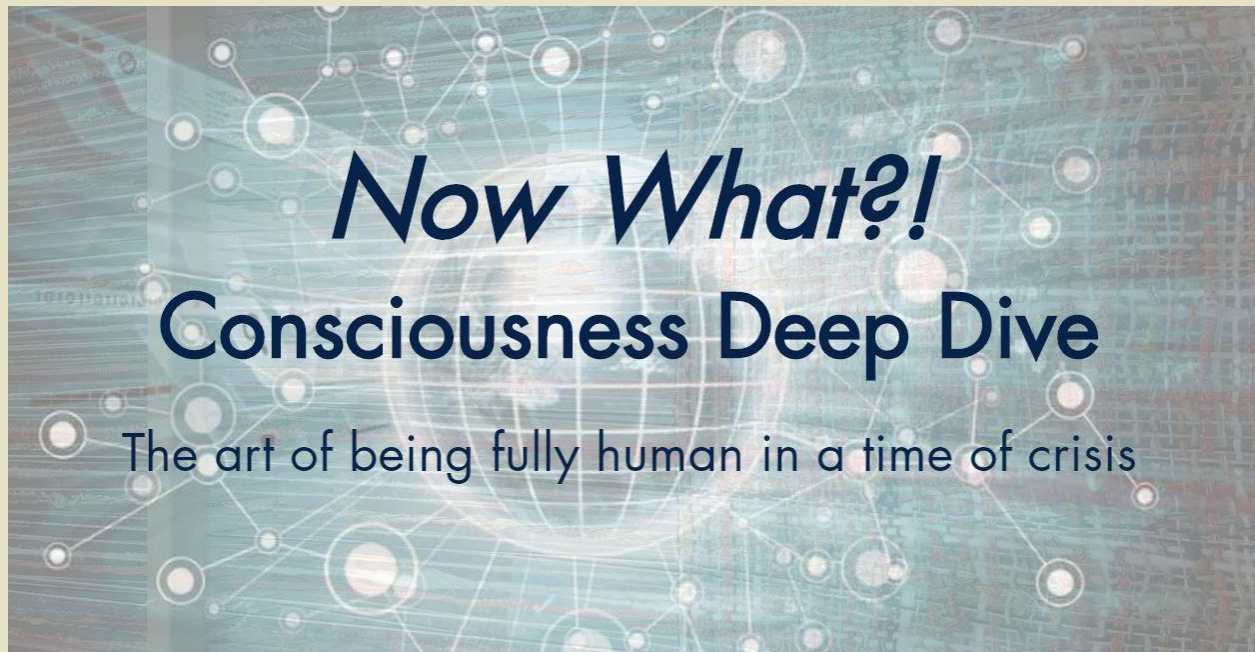




Mini Learning Journey -- Ben Roberts

July 16, 2019

What key elements might make the next *Now What?!* invitation deeply compelling?

Having asked the question above, I went on a journey through the [Consciousness Deep Dive harvest materials](#) as well as some additional resources that I had been looking at during this time and some others that these resources prompted me to seek out, as if following breadcrumbs in the forest...

I have documented the steps on the Journey below. As an expression of meaning based on that, I offer the following:

Possible language for the Oct-Nov 2019 *Now What?!* invitation

- **Join fellow sense-makers, and wisdom seekers on a life-affirming journey** navigating the complexity of the interrelated crises facing humanity in this time of the Great Unraveling/Great Turning
- **Engage in a collective process of sensing, meaning-making, and action**, via a set of Deep Dive inquiries made up of multiple small group conversations, paired with a “pop-up gift economy” to collaboratively generate a nourishing flow of resources to support future inquiries, emerging projects, and the individuals bringing them forth.
- **[Start close in](#), here and now, to deepen existing relationships and weave new ones**, sharing our joys, fears, and sorrows as we dance our way into an uncertain and

troubling future, grounded in a collective understanding and experience of the love that binds us together with all creation.

- **Develop a guild that supports multiple iterations of these engagements**, bringing deep inquiry and the quality of aliveness to our communities, networks, organizations, alliances, etc., tending and weaving across them all as if they are part of a single ecosystem working towards change and transformation.
 - **Go deep together into the well of consciousness, love, and grief**, finding there the blessings, wisdom, strength, and resources we need to move forward in community, based on freedom, shared power, and the understanding that, as Dr. King preached, “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”
-

Jewels

Safe spaces (that keep us in our power - able to use our talents and to learn) and brave spaces (where we speak our truth).

What can we do here and now, with the people “next to us?” These might be our physical neighbors, or members of groups to which we feel a sense of belonging and a call to stewardship.

While it wasn't necessarily a surprise, it was heartening to realize that everyone present agreed that climate change and the precarious condition of our natural ecosystems are only one manifestation of a much larger structural problem that also includes battles over immigration, gender inequality, capitalist exploitation (of both the labor class and natural resources), 'othering' of all sorts of different kinds and many other important issues of diversity and lack of equal opportunity.

World Cafe Tribe #2



Tom Atlee (4:00-5:00): *"what would have to happen for collective living into crisis as a life-affirming journey?"* It's one thing to live through it yourself, but what does it mean to do it collectively (group, community, country, the world, etc.)?



David Isaacs (5:20): "I believe that there is infinite consciousness and wisdom in the universe, and energy that supports it. I deeply know that I cannot touch it alone. I believe in the Course in Miracles that the biggest problem we have is the mistaken belief that we are separate. And so if I (and we) believe that the wisdom is already present, that spirit *knows*, and that the only way to tap into that consciousness is together and that the end of separation is connection, is relationship... Connection to what? Relationship to what? And given the context in which we live, how may we learn to influence the emergence of that collective consciousness? It's a

prayer, without knowing how, and I'm very appreciative to you Ben for bringing us all together again and, as George Por would say, making us all at risk of learning together."

Ben (8-11:00):

- Dismantling supremacist culture-->collective liberation. Tema Okun's list as an eye-opener (link below).
- Finding joy in strengthening relationships as THE MAIN POINT of a gathering

WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE & SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Heather (13:15): experience in a coma of being a drop in/and the ocean of vast protective goodness of *all of it* (despite the appearance of things), if I allow myself to keep turning and turning--it's the journey, not the destination. How do we care for one another?

'Tis the gift to be simple
'Tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down
Where we ought to be
And when we find ourselves
In the place just right
'Twill be in the valley
Of love and delight

When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend
We shall not be ashamed
To turn, turn
Will be our delight
'Till by turning, turning
We come round right

ELC #1



Michael Sillion:

- We need different kinds of “future navigators” so we can collectively understand how to navigate a complex society
 - Sense-makers
 - Wisdom seekers
- Ashoka: “weaving the network society”
 - <https://weaving.changemakers.com/>
 - “Vibrant communities and effective teams of change leaders together can precipitate long-term ecosystemic change for the greater good. How can this be achieved? Through weavers.”

“A weaver cultivates these relationships by nurturing what exists, and by developing and enhancing what needs to exist. Through the Changemakers Academy, weavers of diverse backgrounds across all sectors will be equipped with the necessary tools and skills needed to effect enduring ecosystemic change.”

“The Changemakers Academy helps weavers weave learning ecosystems for a better world. The focus is on deepening and broadening weavers’ skills and mindsets - and accelerating and amplifying the impact of their projects. The journey is rigorous, challenging and exuberant - involving co-creation, peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing, coaching and inputs from multidisciplinary experts. The Academy serves as a resourceful community where weavers lead ecosystemic projects aimed at empowering young people, to increase the impact of weavers’ projects collaboratively, and to specialise in advancing the discipline of weaving globally. “

- [Daniel Christian Wahl: What does it mean to be a ‘Weaver’?](#)

- Reflections on the Ashoka 'Global Change Leaders' gathering to promote transformative innovation in education
 - "A weaver is someone who knows how to bridge between the different silos and sectors of society. S/he has mastered the art of connecting people and organizations who were previously unconnected and often even unaware of each others role along the complex value chain of education. This value chain is much more like a deeply interconnected ecosystem than a linear chain from kindergarten to schools, apprenticeships, universities or occupational training facilities and onto employment or entrepreneurship."
- **Use libraries as hubs where we can connect and learn together how to navigate a complex society as a private person, company, or organization (similar to the way there are support structures for businesses)**

Closing Round #2



Heather Tischbein:

- On my fridge, I have a quote: "There is no way to happiness. Happiness *is* the way." That's been a concept for me, and now I'm actually starting to get that through these calls.



Rob de Laet (7:00):

- Ben, it was wonderful to see you dancing!
- I'm very grateful to be here with you all.
- Our task is to empty the lake of suffering with our hearts, so that the pain that is there does not manifest itself in the real world.



David Whyte ✓

May 8, 2017 · 🌐



THE WELL OF GRIEF

Those who will not slip beneath
the still surface on the well of grief,
turning down through its black water
to the place we cannot breathe,
will never know the source from which we drink,
the secret water, cold and clear,
nor find in the darkness glimmering,
the small round coins,
thrown by those who wished for something else.

.....

The Well of Grief
River Flow
New & Selected Poems
Many Rivers Press © David Whyte

Mountain Tarn,
Photo © David Whyte
Martcrag Moor,
Cumbria July 2011



"Shed A Little Light"

Let us turn our thoughts today to Martin Luther King

and recognize that there are ties between us, all men and women living on the Earth.
Ties of hope and love, sister and brotherhood, that we are bound together
in our desire to see the world become a place in which our children can grow free and
strong.
We are bound together by the task that stands before us and the road that lies ahead.
We are bound and we are bound.

There is a feeling like the clenching of a fist
There is a hunger in the center of the chest
There is a passage through the darkness and the mist
And though the body sleeps the heart will never rest

Shed a little light, oh Lord, so that we can see, just a little light, oh Lord.
Wanna stand it on up, stand it on up, oh Lord,
wanna walk it on down, shed a little light, oh Lord.

Can't get no light from the dollar bill, don't give me no light from a TV screen.
When I open my eyes I wanna drink my fill from the well on the hill,
do you know what I mean?

Shed a little light, oh Lord, so that we can see, just a little light, oh Lord.
Wanna stand it on up, stand it on up, oh Lord,
wanna walk it on down, shed a little light, oh Lord.

There is a feeling like the clenching of a fist, there is a hunger in the center of the chest.
There is a passage through the darkness and the mist
and though the body sleeps the heart will never rest.

Oh, Let us turn our thoughts today to Martin Luther King
and recognize that there are ties between us.
All men and women living on the Earth, ties of hope and love, sister and brotherhood.

*Heather earlier today quoting King on the arc of the moral Universe, and questioning our
collective conviction of the truth of that...*

King on the single garment of destiny, from his [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)

I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by
in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere
is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,
tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.
Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea.
Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider...

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will
eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within
has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded him that
he can gain it. Consciously and unconsciously, he has been swept in by what the
Germans call the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and
yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of
cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice... If his repressed emotions do

not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history. So I have not said to my people, "Get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled through the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. Now this approach is being dismissed as extremist.

I must admit that I was initially disappointed in being so categorized. But as I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love? -- "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice? -- "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ? -- "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist? -- "Here I stand; I can do no other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist? -- "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a mockery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist? -- "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist? -- "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate, or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?...

I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do with," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and the secular.

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period that the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was the thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Wherever the early Christians entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven" and had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number but big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contest.

Things are different now. The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I meet young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

Consciousness -- the final frontier

[Dada Gunamuktananda | TEDxNoosa 2014](#)



“What if mind, matter, and space were all full of consciousness? What if the possibility of consciousness as a higher reality were every bit as real as our current constructs of reality? And what if it could give us (if only we were open to it) some very real advantages in understanding our world and where we fit into it, compared to some very serious disadvantages of materialist worldview?”

“But modern science is just now coming around to the conclusions held by yogic science for millennia, to an explanation of our Universe that is going to take our understanding to a whole new level, and that is that both the substance and the intention of the Universe come from a deeper reality than the material one we normally perceive with our minds and senses. And that reality is consciousness, an all-pervading blissful awareness inherent in everybody and everything.”

Jem Bendell, [Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy](#)

A fourth insight is that “hopelessness” and its related emotions of dismay and despair are understandably feared but wrongly assumed to be entirely negative and to be avoided whatever the situation. Alex Steffen warned that “Despair is never helpful” (2017). However, the range of ancient wisdom traditions see a significant place for hopelessness and despair. Contemporary reflections on people’s emotional and even spiritual growth as a result of their hopelessness and despair align with these ancient ideas. The loss of a capability, a loved one or a way of life, or the receipt of a terminal diagnosis have all been reported, or personally experienced, as a trigger for a new way of perceiving self and world, with hopelessness and despair being a necessary step in the process (Matousek, 2008). In such contexts “hope” is not a good thing to maintain, as it depends on what one is hoping for. When the debate raged about the value of the New York Magazine article, some commentators picked up on this theme. “In abandoning hope that one way of life will continue, we open up a space for alternative hopes,” wrote Tommy Lynch (2017).

This question of valid and useful hope is something that we must explore much further. Leadership theorist Jonathan Gosling has raised the question of whether we need a more “radical hope” in the context of climate change and a growing sense of “things falling apart” (Gosling, 2016). He invites us to explore what we could learn from other cultures that have faced catastrophe. Examining the way Native American Indians coped with being moved on to reservations, Lear (2008) looked at what he calls the “blind spot” of any culture: the inability to conceive of its own destruction and possible extinction. He explored the role of forms of hope that involved neither denial or blind optimism. “What makes this hope radical, is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is” (ibid). He explains how some of the Native American chiefs had a form of “imaginative excellence” by trying to imagine what ethical values would be needed in their new lifestyle on the reservation. He suggests that besides the standard alternatives of freedom or death (in service of one’s culture) there is another way, less grand yet demanding just as much courage: the way of “creative adaptation.” This form of creatively constructed hope may be relevant to our Western civilisation as we confront disruptive climate change (Gosling and Case, 2013).

Such deliberations are few and far between in either the fields of environmental studies or management studies. It is to help break this semi-censorship of our own community of inquiry on sustainability that motivated me to write this article. Some scholarship has looked at the process of denial more closely. Drawing on sociologist Stanley Cohen, Foster (2015) identifies two subtle forms of denial – interpretative and implicative. If we accept certain facts but interpret them in a way that makes them “safer” to our personal psychology, it is a form of “interpretative denial”. If we recognise the troubling implications of these facts but respond by busying ourselves on activities that do not arise from a full assessment of the situation, then that is “implicative denial”. Foster

argues that implicative denial is rife within the environmental movement, from dipping into a local Transition Towns initiative, signing online petitions, or renouncing flying, there are endless ways for people to be “doing something” without seriously confronting the reality of climate change...

In pursuit of a conceptual map of “deep adaptation,” we can conceive of resilience of human societies as the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances so as to survive with valued norms and behaviours. Given that analysts are concluding that a social collapse is inevitable, the question becomes: What are the valued norms and behaviours that human societies will wish to maintain as they seek to survive? That highlights how deep adaptation will involve more than “resilience.” It brings us to a second area of this agenda, which I have named “relinquishment.” It involves people and communities letting go of certain assets, behaviours and beliefs where retaining them could make matters worse. Examples include withdrawing from coastlines, shutting down vulnerable industrial facilities, or giving up expectations for certain types of consumption. The third area can be called “restoration.” It involves people and communities rediscovering attitudes and approaches to life and organisation that our hydrocarbon-fuelled civilisation eroded. Examples include re-wilding landscapes, so they provide more ecological benefits and require less management, changing diets back to match the seasons, rediscovering non-electronically powered forms of play, and increased community-level productivity and support.

It is not my intention in this paper to map out more specific implications of a deep adaptation agenda. Indeed, it is impossible to do so, and to attempt it would assume we are in a situation for calculated attempts at management, when what we face is a complex predicament beyond our control. Rather, I hope the deep adaptation agenda of resilience, relinquishment and restoration can be a useful framework for community dialogue in the face of climate change. **Resilience asks us “how do we keep what we really want to keep?” Relinquishment asks us “what do we need to let go of in order to not make matters worse?” Restoration asks us “what can we bring back to help us with the coming difficulties and tragedies?”** In 2017, this deep adaptation agenda was used to frame a festival of alternatives organised by Peterborough Environment City Trust. It included a whole day devoted to exploring what relinquishment could involve. As such, it allowed more open conversation and imagination than a narrower focus on resilience. Further events are planned across the UK. Whether it will be useful framing for a broader-level policy agenda is yet to be seen.

What are “[our favorite things](#)?” The ones we want to make sure we carry with us and preserve, in the face of collapse?

[Emerge Podcast w/Jordan Greenhall](#)

During the time of this Journey, my colleague Madeleine Charney mentioned that she was loving the Emerge podcast, so I checked it out during a long drive to a meeting. One of the episodes I picked was with Jordan Greenhall, who I encountered on Medium and then Facebook, after Trump’s election. I have found him to be a brilliant and provocative voice—one that has challenged my own sense of identity as a “progressive.”

In this podcast however, Greenhall is not talking politics. Rather, he presents a framework for the notion of “sovereignty” that can be applied both to individuals and to groups. I was quite struck by the way this framework maps onto the elements of the *Now What?!* engagement, and took this as a confirmation of the path I am on with the next iteration. Here’s the really short version: sovereignty as Greenhall frames it requires three elements, and they need to be kept in balance:

1. Sensing, which might look like collecting data and also like “tuning in” through meditation and deep reflection.”
2. Sense and meaning-making, which involves opinions about what is true, and about what that implies regarding “agency” (i.e. the scope of action we might contemplate and the choices we might make within that range).
3. Agency, i.e. making choices, taking action, etc.

The Deep Dive dialogue process covers both #1 and #2, and the “mini learning journey” process takes #2 to an even deeper level. The pop-up gift economy, in which a pool of resources is collected and collaboratively distributed, is a form of #3.