

## Chapter 14

# Envisioning Thoroughgoing Social Transformation

In the remainder of this book I am going to work in more detail on envisioning a thoroughgoing transformation of planet-wide human society. In this chapter I am going to conclude Part Three with a description of the methodology I will be using in Parts Four, Five, and Six. In Part Seven I am going to concentrate on viable strategies for realizing the vision elaborated in the rest of the book.

It may be that my contribution to methodologies for thinking about these matters is more important than the specific items of vision that I describe. Three basic disciplines of thought comprise the methodologies that I am recommending: (1) careful sifting of the scientific and historical factual data, (2) interpreting that data through the lens of an intuitive process that is rooted in Human Essence – that is, in Spirit, and (3) recognizing that all social projects must, in the final analysis, be matters of consensus made by the groups of people who are going to actually deconstruct the old society and construct the new.

### Sifting the Factual Data

The methodologies I am using and recommending are in the first instance empirical. I want the facts. I don't want the facts that fit into someone's pet theory. I want the facts that don't fit into anyone's theory. I want to be provoked by facts that don't yet make any sense whatsoever. I want to be open to incoming reality whatever it is. I want to investigate puzzling arenas not in order to justify some pet belief I already have but to see something I have never seen before or to see something more clearly. Searching for facts will, of course, be guided by questions and interests and theories that need to be tested. But those sorts of research biases are very different from those of the pseudo scientists who begin with the ideological answers they are seeking to "prove." Good science is foundational for a Spirit-based ethics.

### Doing Spirit-Based Interpretation

Nevertheless, the facts alone are open to many interpretations. Instead of making those interpretations in terms of old traditions of the past or obscure ideals for the future, I want to ask Human Essence to respond. Human Essence, which resides in every person's inner being, is a trustworthy guide because that Essence is Trust, Compassion, and Freedom. The Trust of all being and the Compassionate affirmation of all being means an openness to Reality. It means a willingness to see the depth of the matter, however pleasant or painful, however hopeful or horrific. And Human Essence is the Freedom to do something about whatever the truth may be. Freedom enables us to be open rather than blinded by our laziness, lethargy, and false images of impossibility. Such Freedom is expressed in the repeating line from an old civil-rights sermon, "Love will find a way."

Vision creation means finding a way for society to function that genuinely resolves the entire scope of whatever problem is appearing. The person doing this kind of thinking can find guidance from his or her own emotions. When a truly good answer to a truly horrific issue comes into view, the body is able to experience the horrific nature of the problem, the relief from these horrific feelings, the joy of seeing a way out, and perhaps also the scalding call to take steps in new directions. Those are different feelings than one has when one is sweeping the seriousness of a matter under the rug and thereby getting off the hook of having to make any sort of new and disturbing response. Essence or Spirit does guide us. This guidance is subtle but not magical. It is as real and down to Earth and as obvious as the empirical facts.

## Enabling a Consensus-Building Process

But even when the relevant facts have been sifted and the depth of Spirit consulted, the specifics of a social direction still have to be determined by human decision. And this decision is not merely my decision or someone else's decision, it is the decision of the group of people who are experiencing the problem and who are ready to do something about it. So good ethical thinking, discussion, and writing needs to understand its work as enabling group decisions to be made.

In the final analysis, our vision for the future of human social life on this planet is arbitrary, arbitrary in the sense that human beings must make the decision without any past, present, or future authority delineating what is to be done. Groups of human beings have to consense on what is to be done. Such consensus is forged in the light of all the facts and all the guidance from our Human Essence, yet consensus itself must resolve what needs to be resolved to have a definite course of action.

In other words, there is no "God" to tell us which way to go. To put this in mythological language, the God of History is waiting on groups of people to decide what the next set of historical directions shall be. So if we could ask God how the future is going to be, God would say, "I don't know how you people are going to decide. I gave you Freedom and now you get to exercise it."

The ethicist can set before the group of deciders options and their likely consequences, but the group takes the risk and has no cause to blame any god or any human but themselves. The ethicist can believe strongly about the best course of action, as did one of the prophets of the Old Testament who said, "Behold, I set before you life and death, so choose life and live." But even in such cases, after the group chooses life instead of death, it discovers many new choices to be made. And when you ask the prophet, "OK, what now?" the prophet may have to answer, "I don't know." The group has to decide and keep deciding. Consensus building is an ongoing process. We are liberated to be in this ongoing consensus-building process by the knowledge that we don't need to know or find the "right" answers, we only need to be willing to take common ethical risks into the unknown future.

Such seemingly arbitrary decision making does not mean that we are the final authority, that anything we do is right. No, we are finite creatures who can be very wrong in our choices. And we can learn through the consequences of our deeds just how wrong we have been. At such times we can simply admit our mistakes and take different directions. To embrace our freedom and make risky decisions – this is always right. This we must do, and this we can do without succumbing to the doubt that we were supposed to have an authority telling us our direction.

So as I proceed through the rest of this book detailing my vision of the future, I am aware that after consulting the facts and my inner lights, I am simply pulling together a consensus proposal for groups of people to consider, improve, and then "risk" in their actual living to carry it out. I am already part of a consensus process, for I have been reading and conversing with many other members of my society. I am pulling together conversations that are already going on in the lives of many of us. I am continuing those conversations.