

## *Struggles for the basics*

Almost 300 years ago, in the then “new world,” local groups calling themselves Committees of Correspondence formed a network, a communications forum where homespun political and economic thinkers hammered out their ideological differences, sculpting the form of a separate and independent country in North America. Writing to one another and sharing letters with neighbors, this revolutionary generation nurtured its adolescent ideas into a mature politics. Both men and women participated in the debate over independence from England and the desirable shape of the American future. It was in one of these letters that Abigail Adams first mentioned the idea of enfranchisement for women, while another of her friends, the playwright Mercy Otis Warren, used ideas from the letters to create her popular political satires about the British.

During the years in which the American Revolution was percolating, letters, newsheets and pamphlets carried from one village to another were the means to refine ideas about democracy. In time, the correspondents agreed to hold a face-to-face meeting. The concepts of independence and government had been debated, discussed, discarded and reformulated literally hundreds of times by the time people in the revolutionary network met in Philadelphia.

After the writers met in a series of conferences and worked out a statement of purpose, which they called a “Declaration of Independence,” the network of correspondence and printed broadsides led to the formation of an organization. Did our early networking grandparents realize that the result of their youthful idealism, less than two centuries later, would be a global super-

power with an unparalleled ability to influence the survival of life on the planet?

Like stars and people, governments are born, grow and die. Their life cycles are punctuated by transitions and upheavals, patterns found in the development of all complex physical, biological and human entities. Just as we humans are evolving, so are our politics—our social forms, our collective associations— evolving. As we evolve, so do our ideas about possible political structures. There is no name for it yet, this politics of the future.

In a letter to Samuel Kercheval written on 12 July 1816, Thomas Jefferson expressed his long-held belief that each generation has a right and a duty to re-agree upon the fundamental laws by which it is governed, to reassess the laws of nature as they are presently understood.

Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence and deem them like the arc of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. . . . But I know that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As [the mind] becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also and keep pace with the times. . . . Let us [not] weakly believe that one generation is not as capable as another of taking care of itself and of ordering its own affairs. . . . Each generation is as independent of the one preceding as that was of all which had gone before. It has then, like them, a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness, consequently, to accommodate to the circumstances in which it finds itself that received from its predecessors.

Not only constitutions but also our declarations about the fundamental laws of nature are not sacred absolutes of human knowledge. Our covenants about what is real and how reality works have already undergone radical revisions a number of times in human history. To paraphrase Jefferson's view: every generation has the right and the duty to reassess and re-agree upon the perceived laws of nature by which its worldview is governed. The way to our vision of a peaceful and humane planet will be by means of a substantial reordering of our shared worldview, of our

shared basic assumptions and values. Only if hundreds of millions of people, in their daily lives and work, use a new worldview to create new approaches and new solutions will we survive and evolve.

Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, is said to have sprung fully armed and fully grown from the brow of Zeus. Proponents of gradual change sometimes use this myth to disparage proponents of radical change. Athena's story is surely a myth, because, they assert, change starts gradually and accumulates, rather than appearing full-blown overnight. Yet there is an important truth in the Athena story that is particularly applicable to changes in politics, economics and ways of knowing. Gradualists are correct in stating that social change starts with brief flickers and flashes of anomalies, exceptions, crises and lonely protesting voices that slowly gather strength and influence, but when the shift to a new worldview comes, it does so swiftly and suddenly. Since most people are blind to the precursors of fundamental change, the new wisdom seems to burst forth suddenly, fully formed and ready to address the myriad crises of the present. It's the ostrich syndrome. If your head is buried, how can your eyes see?

In our present collective drama, this moment has not yet occurred, nor is it preordained in our script of the future. None of us need be reminded of the gloomy forecasts for tomorrow's social health and personal welfare and for the planet's headlong plunge toward ecological catastrophe. Nor can we deny the dominant American sentiment as expressed by Ronald Reagan's remarkable electoral landslides in 1980 and 1984. However, scattered among the daily doomsday reports there are unmistakable signals of hidden trends that suggest the possibility of a future large-scale shift in worldviews.

One chronicler of these social signals is Alvin Toffler who asserts that the industrial worldview reached its zenith in the mid-1950s and that a "third wave" of human civilization has been building for the past twenty-five years. That is, right now the world is undergoing a transformation as significant as the shifts from hunting to agriculture at the dawn of human civilization ("first wave") and from agriculture to industry four centuries ago ("second wave"). Toffler characterizes the "hidden code" of industrial-age thought in terms of six assumptions:

Standardization  
 Specialization  
 Synchronization  
 Concentration  
 Maximization  
 Centralization.

As an astute reporter of the-future-right-under-our-noses, Toffler describes the emerging third wave of civilization in terms that complement the waning industrial assumptions. Decentralized structures replace centralized forms, values of appropriateness challenge maximization, power and resources are dispersed to counter concentration, flexible time patterns encroach on the linear synchronization of tasks, autonomy and self-reliance break the narrow bonds of specialization, and creative processes expressing uniqueness contrast with the frozen ruts of standardization.

Another signal of change is documented by John Naisbitt's 1982 book *Megatrends*, in which he identified ten significant trends.

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Industrial society	Information society
Forced technology	High tech/high touch
National economy	World economy
Short-term	Long-term
Centralization	Decentralization
Institutional help	Self-help
Representative democracy	Participatory democracy
Hierarchies	Networking
North	South
Either/or	Multiple option

Underlining the most widely reported trend, the shift from an industrial to an information society, we first learned of Naisbitt's research in 1980 while using our computer to browse through the "Community News Conference" of the Electronic Information Exchange System (see Chapter 7).

In its "Values and Lifestyles" study for corporate clients, SRI International reports that a shift of values is taking place in a small but key segment of the population. Summarizing trends in terms of evolving symbols of success, the study says that, for a significant group of people, values are shifting "from quantity toward quality,

from the group toward the individual, from abundance toward sufficiency and from waste toward conservation.”

*Past Symbols:* fame, being in *Who's Who*, five-figure salary, college degree, splendid home, executive position, live-in servants, new car every year, club membership.

*Present symbols:* unlisted phone number, Swiss bank account, connections with celebrities, deskless office, second and third home, rare foreign car, being a vice president, being published, frequent and unpredictable world travel.

*Future symbols:* free time any time, recognition as a creative person, oneness of work and play, rewarded less by money than by honor and affection, major social commitments, easy laughter and unembarrassed tears, wide-ranging interests and actions, philosophical independence, loving, being in touch with oneself.

To these reports of change percolating beneath the crumbling facade of the industrial worldview can be added the rise of networks. Networks are not only the carriers of a new paradigm, they are a reflection of it: a segmented, decentralized, nonhierarchical, fuzzy, value-identified form of organization that is emerging at every social level from neighborhood to globe. The vast, vibrant, still-inchoate metanetwork of people and organizations we call the Invisible Planet is coalescing in every area of personal and social life, motivated by and bonding through shared values. Nascent therein is a great power for change.

When Americans last went to the polls to elect a President, it was 1984. 1984—this year is a fixture in our recent collective consciousness, the year in which we measured ourselves and our society against George Orwell's 1949 vision of a dosed, totalitarian, technocratic society thirty-five years in the future. Now that that time-mark has passed, we can compare reality to the three governing slogans of the ruling Orwellian Party:

War Is Peace.  
Freedom Is Slavery.  
Ignorance Is Strength.

In a rough and premature way, the ingredients for a paradigm shift, a sudden widespread change in worldviews, are present even

now. There is a vital movement for constructive change and there is as well a potentially unifying scientific philosophy forming at the frontiers of knowledge (see Chapter 10). Ironically, the Ronald Reagan years may help the people on these paths to find one another and bond into networks, generating an internal cohesion that finally creates an apparently sudden transition.

Liberalism and conservatism define the two poles of industrial politics, the former representing the layers of sophisticated patches that hold together revisionist industrialism, and the latter representing the earlier, simpler verities of classical industrialism. As long as the dynamic of decision making was locked into this pattern, only industrial alternatives could appear in the public arena. Since Reagan swept away the liberal leadership that had dominated American politics from Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, there may now be an opportunity for postindustrial alternatives to arise in counterpoint to conservative rule, generating a new, sharply defined, complementary dynamic that makes a shift possible.

Often considered the greatest of the colonial Puritan preachers, Cotton Mather was also the last. A paradigm shift is sometimes preceded by "the Cotton Mather effect," the appearance of a powerful and persuasive representative of a worldview just as it is about to be displaced. Furthermore, in evolutionary transitions, there is frequently a distinct "step-back-to-leap-forward," a reversion to earlier ideas and behaviors before a leap to a new synthesis (see Chapter 10). Ronald Reagan may prove to have been the "Cotton Mather" of the industrial worldview, and his administration a conspicuous "stepping back" before transformation in the late 1990s.

Following his sizable mandates and some early political successes, Reagan's administration had problems as the novelty wore off and the industrial crises of deficit economics, arms control, pollution and terrorism remained intractable. Since these crises are fueled by trends that are unstoppable within the industrial context, the need for a new paradigm may suddenly become intense. If a suitable conceptual vehicle is ready, then for the first time the long-submerged struggle between the old worldview and the new could burst into public consciousness.

Politics and economics are about values, about the social processes of defining, using and struggling over value.

Power and money are completely entwined in the world, and

both politics and economics relate to how we process differences in values. Capitalism is based on the assumption that profit is the single motivating economic value and that “realistic” power is devoid of human value beyond the jungle law of survival and dominance. But the citizens of the Invisible Planet understand that all power and wealth have a value context and that the evolutionary spectrum of human values is ignored only at the peril of civilization and now, perhaps, the very survival of humankind and the planet.

Networking is most evident among people who have the least power. Powerlessness is relative, and ultimately the politics/economics of “some have it, some don’t” renders us all victims. In representing the range of *struggles for the basics*, we begin with a relatively small minority and gradually broaden the concept: an indigenous culture to a racial minority to grassroots activism to the women’s movement to human beings everywhere threatened with species death by global catastrophe.

### *Indians*

In 1843, the journalist Margaret Fuller (the great-aunt of R. Buckminster Fuller) called for recognition of an indigenous people—Native Americans. Fuller recorded her thoughts in her book *Summer on the Lake*, when she visited Mackinac Island, in Lake Huron, where the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes had convened to collect their annual recompense from the American government:

Let the missionary, instead of preaching to the Indian, preach to the trader who ruins him... Let every legislator take the subject to heart, and, if he cannot undo the effects of past sin, try for that clear view and right sense that may save us from sinning still more deeply. And let every man and every woman, in their private dealings with the subjugated race, avoid all share in embittering, by insult or unfeeling prejudice, the captivity of Israel.

Fuller’s sentiments can be found in many networks concerned with the preservation of indigenous cultures around the world.

Acknowledging our interconnectedness leads us to see that each of the struggles for individual and human rights is our own struggle.

Within the United States, the oldest struggle for group rights is that of Native Americans, a summary name for the 482 recognized tribes living on 266 reservations. The American government's treatment of the tribes is consistent with the raw industrial worldview in which might overrules right. White people were visitors on the land of Native Americans: had these European-descended capitalists observed their own rules concerning ownership during those early years, history would be very different.

As it was, the Indian people were "reserved" into small areas of land, mere fractions of the territory that various treaties promised. Today the struggle of the Indian peoples revolves around the land on which they live and its resources: oil, coal, uranium, gas and water—all in rich abundance on many reservations. Without land, the traditional tribal way perishes.

The factors of high alcohol and suicide rates, severely depressed income and educational levels, and the jailing of many leaders of the Indian movement have brought Native people to the verge of extinction. A strong network of support, largely invisible, exists to reverse these realities, to celebrate the great heritage of the American Indian and to pave the way for another future.

One of the oldest and most visible support groups within the movement is the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), which addresses such issues as land and resources, tribal government, health care and anti-Indian backlash, and sponsors programs in employment, appropriate technology, youth recreation, environmental education, paralegal training, voter registration and litigation. NIYC was born as an informal network and grew by consciously understanding itself as a process.

In history and principle, the National Indian Youth Council is a process, not an event. The process began in 1952 when Indian clubs at various universities began to form regional associations. It came to fruition during the Conference on American Indians (Chicago, 1960) when non-Indian scholars discussing Indian problems invited Indians for the first time to participate in their deliberations. The well-known "Chicago Conference" had two effects: it demonstrated the absurdity



of white scholars trying to define Indian problems; and the necessity for a national Indian organization to define its own problems and offer solutions consistent with Indian culture and tradition.

NIYC was created in Gallup, New Mexico, in 1961, by ten college educated Indians who had met at the Conference and envisioned that NIYC would become an organization of service to Indian People based upon the Indian system of agreement... Each tribe has a distinct history; thus each tribe has different priorities in dealing with their problems and needs. What works for one tribe does not necessarily work for another tribe. NIYC approaches and responds to the variety of problems so differently that it may appear to the uninitiated that NIYC does not have a consistent philosophy or specific direction; but to NIYC this direction is as logical as the growth of a tree.

Only one of countless indigenous-culture support groups around the world, NIYC symbolizes the need for adaptive, nondogmatic networks that grow organically rather than by preordained ideology.

### ***Blacks***

Movements for social and political change in the United States began in the very process of birth of the country, which was itself such a movement. In the 1800s, the focus was on the abolition of slavery, then enfranchisement for men, while the turn of the century saw the focus shift to concern with workers' rights, immigrant assimilation," and women's suffrage. By the 1950s, a new era was heralded with concern for civil rights for black people, a massive effort that spawned a number of other movements, including the black power movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the women's movement.

But whatever happened to the civil rights movement and later the black power movement? The civil rights movement did not disintegrate with the silencing of some of its leaders by imprisonment and by death, but rather was diffused by its own internal shifting concerns. When the Rev. Martin Luther King was gunned down in Memphis, he was there to lead a march about jobs; the drive for black employment is one of many issue-related efforts

that continue in the 1980s. By 1985, apartheid in South Africa held global attention.

The theory of networking suggests that the people-to-people links at the basis of the black power movement reach deep into the community, reinfusing the culture with a sense of identity.

A personal story brought this point home to us: Lucrecy Johnson is a 65-year-old American black woman, born in Creedmoor, North Carolina, who moved north in the great migration of southern blacks at the tail end of the US Depression. She raised her four children mostly alone and has had a hand in raising nearly all of a dozen grandchildren and as many great-grandchildren. She has worked all of her life, buying everything on time—even her indoor bathroom, which in 1970 was finally installed in her small wood frame house on the only unpaved street in her segregated Pennsylvania town.

Johnson eschewed the black power movement at its most media-visible height, firmly stating that she was not “black.” Yet the ideas of the movement reached her. When “Roots,” a second-generation offshoot of black cultural pride, was first aired on American television in the mid-1970s, Johnson was ready: her response was to dig into an old box in her attic and pull out the only existing photo of her grandmother. “I was always ashamed of this picture,” she said, “because my grandmother was a slave. But now I realize who she was and that I can be proud of her.” The picture now sits in her living room alongside that of her children’s graduation and wedding pictures.

The black power movement separated into myriad small local action projects that have touched many aspects of people’s daily lives. While the large national organizations—such as the Urban League, NAACP and PUSH—appear to be at the “head” of the black movement, a much larger, largely invisible infrastructure exists which sets up day-care centers, forms local community alliances, establishes cultural associations, involves people in tenants-rights activities, serves meals to the infirm and provides access to inner-city gardening plots.

Networking is the key to survival for all minority groups. At a time when the voices of division grow loud—pitting Black against Jew, Haitian against Cuban, Vietnamese against Chicano—it is doubly important that we work from our sense of interconnectedness as a species. Since greed and hate can never be the

basis of lasting associations, those without power and resources must share and love. Now is a crucial time for networks to work together.

### ***Women***

The women's movement, while purportedly working on "one group's" issues, actually represents deep concern for the preservation of individual rights. The women's movement is ultimately about the power each woman assumes over her own destiny. The struggle encompasses global issues: how humanity should proceed, what values will inform our decision making, and how our decisions will be made.

One of the early recognitions of the "second wave" of feminism was that our language itself would become an issue. Historically, most women have been defined by their domestic identities and by their relationships to men: the use of gender-specific words like "mankind" as the "generic" form makes it difficult to dispel old ideas about sex roles and to avoid passing stereotypes on to our children.

Early misinterpretations of the second wave of feminism led people to believe that women "wanted to be men." While many women chose to perform tasks traditionally reserved for men, men likewise chose professions traditionally reserved for women. These role changes are not the point of the women's movement; they are merely its byproduct.

At issue to the women's movement is a fundamental change in the way men and women understand one another and cooperate in the world. The women's movement is about the integrity of individuals.

The heart and soul of the women's movement rests in networking: women making connections among women. Indeed, the entire genesis of the 1960s-born women's movement can be traced to myriad networks that spontaneously developed throughout North America and abroad. Meeting in small groups—called "consciousness raising" sessions (a term later adopted by the human potential movement)—women experienced dramatic flashes of awareness of the *Gestalt* in which they lived. These "clicks," as writer Jane O'Reilly called them, were the architecture that framed

the larger worldview, the personal proofs that isolated women share many problems in patriarchal society.

The women's movement is about awareness and about consciousness, concerns with profound implications for our developing human species. Its most expansive thinkers talk of an integration of political and economic issues with new ways of knowing, integrating the right brain (typically described as the "feminine" hemisphere, where intuition and creativity are generated) with the left brain (typically described as the "masculine" hemisphere, where logic and reason are generated). And, they challenge the pat idea that women are more "intuitive" than men, that men are more "rational" than women. The women's movement reminds us of how much more lies within our grasp as human beings, how much more creative we can be by dropping away our role restrictions and just allowing ourselves to "be." But large evolutionary jumps, such as that suggested by the women's movement, can never develop without the long, slow, day-to-day work of confronting the inequities that exist for women in the workplace, in the media and in the home.

One very successful women's network that reflects the realities of women on the job is *9to5*: The National Association of Working Women, which, as a national membership organization, links women office workers into a support and advocacy network. *9to5* got its start in 1972, when a group of ten women employed in downtown Boston offices met to discuss the quality of their work experiences.

Using the name "*9to5*", later popularized in the Jane Fonda-Lily Tomlin-Dolly Parton film by that name, the women began to organize and to dig out the facts of life for women office workers. What they found was that over 20 million women, about 10 percent of the entire US population, are employed as office workers, with, at that time, an average salary for clerical workers of \$8128 per year; and that 95 percent of all working women earn less than \$10,000 annually. Using this information as their catalyst, the women in *9to5* went on to set up The National Association of Working Women, with members in fifty US states, Canada and Europe, and twenty-five chapters. *9to5* has been highly effective in drawing attention to the concerns of its constituency, having secured raises, promotions and back-pay settlements for thousands of women. More than anything else, *9to5* has identified a large,

unorganized constituency, translating hunches and feelings about women's office experiences into dollars-and-cents facts around which they can organize.

9to5 was the harbinger for the rise of women's business networks that now meet in every industry at all levels of organization—helping women move up the corporate ladder, find new jobs within their companies, change careers and become board members.

Women have also created their own executive “clubs,” which restrict membership to certain income levels and hierarchical rank. “The exclusive [women's] networks disturbed me at first,” Carol Kleiman, author of *Women's Networks*, told *USA Today* in February 1983. “Some sound just like the old sororities. But people have the right to organize within their own groups.”

For women belonging to these networks, their support value is immeasurable.

Thus the women's movement comprises many networks, working on many issues, including such concerns as creating a clearinghouse for information on marital and date rape (Women's History Research Center), establishing a women's media network (The Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press), monitoring federal actions regarding women (Women USA), working to eliminate violence against women (simply named, Women Against Violence Against Women), identifying shelters for battered women (Working on Wife Abuse), supporting displaced homemakers (Displaced Homemakers Network), and establishing networks of peer support among professional women (New England Women Business Owners), to name just a few of the hundreds of thousands of women's groups. (See *Women's Action Alliance*, edited by Jane Williamson *et al.*, and *Women's Networks*, by Carol Kleiman, for extensive listings.)

While no one of the networks is the women's movement, each is a hologram, reflecting the larger women's movement; taken as a whole, they constitute an immense metanetwork of shared perspectives, and they are moving us all toward a new understanding of what women, and men, can be.

### *Networking for peace*

In war, almost everyone becomes powerless and subject to rule by a few. In nuclear war, absolutely everyone becomes powerless after the first explosions.

Peace movements are as old as history, waxing and waning in visibility and strength depending upon the involvements of the world's military at any moment. During the late 1960s, the peace movement (better known as the antiwar movement), had a tremendous impact on international foreign policy, and the dramatic consequences of that era still reverberate as we approach the year 2000. Vietnam provided the collective political baptism for the largest generation in history.

The image of the world at peace is beautiful—and largely unknown in our recorded history. History, as the books read, is rarely more than an accounting of one war after another, with countries and borders changing before new maps could even be drawn.

But now the stakes are higher than ever before, so high that the question can no longer be framed as a choice between war and peace. Rather, since 6 August 1945, the choice is between planetary survival and utter destruction. Despite the deeply disturbing comments of politicians who make mindless statements such as “Nuclear war is winnable,” it is clear to anyone who has seriously studied the effects of nuclear war and its aftermath that no one can win a nuclear war.

With perhaps the oldest lineage in the network ecology we have studied, today's global peace movements trace their roots to 1815 when a few Quaker Peace Societies formed in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. In his classic study *The History of Peace*, A. C. F. Beales describes five fundamental roads to peace explored by the nineteenth-century peace movement: arbitration, an international authority, international law, sanctions and disarmament. In 1930 he wrote, “I was surprised to find that every single idea current today about peace and war was being preached by organized bodies over a century ago. . .

More than a half century later, these five roads still comprise the greater part of the political agenda for world peace.

The aphorism “Where there's a will, there's a way” expresses the strength and weakness of these five roads. Over almost two

centuries, the world community has acquired enormous experience with the *ways* of peace—developing methods and institutions of arbitration, establishing the United Nations as an international authority, progressing toward the codification and adjudication of international law and experimenting with a variety of sanctions. Disarmament, the acknowledged goal and capstone of the traditional global peace movement, has been the most elusive of these roads to peace. Missing in this noble plan has been a sufficient world constituency with a *will* to peace, the real prerequisite to disarmament.

Coincident with the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in 1978, the “Colloquium on the Societal Context for Disarmament” was a forum for discussing the will to peace. A recurrent theme in this conference was the need for a change in perceptions and values, the need for people and nations to “catch up” to the radically new nature of war and peace in the twentieth century. Lasting peace, the conferees felt, is only possible through the attainment of some global value consensus. This emphasis on values now is realism, not idealism—today it is idealism to think that true disarmament is possible without a preceding or an accompanying value shift.

The systems theorist Ervin Laszlo suggests four basic perceptions that need to gain influence as the foundation for peace: the symbiosis” theory of human relationships, the “altruism is pragmatic” insight, the “unity in diversity” thesis and the “multi-level loyalty” concept.

We believe that the Invisible Planet represents evidence that a value shift with just these characteristics is underway and already widespread. Virtually all the networks of our sample reject the idea that aggression and violence are the natural basis for human relationships. Most networks positively affirm the interdependence of all people and of people with the whole planet. Networkers in our sample actively search for threads of unity while protecting the diversity of individuals, groups and cultures. Many networks explicitly state their concern with all the interdependent levels of connection, their responsibility for local and global issues alike. We place our greatest hope for the eventual achievement of global peace in the total panorama of this network.

Robert Muller (see Chapter 8) describes the “new global community values” that have emerged out of experience with “our

planet's first universal organization." Muller's "four globalisms"—globalism in space, globalism in time, global institutions and global education—are paralleled by the whole-system values appearing at each level of network activity.

Globalism in space, for example, involves our new perceptions of the whole earth, externally from space and internally from planet-wide data gathering, which underlie the emerging whole-system values. Remarkably, our network research reveals a complementary "global perspective" operating at the local level. A good instance is provided by members of the *Rain* magazine collective, one of the first appropriate technology groups. They compiled *The Portland Book* as "a slice of the whole earth," a whole-system overview with attendant practical detail that perceived Portland, Oregon, USA, as a complex local system embedded in multiple layers of interdependent systems.

The appearance of global values now is accompanied by revisions of personal, local, regional and national values. Global values are inclusive, representing the integrity of all levels of human and planetary organization. Myriad clusters of people acting with a new worldview are the precursors to a sudden, species-wide value shift toward human transformation and global peace.

Predicting worldview shifts is like predicting earthquakes: we think the precursors of a shift indicate that dramatic change is sure to come, but we do not know when it will happen. Of course, whether you think worldview shifts are as real as earthquakes depends on your view of evolution.

A popular retort to current talk about weapons freezes, reduction, disarmament and the like is this: "We have always had war, and we always will have war." Disbelief that any meaningful change in the current balance of terror is possible rests on the assumption that evolutionary change happens very gradually over a very long time. Many people deny the possibility that there is ever anything truly "new under the sun"; and, consequently, they remain blind to the potential of momentous planetary change within their lifetimes.

General systems theory has convinced us that the model of emergent evolution is more likely to hold the clues to our human history than the prevailing social version of Darwinian genetic fitness. Emergent theories portray evolution as periods of sluggish continuity punctuated by sudden appearances of new entities and



behaviors—evolution zigzags its way toward greater complexity, each important advance marked by crisis and uncertainty (see Chapter 10).

On the scale of even sudden evolutionary change, however, our human days and years are still slow-motion frames that make the perception of large-scale change difficult. An emergent event may require many years before the full impact of the novelty unfolds in personal/social change involving masses of people. Our optimistic assessment of the prospects for global peace is rooted in the belief that we are today witnessing the leading edge of a tidal wave of change set into motion in part by three coincident emergent events that occurred forty years ago.

Global historians of the future are likely to mark the second half of 1945 as one of the great watershed moments of human evolution. In June, the charter of the United Nations (UN) was ratified. In August of that year, nuclear weapons were used for the first time. In December, ENIAC, the first electronic computer, was declared operational.

The seed of knowledge that exploded over Hiroshima signaled the emergence of a new fact in human affairs with enormous implications for war and peace, the potential of species-wide death. As the first successful species-wide planetary organization, the United Nations is also a novelty in terrestrial history. Although the appearance of the computer was less dramatic than the other two events, we now recognize that it was equally momentous, heralding the emergence of what has come to be called the Information Age, the basis for species-wide communication.

Computers, global organization and the nuclear threat are now converging on civilization's center stage.

### *A network of nations*

As though a cosmic compensation for our explosive entry into the Atomic Age, the process of forming a world organization was completed during the same period. While anyone who cared to look could instantly see that the shape of human destiny was irrevocably changed by nuclear weapons, the United Nations had to survive and grow before its novelty and necessity could be

acknowledged. Is it in an accident of history that these two events are so entwined?

Looking at the UN through our conceptual filter of networking, we see, not surprisingly, a very complicated organization. Like most large, modern institutions, the UN is a blend of personal networks, hierarchy and bureaucracy. The UN makes use of graded ranks of authority, of specialized departments governed by policies and of innumerable personal ties inside and outside the organization. After our interview with Dr Muller (see Chapter 8), we perceived that the UN also makes use of group-network organization.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), for example, coordinates a network of relatively autonomous organizational participants who cooperate on the basis of shared values. Intergovernmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations are independent bodies with their own mandates, internal forms of organization, sources of support and constituencies. ECOSOC does not control the behavior of these member organizations but rather facilitates cooperation along lines of shared interests. Many other activities of the UN, such as the International Year programs, are also group networking examples.

When we shift our perspective to the globe as a whole, looking again at the UN through network eyes, we see an even more dramatic manifestation of large-scale networking—the network of nations coordinated through the United Nations. Sovereignty, the bane of internationalists, is the declaration of nations that they are relatively autonomous entities. Given the persistence of sovereignty as an international fact of life, the UN has not functioned in the past thirty-seven years as a “supergovernment” but rather has acquired a diplomatic persona more nearly like that of a nation.

In the networks we have studied, the coordinating group typically has a charter, an office, a staff, publications and other features very much like the participant organizations with whom it establishes peer relationships. Similarly, the United Nations does not function at some higher rung of authority than nations, but rather horizontally, dealing with nations as equals. Nations send ambassadors to other nations and to the United Nations. Bryant Wedge, an early proponent of the US National Peace Academy, found, in a study of UN Secretariat personnel, that many members tend to develop a nationalistic attitude about the UN itself, evincing great

concern for the survival of the institution. This seems natural to us.

The world organization we seek may not lie in the institution of the United Nations *per se*, but rather in the larger network of nations of which the UN is a part. Viewed in this light, the UN has not somehow “failed” to achieve supernational status against the obstructions of national sovereignty but rather has successfully established its status as a “world power” while simultaneously catalyzing the still-forming metanetwork of nations. A network of relatively sovereign nations cohering through shared values and interests is quite possibly more achievable and healthy for humanity than the creation of a supernational coercive authority.

### *Peacing*

One of the sixty-four hexagrams that comprise the Chinese *Book of Changes (I Ching)* is “T’ai.” In English, this hexagram is called “Peace.” Richard Wilhelm writes, “T’ai is a difficult word to translate. It means contentment, rest, peace, in the positive sense of unobstructed, completed union, bringing about a time of flowering and greatness.”

Imagine, for a moment, what a society expressing unobstructed, complete union, reflected in a time of flowering and greatness, could mean. Peace is a condition of realizing human potential in its fullest sense. Peace is a value that many people hold as good. War, with which it is usually contrasted, is a value that many people hold as bad. In the *I Ching*, “Peace” is contrasted with “Standstill.” “*Standstill* and *Peace* stand in natural opposition to each other,” the commentary reads.

Over the years, peace has been defined in two ways: negatively, as the absence of war, a passive state of no violent conflict, and positively, as the precondition for the full release of the cornucopia of human potentials. Many sources are generating a global *will* to peace.

Positive and negative are complements, each an aspect of the other. Today’s world nuclear movement is extraordinarily diverse but united on the shared negative perception of peace as the absence of nuclear war. The power of the movement lies in its ability to represent a universal threat to survival without requiring

agreement on any other beliefs. This aspect of global peace networks will ebb and flow according to changing conditions, but the larger dynamic of evolutionary transition will continue to increase the broader constituency for human transformation and positive global peace.

We say “to war” but not “to peace.” There is no verb for peace. We make peace, talk peace and at moments live peacefully; but there is no action word *peace*. If there were, the networks that we have identified under the banner of the Invisible Planet would be *peacing*, using the word as naturally as they do healing or sharing or evolving. What the networks do say is that they are networking, which means being part of the process of global peace.