

Paths to Global Harmony

"He who knows how to guide a leader in the path of Tao does not try to override the world with military might." — *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 30

"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nations, nor will they train for war anymore." — *Bible*, Isaiah 2:4

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." — Rumi

"Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves." — *The Phenomenon of Man*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1955)

During the past 100 years, popular and scientific literature have presented plenty of dystopian visions. These include the clash of civilizations, nuclear war, environmental catastrophe, tyranny, genocide, famine, global pandemic, and apocalypse. Hopeful visions have been scarce.

One of the few hopeful visions for the latter half of the 21st Century is the New Paradigm scenario in Paul Raskin's 2016 *Journey to Earthland* (pages 71-108). In 2084, people still face real problems, so the world is not a utopia. It is, however, much more sustainable, just, and secure than in 2020. The dominant values have changed from consumerism, individualism, and exploitation of the natural world to quality of life, solidarity with others, and harmony with the natural world.

The goal of accumulating ever more individual material wealth has been replaced by the goal of having a high quality of life in a world where everyone's basic material needs are satisfied. "Enough is enough" and "enough for all" (page 76). This has led to great reductions in wealth and income disparity through changes in tax policies. It has also led to time affluence through productivity increases, reductions in unnecessary production, and full employment policies. "Workweeks in the formal economy typically range from 12 to 18 hours" (page 97). The desire for money is giving way to the cultivation of artistic skills, personal relationships, and wellness of body, mind, and spirit.

World population has stabilized at just less than 8 billion people, far less than the 10 billion or more peak the UN projected in 2020. Universal education and healthcare, combined with more equitable economic policies, have reduced population growth even while increasing life expectancy.

In 2023, the world is dominated by sovereign countries with democratic or autocratic governments. Not only are there great tensions between these different systems of government, there are also great tensions within individual countries. Even large corporations and wealthy individuals often feel frustrated, while the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals seem to many like "pie in the sky."

See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The United States Declaration of Independence states, "all men are created equal." Here is our hypothesis: all people are human incarnations of love. Because we are human, we are subject to distractions, fears, and weaknesses such as greed, anger, envy, pride, lust, gluttony, and laziness. By being honest, open, willing to make amends, disciplined, compassionate, curious, and forgiving, we can build strong loving relationships with ourselves, our families, our work colleagues, and others. These relationships can satisfy our needs for connection, safety, belonging, and esteem. They can help us fully realize our highest potential.

A Buddhist monk once said, "Buddhism is just common sense. But common sense isn't so common. Wealth is good, but health is better. If we are wealthy but not healthy, we can't enjoy our wealth. Health is good, but wisdom is better. If we are healthy but not wise, we suffer because we know, sooner or later, we will lose our health. If we are wise, we can live happily and die gracefully."

Here is what might be called the one-minute autobiography of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius: "When I was 15 years old, I set my heart upon learning. At 30, I had my feet firmly planted on the ground. At 40, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At 50, I knew what were the biddings from heaven. At 60, I heard them with docile ear. At 70, I could follow the dictates of my own heart, for my desires no longer overstepped the boundaries of right." (Analects, 2:4)

How can we build a healthy, wise, flourishing global culture that is sustainable, just, peaceful, and prosperous?

To achieve sustainability, we need a massive mobilization of global resources, especially during the next 10 years, to drive a transition from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy, mostly solar and wind. We must electrify everything currently powered by fossil fuel energy, while regenerating soil, forests, oceans, and fresh water. We are likely to be much more successful if China and the U.S. work together cooperatively to attain mutual sustainability.

To achieve justice, we need economic, taxation, and social policies that ensure the basic human needs of every person living on earth are satisfied, including the need for productive and dignified employment. Establishing a proper role for government is crucial to serving the common good. When government owns the means of production, there are likely to be the inefficiencies, inequities, frustrations, and corruption of large bureaucracy. At the other extreme, laissez-faire capitalism is likely to increase wealth concentration, as in the game Monopoly, resulting in poverty, a shrinking middle class, and instability. Today there are 192 member states of the UN, all of whom have signed on in agreement with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must move from aspiration to the effective protection of these rights through education, legal and institutional systems, and restorative justice practices.

To achieve peace, we need effective conflict resolution processes and training at every level of society including individuals, families, communities, organizations, cities, nations, and the world.

To achieve prosperity, we need universal education and healthcare; job training; incentives for innovation and small business development; and labor policies that support healthy and happy lifestyles, including shorter working hours with no reduction in pay, longer vacations, paid maternity and paternity leave, and sabbaticals.

To achieve good global governance, we need wise leadership at all levels of society with a long-term global perspective focused on serving the common good.

The head of a major investment group in Boston read the *Tao Te Ching*, a 2,400-year-old Chinese book of wisdom, and applied it in managing his group. He developed a successful process for selecting investments that emphasized reaching consensus on the risk involved while minimizing personal power issues. He says, "I read and re-read the *Tao Te Ching* a lot. It helped me keep things on an even keel, with calm leadership." Here are some passages he especially likes from the *Tao Te Ching*:

Chapter 17: "The best leader is one of whose existence the people are barely aware. Next comes one whom they love and praise. Next one whom they fear. The worst is one whom they despise and defy."

Chapter 66: "How does the sea become the king of all streams? Because it lies lower than they! Hence it is the king of all streams. Therefore, the Sage reigns over the people by humbling himself in speech; and leads the people by putting himself behind. Thus, when a Sage stands above the people, they do not feel the heaviness of his weight; and when he stands in front of the people, they do not feel hurt. Therefore, all the world is glad to push him forward without getting tired of him. Just because he strives with nobody, nobody can ever strive with him."

Chapter 68: "A good soldier is never aggressive; a good fighter is never angry. The best way of conquering an enemy is to win him over by not antagonizing him. The best way of employing people is to serve under them. This is called the virtue of non-striving. This is called using the abilities of people."

Chapter 72: "When the people no longer fear your power, it is a sign that a greater power is coming. Do not interfere with their dwelling, nor lay heavy burdens upon their livelihood. Only when you cease to weary them, will they cease to be wearied of you. Therefore, the Sage knows himself, but makes no show of himself; loves himself, but does not exalt himself. He prefers what is within to what is without."

In the Hindu classic, *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna represents the source of the universe and presents four practices that lead to enlightenment: meditation, yoga, devotion, and selfless service. Here are some verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

"There has never been a time when you and I have not existed, nor will there be a time when we will cease to exist." (2:12)

"Perform your duty and abandon all attachment to success or failure. Such evenness of mind is called yoga." (2:48)

"One who is steady, who neither gets elated in happiness nor depressed when faced with sadness; who is free from attachments, fear, and anger, is truly the enlightened one." (2:56)

"For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, the mind will be the greatest enemy." (6:6)

"When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. In the still mind, in the depths of meditation, the Self reveals itself. Beholding the Self by means of the Self, we can know the joy and peace of complete fulfillment." (6:19)

"True knowledge sees the one indestructible Being in all beings, the unity underlying the multiplicity of creation." (18:20)

Two key people in the Christian tradition are Jesus, of course, and the Roman emperor Constantine. Until Constantine, Christians were a persecuted minority, without much political power. After Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire and the dominant religion in European history. The lives of Jesus and Constantine could not have been more different. Jesus was a spiritual leader without much interest in worldly success. Constantine was a general who fought military battles to gain worldly power and eventually became a Roman emperor. Some Christians seem more inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus; others by the life and practices of Constantine.

Whether the latter half of the 21st Century resembles Paul Raskin's New Paradigm scenario, a dystopian scenario, or perhaps a scenario not yet even imagined, will depend on trillions of choices made by billions of people. The prospects for our children and grandchildren are likely to be much better if we collectively choose paths that lead to global harmony.