

**The Third Millennium: Birth Pangs
of an Interdependent World
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Presented At

The GLOBAL 2000 LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

International Computers and Communications World Leaders Council

Georgetown, D.C. April 19, 1993

Crises are, as the Chinese meaning of the word conveys, "dangerous opportunities." They are full of high risk and daring possibilities. As space shrinks, time accelerates, and choice becomes imperative, the stakes become more urgent and ultimate, and the consequences more prophetic and planetary.

The crisis of our time is such a time. It is not marginal, parochial, or merely cultural. It represents the end of a civilization, to use Toynbee's trenchant analysis of the twenty-one civilizations before our own, and the birth pangs of a whole new world aborning. It is cosmic as well as contemporary, global as well as western, planetary as well as human, philosophic as well as scientific, paradigmatic as well as technological, spiritual as well as material.

It is not only that, as General Hap Arnold said after World War II, "We have developed a generation of technological giants and moral midgets," referencing the atomic bomb and Hiroshima, or the Winged rocket and Dachau. It is that our mastery of means, and our bewilderment and idolatry of ends leave us paralyzed before the spectacle of unprecedented infliction of human misery and the promise of unparalleled human bounty in the same breath and time.

In such an audacious conference, focusing on global leadership for the third millennium, our thought must be no less daring. Einstein was right when he said that with the splitting of the atom, everything changed in the world except the human mind and if it does not, he warned, we all may perish.

I invite you then to examine our crisis, our dangerous opportunity, as one would a symphony, in four movements:

I. A Parable - on the surprises of change. (This is a light, fast theme and tempo.)

II. The Paradox - on the radical reconstruction of our time. (This is the orchestration of the theme in solid movement.)

III. The Perspective - contractions on the theme of birthing. (This is modulation of the theme in score and tempo.)

IV. The Proposal - with key parts and performance. (The finale with full ensemble.)

I. A Parable

(The Surprises of Change)

There are lots of warm fuzzies with which we seek to cushion the hard realism of dramatic change. The key metaphor in my opening parable is fuzzy but not a cushion. It is about a caterpillar. (I learned the lesson from my first grade teacher in a two room school in Oregon, the school built by my great grandfather after he had led the wagon train west from Michigan in 1849.)

She told us to collect a caterpillar from the big trees on our school ground, put it in a mason jar we had brought from home with the bottom filled with leaves and the cap punched with air holes, and watch and wait. It was a slow, dull process. When the caterpillar disappeared inside its spun cocoon, we were troubled. When the cocoon hardened and began to crack, we were alarmed. We thought it was all over. The change looked like death to six-year-olds.

But, she knew better, as all teachers do. "You just wait, and watch and learn. Something unexpected and beautiful will happen." And it did!

Out of a broken, dry cocoon it came, a beautiful, winged, new creation, with wings for feet, flying for crawling! That's often how important, long-delayed, and painful change comes: unpredictable, surprising, and with a burst of new creation.

In the childhood of all cultural and personal growing, our cautious conservation is the same. Patch up the broken structures! Hold the old together! Don't wait! But then, we know better. You can't unring a bell. Geese do not fly backwards. There is no going back, no sane security in hardened habit or habitat. We cannot hold back tomorrow. The beat of butterfly wings will out!

A new world beats in our cocoons of culture and consciousness. It is as inescapable as spring breaking through crusted ground, or chicks from an egg, or new life from seemingly dead seed. Our task is to catch the beat, await the wings and tempo, and midwife the flying. The third millennium is already here, straining against the hardened grip of lifeless concepts, dead and dying structure, and weathered wineskins too old and brittle to hold the new wine of a new world aborning.

II. The Paradox

(Radical Reconstruction)

Our time is marked by the radical paradox and reconstruction of four central issues, a) Power, b) Government, c) Loyalty, and d) Knowledge.

We have witnessed a root transformation in the concept and construct of power. With the nuclear age we have learned the more we have the less we can use of it, until our MAD military strategy issued in the bankruptcy of Mutually Assured Destruction. Our confidence in weaponry has been confounded by livingry, to use Bucky Fuller's happy phrase, and the new age must find a new concept and use of power. We are beginning to see the "soft side," and the insinuating strength of information, collaboration, and unconditional love.

Government, in most dramatic form, is undergoing transformation across the world. Whatever its form, from despotic to democratic, communist, or capitalist, hierarchical structures are giving way to horizontal, participative forms of consensus. It is too early to see an enduring model for the 21st century, but it is well on the way.

Loyalty is an ingredient of all forms of human community from the intimate family to the national and global model. It has lived most decisively in the passionate commitment of partisanship. Often, the narrower the partisanship, the more passionate the loyalty. Our time is marked by the radical reconstruction of this view. Loyalty is increasingly like Janus, God of the New Year, double-faced, simultaneously looking inward and outward, locally and globally. Its necessity and integrity requires this new and radical transformation in depth, breadth, and inclusiveness.

Dependable knowledge, long defined by scientific objectivity, mathematical logic, controlled experiment, and empirical verification, is being radically reconstructed. The scientific method, once the messiah, grudgingly yields to include consciousness, metaphor, value as well as fact, subjects as well as objects, and new methods more responsive to wholes than parts, synoptic over specialized vision, and dependability without absolutes, relativity without subjectivity.

III. The Perspective

(Contractions and Rhythm in Birthing)

The change we face is paradigmatic, fundamental, pervasive. It marks the end of an age, and anticipates a new and different era. There are philosophical, psychological, and socio-economic clues.

Arnold Toynbee in his ten volume study of the rise and fall of twenty-one civilizations before our own characterizes the end of an age by the demise of the creative minority, that becomes dominant and then 1) rests on its oars, 2) resorts to the suicidalism of militarism, and finally 3) idolatorizes the ephemeral. What an epitaph for our time!

In another context I have characterized this final passage as inversion of the classic assumptions that underlie our Hebraic-Christian, and Greco-Roman western civilization, for example, 1) the subordination of nature, 2) the superanimality of man, and 3) the objectivity of value. These have been inverted in our

time into 1) the primacy of nature, 2) the animality of man, and 3) the subjectivity of value. *Like Alice in Wonderland*, our world is turned upside down.

The psychological analysis is provided by Gerald Heard's *The Five Ages of Man*, and Jean Gebser's *The Ever Present Origin*. They characterize our human history as passing through successive stages:

1) the archaic, non-differentiated consciousness,

2) the magical, one dimensional consciousness,

3) the mythical, two dimensional consciousness,

4) the mental, three dimensional consciousness, and now teetering on the

5) integral, inclusive and expansive consciousness.

The socio-economic analysis provided by Nesbitt, Bell, Smith, Peters and others paints the emergence of 1) a global economy, 2) free market socialism, 3) revitalization of the welfare state, 4) dominance of the information/computer age, 5) rise of women, 6) ecology, 7) regionalism, 8) revival of orthodoxies, and 9) humanizing technology.

IV .The Proposal

(Finale Canticle and Commencement)

The "running sound of history," to use Churchill's descriptive phrase, can be heard in the merging collaboration of technology, the academy, business and management/marketing, and the value sciences and decision making, in the integration of making a living and making a life. This meeting, mingling, and emerging meaning gathers around the impact of four key concepts with which this century blends into

the third millennium now aborning. There is only time for their mention, it remains for the future to flesh them out.

1) **Relativity** - the radical interdependence of all events, space, time, energy, and value. Though Einstein ushered in this century with this key concept, it is only now working its way into the total awareness of all our systems. There are no "isolated events," no "insulated domains or disciplines," no "atomistic or individualistic structures or systems." This is the death knoll to all forms of narrow parochialisms or partisanship, independent specialization, or vertical ordering of walled knowledge or presumed wisdom. There are no fixed boundaries to information, energy, or intrinsic values. We must integrate or disintegrate. This is the task of education, commerce, government, and culture.

2) **Synergy** - the form of energy, where the whole is more than the sum of the parts. The context design, and function of all our energy systems obey this law of self-regulation and self-renewal. Anticipated by the multi-media congruence with the holistic message, comprehensive simultaneity is the model of our renewing present and "presence." It is the art form and moral and religious profile for the future.

3) **Entropic Reversal** - turning around the drift toward running down, chaos, and entropy of systems. The wisdom of T. H. Huxley, grandfather of Aldus and Julian, which postulated that with the coming of the human mind, natural systems, bent on running down could be renewed and redirected, is just finding its own. The limits of growth assigned to all natural systems is counterpointed by the law of human creativity, no limits of growth.

4) **Quantum Leap** - from the Latin "how much," characterizes behavior of the irreducibly small where transformation takes place not normally causal, conventional, or controllable, but none the less, transformational. Quantum events have properties linking otherwise incommensurables, connections we cannot see and find difficult even to think. Long standing anomalies, mind/body, spirit/matter, wave/particle, nowhere/everywhere, emerge as somehow connected but not in conventional space, time, or consciousness. This inner transformation seems at work in the reconstruction of our understanding of power, governance, loyalty, and knowledge itself.

Such quantum leaps may provide new and fresh insight into causal connections we seek in medicine, AIDS and cancer, where yes becomes no, and no becomes yes, and immunity and growth are reversed. There will be other connections between consent, control, and power in governance, and liberation of

energy through release not compression in new technologies. Brain mapping and computer tracking will help trace quantum leaps that elude our best technology and minds.

Finally, the millennium is coming with surfers on the crest of its wave where computers and communications, the academy and business perform. We can also already see the prelude to their performance. They will be:

- 1) Pacific-directed
- 2) People-oriented
- 3) Ideologically pluralistic
- 4) Committed to competence
- 5) Domesticating the military
- 6) Substituting the science of value for the value of science; and
- 7) Full of surprises

Expect dialogue with the dolphins, encounter with other forms of intelligence, miniaturization of power, new modes of learning, instantaneous extra-sensory perception and conception, and fresh exploration of our three major frontiers of the 21st century, space, the seas, and the self.

May they be as safe as they will be exciting. And may we be tending butterflies and not patching broken cocoons. That could be the most important fuzzie of all, the soft touch of tomorrow breaking through the tired, hardened structures of today. You leaders tend that future. No task is more urgent or consequential. I salute you and the Third Millennium, now.