



# Scientific and Medical Network Annual Conference 2014

*Envisioning and Embodying a New World*  
27-29 June 2014  
Scilla Elworthy

## *Future in the Balance: transformative leadership for a world that works*

Our world faces multiple crises, and attempts to address them are not working. The rich/poor gap gets wider. The richest 300 people in the world now have more wealth than the poorest 3,000,000,000 – nearly half of humanity. Forests disappear on a daily basis, oceans are literally being vacuumed of fish, disastrous crises lurch through unstable financial markets, religious fanaticism terrorises large parts of the Middle East, a global economic system rewards the most greedy among us.

Einstein said that no problem can be solved from the consciousness that created it. So what is the current shift in consciousness that is required to enable us to resolve global problems - to “envision and embody a new world”?

I shall endeavour to address the following points:

- What is this new consciousness? How do you recognise it?
- How does it work in terms of leadership?
- What are the stale values that have caused the present crises?
- What values do we need now?
- Are these values becoming evident?
- How is transformative leadership developed?
- How fast is this leap happening? If it is essential to human survival, is it happening fast enough?

### **What is this new consciousness? How do you recognise it?**

Edgar Mitchell was a pragmatic young U.S. Navy captain who flew as lunar module pilot on Apollo 14, making him the sixth person to walk on the moon. On the return trip, as he watched the earth float freely in the vastness of space, he realized that the story of ourselves as told by science—our cosmology, our religion—was “incomplete and likely flawed”.

“I recognized that the Newtonian idea of separate, independent, discreet things in the universe wasn’t a fully accurate description. What was needed was a new story of who we are and what we are capable of becoming.”

So, what exactly is this new story that Mitchell is talking about? What are human beings capable of becoming?

As far as I can see this is not a shift in consciousness, this is not something incremental. This is a great leap into a fundamentally different way of perceiving ourselves and the world we inhabit. It will alter everything.

My experience tells me that there are many aspects to this leap in consciousness, perhaps four essential elements:

**i) Perspective**, For the first time, we have a bird’s eye view of the human race.

**ii) interconnectedness** Unless we have gone numb and want only to turn a blind eye to what’s happening to the earth, we now realise that we are affecting our own evolution by everything we do. We learned, for example, that the gases produced by refrigerators destroy the ozone layer; the thinning

of the ozone layer in turn permits harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun to reach our bodies. This kind of awareness may be jarring and demanding, but it’s real. And it’s exciting. It is the most unusual opportunity to move toward what some people call unity consciousness – a direct intuitive awareness of the one-ness of reality.

**iii) Blazing intelligence:** the magnificence of nature

**iv) Balance between the masculine and the feminine.**

For three thousand years at least, power and decision-making worldwide has been in the hands of men. While this has brought us obvious advances in science and great discoveries in many fields, it has also led to an imbalance, a distorted way of doing things that excludes or marginalises essential aspects of human intelligence.

When I was researching a book on power and sex in 1995, I found that nearly all recorded thinking on power and the use of power has been andro-centric - that is, done by men and based on male values. The male norm and the human norm, even today, tend to be thought of as identical.

This has led to a dangerous imbalance between the masculine and feminine in most of us today, regardless of gender, and prevalent almost everywhere in the world. For example, we see women in the City of London and in Wall Street dressing exactly like men (except for the high heels) and competing to out-perform men in determination, focus, logic, ruthlessness, achievement and drive.

What has been devalued in this way of living are essential elements of being human:

- the skill of listening,
- the ability to nurture, to include,
- the choice to exercise ‘power with’ rather than ‘power over’,
- the attention to intuition and the creative imagination that makes for great art and invention,
- the ability to stand in the shoes of another person,
- the practice of dialogue with our inner world,
- the compassion and stamina to look after those who are weak or in need
- and above all, reverence for the sacredness of creation and of our bodies.

### **How does this new consciousness work in terms of leadership?**

Authentic leadership – the kind so deeply needed on the planet now – begins in the radical mastery of one’s inner being. Brilliance, charisma, eloquence, vision – these are wonderful gifts that a leader can possess – but these gifts gain ultimate effect and coherence only when fuelled and sustained by inner power.

In half a century of work in the world, the most important lesson I learned from observing leaders like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu at close quarters is that inner work is

a pre-requisite for outer effectiveness – *that the quality of our awareness directly affects the quality of results produced.* This inner power is the diamond formed by years of honing self-awareness, practising selflessness and observing and controlling the ego. It results from developing the essential skill of empathy, even for those who oppose you – and the humble commitment to keep learning the skills of deep listening and mediation.

What I'm expressing here has been known in all the great spiritual traditions, but needs to be *reclaimed for a secular world in crisis*, and in language that all can understand. Without leaders of this kind in every sphere and institution of our world, our chances of survival are grim. With such leaders, a world can be built that our grandchildren will be proud of.

I am certain that a different future for all of humanity is possible, *if humans wake up.* Interestingly, this is happening fast now in the corporate world. Reflection, mindfulness and inner work are now seen as an essential tool in many leading companies, extensively featured in the sober Financial Times of London and making the cover of *Time Magazine*.

But waking up means more than sitting quietly in meditation. It means a radical revision of values. I'd like to present you with 10 values or norms that have governed our (western) actions for centuries, and which have contributed to the state of the planet today, and then propose what we can replace each one with - the kind of values that could enable better decisions – decisions that could get us out of the mess we're in.

## What are the stale values that have caused the present crises? What values do we need now?

### 1. Humans have the right to do as we like with the Earth

to be replaced by: *Humans become responsible stewards of the earth, in order to preserve its beauty and diversity.* [Indigenous cultures]

### 2. Science and the rational mind are what matter most

Sally Dearman Cummings, first woman pilot of RAF fast jets:

"Our left-brain is now so dominant in our social structure that its landscape is taken as the only, or superior, reality. We fail to acknowledge just how much it is informed by the right brain. Without the right brain, the left brain would have very little to analyse or present. It is a brilliant, clinical, zeros and ones pattern-recognition device that is complementary to our right brain. We feel - resonate with - truth and the amplified field with our right brain and use our left to notice its effects and make logical deductions that can be verbally expressed and written down. Neither task can be performed by the other.

Our right brain is ideally developed to read complex, non-linear, non-verbal signals beneath the linear landscape and present that information to us in its own language of emotional, energetic and physical feelings of coherency as previously described. The right brain is a richly equipped, reliable and accurate tool for discerning truth."<sup>1</sup>

So, '**science and the rational mind are what matter most**' gives way to: ***The human body, mind, feelings and soul are all one, interacting constantly, and the entire package is consciousness.***

### 3. Continuing economic growth is essential

There is no doubt that economic growth has brought hundreds of millions out of poverty and has relieved untold suffering across the planet. The question to be addressed is whether this most sacred cow of contemporary economics – one that now dominates world culture - can be sustained. Western nations that already have a high standard of living naturally want to keep it, and developing nations – some of whom are in survival mode - dream of one day being able to emulate the West.

Nevertheless it is clear to anyone with access to the Internet that the planet's resources – particularly water - simply cannot support further endless economic growth.

So, '**continuing economic growth is essential**' is replaced with:

***Growth in consciousness is now more urgent.***

**4. Survival of the fittest** - so dated and a misunderstanding of Darwin. It goes without saying that competition can be a great spur to improvement, can stimulate activity, can be creative and can help modify behaviour. Nevertheless, as a basic belief system, in recent decades competition has grown to become like a towering giant wielding a massive club and driving hundreds of millions of humans to run full speed over a cliff. Listen objectively to the news for a week and count how many times reference is made to the unquestioned force of 'the market', the dominant importance of share prices, the necessity of economic competitiveness and the unquestioned requirement for growth. Economist Hazel Henderson talks of "*the poverty-exacerbating global casino, the speculation in oil and commodities which drive up fuel and food prices, leading to deprivation and hunger.*"

This leads also to legal right of transnational corporations to sue governments that pass laws that may reduce their profits, as in the Trans Pacific Partnership.

So '**survival of the fittest**' becomes:

***It's more efficient to replace competition with co-operation for the greater good, the interconnectedness now evident all over the planet.***

### 5. Good fences make good neighbours

Certainly there is a case to be made for 'good fences' – humans have a fundamental instinct for territory and a 'space of our own' – and that space can need defending. However in an increasingly digitalised world, the notion of 'good fences' is fast becoming outdated, as attacks in cyberspace become the strategy of choice.

On the hidden battlefields of history's first known cyber-war, the casualties are piling up. In the U.S., many banks have been hit, and the telecommunications industry seriously damaged, likely in retaliation for several major attacks on Iran. Washington and Tehran are ramping up their cyber-arsenals, built on a black-market digital arms bazaar, encompassing such high-tech giants as Microsoft, Google, and Apple.

By contrast, locally led peace building initiatives now demonstrate worldwide that preventing armed violence through the unglamorous work of peace building costs a fraction of the cost of wars e.g. NI, SA, IAP

So '**Good fences make good neighbours**' becomes:

***Building trust is the most effective and least costly form of security available today.***

### 6. 'Might makes right'

Emma Sky, who was political adviser to General Odierno, commander of the US forces in Iraq, said: "some Americans believed Iraq could become a democracy that would serve as a model for the region. Most Iraqis had not consented to this experiment, or to being occupied by foreign forces".<sup>2</sup>

'Might makes right' has been described as the underlying assumption of totalitarian regimes. However in my experience in military think tanks in the West, those who think of themselves as 'realist' scholars of international affairs take it as a kind of norm – as 'the way things work'.

Those defending the case for military supremacy might vigorously argue that if you're not armed and dangerous, you're a sitting duck, like the Tibetans were for the Chinese invaders in 1950. They would ask what use is non-violence in a brutal world? The response might be that it was Gandhi's insistence on non-violence that eventually drove the most powerful empire the world has seen out of India, and Martin Luther King's similar insistence that ensured civil rights for African Americans. The Tibetan Buddhist passion for non-violence may not have secured Tibet, but with the Dalai Lama's incandescent advocacy and example, Tibetan Buddhism and its concepts have spread over the entire planet.

So '**might makes right**' could usefully be replaced with:

***Common security is safer and cheaper than an international system based on weapons and superior power.***

### 7. Short-termism is fine

Forget the annual report: these days, shareholders' decisions often hinge on financial analysts' quarterly financial expectations – and, with perks, jobs and bonuses at stake, more and more senior executives are unable to ignore them. Pressure to produce short-term results increased in the five years to 2013, according to 63% of global executives who responded to a McKinsey & Company survey.

Increasingly outspoken activist shareholders appear to drive today's boardroom decisions.

INSEAD research shows that - far from ensuring steady profits - 'short-termism' can be destructive in the long haul.<sup>3</sup> But with a growing number of executive compensation packages rewarding short-termism, it takes courage and willpower to keep the non-immediate future in focus. Jakob von Uexkull, founder of the World Future Council, says that the gap between short-term thinking and long-term consequences has never been wider.

**So "short termism is fine" becomes:**

***Our decisions now take account of future generations, as the oldest indigenous traditions have told us for centuries.***

**8. The technical fix will always be invented in time to resolve serious problems**

Technology has indeed brought untold benefits to humankind - the wheel, the reflecting telescope, the toothbrush, the spinning frame, the light bulb, the electrical motor, the sewage system, the telephone, the bicycle, vacuum cleaners, photography, stainless steel, the glider, microscopes, penicillin, television, hip replacement, cash dispensers, carbon fibre, computers, the worldwide web - the list is extensive.

This has given us such confidence in technology that we have found it easy to forget those advancements in specific industries that have been disastrous. One example: the thalidomide drug that was to help pregnant women with the effects of morning sickness and was sold from 1957 until 1962, when it was found to cause many forms of birth defects. Another example: the meltdown at both the Chernobyl and the Fukushima power plants.

**So, reliance on the technical fix gives way to:**

***The greater intelligence is not only available to us here and now, but is infinitely more powerful than human intelligence.*** Were reason to prevail, we would capture solar energy, not block it; we would shun fossil fuels, not wage ecocidal wars to seize remaining supplies. In today's world, however, policymakers have diverted billions of dollars into blocking the sun.

*Hubris* is an ancient Greek word meaning extreme arrogance. Wisdom is cautionary good sense. *Hubris* is at the heart of Greek tragedy - the arrogant belief that one's power is unassailable. Wisdom counsels that no human power is impregnable.<sup>4</sup>

The arrogance of thinking we can control Nature makes me gasp. Try making a pact with a hurricane, try stopping a volcanic eruption, try doing a deal with a tsunami or an earthquake so that it won't submerge your nuclear plant.

**9. Women are too emotional to deal with the real issues of business and world affairs**

fades away, because:

*The capacities of the deep feminine and the deep masculine - in both men and women - are now seen as vital for human survival on the planet.*

**10. Consuming is our right** (and our addiction!)

gives way to the realisation that:

*What we really desire is to satisfy the human need for meaning and beauty.*

## Are these values becoming evident?

Now the task is to think in practical terms about *strategies to get from here* - from where we are now - *to there*, to be able to reach these inviting future scenarios. This is the practical bit: this is where we bring in the pragmatists who know what to do in their special area, because they've done it, tried it, tested it and made it work. I refer below to some living, breathing examples of what is already happening, already ahead of the curve, with some challenging 'What if...?' questions:

1. Banking: where money serves people, not the other way around, as in Indonesia
2. Business: prioritising people and planet alongside profit **What if...?**
3. "The Most Powerful Green NGO You've Never Heard Of"
4. "Plastic to oil - fantastic!" **What if...?**
5. People power: Avaaz, Sarvodaya, Transition Towns in UK.
6. The boy who plants trees

7. "Radical generosity" **What if...?**

8. How conflict is transformed **What if...?**

## How is transformative leadership developed?

The first step in being ready for a brilliant future is for individuals to wake up to their own energetic potential, meaning that they can then have access to the self-awareness that is an essential part of building a positive future. Here I spell out nine signposts - with clues, messages, maps and poetry - to enable a critical mass of people to make the leap in consciousness by:

- Listening to self, to gain integrity, authenticity and personal truth
- Developing a practice of reflection & meditation, to become observer of the mind
- Dealing with difficult feelings
- Increasing well-being and energy
- Using conflict as opportunity
- Doing nothing
- Allowing imagination and creativity to flourish
- Going into the shadow, and the energy that comes from it
- Learning how to serve, moving from "me" to "we"
- Discovering the Beloved, becoming able to ask "what can I give?"
- Becoming a sacred activist
- What about failure and disappointment?
- Find what you *really* want to do.

## How fast is this leap happening? If it is essential to human survival, is it happening fast enough?

There appear to be two phenomena happening simultaneously in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The first is a disaster: humans stripping the earth of its natural resources so fast that entire eco systems are collapsing, technological breakdown releasing toxic materials that threaten all life, and the unimaginable beauty of the planet being destroyed. Most human beings seem unaware of the tragedy happening around them.

The second is a fast-growing number of highly energised humans waking up to an entirely new perception of the functioning of the universe and how, by working *with* its energy systems instead of against them, they can assist the regeneration of the planet.

I learn this from work with locally led peace building initiatives, through Peace Direct, an NGO I set up in 2002. These are some of the bravest people on the planet, risking their lives daily so that other people don't get killed. The numbers of such initiatives is growing daily, even while more conflicts erupt. The courage and energy of local peace builders leaves me in awe.

The energy awakened in young social entrepreneurs is like a lightning

flash—it jumps from one to another over considerable distances, without a word said.

A secret smile of recognition, a frisson from this special frequency,

a confidence in the skill of each other to find a way through. And do they come through!

- They're cleaning up crime in Rio,
- raising women's rights in Tahrir Square,
- teaching computer skills to young men at risk of terrorism in Kenya,
- setting up safe transport for girls in Islamabad,
- enabling scavenger kids in the Philippines to go to school,
- stopping knife fights in East London.

The connections are now happening quickly between those who have woken up, and those waking—whether young social entrepreneurs, peace builders, NGOs, or business people—because all have, to some extent, moved from "me" to "we." They care less about how much they have and more about how much they can offer.



The main phenomenon that is changing the world today is the empowerment of women, and the re-balancing of the deep feminine with the deep masculine in men and women. It is not only that women's organisations worldwide are multiplying

exponentially and that women are becoming better educated worldwide and slowly taking up positions in parliaments and jobs in the media. There is another phenomenon that suggests something different. It suggests a fast-growing global sensitivity, accelerated by social media, to what is happening to the planet. People do mind that polar ice caps are melting, that toxic waste is polluting oceans, and that so many women are suffering violence—and they have found a way to show that they mind. Voters are beginning to wake up and act, to exert pressure on policy makers, to bring bottom-up forces to interact with top-down forces in ways not seen before.

I believe it is the key to building a future world that works for everyone. We may look back in a hundred years and realise that what we are witnessing now is a revolution more massive than the abolition of slavery.

This is an awakening is taking place worldwide.

These are the new forces gathering speed.

This is the company you may be in, if you so choose.

The future hangs in the balance.

And what happens next depends on all of us.

**Scilla Elworthy PhD** founded the **Oxford Research Group** in 1982 to develop effective dialogue between nuclear weapons policy-makers worldwide and their critics, work which included a series of dialogues between Chinese, Russian and western nuclear scientists and military, for which she has been three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She founded **Peace Direct** in 2002 to fund, promote and learn from local peace-builders in conflict areas; Peace Direct was voted 'Best New Charity' in 2005. Scilla was awarded the **Niwano Peace Prize** in 2003, and was adviser to Peter Gabriel, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Sir Richard Branson in setting up '**The Elders**'. She recently co-founded **Rising Women Rising World**, advises the leadership of selected international corporations and teaches young social entrepreneurs; her latest book is *Pioneering the Possible: awakened leadership for a world that works* (North Atlantic Books, 2014).

#### References

1. Sally Dearman Cummings, personal email on 5th Jan 2014. The TED talk presented by neuro-anatomist Jill Bolte-Taylor illustrates this quite well: [http://www.ted.com/talks/jill\\_bolte\\_taylor\\_s\\_powerful\\_stroke\\_of\\_insight.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html)
2. *ibid*, p.159
3. <http://knowledge.insead.edu/leadership-management/the-perils-of-short-term-thinking-2544>
4. Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, David Krieger, Issue 197, December 2013.

