

Chapter 1

Context

Michael Strong

CEO and Chief Visionary Officer, FLOW

Among the first teachings of the Buddha is the understanding that “mind is the forerunner of all things.” If we believe it is impossible to make the world a better place, we will create a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we believe we can make a difference and set about doing so with a clear-eyed vision, passionate focus, persistence, and courage, then we can achieve extraordinary things.

In the language of business, each human being who is dispirited is a loss to the balance sheet of global goodness, whereas each human being who is an inspired, energetic, and thoughtful change agent is an enormous asset to global goodness. Optimistic creators such as Apple’s Steve Jobs and Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page have produced billions of dollars of wealth and immeasurable happiness and well-being that would not have existed had they not founded the businesses they and their teams created. By championing the practice of microlending, Muhammad Yunus empowered tens of millions of poor women to become entrepreneurs and create value for their families and communities. Maria Montessori created a whole new way of understanding children, and in addition to the tens of

thousands of schools that follow her method she influenced child-raising in numerous ways, including the creation of the idea of child-sized furniture. We believe that every human being is capable of creating something of great value, and that at present the vast majority of us only create a tiny fraction of the value that we could create for ourselves and others.

So how do we create a world in which happiness and well-being are ubiquitous and endlessly abundant?

The Importance of Progress

To begin, we highlight the importance of progress, and illuminate the existence of far more progress than is usually acknowledged. People in general like to do things they are good at and in which they are making progress. If we play a sport or a game, we are more likely to keep playing it if we find ourselves getting better and better at it. If we focus on and believe all the doom and gloom we hear from the media and the negative doomsday predictions from both ends of the political spectrum, it is no surprise that many of us are ready to throw in the towel. But if we see the profound progress humanity is making on many levels, we can become ever more engaged in the game of making the world a better place.

What if, instead of (or in addition to) getting excited about playing a game, we got excited about our ever-increasing ability to make the world a better place?

The work of psychologist Martin Seligman clearly demonstrates that we are more effective for a longer period of time when we believe that we are successful and that such a belief will help ensure we will continue to be successful in the future.*

Stop and breathe. Have you ever been in a room with too many people yelling, too many televisions and radios blaring, perhaps horns honking outside, and so much stress and anger that you can barely hear yourself think?

While it is wonderful that news is now widely available, being immersed in news and its principally negative orientation, confuses us and prevents us from seeing the world clearly.

*For a wealth of resources on positive psychology, visit the Positive Psychology Center (www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/).

The problem is not that what happens on the news is false (though occasionally some is), nor even that the news fails to tell us many important things (which it often does), but more deeply the problem is that the news doesn't encourage us to see the big picture. The news, by its nature, is focused on problems and bad things that happen. And its ubiquitous presence and compelling and penetrating effects distort our perception of reality.

If we want to liberate our potential to do good work in the world and to have a positive effect on the world, we need to believe that what we do matters. And to believe what we do matters, it helps to see that what others are doing and have done for thousands of years makes a difference. The doing of good work may take time, and it may not be obvious how you will achieve your goals. Two hundred years ago almost everyone on earth was poor and famines, in which people literally starved to death, were a regular feature of life around the world. The people who created the steam engine and constitutional government had a general attitude that practical problems could be solved, and they worked hard and long to solve problems, but they did not fully realize that they were creating the beginning of the end of starvation as a routine family experience.

We have good news: What people do matters a tremendous amount.*

Peace Is Breaking Out All Over

Thus, the first fact that we ought to stop and consider is that, despite the steady barrage of news concerning wars that are happening and that might break out in the future, from a deeper perspective the fact is, shockingly enough, that peace is breaking out around the world:

By 2003, there were 40 percent fewer conflicts than in 1992. The deadliest conflicts—those with 1,000 or more battle deaths—fell by some 80 percent. The number of genocides and other mass

*For a data-rich review of the positive context we are all operating in, see Gregg Easterbrook's book *The Progress Paradox* (Random House, 2003), a follow-up to a 1998 article, "America the O.K. Why Life in the U.S. Has Never Been Better" (*The New Republic*, http://phe.rockefeller.edu/g_easterbrook_11jan1998/).

slaughters of civilians also dropped by 80 percent, while core human rights abuses have declined in five out of six regions of the developing world since the mid-1990s. International terrorism is the only type of political violence that has increased. Although the death toll has jumped sharply over the past three years, terrorists kill only a fraction of the number who die in wars.*

Prior to 1992, war was far more common around the world than it is today. Wars with more than 1,000 battle deaths are down by 80 percent! The Cold War, in which the planet was divided between Communist countries and capitalist countries, resulted in endless wars throughout the developing world, many of which we barely heard about. While the end of the Cold War has not brought complete peace, it is significant to notice that despite the fact that ongoing televised casualties in Iraq bring the horrors of war into our living rooms, nonetheless from a global perspective we haven't lived in such a peaceful world since the nineteenth century.

Poverty Vanishing More Quickly than Ever Before

Well, so war is on the decline; what about the horrors of poverty? It turns out that poverty is also decreasing on a global scale the likes of which the world has never seen before. Although poverty in Africa remains a very serious problem, the good news is that economic growth in India and China is raising the standard of living of more people more quickly than has ever taken place in history.

The first thing to realize about India and China is that they are each home to more than a billion people. Together they account for about 40 percent of the global population. In the past 20 years, about half a billion people in these two nations have been raised out of poverty. Now, a negative person might point out that three quarters of

*See "Peace on Earth? Increasingly, Yes" by Andrew Mack in *The Washington Post* (December 28, 2005). The source for this article is a report of a study produced by the Human Security Centre in British Columbia, which Professor Mack heads (www.humansecurityreport.info/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=68).

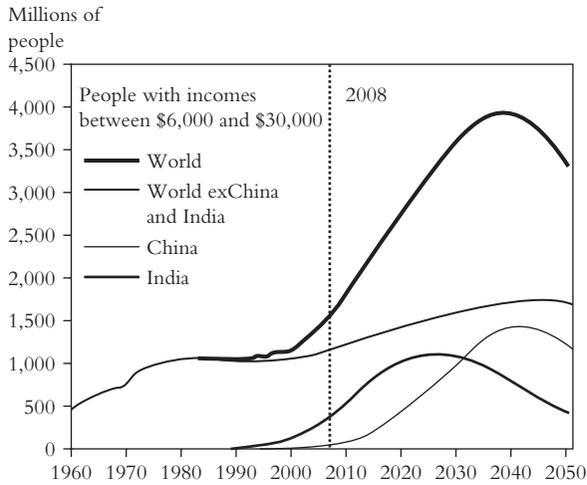


Figure 1.1 The Expanding World Middle Class

Source: Used with permission from Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper No. 170, "The Expanding Middle Class: The Exploding Middle Class and Falling Global Inequality."

them are still poor; but half a billion no longer in poverty is more than the entire population of the United States. For countries that have been symbols of mass poverty for hundreds of years to have a quarter of their populations lifted out of poverty in merely 20 years is mind-boggling. More important, at current rates of economic growth, China will reach the current U.S. standard of living around 2030, and India will reach the current U.S. standard of living a few decades later.* See Figure 1.1.

Defining the middle class worldwide as having an annual per capita income between \$6,000 and \$30,000, Goldman Sachs estimates that before 2040, 4 billion people will qualify. After that the number of people in the middle class by this definition declines primarily because the Chinese will have become wealthier than that.†

Thus, although there are relatively poor people in the United States, from the perspective of Chinese or Indian poverty even the U.S.

* From The Globalist, April 15, 2005 (www.theglobalist.com).

† Goldman Sachs research cited by Paul Murphy, "The Relentless Rise of the Bourgeoisie," The Financial Times Blog, July 11, 2008 (<http://ftalphaville.ft.com/blog/2008/07/11/14423/the-relentless-rise-of-the-bourgeoisie/>).

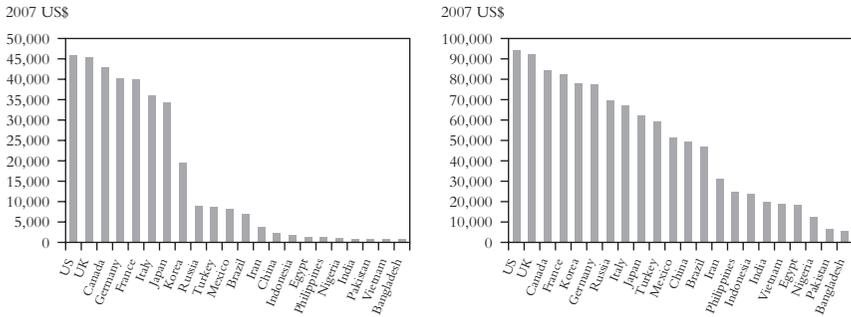


Figure 1.2 Income per Capita in 2007 and 2050

SOURCE: Used with permission from Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper No. 170, "The Expanding Middle Class: The Exploding Middle Class and Failing Global Inequality."

poor are well fed and mostly well housed. Within our lifetimes, mass poverty in China and India will no longer exist.

Note the difference in scale between the two graphs in Figure 1.2; by 2050, Goldman Sachs estimates that income per capita in Turkey, Mexico, China, and Brazil will all be higher than it is in the United States today.*

Moreover, it is not only in China and India that economic growth is rapidly eliminating poverty: Ireland, for instance, moved from being one of the poorest nations in Europe 15 years ago to being the wealthiest. Many (but not all) nations from the former Soviet Union are growing well. Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico are doing well in Latin America. The outlook throughout Asia is generally positive: Forty years ago Japan was a poor nation, thirty years ago Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea were all poor, now Thailand and Vietnam have joined India and China in successful economic growth and are on their way to joining the no-longer-poor portion of the world.

Clearly, there is much to do and we should not rest on our laurels. But we also should not despair over global poverty. It is decreasing more rapidly than it has ever decreased in history, with more people attaining higher standards of living than the world has ever known. While very serious problems remain in much of the world, the fact that we are making so much progress so quickly ought to inspire us to more effective action rather than despair.

*Murphy, op. cit.

Paradoxically, the alleviation of poverty around the world concerns many people. A headline on economic growth in China expressed environmental concerns with the question, “Too Many Toyotas?” The downside, of course, of nine billion human beings (the expected peak global population later this century), each with a U.S. standard of living, is the demand for natural resources on a colossal scale. Most people assume that such an enormous use of natural resources necessarily implies extraordinary environmental damage. Does it?

The End of Environmental Destruction?

Yes, serious environmental concerns do exist and the possibility of catastrophic climate change is among them. That said, in order to solve the problems facing us it is important to acknowledge the significant progress that has been made in the past and to consider the strategies and techniques that succeeded in driving this progress.

The decline of acid rain is a good place to begin to understand the nature of progress on environmental issues. In the 1970s there were widespread concerns that acid rain would destroy ecosystems throughout the United States. Sulfur dioxide, a pollutant that was emitted largely by power plants, combined with various gases in the atmosphere to create rain that was more acidic than is natural. As a consequence, numerous plants and fish began to die.

Subsequently, a law was passed in the United States that set up a sulfur dioxide trading system: power plants that produced sulfur dioxide had to buy rights to continue to do so. Some companies then began to add antipollution equipment to reduce their sulfur dioxide emissions. As a consequence, they were able to sell their pollution rights to companies that had not yet installed the anti-pollution equipment. Although many environmentalists were originally against this system because they did not like the idea of companies owning a “right to pollute,” what happened was that companies suddenly had an incentive to invest in the very best antipollution equipment. The faster they could install better equipment, the sooner they could sell their pollution rights to other companies. Soon it became cheaper, in many cases, to install the innovative antipollution equipment than to buy more pollution rights. As

a result, sulfur dioxide emissions in the United States have been cut in half in the last 20 years and most ecosystems that had been damaged by acid rain are now well on the way to recovery.

As important, the cost of adding these scrubbers was less than a tenth of what had been expected. The innovation dynamic catalyzed by the market in pollution rights created a circumstance in which pollution decreased both more quickly and more cheaply than anyone had imagined possible.*

The growth of forests in the United States is a good place to begin to understand how our environment may be restored. Deforestation in the United States took place at the highest rate during the nineteenth century as pioneers cleared forests in order to create farms. From 1920 to 1990, the percentage of the country covered in forest was stable. Since 1990, the percentage of the country being re-covered in forest has steadily increased, so that now we are returning about two million acres of land to forest each year.† Indeed, the rate of reforestation in the United States is now so high that some scientists believe that the country is absorbing as much in new carbon emissions as it is emitting. U.S. forests now contain 40 percent more wood than they did 50 years ago and, by some measures, despite the fact that the United States is the largest producer of greenhouse gases, due to our heavy levels of reforestation, the U.S. may actually be carbon neutral with respect to net annual emissions.‡

Patrick Moore, a founder of Greenpeace, believes that “trees are the answer.”§ He points out that the more wood and paper we use, the more trees are planted, and the more trees that are planted, the more carbon is absorbed into the atmosphere.

Without going into more details here, the primary points are:

*“Acid Rain Control: Success on the Cheap” by Richard A. Kerr, published in *Science* magazine (Volume 282, November 1998).

†Index of Leading Environmental Indicators, 2003, published by the American Enterprise Institute.

‡“The International Challenge of Climate Change” by Steve Raynor, November 24, 2004, 12 (www.cspo.org/ourlibrary/documents/EACmemo.pdf).

§It is for this reason that Patrick Moore’s Greenspirit claims generally “trees are the answer” and backs using more wood to support a larger forestry products industry (www.greenspirit.com/trees_answer.cfm).

1. We have solved environmental problems in the past (decreased sulfur dioxide emissions, increased forest cover).
2. We can continue to solve environmental problems in the future.

Although there are some people who believe that fear of catastrophe is necessary to get people to take action, it is also important to be aware that real progress has been made and continues to be achieved.

As countries develop and poor nations become richer, environmental conditions generally improve. Economists have noticed what they call the “environmental Kuznets curve,” whereby economic growth can be detrimental to the environment in countries where average annual per capita incomes range between \$2,000 and \$8,000, but thereafter, environmental improvements take place. Economist Benjamin Friedman summarizes the evidence:

In cross-country comparisons, sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, carbon monoxide, smoke, and lead from automotive emissions all show increasing atmospheric concentrations up to some income level but a decreasing concentration thereafter. A similar pattern obtains for fecal contamination in rivers, as well as contamination by heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury, and nickel, all of which carry well-established health risks. Conversely, the level of dissolved oxygen in rivers (a key sign of biological vitality) appears to decrease at first with economic development and then increase.

Benjamin Friedman, *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*, Knopf, 2005, 383

As incomes increase in each country, individuals and governments do what it takes to improve the environment. Although we would like to reduce the extent to which these harms take place, the long-term prognosis for the effects of economic growth on the environment is positive.* Although problems do exist and will need to be solved, our track record for solving environmental problems is far more positive than is often acknowledged.

*See also Jack Hollander, *The Real Environmental Crisis: Why Poverty, Not Affluence, Is the Environment's Number One Enemy* (University of California, 2004).

Health and Well-being in the Developed World

Some of the positive developments in this area are almost unbelievable: The average American lived to 54 only 50 years ago. Now, our average life span is 76 years and climbing. The number of Americans living past 100 is exploding ; currently there are 71,000, three times that many are predicted to reach the milestone in the next 20 years, and who knows how many living up to what age beyond that. Cancer is on the decline, AIDS is on the decline, suicide is on the decline, fatal accidents are on the decline. By almost all measures our health is improving.* The major exception is obesity. If we could only exercise more and eat more healthily we would defeat the single greatest obstacle to dramatically improved health.

Meanwhile, we live in larger and better houses than ever before. It takes fewer hours of labor to buy food, clothes, and most consumer goods than it did 50 years ago. In the 1960s long-distance telephone calls were a luxury; now most teenagers have cell phones and Skype Internet long-distance service is free. Almost every poor American has a refrigerator and a color television, items that were considered luxuries only affordable by the rich not long ago. Indeed, almost every item that was once available only to the very wealthy has become common even among the poor in the developed world.

Health care and education are two of the very few items that have become more expensive and, even there, in many ways they have become cheaper. For instance, although university tuitions have increased rapidly, MIT now has a project through which it offers all of its courses online for free. Although it requires considerable discipline to study the material on one's own, the Internet has made access to vast educational resources essentially free to anyone with access to the Internet. The very best encyclopedias on earth even 20 years ago could provide only a tiny, tiny fraction of the information that is instantly available through Google.

Health care is more expensive primarily because there are such sophisticated options available. One hundred years ago, doctors could do very little to improve health; every local pharmacy today provides far higher quality health care, at a lower cost, than was available from

* Again, see Easterbrook *op. cit.* for evidence on positive trends.

the best doctors that money could buy in 1910. And, although access to cutting-edge contemporary health care remains a problem, 75 percent of the \$1.4 trillion dollars in health care costs spent annually in the United States go to the treatment of chronic diseases, most of which are preventable through lifestyle choices. Eat well and exercise and, in essence, you have solved the single greatest health care problem in the United States in your own small way. Encourage your friends and family to do likewise, and the amount of resources devoted to health care will decrease dramatically.

Goodness and Beauty as the Growth Industries of the Twenty-First Century

Moreover, a significant and growing portion of our population is actively engaged in doing good. Many of the fastest growing companies, and the most desirable corporations to work for, are explicitly committed to doing good: Google, Whole Foods Market, eBay, Southwest Airlines, and Toyota are all socially responsible corporations, and they are just the tip of the iceberg. If corporations want to succeed in the twenty-first century marketplace, they will have to satisfy demanding customers, employees, and investors that they are, in fact, honorable companies. There are numerous indicators that this movement is growing, as documented in Patricia Aburdene's book *Megatrends 2010: The Rise of Conscious Capitalism*.

Meanwhile, from another direction, it is noteworthy that in 2006, for the first time, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Muhammad Yunus and the *for-profit* organization, Grameen Bank, he founded. Grameen Bank has been the leader in the global microfinance movement, through which tens of millions of impoverished women have received micro-loans that allow them to engage in entrepreneurial activity. In 1968, John Kenneth Galbraith expected that the age of the entrepreneur was over. Shortly thereafter, Yunus began giving tiny loans to women to purchase chickens, bicycles, scales, and other capital goods to empower them to launch their own businesses. The age of micro-entrepreneurship was launched even as expert observers had come to believe that the entrepreneurial role was obsolete.

Anyone can be an entrepreneur now. In the 1970s, as Marxist theorists were discussing the final days of “late capitalism,” Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were creating Apple Computer, Bill Gates and Paul Allen were creating Microsoft, and thousands of other high school and college dropouts were creating thousands of other companies that resulted in the technology revolution of the last 30 years. Because of their efforts, I can now develop entrepreneurial projects with individuals in Sri Lanka, Uganda, Romania, and Nepal in 24 hours. Using the Internet, we can all work together immediately. Andrew Hyde’s Startup Weekend gathers small groups of software developers to start a new project or company over the course of an intensive 54-hour weekend.

Sugata Mitra’s Hole-in-the-Wall project has shown that illiterate, uneducated ghetto children in Delhi can learn to use the Internet on their own in the course of days, with no outside guidance or instruction whatsoever and immediately engage with the enormous world of the Web. Those of us who want to help others develop their own projects already face an endless sea of opportunity for helping the world’s poor improve their lives.

Meanwhile, the astounding success of Wikipedia reveals an unlimited appetite for openly and freely producing and sharing information. The Open Source software movement demonstrates that even very high-quality software can be produced collaboratively, for free. As mentioned earlier, MIT is in the process of putting its entire curriculum online and allowing free access. And with the \$100 laptop developed for the One Laptop per Child program and broadband costs collapsing around the world, millions of new people are getting plugged into the global economy and the universe of global knowledge faster than ever before. Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom document the “unstoppable power of leaderless organizations” in *The Starfish and the Spider*, as eBay becomes one of the largest economies on earth.

Daniel Pink, in *A Whole New Mind*, makes a compelling case that the growth industries in the twenty-first-century economy in the developed world will be based around the production of goods and services into which meaning, beauty, empathy, and other soft values are integrated. In the developed world, there is a thriving “green” consumer sector. But Pink also points to the ubiquity of design: from

the elegant Apple iPod to the fact that Wal-Mart carries “designer” toilet bowl brushes. Much of the value added to products in the future will come from improved aesthetics and richer, more rewarding experiences rather than bigger and more. BMW has engineers who specialize in the acoustic experience of driving a BMW. There are professionals with business cards that read “Cultural Strategist” and “Organizational Storyteller.” The world of meaning, design, and aesthetics will generate enormous new industries in the twenty-first century, as all of the old mechanical and commodity-based industries, which operated strictly on price criteria, fall prey to competitors that are ahead of the curve in the meaning dimension of their products and services. Many of the great entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century will be entrepreneurs who create exceptional enterprises that are preminent producers of beauty and grace, culture and experience, happiness and well-being.

The poet Frederick Turner describes the twenty-first-century growth industries as the “Charm Industries:”

Once manufactures and information have become vanishingly cheap to produce and therefore are not very profitable or labor intensive, the major form of profitable production in the twenty-first century will be cultural production—the irreducibly labor- and capital-intensive human activities that I call the Charm Industries: tourism, education, entertainment, adventure, religion, sport, fashion, cuisine, personal service, gardening, art, history, movies, ritual, psychotherapy, politics, and the eternal soap opera of relationships. Those industries are subject to diseconomies of scale—that is, they are less effective when pursued by large units of production, such as big nation-states, and more efficient when they take place in small units such as cities, regions, and traditional ethnic areas. Therefore we should remove the political obstacles to the present trend toward greater regional autonomy in culture, while opening all the technological and economic gates of world communication.

Fred Turner, “Make Everybody Rich,”
Independent Review, Summer 2002, 135

Through Pink and Turner we can glimpse a world of never ending economic growth in which the bulk of the growth is in education, culture, and diverse forms of human development and experience. We'll expand on this glimpse when we look at the consequences of liberating entrepreneurs of happiness and well-being to create new and better subcultures and ways of life.

This is the context in which truly extraordinary flows of goods, services, capital, people, and knowledge are taking place. We can no longer afford to be parochial or to support parochialisms anywhere. *The World Is Flat*, in Thomas Friedman's sense. The markets of the future will demand a *Whole New Mind*, in Daniel Pink's sense. And soon we will all be engaged in "Social Business," in Muhammad Yunus' sense of business engaged in a social purpose.

Are Women Entrepreneurs Real Entrepreneurs?

A Whole New Mind, A Whole New Gender, A Whole New World

The world of entrepreneurs is a male-dominated world. The great entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were industrialists, inventors, and salesmen: Andrew Carnegie, Thomas Edison, P.T. Barnum, Henry Ford, Thomas Watson, the railroad builders, the retailers, the newspaper publishers, and so on.

The great entrepreneurs of the second half of the twentieth century were tech entrepreneurs and media moguls: Bill Hewlett and David Packard; Intel's Robert Noyce, Gordon Moore, and Andy Grove; Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak; Bill Gates; Ted Turner; Richard Branson; and so forth.

First we were a manufacturing economy, then we became an information economy. In both cases, the world we lived in and the wealth that transformed our standard of living was largely created by men. In a recent survey ranking history's great entrepreneurs, the most highly ranked women were Mary Kay Ash and Oprah Winfrey: both highly successful, but makeup and a talk show about relationships?

Daniel Pink's book *A Whole New Mind* makes the case that in the twenty-first century, the most important growth industries will be in the realms of beauty, empathy, harmony, and other aesthetic and quality of life values. He makes the case that Asia, Automation, and Abundance will dictate this transformation. Low-cost

manufacturing in Asia has already displaced much of the manufacturing base in the developed world and even some of the manufacturing in Latin America. Meanwhile, automation of manufacturing is continuing at a rapid pace, such that fewer and fewer human beings will be required in manufacturing processes in any case. And, finally, due to abundance, most of us in the developed world are already at the point at which we really don't need any more stuff. We have enough quantity. From here on out, quality will matter far more than it has in the past.

The successful entrepreneurs of the future will be those who can improve the quality of the products and services we consume, especially insofar as those improvements result in improved quality of life. The growth industries of the future will be led by entrepreneurs who specialize in excellence in beauty and design, in style and fashion, in taste and elegance, in better living environments and better social environments, in more harmonious workplaces, more empathetic and patient-respectful health care, in more humane education, and the like.

Pink's notion of "a whole new mind" refers to a future in which both the left brain—analytical—and the right brain—intuitive and holistic—will be more valued than they have been in the past, especially when used together. Although it is not politically correct to make gender generalizations, precisely because in the past women have had to prove their proficiency in a male-dominated world, it seems likely that the future will favor women entrepreneurs to a greater and greater extent. Now that we have enough big cars and powerful computers, maybe we need more wonderful environments in which to live, work, and socialize; better human interactions with our colleagues and from our professional service providers; more design, beauty, style, and taste incorporated into every object we use, every thing we taste, every surface our eyes see.

Most business training is 100 percent oriented toward the analytical side of business. It is mostly by men, for men, to create male businesses, even when occasionally women go through the pipeline. But what if the next generation of business training is far more focused on art, design, style and taste, and on improving the quality of human interactions?

What if women are the real entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century, the ones who create not only the wealth, but more important the well-being, that we all so crave? What if they are the ones who finally shift us from a world based on quantity to a world based on quality? From a world based on ugliness, aggression, and stress to a world based on beauty, empathy, and peace?

Getting a Perspective on Liberating the Entrepreneurial Spirit for Good

Serious problems remain and, as you know if you listen to the news, you will hear about them constantly. But emotional responses, such as anger and depression, do not in and of themselves solve problems. Go ahead and listen to bad news, but remember to discipline yourself to keep a longer term perspective in mind, both with respect to the extraordinary progress that has taken place in the past as well as the extraordinary progress that can take place in the future, if we take initiative and work together.

The Tibetan Buddhists, who have seen as much deliberate destruction of their lives and their culture as almost any people on the planet, are committed to a 500-year plan to create a better world. While most of us believe that it won't take 500 years, sometimes it is worth thinking about what you as an individual can achieve over the course of a lifetime. The Renaissance artist Lorenzo Ghiberti is famous for completing two sets of bronze doors in his lifetime. The first set took him 21 years to complete. The second set took him 27 years to complete. Each door is covered with amazingly beautiful and detailed sculpture, doors that will be famous for as long as they exist. In our world in which life moves so quickly it is worth reflecting on the kind of commitment to excellence that could motivate someone to spend the first half of his life perfecting a set of bronze doors (he started on them when he was 21), and then, when he finished, to spend the second half of his life on a second set.

What if you committed yourself to making a powerful difference in the world over the course of your lifetime? Realize that making a difference is not about a feeling that you have now but a focus on doing good and a commitment to personal excellence that you make for the long haul. You may not know exactly what your contribution is and you may have a number of different ones. As long as you develop your abilities and apply them on behalf of doing serious work for good, you will create your own bronze doors. The historical record shows that the world has become more peaceful, more prosperous, more environmentally healthy, and more comfortable than it was in the past. What can you do to create a better world over the course of your lifetime? What will your bronze doors be?

An Organic Approach to Climate Change?

Jim McNelly became fascinated with composting in the 1970s. He began simply as an enthusiast who practiced composting, studying it, and later writing books and articles about it. He became an expert based on his love of composting.

Gradually he began composting for others, working with larger and larger clients to transform their organic wastes into superb soil supplements. As he worked with larger clients, he needed to solve numerous technical problems that had not been necessary to address on smaller scales. Eventually he created a patented technology for automatic industrial scale composting based on containers modified from the standard container ship unit. His composting containers now produce a super-enriched soil supplement from organic refuse automatically, without releasing significant gases during the process (uncontained composting can release ammonia and methane during the decomposition process).

The resulting soil supplement has a sufficiently high nitrogen content in a "bio-available" form to outperform all commercial fertilizers and yet it almost certainly qualifies as organic. (Not officially as yet because in order to get the nitrogen content up there he has to add a small amount of nonorganic nitrogen and this technique is under review by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

Jim's small company, with three full-time employees and various contractors, had its first profitable year last year. This year they expect to see explosive growth, with every year looking brighter beyond. Indeed, based on the prospective size of the global market for his product, Jim is applying for the \$25 million Branson/Gore Carbon Sequestration Prize.

What? Composting could become the leading carbon sequestration technology of the twenty-first century? Well, maybe. Jim's calculations are based on the global issue of soil depletion. Commercial farming techniques combined with erosion have depleted the nutrients in tens of millions of acres around the world. The application of commercial chemical fertilizer is running into decreasingly marginal returns in many places. If he can produce high-nitrogen compost that outperforms chemical fertilizer at a lower price, suddenly it becomes profitable for farmers around the world to buy his high-nitrogen compost rather than chemical fertilizer, with the added advantage that applying it each year enriches the soil rather than depletes it. Strictly as a by-product, this massive scale composting would sequester many hundreds of billions of tons of carbon by plowing them back into the earth as a component of this super-soil. And it would eliminate trillions of tons of rotting organic matter from

(continued)

landfills and other stockpiles where large accumulations of plant matter generate fugitive methane (CH_4), another significant carbon-based greenhouse gas (indeed, some scientists consider the methane issue to be more serious than the CO_2 issue). Finally, “nutrient pollution,” much of which stems from fertilizer runoff, is the single largest water pollution issue on the planet—and stabilized nitrogen-rich composted soil, tilled into the ground, results in a tiny fraction of the nutrient pollution caused by chemical fertilizers.

Will all of this happen? We don’t know. Right now, McNelly’s market is relatively small because the up-front cost of his composting containers is high. At present, they are primarily used in places where there are advocates for industrial scale composting, or where sensitive aquifers place strict limitations on the runoff from chemical fertilizers. But as with all product innovation cycles, as his market grows his company will produce a higher quality product for a lower price. How to accelerate this process?

Peter Barnes advocates environmental trusts as a solution to environmental problems. Environmental trusts are private entities with a legal obligation to steward specific environmental assets. They are a property rights solution to the tragedy of the commons problem; thus they represent a new manifestation of The Entrepreneur’s Toolkit. With a river trust, for instance, rivershed trustees would be responsible for protecting the integrity of the river’s water quality. At present, there are rivers where bass fishermen protect the water by suing upstream polluters—it turns out that bass fishermen are a large, well-organized, aggressive constituency who want the rivers clean and full of bass. A river trust would engage in similar protections of the river regardless of the particular species of fish in the river. If fertilizer runoffs were polluting the river, the trusts would sue either the farmers or the fertilizer companies for letting the runoff contaminate the stream. Merely the threat of such a lawsuit would make less toxic fertilizers a better investment for the farmers or fertilizer companies. Thus, if river trusts were created, they could impose a sufficiently higher cost on farmers and/or fertilizer companies so that Jim’s composting containers would obtain a large commercial market.

Other paths to scalability are also possible: As soils become more thoroughly depleted and as Jim’s nitrogen-rich compost becomes better known, direct market demand from farmers could stimulate growth. Or if Jim is able to modify the chemical component so that his compost qualifies as organic under U.S. law, demand will increase. Or perhaps Jim’s existing product will be considered organic in some country even though it may not yet meet U.S. standards. The rate at which demand for his product will grow depends on numerous variables, including the cost of his inputs,

the interest rate, the cost specified by landfills for accepting organic refuse, the cost of competitors; products, and so on. If demand drives Jim's company to produce millions of composting containers, it will be a very profitable company and he will become a very rich man. But at no point was money ever the purpose of his work. Jim is just a hippy geek who loves compost.

The primary reason for telling this story is not the ultimate fate of Jim's business. It is, instead, to show one of millions of means by which entrepreneurial creation will ease our growth pains.

Jim's story is interesting because it is unexpected and far-reaching—who would have imagined that composting could do so much? We might well find ourselves in a world some years hence, with eight billion people all enjoying a U.S. standard of living, but with less air pollution, less water pollution, richer soils, and a healthier environment than we have today.

Making the World a Better Place through Entrepreneurship and Markets

The public sector has failed. Or at least it is on the way out despite our best efforts. Bureaucratization cushioned by subsidies, economic and political protection, and lack of transparency is killing it off. It has become a playground of corruption. What started out with good intentions became a road to disaster. . . . Government doesn't have the answers and never will. It is up to social entrepreneurs to solve our problems.

—Muhammad Yunus

While liberating the entrepreneurial spirit is good, while being one-self for a living is good, and while Conscious Capitalism is good, what about the very serious problems facing the world?* What about poverty, war, and environmental degradation? What about crime and homelessness in the developed world? How can entrepreneurial creativity alleviate these problems? Is "being good" good enough? Looked at from another direction, are there limits to what Conscious Capitalists and

*Conscious Capitalism is a registered trademark of Freedom Lights Our World (FLOW), Inc.

Conscious Entrepreneurs can achieve or not? If there are such limits, how can we change the policy environment so that more good can be done more quickly and so that seemingly intractable problems may be solved? Can we design and create a world in which all problems may be solved entrepreneurially?

Ideally we want to create a world in which those individuals and organizations that are adding the most authentic value to the world are rewarded with the most revenue, so that they have the power to take advantage of new opportunities to do more good by adding more authentic value. Conversely, we want to create a world in which those individuals and organizations that are harming human beings and the environment are not rewarded for doing so; ideally no one would be rewarded for harming human beings, and all financially sustainable organizations would make life better for people and for the planet.

At present, even though there are clearly niches in which Conscious Individuals and Conscious Capitalists can succeed, aren't there also many niches in which not merely unconscious individuals and capitalists, but actively evil individuals and capitalists are also succeeding? How can we change the rules of the game so that we create an operating system for capitalism in which we ever more closely approximate a world in which only those who make positive contributions succeed in the world?

At the same time, we want to make the world a better place; we want to create sustainable peace, prosperity, happiness, and well-being for all. How do we create an operating system for Conscious Capitalism that will allow the good guys to win more consistently? More significantly, how do we create an operating system for capitalism that will lead to sustainable peace, prosperity, happiness, and well-being for all?

We won't be able to provide definitive answers to these questions here, but we hope to encourage thinking through these issues under a new paradigm. For most of the past hundred years, well-intentioned people have tried to solve these problems directly, by means of proposed government solutions. But even to the extent that those solutions have worked, they have often caused other problems, unintended consequences.

A short history of twentieth-century economic and political thought might be summarized as:

- Market Failure! Markets don't work as well as the classical economists thought and therefore we must control them (1900–1960).

- Government Failure! Governments don't work as well as democratic theorists thought, and therefore we can't depend on them to do the right thing either (1960–2000).

What do we do after we discover the phenomenon of systemic government failure?

The metaphor of a “new operating system” for capitalism is one in which instead of attempting to solve problems directly by means of government managed programs, we artfully design an operating system, a set of legal rules, within which entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists are more likely to be able to create positive enterprises and within which positive enterprises are more likely to succeed financially.

But hitherto most advocates of a more Conscious Capitalism have taken for granted that existing levels of government control are largely benign. We believe it is very important to break from this subconscious prejudice on behalf of existing legal structures and create a new, more Conscious Capitalism that is acutely aware of the diverse ways in which governments at present inhibit the solution of many world problems. The reflexive rejection of free market thought has been one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century. Conscious Capitalists need to be aware of the extent to which their ability to create a new and better world depends crucially on The Entrepreneur's Toolkit, secure property rights, rule of law, and freedom of contract.

One of the paradoxes that we must address is that innovation is key to making the world a better place, and yet innovation requires freedom. Just as free speech necessarily allows negative speech as well as positive speech, the freedom to innovate will require freedom to act both negatively and positively. We will suggest ways to think about an operating system for Conscious Capitalism that integrates protection for the environment with the freedom to create new and better ways of living. Our belief in the power of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship to transform the world will bring a libertarian, or classical liberal, flavor to many of our solutions.

The extent to which our direction may be described as libertarian is strictly practical; entrepreneurial solutions work faster and better, whenever possible, than government solutions and centralized, bureaucratic control. Moreover, government solutions usually involve creating a frozen, self-interested constituency that prevents urgently needed

change later on. The humane protections enacted on behalf of farmers in the 1930s have become obscene agricultural subsidies today. Timber and mining subsidies, likewise, originally justified as humane interventions to help struggling industries many decades ago, have now become multibillion dollar subsidies by the government to damage the environment and inhibit investment in innovation. Green Mountain Energy, the largest clean energy retailer in the United States, finds Texas the most hospitable state in which to do business, because Texas has the least regulated electricity market. In all other states the electricity regulators favor the existing utility companies through a host of pricing and regulatory strategies.

For more than a hundred years, most progressives have reflexively argued against free markets and for government control. In hundreds of ways this is now changing:

- Barack Obama came out in favor of charter schools during the heated presidential primary with Hillary Clinton against the opposition of the teachers' unions. Indeed, he refers to himself as a "University of Chicago Democrat," thus nodding respectfully toward Milton Friedman.
- Jason Furman, Obama's chief economic advisor, is most famous for defending Wal-Mart as a "progressive success story" because it brought low prices to the poor.
- The global antipoverty NGO Oxfam now lobbies to reduce trade barriers in the developed world in order to alleviate global poverty.
- Progressive Peter Barnes' concept of environmental trusts is an innovative private sector solution to secure sustainable environmental stewardship.
- Amory Lovins' Rocky Mountain Institute argues for a real free market in energy that includes the full cost of oil and gas, because he believes that such a free market would make many innovative energy conservation measures profitable. Former Republican Secretary of State George Shultz wrote the foreword to Lovins' most recent book.
- Worldwatch Institute's David Malin Roodman, in his *The Natural Wealth of Nations: Harnessing the Market for the Environment*, documents hundreds of environmentally harmful subsidies and regulations, some of which were mentioned above.

- Progressive educator and twice-named New York State Teacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto is a signatory of the Alliance for the Separation of School and State, an organization that wants to eliminate all government involvement in education.
- Progressive educator Larry Rosenstock, founder of the celebrated High Tech High charter school in San Diego, is now struggling against the public school establishment as he seeks to replicate his charter schools in working-class neighborhoods.
- Lifelong Democratic economist William Easterly wrote a book criticizing foreign aid while at the World Bank and was fired for doing so.
- Fellow Democratic World Bank economists Dennis Whittle and Mari Kuraishi left the World Bank to found Global Giving, a private philanthropy, because they were convinced that private philanthropy could do more good than the foreign aid given by the World Bank.
- Gore speech writer Daniel Pink describes himself as a founding member of Democrats for School Choice because of his analysis of the skills needed to succeed in the twenty-first-century job market, and his apt conclusion that government-managed schools cannot develop the creativity and innovation that our children will need to succeed.
- Organic farmer Joel Salatin has written an article titled “Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal,” showing how health and safety regulations prevent him from having an organic teaching farm where he could train the next generation of young people in his natural farming techniques.
- Montessori schools have lobbied against universal preschool because they rightly fear that such a government program would destroy Montessori education as we know it.
- Alternative health care practitioners, including midwives, herbalists, chiropractors, and others are constantly under siege by the mainstream medical establishment.

These are but a small glimpse of the thousands of ways in which traditional free market principles are being adopted, knowingly or unknowingly, by individuals and organizations that have traditionally identified themselves as “progressive” or “leftist.” We believe it is time for

progressives to look deeply at many long-standing prejudices against free market thinking and be willing to rethink fundamental perspectives—for the sake of creating sustainable peace, prosperity, happiness, and well-being for all.

How Free Markets Brought Peace to Northern Ireland

Twenty years ago, Ireland was one of the poorest countries in the European Union; it is now one of the richest countries, per capita, in the EU and the fourth richest country per capita in the world. This amazing economic growth in Ireland has simultaneously reduced violence in Northern Ireland, the most violent region of Northern Europe for the past 40 years. (See Figure 1.3.) Since the mid-1990s the IRA has observed a ceasefire, and in 2005 it declared an end to its campaign.

Although negotiators and leaders deserve credit for stopping the violence, so does the miraculous rate of economic growth in Ireland and the related high growth

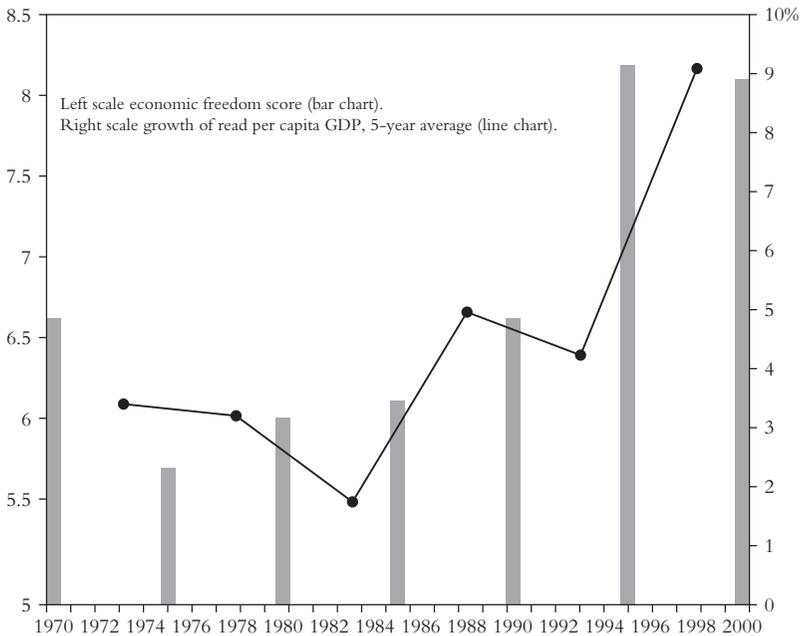


Figure 1.3 Ireland’s Economic Freedom Score and Growth Rate

Source: Benjamin Powell, “Economic Freedom and Growth: The Case of the *Celtic Tiger*,” *Cato Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3.

in Northern Ireland. A series of trade agreements between Ireland and Northern Ireland led to a 44 percent increase in trade between the two entities, allowing Northern Ireland to benefit to an increasing extent from the economic growth in Ireland.* The miraculous rate of economic growth in Ireland was caused by steady increases in economic freedom.†

In 1984, unemployment in Northern Ireland was nearly 15 percent, with youth unemployment exceeding 20 percent. (See Figure 1.4.)

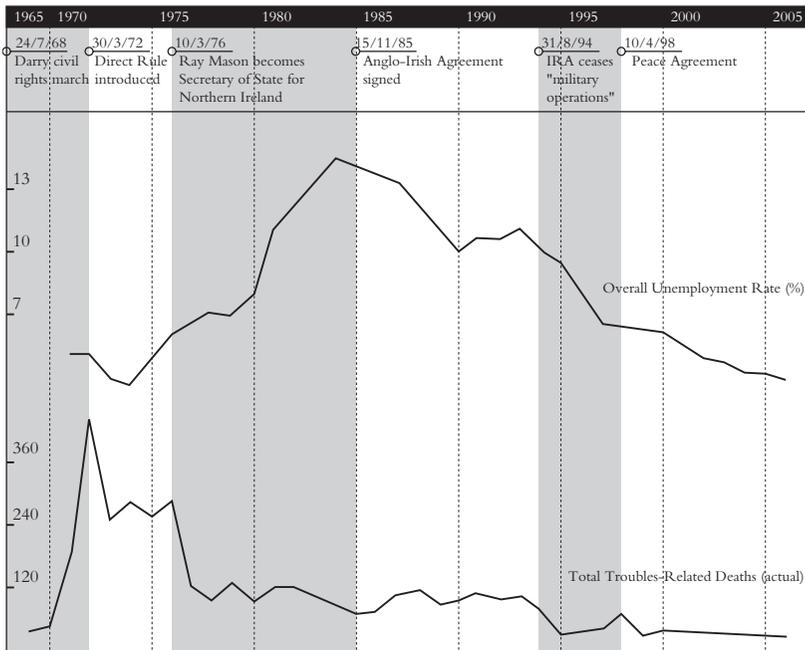


Figure 1.4 Northern Ireland's Unemployment Rate

SOURCE: "Economics in Peacemaking: Lessons from Northern Ireland," *The Portland Trust*, 2003, front material.

* "Economics in Peacemaking: Lessons from Northern Ireland," *The Portland Trust*, 2007, 27.

† Although some claim that EU subsidies led to the burst of economic growth in Ireland, clearly economic freedom contributed as well, consistent with the extensive literature on economic freedom and growth. William Easterly, among others, has shown in *The Elusive Quest for Growth* (MIT Press, 2001), that foreign aid alone has not led to growth.

(continued)

Today, the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland is 4.5 percent, one of the lowest unemployment rates in all of Europe. Although it is true that poverty does not cause violence and that the vast majority of poor people are nonviolent, chronic unemployment and poverty provide recruiting grounds for those who wish to address other grievances violently. Desperate, angry, marginalized young men with nothing to lose are more likely to try to regain their dignity and seek revenge through battle and bombings. Although the leading figures of terrorist movements are typically more highly educated than average, their popularity as heroes among their peoples stems from the fact that they are perceived as addressing a grievance or an injustice.

Thus, even more important in reducing the level of violence than the change in the overall rates of unemployment was the reduction in the discrepancy between Protestant and Catholic unemployment rates in Northern Ireland. (See Figure 1.5.) In 1985, there was a 14 percent discrepancy between the unemployment rates of Protestants and Catholics; by 2004 this was down to a 3.5 percent discrepancy.*

Naturally, when there is a large discrepancy in unemployment rates, the level of resentment is much higher. The combination of overall high unemployment rates, with much higher Catholic unemployment, heightened the religious conflict. Often, the differential rates of unemployment are perceived by the less economically successful group as persecution by the more economically dominant group. As a more dynamic

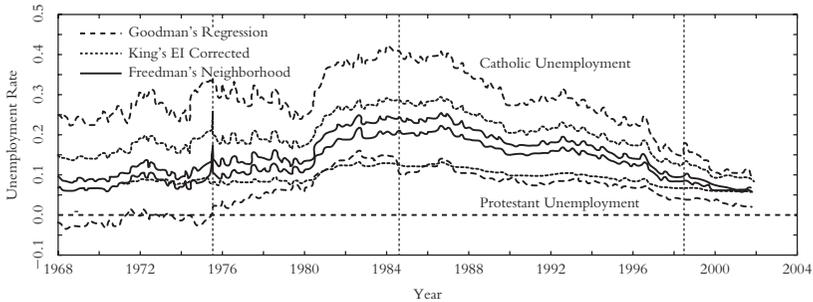


Figure 1.5 The Ratio of Catholic to Protestant Unemployment in Northern Ireland, 1968–2004 (different lines show different approaches to estimating differential rates of unemployment by religion)

SOURCE: Taken from Honaker, J., "Unemployment and Violence in Northern Ireland: A Missing Data Model for Ecological Inference." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago April, 15, 2004 (www.allacademic.com/meta/p83125_index.html).

*"Economics in Peacemaking: Lessons from Northern Ireland," The Portland Trust, 2003, p. 9.

economy reduces unemployment for all, thereby reducing the differential rates of unemployment, the perception of persecution is reduced and the rate of violence declines. While Conscious Capitalists should certainly make a proactive effort to hire so as to minimize such ethnic and religious disparities in employment, there is no substitute for a dynamic, fast-growing economy.

Can the Irish success story be repeated around the world? Gracia Burnham, a U.S. missionary who spent 377 days in captivity with Abu Sayyaf, an Al-Qaeda-related terrorist group in the Philippines, said of the terrorists she knew so intimately:

So many of the kids weren't bent on jihad . . . [in a world of extreme poverty, Abu Sayyaf was] . . . a career move. . . . Whether they were bent on jihad or not, all those guys wanted was to die in a gun battle so they could bypass the judgment of God and go straight to paradise. If they couldn't die in jihad, their next choice was to go to America and get a good job. (As quoted by Eliza Griswold, "The Believers," *The New Republic*, June 4, 2007)

Hope, and the opportunity to create a better life for oneself and one's family, is a universal aspiration.

Both the terrorists of the Irish Republican Army of the past hundred years, as well as the Islamic terrorists that frighten so many people today, are mostly young people who want opportunity and respect and want their peoples to have opportunity and respect. There will always be ideologues and individuals full of hate, but in a world of opportunity for all, hate-filled individuals will be marginalized as dangerous loners rather than heroic leaders of terrorist movements.

In today's Northern Ireland, few want to see violence destroy the recent prosperity and take away the good jobs they increasingly have. InterTradeIreland, an island-wide economic development agency, aspires for the entire island of Ireland to be one of the five richest economies in the world by 2020. The good news is that in order to achieve that goal, InterTradeIreland projects that the region's economy need only grow at a rate of 4.5 percent annually, more slowly than it has grown in the last 10 years.* With Ireland already ranked at number nine, this is primarily about improving the economy in Northern Ireland, which would not yet rank among the top 30 nations in terms of GDP per capita if it were an independent nation.†

* www.intertradeireland.com/module.cfm/opt/25/area/News/page/News/id/195/year/2005/month/10.

† Estimated ranking from data obtained here: www.bized.co.uk/current/leisure/2004_5/300505.htm and CIA World Factbook, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html.

The FLOW Ideal: A World of Healthy, Happy People Doing Good through Meaningful Fun

When we are motivated by goals that have deep meaning, by dreams that need completion, by pure love that needs expressing, then we truly live life.

—GREG ANDERSON

I want to do good and have fun doing it. I expect that most people would also like to be doing good and having fun doing it. We can help to create a world in which most of human life, most of the time, consists of doing good and having fun doing it.

In order to do so, we need to dramatically change many of our institutions, not just once, but over and over and over again. We need dramatic, ongoing change in all of the institutions of our society. We need to embrace the process of creative destruction enthusiastically; we need to celebrate the forward motion of an ongoing process of innovation and entrepreneurship that will bring happiness for all into the world.

In Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, once people's more basic needs for food, shelter, and safety have been met, they then crave love, esteem, and self-actualization. In the developed countries, almost everyone's basic needs have been met. Regarding the emerging economies, we know that opening the world will allow the basic needs of almost everyone on the planet to be met. Thus the fundamental problem is how to allow people's needs for love, esteem, and self-actualization to be met more effectively.

We are entering the age of meaning. An increasing percentage of us, an increasing percentage of the time, will have the time, leisure, ability, and interest to choose to engage in meaningful activity that we enjoy rather than meaningless activity that we dislike. Everything about work, leisure, entertainment, education, and family time is in flux. The ongoing inertia of choices made in the past, those patterns of consumption, employment, and investment that determine every aspect of the world we have created, are all undergoing a profound transformation. We are ready to create a new world.

Meaning comes from engagement in positive work that challenges our personal capacity combined with knowledge that our positive work

is making a larger contribution to the overall well-being of humanity and life on the planet. There will be an ever-increasing demand for meaningful work. We intend to help show the way to create an ever-increasing supply of such work so as to create a virtuous circle in which all benefit.

Whether people work for themselves or for others, they increasingly want to understand how their actions are contributing to a greater good. They will want to be engaged in work that contributes to society. Many will create new enterprises that are explicitly dedicated to doing good—the current social entrepreneurship movement is the tip of the iceberg in this respect. Many more will want to work for enterprises that provide them with both autonomy and meaning—workplaces such as Google are the tip of the iceberg in this respect. How can we create a society in which everyone has meaningful work? How can you find meaningful work today?

A World of Flow

Many attitudes and institutions today are relics of a time in which conflict was more pervasive, in which many people were more desperate than they are now. In the developed world, in particular, the vast majority of people have more than they need to live comfortably. Indeed, many people are in search of meaning more than money. Many of those who continue to search for money are really searching for meaning through status and consumption. What if those already in search of meaning found it in productive flow play? What if those who thought that they were finding meaning in status and consumption were to discover a more direct and satisfying path to meaning through flow?

Flow is:

Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost."

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow* (Harper Perennial, 1991)

What if we could create a world in which all seven billion human beings on the planet could be engaged in flow most of the time? What if most people, most of the time, spent time in productive work that was joyously identical to play?

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi developed the flow concept from studying people who loved what they did, who engaged in an activity for its own sake, not for extrinsic rewards. The key element was that people found their capacities challenged by their work/play without being overwhelmed by the challenge. Indeed, individuals engaged in the flow of optimal experience, of full engagement in life, were happier than were those who were spending time with entertainments.

Maslow described a hierarchy of needs. People first need to focus on basic needs such as food and security; starving people are not apt to philosophize. But after their basic needs have been met, they then experience needs to belong and to be esteemed. Only after their needs to belong and be esteemed have been adequately met does their primary purpose become self-actualization. While people may not move directly up the hierarchy, there is a general movement beyond the needy self.

Many of our political conflicts are premised on a world of self-interested individuals. But we live in a world in which an increasing percentage of the population seeks self-actualization, flow, love, and ecstatic mystery more than they seek money, status, or consumption. In the future, an increasing percentage of young people will naturally and unselfconsciously be devoted to creating meaningful careers for themselves. In order to do so, they will need to take responsibility for their own well-being, and they will do so joyfully. And, just as joyfully, they will encourage those around them to be responsible for their own well-being.

The Course in Miracles (Foundation for Inner Peace, The Course in Miracles, www.acim.org) makes the point more simply: Love is the opposite of fear. We no longer need to act out of fear.

Doing Good through Meaningful Fun

To date, Csikszentmihalyi's insights have been used primarily by game designers to develop an endless appetite for game playing. What if the flow experience was characteristic of life experience while doing good rather than play experience in imaginary universes?

We believe that it is possible to create a world in which we are all engaged in meaningful work that makes the world a better place and to engage in that work in a flow-like state that is profoundly satisfying. In order to create this world, we will have to work together both on the systems in which work takes place as well as on the focus, vision, and ethos that each of us brings to the public sphere. As a consequence, we will cover a wide range of issues, ranging from tax policy and economics to personal and spiritual growth. At no point do we claim to have the final word; but we do believe that we have gathered together the foundation for a perspective that can dramatically increase human well-being.

Capitalism is the dominant form of social organization in the world today. And yet many people are concerned that capitalism is harmful to the environment and harmful to human well-being. How can people feel as if their lives are meaningful when they are working within a system through which they harm the world on a daily basis?

It is important to realize that having a meaningful life doesn't imply that everything that we are doing right now is perfect. But it does imply that we are making progress toward a greater good, that our daily efforts contribute to making the world a better place. We offer here a road map to sustainable peace, prosperity, happiness, and well-being for all. By means of this road map, we intend to provide people with an understanding of how each and every one of us can contribute to the greater good of humanity.

Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*

Eckhart Tolle was a research scholar at Cambridge University when, at the age of 29, "a profound spiritual transformation virtually dissolved his old identity and radically changed the course of his life." He subsequently wrote *The Power of Now* (New World Library, 1999), a short, simple book, which became a word-of-mouth best seller with over two million copies sold.

Opinions about the book vary widely; *O: The Oprah Magazine* says, "It can transform your thinking. . . . The result? More joy, right now!" *Time Magazine*, on the other hand, describes it as "mumbo jumbo."

Tolle is an excellent example of a spiritual entrepreneur. He was, and is, not interested in money—he left a traditional path toward what is normally considered

(continued)

a “good life” as an academic researcher and spent years with almost no possessions at all. But Tolle is also not some bizarre, esoteric spiritual guru. Many of Tolle’s insights are extremely simple but not often practiced.

For instance, a primary theme of his book is that most of us spend the bulk of our time either worrying about the past or worrying about the future. He points out that we need not spend our time anxious and worried. We can, instead, choose simply to detach from our ego-mind and experience the present moment, the “Now.”

All of us have had spontaneous moments in which we were so struck by the freshness and beauty of a cloud, a mountain, a rainbow, or some other natural phenomenon that for a moment we were simply witnessing, without ego-awareness. For many of us, we may have to think back to childhood to recall distantly the experience of such moments because we have become so habituated to the business of life that we no longer are struck so spontaneously by natural beauty that we forget ourselves.

Tolle not only reminds us of these natural, spontaneous states of being, but he also provides us with ways to escape our egos to experience a similarly peaceful state of awareness anytime, anywhere. Although using such language as “escaping egos” may be a case of the “mumbo jumbo” referred to by *Time*, Tolle makes a compelling case that many writers in traditional philosophical and religious traditions often pointed to a similar source of inner peace.

For instance, Tolle writes, “Many people are in love with their life drama. Their story is their identity. The ego runs their life. They have their whole sense invested in it.” His advice, to escape the anxious ego drama to which many of us are addicted, is similar to that given by the Stoic philosopher and Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius nearly 2,000 years ago, “Accept whatever comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny, for what could more aptly fit your needs?” Neither Tolle nor Aurelius are claiming that we should not use our minds to solve problems, both to improve our own lives and those of others. Their message is consistently that we should not allow the thought processes needed to solve problems to become addictive emotional states that destroy happiness and well-being.

It turns out that escape from ego and developing the ability to be at peace in the present moment, requires some practice for most people. Tolle’s message, along with that of many Greek and Roman philosophers, Christians, Sufis, Buddhists, and others is that we can take responsibility for our personal happiness by means of disciplining our minds and transcending our egos. Buddhist meditation, Christian Centering Prayer, Sufi prayer, Taoist Tai Chi, and Kundalini Yoga are but a few of the many means by which we may train ourselves to escape from ego neediness and

pain and from the countless subtle anxieties about the world of which we are often barely aware.

Much human misery, both self-inflicted and harm inflicted on others, is caused by acting from the neediness of the ego. Whatever sources are helpful to you in escaping from the self-imposed pain caused by your ego, we encourage developing some kind of personal practice that empowers you to be free from the emotional pain or neediness whenever you please and to support the cultivation of such practices in others.

