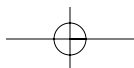
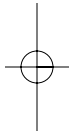
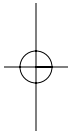




THE GREAT TURNING



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The Great Turning

From Empire to Earth Community

DAVID C. KORTEN



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My paternal grandmother, Lydia Boehl Korten, who taught me that every person has a sacred purpose.

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The Great Turning pulls together the many strands of my journey of understanding that began more than forty-six years ago in my senior year of college. Most everyone who has since touched my life has contributed in some way to the reflections I share in the pages ahead. I mention here only those whom I have had the privilege of knowing and engaging personally during the more than three years I have devoted specifically to writing this book and who have made special contributions to my thinking.

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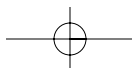
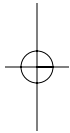
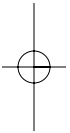
Danny Glover, Robert Jeffries, and Belvie Rooks raised my awareness of the centrality of race in shaping the American experience. Raffi Cavoukian drew my attention to the universal concern for children as a potential bridge across the seemingly irreconcilable political divide between conservatives and liberals. Larry Daloz, Sharon Parks, Elizabeth Pinchot, David Womeldorff, and Donna Zajonc all contributed to my understanding of the developmental stages of the human consciousness and their broad implications for actualizing the potentials of our nature.

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THE GREAT TURNING



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We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

THE EARTH CHARTER (2000)

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The Great Turning

Future generations, if there is a livable world for them, will look back at the epochal transition we are making to a life-sustaining society. And they may well call this the time of the Great Turning.¹

Joanna Macy

By what name will our children and our children's children call our time? Will they speak in anger and frustration of the time of the Great Unraveling, when profligate consumption led to an accelerating wave of collapsing environmental systems, violent competition for what remained of the planet's resources, a dramatic dieback of the human population, and a fragmentation of those who remained into warring fiefdoms ruled by ruthless local lords?

Or will they look back in joyful celebration on the noble time of the Great Turning, when their forebears turned crisis into opportunity, embraced the higher-order potential of their human nature, learned to live in creative partnership with one another and the living Earth, and brought forth a new era of human possibility?

It is the premise of The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community that we humans stand at a defining moment that presents us with an irrevocable choice. Our collective response will determine how our time is remembered for so long as the human species survives. In the days now at hand, we must each be clear that every individual and collective choice we make is a vote for the future we of this time will bequeath to the generations that follow. The Great Turning is not a prophecy; it is a possibility

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PROLOGUE

In Search of the Possible

Man, when he entered life, the Father gave the seeds of every kind and every way of life possible. Whatever seeds each man sows and cultivates will grow and bear him their proper fruit.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1486)

The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

In 1995, I observed in the prologue to *When Corporations Rule the World* that everywhere I went I found an almost universal sense among ordinary people that the institutions on which they depended were failing them. Rising poverty and unemployment, inequality, violent crime, broken families, and environmental deterioration all contributed to a growing fear of what the future might hold.

Now it turns out that those were the good days. The financial shock that swept through Asia, Russia, and Latin America in the late 1990s, the bursting of the stock market bubble in the opening days of the twenty-first century, and a continuing wave of corporate financial scandals have drawn attention to a corruption of the institutions of the global economy well beyond what I documented in 1995.

Pundits continue to speak optimistically about economic growth, gains in jobs, and a rising stock market, yet working families, even with two incomes, find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet and fall ever deeper into debt as health care and housing costs soar out of reach. We are told that as a nation we can no longer afford basics we once took for granted, such as living-wage jobs with benefits, a quality education for our children, health care and safety nets for the poor, protection for the environment, parks, public funding for the arts and public broadcasting, and pensions for the elderly. Economists tell us we are getting richer, yet everyday experience tells a different story. Meanwhile

we face global terrorism, rapid increases in oil prices, increasingly violent weather events, a skyrocketing U.S. trade deficit, and a falling U.S. dollar.

Talk of end times is in the air. Books on biblical Armageddon and the imminent return of Christ to lift believers to heaven are selling in the tens of millions in the United States. Leading business magazines carry cover stories about the end of oil. The Pentagon has joined environmentalists in issuing warnings about the potential apocalyptic consequences of climate change.

One of the most common reactions I received from readers of *When Corporations Rule the World* is that it gave them a sense of hope. I was at first surprised, because documenting the systemic causes of increasing inequality, environmental destruction, and the disintegrating social fabric had been for me a decidedly depressing experience. Yet, reader after reader responded that by providing an analysis that explained the cause of the difficulties they were experiencing and by demonstrating that it is possible for human societies to take another course, *When Corporations Rule the World* had given them hope that things could be different.

As the crisis has continued to intensify, I have come to see that the issues I addressed in *When Corporations Rule the World* are a contemporary manifestation of much deeper historical patterns and that changing course will require far more than holding global corporations accountable for the social and environmental consequences of their operations. This book, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, examines these deeper patterns. It offers no simple answers to five thousand years of human misdirection, but it does make clear that the misdirection is not inevitable and that a practical pathway to a positive human future is now within our means as a species to choose. Consequently, I expect that on balance readers will find *The Great Turning* to be an even more hopeful book than *When Corporations Rule the World*.

As I have done in my previous books, I want to introduce the issues we will be exploring together by sharing with you the outlines of the journey I have taken from the innocence of my growing up to my current understanding of the epic opportunity now before us as a species.

GROWING UP ON A SHRINKING PLANET

I am a member of a transitional generation that has experienced the profound cultural, economic, and political consequences of a communications revolution that has shrunk the planet and wiped away the barriers of geography long separating humans into islands of cultural isolation. This revolution is bringing forth a new consciousness of the reality that we humans are one people sharing one destiny on one small planet. The story of my personal awakening is far from unique among the members of my generation.

Transitional Generation

Born in 1937, I grew up white, middle class, and quintessentially conservative in a small town in the northwest corner of the United States, surrounded by an extended family of uncles, aunts, and grandparents. I rarely saw a person of a different race and never met a Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist. I assumed, as did my family, that on completing college I would return to the town of my birth to spend my life running the family retail business. I had little interest in travel beyond visiting the nearby mountains and seashore and, until just before graduation from college, found it a bit odd that anyone blessed with U.S. citizenship would want to venture beyond our national borders. Never, even in a fleeting fantasy, did I imagine that as an adult I would reside and work for over twenty years in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

The difference between my experience growing up and that of my daughters illustrates the dramatic shrinking of the planet and the transformation of human experience that occurred over a period of less than forty years. By the time my daughters graduated from high school, they had lived in Nicaragua, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the United States and had attended International Schools with classmates of richly varied racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds from more than sixty countries. They grew up as itinerants far removed from blood relatives other than their mother and father. During their high school years they thought nothing of traveling on their own between Indonesia and the United States with a stopover in South Korea, a country in which few people spoke English, to do some shopping. Even before graduating from high school, they had a global consciousness and skills in dealing with cultural differences wholly beyond my comprehension growing up in a day when international travel was slow, prohibitively costly, and uncommon.

Large-scale international student exchanges, voluntary service programs, and international careers in transnational governmental, nongovernmental, and business organizations now provide millions of people with sustained in-depth cross-cultural encounters. Since the early 1990s, Internet technologies have made international communications instantaneous and nearly costless and thus open possibilities for still more varied forms of international exchange and cooperation.

By the scale of evolutionary time, this has been a virtually instantaneous break with the previous human condition. It creates new challenges even as it expands by orders of magnitude our species' possibilities. Here is the story of how I experienced this break.

From Hometown to Global Village

In 1959, as a psychology major in my senior year of college, I faced a requirement to take a colloquium taught by a professor outside my major field of study.

I was attracted to an offering on modern revolutions taught by Robert North, a distinguished professor of political science. It seemed a useful opportunity to learn something about the Communist revolutions that to my conservative mind posed a threat to my American way of life. In the course of the seminar, I learned that Communist revolutions grew out of the desperation of the poor. As I absorbed the implications, I made a life-changing decision: I would devote my life to sharing the secrets of America's economic and political success so that the world's poor might become free and prosperous like Americans and thus abandon ideas of revolution.

The subsequent experience of working for some thirty years as a member of the international development establishment profoundly changed my worldview. I had gone abroad to teach. Far more consequential than what I taught was what I learned—about myself, my country, and the human tragedy of unrealized possibility. Ultimately, I realized I must return to the land of my birth to share with my people the lessons of my encounter with the world.

In 1992, Fran, my wife and life partner, and I moved to New York City. Fran continued her work as a program officer at the Ford Foundation's headquarters, and I began the research that led to publication in 1995 of *When Corporations Rule the World*.²

To this day, I retain my conservative suspicion of big government. I am now, however, equally suspicious of big business and big finance. I remain critical of the shortcomings of unions and public welfare programs, but have a far greater appreciation of their positive and essential role in protecting the rights and well-being of otherwise defenseless working people in the hard-knocks world of big business and global finance.

Although my love for my own country and its possibilities remains firm, I no longer view the United States through the eyes of innocence. I have seen firsthand the devastating negative impact that the economic and military policies of the U.S. government have had on democracy, economic justice, and environmental sustainability, both at home and abroad. That experience has also brought me to an understanding that the leadership to create a world that works for all can and must come from the bottom up through the creative work and political activism of ordinary people who know from their own experience the consequences of these policies.

Therefore, in most respects, I continue to align with what I grew up believing to be conservative values. Yet I find I have nothing in common with extremists of the far right who advance an agenda of class warfare, fiscal irresponsibility, government intrusions on personal liberty, and reckless international military adventurism as conservative causes.

THE TRAGEDY OF UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

Much of my professional life has been devoted to an inquiry into the tragedy of unrealized human potential. In setting after setting, I experienced a persistent tendency in formal organizations—whether business or government—to centralize control in the interest of order and predictability. It is so pervasive that most of us take it for granted as inevitable.

The costs in lost opportunity came into focus for me when Fran and I became involved in the early 1970s in an effort to improve the management of clinic-based family-planning programs in Central America. Procedures and organizational structures were dictated by foreign advisers employed by aid agencies or by professionals at national headquarters—none of whom had contact with the women the program was intended to serve. The result was abysmally poor program performance as measured by the number of women served, staff morale, and client satisfaction.

By contrast, the best performing clinic we identified had a courageous and innovative nurse who ignored the formal procedures and focused on organizing the services to be convenient for clients and responsive to their needs. The staff and the program flourished.³ Unfortunately, such cases were actively discouraged by program officials.

Fran and I subsequently observed the same devastating consequences of rigid central control play out in programs throughout South and Southeast Asia in health care, agricultural extension, irrigation, forestry, land reform, education, and community development. Programs intended to serve the poor consumed substantial human and material resources to no useful end. Even more alarming was the frequent disruption of the ability of villagers and their communities to control and manage their own resources to meet their needs.

For example, small family farmers throughout Asia have for many centuries joined together to build and manage their own irrigation systems, some of which are marvels of engineering ingenuity and operating efficiency. Yet when government programs inventoried irrigation capacity, they counted only irrigation systems built by the government. They then proceeded to replace the village-built and village-managed systems with more costly, less-efficient centrally managed systems. Commonly the new systems were financed by multimillion-dollar loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, which the children of the farmers would one day be taxed to repay.

In an effort to demonstrate the possibilities of an approach that strengthened local control, Fran and I became involved in a ten-year intervention to transform the Philippine National Irrigation Administration (NIA) from a top-down engineering bureaucracy to a service organization responsive to the technical and organizational needs of community irrigation associations. The process involved transforming the structures, procedures, purpose, staffing,



PART I

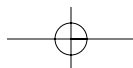
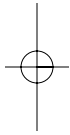
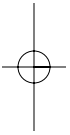
Choosing Our Future

The capacity to anticipate and choose our future is a defining characteristic of the human species. The recent global spread of communications technologies has combined with a confrontation with planetary limits to present us with a unique opportunity, and the necessity, to use that capacity with conscious collective intent.

The defining choice is between two contrasting models for organizing human affairs. Give them the generic names Empire and Earth Community. Empire, which features organization by domination and which has been a defining feature of the most powerful and influential human societies for some five thousand years, appropriates much of the productive surplus of society to maintain a system of dominator power and elite competition. Racism, sexism, and classism are endemic features of Empire. Earth Community, which features organization by partnership, unleashes the human potential for creative cooperation and allocates the productive surplus of society to the work of growing the generative potential of the whole.

The defenders of Empire teach that we humans are by nature limited to a self-centered and ultimately self-destructive narcissism. Their favored organizing model suppresses development of the higher orders of human consciousness and thereby creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. The organizing model of Earth Community, by contrast, nurtures expression of the higher-order human capacities for responsible service that Empire denies. A convergence of imperative and opportunity unique to the

present moment in the human experience sets the stage for an intentional collective choice to put the way of Empire behind us as we live into being a new era of Earth Community.



CHAPTER 1

The Choice

Energy always flows either toward hope, community, love, generosity, mutual recognition, and spiritual aliveness or it flows toward despair, cynicism, fear that there is not enough, paranoia about the intentions of others, and a desire to control.¹

Michael Lerner

All societies are patterned on either a dominator model—in which human hierarchies are ultimately backed up by force or the threat of force—or a partnership model, with variations in between.²

Riane Eisler

In the early 1970s, while teaching at the Central American Management Institute in Nicaragua, I made several visits to a cattle ranch in Costa Rica I'll call Hacienda Santa Teresa. The simple but compelling story of this ranch captures for me the essence of the tragedy of unrealized human possibility that plays out at all levels of society, from relationships among nations, to relationships within nations, between races and genders, within families, and among individuals. The names are fictional. The story is true.³

HACIENDA SANTA TERESA

When Juan Ricardo took charge of the Hacienda Santa Teresa as manager in 1970, its lands, roads, fences, and buildings were in poor repair; many of its cattle were in poor health from a lack of necessary mineral supplements and vaccinations. Most of the *sabaneros*, the workers who looked after the cattle, were single men who lived in a dilapidated, unpainted one-room bunkhouse, where they slept on wooden planks. The *peones*, who did the manual labor, shared a similar but separate facility in which they simply slept on the floor for lack even of wooden planks. Each received a small wage plus a ration of rice, beans, lard, coffee, and occasionally corn flour for tortillas. These conditions were standard for the region.

Sabaneros in those parts were often related to one another and formed tight-knit groups. For the most part they were cleaner and more concerned with the appearance of their quarters than the peones, but were still lax in their personal hygiene and generally in poor health. They had a reputation for honesty, did their jobs well, and commanded a certain grudging respect from the ranchers, who depended on them to care for the cattle on distant pastures.

Like most others in the region, the sabaneros at Hacienda Santa Teresa were responsible for providing their own equipment, which was often in poor repair. Their bridles had no bits, their ropes were old, and they lacked basic rain gear even though heavy rainstorms were common. The ranch provided their horses, which received minimal care. The sabaneros did not know how to trim their horses' hooves properly and took no care to remove ticks from the animals' hides.

The peones built fences, repaired roads, cleared land, and constructed corals and buildings—tasks for which some of them had considerable skill. They were, however, considered incorrigible thieves who needed strict supervision. They were expected to respond to any order with subservience and respect. Because labor-code provisions only took effect after three months of employment, many ranchers made a point of never keeping a *peón* that long. The sabaneros were disdainful of the peones, whom they considered dirty, unprincipled, irresponsible, and ignorant, and felt they were entitled to give the peones arbitrary orders.

Ricardo observed that many of the peones, who were paid hourly wages, were hardworking and, by working voluntary overtime, sometimes earned more than the salaried sabaneros. However, the peones lived in complete filth and took no initiative even in matters directly affecting their own comfort and well-being. At the end of the workday, they dropped their tools where they stood and returned to the bunkhouse unless otherwise instructed. The next morning they lined up awaiting orders. If a *peón* saw a cow walking through a hole in a fence, he would stand and watch unless ordered to retrieve it. Petty theft was a continuing annoyance.

Ricardo concluded that both the ranch and its staff had unrealized possibilities. He set out to test his theory that by treating his workers like responsible adults they would respond accordingly. One of his first steps was to improve their health by providing each with a raincoat and a mattress and adding eggs, meat, vegetables, and cheese to their diet. He then raised the wages of the sabaneros by 25 to 30 percent, raised the starting wage of the peones by 20 percent, and implemented a policy of deducting the cost of lost tools.

He appointed the informal leader of the sabaneros as head sabanero and gave him an additional raise and a wristwatch. However, instead of assigning each sabanero ten to fifteen horses, as was standard in the area, he cut them back to three, bought them new saddles, and taught them to de-tick their

so important to the human future between human communities and the natural communities that sustain them. The term *Earth Community* comes from the Earth Charter, a “Declaration of Interdependence and Universal Responsibility” created through a multiyear collaborative process involving hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals of diverse religious faiths, cultures, races, languages, and nationalities.⁵

Competing Narratives

Empire and Earth Community flow from sharply contrasting worldviews.⁶ The narrative of Empire, which emphasizes the demonstrated human capacity for hatred, exclusion, competition, domination, and violence in the pursuit of domination, assumes humans are incapable of responsible self-direction and that social order must be imposed by coercive means. The narrative of Earth Community, which emphasizes the demonstrated human capacity for caring, compassion, cooperation, partnership, and community in the service of life, assumes a capacity for responsible self-direction and self-organization and thereby the possibility of creating radically democratic organizations and societies. These narratives represent two sides of a psychic tension that resides within each of us. One focuses on that which divides us and leads to fear and often violent competition. The other focuses on that which unites us and leads to trust and cooperation.

These competing tendencies are expressed in the tension between the feminine predisposition to bond for mutual protection in the face of danger and the masculine predisposition to fight or take flight. Yet while one tendency or the other may be more fully expressed in a given individual or society, both reside in each of us—male or female—which helps to account for the wide variety of the human experience. Healthy social function depends on maintaining a balance between these tendencies. Empire’s five thousand years of male domination demonstrate the tragic consequences of imbalance.

TABLE 1.1: The choice

Empire	Earth Community
Life is hostile and competitive	Life is supportive and cooperative
Humans are flawed and dangerous	Humans have many possibilities
Order by dominator hierarchy	Order through partnership
Compete or die	Cooperate and live
Love power	Love life
Defend the rights of the self	Defend the rights of all
Masculine dominant	Gender balanced

The competing narratives are also reflected in the range of qualities attributed to God in different cultures. At one extreme is the wrathful God of Empire who demands exclusive loyalty, favors one people over another, lives apart from his creation, rules through anointed earthly representatives, and extracts a terrible vengeance on his enemies and the unbelievers. At the other extreme is the universal loving God/dess of Earth Community, the intrinsic, omnipresent living Spirit beyond gender that manifests itself in every aspect of Creation.

Love and fear are both integral to our human nature and necessary for our full development. Love is a binding spiritual force that opens our minds and hearts to life's creative possibilities. Fear alerts us to real dangers and focuses our attention to ensure that we do not neglect our own survival needs. However, when fear awakens our defenses, it also evokes our capacity for violence, including violence against those we love. How we resolve the tension between love and fear has major consequences for the course of our lives—and our politics. The deep democracy of egalitarian civic engagement that is integral to Earth Community necessarily depends on a mature sense of mutual trust, responsibility, and caring.

Relationships of Empire

Empire, which gives expression to the authoritarian impulse, features a drive for *dominator* power, to use Eisler's term: the power to take, control, and destroy by coercive means. It organizes every relationship at every level of society according to a hierarchy of power, control, status, and privilege. The ever present focus is on attaining more power by co-opting and monopolizing the power of the many below, often at great cost to the whole.⁷ Males have been socialized to specialize in the cultivation of dominator power.

The cultural and institutional systems of Empire support a monopolization of resources by the ruling elites, whose lives become consumed in competing with one another for the top positions in the dominance hierarchy. Because power struggles are continuous and often treacherous, relationships commonly feature a substantial element of distrust, fear, and duplicity. Fear is Empire's friend, as it creates a psychological need for certainty, control, and structured relationships that motivates acquiescence by those below.

Empire routinely extends rights and freedoms to those at the top of the hierarchy that it denies those on the bottom. By the logic of Empire's narrative, the smartest, toughest players have the right and the duty to seize and hold power by whatever means are available to impose peace and order on an unruly world in the interest of all—a service for which they believe themselves to be rightfully rewarded with even greater power and wealth. The legitimating culture extols the virtues of the powerful winners, attributes the condition

render political action pointless, most Christian groups of such persuasion took little interest in political life and had to be convinced of their Christian duty to engage politically.

The second challenge for those who sought to mobilize the Christian Right as a political base was the deep influence of the ideas of R. J. Rushdoony, a champion of Christian Reconstructionism, whose articles were regularly published in Falwell's newspaper. Journalist Frederick Clarkson, who specializes in reporting on the Christian Right, explains that

generally, Reconstructionism seeks to replace democracy with a theocracy that would govern by imposing their version of "Biblical Law." As incredible as it seems, democratic institutions such as labor unions, civil rights laws, and public schools would be on the short list for elimination. Women would be generally relegated to hearth and home. Men deemed insufficiently Christian would be denied citizenship, perhaps executed. So severe is this theocracy that capital punishment would be extended beyond such crimes as kidnapping, rape, and murder to include, among other things, blasphemy, heresy, adultery and homosexuality.¹⁴

In short, the vision calls for creating a theocratic state with legal codes similar to those of the early Calvinist colonies in New England. A program akin to that of Islamic fundamentalists who seek to create Islamic states, it lacks broad popular appeal. To build a loyal voter base, plutocrats and theocrats alike had to become skilled in waging stealth campaigns that played to the resentments of those who were being squeezed out of the middle class by cloaking the real agenda in populist rhetoric and values.

Mobilizing Resentment

The New Right alliance became especially effective in targeting the resentment of small-business owners, farmers, and wage laborers whose middle-class status was threatened by the very system they were being mobilized to promote. It was a diabolically effective strategy. Since the actual intention was to advance a neoliberal economic agenda hostile to the middle class, the greater the New Right's success, the greater the anxiety and resentment it engendered. Through skillful scapegoating, the resentment of the middle class was deflected away from the economic policies that were the real source of its affliction and was turned instead against gays, people of color, feminists, welfare recipients, immigrants, drug addicts, government workers, Jews, and the liberals who support them.¹⁵

All the while corporate advertisers were cultivating an individualistic culture of greed and materialism and using sex and violence to keep people glued

to television sets, thus fueling social alienation and a sense of decline in moral values. As liberal reformers focused their attention on expanding the rights and freedoms of women, people of color, children, and gays and lesbians, the New Right accused the reformers of being responsible for the breakdown of the moral order of traditional American cultural norms—“the work ethic, sexual restraint, self-reliance, patriarchy, Christian worship, and patriotism.”¹⁶ The New Right found it particularly easy to generate resentment among struggling working-class taxpayers against welfare recipients.

The New Right found that three story themes worked particularly well to mobilize their constituencies: social ills are the result of permissive liberalism; free market capitalism is more effective than government in delivering prosperity; and the external threat of Communism (later terrorism) requires a strong defense.¹⁷ These themes in turn supported cuts in social welfare programs, the deregulation of markets, and lucrative military contracts for corporate sponsors. As observed by researcher Jean Hardisty,

In confusing and frightening times, Christian Right groups provide clear rules of conduct and theologically ordained answers to life's problems... The New Right captured and mobilized widespread social stress caused by rapid social and economic change. It did not create backlash sentiments out of whole cloth. They had already existed, at least latently. New Right leaders listened to them, took them seriously, and then mobilized and manipulated them.¹⁸

The theocrats respond to attacks on their positions with the charge that opponents are motivated by a hatred of Christians, America, and the moral order. This tactic disguises the fact that promoting hatred and intolerance—particularly against society's most vulnerable people—places them sharply at odds with the foundational values of the Declaration of Independence, the teachings of Jesus, and the beliefs of the substantial majority of Christians. Indeed, most Christians, including many who identify themselves as fundamentalist or evangelical, are compassionate, committed to progressive democratic values, and deeply offended by the un-Christian aims of leaders of the theocratic right and their distortions of Christian teaching. Hardisty and Clarkson each underscore the essential distinction between the *followers* of the New Right, who are struggling with legitimate concerns, and the *leaders* of the New Right, who manipulate those concerns for political advantage.¹⁹

Exploiting Family Breakdown

The New Right has been brilliantly successful in restoring the imperial status quo in relations between the owning and the working classes. Since 1983, nearly all the gains from economic growth have gone to the very richest

CHAPTER 14

Prisons of the Mind

Perhaps the only limits to the human mind are those we believe in.¹

Willis W. Harman

Those who control the stories that define the culture of a society control its politics and its economy. This truth is crucial to explaining how a small cabal of right-wing extremists was able to render the democratic safeguards of the U.S. political system ineffective and gain control of the governing institutions of the nation. It is also crucial to framing a strategy for advancing the Great Turning.

The leaders of the New Right view the world from the perspective of an Imperial Consciousness that holds elite rule to be the only viable option for maintaining social order. To build their political base they set about to frame the large stories that would legitimate this worldview in the public mind and bind the political debate to their interests.

Thus, the true believers of the New Right gained power not by their numbers, which are relatively small, but by their ability to control the stories that answer three basic questions: How do we prosper? How do we maintain order and keep ourselves secure? How do we find a sense of meaning and purpose in life? We might call these our prosperity, security, and meaning stories. The New Right has carefully honed and incessantly retold imperial versions of these stories to legitimate, even celebrate, the ordering of society by hierarchies of domination.

Given the long history of elite rule in the United States and other Western democracies, many elements of the stories they needed were already familiar within the culture, as they are but variations of the stories imperial rulers have relied upon for millennia to legitimate injustice. The leaders of the New Right only needed to organize them into simple messages and recruit sympathetic scholars, preachers, politicians, media personalities, and think tank pundits to repeat them constantly through the megaphone of the corporate media. Together they created an echo chamber that embedded their stories in the culture and limited the boundaries of public discourse to a choice among policies that favor elite interests.

We hear these stories echoed so often in so many different contexts that we come simply to accept them as statements of reality. Their narratives become prisons of the mind that confine us to the lower orders of consciousness and possibility. To liberate ourselves we must first recognize these narratives for what they are.

IMPERIAL PROSPERITY STORY

By definition, imperial elites inhabit a world of power and privilege based largely on their ownership of the productive assets on which the lives of all depend. They understandably favor stories that affirm the importance and legitimate the privilege of the owning class.

The Story

These are the essential elements of the imperial prosperity story:

Economic growth, which expands the pie of wealth to create prosperity for all, depends on investment and therefore a wealthy investor class. The greater the financial returns to members of the investor class, the greater their incentive to invest. The more they invest, the faster the economy grows and the faster the lives of all improve. Since the market rewards individual investors in proportion to their contribution, inequality is natural, healthy, and essential to prosperity. Only the simpleminded or mean-spirited would begrudge the rich their due reward, because as the rich get richer, so does everyone else.

Through regulation, taxes, and trade barriers, government limits profits for investors and reduces the incentive for the rich to invest, raises prices for consumers, and destroys jobs – thus impoverishing the society. Through welfare programs, government eliminates the incentive for the poor to work – thus eroding the moral fabric.

In a free market capitalist economy, anyone can make it if they really try; individual failure is the mark of a character defect. Eliminating welfare programs to force the poor to work builds their character and brings them into the mainstream of society.

To achieve prosperity and end poverty, we must free the wealthy from taxes, regulations, and trade barriers; sell off public assets and services to private investors, who are by nature more efficient and responsive to consumer interests; and eliminate the disincentive of public welfare programs. The free market will put people to work, eliminate poverty, get money in people's pockets so they can

organizational challenge of dealing with growing population densities, our forebears made a choice for the dominator relations of Empire. A self-destructive era of warfare, greed, racism, sexism, and suppression of the higher orders of human consciousness followed. We now face the imperative and the opportunity to embark on a path to a new era grounded in the partnership relations of Earth Community.

The time of reckoning with the consequences of Empire's excess is no longer a future event. It is now upon us. Increasing oil prices are but one indicator of the unraveling of an economy based on the depletion of nonrenewable natural resources. An increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events is only the most dramatic indicator of the unraveling of the established human relationship with the living systems of the planet. Growth in the frequency and destructiveness of terrorist attacks signal an unraveling in the capacity of Empire to impose its will on subject peoples. Each of these unravelings creates an imperative for a turning from the relationships of Empire to the relationships of Earth Community.

We are getting a wake-up call we cannot ignore. How we respond will determine whether Creation's gift of reflective consciousness was well conceived or overly reckless. To pass the test before us, we humans must demonstrate the intelligence and the moral maturity to liberate ourselves from the addictions of Empire and to use our gifts wisely in the service of the whole.

Rather than give in to despair in this often frightening time, let us rejoice in the privilege of being alive at a moment of creative opportunity unprecedented in the human experience. Peace and justice for all and a sustainable relationship to the planet are within our reach. If we fail to embrace the opportunity, Empire's pessimistic assumption that we are an inherently destructive species becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and we continue on the path to collapse. If we pass the test, we move on to the exploration and realization of untold new possibilities.

Our time has come to trade the sorrows of Empire for the joys of Earth Community. Let our descendants look back on this time as the time of the Great Turning, when humanity made a bold choice to birth a new era devoted to actualizing the higher potentials of our human nature.

The work begins with embracing the truth that it is within our means to choose our future and to place our capacity for reflective choice at the service of Creation's continued unfolding. We are the ones we have been waiting for.

Notes

THE GREAT TURNING

1. Joanna Macy, "The Shift to a Life-Sustaining Civilization," para. 3 on the Web page "The Great Turning," n.d., <http://www.joannamacy.net/html/great.html>.

Prologue

1. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, as translated by the revered Anglican theologian Richard Hooker (1554–1600).
2. Further details of my life journey can be found in the prologues to *When Corporations Rule the World* and *The Post-Corporate World: Life after Capitalism* and on my Web site (<http://www.davidkorten.org/>).
3. Deirdre Strachan and David C. Korten, "The Overcrowded Clinic," in Frances F. Korten and David C. Korten, *Casebook for Family Planning Management* (Boston: Pathfinder Fund, 1977), 49–62.
4. The details are extensively documented in Frances F. Korten and Robert Y. Siy Jr., *Transforming a Bureaucracy: The Experience of the Philippine National Irrigation Administration* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1988); Benjamin U. Bagadion and Frances F. Korten, "Developing Irrigators' Organizations: A Learning Process Approach," in *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, ed. Michael M. Cernea (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 52–90; and David C. Korten, "Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach," *Public Administration Review*, September/October 1980, 480–511.
5. Key works include Mae-Wan Ho, *The Rainbow and the Worm: The Physics of Organisms*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: World Scientific, 1998); Elisabet Sahtouris, *EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution*

(San Jose, CA: iUniversity Press, 2000), also at <http://www.ratical.org/LifeWeb/Erthdnce/erthdnce.html>; Sidney Liebes, Elisabet Sahtouris, and Brian Swimme, *A Walk through Time: From Stardust to Us: The Evolution of Life on Earth* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998). For an extensive Sahtouris bibliography see <http://www.ratical.org/LifeWeb/>. For a guide to the ideas and publications of Ho see <http://www.ratical.org/co-globalize/MaeWanHo/>.

6. A detailed history of the Earth Charter Initiative is available at http://www.earthcharterusa.org/earth_charter.html.
7. Frances Korten and Roberto Vargas, *Movement-Building for Transformation: Bringing Together Diverse Leaders for Connection and Vision* (Bainbridge Island, WA: Positive Futures Network, 2006).
8. We published our joint paper on the Web site of the People-Centered Development Forum in December 2002. David C. Korten, Nicanor Perlas, and Vandana Shiva, "Global Civil Society: The Path Ahead," a discussion paper, <http://www.pcdf.org/civilsociety/>.

PART I

Chapter 1

1. Michael Lerner, "Surviving the Bush and Sharon Years," editorial, *Tikkun*, March–April 2001.
2. Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), xix–xxiii.
3. This story is abstracted from a teaching case I wrote with John C. Ickis while on the faculty of the Central American Management Institute in Nicaragua.
4. Eisler, *Chalice and Blade*.
5. See <http://www.earthcharter.org/> for more details.

6. This discussion of the defining narratives draws from Korten, Perlas, and Shiva, "Global Civil Society."
7. Eisler, *Chalice and Blade*.
8. Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 28–31.
9. Andrew B. Schmookler, *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution*, 2nd ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).
10. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. (New York: Pocket Books, 1984).
11. *Ibid.*, 86–87, 157.
12. *Ibid.*, 86–87.

Chapter 2

1. The description of these five stages is based primarily on Robert Kegan's framing, but it also draws from the work of other developmental psychologists, including Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, and Stanley Greenspan, to bring in a stronger focus on the moral and emotional dimensions. I am particularly indebted to Larry Daloz and Sharon Parks, who worked with Kegan at Harvard for some years, for their assistance in interpreting and elaborating the Kegan categories. In addition to Kegan's work, the descriptions of the third and fourth orders draw on Eleanor Drago-Severson, *Becoming Adult Learners: Principles and Practices for Effective Development* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 23–32. Discussion of the fifth order draws in part on Laurent A. Parks Daloz, "Transformative Learning for Bioregional Citizenship," in *Learning toward an Ecological Consciousness: Selected Transformative Practices*, ed. Edmund O'Sullivan and Marilyn M. Taylor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
2. Robert Kegan, *In over Our Heads: The*

Mental Demands of Modern Life (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 39.

3. Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 56.
4. Paul H. Ray, and Sherry Ruth Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World* (New York: Harmony Books, 2000).
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6. Kegan, *In over Our Heads*, 40–41.
7. See Daniel Maguire, *A Moral Creed for All Christians*, forthcoming from Fortress Press.

Chapter 3

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3. Worldwatch Institute, *Vital Signs 2003: Trends That Are Shaping Our Future* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 29.
4. Janet L. Sawin, "Making Better Energy Choices," in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2004*, ed. Linda Starke (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 29.
5. Christopher Flavin in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2004*, xviii.
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7. World Wildlife Fund for Nature, *Living Planet Report 2002* (Cambridge, UK: WWF, 2002). Available at http://www.panda.org/downloads/general/LPR_2002.pdf.
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9. Chris Bright, "A History of Our Future," in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2004*, 5.
10. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, World Meteorological Association and United Nations Environment Programme, *Third Assessment*