

Spiral Dynamics Integral

"The Theory that Explains Everything"



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The Day the Earth Stood Still

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One of the first motion pictures to portray aliens from space as advanced saviors rather than menacing monsters, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, hit the theatres in 1951. This classic "atomic movie" of the post World War II epoch still plays on cable and satellite channels in the United States. Klaatu (Michael Rennie) lands in Washington DC, accompanied by a huge robot armed with an awesome death ray and other capabilities far beyond anything the earth has ever seen. His civilization has created and trained a race of robots who can instantly vaporize any society that perpetrate violence. While Klaatu's message is a peaceful one, he issues a stern warning to the assembled world leaders as he is about to board his flying saucer: Unless we earthlings get our collective act together and cease becoming a threat to the universal order, he informs the leaders, the planet Earth would be destroyed.

Maybe Klaatu and his robotic friend need to return in 2004.

At this writing, the United Nations is poised to host the annual General Assembly in New York City. No doubt the leaders of the UN as well as the member states are aware that this premier "multilateral" global organization is in deep crisis. The whole world changed on that September day in 2001 when the fiery glow from Lower Manhattan reached the reflective panels of the UN tower building. No doubt, too, that the entire microcosm of global threats, ills, divides, and fears will descend on the East River, the geographic location of this single entity which, at least in theory, represents all six billions earthlings.

If the safest place in any crisis is always the hard truth, what are the hard truths now, in September of 2003, that need to be accommodated? Can it be that in our Tower of Babel II, everybody will only do what is right in his or her own eyes? While there are plenty of high quality UN translators who can bridge over linguistic divides that separated people in Tower of Babel I, who can mediate and mesh among the global differences in world views, value systems, and political/economic priorities that confront us now?

It is as if we have gone back to the future and forward to the past in a single decade. All of the human-kinds that have ever emerged in our long psychological ascent have now reappeared in real time and in unique cultural, religious, and ethnic forms. The UN membership itself has risen from 51 to 191 members.

If the conditions after World War I generated the League of Nations, and the post-1945 realities inspired the creation of the United Nations, how will the forces at play in early 21st Century forge the next in the sequence?

Maybe we should resist efforts to "reform" the UN. Perhaps it is premature to debate competitive power sharing forms and models. Clearly, the past can neither be repaid or replayed. The future must play a more major role than the past in shaping the present.

What if we heeded the advice offered by R. Buckminster Fuller: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

This is our intent in this brief article. First, I will focus on the life conditions that we face at this epoch in human history. Second, I will list several of the functions that need to be performed by the world system in dealing with the "hard truths." Finally, this may lead us to

an approach that could well germinate into a natural design, one that reflects the realities for the six billion humans who reside on the planet Earth, and for their respective futures.

The Age of Fragmentation

This is the Age of Fragmentation. One can see it everywhere. National boundaries have lowered, allowing for the spread of new human mosaics and the formation of a distinctive 21st century cosmopolitan culture. Yet others remain in more primitive and deprived conditions, surviving on two-dollars-a-day income while being beset by poor medical care and horrible living conditions. Clans, tribes, empires, holy orders with rigid authoritarian structures, materialistic enterprises, communal circles of “equality,” and other manifestations now all have Internet Web sites, communicate instantly by emails and cell phones, and demand to march to their own respective drummers. Mass customization efforts can target each person's buying habits and the Human Genome project can identify unique DNA tracks for people and human groupings.

Never before in our long human history have individuals possessed so much power and potential in making personal choices.

Can any political, religious, or social “glue” hold it together? Have we finally reached the stage where human actions can, indeed, destroy the life essence of the species itself?

Well, that's the real question, isn't it? If our technological prowess has outstripped our cultural intelligence to deal with these potentially dangerous modern-day “tools,” we may push the self-destruction button after all. Or, if we cannot discover the deeper codes that form cultures in the first place, and understand how, when, where we engage in cultural wars, wars for national liberation, wars designed to advance holy causes, and wars intent on wiping out a competing ethnicity, the whole world might be set ablaze. Maybe the cockroaches will rise from our ashes.

Basic Global Functions

But let's get practical. What functions should a new Global Multilateral Intelligence (GMI) perform in this Age of Fragmentation?

Such a holonic Intelligence could exist and proliferate regardless of the structures in which people find themselves. The GMI could operate at both global and local levels. Let me suggest a few of the critical functions that the GMI would need to fulfill:

- Someone needs to monitor threats to our global natural habitat to see to it that life-sustaining elements – food, water, air, and essential biodiversity elements – are preserved and protected as our precious “seed corn” and biological home habitat.
- Someone needs to see after the human gene pool and basic biological health and well-being so that we can continue to breed our kind on this planet. This human “yeast” should be free from as many environmental contaminants as possible. (This also must include extreme caution in the areas of gene splicing and biological cloning, for fear we could do serious damage to our evolutionary codes and processes.)
- Someone needs to gain an understanding of our cultural dynamics so that we can get to the bottom of how and why we demonize each other, and why the Us vs. Them perceptual filters form so quickly and act in such a deadly fashion.
- Someone needs to prepare for “wild cards” that could appear suddenly to threaten our very existence, whether from nature or as the result of human actions.

While many of these functions are currently being performed in various countries and in many multinational organizations, the know-how is too fragmented, proprietary, and too much contained by gatekeepers and turf protectors. To my knowledge, the functions have not been brought together in the form of global Vital Signs Monitors designed to enable leadership (and everybody else for that matter) to make better decisions about our 'hard truths,' our basic realities. Displaying all the data, even on floor-to-ceiling video screens in colorful detail, will not be sufficient unless we can find sensitive and accurate pattern detectors to actually comprehend what is happening. John Petersen, at The Arlington Institute in Virginia, is developing this very technology as he cobbles together state-of-the-art data mining facilities, Web crawlers, and other scanning and analytical technology. (See

www.arlingtoninstitute.org for details.)

In addition to our understanding of our unique fragmentation on the planet, and our acceptance of the critical and basic functions that need to be performed, we now approach the most difficult question that will no doubt be raised time and time again at the UN meetings in September, 2003. I recognize how complex these issues are and can only sketch in some new directions and perspectives.

The Global Multilateral Intelligence

How can human beings at this stage in our psychological history find the ways to weave together our vast differences into new organizing mosaics? How can the interests of unilateral entities, such as nation-states and global tribes, be meshed into principles, patterns, and processes that can support what is called The Power of the Third Win – that society itself, with its multiple futures, “wins” in the short and long term?

As a species we once moved and morphed from tribal enclaves into larger, more complex nation-states. Why can't we now do the same as we shift over time from a total focus on nation-states into a new and more complex global arrangement? We had the League of NATIONS and the United NATIONS, but will the next iteration even have the word NATION in it?

New Political Knowledge

By “politics” I mean our collective “we” and how we make decisions about our lifetime on the planet – the operating codes that determine power relationships, distribution and redistribution formulas, and the essential principles and standards of conduct that make it possible for us to live together in groups and fulfill our dreams as individuals.

During the early 1990s in South Africa various people were consulted on their views of what should characterize the new South African constitution which was to be written and adopted in the post-apartheid age. I was asked whether the form of governance should be unitary, federal, or confederal. I had spent a great deal of time in that country-in-transition from 1981 until last year.

I said “Yes.”

What I meant was that the South African population was hardly a monolith, that both migration patterns and mixed levels of and opportunities for development had spread individuals all along an emerging Map of Complexity. Many of us felt at the time that South Africa was a microcosm of the population patterns of all six billion of us (and it still is). I looked carefully at all nine provinces, calling each a unique “Zone of Synergy.” These distinctive value systems clusters – we now use the term “memetics” to refer to these cultural codes and priority sets – would pretty well determine responses to education, wealth creation, justice, health care programs, and religious experiences. These diverse capacities to deal with the challenges of life in the 21st century would require tailored managerial or political systems and structures. Some were still in a Feudal Age configuration; others needed a Singapore-like dose of Good Authority; yet others were primed for First World, technology-rich, multiparty competitive politics.

I now call this “Stratified Democracy,” which is based on the concept that different human groupings are passing through different developmental stages at different speeds and with quite different views of the future. None of these historic differences reflect any relative worth of individuals nor do they comment on the richness of the contributions that each can make to the quality of life. But the differences between the human groupings are real.

If we now project this awareness of developmental differences onto a global screen, one can begin to see and comprehend the deepest codes and patterns that inevitably shape surface-level conflicts, preferences, and agendas. In 1945 the concept of a “nation state” was primary. Today, there are millions of “world citizens” who are less inclined to wave patriotic flags. Others are moving quickly on our memetic maps into new developmental zones, requiring different political configurations.

What, therefore, if the proposed new Global Multilateral Intelligence contained these deeper memetic codes and contours that shape the political and economic behaviors on the surface level? Not only would it provide the knowledge and insights to monitor major conflicts in the making, but it would also know how to craft “natural designs” to fit the levels of complexity and other capacities of specific situations around the planet.

The GMI would have a Vital Signs Monitor with the necessary computer power to detect these deep level flows and search for blockages. I have suggested the formation of the Human Memome Project as a necessary companion piece to the Global Genome Project. The intent, here, is not only to serve as a depository and central clearing house for knowledge regarding our Memome, but also to construct a scaffolding of economic, political, social, architectural, educational, health care, agricultural, developmental and environmental models, programs, and benchmarks that have naturally emerged over the planet in response to real problems. These can then be shared globally along with the knowledge to know which particular package and approach to use in a specific situation. Gone will be the one-size-fits-all “solutions” that often make things worse, not better.

New Political Processes

Finally, to deal with our growing fragmentation at the practical level we will need new, fresh, and dynamic modes of decision-making and problem-solving. We must learn how to get all the stakeholders on the same page and working in the same direction. We must search for the models that integrate, align, and synergize in behalf of the larger vision, the greater good.

Many of our new models and processes have emerged from value engineering and value management disciplines. Both confrontational and consensus models lack the precision and depth of inquiry to generate sufficiently complex solutions. Attempts at dialogue have had mixed results since many of the sessions simply re-circulate older ideas and spend critical time sharing viewpoints and feelings, ensuring that everybody be “heard” while nothing gets done. I now suggest a new profession of Integral Design Engineers who work around the general theme of “Enabling Emergence.” Maybe a focus on “making peace” won't get it done. But if we can learn how to facilitate the movement of six billion earthlings along an evolutionary trajectory, we might find “peace” in spite of ourselves.

Oh yes, one more thing.

What if a flying saucer landed on the UN grounds during the General Assembly session and a man named Klaatu, “friendly” robot in tow, appeared in front of our eyes, requesting to speak at the Assembly? Would it will take this dramatic an event to finally wake us up?

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