

DUMBO FEATHER

Conversations with extraordinary people

Leadership for a hopeful future

Jane Hardwicke Collings Eliane Ubalijoro Nate Hagens Joan Scheckel Orland Bishop



Exit Mentor (Pádraig Ó Tuama)

I'm a failure of a mentor, but I do love my friend.
He said he had to take a trip — one year, two —
and asked me to stay behind to guide his son. I said I'd do

the best I could. As the boy grew, he'd turn to me for help.
I'd give advice. By night, I'd pray to all the gods
that at least some of it was right. Fighting brewed.

Sometimes I heard myself say things to the boy I didn't know
I knew. I'd see something on his face while I spoke
and I'd wonder what he was listening to. Or who.

One decade stretched to two. Things grew worse at home.
When we finally found the father, they each knew the other.
Then they set about revenge — pursuing every threat.

I think I did the best a friend could do, I helped sometimes,
I failed too. I look at my reflection and wonder who is
speaking.

Mentor, My Love (David Laverly)

I don't recall when you arrived.
Unusual, I suppose, for a goddess
of war — I would have bet on
trumpets and fanfare, but

there was none of that,
just an olive tree and a note.
You offered an invitation. For once,
there was no strategy.

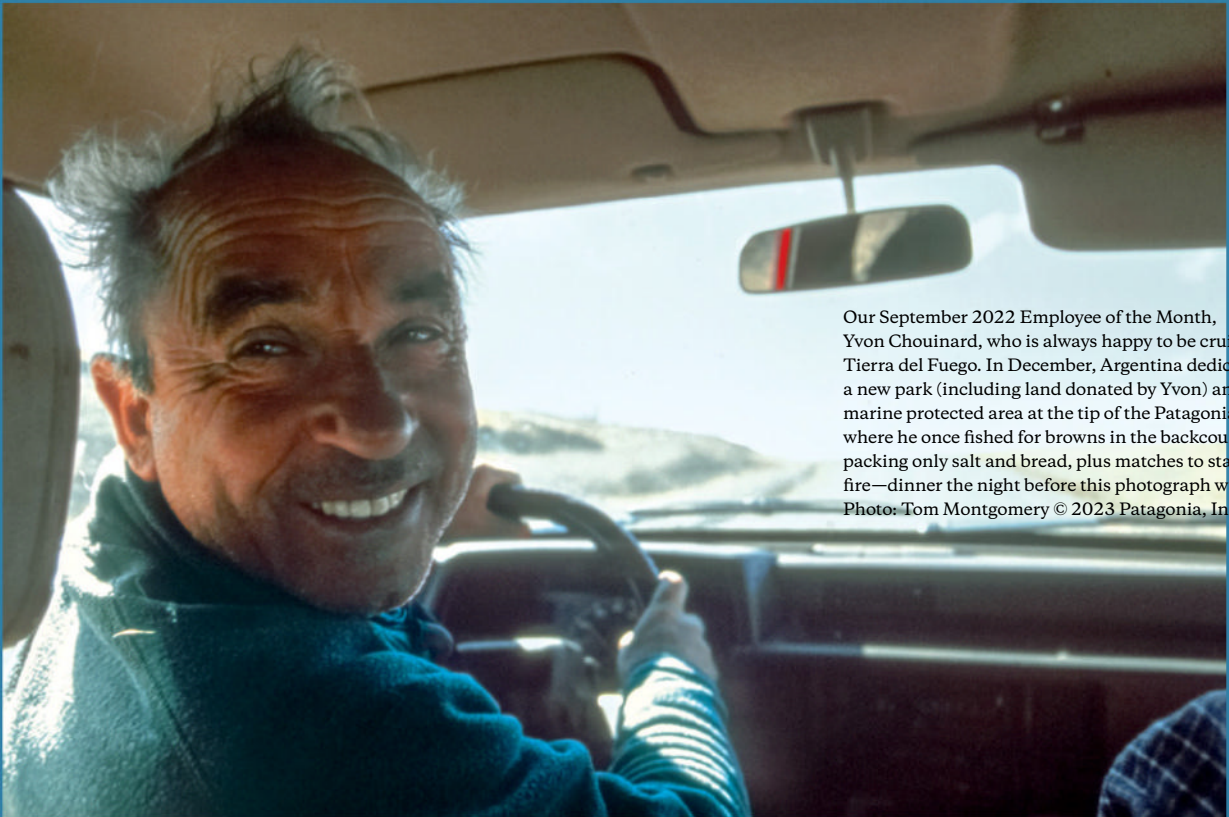
Instead, possibilities — fields
and fields and fields
washed in Adriatic sunlight.
And over there,

a shimmer of you — bow raised
and drawn.

In *The Odyssey*, the character Mentor was asked to look after a boy while the boy's father went to war. The father was away for almost 20 years. Mentor and the boy — now a young man — went to find him. Athena, the goddess of war, would sometimes disguise herself as Mentor to guide the son.

David Laverly is a poet from Canada. Pádraig Ó Tuama is a poet from Ireland. They share friendship, and time, as well an interest in both mythology and power.

What's



Our September 2022 Employee of the Month, Yvon Chouinard, who is always happy to be cruising Tierra del Fuego. In December, Argentina dedicated a new park (including land donated by Yvon) and a marine protected area at the tip of the Patagonia cone, where he once fished for browns in the backcountry, packing only salt and bread, plus matches to start a cook fire—dinner the night before this photograph was taken. Photo: Tom Montgomery © 2023 Patagonia, Inc.

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It's time to ditch growth
for growth's sake.

Let's make things that last
longer. And do more with what
we already have.

Let's find joy in protecting
the land and waters that have
always nurtured us.

And revel in their beauty,
open spaces, magic.

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communities in harm's way,
and save this wondrous, resilient
planet, our only home.

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Next is saving our
home planet.

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And so it's goodbye to all that.

I have absolutely loved every brief and shining moment of editing Dumbo Feather these past 12 months. My connection with the magazine began in 2015, when, adoring the content, I offered my services as a proof reader. I wanted to honour the magazine by eradicating every typo; now as editor I understand what a challenge that can be! Moving into our collective, collaborative future, Dumbo Feather will be honoured as an artefact of connection that will never be less than what it has been, because it isn't printed a few times a year. As a nature lover, the silver lining is to keep more trees in the ground. But I adore holding the magazine, what it represents and the lives it has touched. Thank you to our community for your messages of love and inspiration. Like you, I will feel its absence immensely.

This final issue of Dumbo Feather explores the theme of leadership for a hopeful future. In the following pages, we examine what makes a leader, how they lead and from where we might draw our inspiration for guidance along our own paths. Because in order to live right into the future that's unfolding, we need new ideas about, and expressions of, leadership. Nobody has all the answers so maybe we can practice the lost art of deep listening as a starting point. In theory I'm up for all of it and in practice, some days are better than others.

Our work at Small Giants continues in the form of the Small Giants Academy. If you want to gather more practical and philosophical knowledge and spend more of your time with like-minded souls invested in shaping our world for the better, head over to our website (www.smallgiants.com.au) to learn more about how we can work together. The unique storytelling that Dumbo Feather offers the world will continue on our podcast. We will reach out to our community in the coming months with more information about it. We will also continue to share hopeful stories online.

My hope is that, in the pages of this final print issue of Dumbo Feather, you will identify a version of leadership that speaks to you and reflects how you might lead in your world. But also, to allow the space to reflect on how we might simply do the work of engaged citizens: to deepen loving ties within our communities, remove the ego and pile on every effort towards the greater good. A good society is what the world needs now. It is what Small Giants – Dumbo Feather's parent company – is committed to, and that is a vision of the future that I can commit my life to. I hope to join you there.

With love, and hope, and a life-affirming touch of sorrow,

Kirsty

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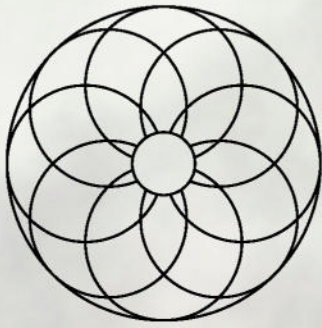


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AGAINST THE GRAIN: UNEARTHING BUSINESS WISDOM IN THE WORLD OF PUNK ROCK

For aspiring leaders of the Next Economy, the anger, energy and DIY ethos of punk rock is a vital resource, writes Oliver Pelling.

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I was 14 when Bad Religion arrived in my life. I was gifted their 2002 album, *The Process of Belief*, by my cool aunt. The record, all breakneck drums and supersonic guitars, featured songs that dismantled materialism, consumerism, capitalism, corporations and corporate-interest politics.

One track, the frenzied *Kyoto Now!*, beamed the urgency of our climate predicament directly into my brain while I sat, headphones-on, hormones raging, in the backseat of my parents' car. Even now, 20 years on, the lyrics of *Kyoto Now!* cut to the quick: "The media-paraded, disjointed politics / Founded on petro-chemical plunder, and we're its hostages," vocalist Greg Graffin intoned during the intro. It was a lot. And it was the first time I'd encountered music with a message.

Bad Religion reconstructed my worldview brick-by-brick. Their lyrics shattered any ideas I had about how the world worked. Obsessed and terrified, I delved deeper into their back catalogue, studying lyric sheets as if I was learning a new language. In many ways, I was. "The business man whose master plan controls the world each day, is blind to indications of his species' slow decay," Graffin barked on *Suffer*, released in 1988, the year I was born. *Phewf*.

The punk bands I loved the most were angry, political and smart. I had no idea those three things could even co-exist. Like all teenagers, I was searching desperately for a belief system to cling on to and in punk rock, I'd found it. I got knocked over in mosh pits only to be pulled to my feet by perfect strangers. I put my arms around those same strangers and sang – badly – as loud as my lungs would last. I clambered on stages and howled encores with Irish punk bands from Boston. I shook hands with my idols as we stood side-by-side to watch the support act. All my friends came along for the ride, and together we found an exhilarating new way to move through the world.

Punk rejected authority, which was a pretty attractive concept for a bunch of shit-kicking 16-year-olds. But it wasn't just speaking truth to power, or chaos for the sake of it, it was a response to the systems that sought to control us. "Authority is supposedly grounded in wisdom, but I could see from a very early age that authority was only a system of control and it didn't have any inherent wisdom," said the late, great Joe Strummer, front-man of The Clash. "I quickly realised that you either became a power...or you were crushed."

The music of Bad Religion and others like them led me to the likes of Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky and Benjamin Zephaniah and Billy Bragg; establishment outsiders who communicated important social and political ideas simply (or beautifully, or both). But being from small-town England, I had no power of my own, no agency, and no model for how to act on any of this new information. My naïve assumption was that the adults – with all their cities, jobs, resources, money and influence – would figure it all out. (Newsflash! The adults are yet to figure it out!)

Despite having my worldview blown to smithereens by all these new ideas, I just went about my life, like so many of us do. I scraped into university, met a girl, moved to Australia, worked in retail, worked in bars and cafés, got a job, got another job, and so it went. All that ideology and rage and potential still in there somewhere, buried deep enough so as not to rock the boat.

But through the increasing chaos wrought by (and among other things) Trump, Morrison, Brexit and the climate crisis, those ideas, planted all those years prior, finally began to sprout.

Beyond the overhauling of my political consciousness, a few core tenets of the punk rock philosophy had apparently also wedged themselves into my psyche: the idea of questioning authority and making your own decisions, and the inherent value of authenticity, non-conformity and community. The whole punk subculture was born out of frustration at how inaccessible and bloated and commercialised and expensive music had become. Punk was making music accessible again, about getting to the heart of things, and about handing the microphone to anyone who had something to say. It was about creating viable alternatives from limited resources, strengthening your position from the ground-up and seeking ways to redistribute power when you got it.

Punk rejected authority, which was a pretty attractive concept for a bunch of shit-kicking 16-year-olds. But it wasn't just speaking truth to power, or chaos for the sake of it, it was a response to the systems that sought to control us.

Many of the bands I grew up listening to ignored interest from major labels in favour of setting up their own labels, putting out their own music, and supporting other artists – lest their art be compromised by corporate interests. These bands were small, savvy and successful independent businesses, that were responding to a problem they saw in the world. These bands became my blueprint.

By the time I founded my company at age 31, I was well-versed the B Corp movement, having worked with a bunch of them over the years.

That knowledge was critical, but my main source of energy and inspiration was the punk music I grew up listening to. The bands I loved and the books I read as a teenager became my business coaches. (I'll take Ian MacKaye over Gary Vee any day).

Our current crises of climate and energy and geopolitics and community and collective consciousness are fierce and far-reaching, and they demand a fierce and far-reaching response. I still listen to my punk records (on Spotify, obv) most mornings, and instead of feeling the dissonance I used to feel when I'd listen to the same records as I walked through the school gates, they fill me with optimism and ideas. They give me energy, and in many ways underpin every decision I make.

Perhaps more than anything else, the DIY mentality of punk is what's needed most now. We can't wait for permission to respond to the multiple crises before us. In business, how many millions of world-changing ideas never get made because someone, somewhere was waiting for the green light, for seed funding, for a promotion, for the board to sign off, or for the conditions to be just right? Perfection isn't the goal. The goal is progress towards a liveable future. And every failure, imperfection and setback help us move a little closer to it. We've precious little time to waste. "Play before you get good," said Joey Ramone, frontman of the Ramones and (until-now) undiscovered business guru. "Because by the time you get good, you're too old to play."

You know what else punk rock is? The most fun you've ever had. A few weeks back, someone told me that if we're going to stand a chance against the systems we seek to overturn, we're going to have to throw better parties than the other side. Consider this the case for making punk rock our soundtrack. ●

Oliver Pelling is a writer and editor, and the founder of Good&Proper, a purpose-driven content and communications agency based in Melbourne. He never had a mohawk. But he once, briefly, owned a pair of questionably skinny white jeans.



BRIDGES

It all started over a shared love of Liverpool F.C. Jordan O'Reilly, CEO of Hireup, met Scott Taylor when Scott began to use the platform: an app that connects people with disabilities looking for support with care workers who they can choose. Jordan and Scott share how they've forged a friendship – and blossoming working relationship – through good times and bad.

Written by Cherie Gilmour
Photography by Mikey Matthews



Jordan Hireup started for my sister Laura and me with our brother Shane. He had cerebral palsy and relied on support in all aspects of his life. Seeing the challenges that Shane faced in trying to find good, consistent support made us want to do something. We had this idea for a website or app that could connect someone like our brother with great support workers in the community. It was amazing how much need there was.

In 2016, when we were setting up Hireup, we'd get in these crappy cars and drive up and down the coast doing presentations. It was quite nerve-racking. I walked into this community hall one night, wondering if anyone was going to turn up. I came around the corner and saw the back of Scott's wheelchair, and there was a bag with a Liverpool F.C. logo on it. I love Liverpool, so I thought, *At least there'll be one friendly face in the audience; if he's a Liverpool fan, he must be a good bloke!* Scott had the biggest smile on his face as we did the pitch, and I remember his enthusiasm from the first minute. We chatted afterwards, and there was a bit of banter.

You've got to have some brave people—the first adopters who will take a shot—and that's what we needed in those days. Scott was one of those people who was so supportive and encouraging, like, "People need this; it's going to work". He jumped in and built his own team in Newcastle. We stayed in touch because we're both Liverpool fans, and then Scott moved to Sydney. He was one of the first people to really commit to it, throw himself in, and show us how Hireup would work.

People can often overlook that for someone with a disability, managing a support team is a complicated thing; they're complex relationships that can last for many months or even years. For Scott to manage an ongoing team speaks to the leadership qualities many people with disabilities have to develop to drive their lives forward.

Scott Taylor (left) and Jordan O'Reilly have grown a friendship through Jordan's business, Hireup. The autonomy that platform provides transformed Scott's participation in life.

There was a period when we started talking to various ministers in government about how it all works. It's all well and good for me to go in and try to explain it to them, but we needed someone who could more authentically explain why this is so important. I remember calling Scott and being like, "Mate, we've got to go to Canberra," and Scott didn't have a second of doubt. He delivered the most passionate, sincere explanation of how Hireup works to these important ministers and why it's so important. They were completely engrossed in his story.

In the last few months, Scott signed up with an agency that will give him more speaking and writing opportunities. He's getting out there, telling his story, and trying to spread the word. He's part of this movement of disabled people stepping forward into positions of leadership. There's an amplification of voices that are often left out, and I think Scotty is positioning himself to be a leader among them. He's such an articulate young man with a lived experience of disability who's pushed through the challenges that life has thrown up.

Scott has given so much to me as a friend and to Hireup. I have huge admiration for him. One day, we want to go to Liverpool and watch a game at Anfield Stadium. That's our long-term goal.

Scott My journey with Hireup goes back to when the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] first came to be. I was living a reclusive life in Newcastle and wasn't getting out much or doing a lot of socialising. In 2016, I received an email about this new company called Hireup, where I could find, hire, and manage my own support workers. There was an information session happening in a community centre not too far from home. I was at a really low point at the time and I didn't envision much happening in my life.

I went into this room where Jordan and a few of his colleagues were hosting the event. As I like to tell the story now, Jordan and the team did this incredible pitch that night, and I was hooked. They sold me the dream that is Hireup. It was a "Wow" moment for me: an organisation allowing me to have full choice and control over who supports me and who assists me in my day-to-day life.

By 2017, I'd built a consistent group of three or four workers I would see on a weekly basis. With the support of my team, I ended up applying for a role at the Apple store on George Street in Sydney, and by May of 2019, they offered me a job. So I moved to Sydney and began my role as a product specialist at Apple.

I really admire Jordan's work ethic; I've never been around anyone who lives, breathes, and works so hard the way he does at Hireup. He's always thinking about how we can continue to improve the lives of people with disabilities. I want to keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible for my life because this is what he does on a daily basis.

When the state government started introducing restrictions on people's movements and types of support that were necessary during COVID, I got on the phone to Jordy. He reassured me that no matter what situations came up, we would find a way around them, even if that meant he would come and support me himself. This not only highlights what an incredible leader he is, but also a true friend.

In October 2021, I started working at Hireup in the Industry Engagement Team. I strongly believe that the work I'm contributing is just a small portion of what the organisation and Jordan's friendship have given me. It's not just about shaping Hireup for the future and making it better: my role is also as a voice for the broader disability community as well. ●

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‘HELLO, HUMAN. THIS IS EARTH. WE’VE GOT THIS.’

I saw it as soon as I entered the lounge. It sauntered past the window – confident, elegant, present. I froze. It froze. The fox turned its head and we locked eyes. I remember feeling time stop. I remember the sensation of glass shattering. I remember hearing, “Hello, human. This is Earth. Nice of you to join us”.

By **Tahlia Norrish**

It was just after five a.m. on a crisp London morning in April 2020. Along with the rest of the world, the UK had recently implemented a lockdown (whatever that was) and the light of its capital was starting to dim more and more each day.

Like everyone everywhere, London’s residents were a cocktail of confusion and increasing panic. “It will all be okay, right?” was the question, demand, and plea that began permeating our every waking – and sleeping – hour.

My strategy for countering the uncertainty and fear was to continue business as usual. I epitomised “Keep calm and carry on”. I continued to rise at five a.m., I continued to expect bountiful creativity and productivity from my days, and continued to plan for an exciting future I believed – *needed* to believe – awaited us on the other side of this unreal blip.

Some days I was more successful at rallying myself than others. This particular morning was one of the others. I felt lost and untethered. Nonetheless, I proceeded through the motions of my morning routine: heading to the coffee table for some much-needed journal time before the fox snapped me out of my trance.

Over the coming months of that locked-down year, the fox and I re-enacted this encounter at least once every two weeks. I savoured every one. Not just because I was able to look into the eyes of a living being for a non-trivial amount of time (although this was ground-breaking in and of itself), but because what I saw in those eyes I wasn’t seeing anywhere else: confidence, elegance, presence. What I saw in those eyes was an affirmative answer to the question that we were collectively crying louder with every passing day.

I know I’m not the only one who found the resilience of Mother Nature incalculably fortifying during this time. While we all lost our minds, animals, plants, and organisms of every kind seemed to be saying, “Oh, this? This is nothing. We’ve got this.”

As a species, we’ve long placed ourselves at the head of the table of living things. No doubt a wise move in many ways, but it seems we’ve come to take this responsibility a little too seriously. We assume that *we* must have the answers, that we must make the calls, and that action is always the solution. We’ve adopted the persona of a micromanaging boss incapable of seeing the value in what those ‘below’ them have put forward.

Recognising that others have better solutions than we do can be challenging. Ten years ago, I committed myself to verbally acknowledging when others brought gold where I proffered bronze. Yet, a whole decade later, my ego still



“It’s not the strongest of a species
that survive, nor the most intelligent,
but the ones most resilient and
responsive to change”

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occasionally reverts to setting up battle stations and calling out the self-defence force. This is especially true when there’s even the slightest sense of superiority. No wonder it doesn’t even cross our minds to heed a seedling, an octopus, or an elephant.

The Latin root of resilience – *resilient* – means “leaping back”. And my goodness, has nature repeatedly invited us to five-star demonstrations. In lockdown, however, we had no excuse to decline. Those of us that showed up left inspired, hopeful, in awe. We left with a felt understanding of Charles Darwin’s observation: “It’s not the strongest of a species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most resilient and responsive to change”. We left thinking, “Hey, we might just make this!”. And make it, more or less, we did.

What does this mean for us going forward? How does this help us combat climate change, prevent future pandemics, or simply navigate ageing and sickness? To be honest, I don’t know exactly. I don’t believe the UN plans to welcome bamboo trees or bottlenose dolphins to meetings any time soon, but I *do* know there’s something there.

Nature operates with a more expansive view of time, so maybe it plans to win us over one by one. The fox in the suburbs of London did it for me, but it might be the succulent growing on a beach dune or the goat on your parents’ farm for you.

Fully appreciating the hypocrisy of now offering a suggestion, I’d encourage us all to find moments to observe Mother Nature. Watch it. Feel it. Hear it. If enough of us do, perhaps we’ll shift the configuration at the table of living things. Perhaps we’ll dispose of the table entirely and gather together in a circle on the ground instead. ●



DANCING ACROSS HORIZONS

Written by Kaj Löfgren

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We all know the dreamers. Those who love nothing more than to pause everything to ponder how the world could be different. They stretch our imaginations as they paint vivid descriptions of a renewed street, or city, or country, or even the whole world. They use words like wholeness, regeneration, care economy, interconnected, interdependent, love, connection. When we feel rested and empowered, these words inspire us, fill our cups and drive us to be the best we can be. But when we are exhausted and cynical, they deflate us further, proving once more that the gap between the world as it is and how it should be is an unbridgeable chasm. We label them “visionaries”, “creative”, “idealistic” and “naive”. Amongst friends and family they are the ones with “lots of ideas”. Life continues around them like a stream flowing around a rock.

We also know the conservatives: not of the political variety. They are those who don't hesitate to explain why something *won't* work. Why it is best to conserve things the way that they are. Why it's not worth taking a risk or seizing an opportunity because, actually, things are ok. Life is good. Don't you know how hard our grandparents had it? If we're feeling rested and empowered, we rise to the challenge. Sure, it might be ok for you, but what about those left behind, what about the collapse of our natural world? Surely with all our privilege we have a responsibility to improve things? When we feel exhausted and cynical, we are comforted by conservatives. Comforted in our own passivity; our belief that it's not worth changing *everything* in pursuit of a better world. Things are ok. In many ways they've never been better.

And we know the entrepreneurs: those who live to disrupt. They jump from project to project, each one with the same unshakeable confidence, gathering large followings of inspired teams who work around the clock to create something new. For entrepreneurs, everything can be framed as a problem to solve: often with a deceptively simple, marketable solution that will upend a system, creating prosperity and growth for all. If we're feeling rested and empowered we love spending time with entrepreneurs. They're not just talking about things, they're making them happen! We live vicariously through them. We love hearing about the risks, the sacrifices, the blood, sweat and tears. But when we're feeling exhausted and cynical we see clearly that although some things change, the important things actually don't. They stay the same. Or get worse. Inequality grows, extinctions accelerate and our climate catastrophe is here. Despite a flurry of activity, projects and stories, the fundamentals of our system stay the same.

As much as archetypes can help us make sense of the complex world around us, they are perhaps more useful or interesting when used as a mirror for ourselves. We all have moments of deep imagination, when we envisage how the world could be radically different. We imagine how it would feel to wake up in a world where need came before greed and nature was thriving. At other times we feel fiercely protective of what we have and how things are. We use the system to get ahead. We lean on rules and norms to build safe and secure lives. We defend the status quo to protect our family or friends. And sometimes we've simply had enough of how things are and we roll up our sleeves to drive change: shifting careers, ending relationships, starting a community project, founding a business.

We are all conservatives, entrepreneurs and dreamers. We can rethink these archetypes as three parts of ourselves: our head, heart and hands. Our heart as a dreamer, our head as the conservative or protector, and our hands as the entrepreneur or the creator. All three parts can be beautiful, nourishing and positively impactful on ourselves and the world around us. However, in the wrong balance, our well-intentioned work can be ineffective, or worse, harmful. We might protect harmful aspects of the current system, or we dream without connection to the current world, or we chase disruption without care for how the world does or doesn't change as a result.

So how can we move between these three aspects of ourselves in a way that supports the transformation that the world desperately needs, towards regeneration and a hopeful future? Which attributes should we nurture or bring forward in which context?

The answer begins in two parts. The first is self-awareness, or the ability to recognise and understand the emotional landscape and behaviours that make us who we are. Put simply, it is the ability to see ourselves clearly. If we are able to reflect on how we protect, disrupt and dream in various contexts, we can adjust our behaviours to be more positively impactful in each interaction or project.

However, self-awareness is only one part of this equation as it doesn't move us beyond individual actions and direct relationships. In order to calibrate our protecting, disruptive and dreaming selves, we require an understanding of how our actions affect not only those immediately around us, but how they ripple out into a broader system of aligned and non-aligned actors. *This requires not just self-awareness, but also systems-awareness.*

Systems-awareness has always been important, but in our current context of environmental and social crisis, it becomes essential. Many understand the existential nature of our environmental crisis, but fewer understand what Daniel Schmachtenberger (*Dumbo Feather* issue 70) describes as the "metacrisis". Schmachtenberger's organisation The Consilience Project writes, "Our civilisation has never been more vast, complicated, and fragile. This systemic fragility is exacerbated by new technologies, geopolitical instability, an ecological crisis and a reliance on global economic supply chains. These interlocking, interrelated problems are known collectively as the metacrisis."

Impact leaders who are passionate about single issues like climate, wealth inequality, health, housing, gender equality, the energy transition, and democratic renewal, must recognise the interconnectedness of these challenges, and therefore the interconnected nature of any effective "solution". Not recognising this interconnectedness, and the social and economic system that enables it, leads many well-intentioned actors to being ineffective: we may protect institutions that should transform, develop disruptive "solutions" that cause unintended negative consequences, or deploy radical imagination and fail to connect our current reality to the world we'd like to see.

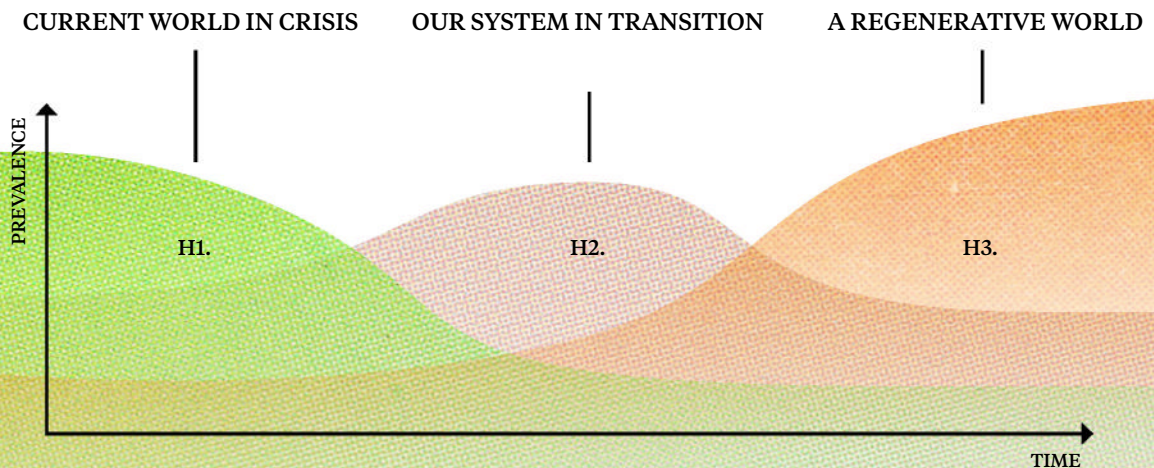
In the context of the metacrisis, systems-awareness is the ability to recognise and reflect on the interconnected elements of the system that we are affecting, and how our work may or may not be contributing to the broader impact that we seek in the world. Our "system" could be our school, community or city, or it could be a thematic system like energy, water or health. These systems of course intersect and interrelate. Importantly, systems-awareness doesn't lead to an ability to control them or manage them like a complex machine. As renowned systems pioneer Donella Meadows reminds us, "Systems can't be controlled, but they can be designed and redesigned... we can dance with them!"

Systems-awareness is closely linked to the discipline of *systems-thinking*, a mindset and approach that emphasises the relationships, interdependence and connections in our complex world. This mindset moves us beyond the simple and reductive thinking that dominates our society; the mindset that distills big problems into "solvable" chunks. While simplicity can be seductive, it can also stop meaningful transformation and can reinforce the existing ways that a system operates. This leads to a lot of activity and very little real change.

One model that can help us navigate this strange and wonderful world of systems-awareness is the *Three Horizons* framework developed by Bill Sharpe – a systems thinker and futures practitioner – and adapted by many others. The model is a tool for thinking about how our world changes and what actually drives these changes. It describes aspects of the future that are already visible in the present. Sharpe describes these aspects as "horizons" and they can be drawn on a graph where on the y axis we have prevalence and on the x axis we have the passage of time.

The first horizon (H1) is the current, dominant paradigm that is all around us. This is the domain

THREE HORIZON FRAMEWORK TOWARDS A REGENERATIVE FUTURE



H1. Our current dominant paradigm

H2. Increasing upheaval leads to dynamic possibilities for systemic change

H3. Systemic transformation leads to a regenerative future

This diagram has been adapted from the International Futures Forum.
For more information visit www.internationalfuturesforum.com

of the conservative, preserving the status quo, protecting business as usual. We rely entirely on these systems today, but as our context shifts it is clear that many are no longer fit-for-purpose and lead us to a degenerative, divisive and destructive outcome. Our conservative selves play a vital role in sustaining the critical elements of our current system, while discerning what elements we need to let go of, to transition to a more regenerative world.

The second horizon (H2) is where change happens. In the context of increasing upheaval around us, from climate change to social movements to pandemics, there are increasing opportunities for our disruptive and entrepreneurial selves to create new projects. How effective these initiatives are will depend on the self and systems-awareness of each actor, and their ability to dance effectively between the world we have and the world we want to see. In the same way that we can't be lulled by the simplicity of *problem solving* in the metacrisis, we must recognise that the entrepreneurial spirit is not an end state: it can be unleashed to create space for deeper transformative change.

The third horizon (H3) is the world that we are working towards: a just and inclusive one that supports human flourishing while living in harmony with the natural world. This is the domain of the dreamer. Although this horizon is the least prevalent today, it is already here, in small ways, all around us. Think of the hundreds of stories in the pages of *Dumbo Feather* over the years. As Arundhati Roy notes, "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

Conscious and effective leadership is required on all three horizons if we are to move from a degenerative to a regenerative world. And each horizon requires us to calibrate our conservative, disrupting and dreaming selves differently. Our systemic instability also means we'll increasingly find ourselves on unexpected horizons. It may feel uncomfortable to dream when we're used to protecting, or to disrupt when we're used to dreaming. This is the work of our times: dancing across horizons, recalibrating ourselves as we go.

So, where do you operate on the first horizon, conserving elements of the status quo? Which aspects do you actively conserve and who benefits? How do you discern which elements are conserved and which are relinquished or transformed? If you work in a large workplace, which hierarchical structures ensure critical accountability and which simply preserve status quo power arrangements, shutting off potential for creativity or evolution?

Where are you dancing on the second horizon to create new projects and initiatives? How do you engage with the current system (H1), and how do you bridge to the world you want to see (H3)? Is your disruption supporting the emergence of a more regenerative world, or has it been captured by the first horizon, reinforcing all the things you set out to change? If you work in a new start-up, consider where your financial resourcing comes from and whether this shifts the transformative potential towards H3 or back towards H1.

And where do you operate on the third horizon, imagining entirely new ways of perceiving and being in the world? How do you create the conditions for radical reimagining, inviting others in, while ensuring you create connections to the way the world is and how it is changing? In your local community, how can you ensure that individuals with less free time or resources are included in developing a collective vision so that it is connected to diverse real-world experiences?

Just as we are all conservatives, disruptors and dreamers, the three horizons are always present in our system. It is the balance between them that adds up to our current reality. Systems-awareness can help us to appreciate the importance of conserving the aspects of our system which create stability and preserve life, the critical value of a dream or vision to give us a goal for our transition, and the power of entrepreneurial endeavour to get us there.

Combining self-awareness and systems-awareness can allow us to move beyond the comfort and simplicity of our conservative, dreamer or entrepreneurial mindsets. We can integrate the attributes of these archetypes as the ingredients required for truly transformational leadership. This is hard work. It's harder than staying in the lanes of traditional management, entrepreneurship or creative endeavour. But perhaps that is exactly what this radical moment and our precarious world requires of us. ●

Kaj Löfgren is the CEO of Regen Melbourne – a platform for ambitious collaboration in service of Greater Melbourne – and Entrepreneur in Residence at the Small Giants Academy. Regen Melbourne is powered by an alliance of around 150 diverse organisations and hosts a portfolio of collaborative projects including Swimmable Birrarung (making the Birrarung / Yarra River swimmable again), Participatory Melbourne (rejuvenating agency and trust across the city) and Village Zero (transitioning neighbourhoods to holistic net zero). In each of these initiatives, Regen Melbourne dances across three horizons.

Doing



Create art, alleviate poverty, invent technology that improves life, expand the field of what we know. This is inherently meaningful.

**NATE HAGENS
WORKS WITH
ENERGY**



Albert Einstein is quoted as saying “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”. That is what keeps coming to mind during my many conversations with Nate Hagens. Nate is the Director of the Institute for the Study of Energy and Our Future: an organisation focused on preparing society for the coming cultural transition to when fossil fuels no longer power our world. Nate researches how we might live a vastly different existence and he predicts a long period of adjustment. He expects that the world we experience now in developed parts of the world – a world constantly on – will no longer be possible as we conserve energy for essential services and operations.

Nate is doing some serious heavy lifting globally. He shares important conversations through his popular podcast *The Great Simplification*, teaches an Honours course at the University of Minnesota titled *Reality 101 – A Survey of the Human Predicament*, and counsels governments and world leaders on what this possible transition will entail and how we might prepare for it. Nate’s presentations address the opportunities and constraints we face after the coming peak of global economic growth.

Nate is entirely, deeply human. His empathy and understanding of human behaviour moves me as we talk about a future for humanity where we are grounded in a simpler life, embedded in community, with less power at our fingertips. Maybe, just maybe, that life will also feature a heightened sense of meaning and purpose as we confront a warming world.

A former VP of Lehman Brothers bank, Nate once sat in the heart of the engine of the economy. He realised quickly that it was enabling the destruction of our world, educated himself about how energy resource and financial markets were driving us collectively off the cliff we can’t see ahead and walked away from Wall Street to live a life in service of what he calls a pro-social future. The future Nate describes is one in which we understand enough of our own motivations and psychology to pause and pivot before it’s too late.

BERRY LIBERMAN: I want to learn about you and your work.

NATE HAGENS: With almost all questions in this field there are two aspects: what could humans as individuals and as a global or national culture be

like, how might we thrive and live up to our potential while respecting the limits of the natural world? And then, how do we get from here to there? That’s a separate question. We are living in a Wile E. Coyote moment. And on the backs of extracting fossil carbon, which is incredibly powerful, 10 million times faster than natural systems sequestered it, relative global peace and the complexity of a six-continent supply chain. And credit where we can just go somewhere and get a loan, because people expect growth to continue and therefore we can pay it back in the future. We’re living in an anomaly really. I want to prepare people and governments and institutions and the culture for humans living differently – with each other, with respect to energy and materials and especially with respect to the environment. We share this Earth with 10 million other species, give or take, that have no say in our economic decisions.

We’re living in both an amazing and a perilous time. It’s so magical to be able to do these things that, to our ancestors, would have seemed like a *Star Trek* future not that long ago. But we’re also inexorably destroying the natural world and our current lifestyles are patently unsustainable. Something big is going to change in coming decades. I have a belief in the

Subject:

Nate Hagens

Occupation:

Educator, social philosopher

Interviewer:

Berry Liberman

Photographer:

Benjamin Rigby

Location:

Wisconsin, USA

Date:

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human spirit and the collective forces of good and I'm hopeful that we can steer away from some of the default outcomes.

We're used to this level of consumption. The average American consumes 100 times more energy than our bodies need to survive. The average Australian is around 80 per cent of that – 80 times more than our bodies need to survive. This is unsustainable. The distribution is unequal around the world but we're going to have to use less energy and materials in the future. On the surface that sounds scary until you realise that our wellbeing and our happiness and the best things in life mostly don't require energy and materials. If I ask you about the five best experiences of your life, I doubt any of them were incredibly monetarily or energy-intensive. It was probably something in nature, or with your kids, or music, or your loved ones, or food. These things aren't going away. We're heading to what I call "The Great Simplification", which is the downslope of a centuries-long increase of adding more energy to the human system. And that seems scary – the unknown *is* scary. But there's a silver lining here, that we can replace monetary markers of wealth with actual markers of social, human-built and natural capital. If we get a lot of people on board, it might be good in many ways. For most people in the developed world and the Global North, using less is not going to be a big deal. The Global South is another question and that gets to distribution and how we can have a contraction and convergence, and that's a really complicated question. But here's the thing:

MOST PEOPLE, MOST GOVERNMENTS, MOST CORPORATIONS, HAVE NO POSSIBILITY OF A REDUCTION IN GDP AND CONSUMPTION IN COMING DECADES. EVERYONE IS PLANNING FOR MORE GROWTH.

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To be honest Nate, I want to travel and everybody's like that. We revert to hedonism. Our hearts and souls and heads can't get around the complexity of this problem. You're talking about a complete reframe of the economy and how we live.

We have to talk to those people and breathe life into their awareness and their spirit of going all-in to help our situation. That's why there are different messages for this. The full truth of my 20 years of synthesising how energy, human behaviour and ecology fit together is probably

not for a billion humans. There are different messages for governments, for activists, for children, and young adults. And there is a different message for the general public, which is that after basic needs are met, the best things in life are free. There's probably an economic winter coming in the not-too-distant future. Self-worth, your physical and psychological health, your friends, your network, your social capital, your skills, your knowledge: these things are going to be your new net worth. And we've lived in this anomalous period of using fossil sunlight of the equivalent of 500 billion human labour equivalents relative to five billion real humans. It is unsustainable. People like certainty. And uncertainty, *I'm not sure what's going to happen*, that feels bad to a person. So that's why we end up having extreme views of, "We're screwed, there's nothing, we're headed for a Mad Max future" or, "We're going to science the shit out of it and technology's going to save us and we're going to be colonising Mars and all these people are Malthusians." A lot of people go to those poles.

What's that word? Malthusians. Thomas Malthus was a preacher a couple of hundred years ago who famously

said that the exponential growth of humans is going to outstrip the linear growth of our crop production, so there's going to be a die-off. He was wrong because he lived before we found fossil fuels. Then Paul Ehrlich famously wrote a book called *The Population Bomb* in 1968, saying the same thing. But then we went to globalisation and the Green Revolution with Norman Borlaug, where we used fossil fuels to create nitrogen fertiliser to boost global crop yields. We kicked the can again in 2009 when global central banks took over the money-creation model. We keep kicking the can of accessing more energy and materials and there are no more cans left to kick. The next big can will be in our minds. It's going to be how we think about our consumption and our relationships.

We're going to have to live differently quite quickly. This starts with individuals recognising their relationship with consumption and stuff and social status and trying to live like others. I don't think our culture has a problem with greed. We have a problem with envy, where we look at others and we want to get the social status that they have. We compare ourselves to others and in this culture we compare it based on how much stuff we have, or how big our house is. But in prior cultures, and

I EXPECT IN FUTURE CULTURES, WE WILL COMPARE OURSELVES TO OTHERS USING DIFFERENT METRICS. MAYBE HOW KIND OR HOW MUSICAL OR HOW ARTISTIC OR THE QUALITY OF THE VEGETABLES THEY GROW.

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The question is, who do you want to be?

Yeah. "Who do you want to be" is a great reframing relative to, "What do you want to have?"

But, "What do you want to have" was toggled to, "Who do you want to be?" Right? Now we're going to go into *The Great Simplification*. Right now, financial currency is currency. But, what about friends? A robust inner life that can experience joy and wholeness in the face of dynamic changes?

I recognised that this was going to happen during my lifetime 20 years ago, when I was working on Wall Street. I gave my clients their money back and I quit. I took my golden retriever to Alaska and we hiked for six months and I read books about neuroscience and anthropology and climate change and energy and decided to dedicate my life to this.

Why did you realise that? You were on Wall Street.

One of my clients was a billionaire who wanted me to help him trade oil.

I STARTED READING ABOUT OIL AND I THOUGHT, THIS STUFF IS LIKE PIXIE DUST. IT'S SO POWERFUL AND WE'RE NOT PAYING FOR THE EXTERNALITIES. WHEN WE BUY IT, WE'RE ONLY PAYING FOR THE COST OF EXTRACTING IT FROM THE GROUND WHERE ANCIENT OCEANS AND HEAT AND PRESSURE AND MILLIONS OF YEARS CONDENSED IT INTO THIS MAGICAL SUBSTANCE THAT WE ADD TO OUR ECONOMIES. WE'RE NOT PAYING FOR THE COST OF POLLUTION.







The cost for CO2 is not included in the price of petrol in Australia or the United States or anywhere. I became fascinated with that. I got my PhD to study this stuff full time. I'm focused on the truth of how our global human ecosystem fits together. Our social species found this giant cache of buried powerful energy and has built an economic system and institutions and expectations around that. What are we doing to the natural world, and how does this all fit together? And how do we use money as an overlay? I'm mostly trying to understand what's happening.

You can look at the world from a social justice lens and be right. You can look at the world from a climate change ocean acidification sense. You can look at the world from a geopolitical war or a financial lens, or an energy lens. My work is trying to synthesise how they all fit together and it ends up with quite a different lens. Most people look at the world from a money and technology lens: that over time, via markets and technological inventions, we will find answers to our problems. What they don't realise is our culture is energy blind. Like a fish that swims in water and doesn't know what water is, we don't appreciate or acknowledge how vital energy is to everything we do. Everything in your house or your studio or where I am, everything in my room right now took energy to mine, create, deliver, maintain, repair and dispose of. We have an idea and then we get some resources and we use energy and materials to create a product. And then we sell that around the world. For the last 150 years, humans have used more energy every single year, other than a handful of exceptions. At some point in the not-too-distant future we're going to have less energy every year. We've never had to ask the question, "What does technology do for us as energy declines?"

What I love is you're stretching us to have a whole planetary imagination. There's something beautiful in here that I feel is connected to our consciousness. And I'm staying away from the head thing of the what-is-ness just for a minute, so that I can breathe some life into an active hope.

One of the core parts of my story is evolutionary psychology and who humans are. That is where there's a lot of hope. We have been 300,000 years as a species. For 98 per cent of that time, we lived in small hunter-gatherer bands. There was a slight hierarchy, but everyone had equal consumption because we didn't have anything. We moved

around and we worked 20 hours a week gathering food, hunting, and the rest of the time we told stories and made love and played music and took naps and played. Deeply engrained in us, as much as our physiology, are emotional drivers. We go through our lives trying to replicate the same emotional states of our successful ancestors in a wildly different techno-consumption culture and this is not the stuff that gives us meaning and happiness. We want relationships with others. We want to be in natural settings. We're going to start to naturally have community and more social relationships and networks. My hope is that we start to build those social networks ahead of when we have to build them, and that this is a species-level conversation.

We had to live through this carbon pulse where we're burning through these fossil materials and reserves 10 million times faster than they were trickle-charged by daily photosynthesis. We had to experience the Las Vegas all-you-can-eat smorgasbord couple of generations as a culture. We had to recognise what we're doing to the natural world in order to wise up and move from being clever to having some wisdom and restraint. We have to understand our plight and how energy, materials, climate, the environment, other species, money and our brains fit together to understand what's still open as paths and what things don't make

sense. The tech elite are not going to magically solve this with better technology. Technology requires materials. Materials are 100 per cent correlated with GDP. If we continue to grow, we're going to double the amount of stuff that we use every 25 years or so as a global culture.

In this era where stuff is so cheap and abundant what we've done is we self-organise as families, as small businesses, as corporations, as nations, as a global culture, to maximise profits. And the profits are 99 per cent linked to energy. And the energy is 85 per cent linked to fossil energy. We have outsourced our decision-making and planning to the market. Billionaires and politicians are not in control of this: the system has taken on a life of its own. It's not the fault of these billionaire tech people, they're following the rules of the social and economic structure to develop a product, charge a profit, and if people want your product, you will get rich.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A SYMPTOM OF THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM OF A SOCIAL SPECIES FINDING THIS ENORMOUS TREASURE TROVE AND TREATING IT AS IF IT WERE A PERPETUAL BANK ACCOUNT. LIKE IT WAS THE INTEREST, INSTEAD OF THE REALITY THAT WE'RE DRAWING THAT BANK ACCOUNT DOWN RAPIDLY.

What I love about this is it's practical. This is happening. We can all see it just by living our lives. We can see that we've got too much stuff and we're consuming too much and the economy is toggled to things that don't even make life worth living. We know that the system is so broken and we are not even factored into the system any more. And the most vulnerable of us are factored in the least. That's not okay. Anyone coming from any wisdom or spiritual tradition, we look after each other or we die together.

of barrels of ancient sunlight into micro-litres of dopamine with nothing to show for it. And overlaid on top of that is an institutional economic structure that's optimising the size of how much stuff that is without looking at the wellbeing of nature and how people are really doing at all scales. That's what needs to change. And it's not a hopeless task because the silver lining is we don't need all this energy and stuff to be happy and healthy.

I think GDP is a fantasy. The whole thing is a construct. And then there's base reality, which is we live on this beautiful blue planet, there is an ecological ceiling and there are functions of the ecology that work better than anything we can manufacture. We're not that clever. We need to get back in harmony with living systems on Earth. The purpose of financial capital should be in service of life.

If you think about it from an individual consumption standpoint, the wanting of things is stronger than the having of things. We get our dopamine response when we decide to go to the store to buy new shoes, or the car, or whatever. But once we have it, we don't get that dopamine surge anymore. Dopamine motivates us to buy it or to do the behaviour, which is why we end up with these storage sheds full of stuff from our previous life and we never even open them. Our entire economic system is de facto turning billions

Financial capital as a marker of excess status relative to other humans has a ticking fuse on it. If you are a shepherd of resources, I would advocate considering a spend-down strategy to accelerate turning that financial capital into real capital, social-built human and natural capital, to help communities through the bottlenecks of the 21st century. Because at some point in the future, those electronic digits may not be transferable into real things. We can direct

that money towards things of value now rather than waiting 80 years to cash it in.



There is so much to unpack in what you just said and so much that I want to talk about. The thing that's getting in the way between us and hearing what you've just said about energy consumption and how we've tied our future to a resource that's ending. We can't just keep taking.

We need the artists, the storytellers, the musicians, the creative people to understand this first. And tell stories and narratives and change the cultural dialogue. And then you get the architects and engineers involved to figure it out and how we're going to get there. Not the other way around. The other thing is our culture rewards reductionist

expertise. What's ended up happening is we have islands of expertise around the world that exist within oceans of nonsense. Everyone is an expert on renewable energy or climate change or finance or psychology. No one is uniting how those things fit together, so that we can evolve all expertise towards a common goal. I think that's the era that we're approaching where we must have competent generalists who understand how things fit together and then involve the experts on what we are going to do. What I'm trying to do with my work is fly up high enough to look down at how things fit together, and that'll inform what's possible and what's a waste of time.

I saw that French President Macron said, "We have reached the end of an era of abundance where we could have access to all these material things and technology, and that era is ending." I didn't think a world leader would say that. He said the quiet part out loud. We *are* approaching the end of abundance. It's very difficult for a politician to unpack what that really implies.

If Macron was going to follow up, what would that look like?

One way is to prepare your government for the things that need to be done. And the other is to say inspiring yet honest things to your population of citizens, which run the gamut from left to right. And like you said, there are architects and engineers and farmers and artists in there. So it's very difficult.

Doing

In a society that maximises consumption in our marketing and our media, when you try to tell people that they're going to have to consume less because of the laws of physics and oil and everything else, that is not a marketable prospect. This gets into how we redefine our success and our wellbeing and our consumption and our capital. I used to make a lot of money 20 years ago. And now I make very little money and I have very little savings, but I get paid in my students' reaction. I get paid in people learning from my podcast. And I get paid in teaching things to people and the brain experience I get from deep conversations with Daniel Schmachtenberger. I get paid in different things.

Do you have those moments where you go, "Nate, you're a sucker"?

I have had many of those moments the last 15 years. *Why didn't I just stay on Wall Street five years longer and save some money?* I don't miss, "I could

have more stuff." I don't live in a country like Australia or Canada. If I get sick, I spend all my money to heal and I'm not alone. There are tens or hundreds of millions of Americans that feel that same anxiety. I don't need to have a pile of stuff. I have this house and some land next to it. And I have dogs. I don't have children, I have forests. Every morning I go for a long walk with my dogs. And I have a ton of friends. I feel incredibly rich. I do feel a depth in my soul of understanding the human predicament and sharing it with others as my calling. To be a teacher and to help people get on the real path between the blue and the red pill. That gives me deep reward and satisfaction that I'm spending the hours of my life in the right way.

YOU CAN'T BE PERFECT. IF YOU EAT LESS MEAT AND FLY LESS AND DRIVE AN ELECTRIC CAR, YOU CAN NEVER BE PERFECT ENOUGH. SO MAXIMISE YOUR IMPACT ON THE PLANET RATHER THAN MINIMISE YOUR IMPACT.

I love that.

If I consumed less, I could live in a little shack on the back 40 of my property and I would never be doing podcasts like this. I flew to Finland to talk to their government about energy depletion scenarios. I want to impact things on a larger scale rather than be a smaller, one-eight-billionth of the problem.

This is the kind of big thinking that I adore because it helps us live in the gnarly paradoxes and the contradictions and the icky weirdness of this moment. Have maximum impact, not minimum. I've got to get out on the hustings. I've got to do the good work. I must also nourish my family and fill my cup. And do that without promoting a fetishised lifestyle that other people would envy. I love that you said we're not greedy, we're envious. It's such a compassionate frame for how we can massage our brains and our hearts and our hands into the place that we want to gift our children. I want to start shifting our thinking into productive ways forward as opposed to feeling frozen and overwhelmed.

There are some ecological principles which are important to understand. There are a lot of statistics about different things in the world that I think it's important for people to understand about oceans, about climate, about biodiversity, about ecosystems, natural systems. Our real stock market is the ecology and natural world.



The sense-making world doesn't have the feminine in it. It's a real problem. Because if you want to do the heart and the soul work, you must have deep, rich feminine flow state baked in there.

I was just at two major conferences on collapse and sense-making. And the polycrisis. People were jumping around and meeting people and learning. By the third day, they had self-organised into little groups of women and men and the conversations

were totally different. We need more feminine energy, more women in this cultural transition space. Because from an evolutionary standpoint, women have the ability to think rationally about the future more than men do. I've done 34 episodes on my podcast so far. I've had five women out of the 34 but six of my next 10 are women. We don't have decades to change this. We must use the next few years to plant seeds for coming decades. I feel this intense urgency.

Nate, this was awesome. You're a legend. Thank you.

I'm not a legend. I'm just a human that cares about the future. I'm above average intelligence but I'm

50 IQ points away from some of these other people. I have a huge social network and I have learned from all these scientists about the brain and about climate and about energy. And I've pulled out the best things that made sense and condensed it all. And I want to help as best I can and pay it forward. And, you know, this is the story of our times. So, onwards. Let's get more people involved in the story. ●

Berry and Nate have recorded a multi-episode podcast series in which together they unpack Nate's theories and approach for the future of humanity.

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**JOAN SCHECKEL
WORKS WITH
FEELING**



Twenty-three years ago, I was a 21-year-old budding filmmaker, fresh out of the Victorian College of the Arts, with the feature film rights to Mirka Mora's memoir. I was all promise and no clue, with a graduate degree that had not remotely prepared me for the gruelling, disciplined rigour of making movies, let alone writing a proper screenplay. You cannot read a book about writing – you must write. So where to start? With my ear to the ground about where I needed to be to get where I was going, I heard the script “doctor” Joan Scheckel was coming to Melbourne. Joan was known then as the script whisperer, a magician in the indie film world, whose gift was turning small films into ground-breaking ones. I got a ticket to the workshop and during a break, despite her lying exhausted on the floor, approached Joan and said something like, “I have a film to make, will you help me?” Joan said, “Well if you're ever in LA give me a call and we'll see.” Aged 21, I took that as an invitation. A few months later I called Joan, “I'm here”.

In the years since, Joan has refined her practice into something called The Technique: a process so profound and disciplined that you dare not do it if you are not committed to your craft. The premise of the work is this: that narrative can be (must be) driven by feeling and meaning. This is revolutionary. Every scriptwriter, actor, director, filmmaker at every film school is taught that conflict drives story. Working with Joan tears all those myths apart and cracks you open so there is nowhere to hide, only your own truth to reveal and in doing so challenges our cultural addiction to conflict and calls for a new storytelling paradigm.

Joan has worked on hundreds of films: from *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Whale Rider* to *Transparent*. Her students have won dozens of major awards. I knew then and I know now that I was in the presence of a master. I have been profoundly shaped by my years working with Joan. It was an honour to speak with her about storytelling in troubled times.

Subject:
Joan Scheckel

Occupation:
Writer, director,
producer, teacher

Interviewer:
Berry Liberman

Photographer:
Megan Cullen

Location:
Los Angeles

Date:
February 2023

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BERRY LIBERMAN: This is the clearest you've been and I can see your expression.

JOAN SCHECKEL: You know, Berry, connection is worth the effort. Being able to hear one another and see one another is the work of being human.

It's the thing that we crave most deeply. And have the opportunity to express through the arts, which is how I met you all these many years ago. One of your first and most profound questions to me was, “If you're not measuring yourself by money, as society tells us to do, then what has value?”

I'm still in that exploration. I think it's my life's work.

I had the opportunity to meet you early in your journey.

Twenty-one years old. I had arrived in LA. No one knows this story. [laughs]

I came to Australia and I did a tour and I met you after a talk. I remember this incredibly passionate mind. You said, “I want to come study with you.” I hadn't been teaching for long at that point. Then

one day I got a phone call from you. You're like, “Hi, it's Berry!” You were in L.A., to study with me and I didn't even have a lab going on at that time. You came with all of your openness and curiosity and passion for story and your ability to go out into the world. You said, “I'm here to work.”

You've been a profound teacher in my life. One of my greatest mentors, and taught me everything I know about story and honouring my creative life. It was a powerful time of learning and formed me as a human being.

There's this notion that a story is something outside of you. Like, *I'm going to get some ideas together and make a story and make a concept*. But that's not story. Story is your inner life moving outward. It is what's within you that craves to be seen, known and shared.

IMAGINATION ISN'T STUFF YOU COME UP WITH, IT'S THE LENS TO YOUR SOUL. STORY IS THE MEANS BY WHICH YOU EXPRESS WHAT IS THERE. ALL OF YOUR DEEPEST QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU WANT AND HOW YOU FEEL, THAT IS THE STORY. THERE'S NO SEPARATION.

It was such big work and it began all my big work. Because the bigger the story that you want to tell, the more you have to know your own soul and story.

You don't have to know it. You're going to encounter it in the process of making the art, or making the business, or making whatever it is that you're making. A story is an encounter with the self and writing is a way of knowing.

I'm not a therapist, I'm a dramatist. It's not my job, nor is it my skill or intention to get inside anybody's head. That's not where I belong. I do think that talent and tolerating are closely linked. How much can you tolerate revealing that which you have come to know about living? It's hard to tolerate our own humanness. It has been deeply co-opted and corrupted by our entertainment industry via our impulse to tell a story. That's why I do this work. I knew that I wasn't going to work in the oil industry and be able to design an electric car, but I wanted to create a craft that would help 21st-century storytellers speak to their own truths. And make space for a multiplicity of stories, not just one or two points of view, which our industry is addicted to.

I'm having such a full body response to everything you're saying. I was telling story through *Dumbo Feather* as the extension of our work together. It was, *How can I go back in and work with financial capital and my creative capital? How can I do both?* I knew the potency of storytelling as healing was the most obvious thing. The rest was confusing. [laughs] We had so many sessions together but I'll never forget one of these moments, which is when you said, "Oh you didn't know that you're intense?"

I remember that! [laughs] I remember that! You were probably in sweats and a white t-shirt and drawings and writings all over the floor. You were looking at issues of art, family, the Holocaust, grief, hidden secrets. The unholy rampant mess of the inner life as it seeks to be known. There is an intensity to that, because feelings are big. It's why we fear them so much.

I remember you saying to me, "Number one: you have permission to be intense because you don't have a choice and that's who you are." Then you said, "You need to know that feelings won't kill you."

That's a big one isn't it?

Yeah. And that was what we're talking about. The ability to feel the big feelings, to tolerate them enough to share with the world.

We stayed in touch all these years and you've done so much wonderful work in film with those incredible storytellers. My path diverged, so it would seem, because I was working in business and the economy. And then we did a workshop during COVID and I remember I was on the screen with 50 filmmakers and you. And it still felt the same. What came up for me during the work was the economy as a story. I went into impact investing and to our work in the economy and business as a B Corp. All these attempts to open a crack in the universe where the light could get in and a new story could emerge of how we can live in this world, honouring life. The purpose of capital is to be in service to life.

then that conflict itself is going to drive that story forward until the next point of conflict. It's all about, "I want this, you want that, so we're going to fight about it." I don't think that that helps us make change. In my work I've actively been saying, "Hey look, there's another way to tell a story. It doesn't just have to be through conflict." You can centre the story on meaning – that's what the nugget is, on whatever has meaning to you – and then look at the chains of actions, feelings and relationship that earn that truth. And that's applicable to a business, a magazine, a big action movie.

THIS NOTION THAT YOU CAN LOOK AT THINGS NOT IN TERMS OF WHO'S GOING TO WIN OR LOSE, BUT WHAT THINGS MEAN AND HOW THEY FEEL. IF THE PUSHBACK ISN'T HAPPENING WE'RE PROBABLY NOT CHALLENGING AS DEEPLY AS WE MIGHT.

You were teaching me at 21 how to protect that space for myself. I've waxed and waned in my ability to do it, with phones and distractions and I have a family and these businesses. I've felt like I can honestly say I have, with deepest love, authenticity and integrity, been leaning into that through business and through the economy. I didn't realise how rough it was going to be!

want to have real contact with yourself. It's not supposed to be easy from anything I've ever read or heard or experienced.

Exactly. It's not going to look like anybody else's version.

One of the biggest issues in the 21st century is despair. The problems are so large. There are big issues that face us, that feel and seem beyond our present scope of mobility to help. To help heal our hearts towards a more connected humanity. It's a rough time in that regard, no matter where you look. At the climate, at racism, poverty, water, education, human rights. We're not seeing a lot of lust for forward thinking. [laughs.] Change is a long game. I'm lucky that I get to work with so many storytellers, but my business is very small. Our industry is addicted to conflict. There's an antagonist on one side and there's a protagonist on another side. They're going to butt heads. That conflict is what gives any story its energy. And

As my own childhood circumstances were so rough, I had an early understanding that life is straight up. It's steep and it just gets steeper. That's one of the big benefits of having a childhood that's hard in different ways. I have an intense need for truth and a love for reality and a yearning to contact reality before I die. As much as I work with story and imagination in all of its many forms, you



HOLLYWOOD



California State Blvd
Freeway



Interesting things are coming up for me when you're talking about the industry and doing the work of staying connected to who you are. I was in the face of expectations and comparison.

Oh yeah. Needing to prove yourself. Wanting your parent to see you and love you and thinking you're going to achieve that through fame, or anything external. Everybody has a different value system. What value is to each individual, and has not yet been defined. Throughout history that's been a pretty dangerous place to be. We haven't been inclusive, curious, able to hold space for a multiplicity of perspectives on what has value long enough to even figure out what value needs. [laughs] We all want to do the work. But the question is, what is the work? When you're talking about storytelling, it is super simple things. Like saying, "Okay, for these four hours we will close the door, turn off phones, devices. You will have a pen, you will have a piece of paper. And that's it. And your mind." And so for that period of time, however long it is that you can muster, whether it's five minutes or an hour, and gradually working your way up to three or four hours, you just sit there with yourself, your feelings and whatever it is that you want to do. If nothing happens then you've shown up for nothing. That has enormous value, just to show up for space itself. A lot happens when nothing happens. I'm curious about that, as change. Because we cram up space, we cram up any opportunity for change to occur because we're trying to do so much all the time.

I'm reflecting on my inability to hold the space for nothing.

One thing that's really important, while you're reflecting, is not to make sweeping categorical statements against yourself. We're then quick to attack ourselves. "Oh I don't do that enough," or, "I haven't done that." And that's absolutely not true in your life work, it's not true in this moment. We have to be careful about attacking ourselves in any way the moment that we feel need. And always to remember that a little bit goes a really long way. Any great thinker that we've had throughout human history, you remember one thing that they say that rings true for you. And that's all you need.

I didn't have a difficult childhood. And so in many ways I feel like I expected the embrace in return. Like, "Let's do this! This is beautiful! People, planet, profit? Like all in favour say aye!" [laughs] I had these naïve open-armed ideas. And then I experienced pushback, envy, jealousy, attack, betrayal, fraud. All these things that happened in the human space.

We all have a passionate impulse to go forward: into a love relationship, a business adventure or a story. You have that desire to change the world. But hidden underneath that is a desire to change your family. And then working with the planet, with the laws of gravity, envy, jealousy, pushback, of loneliness, fear, betrayal, failure, disappointment. Of helplessness, of greed. That's the work. The tendency is to give up that open-heartedness, that childhood passion, that scope of vision that is innate to all of us. That can be crushed as we socialise or as we meet up with the world as it is right now. And so it is a dance to mature, to carry the vision in a realistic way, whatever it is that your vision is. For me it has to do with telling stories that that are meaningful.

I've been reading a lot about hell lately. In the Celtic myths, Nordic myths. I'm citing those two because I was reading about them this morning. Hell didn't have a suffering component. I grew up Catholic and so that was the entire point of hell. [laughs] But it was a place of feeling all of the things that we just spoke to, where you burn with your own envy or grief, or whatever it is. It doesn't mean to give up. Change is hard and slow, and resistance is natural. You wouldn't get pushback if what you were saying or feeling wasn't new.

And for every single person in every way, it is always new. We just don't know how to hang out with that in each other. And things get shut down really fast. It's really incredibly hard and it's incredibly painful, but somebody's got to do the work. Somebody's got to do it. When you encounter whatever resistance to that which you might want to do, or express, or feel, or share, what do you do?

Well that was my question to you! I have been at a crossroads.

This is a beautiful vision that you have, Berry. A generous whole-hearted vision of how the world can be and is as you experience it. That's an enormous gift. But you can't throw out that gift because someone else can't see it and instead make your work about fixing everybody else. That's why I was so happy when we did *Whale Rider*. To sit in a screening and everyone was crying. That was my vision: *I just want to sit in a room where everybody in suits feels one thing*. Or everybody cries because they remember what it felt to be a little kid. Just wanting to connect with your dad and your grandpa and your mum. Which is what *Whale Rider* does.

So what's the remedy for that impulse?

I get back with the helplessness that I felt as a child. The remedy is always going back to feeling the thing you don't want to feel – helpless, lonely, confused. To your own emotional truth before you go back into the work of change-making, particularly in a leadership role.

This issue is about leadership. You said to me, "As a director, don't ever take an actor somewhere you haven't been." There is an enormous amount of responsibility to have done work first, to have been where you're taking other people. Can you speak to that? It was an incredibly powerful lesson for me very young. I didn't quite understand it at the time.

It all comes down to, what can you get up and do every day? What can you manage with yourself and anybody else? Leadership at the core also has to do with non-conflict, knowing that you're in a team. That's why I love movies and creative work. And business as well. You're a group of people who are there to bring through an idea, which is a felt truth. Does the company or story have something with integrity at its core? That is what I'm interested in talking about, or investigating. It's not like I know. There's no such thing as an expert, but a lot to be said for curiosity and investigation.

A director is a leader, but a leader is a receiver, like a conductor. So here are the things that I will say to directors, and maybe they apply somehow to leadership:

NUMBER ONE, YOU MUST HAVE THE VISION FOR THE PIECE AS A WHOLE. NUMBER TWO, YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE THAT VISION. NUMBER THREE, YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO TAKE RISKS. NUMBER FOUR, YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO DISCERN WHAT IS NEEDED TO KEEP THINGS ON TRACK AND MOVING FORWARD. NUMBER FIVE, YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO FOCUS ON THE WORK AND NOT THE EGO. AND THEN NUMBER SIX. YOU MUST HAVE THE ABILITY TO SAY, "I DON'T KNOW," AND MEAN IT.



To claim, “I don’t know.” And let that be true. Because that’s when space arrives. As leaders, no matter what we’re leading, we can get really trapped in any one of those six things. You can have that vision inside of you but you can’t articulate it. Or you don’t have the words for it.

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You taught me this and it’s always stayed with me. You said, “The characters will say one thing, but what is the feeling underneath?” What is actually happening? That’s real life. When you get a screenplay right it’s a moment where you reflect real life, real dialogue, where you’re going to go into rooms and most people will not know why they are in the room. The ability to discern what’s really going on as opposed to what’s being said. But discernment is really hard.

You say a lot of big things, Joan. The soul takes a while to catch up, and it’s gotten dark behind you, which is so beautiful. What I think I just heard you say, were you saying that cultivating love – our ability to connect and to love – has been the human project over aeons?

I had that sense of what you’re talking about. That care is instantaneous and animal, but love is a cultivated sensibility. And that was my download in that moment. And obviously from learning with you all those years, that must be the emotional through line.

I think it’s natural to all of us but it has to be cultivated. I don’t know that we have as many opportunities as we crave and need to cultivate our innate ability to feel, connect and love. It has to be grown not just over days and weeks and months, but years, aeons, millennia. It’s a long game, human evolution. We’re such a young species.

Oh yeah.

Human beings have a rich capacity to love, and that is where cultivation comes in. I feel that we’re born babies and we become human through our lifetime. We’re coming to be earth-dwellers. We’re coming to be human. If we don’t kill ourselves before we figure it out, [laughs]. Conflict is not our only dance card. We also have awareness, cultivation, consciousness, of coming to be.





The work of not knowing, which is a reclamation of the truths that we're born with. Meeting up with feelings we don't like as well: greed, envy, confusion, pain. I think about that every day. How old is this cerebral cortex? You know, this part of my brain that can come up with words and put them together as thoughts? 30,000 years, maybe? But the brain stem, the part of our brains that can feel? Hundreds of millions. It's as old as life itself. We have a rich ability to feel. And we're only very slowly evolving how to articulate that, know it and share it. Story is critical in order to do that. We don't know what the new money models are and we're letting go of old ideas about money and value and lack and abandonment and terror and withholding. We're investigating ways to create value through connection and beauty and abundance and meaning. It has to do with how much we open ourselves up to being human with each other. Any act we take is an investigation of that. Healing comes in every act of creativity. A business is a story.

As is the economy itself.

Exactly. Everything's a story we tell ourselves. So what stories are we telling ourselves? And what do we believe? We're telling ourselves so many stories every day that come from before we could think we were telling stories, to make sense of the world around us. And other people tell us what to believe and what stories are. I'm simply saying questioning is a form of leadership. To ask a real question and to stay present for the unfolding response. And make it actionable step by step. Don't just leave it in a dream, put it on a piece of paper. Get up and do it.

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You have to have it in your body. Especially in the dramatic arts because when we're writing, we're not writing for the page. It's not a poem, which will come into being in the inner life of another human being. If you're writing a movie or writing a play, the actor is going to have to get up and do it.

It's the same as business. You've got to get up and do it. There is so much more for us to talk about. And just to know that all of it is the story we tell ourselves. And the built environment's so powerful, the spaces that we create. So architects, property developers: please know that you are determining how we feel and live.

That made me think about my own house that was this little cottage that was built in 1915. It has to work so hard because the windows don't fit and it wasn't built with consciousness. Buildings and places of work. What are they supposed to be? They're supposed to be tall. [laughs] Right? And rectangular, with horrible lights. So that we can reach the sky and focus. The building is definitely telling us a story of how we need to win. But that is not the only story. How can I love when I've been taught that what I need to do is to win and to gain and to go higher and to acquire. It's just a bunch of crap really.

Joan Scheckel, everyone. You're welcome. I've had some incredible moments in my life, not least of which was studying at your feet for many years.

We were both on the floor, I want to say. It wasn't at my feet. [laughs] I do want to say in closing that we are here and the work is happening. It's like the sun. You don't need to stare straight at it 24/7 and have sunbeams pummelled all the time. It's too much for human eyes to take. But just a little bit of your own light and sharing it with another person goes a long way. And it is happening. Can I say one thing about hope?

Yes, please!





In Hollywood we have this big thing about hopeful endings. It's got to have a likeable character and a hopeful ending. How, when you have an antagonist and a protagonist that are only hellbent on winning or losing and destroying each other the entire time? Then at the end of all that, you're supposed to feel hopeful. There's a misuse of this word *hope*, that any time we feel something that's real, we confront anything that's challenging, we immediately want to say, "Oh, we want to have hope." When we say we want to hope, underneath that, what we're really feeling is, "I want to hop to safety!"

**HOPE IS IN THE TRUTH. AND IN THE FEELING ITSELF. IT'S IN THE MEANING.
JUST LET IT BE WHAT IT IS AND GO FORWARD.**

Thank you. Love you very much.

I feel so moved. Touched to have this opportunity to talk with you as a mature leader. When I first saw you, both at that talk and when you showed up at my door as a very young woman, I just thought to myself, *It doesn't matter if you don't have time. Make time. This person, Berry Liberman, is so full of life and aliveness and passion and power.* I felt and feel so grateful to know you and to work with you, and to have this time. Thank you for letting me be your teacher so that I could learn more deeply to listen. You done good.

These were just dreams when I met you. Right? They were your dreams, the most valuable thing of all. The beauty you wanted to bring. What you wanted to share. ●

This is an edited extract from a conversation between Berry and Joan Scheckel. Please head to our podcast to hear the full conversation.





**ELIANE
UBALIJORO
LEADS WITH
EMPATHY**



For an issue that explores the theme of hopeful leadership, Eliane Ubalijoro was recommended to me by a trusted friend whose worldview and broad education I value immensely. “She will blow your mind,” my friend told me.

Eliane gives herself whole-heartedly to empathic leadership. In her multi-dimensional career she works with smallholder farmers in Africa as well as technologists and world leaders, to envisage a better planet for us to share for generations to come. Eliane works at the intersection of human capital, social capital and natural capital, understanding each from a granular, practical perspective as well as a philosophical approach. She embodies the future of leadership as a unity of head, heart and hands.

One of the many things I love about this conversation with Eliane is her openness to learning, continually challenging herself to look inward for a deeper understanding of her own responses as well as those who she works with, to work towards increasingly positive results for people and planet. Perhaps this commitment to lifelong learning and adaptability is the organic answer to what a thriving 21st-century leader must do: park the ego at the door, listen actively, and move into the big questions with curiosity and vulnerability in equal measure.

In May of this year, Eliane will relocate to Nairobi, Kenya, to take up the role of CEO at CIFOR-ICRAF: a global agroforestry research institute that seeks solutions to transform the way land and renewable resources are used to produce food for a world with a growing population. Eliane leans into the unknown with characteristic enthusiasm: she gives herself warmly to the moment, and invites familiarity and discomfort into her every day.

KIRSTY DE GARIS: You're a woman in leadership in many different sectors and there are so many strings to your professional bow. It would be wonderful to begin with your background and where your interests intersect, because they are so broad.

ELIANE UBALIJORO: I have an undergraduate degree in agriculture and a PhD in molecular genetics. One of the defining influences in my life has been my mother seeing transformation of landscapes in Rwanda over time. In my childhood I remember a lot of forests and streams, and as an adult I see a lot of urbanisation. My family has always had a home in the countryside in Rwanda and I've always felt really close to smallholder farmers and to nature. The other defining moment in my life was the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. That demonstrated the power of leadership and what it can do in the worst of cases, in 100 days. It launched me on a reflection of what leadership for good versus leadership for evil might be. And the importance of bringing consciousness to everything we do.

Can you tell me more about the bringing of consciousness? How does that work in practical terms?

For over a decade I've worked at the interface of leadership and innovation. And I've explored the area of values-based leadership. The Barrett values framework, that looks at levels of consciousness, and paralleling the seven levels of Maslow's pyramid of needs with consciousness we bring to leadership. Different levels of consciousness will produce different outcomes in terms of how we lead. So the level of consciousness during

Subject:
Eliane Ubalijoro

Occupation:
Digital sustainability expert

Interviewer:
Kirsty de Garis

Photographer:
Harald Schrader

Location:
Montreal, Canada

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leadership, if it's at survival mode, will produce survival results. For leadership to produce transformation requires what a Barrett values scale would say is a level four leader, which opens the partnership on the heart chakra.

HOW DO WE OPEN OURSELVES TO DISCOMFORT? HOW DO WE OPEN OURSELVES TO TRULY LISTENING AND BEING PRESENT FOR OTHERS, SO THAT WE BRING ABOUT A COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE THAT IS GREATER THAN THE INDIVIDUAL INTELLIGENCES THAT WE WORK WITH?

My work in the environment has been elevated by my work in leadership, in that environmental transformation requires the highest level of leadership and consciousness in terms of the Barrett value scale. The work of Barrett around different scales of consciousness and how that relates to individual leadership, collective leadership, have been frameworks in guiding me to understand when I'm working with people what is their level of maturity. If you work at a level of maturity that is much higher than theirs, sometimes what you bring to the table, because it's so foreign to who they are, can be seen as violence. It's the importance of working with people where they are, ensuring that our language mirrors their framework in the most enlightened way possible to help them grow and help us grow as well, to collectively move forward positively.

Part of your work is with smallholder farmers, and women play a large role in that. I'd love to hear more about your thoughts on women in leadership, where you see the future. Because I've heard you say we have 60 harvests to get this right.

There's a wonderful interface around soil health, regenerative agriculture, regenerative economies. How we relate to each other in terms of gender and our relationship with the earth, with our planet and what it means to incubate things in the dark. On a psychological level, the feminine incubates

for nine months and the child comes. So the relationship to time, to what grows in the dark, is paralleled when you put a seed in the soil. You have to nurture it, you have to water the soil and eventually a plantlet emerges. The nurturing that we often identify with feminine leadership is a critical trait in terms of what is required to nurture soils back to health. We live in a world where a third of the soils on the planet are degraded. And in Africa where I do a lot of work, 65 per cent of soils are degraded. How we produce food for the future is going to be critical as to whether we extend those 60 seasons or use them up.

Wow. Sixty harvests is nothing at all in the arc of history. I'm interested in the balance between practical, hands-in-the-soil knowledge, and digital, which seems to remove those hands from the soil. Where do the two intersect and where you see the potential?

Barbara Marx Hubbard, who was a futurist, said that the internet is the neural network of humanity. When you think about that, it's how we are living in symbiosis as humanity in terms of our relationships of interconnectedness with each other and all over the planet, versus how we are

living out of balance, or out of authenticity. The digital age is a mirror of the best and the worst of who we are. And this is where it is so important that we think of our digital age in terms of that neural network and ask ourselves, "What is it that is needed to keep that neural network healthy, keep it in the space of truth, of science and not conspiracy-based?" It's important in terms of how we relate to each other, what is the level of trust we bring to that

network. Healthy soil has a network of microbes, insects, root systems, that aerate the soil and allow it to be spongy and absorb a lot of water. According to my colleague Vijay Kumar in India, who works with Community Natural Farming in the state of Andhra Pradesh, for every gram of solar organic carbon we have in the soil, the soil holds eight grams of water. What that translates to is that healthy soils can hold 50 times more water than soils that have been heavily degraded and have had a lot of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides. The reality is if we want to keep our soils healthy, we need to keep that network, that web in the soil of organisms healthy. In the same way in terms of how we relate to each other's humanity, how do we keep our interconnectedness healthy? This is how I relate what is happening in the digital age and what is happening to our soils. They're mirrored by the level of consciousness that we're bringing to how we're treating the planet in terms of the planetary boundaries we live in and in terms of how we're using the digital age to spread misinformation or be a space of sharing, of knowledge, of nurturing and supporting each other.

What score are you giving us, Eliane? [laughs]

[laughs] We can do better!

Where do you see tangible opportunities to do better?

What I'm most excited about is partnership for good. I look at COP15, which was the Conference of Parties around biodiversity that happened last December in Montreal. At the beginning of COP15, we had about 300 corporations that had signed on to become more regulated, asking governments around the world to regulate them more effectively so that they can contribute to bending the curve on biodiversity laws. And by the end of COP15 over 1000 companies with trillions of annual returns in GDP had signed up to be more regulated.

BUSINESSES ARE SEEING THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF NOT ONLY PROFIT AND PRODUCTS, BUT CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN CAPITAL, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NATURAL CAPITAL. HOW WE AS HUMANITY LOOK AT THOSE DIFFERING FORMS OF CAPITAL AND ACCOUNT FOR THEM IN EVERYTHING WE DO COULD TRANSFORM HOW WE RELATE TO EACH OTHER AND TO THE PLANET.

I'm based in the south of Australia. It's a continent that's seen biodiversity loss at a faster rate than any other continent. I'm interested to learn about how you're working globally with Indigenous wisdom and how that is incorporated into technology and innovation.

Many of the areas in Canada, where I'm based right now, that are critical to carbon sequestration, to biodiversity, are on Indigenous lands. I have had the privilege of working with many Indigenous experts across Canada, reflecting on how we elevate what we call "two-eyed seeing." It's bringing

the best of Western science and the best of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom together in ways that enrich us and in ways that build on the millennia of relationship that Indigenous people have had in harmony with the land. How do we ensure this wisdom is kept in how we move forward? There's an expression that says, how do we look at our governance systems seven generations forward, or in some cases, seeing our generation and three generation backwards and three generations forwards? It's this idea of looking at governance across the generations. That's how we lead to be the ancestors that future generations need us to be. Our planet is an island and we are all peoples of this island in this cosmos. So how do we hold the cosmology that brings all of humanity in a brotherhood and sisterhood that allows us to





live our interconnectedness and doesn't create toxic patriarchy and hierarchal systems that marginalise certain people?

Who's doing it well?

We have islands of wisdom and of regeneration all over the world. We need these metaphorical islands to connect to each other so that we create a tipping point that accelerates living this interconnectedness more effectively.

When it comes to your journey as a leader, how have you evolved and learned to lead and bring people along with you?

It's about collectively holding discomfort. If we can collectively hold the discomfort, we can collectively hold the creativity to get through hard problems. We can be adaptive leaders that not only use technology but work collectively to identify adaptive solutions when technical solutions aren't enough. It's that capacity of being able to ensure that we're open to creativity, to innovation, to finding ways to work together, that we listen to each other with respect. That we work with curiosity and openness and create safe environments for people to fail forward and to get up and keep going. It's about bringing joy to our work through holding discomfort that allows us to build a world that is better collectively.

I love that idea. As a people pleaser, holding discomfort is really, really uncomfortable for me. [laughs] I wonder if you have an example of when that's worked for you? When you've as a team been able to lean into that discomfort openly?

You know, there's those moments of silence that become uncomfortable where you want to jump into a conversation. But some people need a little bit more time to process, to have space to come in, to feel that they're welcome, that they belong and can contribute. Being able to hold that moment of silence and really listen and not try to formulate answers while somebody else is talking. Truly being present to the moment is a constant practice.

Such a good reminder, to leave that open space. I heard you describe the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis of values and I'd love you to expand on that. We will be living with the ramifications of that pandemic, and waiting for the next one, all our lives.

On a scientific level, epidemics and pandemics happen when you have emerging diseases that meet hosts that have not had their immune system interact with a particular infectious agent. In the era we're living in, where we have more and more biodiversity loss, humans have become the primary host for infectious diseases. And so one of the things we don't realise is by not taking care of nature, which is a value issue, we have become the primary host for viruses that are emerging: types of diseases that may have been more mild in other hosts. Because those hosts are disappearing, our immune system is confronted with micro-organisms that we do not know how to deal with. So how we live in harmony with nature determines our capacity to prevent future pandemics and epidemics. We had Ebola. We had SARS. We've had many warnings but did not heed the call. On the positive side, I would say the research community and pharmaceutical industry came together to bring us vaccines at a rate we've never seen on the planet, so we saw the best of collaboration in terms of bringing medicines forward. But we also saw the vulnerability of our systems – healthcare workers around the world dying while caring for people. What is the value of care on the planet in terms of how we took care of them? And how did we take care of the people who had to work? Many of us who have white collar jobs could stay at home, order online, keep working and be fine. But





if you were a cashier in a grocery store, you were there every day. If you had a delivery job you were interacting with people and had more chances of being contaminated. If you were a nurse in a hospital ... How are we taking care of the people who care for us, and remunerate them accordingly? At the same time as COVID-19 we had the murder of George Floyd that triggered a movement around the world around social injustice. Who is allowed to be safe in their bodies in this world and who is not? A lot happened in COVID-19. We had marches while the virus was raging. It was a time of crisis and of deep reflection around how we live our interconnectedness of nature around that issue of infectious disease and zoonosis, which is this idea of diseases going from wildlife to humans, livestock and our pets. And how that created a social crisis around how are we treated around the world.

HOW DO WE DISMANTLE SYSTEMIC RACISM, SYSTEMIC SEGREGATION? AND HOW DO WE REFLECT ON WHAT IT IS TO BE HUMAN AND WHAT IT IS TO CARE? THIS IS WHY FOR ME COVID-19 IS A CRISIS IN VALUES BECAUSE IT REALLY COMES BACK TO HOW WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER AND THE PLANET.

They're big questions. I'm wondering how we resolve that tension between what is considered to be progress, and then on the other hand the planetary destruction that seems to be taken for granted as part of that progress. How do we frame that assessment to see progress as restorative and regenerative instead of destructive?

of symbiosis between humanity in itself and humanity and all of nature, that we should see ourselves as part of.

I wonder what it is about the nature in some humans to exploit. Do you think that is something we can reason our way out of, to build a more inclusive society? Or are we fighting against a human nature that won't change?

There's a change of paradigm that's needed from an extractive economy to regenerative economies. We can think of hundreds of years of slavery, of colonisation, of imperialism, and how that affects who we are as a society. And we can really think about what it has meant to have societies based on the exploitation of man by man. Exploitation of land by man. We need to shift to a relationship

The critical word is "reason." We cannot reason ourselves out of this. [laughs] One of the realities is we have our rational selves, we have our emotional selves, we have our psychological selves. And all of those are interacting all the time. What we know is that our emotional selves will trump our rational

selves. I think this is where the consciousness we bring to who we are, what we do and how we move in our being on this planet become important because it's about living in harmony: heart, mind and body. This is as individuals but also as the multicellular entity that is the planet. If we think about it at those levels it comes down to that interrelatedness: are we living it in ways where we are exchanging and sharing and living in empathy? Or that we are taking from and that we're hoarding and that we have a zero-sum game thinking. We have fixed mindsets, not growth mindsets. And those will determine how we see our relationships with others and with the planet. Fixed mindsets come about from not having wide enough frameworks, enough curiosity to think that we can do better. Fixed mindsets are a stuck-ness in fear. There are opportunities to engage in education and learning and interacting with others with curiosity, with creativity, to open ourselves to nurturing and building growth mindsets.

Well that's an exciting prospect to me. So dreaming is free, Eliane.

Dreaming is free! I love that!

Yes! If you were to dream your vision for the world, what would it look like?

Oh my God. Half of the planet would be covered in nature. [laughs] We'd bring back forests, we'd bring back all of the different landscapes as close as they were to their original state and at least half of the planet to ensure that we're living in harmony with nature, within planetary boundaries. We would have circular economies. The word "waste" would be eliminated from our vocabulary. I would like us to have economies that are circular, that are regenerative, that are green, that really bring the best of our technological age, the best of scientific innovation and the best of empathy. And the best of biomimicry in terms of imitating nature to look at how we create economies that are fully regenerative. If we are unable to hold the suffering of the world, we cannot be part of the solution. Our science is important but our empathy is equally important. How do we look at decolonising frameworks, where we're looking at not the most powerful people making decisions, but about bringing the most diverse voices to work collectively to allow the emergence of a future that we can all claim we've contributed to? That we can be proud of as future ancestors. ●



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**JANE HARDWICKE
COLLINGS
WELCOMES THE
CONVERSATION**



A former midwife, Jane Hardwicke Collings works in the realm of women's leadership, personal development and community-building through her workshops at the School of Shamanic Womancraft. It sounds counter-cultural, but as I explore new systems, all roads lead to understanding natural cycles and inhabiting our own bodies. Everybody talks about female leadership, equal opportunity and the rising crisis of poor mental health and suicide in young women, but what are the solutions? That question led me to Jane's work with women who have arrived at a clarifying awareness – that we need new understanding of what it takes to lead, of how to honour the feminine in our world and that any thriving future for humanity will elevate the female experience to one of reverence and sacredness.

In a roaming conversation, Jane shares with me her thinking about feminine archetypes as guides and that the arc of a woman's menstrual cycle is key to understanding female leadership: how we might govern ourselves better and honour the Earth by honouring our bodies and our cycles. This work is so important, not because it is counter-cultural, but its omission from systems design is how we got here in the first place. Ideas of rest, shared power, embodiment, caring, gentleness, reverence, compassion, awareness, aliveness are all central to how we create the Next Economy and a regenerative future for human life on Earth. That older women should not be invisible but instead should guide communities from their place of earned wisdom and experience. Youth-obsessed, power-obsessed, money-obsessed extractive systems are killing us all. Through the privilege of growing older as a woman, I continue to learn and grow.

What does it mean to lead when you are a woman? To inhabit a woman's body and life journey in a world driven by relentless pace and extractive capitalism? What if we saw the full life cycle of a woman as a pathway to embodying personal power, with an ultimate goal to serve the world? My main thought throughout our conversation was, *Can it really be this simple?* Women have been so oppressed because of our biological imperatives: maybe the key to healing our systems is to listen to that biological rhythm and honour it.

BERRY LIBERMAN: I was told about your work by a mutual friend of ours. And someone else who I'm working with on my menstrual cycle as a pathway to understanding feminine leadership. She said, "You've got to talk to Jane." And then as often happens, all these people started telling me that I had to talk to you. So here we are. How would you articulate what you do?

Okay. You're talking to everyone here at *Dumbo Feather* and on the podcast.

language of the people who are going to listen to you, so they can hear you. I will introduce myself first before I talk about the work I do: I am a post-menopausal grandma who was a home birth midwife for 30 years and I have founded a women's mystery school. When I'm talking to people who understand what I mean, I would say I am a witch. And I am a warrior queen whose role is midwife. And I am a teacher of the women's mysteries. The easiest way to

Subject:
Jane Hardwicke Collings

Occupation:
Author and educator

Interviewer:
Berry Liberman

Photographer:
Brian Hodges p.74-79
Amy Jean Harding p.81-83

Location:
Southern Highlands, NSW

Date:
March 2023

understand all of that is, my work is around the menstrual cycle and rites of passage: birth, menarche – our first period – as well as every pregnancy, because every pregnancy results in a birth. Whatever finishes, the pregnancy's the birth. And menopause and death.

I AM VERY MUCH FOCUSED ON THE RITES OF PASSAGE THAT WE ALL GO THROUGH. A LOT OF MY WORK IS ABOUT HELPING WOMEN TO REALISE WHAT'S HAPPENED IN THEIR LIFE SO FAR AND TO MAKE SENSE OF IT. AND TO RECLAIM THEIR RITES OF PASSAGE AND HEAL THEM AND PREPARE FOR THEIR NEXT ONES FROM THAT PERSPECTIVE, FROM A HEALED PERSPECTIVE INSTEAD OF JUST HAVING THE SAME OLD THINGS HAPPEN OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

I've done a bit of work on the menstrual cycle. In the past I have resented that I have a weeks-long cycle. And I've resented that men get to be what I call week one all the time. I'm like, *I want to be in week one all the time!* When I have my period, my oldest son will say, "What... *again?*" I have felt this social current and pressure as a creative person, as a businesswoman, as all the things that I am. I've wanted to be able to be on, and never have to be off. But more and more as I'm exploring it, I'm understanding that there's a hell of a lot of wisdom and leadership in femininity. Can you talk to that?

Hmm, absolutely. This is one of my favourite subjects. Because in that desire that you feel, that you have to be on all the time and you want to be in week one all the time, and you want to be able to go, go, go and do what you want to do when you want to do it: that's what the patriarchy encourages in us. The culture that we live in is fixated on youth and beauty and 24/7 availability and instant gratification and growth, growth, growth – on, on, on, all the time. All we have to do is look at our Earth and the state of everybody's mental health and especially the state of their menstrual cycle

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and the intervention rates in birth. And then everything coming out at menopause to see that our way of living, particularly for women, but for everybody really, is not healthy. Not even practical. Actually, it's not even possible.

What we've seen recently through the enforced stop of COVID-19 is what happens to us when we rest. This modern world where we're go, go, go all the time, that growth economy mindset: it hurts our bodies. And Earth is being sacrificed. The animals, the ecosystems, the water, the air: all are showing the signs of this Peter Pan-style, unrealistic attitude that we can just keep going forever and stay young.

THE THING I LIKE THE MOST ABOUT THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS THAT THE CLUES FOR HOW TO LIVE AN EARTH-HONOURING AND SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE ARE HIDING IN PLAIN VIEW IN THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE. WE HAVE WEEKS ONE, TWO, THREE AND FOUR. AND THE CYCLE GOES REBIRTH, GROWTH, FULL BLOOM, HARVEST, DECAY, DEATH.

In the menstrual cycle, the beginning is day one of the bleeding phase.

Then it builds and peaks at ovulation. So we have the ascent. And then we have the descent where we experience the harvest, the decay, the death and the rebirth. If we avoid that, we don't get to do the decay and future planning that the cycle gives us. And we burn out fast. And it all shows up as pathology in our menstrual cycles.

But we have to opt-in to that. Most people just want to take a pill to avoid having their cycle. What richness is there to be found in opting-in to cycle awareness and working with your cycle? Because when you say decay, I'm thinking, "Oh, I don't want to do that bit."

Well you will do it anyway. And it'll be worse if you don't do it on purpose – that's part of the benefit of opting-in. But in terms of opting-in, first it's important for everybody to realise that they've opted-out: they are rejecting their bodies.

Particularly with regard to the menstrual cycle, which I feel is where a lot of this stems. Menstrual shame is what most girls are initiated into at menarche and menstrual shame leads to body shame, which leads to low self-esteem, and low self-esteem leads to all manner of wounded behaviours such as eating disorders, self-harm and, sadly for teenagers, risky and dangerous sexual decision-making. We are encouraged to reject our menstrual cycle and not do the cycle. If we reject our menstrual cycle we reject our body, because that's what our body does. When we reject our body we are lost to ourselves, and then that then plays out for the rest of our lives.

The menstrual cycle is the barometer of our wellbeing. There is a wonderful quote by Alexandra Pope from the Red School in the UK. She says that the menstrual cycle is our canary in the coal mine. Everything that's not working in your life shows up in your menstrual cycle to get your attention, so that you can change the way you live, the way you think, the way you do things, so that you can come back to a harmony with your nature. The other thing about the opt-in is that it's about returning to our nature, our way. And just to get nature clear, we don't visit nature. We *are* nature. We're the human variety of nature. If there is a job on Earth for the human variety of nature, I would imagine it's gardening and tending to animals. I know that many people do that and find a lot of richness from it, and that's probably where all of us have come from and inevitably where many of us need to go back to, to feed ourselves in the future. But the purpose and benefit of opting-in to the cycle is that you feel the interconnectedness with all other parts of nature and that feels really good. Humans want to make meaning of things. One of the ways we survive is to make meaning. Making meaning around our menstrual cycle is so easy because the same cycle is happening everywhere else in nature. The way it's most obvious is in the cycle of the seasons of the Earth. In our menstrual cycle we go through seasons on the inside: spring, summer, autumn and winter. And more than anything, the exciting aspect of the menstrual cycle is that in each cycle you can be reborn. There is so much personal growth and development available in the menstrual cycle. More than you could ever want.

Listening to your body feels... counter-cultural.

Totally. And that's a problem, right? We have bodies. And our bodies are getting sicker and sicker. Our mental health is getting more and more complex and complicated and damaged, so to speak. We have a window of time in which to change things. We have to change the way we live, change the way we treat the Earth, change the way we treat each other, change the way we treat our bodies, the animals and all of that. And we need to take responsibility at this time to do everything that we can, especially thinking about our great, great grandchildren.

Menstrual cramps are trying to call you into your body. She's telling you to just slow down for a bit. Have a rest.



It's really challenging when I listen to you. I've had really powerful, quite overwhelming periods. I know lots of my girlfriends after we've had our kids, everything changes again. You think it's one consistent thing but it's this massive thing, happening to half the population, all the time.

One of the things that I love hearing at the moment is a lot of conversation around menopause as well. Because the other thing that we're told is we have this very short window where we're of use. It's when we're hot and skinny and fuckable. Then we have to produce bodies and stay hot and stay fuckable. And then we go out to pasture. And pretty much from then it's like silence and white noise. We don't know what happens to women but they start getting sweaty and tired and useless. And menopause, and no one cares, and then invisibility. So a different story is emerging, which is exciting. You just introduced yourself as a post-menopausal grandmother!

And we're ignoring it.

I grew up in the birth world, as a midwife, and I saw birth in the institutions and birth in the home: two very different things. As a midwife, I thought there couldn't possibly be anything more transformational than giving birth until I went through menopause. Like every rite of passage, menopause is not a problem, it's the culmination of your life thus far. Our rites of passage have been medicalised. They've been claimed by the medical system. The menstrual cycle gets switched off, birth is medicalised and menopausal women are given drugs to stop it. Anything to do with the feminine or women, that's put down, feared,

turned into a taboo or made a joke of. Every culture that has survived the patriarchy has not just oppressed women and the feminine, it has sacrificed their men to war or to work for the man. Every rite of passage creates the future, but when women give birth, they are being birthed as a mother. When you're pregnant you don't just grow a baby. You grow yourself into the mother this baby's come for by being with and dealing with everything that arises.

So true.

Ask every pregnant woman.

EVERYTHING'S UP FOR RENEGOTIATION WHEN YOU'RE PREGNANT. IT'S LIKE YOU HAVE A WHOLE NEW WAY OF BECOMING YOURSELF. AND THERE'S A TERM FOR THAT NOW. IT'S CALLED MATRESCENCE. THERE'S ADOLESCENCE, THE BECOMING OF AN ADULT AROUND PUBERTY. AND THERE IS MATRESCENCE, WHICH IS THE BECOMING OF A MOTHER AROUND PREGNANCY AND BIRTH AND MOTHERING. IT'S NOT A MOMENT, IT'S A BECOMING.

I'm starting to bring in the equivalent around menopause called "sage-escence", which is the becoming of the wise woman.

I love it.

So back to birth, which is another canary in the coal mine for our culture. Australia represents a pretty typical Western world story around birth. Less than 50 per cent of women have a normal birth – more like 48 per cent – less than half of all women. One in three have an induction of labour to start the birth. So many drugs are used because we've been led to believe that birth is just a medical emergency that is associated with so much risk. There is another way, and it's



Jane Hardwicke Collings facilitating her Autumn Woman Harvest Queen workshop.

called the midwifery model. And that is where midwives work with women to support them in a natural rite of passage of their lives. If they need medical help, they get it.

And now to start this conversation about menopause. There's a wonderful First Nations American saying: at menarche a girl meets her power, through menstruation she practices her power and at menopause she becomes her power. In traditional Chinese medicine, menopause is called the second spring. There was a time when evolutionary biologists asked the question, "Why would human women live beyond their fertility? What could possibly be the use of them?" And as evolutionary biologists do, they looked to nature for information. What they found were that there are only five creatures on the planet that go through menopause: human women and pilot whales, beluga whales, orcas and narwhals. So they had a look at those toothed whales to see, well, what's the point of them? Why are they surviving? In the toothed whales, the post-reproductive grandmothers are the leaders of the pods. Their being alive ensures that their daughters and sons live longer, and their grandchildren thrive. Because the post-menopausal toothed whales have wisdom. They know where to find food in a current, that sort of thing. And so in the menopause time, the blueprint is for us to be leaders. Imagine.

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Oh I love it so much. And it's making me think, funnily enough, about how shallow our culture forces us to become. And when we think how do we re-imagine the economy, energy, food security, community, mental health, humanity, how do we re-imagine how we co-exist with the rest of life on Earth? This feels like a key in the door.

How rites of passage work is this: whatever happens, whoever's there and what they do and what does or doesn't happen, and whatever's going on in the world around the person going through the rite of passage at that time – *everything* that happens teaches the initiate how their culture values the role they're going into. At puberty it is adulthood. At birth it's motherhood or fatherhood.

And at menopause it's into our wise woman years. The easiest example to understand the effects of this is if we look at the menarche, our first blood. The most common experience



Jane's workshops reimagine rites of passage for our society and require deep involvement from participants.



for menarche in our modern Western world is the girl receives the messages of, *just carry on business as usual. Hide your blood. Don't tell anyone you're bleeding. Don't show any weakness. And whatever you do, don't leak or you will shame us all.* We get initiated into that and we know that's how we're supposed to behave as women. Make sure you don't leak at the very least. And then she who was initiated into womanhood at the altar of menarche – that's priestess talk – is the woman that shows up to the birth altar to give birth who is completely enculturated into how she's supposed to behave as a woman. So she's not allowed to draw any attention to herself, she has to be quiet and suffer in silence. Just take the medication so you can carry on regardless. Is it any wonder that the girls, the women who've been encouraged to just carry on regardless all the way through their menstruation before they have birth, take the drugs to be able to just keep going? By the time they get to birth, they don't even know how their body feels unmedicated. When their womb is contracting. I really believe that a conscious menstrual cycle is the best preparation for childbirth.

You have me thinking about what you said before about “sage-escence” and the menopausal years as being that feminine flow state to leadership, of being in our power. A lot of my girlfriends are talking about menopause at the moment. Everyone's a little bit afraid. The change is really hard because it's not held.

Absolutely.

Maybe we need a rite of passage for menopause as well.

We totally do. I've just come from a workshop teaching Autumn Woman Harvest Queen to 45 women in Sydney in the middle of Mardi Gras. The workshop is

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about how to harness the transformational powers of menopause. And it is like a birth. It's a labour and a birth that is related to all your previous rites of passage. It's the culmination of your life thus far. As Dr Christiane Northrup says, everything that's been swept under the carpet comes out at menopause. You can let it go and enter the second half of your life as the wise woman. You hack a culture by changing the rites of passage. ●





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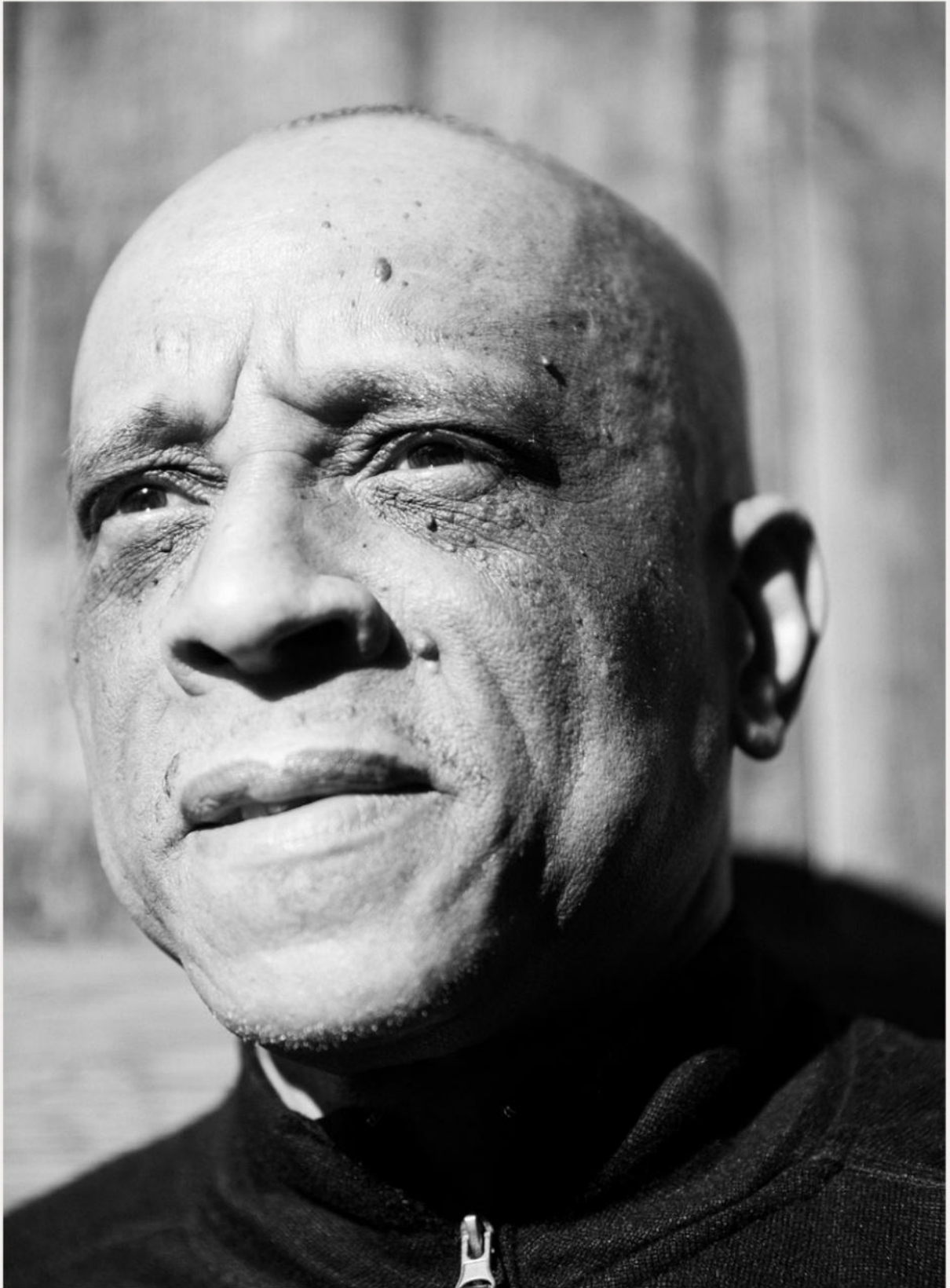
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**ORLAND BISHOP
LIVES WITH
INTEGRITY**



Arriving in New York at the age of 15 from Guyana, Orland Bishop studied medicine as a young man, enamoured of science and its mysteries. Conscious from a young age of layers of awareness and the construction of the ego, his life steered towards spiritual inquiry and practice. Today, Orland is many things: as founder of Shade Tree Multicultural Foundation, he engages in peace work with Los Angeles gangs and he also works with social healing, youth initiation projects and research into esoteric and indigenous cosmologies.

Subject:
Orland Bishop

Occupation:
Community leader

Interviewer:
Berry Liberman

Photographer:
Megan Cullen

Location:
Los Angeles

Date:
February 2023

Orland cautions that the modern world is one of winners and losers. This is problematic, he says, because “Even if you win, you feel alone in the victory.” Instead, Orland suggests that our will must be mediated by our community, the self understood in its context as belonging to our collective humanity, not in competition with. These are big, painful propositions for a society increasingly unable to make sense of things together.

I have found, time and again, that the people doing the deepest, most profound work on repairing our world, understanding our moral universe and shaping our pro-social future have a spiritual or higher-consciousness seeking practice and longing. It would seem that, religion aside, we do better when we stay curious and in awe, with less focus on command and control of our world. Orland speaks about the will, how it is something to relinquish. He suggests we should learn how we can be of service and let that guide our decisions.

I struggle with all of this as I feel the stress and sadness of our crumbling context and wish to shape a viable path forward for future generations. Speaking with wisdom keepers like Orland reminds me that there are depths to our capacity we rarely explore in our world ruled by iPhones and relentless schedules. Being in his presence opens up deep time.

As a practicing mystic, Orland Bishop invites reflection on the power of our will – for wanting more over being of service. It is an ancient intelligence that has been called forward by all religions at all times in history. It’s good to hear this attitude again, and again, and again.

BERRY LIBERMAN: It’s so wonderful to see you! How are you?

ORLAND BISHOP: Overall, well. I’ve had my mountains to climb. There were so many things. The pandemic created more work for communities that are so challenged.

I’m so interested to hear you say that. When you talk about mountains to climb, do you ever answer that question for yourself? Or do you mean for the community?

Both. I had probably the biggest challenge in 20, 25 years. To return my psyche to another octave of self-development, I had to let go of so much to integrate something else. I knew it was coming but in the midst of all the other externalities it was

heavy. I’m regaining my momentum from what felt like an exile.

How would you describe that exile?

From the world paradigm, the current civilisation’s paradigm. I had to dissolve almost every framework to regain a fresh insight to things. A cycle had finished, 28 years had finished in relationship to the body of work that I took on in 1995. It’s been liberated, given back to the world and now I am entering a new beginning.

I'm fascinated by the notion of a spiritual life and a spiritual plane of consciousness and how it interacts with the world of the body and the everyday things that happen. In humanity right now, with all the metacrisis at play, we're trying to get our mammalian brains around what is required to heal ourselves, heal the world, show up for this moment. If there is a higher consciousness, does that higher consciousness want anything for humanity? Or are we just here to play out whatever the drama is on the stage and exit stage left? I'm still rooting for humanity's survival and thriving, and for humanity to lift in consciousness and that we would all mature into using more of the richness of what it is to be human. I keep thinking if there's higher consciousness, and I know human beings have asked this for aeons, wouldn't the higher consciousness want us to survive this? Or not necessarily?

I'm loathe to go backwards and tell everybody your story. But maybe this is a good moment to talk about the arc of your life and why these questions are being asked of you.

Well it's been now 40 years in the United States. My family immigrated to United States: my parents in the late 1970s and siblings in the early 1980s. I came in 1982 to Brooklyn, in the middle of my teen years, went to high school there. I came from Guyana, the tropics, being 70 per cent Amazon rainforest. I felt like I had nature in its abundance in my 15 years of life there. In school, I took interest in science but then my exposure to philosophy, my exposure to history, at least the deeper history of African history in relationship to coming into contact with the West, brought my awareness into a much larger reality.

Were you a spiritual child? Were there any signs of what would come?

Oh yes. I came to observe the consciousness in one of my teachers in school. She was observing me not paying attention to her, but she could not see what I was being attentive to. I observed her thoughts being whether she should punish me for not paying attention, but I saw the dilemma of her heart saying, "There's nothing to judge," and her mind saying, "I am the authority." And I questioned, *Why would she do something her heart is telling her not to do?*

**I REMEMBER MAKING A DECISION THAT I WOULD NEVER BETRAY MY HEART.
THAT I HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT I CALL INTEGRITY OF WILL,
THAT IS NOT GOVERNED BY WHO SOMEONE ELSE WANTS ME TO BE.**

So I woke up the next day a couple of hours earlier, to connect with this internal code. I took control of my will from about five years old: I would not do something that was against an inner awareness guided by other intelligences. And I prepared a couple of hours before school every day to communicate with that and then allow teachers in the invisible realm to guide me through the rest of the day.

That is such a beautiful formation story. And it's fascinating to me that you were also drawn to science. A lot of people think science is a black-and-white discipline. But it's a juicy, beautiful space of human curiosity and experimentation, which I love. I feel like we're in an age that wants to have both, that it's a coming together. How do we develop that capacity in ourselves, to trust and belong to that deep spiritual, intuitive voice?

I get stuck in the second, symbolic, realm. I love that, the realm of archetypes which is ideal and it's where the possibilities live. Between realm one and realm two, I'm happy as a clam, it's all coming in and I feel like it's mine to do. And that's a big mistake of course – maybe my own immaturity. But if I hear what you're saying, the third bit, which is the realm of reality, that soul recognition. Is that where you should be identifying what is yours to do?

From the realm of possibility, the archetypal world gives us ideals first. So the ideal is, Can I organise my will to be in service of something that will transform me? Then the symbolic: I begin to see signs in the world of something that could bring my will into the world creation process. Then the third level is the reality that brings me something directly from my own conscious experience.

Well, yes. And it'll come from community. Because the second phase is to create the community that supports your gift coming into the world. It is a realm of so much abundance and it feels beautiful to live within all of that giving of inspiration. Aspiration also has to be encoded with a certain degree of reverence for what a spiritual world reveals in the realm of abundance. Part of the caution is that if you have a community around you, they recognise what you're really good at. The world reveals it to you.

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- I would have loved that little reminder sooner!

Modernity doesn't allow us. The schooling that I went through tells us I should not tell the community what I'm thinking. That I should use it and achieve first place in the exercise of a competitive process. That I can't rely on someone else's reflection if I'm trying to win.

A WORLD OF WINNERS AND LOSERS: THIS IS A PROBLEM. EVEN IF YOU WIN, YOU FEEL ALONE IN THE VICTORY. PSYCHOLOGICALLY IT CREATES A HEAVIER WEIGHT TO HAVE ACHIEVED SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN'T SHARE.

Where do we start? When you sit in silence, when you sit in a degree of aspiration and wait for the guidance. The mind is not what I learned, it is what I develop. What you learn can be lost, it can be forgotten. But development is a certain kind of encoding of elevating the soul into the world. And you're seen more clearly by others by living into that.

Survival of the fittest, not collective thriving. These are profound ideas that really are very painful. And this is where we are.

I have to include others in my worldview in a precise way. They're not adversaries, they're the context that helps me to keep refining my will. And to keep asking, *What do I have that belongs to*

you and what do you have that belongs to me? This is the economy. It has to be understood at its spiritual and not material.



Enough mystics in the world have touched realms of consciousness that everyday people like myself don't have contact with in conscious ways. Maybe unconsciously, when we have a moment to touch base with the breath and stare up at the sky and see the birds and know that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. I still wonder why that hasn't saved us. How we got to here, where we're so very much on the precipice of civilisational collapse and ecological collapse? Does that worry you? Do you see it all as necessary? How could we understand, those of us who aren't as far on the spiritual path? How could we understand conscious leadership and how to be in this moment in a hopeful frame?

I want to come back to your story. When you came to Brooklyn, New York, at the age of 15, what were your impressions? How did that experience shape you in early adulthood?

and treated very differently. They spoke another language, French, but also that they were of darker complexion in relationship to the others. I'd never seen that kind of prejudice in an outright structure and the school went along with carrying that process. I was the only English speaker who joined the Haitian club and engaged without having language as the bridge. I bridge it with my own feelings. So it began a process for me to learn how language is structured from a feeling in relationship to another human being and the truth we could share. That, for a couple of years, allowed me to have friendships outside of the cultural gap that was created.

You wanted to be a doctor at one time.

I pursued it all the way to medical school and realised that it was still not what I wanted to do.

But I needed the experience, and this is the thing about the discipline of studying. I was able to ask the questions that I wanted to ask, even though the books weren't written for the questions I was asking. I had to do some independent research most of the time for the questions that I carried, which had to do with the ego: that it lived in the body in a certain way and that the choices we make, as energetic processes, affect health and affect our environment. In college, I had to write a paper in philosophy class about what we as human beings share that is mostly on an energetic level. And it was a philosophical thesis, but it had all the scientific criteria for me in the research I later engaged with.

Where were you led to?

During my medical studies, in 1992, a friend was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. He passed in 1995. I was supporting his care and I developed an awareness of his psychic space. As he came closer to the decline of his physical health, the spiritual health increased. In December 1994, spending time with him while he was in hospice care, we would engage with these levels of investigation of the soul. One day I went into the room and he was asleep. I was about to leave, I didn't want to wake him. He said, "You'd better do what you're here to do." And I looked around and he was asleep. And this is really the first clue that the superconscious can exercise its will

outside of the physical form that we are. I asked him with confidence, “What did you say?” he spoke from this sleep, “You heard me, you’d better do what you’re here to do and if you don’t do it, you will regret it.” When he woke up he said, “They don’t know the kind of doctor you’re supposed to be.” He died a month later and I kept journeying with the vibration of this intelligence that he introduced. I changed my orientation. I added a lot of disciplines to what I had learned in the allopathic field and kept going. I didn’t feel I needed the degree to do that. I just needed to advance my thinking. And I supported the emergence of a number of different practices that had to do with the healing of physical, emotional, mental and ancestral challenges in people’s lives: which one causes illness and which one causes transformation. It’s been 28 years of doing that work and it’s still changing me.

You have said, “Society used to be an initiated thing. Not a group of people trying to do their own thing, but a group trying to realise the collective intention.” How do we return to a positive path for the collective? To that idea of what are the opportunities for society to repair itself, to be on a path of collective intention?

I would say observation. We have returned to it, we just don’t observe how subtle it is. We’re still in a certain kind of denial that it has to look a certain way and it has to look as if it is an exercise of the will into the exterior world. Our will is going more into the interior aspects of consciousness.

Modernity is not a conscious will experience, it’s an unconscious will experience. We’ve inherited enemies in our feeling, that someone else is putting my life at risk. This is not true. Our shadow is putting our life at risk. Our personal unconscious is putting our life at risk. And this is where the reconciliation must first happen. We must accept that this very thing that is a shadow is in devotion to a higher light. We must turn that will internally, towards service of something that is in the other person. If my will turns into service of you, I’m doing my will a favour. This is the dilemma of our time.

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So what type of leaders do we need to serve this moment?

We’re still feeling the scarcity because we’re not in community. We’re not really in love with our will in the world. Acceptance that I am here puts me in touch with a higher purpose. Regardless of position and power and politics, those things do not bring us here to the essential self. I must create the integrity for something that will come alive in me because it’s living at the most inner part of consciousness.

I really feel that this world we’re living in resists that proposition so very much.

I get it and I understand. In creating a patriarchal world, we had to create it around knowledge. So the tree of life is in the maternal structure, which is in the womb, right? The earliest symbolic systems that understood the archetypal world first created it as an egg or a womb. Not branches into specifications of knowledge and power and privileges. Most ancient initiations had to do with putting the human being back in the womb of life in some form.

So why have women been so powerfully excluded from those initiatory rites, those worlds of both intellectual and spiritual traditions? Why were we shut out of the gates?

Because the power dynamics were quite obvious. That the woman had, even in childbirth, the most mystical revelations because the child was a spiritual being entering into their physical body. The child was understood to be a seer in the mother’s womb. And people who could understand that would even kill the mother and



the child to create a protection of their power structures. The violation had to do with the knowledge that this was a special kind of relationship, mother and child. The mother was the priest. The child was the priest. This remained intact for a long time until the male initiation, which was then, *How do you construct the world that was gifted by the spiritual seer?* And they created a world in their own interests. Over time – it wasn't immediate. The child was always the risk factor of every civilisation because they brought in the new. And if they remained in the mystical reality over a certain age, they were persecuted. I see the tears and I'm feeling your sensitivity to this higher virtue. How do I support people who I know are moved this way? Because the feeling that allows this empathy is really what allows the higher world creation to happen. I'm feeling what you're feeling. So much loss. And it's time it stopped.

Healing is becoming more radical because it will transform what we have inherited. This age of humanity will take in the aspirations of all our ancestors that are reaching us. This is not an everyday discourse, even though I would love it to be. When I work with people who are mentally ill, or kids on drugs, they get what I do in consciousness far more quickly than people who have to ask me what I am doing.

BEGINNING NEVER LEFT THE WORLD, BUT WE NOW HAVE TO REFINE OUR SENSES IN ORDER TO OBSERVE IT. I'M JUST POINTING TO THE REFINING OF OUR SENSES, NOT TO THE THINGS THAT ARE OBVIOUS. BUT THE VERY THING THAT ALLOWS US TO SEE CAN BE SEEN. LIKE MY EYES CAN BE SEEN FROM ANOTHER LEVEL. I'M TRYING TO INVITE US TO LIBERATE OURSELVES FROM HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OURSELVES. ●



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Sarah Wilson, Author



Being



We can deepen our appreciation of beauty
in the world and with it, the joyfulness and
meaningfulness of our experience.

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ACCESSING YOUR THREE CENTRES OF INTELLIGENCE FOR INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP

When was the last time you truly listened and paid
attention to all three centres of intelligence?

Melanie Owens

The wonder of modern neuroscience has caught up with ancient wisdom and now tells us that we each have three brains, or three centres of intelligence. The one we most often think about and pay attention to is the “head”, or our cognitive processing brain (IQ). We also have a heart brain (our emotional centre, or EQ) and a gut brain (our instinctive, sensing-for-action centre, or SQ). Each brain has sensory neurons, motor neurons, ganglia, and neurotransmitters. Each is able to absorb information, process it, and store it for access when needed.

Each centre of intelligence has a number of functions that it serves better than the others.

- Our Head – IQ brain – is great for thinking, cognitive perception and making meaning of things. At its best, it is the seat of ideas and creativity.
- Our Heart – EQ brain – takes the lead on emotional processing, on values and on our connection with others. At its best, it is the source of passion and compassion.
- Our Gut – SQ brain – is designed to focus on our sense of self, on self-preservation and mobilisation. At its best, it is the root of courage to take action from an instinctive, sensing place of body wisdom.

The three centres of intelligence are the leadership trinity for the self-aware individual and leader. All too often, leaders are either disconnected from their heart and gut brains, or they process the messages those two brains are sending through the head brain. Historically, Western society has embedded in our culture that decisions are best made rationally, with all necessary data and thoughtful analysis. We don't want to depend on gut instinct and we want emotion out of the equation. Using this approach, there are times when everything works out fine. There are also times when the result is problematic, even disastrous.

The invitation is to develop a more balanced leadership approach that draws on the strengths of all three intelligence centres. Like a three-legged stool that, with uneven legs, would be wobbly and unstable, ideally we have all of our three 'stool legs' of intelligence balanced to make grounded leadership the place from which we react, respond, and make decisions.

Leaders who apply their three centres of intelligence are beginning the process of reprogramming their neural networks to believe in – and succeed with – leading the change. They plant the seeds in their subconscious that will help them find the path through the inevitable obstacles that arise when creating a more hopeful future.

The following page provides some more description of the three centres of intelligence, leadership mindsets and behaviours to cultivate in each of these, and then an activity designed for your own self-reflection.

The foundation to leadership is self-awareness, and from this, practicing leading others from a place of conscious understanding.



HEAD



HEART



GUT

We can all be leaders, whether it's our job or a way we step into responsibility to direct certain situations in our lives. Most leaders are not all head, hands or heart: most are some combination of the three. Even leaders who have all three in seemingly equal measures have some pitfalls to watch out for. The point is not to change who we fundamentally are, but instead to embrace our strengths, shore up our blind spots and adapt our styles to be more effective when leading across a variety of people and situations.

Abbreviation

Core idea

Highest function

Key question to engage each of the centres

Tendency to prioritise

Why it's important for a leader's impact with others

Core emotions felt in each centre (both have merit and can be a healthy catalyst for change)

Core mindset and behaviour when optimally functioning – in self and for leading others

What engaging with each centre of intelligence represents for leadership



HEAD
Centre of Intelligence

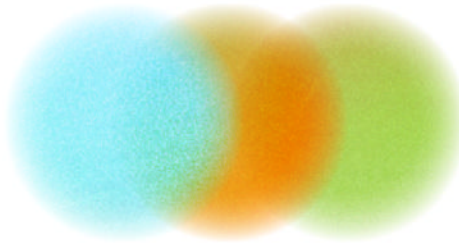


HEART
Centre of Intelligence



GUT
Centre of Intelligence

IQ	EQ	SQ
I THINK	I FEEL	I SENSE + I DO
Provides clarity Provides certainty	Provides connection Provides motivation	Provides right action to take for fairness, to create justice
What have I learned? What are you thinking? What knowledge did you draw on?	How do I feel about this? How are others feeling?	What actions am I going to take? What are the next steps? What skills can I use?
Rational data and logic	People, emotional human experience	Primal, habits and behaviours
Elicits intellectual buy-in from others	Elicits emotional buy-in from others	Elicits behavioural effort from others
from fear to confidence	From sadness to joy	from anger to peace
Critical thinking Information processing, from data to insights & understanding to knowledge and making meaning Creative ideas Problem solving Questions, risk assessment	Emoting, emotional landscape Relational affect Forming connections Values and motivations Compassion and appreciation Belonging, collaboration	Effort and Contribution Mobilisation, driving actions and behaviours Sensing the environment and responding with the right, fair and just action to take
Represents the concern for direction	Represents the concern for energy	Represents the concern for achieving goals
It comprises behaviours by which the leader understands business, sets direction, solves problems and makes decisions.	Divided into three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Others – the interpersonal aspect of leading with emotional intelligence. • Enabling Self: – the personal aspects of emotional intelligence. • Enabling Groups and the Organisation – the effective use of influence to ensure that people can work together constructively and creatively. 	It deals with holding people and processes accountable and ensuring that they perform and are iteratively developed.



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

An invitation to translate the three centres of intelligence for your own self-awareness. Take some time to write:

1. Which of the three centres of intelligence is your default, your most dominant style, the one you rely on the most for your leadership style or rely on when you are in stressful situations? Head, Heart or Gut?
2. In your own words, what characteristics do you access or demonstrate in each of the three centres?
3. Bring awareness to your dominant Centre of Intelligence as an enabler and disabler for your leadership style (consider and capture responses to these questions):
 - a. What are the upsides of your dominant centre of intelligence? What are your intelligence centre superpowers as a leader?
 - b. What are the downsides of your dominant centre of intelligence? How might this hinder you as a leader?
4. Think of a specific situation that you find challenging. Work through how accessing the three centres of intelligence can provide broader perspective on the situation
 - a. WHAT is the situation?
 - i. What are you thinking/what have you learned? (for self & others involved)
 - ii. How are you feeling? (for self & others involved)
 - iii. What are the next actions to take (for self and others involved)
 - b. HOW might your dominant centre of intelligence show up?
 - c. WHAT IF you could also access the intelligence of the other two centres? What would you do differently now?
5. What aspect will you focus on developing in the next months? Which intelligence centre will you dial up or dial down? Who do you know that currently models these behaviours that you could learn from? Consider and capture your responses and make a plan.

VISIONS OF A HOPEFUL FUTURE

We asked Dumbo Feather alumni to share with us their dreams of the future they want to co-create.



Ronni Kahn Issue #53

Great leaders have the power to inspire people, create positive change and transform communities. They are visionaries who see the potential in others and motivate them to achieve their best. As the world grapples with complex problems such as climate change, hunger, inequality, social unrest and natural disasters, strong and mindful leadership is more crucial than ever to build a better future.

Leadership is not just about holding a position of authority. It is about serving others, empowering them to achieve their full potential towards a shared goal. Great leaders share qualities such as empathy, kindness, humility and strong communication skills. They lead by example, demonstrating their principles and values by their actions with a strong commitment to sustainability, equity and social justice. In order to create a hopeful future, leaders must have a clear vision and the ability to share that vision.

A hopeful future is where every individual has access to basic needs such as food, water, shelter, education and health. Leadership is our birthright! Every one of us, from the time we are little, absorb the values required to be a leader: in all the relationships we engage in and the values we have subliminally picked up, to the different ways we interact with each other. We require the skills of kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion. It is so important to remember that in all that we do we are role models, whether we are parents, team leaders, government officials or leaders of countries. We are here to serve others and how we do it matters.

Hope comes to me daily: in the talented future leaders I see in my team, who have chosen to work in a purpose-led organisation determined to make an impact; in the classrooms around the country where we engage, teach and empower young people on the value of food, sustainability and food systems as they learn to become future eco warriors and climate activists. I see young decent human beings committed to looking after people and planet. That inspires me!

Peter Mcfadyen Issue #63

Top of my list for positive leadership comes the capacity for empathy. Whatever our experiences in life, leaders need the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences and deeply imagine what it's like to be in that person's situation. Empathy needs real skills in listening – not to be confused with hearing – to deeply learn how we might wish to respond to a situation. Then I'm looking for humility and generosity, to take that learning and work with others to decide what we might, or might not, wish to change. To make the best decisions will need courage, honesty and a good sprinkling of humour.

Many of the attributes I cite are those we normally associate with women. It would be naïve to think a gender change alone can pull us back from the brink, though more women in traditional positions of leadership is generally positive and men have caused so much to go catastrophically wrong. But perhaps gender misses the point? For me, real hope lies in the many movements and communities where everyone cultivates and nourishes the attributes I have set out, where leaders are hard to find because they are everywhere, and the group ethos provides 'leadership' rather than any individual.



Peter Mcfadyen



David Holmgren

David Holmgren Issue #63

Through permaculture we can create the world we yearn for by living it each day. As an ecological design system, permaculture empowers us to provide for fundamental human needs and aspirations through self- and collective-reliance in partnership with nature, much of it outside the straitjacket of the monetary economy. By being the 'guinea pigs' in our own experiments to test our ideas and ideology, we tackle the leading edge of innovation, and experience a humbling reconnection with ancestral wisdom. Through this process of enlightened self-interest, we uncover diverse pathways beyond the old systems of separation. We provide inspiration and insight for others who struggle to find their own path to live more lightly on the earth, sustained by nature's abundance. The global growth and diversity of the permaculture movement and its mycelial cross-fertilisation from kindred concepts is a strength that helps us survive and thrive despite the increasing 'command and control' structures that seek to separate us from nature and each other. Positive leadership in such dark times must avoid the dangers of ideological extremism on the one hand and coercive enclosure on the other. Through a permaculture life we can face both problems, leading by example towards a regenerative, reconnected, resilient society.

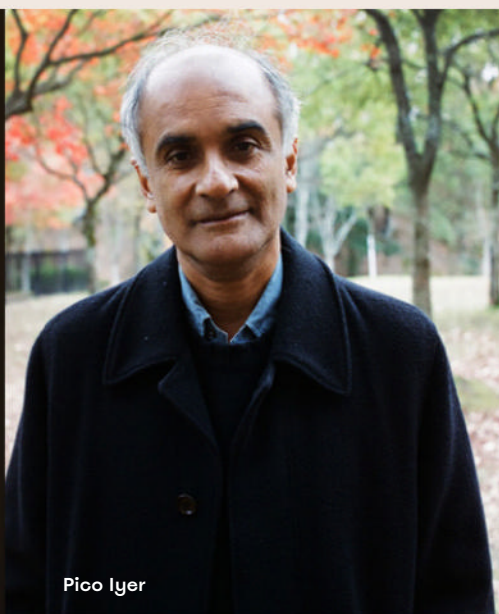
Catherine Crock Issue #47

In today's world, leadership has a significant impact on shaping our collective future. When it comes to positive leadership, I believe that kindness is at the heart of it all. Kindness towards others, oneself, and the planet is crucial to creating a hopeful future.

A leader who prioritises kindness recognises the value and importance of each individual's unique experiences and perspectives. A kind leader listens deliberately and creates an inclusive environment where everyone feels heard, valued and respected. They foster a sense of belonging and build trust and community within their team. Kindness extends to prioritising the wellbeing of everyone, recognising that happy and healthy team members are more engaged, productive and fulfilled.

Leaders who prioritise kindness towards the planet understand the importance of sustainable practices. They recognise that every small step towards reducing their environmental impact can make a big difference in preserving our planet for future generations.

My hope for a better future comes from the belief that small acts of kindness can create significant positive change. By prioritising kindness in our leadership, we can inspire others to do the same and create a ripple effect that contributes to a more kind, inclusive and sustainable world. Ultimately, a kind and thoughtful leadership approach can help build a better future that we can all be proud of.

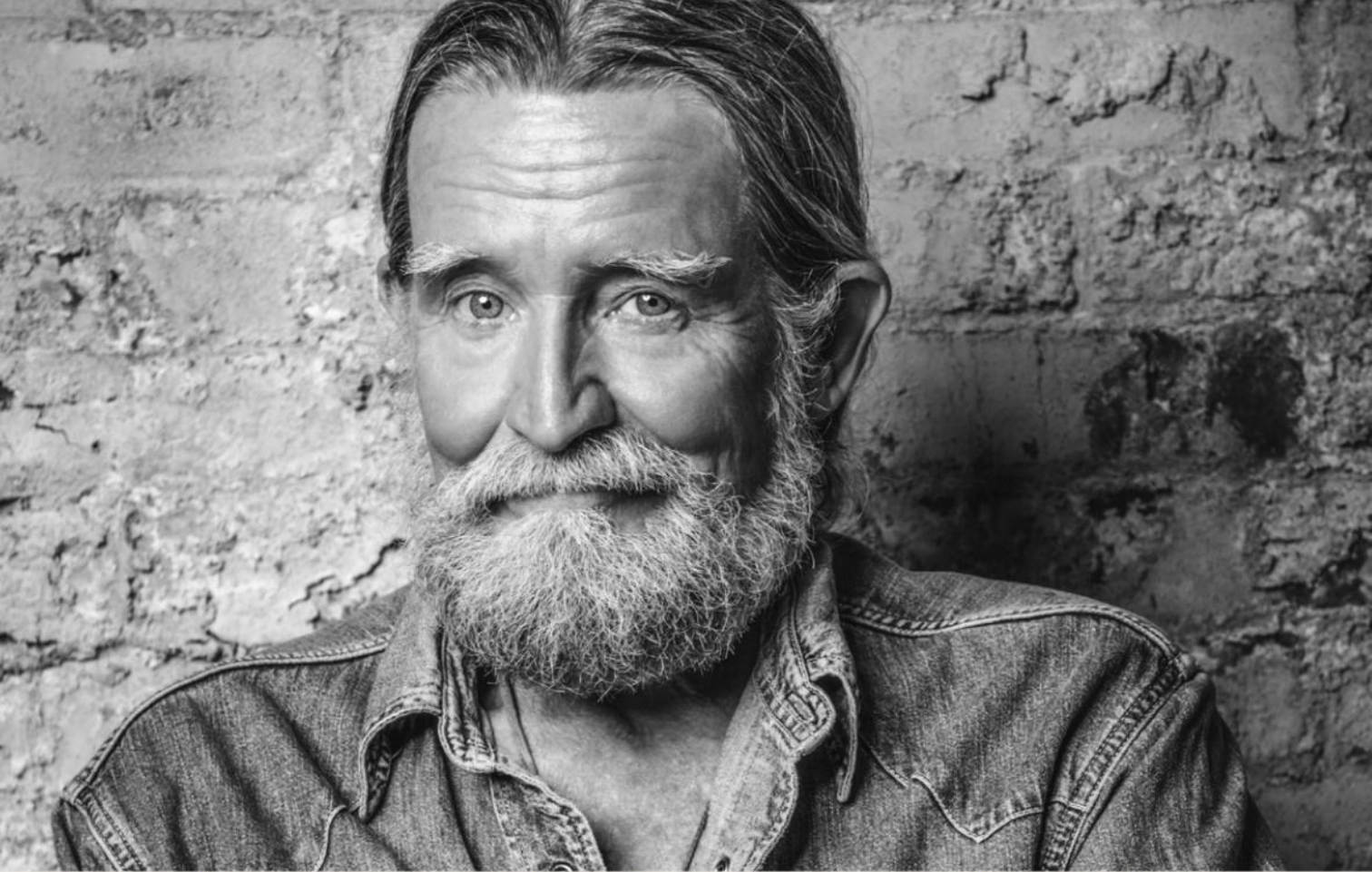


Pico Iyer Issue #46

Warmest congratulations to you all on keeping such a serious and thoughtful magazine going for so long, and I really look forward to conspiring with you further in your new home!

Hana Assafiri Issue #51

I really do find that we exist in bizarre, divisive times. To be allies to causes and defend and protect the very values which will enable a plural, open, diverse society where everybody is afforded dignity and respect: wherever we find that, we all lean into it. Protect those values, defend those values. That's what hope looks like to me.



Stephen Jenkinson, Issue #54

I'm reminded of a story I heard that came from Iceland not that long ago. Apparently the local municipal government decided to establish a sign at the foot of a glacier that was quickly receding. And the sign apparently said three things. It said, "We know what's happening." Second line was, "We know what we should be doing." Third line was, "Only you will know if we did it or not."

It's not clear, at least the way the story was told to me, who that *you* is in the last line. I suspect it's the glacier. Because a lot of Icelanders are old-order animists, right? Old-order pagans. And that's still alive there from what I've seen when I was there a few times.

We could put such a sign at the foot of every one of our carefully nurtured convictions that somehow goodness will prevail. And we should put one of those signs at the foot of every one of those convictions. "We know what's happening. We know what needs doing. Only you will know if we did it or not." Are we now in the time of the third section? Are we now in the time of saying, "We're not any longer going to know if what we've done, the measures we've decided to take personally and at a community level and beyond, are going to have the consequences that our desire to be assured plead for"? Because I don't think I'm trafficking in darkness here when I say that it's fairly clear that the last 25-40 years have provided abundant evidence of the willingness of the cultures most consequential in the world right now, or the unwillingness of those cultures, to take upon themselves the limitations that heretofore have only been problems for them to solve. ●

A GLOSSARY OF HOPE

Compiled by Daniel Simons

Grounded
Hope

Grounded Hope is rooted in the realities of the challenges we face, rather than wishful, Pollyanna fantasies. It invites us to be aware of the multiple factors that can have an influence and requires us to work towards creating positive changes within those constraints.

Grounded hope has been embraced by the climate movement and was a key theme in Rebecca Solnit's book *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. It is also used widely in health and medical settings.

According to psychologist Lee Daniel Kravetz, the "hope" part of grounded hope can be cultivated by building confidence in our ability to shape what happens to us in the future. His five principles for accessing grounded hope are:

1. Let your worldview shatter
2. Find someone you can count on
3. Realise you don't have all the time in the world so don't waste it
4. Focus on planning, not positivity
5. Practice future-focused forgiveness

Active Hope

Active hope is something we do rather than have. It asks that we acknowledge the harsh realities of the environmental, social, economic, and political crises we face, but also invites us to respond with intention and action rather than despair or nihilism.

The concept comes to us from the book *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*, which was written by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy (*Dumbo Feather* issue #61), the ecologist, teacher and author of *The Work That Reconnects*.

The authors argue that it is our action that fuels hope, but they also suggest this action should not be in isolation. Active hope is a process we share with others. It swells when we build connections with our community, engage in collective action, and cultivate a strong sense of agency, even in the face of inevitable challenges and setbacks.

Macy describes active hope as a process that can be applied to any situation. It involves three steps: 1. Gain an unflinching appraisal of reality; 2. Decide on the values we want to uphold and the directions we want to move in; 3. Make sure we take the steps needed to move ourselves and our situation in that direction.

Macy's concept of active hope is tied to the daunting challenges of climate and ecology but active hope is more than a simple coping mechanism for her. Macy sees embracing challenges as deeply empowering. "When our responses are guided by the intention to act for the healing of our world," she writes, "The mess we're in not only becomes easier to face, our lives also become more meaningful and satisfying."

Radical
Hope

Radical hope arises in situations of extreme adversity, loss, or imminent devastation, where our understanding of identity and concept of reality are under threat of annihilation.

The concept of radical hope was introduced by philosopher and social theorist Jonathan Lear in his book *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*, which explored how the Crow Nation reacted when their culture and way of life were destroyed by the American government in the 19th century.

According to Lear, radical hope is, "An expression of the human spirit's capacity to act in the face of forces that threaten to undermine our sense of ourselves as capable agents of the world."

Radical hope helps us anchor ourselves into meaningful work with an understanding of our present circumstances and the overwhelming challenges we face. We don't need to be optimists to have radical hope.

For Lear, radical hope is an ethereal comfort. It is, "A form of hope that is not based on immediate or tangible results, but rather on a faith in the possibility of a better future, even if it is not clear what that future will be."

Urgent
optimism

Urgent optimism is a mindset that we can embrace in moments of challenge or crisis. It invites us to act with speed and immediacy while still believing that positive change is possible and that our actions can have a meaningful impact. Urgent optimism champions both foresight and creativity and is made up of three key components:

Psychological Flexibility: The ability to believe things can become different in the future, even if they seem daunting or intractable.

Realistic Hope: Balancing dreams with reality and knowing which risks and threats make sense to worry about and which solutions and ideas we should focus on.

Future Power: Having a sense of agency and belief that intentional actions taken today will be able to create a better tomorrow.

Urgent optimism was coined by Jane McGonigal, a research director at the Institute for the Future and author of *SuperBetter*, *Reality is Broken*, and *Imaginable: How to See the Future Coming and Feel Ready for Anything*.

Apocaloptimist Someone who knows it's all going to s**t, but still thinks it will turn out ok. ●

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