the creation of a completed, universal, national Basic Economy. Would there be any immediate benefits?

A. Yes. The elimination of homelessness and malnutrition. The creation of community neighborhoods defined by the focusing of a newly-installed electronic communication network on the learning needs of the young.

Q. Do you foresee other benefits in the near to mid term as well?

A. Most assuredly. They are:

- Democracy at a human scale.
- A greater sense of the individual person's control over his/her life.
- Providing each neighborhood with a feeling of continual stability independent of the business cycle, government spending, and corporate employment.
- A lessening of the individual's alienation from society.
- Elimination of excuses for criminality.
- Providing socially useful outlets for the energy of the young.
- Total security for the elderly and disabled.
- Meaningful occupations for seniors.
- The constant availability of meaningful work.
- The recovery of the extended family.
- People encouraged to form a life-long connection to the land.
- The return to economic viability of the family farm.
- Better nutrition.
- Possibility of local variations in sumptuary laws and social conduct codes.
- Providing a local basis for the support and expansion of education.
- Peaceful retention of urban multi-cultural ethnic traditions.
- Local labor-intensive art and cultural work becomes economically viable by incorporation into education and community building.
- Local help with diagnosis and treatment of dysfunctional families and people.
- The implementation of local renewable energy technology.
- The implementation of local energy conservation.
- Down-sizing of state and national governments and associated taxes.

Q. Would there be an impact on the political geography of a country that adopts the Watershed Communities-Basic Economy human-occupation and land-form bases for land-mapping?

A. Eventually, yes. If the Watershed Communities concept were implemented on a national scale, its divisions and boundaries would begin to supersede existing national, state, and county, and in some cases, metropolitan lines. All Basic Economy administration and technological infrastructure would be divided along the lines of elementary school district, town, city, and region within a regional watershed context.

Non-residential land such as forests, wilderness, and wetlands (as well as that occupied by large-scale industry and infrastructure) could be environmentally administered by that scale of Watershed Stewardship large enough to contain it. Private enterprise would function within the community-based and Watershed Steward-based administrative environments—each of which would have well defined agendas. Though often at odds, the differing interests of environment, welfare, and business could have a workable forum for resolving differing goals without necessarily relying on government coercion in ways that we cannot now foresee.

Watersheds could replace counties while regional basins, i.e. the Columbia River, could replace states, and in places, cross national borders. Basic Economies would respect national borders.

Q. Would those who failed or refused to participate in the Basic Economy, for whatever reason, be punished?

A. Not at all. Anyone would be free to opt out, but in so doing would renounce the BE's benefits.

The wealthy might choose to do so, but participate in the benefits by purchase, at a higher price, with cash.

The poor who refused to participate would have no claim on the services of the Basic Economy. They would have to survive by finding a niche in the cash economy or charity, as they do now.

Those who participate in, and are receiving necessities from, the Basic Economy, but refuse to generate work-hours would be required to spend an equivalent amount of time in group therapy, job training, or some such rehabilitative program. The focus of such modalities would always be educational or therapeutic, never punishment. For those adults who might need to generate BE credits but no work was available that fit their skill-set, there would always be work to do under the direction of the Watershed Stewards in environmental remediation.

Q. Why not work-hour bartering for non-necessities as well?

A. Why not indeed? Labor-barter and cashless exchange networks presently exist. Members active in this movement could be expected to be among the first activists in the promotion of a Basic Economy and there is no reason these networks should not continue to operate. They just wouldn't be tracked by the Basic Economy data system.

Q. So now you have the people making progress toward 100% home ownership (pardon me; "usership") and recording certain of their work-hours with the expectation that an equal number of work-hours will, at some future time, be expended in their behalf. How will income balance outgo without the imposition of taxes?

A. From now on, answers to many questions might vary considerably from community to community. The "usership" profile of a poorly maintained, mostly rental-unit neighborhood will be very different from a well-maintained largely owner-occupied one and therefore will require a much higher level of start-up capital investment.

In all cases, the books will have to balance right from the beginning. The BEN would keep records of both members and its own cash accounts and work-hour accounts. There would need to be a standardized program for conversion from one to the other. Goods whose provision requires a cash expenditure component outside the BEN will be priced in a mixture of cash and work-hours.

Individuals would have total freedom in spending from their cash accounts. Their spending from their work-hour accounts in the BE would be constrained by an interactive program that balanced the fiduciary need of the BE with the individuals needs and work-hour contributions. Individual spending of work-hour credits should be a highly individualized, variable and interactive process allowing for individual choice within community-set parameters. At the outset, work-hour contributions might go largely to a retirement reserve. This should insure positive "work-hour flow" for at least a decade. Full-time neighborhood workers, the unemployed, and the disabled would be allowed a much higher rate of current work-hour exchange, again, on highly personalized interactive individual formats. Work-hour barter should not bear the burden of an income tax, but if it were required to, the BE would have to withhold an additional amount for that purpose. Watershed Communities policy should champion governmental income tax on the wealthy only with the shortfall taken up by "green" value-added taxation and fees for private use of the commons such as the electromagnetic spectrum.

Q. What do you visualize life in a Basic Economy might be like?

The difficulty in fashioning a realistic portrait of such a society is that it would be so greatly impacted by the circumstances of its formation and early years. A quick transition would be painfully chaotic. People can adjust quickly to new circumstances but not to new rules of the game. The scenarios I'm about to outline assume a gradual non-violent transition followed by a period in which the unequal speed of development between adjacent communities is handled with finesse.

For the purpose of imagining some aspects of the different texture of life in a Watershed Community, let me follow the typical lives of imaginary citizens from childhood to old age.

The small child would be less likely to experience moves, have more time with parents, make friendships (and enemies) that would last into adulthood, be less exposed to threats to safety in the neighborhood, have more costly access to technological entertainment, begin education earlier, have a constant example of more industrious older children complaining about all work and no play, see petty rivalries among their caregivers replace worries about money as their chief negative adult input. They would walk more. Junk food would require cash, discouraging consumption.

School age children would see their older peer-group role models, perhaps dressed in uniforms, doing simple useful work of benefit to the community—picking up trash, mowing lawns, gardening, planting trees, learning practical skills, baby-sitting, house-cleaning, stacking folding chairs. Complaint and slacking would be balanced by the cachet of gaining the increased respect and freedom accruing to the transition to adult responsibilities. The intense enrichment of the educational spectrum through the early introduction of nature study, ecology, familiarity with the natural features of their Watershed, training in the arts, physical culture, in addition to the normal academic subjects would make the school the center of their lives. From year to year they will gradually be sent for part of the day to schools that specialize in areas for which they show aptitude and desire. They will experience adults acting as teachers as a much more usual occupation. Attempts to "beat the system" will be dealt with firmly, and there may, occasionally, erupt juvenile movements to form a student union to fight perceived adult exploitation.

The older students beginning to build their BE accounts will be found in their idle moments diddling their I-Phone equivalents to manipulate their work-hour credits to some desired end, whether to put off an onerous duty, reschedule a class or responsibility, get in the same work party as a friend, get extra cash for the weekend, build extra credits for admission to a school of choice, access baby-sitting opportunities, plus a myriad of other useful or entertaining diversions that the supervising adult programmers (heeding the edicts of parents and teachers) might deem harmless. With training, they will begin to drive electric golf-cart-sized vehicles around the neighborhood.

The universal dilemma of how and when to fulfill one's lifetime work-hour obligation will begin in adolescence. As such, it will be the source of constant discussion, and considerable complaining. College or trade-school enrollment will earn work-hour credits so long as the course of study leads to an occupation in the Basic Economy. Some young adults will want to get their community obligation out of the way as quickly as possible, while others will want to delay it as long as possible. Some will want to spend their whole lives working in a Basic Economy job exchanging excess work-hour credits for cash for luxuries, while others may attempt to avoid Basic Economy service entirely by going directly into the cash economy with the hope of earning enough to pay off Basic Economy obligations weighted with a surcharge. All this will be enabled by the juggling of actuaries whose calculations will be a matter of public record. They will have to adjust from time to time to rectify their bad guesses. This will raise a howl from those whose plans have been set back. For those for whom work performed under the tyranny of the clock is anathema, refusing to join in the communal effort is an option, as well, but they will be obliged to exercise diligence in obtaining their necessities outside the work-hour denominated community. In any case, uniformity of life-style and trajectory should not be a complaint, although the blandness of a society without the example of harshly-treated losers as a goad may be thought debilitatingly dull.

Given the likely historical circumstance of excess population facing diminishing resources, I would expect the main political debate to be between those pushing for a

growing economy and those fearful of unsustainability. The more ardent proponents of the Watershed Communities Basic Economy could be expected to develop a kind of anti-luxury/anti-pregnancy kind of Puritanism. More high-risk-prone free spirits would rail at these constraints. The shared goal would be to achieve a declining standard of living coupled with increasing quality of life. This would be required lest a stagnant pall descend over the society. The success of the kind of economy envisioned by Watershed Communities is predicated on the continued production of an abundance of Basic Economy goods plus enough non-essentials to ensure individual and cultural diversity.

However, a Basic Economy in place would provide better insurance against a sudden major ecological collapse than our present global-commerce-dependant network. Next to the fear of changing the rules of the game, the institution of a Watershed Communities organizational paradigm would be threatened most at every step of its development by the danger of corruption. People at all levels of society must feel continually rewarded by their society's systems for them to reject schemes to elide or subvert those systems. Not only that, but humans are notable for the validation which sheer perversity gives to their will.

My hope is that the combination of distribution of economic power to a myriad of roughly equal local populations, connected by an electronic information network continually open to inspection, overseen by a network of locally democratically elected officials would provide the system closest to corruption-free yet achieved by any society. Many would view any attempt by a neighborhood to pad its list of necessary goods and services as corruption. Neighborhoods feeling the least need for the provision of the necessities by the Basic Economy might vote to have their list vanishingly small and thereby come under criticism for not doing their share.

Enterprises, as at present, would constitute the major threat of corruption by promoting undeserved markets within the Basic Economy and seeking to undermine and take over Basic Economy functions. There is a certain element of the population that at any one time will be intent on beating the system, no matter what that system is. Careful and continuous monitoring of the information stream will be necessary to curb such attempted depredations.

I would expect that the elevation of importance of the Neighborhood would, over time, produce a kind of insularity—perhaps in some cases verging on xenophobia. Such a result would seem to compare unfavorably with contemporary urban open accessibility enabled by the automobile and exacerbated by the greater mobility of a population forced to wander from here to there in search of employment or cheaper rent. In the imagined alternative, poorer neighborhoods, or ones populated exclusively by ethnic minorities, insular tendencies promote gangs and other forms of oppressive organizations. Although the general lack of tension brought about by the removal of worry about brute survival would undermine the economic basis for neighborhood gangs, that same tranquility could create a need in certain glandularly overactive youth for more excitement.

The Basic Economy would be so structured as to encourage small families, lifelong education, healthful lifestyles, rich local culture, walkable neighborhoods, returning suburbs and parking lots to agriculture or Nature, exclusive use of renewable energy, motivation for individuals to pursue high levels of achievement, encouragement of disuse of toxic chemicals, maximally efficient and downsized transportation modalities, and universal access to electronic communication.

The aged (as well as children and the disabled) would enjoy absolute security that their basic needs would be met as a first priority by the efforts of the working-age population.

I could go on with these speculations, but I think I've outlined enough to draw the conclusion that the ordinary American would find the Watershed Communities paradigm to be a mixed bag in comparison to his or her accustomed way of life. The proposition that “the American way of life is non-negotiable” could change, however, if transitioning to something like Watershed Communities Basic Economy Network came to represent the sturdiest and best-appointed life-raft being lowered from the sinking Titanic. Oh, did I mention?—our Titanic made its first contact with the iceberg about fifty years ago, and the iceberg's not giving up.

PART V:

ANSWERS TO ARGUMENTS ATTACKING THE VALIDITY OR UTILITY OF THE CONCEPT OF A BASIC ECONOMY:

Q. *You are continuing to ask questions of yourself, correct?*

A. That's correct. New paths always bring forth reasonable objections. The questions voice those potential criticisms that have occurred to me. I'm sure there are others. I must re-emphasize that this discussion relates to the highly theoretical postulation of a Basic

Economy as outlined in Part III becoming the norm for the whole society. In any case, why did you ask?

Q. I have the strong suspicion that you're setting up some straw men here,

A. That's a quite reasonable assumption. But you don't know my doppelganger; he's really out to get me.

Q. Why do you anticipate such an earnest, well-meaning but dull and challenging proposal to provoke attacks in the current media and political environment?

A. If the proposal were to gain traction along the path of gradual democratic implementation, it will eventually attract opposition. If it gains adherents it will eventually become the target of attacks by the corporate-dominated media. The media will attempt to define the Basic Economy in terms of its own current clichés. The media has an inexorable tendency to couch everything in terms of the conventional wisdom, and, conversely, present alternatives in controversy-stimulating pejoratives.

At such a time, the full panoply of modern communication tools would have to be brought to bear in order to define the proposal to the public in its own terms. Out of this controversy, enough of a groundswell of public support must be developed to fend off any hostile government rulings and corporate pillaging. Structural change of the kind and magnitude proposed would not be possible, or desirable, through legislative imposition alone. It must grow from the grass-roots.

Q. Isn't it wiser to distrust any new proposition that requires many people to make coordinated decisions based on new, and thus often poorly understood, ideas, goals, and organizational forms?

A. What is poorly understood today is how to cope with conflicting instructions from competing authorities, distant and unavailable, utterly unresponsive to the individual.

Really, there are only four novel—unfamiliar is perhaps more apt—constructs basic to this proposal. Two are economic: the work-hour as a store and benchmark for value, and bartering of work-hours acting as a modus operandi for construct number two: the definition of, and separation from the cash economy, that part of the economy providing the necessities of a civilized life.

Two are land-use constructs: usership and Watershed. The usership is the atom of Watershed Communities' people-centered geographic construct which groups userships into elementary school-sized neighborhood-communities, communities into towns, towns into cities. The local Watershed (at a scale approximating the county) is the atom of the earth-centered geographic construct which groups Watersheds into major basins, basins into regions, regions into countries or continents as the situation allows.

These economic and land-use innovations, by nature, tend to favor the provision of the necessities of a civilized life to the populace at large in the context of a sustainable natural world. Within the constraint of doing the right thing by the commons and our fellows, they all, by nature tend to favor the individual's power to set personal direction. They all, by nature, promote peaceable coexistence.

Sure, there would be serious errors made in a transition this basic, as well as pet ideas not surviving the test of reality. Humans err. Were it not for the inevitability of change for the worse from clinging to the known, there would be wisdom in opposing change.

Beginning with pilot projects is essential.

Q. Wouldn't the Basic Economy sink of its own bureaucratic weight?

A. To function properly, all social organizations require personnel whose main function is to plan, motivate, coordinate and monitor the work of others—in a word: administration. Historically, administration has followed the military, hierarchical pattern of orders from the top transmitted down a pyramidal chain of command to those who actually do the work at the bottom. Bureaucratic excess becomes a problem in modern organizations when positions in the chain of decision and command multiply or become rigid. Since empires are built in this way, all involved become empire-builders, and the administrative bureaucracy multiplies out of all proportion to its function.

The Basic Economy turns the pyramid on its head.

The function of the Basic Economy is to provide the essentials of civilized life to the inhabitants of individual neighborhoods. Many administration functions would occur at the neighborhood level where bureaucratic excesses would be highly and immediately visible.

Monitoring and coordinating the Basic Economies of the neighborhoods would be the function of the town Coordinators. At each greater level from city to Watershed to major basin to nation or continent, the information flow upward would become more abstracted and the information flowing downward would become more generalized. Much of that downward flow would deal with standardization necessary to achieve economies of scale, sustainability, efficient distribution of goods and work opportunities, and effective inter-communication.

The basic decisions would be made at the neighborhood level by the people in ongoing debate about what to include in the Basic Economy, what jobs are required to deliver those goods and services, and what the multiplier-factor should be for work-hours expended in doing those jobs.

Unquestionably, the Coordinators and Watershed Stewards would require office staffs. Human nature being what it is, constant vigilance would be required to keep these staffs

from expanding. One of the main purposes of pilot projects would be to model the detail and test the workability of the administrative network.

Currently, governmental directives originate in the form of laws which are enforced by threat of fine or incarceration. In the Basic Economy, people don't need to be coerced to provide themselves with food and shelter, etc. If they don't they will be punished by not having them.

Dereliction of duty (at whatever level) ought to result in work-hour credit cancellations and, in special cases, fines, ousters, de-certifications and the like. Prisons should be for violent criminals only.

If the Basic Economy were put in place universally, the lawyers, administrators, accountants, consultants, brokers, and their staffs in all government and many corporations would find their services un-needed. Many devote the bulk of their efforts to jousting with each other to maintain their position in the hierarchy, anyway. Most could find re-employment in some niche in the Basic Economy administrative network where their organizational expertise would be assured of useful consequences.

Q. Isn't a desire to beat the system a common human trait with historically-proven survival utility? If so, how could work-hour accounting corruption be avoided?

A. To answer this question one must define the different areas of corruption. The danger of embezzlement, for instance, would be roughly the same as it is in consumer banks now—very low, but ever-present. Motivation to embezzle would be discouraged by the de facto cap on individual work-hour accounts (due to the average life expectancy). There would be no large fortunes to plunder. Therefore embezzlers or hackers would apply their ingenuity to converting work-hours to cash fraudulently. It is inevitable that a few would succeed.

The two most likely threats of corruption would be getting credited for hours not actually worked and creating non-productive BE jobs. It would be one of the major functions of the Communicators to employ a roving team of specialists in accounting, auditing, computing and the like as a first line of defense against the latter tendency. Violators would be fined by charges against their accounts.

How about a system where hackers and embezzlers were offered amnesty and a reward if they voluntarily returned their loot with a complete description of how they went about getting it? That's the carrot. The stick would not be a jail sentence, but required restitution (plus a penalty) and life-long exclusion from positions of BE responsibility.

As for inventing unnecessary jobs, all must eventually exchange sufficient of their own labor for their share of the BE total. Bloating the BE with superfluous work-hours would cost everybody thus producing constant pressure to pare administrative personnel and marginal or ineffective BE job categories.

Even if fraud-proof at the end-user level, considerable opportunity would exist for diversion of work-hour credits in transfer from place to place within the BEN. These information-flows should not be allowed to become so rapid or complex that effective oversight becomes impractical.

Q. Wouldn't having everyone's BE account on a locally-focused communications network result in neighbors knowing too much about each other's business?

A. No. In fact, an operating system such as the BE proposed here would almost certainly be highly neighbor-intrusive were it not for the distance provided through electronic, rather than personal, communication. True, with more work actually being carried on in the community, more people would spend more time interacting with their neighbors thus making reclusiveness more difficult, perhaps, but still possible.

Each individual's BE account would have a PIN. Access to information by BE personnel would be for cause and with the individual's knowledge and consent.

Q. Isn't the Watershed Communities Basic Economy proposal an updated version of the kind of social legislation which the people have rejected as the interference of big government into their lives?

A. The social legislation of the '60's was designed as a safety net for those who fell through the cracks in the floor of the market economy. Those of us busting our butts to cling to the edges of those cracks experience government taxation as heartlessly kicking our fingers while simultaneously subsidizing both the rich and the poor. The people don't reject Social Security or public education. They benefit everyone. The proposal offered here is as if we had food stamps for everyone, Medicare for everyone, home ownership for everyone, all put together in one comprehensible, locally managed and delivered system. Unfortunately for those looking for something for nothing, it's also like work-fare for everyone.

Lack of government interference may make it easier to run a profitable business, but it won't solve the problems of poverty, over-population, and environmental degradation. Along with an underground economy and bought politicians, these problems are insoluble in the context of the present American financial system and property-rights-determined land-use practices.

Q: Well then, since you seem to think government social programs are okay, why not, instead of trying to introduce a whole new level of social and economic organization, introduce legislation, item by item, through the established process of democratic government that would give the government the power to institute the reforms you favor?

A: Because, as recent history has shown, government's basic premise for existence is the defense of national sovereignty in the anarchic world-context of nation-states. This means that the Basic Economy is put in service by, subjugated by, and taxed by the war-making activities of the nation it feeds and houses. The people's need to survive should

dictate the provision of their necessities as a first priority, even in time of war. The infrastructure that provides these necessities should not be put at risk or taxed by national governments, either by being drained to fuel a war effort, or serving as a legitimate target for adversaries during a war.

Q. You use present interdictions against outside influence in the schools as an excuse for not discussing in full what would be the result of incorporating the public schools in the Basic Economy—a result which you favor. How would public schools integrate into the Basic Economy?

A. Personally, I would like to see educational activity and employment greatly expanded. One of the arguments against a Basic Economy is the narrow range of job skills required which might force people to gain work-hour credits through working at incompatible jobs. Better they should teach others the skills to which they have become truly devoted.

Class sizes need to be smaller. Parents could earn credits as para-professionals so as to leave the teacher free to teach. Good education is necessarily labor-intensive. Paying for it in work-hours to which the whole community could contribute might seem more attractive than the bond issues currently being voted down.

Also, it seems sensible that young people in college ought to earn work-hour credits for learning higher-end skills required by the Basic Economy.

Q. Your idea is fatally flawed by being dependant on the determination of what is, and what is not, a necessity. It's an issue on which you'll never get people to agree, isn't it?

A. People institutionalized by the state live close to the level of bare necessity. Agreement on what that is was achieved among those responsible for their care. Soldiers going into battle carry only what's necessary, and that's probably standardized. Wilderness back-packers don't overload themselves with stuff they won't use. The point is, considerable precedent exists for people sitting down with each other and making a list of various kinds of needs.

Under this proposal, some (most probably a small minority) would choose, or be required by circumstance, to receive all their income from the Basic Economy. They would constitute a continuous constituency for an ever more compassionate Basic Economy. On the other end of the spectrum you might find someone so well off as to be able to buy (with cash) an entire life-time BE account at one stroke, as one might a comprehensive insurance policy today. Such people could be predicted to favor ephemeralization of the BE in order to maximize their discretionary income.

Any citizen could propose certification or decertification of any good or service at any time. Once certified, that good or service would have a certain "shelf life" before decertification could be considered. Some needs would be found to be universal at certain scales, whether civic or regional, and others could be particular to a single neighborhood. In any case, no uniform "one size fits all" standard need be imposed.

Those who found their neighborhoods provisions foreign to their tastes could, at slight extra cost, convert their un-used work-hour credits into cash.

Q. Hasn't it been proven that without competition (or the threat of starvation) producers lack motivation for efficiency and innovation leading to a stagnant economy?

A. This just in from the Coliseum! Lions- 13, Christians- 0. Seriously, humans universally love games, whether of skill or chance. Making a game out of productive enterprise's often gritty exertions has indeed produced a cornucopia of physical wealth in capitalist societies. The problem with late stage capitalism is twofold. The game has become one of giving the least for the greatest profit through lowering quality and externalizing costs, while the big winners drive competitors from the market thereby gaining monopolistic market share that discourages efficiency and innovation while ignoring the needs of all stakeholders other than investors and executives. The ultimate reward for winning in the noble game of competitive wealth creation has been the sloth of early retirement and indolent progeny. If one must make a game of getting motivated to get up in the morning, how much better it is to compete in the game of giving than the one of taking.

Q. Perhaps it would work if someone gave you your own planet and you could start from scratch.

A. That would certainly make my task easier, but I can imagine a scaled-down version of that fantasy. Many science-fiction buffs have at one time or another entertained themselves by visualizing a space colony. You know, a really giant glass-lidded saucer-shaped mini-world rotating on its axis so that centrifugal force would replace gravity. It would need a self-contained bio-sphere to feed the thousands on board for the many generations it would take to reach Sirius, or wherever. I submit that such an enterprise could not support the luxury of the so-called American free economy where occupancy is conditional on rent and extremes of wealth and poverty exist side by side. But a military-style hierarchical forced-labor system with cookie-cutter rations would institutionalize a society incorporating the worst aspects of 20th century totalitarianism. For this scenario, the Basic Economy concept starts to look like a more promising alternative. The Earth is also a closed system—only much larger. Rather than being installed at the outset, a terrestrial Basic Economy must be able to grow in the context of the current decaying, over-loaded one. Viability and desirability are its two main issues.

Q. Wouldn't the benefit-floor, risk-spreading characteristics of a Basic Economy sap individual initiative and ambition just as much as socialist schemes do?

A. First off, some people lack initiative and ambition altogether. That is their right. As a result, they should expect to exist at the bottom of the economic heap and to be ordered about to the extent required to get them to carry their fair share. For the rest of us, sloth is to be found where it is rewarded or where exertion produces no benefits. Those outcomes occur routinely under the present regime. By contrast, some of the most

productive work-forces in the world live in the mixed-socialist economies of northern Europe.

Q. Isn't there something suspect about a proposal that requires the implementation of so many interlocking novel and untried ideas?

A. Most of what's proposed here already exists in one form and place or another, but is either fragmented by (and competitive with) special privilege enforced by a coercive patriarchy or is in an early stage of development.

Q. As littered as your landscape is with gored oxen and sacred cows don't you find a certain irony in having the surname of Metcalf?

A. What's worse, I find the Golden Calf to be a false idol!

Q. Wouldn't the adoption of your proposal return us all to a condition of peasantry?

A. The notion that technological progress would one day remove the burden of toil from our backs has always been an illusion created for the purpose of stimulating the growth of industry for the profit of the few who own it. If the grindstone were ever to disappear, heaven knows what mischief all those noses would get into.

Now, as we enter a new century, regaining harmony with Nature is becoming imperative for our survival. In any case, growing population and shrinking resources guarantee declining living standards (but not necessarily quality of life) for all but the wealthiest. If having to work for your keep in sometimes grubby ways is your idea of peasantry, I say, get used to it. Most of humanity has never escaped it. In any case, there are so many technological artifacts in existence that they will not disappear overnight, although the energy to run them might.

Q. How can you seriously propose the abolition of the right to private property, the keystone of the American way of life?

A. Put in this way, I suppose one could assume that I had only recently arrived from a distant planet. Americans are enjoined from early on to revere the concept of private property. We are not encouraged to ask what this phrase really means.

If legally acquired, the right to ownership of manufactured capital as private property presents no basic problems. It is land as property where the difficulties begin.

The present pattern of land ownership is suspect on two counts: One, it was wrested at some point in history by coercion and fraud from its aboriginal occupants. Two, its political and property boundaries are not based on the land itself but reflect patterns of military conquest, exploitation, and frequent devastation.

Also, although an area of land may be fenced off to form a discrete enclave within contiguous land, the degree of the enclave's connectedness to its surroundings far outweighs its separation. Air, water, and the creatures that thrive in them pay no attention to these boundaries. As they pass through, the land is altered. Private property implies the absolute right to interrupt these flows at any time, but, in fact, riparian laws guaranteeing downstream flows have as ancient a history.

The American concept of property rights was shaped during the 18th and 19th centuries when the continent was as yet thinly populated. Any particular piece of land, since it was recently taken from its Native American occupant by military force and given to the homesteader or railroad was of no particular value and destructive uses had little impact on distant neighbors. If the land was ruined, one could simply pick up and move west. But there were many who, starting from scratch, with industry and luck, made fortunes from the land, as increasing population concentrations raised land values.

The exploitation of land through the removal of its non-renewable resources and the exploitation the unearned increment harvested from people's need for land have been the twin pillars on which the American wealthy have based their fortunes. It is no wonder that now that environmental degradation and homelessness have become intractable problems, the defense of "traditional" property rights should become so shrill.

No one disputes the human need for a certain amount of inviolable domestic space. No one disputes the human need to have access to an area of land from which sustenance may be drawn. The present proposal seeks to remedy the tendency of unrestrained "owners" to take for themselves the bounty of the land and leave a wasteland behind as their legacy to the next generations. It seeks to prevent land "owners" from using their fellow's unavoidable need for a platform from which to conduct their lives as an excuse for consigning them to a lifetime of servitude with no other option than homelessness.

Q: In proposing such a sweeping revision, not only in the use of money and land, but in the fabric of everyday life, aren't you concerned that the twin inevitabilities of human fallibility and unintended consequences could produce a result far off the mark that you picture?

A: You bet I am. If such a radical reordering of our society were to be attempted either by administrative decree or armed revolution, painful dislocations (in the *best-case* scenario) would surely result. That is why I propose gradually moving in the direction of equitable financial and land-use practices through increased public awareness, small reforms desirable in themselves, and pilot projects of alternate systems.

Even so, doubts remain. George Soros' highlighting of Popper's principle of the inevitability of human fallibility is an echo of the Socratic "he is wise who knows he knows not." The difference is that Socrates' dictum is most relevant to the nature of the mind, where Popper's is more relevant to ideas put into action.

Organizational power (and complex, poorly understood patterns of competition and cooperation) causes unintended consequences to adhere to actions that change the balance of power between society's constituent elements. Humans seem to require a sense of purpose to motivate them to action. The recurring purposeful activities characteristic of our species can be seen as meta-games, most conspicuously, the Game of survival. When one considers that the flow of power in the *financial* Game goes from the center to the margins, and that the flow of power in the *provision of necessities* Game would go from the margins *to* the center, one sees that serious unintended consequences would occur in transition as the existing financial Game controlling the center would instinctively hold on to power.

Q: *Is this really a serious proposal, then?*

A: It's clear to me that the juggernaut of exponential human population and economic growth has for some time now been pushing on the envelope of our environment. Clearly, the days of the present "system" are numbered. Depending on the precise nature of the eventual crash, the toll in human misery could be immense. At that point, people will be looking for the answers to the questions not being taken seriously today that are addressed in the line of speculation followed here. Government instituted socialism has had to battle the corporate drive to concentrate and privatize all wealth. The crash of the global capitalist economy leaves the world without a generally accepted model on which to base an equitable and sustainable economy. Proposals like Watershed Communities now have a chance for serious consideration.

All that which exists, does so as the result of immense forces interacting over eons in constant evolution. The potency of individual human ideas, collective will, and received wisdom to joust with these forces is marginal. We are at the mercy of our own genetic and cultural evolution. That has given a near-universal patriarchal, hierarchical cast to our civilizations. Although the gains in cultural and technological progress have been miraculous, they have come at the cost of war, slavery, mass poverty, and environmental degradation. For humanity to free itself from the trap it has set for itself, it must make progress replacing domination Games with cooperation Games. This will never happen so long as the patriarchal mindset holds sway. On our present path, we are destined—no matter how many battles won—to lose the war. The charting of a different path opens the possibility of a more hopeful guide to our uncertain future.

APPENDIX I

What & how do we know; should we believe what we think we know?

The following paragraphs are in no way put forth as objective "facts," but are, instead, intended to shed light on the heuristic armature (or a set of premised analytical tools) used in synthesizing the Watershed Communities concept. I have erected "my own personal standard for harvesting what I should believe out of that which I think I know." My purpose in bringing you along on my personal quest is to acquaint you with the parameters I have set for myself in the formulation of this "guide to an uncertain future."

1. Embracing the Power of our Collective Consciousness

The present situation in America is driving everyone crazy. It is not only that our daily lives are fraught with multiple anxieties and cognitive dissonances. What is really crazy-making is that the information we are given is designed to seem like it addresses our discontents, but doesn't. The government and corporations own and control our little playpens for their profit and convenience. But instead of giving us the truth to the best of their knowledge the corporations give us advertising, public relations, and news-lite, while the government responds to issues of public concern with propaganda serving hidden agendas. The existence of these practices is unavoidable in a democratic capitalist (that is to say, plutocratic) society. But when they become the public's dominant information intake, the public gradually becomes unable to form reliable and generally shared fact-based opinions.

The practices used to produce this result have been exposed and analyzed, but the public prefers to not see the sleight of hand. If the facts contradict the constantly repeated conventional wisdom, they are hidden from the public or the public is urged to ignore them. Again, this tendency is unavoidable, but when it becomes the ruling operational principle, people start arguing about things that don't actually exist and ignore threats that actually do.

I perceive myself to be one who sees through the smoke and mirrors, but how can I be sure that I do? There is no perfect knowledge in the material world, but one would hope that it would be possible to at least ward off self-serving government and corporate propaganda that threatens other's well-being (including mine) down the line. How can we—to press into service Donald Rumsfeld's categories—learn to distinguish known knowns from known unknowns and both of these from unknown unknowns? Or to distinguish what we think we know from what we are persuaded to fear from that which is unknowable? But most importantly, how can we avoid being hoodwinked by ourselves as well as others?

Well over 99% of human "knowledge" is hearsay. Hearsay is not authentic experience. Only personal experience is truly authentic. We can only truly know that which we have seen with our own eyes. Subjective experience is the origin and touchstone of all experience, and therefore of all objective knowledge as well. Because subjective authenticity sometimes fails to be congruent with objective truth, it can act as a barrier to experiencing mediated objective input as truthful. How does one, then, make coherent that which one has experienced with what one has been assured by others to be true?

At its biological root, unmediated immediate human experience is an *analog* to both exterior and interior events that register on the human sensorium. This, however, could be said of all organisms with nervous systems. The analog nature of human experience is not, then, its distinguishing characteristic. Analog experience "just keeps on happening" as it did for Flakey Foont for that brief instant before he started to try to explain it to Mr. Natural. In its essence it seems nothing more than mere continuity. But its path lies on a curve that results from the interaction of multiple vectors, none of which analog

experience can untangle from the others. In fact, the analog experiential state refuses to distinguish one vector from another. The flow of the analog experience has only—in the coinage of Daisetz Suzuki—a certain “suchness” in the stream of what others have labeled “the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum.”

Although human experience is grounded in a continuous flow of sensation that makes no necessary distinction between self and other, the human nervous system has evolved the capability of making that distinction, a universal human capability that is first manifested when the infant experiences its mother as separate from itself. This capability becomes permanently embedded in the fabric of human experience with the naming of self and parent. This is one of the earliest manifestations of discrete individual experience and the pathway to an ever-expanding range of trans-analog experiential repertoire. Thus in the realm of human experience, there arise unique phenomena observable (so far) nowhere else in the Universe. (The Universe is the name we give as a kind of container to the farthest extent of our discrete experience.) These phenomena include language, number and mathematics, abstract spatial and temporal concepts, imagination, arts, systems of law and morality, philosophy and religion.

All of these experiences that register on our consciousness as discrete and personal—no matter their discursive or linear content—are grounded in basic analog experience. Therefore all human experience that can be verbalized or in any way personally conceptualized abstractly is accompanied by the “flavor” of that personal experience—usually an emotion or a mood. From this standpoint, the entirely slippery analog nature of all mental functioning is the container within which all thinking must exist. None of these thoughts, then, can be used to judge the validity of the source from which they have sprung. Writing can never succeed in “writing paper.” Although a word or phrase such as “differential calculus” may be mouthed from memory, the kind of discrete ideation being considered here “knows” what the phrase “means.” Otherwise it is not authentic personal experience of the idea. Thus far, the only conclusion to be drawn from this picture is that—from the strictly rational, linear, discursive standpoint—personal experience can never be entirely trusted to validate any mental construct. Mental constructs that arise in personal experience can only be re-created in the brain’s memory function in imperfect verisimilitude.

At some point humans became impatient enough with the level of ambiguity in normal mental functioning that they took to making marks on physical objects that could be used to re-access at least the bare bones of the former experience. Thus, written language was eventually added to speech in what became a campaign to paper over the essentially ineffable nature of lived experience with discrete markers which served as pegs that we could grasp in order to think and talk about the unique, authentic, personal experience which we were no longer actually having.

Before we resign ourselves to viewing our world as one of faux discretion in an actual world of analog mist, we might do well to consider the possibility that—although the discrete experience we can conceptualize and verbalize may not itself be the reality of our experience—discrete concepts do appear to have as much of an analog relationship to

characteristics of the observed physical world as our basic experiential flow. The observations that took root in our experience that led to mathematics, and thence, to science, and thence to advanced technology did indeed enable us to create a network of self-verifying mental constructs with predictive power and vast physical manifestations. Once discovered, the basic analytical constructs of the physical sciences (and the mathematics that knit them together) come immediately to be seen as integral characteristics of the material world that exist independently of our cognition of them.

Continuous vectors such as space, time, and energy can be usefully divided into units of equal width—discrete entities—that then can be shown to have certain universal relationships to one another. Further, at certain scales, the Universe is revealed to manifest itself in actual discrete entities such as elementary particles of uniform size and mass, the constant speed of light, and spheroidal heavenly bodies moving in elliptical orbits. Using these data as fundamental benchmarks, the material universe that our unaided senses—un-mediated by linear concepts—can only perceive as continuous flow, appears to be composed of discrete elements. If this is truly the case, then, the analog nature of our authentic personal experience results from the aggregation of sensory data that lumps together a myriad of micro- or macroscopic discrete events. This view prevailed at the beginning of the 20th century, but gradually came to be undermined by the investigations in sub-atomic physics which revealed significantly non-linear characteristics that continue to attract the exertions of our most sophisticated mathematical minds. Any system postulated on discrete entities must admit the possibility of entities smaller or larger than entities already identified—unless zero and infinity can be shown to be an identity. Also it must grapple with the chaotic aspects of the Universe.

The ancient Chinese philosophy of the Tao addressed the question of the primacy of continual flow versus the primacy of discrete entities by opting to pay attention to the flow of events. It saw discrete entities as continually arising and dissolving. From this standpoint, the conception of any discrete entities as permanent becomes illusory—the shadows on the wall of the Platonic cave. In this the Taoists are in accord with the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, who postulated change to be the only constant. A Universe in constant change implies that all entities and events are interconnected and interdependent, that all changes extend their energy throughout the Universe. Sub-atomic physics reveals this to be true empirically.

Contemporary educated humanity has access to a vastly enlarged view of Nature informed by electron microscopes and orbiting telescopes that could not have even been imagined by the ancient Greeks or Chinese. And yet, as I look out my window at the foliage of the trees in the courtyard waving gently to and fro in the breeze, I perceive myself to be in a reality unmediated by a science and technology-based education. The realization that my experience is a tunnel view radically blindered by a genetic inheritance prejudiced by my organism's survival needs fails to make my experience any less real. I remain in the same boat as those hoary philosophers, only the boat now has as cargo a keyboard and flat-screen that accesses Google and Wikipedia.

And now I imagine this conceptual boat to have palpable existence as a rowboat somewhere in the middle of an imaginary lake shrouded in dense tule fog. This is now my new existential “reality”—not a mere mixed metaphor—invented out of whole cloth (even if the cliché used to explain it is not) in order to contrast my experience of being totally lost, and yet totally present, in the cool, moist fog hovering in the still air silent except for the faint creaking of the oars in the oarlocks as the boat gently rocks. You see, out of all this abstract lucubration finally comes some sensible *reality!* But this “reality” exists only in my imagination.

If my original hope was to ground all wisdom in individual human experience, I now find myself far a field from that goal. Folly necessarily accompanies wisdom grounded there. I persist, then, by acknowledging the universal wisdom/folly dichotomy in human mental functioning. I therefore must change my focus of inquiry from a search for guidance in determining optimal mental functioning, to a realistic appraisal of observed existing mental functioning from which to distill the best models for emulation.

Although human consciousness exists as an integral aspect of an individual self-contained animal organism, it has a *social* as well as an *individual* dimension. To the extent that any individual’s consciousness is socially shaped it is mediated by social constructs. The flow of the individual’s subjective experience has a kind of unassailable bedrock validity for that individual. Subjective experience that embraces objective constructs, on the other hand, possesses (as a consequence of arising from social input) a more conditional sort of validity for the individual. Moment to moment subjective experience “just is,” whereas subjective experience involving objective constructs varies with outcome. There can be no individual experience of objective constructs without social input of the building blocks of objectivity. Objectivity occurs with resonance between individual subjectivities around discrete constructs. The constructs about which a whole society shares resonance I have referred to as the secular consensus.

All discrete and/or linear concepts have a social dimension if only because language is unthinkable without social interaction. Indeed, our very first discrete and linear thoughts arise in the context of inter-reactions with our parents, siblings and other intimates in our earliest infancy. So, although not all discrete ideas need concern themselves with social interactions, almost all must find mental realization in socially learned modalities. The first visualization of the concept of the wheel might be one of the few that incubated in a socially unmediated individual imagination.

In the dimension of the lone individual’s private subjective experience, the presence of human-inflicted harm can only originate in the individual’s inner conflicts. In other words, if I take other people (and the rest of Nature) completely out of the picture, any harm that comes to me must be self-inflicted. It is only in the social dimension that harm can come from others. (In the human/environment dimension, harm comes with Mother Nature’s active or passive revenge.) The conflicts that seem to be congenial to humanity’s *social* nature are the one’s that need to be reckoned with in order to evolve the new institutions required for long-term sustainability. One wonders if these conflicts—and their attendant aggressive behaviors—are so deeply rooted in our genetic

makeup as to be ineradicable, or if they are learned behaviors. If they are learned behaviors, are they acquired by adult initiation or by sibling interaction? Both, I think. Children both imitate adults and are indoctrinated by them. But in their relations to their siblings they are on a more equal footing. With both parents and siblings, the ideas and emotions that contribute to social conflict begin in the uninhibited consciousness of infancy. (Personal experience indicates that only-children have a more superficial sense of social boundaries than those with siblings.) Brothers and sisters are more typically forced by each other to investigate power relations with each other at the most basic level. The nature of that interaction forms an unconscious basis for their social behavior as adults. In the normal case, the major conflict-inducing behaviors that children take into adulthood from their relation to their parents center on problems with authority. However, it seems that each generation of siblings teaches its members the basic rules of engagement for conflict between equals.

The unconscious emotional content of our approach to sharing, boundaries, justice, victimhood, revenge, veracity/deception, authority/disobedience, and many other issues creates for opinion-makers a window of opportunity for the invention of information that either circumvents or justifies (or is justified by) childish emotional prejudices if the childhood emotional experiences tapped are widely shared in the society. Most importantly for our society, the employment of information, vocabulary, rhetoric, and metaphor grounded in subliminal references to infantile emotional prejudices defines modern advertising. The rhetoric of modern political advertising also relies heavily on emotion-driven prejudices acquired in childhood. “You’re either on my side or on the side of my enemies.” “...protect our kids heritage...” It’s *your* money. Fight higher taxes.” “Don’t let big government run your life.” “I feel your pain.” “...level playing field...” “Giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” “The market decides the true worth of things far better than any paternalistic government bureaucrat.” And of course, “family values” is the all-purpose referent to infantile angst around parental authority and sibling competitiveness among those who fear the rebellious reaction by youth to patriarchal hierarchies.

This is not to say that all American children grow up with the same infantile emotional baggage. Families vary too much. Nor is it to say that hot-button reactions to sibling and parental related rhetoric are the only potent subliminal prejudices formed in childhood. Attitudes on sex, race, ethnicity, class, wealth, and religion often crystallize at a very early age.

In addition to such use as veiled support for polemics, the corporations—through advertising—have become skilled in using the subliminal emotional content stemming from sibling rivalry and parental authority as effective tools in marketing to children. Interestingly, although most of this media input (as well as the corporate presence in the public schools) indoctrinates children with pro-corporate ideology, some of it does not (the ubiquitous smart-ass teen with attitude, for example) if it serves to hold its short-attention-span audience in thrall. Regulating advertising content to protect children from subliminal indoctrination would be an invasion of the right to freedom of expression.

Freedom of thought is impotent without freedom of expression. Speech, in the broader sense of language in general, can have a purely personal, individual function—as I am using it here—as a tool to formulate one’s interior mental landscape. Nevertheless, speech (in the sense of vocal and written utterances) is fundamentally social in origin and utility. Or so I assume. I cannot imagine the first human language to have been developed by an individual solely as a means of inner dialog.

That said, societies universally regulate or prohibit speech that is perceived to do social harm or harm to other individuals. This would indicate that either there are more fundamental principles involved than individual freedom, or that the fundamental principles applicable to individuals vary from those applicable to social groups. It would seem that—at a deeper level—the latter would be the case. In all rule-bound societies that allow personal freedom, personal freedom will be (at some point) at odds with public order.

What holds for the individual’s relation to society as a whole does not necessarily hold for the individual. The reward to the individual for a successful suicide—unlike for murder—is the desired death of the perpetrator. Stealing from oneself seems an act plagued with existential anomalies. Lying to oneself meets with better—and quite general—success, but the victim of the deception, even though eventually suffering for it, lacks a target if wishing to sue for redress.

Society not only gives us the conceptual tools with which to think that enable us to express ourselves, but sets limits on the use to which we put those tools. But lacking the individual’s overt expression, society has only indirect ways of controlling our individual interior mental functioning. These ways, such as propaganda and conditioned response, are not foolproof—if for no other reason than that the individual lacks complete control of the flow of his or her thoughts. One begins to get the picture of the social nature of human mental process to be one that stresses uniformity of discrete entities, and the individual nature of mental process—where the actual process is going on—to be inherently un-rule-bound and therefore potentially chaotic.

Thinking begins, of necessity, with questioning. What, where, when, how, and with whom occur at some level to all sentient nervous systems not entirely driven by inherited instincts. Humans alone seem driven to ask why. Are you human? The task I have set myself here is to determine that when I ask why, I should have a reliable means for evaluating all proposed answers. I have sought that means in the authentic on-going flow of personal experience because that has to be my touchstone for what is real. But asking why comes on top of (or within) the subjective flow of lived experience. The answers that arise from un-mediated (or unbound) experiential flow can be at wild variance with objective (or socially-determined) explanations. On the other hand, if I seek greater reliability in the realm of received socially generated (objective) discrete ideas and value judgements, I am presented with a different set of shortfalls. It is quickly apparent that I may possibly (how can I know for sure?) be abandoning personal responsibility. Having to lamely lament, “I was only doing what I was taught” becomes a possible outcome. Neglecting that consideration, though, if I feel a need to ask why about any condition of

social consequence, I am justified in assuming that others are, too. Since there are an unknown number of others who admit—like me—that they do not know the answer, there may be a variety of credible guesses even in the face of generally accepted social norms relating to the questioned area.

One particularly vivid example of this is how we experience the Earth. Since our sense of verticality is determined by our reaction to gravity, we perceive the surface of the Earth to be generally flat (and bodies of water entirely so). Since we perceive ourselves to be mobile, we perceive the surface of the Earth to be stationary. Thus we perceive the heavenly bodies to rotate over us. Early man could have intuited the Earth's curvature with the naked eye by carefully observing the behavior of distant objects on oceanic horizons, but didn't, or did, but disregarded the observations. Combined with the diurnal return of the heavenly bodies, the spherical nature of the Earth and the orbital relationships of the heavenly bodies could have been deduced. This did, of course, finally occur, but only after a very long time. And yet, despite our modern understanding, we continue to *experience* the Earth as flat and the sun and moon as “rising” and “setting.” The spherical nature of the Earth and circularity of orbits are learned constructs of social origin that we know through persuasion rather than experience—unless we are astronauts. We have walked on a flat Earth for multi-millennia; only in the last five hundred years have we walked on a round one. At the time of its introduction, the resistance to such a fundamental conceptual change was such that individuals lost their lives to the rage of society. This, in spite of the fact that the flat Earth construct required an edge (at some point) to the earthly plane—an edge that had never been observed no matter how far one traveled in any direction.

Quite simply, objective constructs can never be entirely free of the bias begat by context. The notion that somewhere or somewhen there exists, or will exist, an unimpeachable Reality appears to be a mirage. There are hidden agendas and begged questions lurking in the rock-hard immediacy of lived Reality just as much as there are in un-provable ancient Myths. Although it may seem that Reality is that which replaces Myth, Reality is actually only a newer Myth with greater credibility. The Myth of mythlessness.

The social sharing of mythic content can serve to validate what would be, if entertained only by an individual, considered a fiction or hallucination. Since all myths are equally unverifiable, are all equally irrelevant? This position, I think, would be dangerous. It would then logically follow that any analysis of any political issue would be crippled by its underlying mythic assumptions, and therefore be a waste of time.

The problem with this view is that there are some myths that are false (“the earth is flat”), there are certain myths that are unverifiable (“there is no limit to economic growth”), myths that promote conflict (“we must remain competitive”), myths that promote cooperation (“what goes around, comes around”), myths that promote bigotry (“some people are good, others are evil”). And so forth. Accepting the equality of all myths erodes any hope of progressive cultural evolution. Even if progressive goals are achieved through solely action-oriented agencies, they will be hobbled by residual Pandora's boxes of mythical baggage. In fact, I would hold that widely held myths that are untrue (“We

must fight them over there or we'll have to fight them here.") must be disputed in the political arena. Further, un-provable myths ("America is the greatest country in the world.") must be shown to be irrelevant to political discussions, or the discussions that include them will become irrelevant themselves.

The potential universality of mythic elements in all philosophical speculation helps me to focus my inquiry, however. I am seeking here my own personal standard for harvesting what I should believe out of that which I think I know. I willingly admit that the result will be vulnerable to dismissal as my personal myth—a kind of fiction—unless embraced by many others. My insistence on the legitimacy of the "secular consensus" as a basis for a myth-proof objectivity should be a partial bulwark against this vulnerability. But my views on the fraudulence of fiat currency toss me back into the soup again.

At least, from the very beginning of this inquiry, I have not confused any possible mental construct with "reality." I have seen mental constructs as imperfect analogs to whatever reality they track and interpret. But human mental constructs are not limited only to analog engagement with the senses. Mental constructs recreating the past (memories), and mental constructs predicting the future (imagination and divinations) transport the ongoing mental process out of the physical analog reality into an ongoing reality of a purely mental nature. If they are accurately enough remembered, these mental structures surviving in the consciousness of the individual can be useful as predictors of the future. But are they "reality"? Where in non-human Nature does one find numbers and the rules of arithmetic? These are mental constructs entirely abstracted from lived experience. Human societies create culture when individuals fashion memes, entities, and events from the materials at hand in a social context that allows those memes, entities, and events to proliferate and persevere. But then, the ongoing flow of individual experience either confirms or denies the "reality" of the cultural norm underlying the artifacts and practices that are the physical manifestations of the society. Numbers and arithmetic (and the rules of logic that govern them) seem to hold up, both as easily remembered and useful in predictions. Mathematics transfers effortlessly from culture to culture with no loss of meaning or bending of rules. Mental constructs must have these kinds of properties to qualify for inclusion in what I mean by "the secular consensus." Those things which everyone takes for granted, ranging from the potential lethality of large and powerful objects like big-rigs to the entirely ethereal skill of doing arithmetic in your head, are all incorporated in the secular consensus. That is not to say that the secular consensus is not a mythology, but one experiences it as reality to the extent that some aspect of one's personal experience confirms it.

Whereas European thought is firmly grounded in abstracting discrete structures, Taoist thought from ancient China embraces the diffuseness of the experience of flow as well as the discreteness of number. The concept of Yin is epitomized by the Void and inhabited by entropy-gripped entities in the process of going out of existence. Its opposite—Yang—is epitomized by the concept of Unity and is inhabited by anti-entropic entities growing in power and complexity of organization. The Taoist view is that the diffuse and the discreet continually fade one into the other. Thus Taoists focus on teasing out the threads in the process of this ongoing transformation. In this cosmology, if Yin went all

the way to the Void, it would cease to exist. Therefore, all Yin must contain within it the Yang seed. Conversely, Yang evolving all the way to Unity, with all its expanding, powerful, complex organization finally totally integrated, would lose its “Yangness.” Therefore, all Yang must contain within itself a Yin drain.

My sense is that the contemporary understanding of the way the brain functions validates the ancient Chinese intuition; the right brain processes incoming infovectors while the left brain creates outgoing infovectors. All the while the brain as a whole integrates the two functions in a seamless ongoing process by each half having minor capabilities of the other. The European intuition, by contrast, focuses on the algebraic symmetry of right brain’s discrete out-going infovectors with a resulting more hard-edged, black-and-white dualism productive of more tangible concepts, but lacking in nuance.

2. Tri-phasic analysis.

I have found it useful in my thinking to divide temporal cycles into three (rather than two) phases. Two phases only permits back-and-forth, where three phases better matches many organic processes, particularly the individual’s metabolic homeostasis. I have found that the tri-phasic nature of animal metabolism seems to have far-reaching consequences for all aspects of human existence. Granted, the principle of duality finds fundamental expression throughout organic nature: i.e., division of sexes, bilateral symmetry. However, an animal's need for mobility calls for a separately developed internal neural intelligence that the plant world, by and large, doesn't need. Animal metabolism can be divided into three phases. 1) Determination of a metabolic need. 2) Acquisition of food to satisfy that metabolic need. 3) Processing of food into energy; distribution of that energy around the body; the expulsion of waste products. The cycle is completed when the blood/guts function interfaces with the intelligence function which then determines whether need for acquisition of food by the organism has indeed been met. Intelligence gives direction to the mobility of the organism as it seeks food and seeks to avoid predators

The so-called higher animals have evolved quite separate and distinct somatic agencies for doing these jobs. The whole nerve-brain complex is composed of tissue that accomplishes the intelligence function. The bone-muscle tissue accomplishes the action and mobility function and forms the platform in which the other two tissues function. The blood, guts and glands do the energy processing. The three metabolic functions and their attendant tissues interface down to the cellular level, actually to the DNA level. Triadic functionality of nerve-brain, bone-muscle, and blood-guts is unified at the genetic level.

The metabolic process flows both clockwise and counter-clockwise. The "gut reaction" is an example of the process working in the opposite direction. The guts inform the body to do thus and so without informing the nervous tissue, which finds out about it later. Further, since the guts communicate to the brain through feelings, it's possible for the body and the brain to be engaged in a dialogue which neglects the interests of the guts. Also, it's possible for the mind, rather than to direct the body's actions, to be fixated upon feelings.

Working backward, now, from the standpoint of the individual human consciousness, we find ourselves incarnated in an experience in which we, as individuals, have the capacity to "write our autobiographies" as we go along around the themes of purpose, pleasure, and understanding. These "autobiographies" are atomic constituents of a fundamentally different "story," the history of our species as a whole up to the present moment, and—since we are human—the projection of our goals, hopes (and fears), and predictions into the future. The story of the evolution of patterns of human social relations is fundamentally different, not only from the narratives of the internal human dialogue, but from the human role in the ongoing evolution of Nature.

3. The Work-hour's Basis In an Analogy to Metabolism

The idea of a medium of exchange based on work-hours is one of the more counterintuitive aspects of the Watershed Communities proposal. The ephemeral nature of the money in current use is poorly realized by those of us who must believe in money in order to survive. Since we believe in it, we take for granted the premises that underlie it. Therefore, any challenge to those premises seems mooted by our instinctual attachment to proven survival enablers.

My basis for the creation of an alternate means of exchange emerges from the tripartite model of metabolic process (and corresponding tissues) as a possible cultural evolution analog. In this scheme, money is a symbol for the blood (and associated guts, glands, and fat) that circulates energy to the rest of the body: the neuro-network (monitoring/planning/directing), and the bones and muscle (actors/physical producers). The money in use today (since its historical antecedent was a commodity) is symbolic of products, or more generally *things*. Since the things produced (economic objects) are of no use to the producer in a highly specialized and technologized culture such as ours, the economic value of them is ultimately dependent on consumer demand. In other words, it is the sense interface of the guts, etc. with the intellect inherent in the human neural network that is expressed in the money we use. Since the economic analog to the neural network (oversight and administration) functions as the ruling partner with the actual producers and consumers in our society, the money we use tends to slight the actual producer (the bones and muscles), and coddle and hoodwink the consumer (the guts). It is as if the economy were a person characterized by resolute greed and insatiable needs, afflicted with overactive glands informed by a massive brain, kept alive with blood directing excess energy into growing obesity, the resulting superstructure supported on legs and arms kept as lean and scrawny as possible. The work-hour concept means to balance object-oriented money with life-time oriented money.

The metabolic cycle, when translated to the economy, starts and ends with the consumer. In the capitalistic economic cycle, market research and inventor's imaginations track the consumers' past levels of satisfaction, present needs, and possible future desires. Financiers apportion capital expenditures in order to exploit these needs and possibilities. Executives (empowered by the enterprise's owners) translate market potential joined to capitalization into a general production plan. Technical personnel translate those plans

into specific directions to workers. Workers produce the actual goods and services. Additional workers distribute the goods and services to the point of sale. Marketers sell the product or service to the consumer. The consumer's purchase completes the cycle. The several links in this chain—neglecting, in most cases, the consumer—can be integrated into a single business entity, or they can each be a separate business entity with their own internal metabolic cycle. Information feedback going in the opposite direction of the production cycle is necessary for efficient monitoring.

Typically, the participants best situated to siphon off the excess energy (profits) generated during the cycle are those who make the stop-or-go decisions: the financiers, the executives, and the marketers. (An inventor, if involved, is a highly variable special case.) Unless the enterprise self-markets its product, it is at the mercy of independent retail outlets to actually make the crucial sale; therefore marketers must also be motivated by potential profit. Meanwhile, market researchers are employees or sub-contractors; technical personnel and all workers are employees. Whereas the financiers, executives, and marketers are rewarded by the success of the economic object, all others are rewarded by the enterprise with hourly wages or salaries. The financiers, executives, and marketers justify their profits as reward for risk and pay the least possible in hourly wages, viewing wages as just another cost of doing business since the worker has no capital at risk in the enterprise. The inevitable result of thing-symbolic money being used as the energy processor (blood) in such a system, is the accumulation of energy (fat) at the interfaces with the consumer (guts). Work-hour denominated money would tend to re-balance the system.

4. The Basis Of Morality.

Watershed Communities has unstated moral principles as a sub-text. Moral principles are thought to proceed from religious sources, but Watershed Communities aspires to the same kind of religious neutrality embraced by the nation's Founders. If that is so, Watershed Communities would be well advised to seek out a more universal moral platform if such could be deduced from the evident facts of the natural world.

The central task is to define those moral areas wherein a democratic society must impose laws backed by the threat of physical coercion. To the extent that the state is a dem-org, Watershed Communities recognizes the state's authority, but agrees with the Founders that government authority's least extent (consistent with consensual social order) should be the goal. The commitment to a sustainable basic-economy commons requires a clear understanding of the points where the inevitable tendency of governments to expand their power must be resisted. On the other side of the coin, the protection offered by such a government should require a Basic Economy Network to rigorously embody the agreed moral basis.

A code of morality is found nowhere else in Nature (to our present knowledge). Morality assumes that we have the power to choose (as does esthetics). Affirming the power to choose implies the existence of individual human consciousness as a self-referential

entity equipped to remember experience, imagine the future, and will actions in a world perceived as separate from self. All of these universal human characteristics—individuality, memory, imagination, willfulness—display themselves in our conscious choices. The faith that it takes to place the origin of morality in free-will-enabled choice resides in the firmer foundation of the material world’s tangible environment as we experience it. And yet, faith in free will seems to require the manifestation of evanescent, ephemeral, even questionable mental functions as pre-conditions for morality-based behavior. Morality-based decisions can be as difficult to come by through common-sense principles as through detailed codes. Each standpoint deserves the respect of the other.

On the other hand, if all events are fate, or the will of God (or Allah), or automatic genetic and conditioned responses to stimuli, then the kind of choices we make which we call morality-based are an illusion—as is choosing a moral code on which to base choices. We must embrace the construct of the unique human freedom to choose, or abandon the construct of moral (as opposed to automatic) behavior. We would range automatic choices on a scale from fortuitous to unfortunate. Due to intent as well as consequence, we place morality-based choices on a scale of *good* to *evil*.

Given operational free will, the essential principles of morality are few in number and infinite in their various applications. The Perennial Philosophy outlined by Aldous Huxley defines behaving morally as doing the most good and the least evil. Both the Buddha and Hippocrates held as the highest moral principle: “Do the least harm.” Jesus of Nazereth was reputed to have propounded the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” In the abstract, this injunction—while establishing interpersonal equality as a desired norm—seems coherent with the principle of least harm. Although the application of this prescription tends to considerably smooth out social conflict, it has problems in interpretation. Sadists harm other sadists at their peril where the same behavior may bring joy to a consenting masochist. We must consider that we can never really know what’s in another’s mind. Then there is the question of timing. A friendly slap on the back that normally would be appreciated as a sign of affection, would not be if the slapee were in the midst of a drink. Ultimately, it is impossible to see exactly enough into the heart of another with even the purest of intent. The algebraic eloquence of the Golden Rule can suffer from translation into the real world.

“‘Do the least harm.’ Four words of guidance, that’s all we get?” you protest. That is a little too general to be of much practical use in the heat of the moment, isn’t it? I would propose that the Perennial Philosophy gives specific advice related to our three essential, universal physical functions: information processing, maintaining homeostasis, and protecting physical integrity. In laymen’s terms: Don’t mess with the facts. Don’t mess with people’s stuff. Don’t mess with anyone’s life.

One further addition to the three interdiction above is an extension of the commonsense observation that more than one material object cannot occupy the same space. Thus, for one example, highways must be divided into left and right lanes going in opposite directions. Purposefully disobeying this arrangement is wrong behavior. Whether exactly immoral or not could be argued.

Although these interdictions are the central pillars of individual morality, the social sphere seems to operate on a separate moral code that addresses different issues with different power equations. I would hold that societies that possess the means to insure that their populations are fed, clothed, and housed—but don't—are immoral (unless disabled by a natural calamity). And yet they by and large do not. Societies that sustain themselves through the practice of institutionalized violence are immoral. And yet warfare is thought essential to national sovereignty. Societies that practice slavery are immoral. Societies that suppress freedom of thought and speech are immoral. These would seem to me the societal incarnations of the lying, stealing, and killing prohibited to individuals. Organizations have more power than individuals, but lack the restraint mandated by individual responsibility. It would seem that other practices such as usury, kidnapping, torture, and others (including those not yet thought of) should be added to an open-ended list of immoral practices permitted to the interactions of groups that are denied the individual.

I am persuaded that it is necessary to add a further injunction that extends morality beyond the limitations of the human social sphere: *Don't mess with Mother Nature.* The preceding observation, that more than one object cannot occupy the same space, prompts the analogy that two competing species cannot occupy—although they may overlap—the same ecological niche.

The nature and compass of morality is a prime example of my contention that differing concepts are required for the proper understanding of individual humans, humans as groups, and the non-human environment. The commonplace practice of applying a principle of obvious correctness in one sphere to either of the other two should always be looked at with suspicion.

“But what,” you may protest, “about sexual conduct, marriage, filial piety, loyalty, sobriety, and respect for our ancestors? Are these to be outside the bounds of your morality?” I would reply to such pleas that these concerns vary from culture to culture. Assigning primacy to protocols of culturally variable social interactions produces more conflict than demoting their importance to one of secondary consideration.

Along with enjoining us not to kill and rob one another, morality (as existentially rather than religiously defined) requires us to first determine the relevant *facts* with as great accuracy as possible. What are the facts; what is legitimate property; and where is the threshold of personal harm? Due to the infinite variety of real-life events and individual perception of them, we must reluctantly conclude that all practical moral guidance varies with personal intent, social context, and impact on Nature. Precise codes can provide useful benchmarks, but true justice takes into account the particular situation.

To finish with morality, then, by my joining the injunctions of the Perennial Philosophy to other more current (mostly ecological) dos and don'ts, I have unwittingly taken a stab at formulating a generally acceptable secular consensus moral code. I can see nothing in what I've outlined that any reasonable person could disagree with, other than the lack of

explicitness about banned behaviors and the failure to include other behaviors thought to be equally immoral. Certainly, the outlined code is no prescription for achieving sainthood. “There are many *good* ways to be wicked.” (Lord Buckley)

5. Morality and the commons

Moral constructs appropriate to the commons brings to bear all of the moral precepts, both individual and societal, discussed so far. A moral society will value the commons by seeking to define it broadly (whether natural or synthetic) and then defend it. Abuse of the commons is a compound offense against Nature and society unless permitted by society in which case it is an offense by society.

6. Morality versus the doctrine of market determinism

Of the multitude of moral flash-points that impact the commons (as well as the individual), I would like to reflect upon greed. The capitalist system is successful because it harnesses all the productive powers of human nature, irrespective of any but those most basic moral considerations that ensure the system’s survival. Chief among those productive powers is greed. Greed begins with wanting more than enough. Wanting enough is blameless. On the other hand, not wanting enough is walking through the doorway to Sloth and Apathy. Greed is valued, then, as an engine of productivity, however, one that is on a vector with its opposite, laziness. Thus greed must be tempered by other factors than its mere absence. These other factors tend to be rooted in moral exhortations. If these moral factors are not brought to bear, the result is a system—such as the one we have now—in which greed dictates that we all must swim in an ocean wherein we are all the prey of each other.

The doctrine of market determinism, very much the creation of the Enlightenment, holds all individuals to be “rational actors”; in effect, to unfailingly bargain for personal monetary advantage without regard for any external considerations. Freedom, in this context, adheres only to freedom to opt out. Commerce so conceived becomes a “game”. Like all good games, the economic game must have rules, lest the freedom of the individual (another Enlightenment icon) lead to chaos.

Well-played games tend to be thought of as those closest to a draw. But there is no bar keeping a contestant from experiencing the joy of overwhelming dominance, nor to protect a loser from another’s *schadenfreude*. In sports, both winning and losing may be reversed the next time around. But what about the market? Originally, the economic game was a contest between humans and Mother Nature. To conceive of the market-centered economic game as one of human-versus-human is to imprint on the winner the role of surrogate for Mother Nature. Since humans depend absolutely on Mother Nature for sustenance, the market determinist game becomes one in which the loser may, and often does, lose the means of sustenance. This imposes on the winner a moral burden greater than just playing by the rules. For the loser, there may not be a next time around. The doctrine of market determinism as currently practiced treats this burden as an

externality. And yet the vanquished and the un-included are still human and do not simply fade silently from existence.

Greed as a goad serves to undermine truthful communication. The doctrine of free-market determinism holds that the average offering price of the seller adjusts spontaneously to the demand of the buyer without the necessity of either government direction or moral suasion. Thus the doctrine—devoid of sentimental second thoughts—assures a built-in opening for the free reign of greed.

Externalizing issues—removing them from communication—pollutes the stream of information exchange as much as falsehoods or irrelevancies. But we see all around us overwhelming evidence that purposeful and sophisticated pollution of the information stream is one of the major winning strategies in the marketplace. In fact, a standard marketing strategy is the creation of “information asymmetry”. All major players resort to advertising, lobbying and public relations in order to omit relevant facts, loft irrelevancies, exaggerate merits, and pander to subliminal emotions as a principal way of gaining competitive advantage. The way the game is actually played, the rational substratum of the “rational actor” is continually undermined.

Information from the major organs of power always runs on two tracks: the servile and the manipulative. A bifurcated agenda-motivated mass-media environment breeds a style of communication throughout our society that requires that, in matters of substance, all parties must be constantly on their guard against predatory disingenuousness. But one must remember that, after all, it’s only a game—like poker—where all seek to mystify each other as a major winning strategy. When everyone is of necessity placed in the market-game, trusting information becomes conditional on the individual’s good or bad experience over time.

The free individual’s participation in an unfettered market involves placing a bet on a fundamentally unknowable unfolding of future events. Buying involves the risk that the purchase will turn out to be worthless. Selling involves the risk of poor market timing. Being in the labor pool involves the risks of unlivable wages or unemployment altogether. Risk aversion becomes a fundamental concern of all the players in the free market. But any who achieve freedom from risk remove themselves from the competitive aspect of the game since they’re winning is a foregone conclusion. Too-big-to-fail financial institutions presently exemplify this condition; their insulation from the discipline of competition is correctly (if somewhat euphemistically) seen as “moral hazard”. Risk-spreading schemes for insuring investments implement a different sort of moral hazard—the spreading to others the responsibility for assuming the burdens of an investors losing bet. The market theory that justifies investor reward as compensation for risk undertaken, is constantly being undermined by risk-averse market participants themselves.

Anyone who has ever played the game of “Monopoly” has had an opportunity to learn that, in a closed market with perfect information, the laws of chance favor an eventual winner-take-all outcome. A single player taking a monopoly position in real world

markets is rare (even neglecting any governmental prohibitions) because markets react to non-chance influences such as innovation, marketing, and investment. In any case, the continuing entry of the young into the market revitalizes its metabolism, particularly if their numbers exceed those of their departing forbearers. Nevertheless, other factors (such as economies of scale and the ability to acquire large concentrations of financial capital) will favor the growth of a particular corporation to a position of market dominance. The market-dominant corporation has a greater opportunity to administer prices, costs, and wages in its field of play. It has won the race before the crack of the starting gun. All players are in the game to win. Those who choose to wrestle the eight hundred pound gorilla will surely lose. Does, then, the monopolist have a moral duty to anyone at all in his market domain? What if his activities in the market deprives someone of their necessities of life? Once again, the theoretically benign amoral doctrine of market determinism is challenged by inevitable outcomes of questionable morality.

The consideration of scale is of particular importance to the role of monopoly. If I am the only doctor in an isolated rural hamlet, my fee for responding to an emergency could be enough to bankrupt the patient if my billing was ruled only by the law of supply and demand. But I would be well advised to bill as if it were an ordinary office call. One dare not be flagrantly exploitative of one's neighbors in a small town. On the other hand, the CEO of a multi-national corporation with dominant market share sees his world in market reports and spreadsheets that enable him to use his dominance to continually increase the corporation's market share and bottom line. The actual people affected are at great remove, acknowledged, if at all, only as statistics.

The Enlightenment's philosophers, scholars, scientists, economists, and Protestant clergymen who developed the interlocked theories of personal liberty, democratic rule, and free markets were, in part, reacting to the abuse of a Church that had become hypocritical in the exercise of its moral authority. And yet they were living in an environment where the Church's authority in matters of morality was supreme; even kings flouted it at their peril. The Enlightenment's side-lining of royalty and ghettoizing of religion opened the field to the free market at the same time that it undercut the market's moral foundation as an unintended side-effect. Or perhaps the side-effect was not that unintended. The aristocracy, no longer feudal lords, nevertheless held the strongest position in the newly liberated capitalist markets thus allaying any fears of the liberated serfs, of whom there were many, coming to dominate the society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arendt, Hannah, Totalitarianism, Harvest/HBJ, 1951-1968

Atkinson, Lloyd, Economics, Irwin, 1982

Berry, Wendell, In the Presence of Fear, The Orion Society, 2001

Berry, Wendell, The Idea of a Local Economy, The Orion Society, 2001

Berry, Wendell, Life is a Miracle, Counterpoint, 2000

Bookchin, Murray, Remaking Society, South End Press, 1990

Brown, Lester R., et al, Saving the Planet, Norton, 1991

Brown, Lester R., et al, State of the World 1992, Norton, 1992

Brown, Lester R., et al, State of the World 1998-2001, Norton, 1998-2001

Brown, Lester R., et al, Vital Signs, Norton, 1999

Brown, Lester R., Eco-Economy, Norton, 2001

Brown, Lester R., Plan B, W. W. Norton, 2003

Chomsky, Noam, Manufacturing Consent, Pantheon, 1988

Chomsky, Noam, The Prosperous Few and the Restless Many, Odonian Press, 1993

Chomsky, Noam, What Uncle Sam Really Wants, Odonian Press, 1986-1992

Chomsky, Noam, World Orders Old and New, Columbia University Press, 1992

Chomsky, Noam, Understanding Power, New Press, 2002

Coates Gary, J, et al, Resettling America, Brick House Publishing, 1981

Crosbie, Michael J., Green Architecture, AIA Press, 1994

Daly, Herman & Cobb, John B. Jr., For the Common Good, Beacon Press,

Daly, Herman E., Steady-State Economics, Island Press, 1991

Danaher, Kevin, Corporations Are Gonna Eat Your Mama, Common Courage, 1996

DeRopp, Robert S., The Master Game, Dell, 1968

Edsall, T. B., The New Politics of Inequality, Norton, 1984

Ekins, Paul, Green Economics, Doubleday, 1992

Fuller, Buckminster, Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth, southern Illinois University Press, 1969

Galbraith, J. K., Annals of an Abiding Liberal, New American Library, 1979

Galbraith, J. K., A Short History of Financial Euphoria, Whittle, 1990

Galbraith, J. K., The Age of Uncertainty, Houghton Mifflin, 1977

Galbraith, J. K., Economics and the Public Purpose, Houghton Mifflin, 1973

Gatto, John Taylor, Dumbing Us Down, New Society Publishers, 2002

George, Henry, Progress and Poverty, The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1990
(originally published 1879)

Greco, Thomas H. Jr., Money—Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender
Chelsea Green 2001

Greco, Thomas H. Jr., The End of Money and the Future of Civilization, Chelsea Green,
2009

Group of Green Economists, The, Ecological Economics, Zed Books, 1992

Hawken, Paul, The Ecology of Commerce, HarperCollins, 1993

Heinberg, Richard, Powerdown, New Society Publishers, 2004

Heinberg, Richard, Peak Everything, New Society Publishers, 2007

High Country News, Western Water Made Simple, Island Press, 1987

Jefferson, Thomas, (The portable, edited by M. D. Peterson), Penguin, 1975

Klein, Naomi, Disaster Capitalism,

Krugman Paul, The Return of Depression Economics, Norton, 2009

Lakoff, George, The Political Mind, Viking, 2008

Lanier, Jaron, You Are Not a Gadget, Knopf, 2010

Leopold, Les, The Looting of America, Chelsea Green, 2009

Machiavelli, Niccolo, The Prince, Mentor

Mander, Jerry, In the Absence of the Sacred, Sierra Club Books, 1991

McChesney, Robert W. The Problem of the Media, Monthly Review Press, 2004

Mesarovic, Milo & Eduard Pestel, The Limits to Growth

Mesarovic, Milo & Eduard Pestel, Mankind at the Turning Point, Signet, 1974

Mokhiber, R., & Weissman, R., Corporate Predators, Common Courage Press, 1999

Myers, Norman, Future Worlds (The Gaia Atlas of), Doubleday, 1990

Nieburh, Reinhold, Man's Nature and his Communities, Charles Scribner's, 1965

Palast, Greg, The Best Democracy Money Can Buy, Pluto Press, 2002

Pasour, E. C., Jr., Agriculture and the State, The Independent Institute, 1990

Phillips, Kevin, Wealth and Democracy, Random House, 2002

Purdy, Jedediah, The Meaning of Property, Yale University Press, 2010

Ramos, Joshua Cooper, The Age of the Unthinkable, Little Brown, 2009

Register, Richard, et al, Village Wisdom – Future Cities, Alonzo Press, 1997

Reps, John W., The Making of Urban America, Princeton University Press, 1965

Ritter, Lawrence S. & Silber, William L., Money, Basic Books, 1970-1984

Sale, Kirkpatrick, Dwellers in the Land, New Society Publishers, 1991

Scheer, Robert, The Pornography of Power, Hachette Book Group USA, 2008

Schuler, Douglas, New Community Networks, Addison Wesley, 1996

Schumacher, E.F., Small Is Beautiful, Harper & Row, 1973

Schumacher, E.F., A Guide for the Perplexed, Harper & Row, 1977

Schumacher, E.F., Good Work, Harper & Row, 1979

Simmel, Georg, The Philosophy of Money, Routledge, 1978-1997

Snyder, Gary, A Place in Space, Counterpoint, 1995

Soros, George, The Crisis of Global Capitalism, Perseus, 1998

Tawney, R. H., Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, Peter Smith, 1926

Veblen, Thorstein, The Theory of the Leisure Class, Macmillan, 1899

Vilar, Pierre, A History of Gold and Money, Verso, 1976

Vidal, Gore, Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace, Nation Books, 2002

