

The Road From Empire to Eco-Democracy

An examination of:
**Social Awakening
History-Long Vision
Societal Basics
& Overall Strategies
of Transformation**

As viewed by five United States citizens in 2011

Gene Marshall
chairperson

with task force members
**Ben Ball, Marsha Buck,
Ken Kreutziger, and Alan Richard.**

Table of Contents

Foreword: Land of Mystery and the Social World

Introduction: Toward a Unified Progressive Vision

Part One: Ten Wake-up Calls for Civilized Sleepers

1. The Primacy of the Ecological Crisis
2. The Undermining of Democracy
3. The End of the Fossil-Fuel Economy
4. The Population Plight
5. The Continuing Drag of Patriarchy
6. The Enduring Curse of Racism
7. The Death Throes of Theocracy
8. The Obsolescence of War
9. The Tyranny of Money
10. The Horror of Poverty

Part Two: Taking the Long View

11. The Dawn and Demise of Civilization
12. Living in a Transitional Period
13. Democracy as an Unfinished Revolution
14. Ecology, Democracy, Free Markets, and Socialism
15. Facts, Authenticity, and Workability
16. A New Spectrum of Political Positions

Part Three: Seeing Society Whole

17. Economic Processes
18. Political Processes
19. Cultural Processes
20. The Rebalancing of Society

Part Four: EcoDemocracy: How Do We Get There from Here?

21. The Plausibility of Radical Change
22. The Forces of Transformation
23. The Role and Limitations of Electoral Politics
24. The Never-Ending Task of Citizen Education
25. The Need for Nonviolent Noncooperation
26. The Strategic Importance of Local Empowerment
27. The Reshaping of Global Institutions
28. Step-by-Step Strategy
29. The Ever-Unfolding Vision, Strategy, and Action.

Afterword: The Challenge to Each of Us

Foreword

Land of Mystery and the Social World

We live in a Land of Mystery.
We know nothing about it.
We don't know where we have come from.
We don't know where we are going.
We don't know where we are.
We are newborn babes.
We have never been here before.
We have never seen this before.
We will never see it again.
This moment is fresh,
Unexpected,
Surprising.
As this moment moves into the past,
It cannot be fully remembered.
All memory is a creation of our minds.
And our minds cannot fathom the Land of Mystery,
much less remember it.
We experience Mystery Now
And only Now.
Any previous Now is gone forever.
Any yet-to-be Now is not yet born.
We live Now,
only Now,
in a Land of Mystery.

The social world that you think is the world you live in is just a world in your mind.

We actually live in the Land of Mystery. We project our views of the natural world and of the social world onto this screen of sheer Mystery. Our views of the natural world have been constructed with our scientific knowledge, our revolts against scientific knowledge, and our superstitions. Our views of the social world have also been constructed with our scientific knowledge, our revolts against scientific knowledge, and our superstitions. Our views of nature and society may not be totally out of sync with Mysterious Reality, but they are definitely incomplete. We live in a Land of Mystery.

Here are some of the popular views of the social world:

* Some of us comfort ourselves with the view that the social world we call "civilization" is basically good and will only get better. Progress may have bumps in the road, but there is a road and that road leads to a better place.

* Others of us comfort ourselves with the view that the social world we call "civilization" is basically a corrupt and obsolete social form whose collapse is imminent. Repairs can be made on this old social vehicle, but they are useless. They are repairs on a vehicle that is headed inevitably for the cliffs of doom.

* Some of those who hold this latter view of civilization also hold the view that some of us can build for ourselves a stronghold of community, grow our own food, simplify our lives, collect guns and ammunition to defend ourselves from the thieves, and hold out through the inevitable collapse that is coming.

* Others of those who hold the view of imminent collapse also hold the view that something urgently needs to be done to salvage a bit of viable future for some of us: (1) kill off the rich people and redistribute their wealth, (2) kill off the liberals and join the rich in their well-built fortresses.

* Still others of those who hold the view of imminent collapse also hold the view that the communal strongholds as well as the fortresses of the wealthy will be torn to shreds by the overall collapse. Killing off the rich is nothing more than making ourselves bloody-handed accelerators of the collapse; no equitable distribution will be possible under the conditions of general collapse. So, eat, drink, travel, play, and copulate as long as possible as we ride this doomed train to the end of its line.

With this book we are suggesting a different view, a temporal and ever emerging view. First of all, we employ our scientific genius to investigate matters beyond all our superstitions, unconscious desires, and futile hatreds. As best we can, we learn what is so and what is not so, factually speaking. We also inquire into our inner being, our inherent enigma of human consciousness. Are we hopeless, evil, selfish, obsessive, desperate animals that cannot be counted upon to save our own species? Or are we essentially free, creative, compassionate, hope-building, task-constructing, persist-working heroes of our own lives? Let us then put together the truth we discover in these investigations to form a workable prospect for the future that is beyond our superstitions and our preference for over-glad illusion or for bitter hopelessness.

Perhaps we can put together a workable, plausible, achievable future beyond continuing the social mode we call "civilization" and also beyond a surrender to species extinction. Perhaps we can find detachment from civilization and from civilization's passing. Perhaps we can enter wholeheartedly into the Land of Mystery in which we actually live and give up all the worlds that our restless, security-hungry minds create.

In this space of peaceful detachment what do we see? What engagements appear that are worth our time, that give us specific hope for the survival of our species? Yes, in the Land of Mystery we know that the survival of our species is not certain. We also know that our freedom and our creativity can make a difference in the outcomes of the flow of time. We also know that we can access the compassion to work industriously and persistently for the survival of a planet that is fit for humanity and a humanity that is fit for the planet. Even if we fail to realize such an inclusive and benevolent vision, it seems the happier scenario to plunge off the cliff of doom having fully tried rather than to simply give in to the countercurrent of disintegration.

If we do not forge such a vision and discipline our minds to live in it, then our minds will live elsewhere and this will indeed make our doom inevitable. Humanity faces its greatest test. Will we access our true humanity and sweep away all the illusions of civilization and all the illusions of tribal life, and yet learn what we can from 6,000 years of civilization and 100,000 years of tribal life? Will we put together what is workable tradition and leave behind what is obsolete and corrupt? Will we learn in the process what is eternally true – that even our new vision will one day become obsolete and corrupt? For we do not live in the visions of our minds only, we live in a Land of Mystery that our minds can never fully know. All our projects of knowing are temporal fabrics that pass away. All the societies that we may build are but bamboo bridges spanning an Infinite Abyss. We live in a Land of Mystery and that Land is not going away.