

To Choose Our Common Future

A conversation with Jeremy Lent and David Korten

Session I of IV in the Ecological Civilization Series

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Description: Shared stories are foundational to our species' ability to organize as families, tribes, and nations. A blessing if we get our story right; a curse if we get it wrong. A fatally flawed story now drives humanity toward moral and ecological catastrophe. We are called to craft and embrace a new story grounded in the insights of an emerging new enlightenment that draws insights from the many sources of human wisdom to guide our path to an ecological civilization of justice, sustainability, and peace for all.

David Korten: [00:00:03] I'm David Korten. Some of you know me from When Corporations Rule the World or from the book The Great Turning, from Empire to Earth Community, or the more recent Change the Story, Change the Future. You may also be familiar with Yes magazine, of which I'm co-founder and was Board Chair for 22 years, and my wife Fran here is the publisher, until just a few months ago and retired. And she actually will be circulating a sign up sheet during the session, in case you want to sign up for the Yes magazine email list, or my Living Economies Forum list.

David Korten: [00:00:48] Some of you know I come out of a background of a lapsed Harvard Business School professor who turned anti-corporate, wrote When Corporations Rule the World and Fran and I spent most of our adult lives living in Africa, Asia and Latin American countries, on a mission to end global poverty, 'til we really ended up learning what was the real cause of the poverty, of which was the development system that we were part of bringing into the world.

David Korten: [00:01:27] Now currently I'm dedicated to this framing of an ecological civilization. If you are familiar with The Great Turning, I use the term "Earth community" which came from the Earth Charter work. But more recently the term with a very similar meaning, ecological civilization, is gaining enormous traction and I think that is the frame. So we're focused on four sessions that I've been involved in organizing, all of which will be in this room: this session, the next session with Matthew Fox, the session with Jeremy Lent tomorrow. At the same time we will have a session with John Cobb who is a famous theologian philosopher and has been one of the driving figures behind the whole ecological civilization movement, including this establishment in China, in an extraordinary way.

David Korten: [00:02:39] Now just to see if we're all on the same page. How many of us in here are aware that humanity is on a path to self extinction? OK we don't have to spend time setting up that problem. Actually how many of you think that that is a problem? You didn't raise your

hand! Yeah that's a very strange thing, but I think Matt will have a little bit more to say about that. And as you may be aware that, well we somehow humans have developed such a fascination for for death that the Rapture folks and so forth that there are elements among us that look forward to that.

David Korten: [00:03:35] I was fascinated in preparing for these sessions, really connecting in with the Parliament of the World's Religions and the statement of mission, their statement of 1993 and their declaration in 2015, all of which centered on, well the mission is: cultivate harmony among the world's religions and spiritual communities and foster their engagement, action with the world and its guiding institutions. Institutions... To achieve a just peaceful and sustainable world. So there are the three primary elements of focus of the Parliament: peace justice and a sustainable world.

David Korten: [00:04:23] And they are in fact integrally and inseparably connected. And you may realize that very often in our organizing and progressive movements we tend to separate them. We don't look in depth at the underlying causes both conceptual and institutional. And our four sessions in this series will address that.

David Korten: [00:04:53] And you may be aware that the 2015 declaration of the Parliament on climate change has this statement: Earth is an interconnected whole. The future we embrace will be a new ecological civilization and a world of peace, justice and sustainability, with the nurturing of the diversity of life. Well that is absolutely the frame of of these sessions. Oh thank you. Now the session today with with Jeremy... And let me let me give a brief introduction and then. Well let's... No, I'm sorry.

David Korten: [00:05:42] The two sessions today will focus on our conceptual framing. Underlying this is a recognition, that one of the things that makes us distinctive as a human species, is our capacity to choose our future. And in a sense we choose our future by our choice of our defining narrative. Our big narrative by which we understand the nature of creation and our human place within creation. That will be the focus of both this session with Jeremy and with Matthew.

David Korten: [00:06:30] Jeremy is.. In his early career, he was the founder and CEO and chairman of an international Internet company. He's now the founder and president of the Liology institute dedicated to advancing a worldview for sustainable human relationships with Earth. He has a B.A. from Cambridge University, an MBA from the University of Chicago. And in one of our discussions, among the speakers in this series - I don't know if it was you, Matt but somebody mentioned that Ph.Ds really bear responsibility for most of our problems in the world. Jeremy has the benefit that he does not have a Ph.D. [Audience laughs]

David Korten: [00:07:17] I celebrate that! The rest of us on the program do, so you'll have to forgive us. Now these narratives, which are the focus of these first two sessions, are really the basis of our ability to choose our future. And one of the things that has been so evident from the experience that Fran and I had living in so many different countries, and experiencing so many different cultures, is that we humans do live by many different stories. And those stories have huge implications in terms of the differences and which way societies organize. And Jeremy has written one of the most extraordinary books. Well it is the most extraordinary book I have ever seen in terms of the exploration of the depth of differences, changes, connections in our human stories, throughout the human experience - from the very first primitive humans to our current modern civilization. And understand, you know it's only now, it's only within the generation that is particularly represented in this room that we have seen the world move from disconnected individual societies to where we become a truly global species with basically a set of unifying stories that ultimately lead us in this direction of self extinction. And understanding how that works then gives us the basis to think about, well what is the story? What are the distinctive characteristics of the story that will allow us to achieve the world that we truly want? A world of peace that works for everyone. A world of equality. And a world in which we live, not only live in balance with nature, but actually become Earth healers, to facilitate the healing of the Earth systems that we have had such a tragic part in destroying.

David Korten: [00:09:46] Now, fundamental questions that are raised in that conversation - and I also want to throw in here the two sessions tomorrow will focus on the institutions, they will focus on policy, they will talk about the very practical kind of actions, things that we need to do to organize around a new story.

David Korten: [00:10:09] So what are these key stories? Well, first question... Is Earth a rock, that has some living beings living on it? Or is Earth itself a living organism? Fundamental difference... Are we humans inherently individualistic, violent and greedy? Or are we naturally caring, peaceful and sharing. We've clearly demonstrated the potentials for both. What determines the difference? We're now in a process of global cultural evolution of humanity. And I turn it over now to Jeremy who's prepared a beautiful PowerPoint presentation and you know, bear in mind, what he's dealing with is the whole of the human experience, which is a little hard to summarize in 25 minutes, but I think he captures this in an extraordinary way.

Jeremy Lent: [00:11:17] All right. Thank you David. Let me see if I can get this back. Without it losing its connections. Looks like we succeeded... Okay great.

Jeremy Lent: [00:11:38] All right well. So, thanks. And we're gonna be talking then about the new story underlying an ecological civilization. And as a precursor to that, just as as David was talking about, we're going to take a bit of a scan at some of the older stories. And to begin with, obviously it's no surprise for everyone for anyone in this room to look at the fact that civilization

is in crisis way, beyond sustainable levels of so much. But you know something that has been talked about here in the Parliament but hasn't really been touched on so much is just the level of crisis we're in. But it's not just a matter of you know we are one and a half degrees above pre-industrial levels or two degrees. And what's going to happen. But the simple fact is that as we go into this current trajectory, if we keep going, we could be hitting tipping points with feedback effects. And there's a serious risk of an act of a true civilizational collapse; the collapse of our global civilization this century at this rate. So a reasonable question to ask when we recognize this is where did it begin?

Jeremy Lent: [00:12:56] So, you know we're all probably familiar with this kind of graph of world population and and there's so many other graphs as we know around consumption and human activities on the earth, that look something like this and this kind of shape. And what's interesting is that there's this kind of inflection point that seems to happen with so many of these graphs around the sixteen, seventeen hundreds. And one thing that happened at that inflection point that I think is probably the most significant aspect of that change - that change in the direction of these trajectories - is the scientific revolution in Europe around that time. It led to a change in the underlying values that led to a different story about the universe and humanity's place within it, just as David's been touching on.

Jeremy Lent: [00:13:44] And so, you know, I think probably most people here are familiar with the key elements of that story, like: nature is a machine, humans are separate from nature. Humans are separate from each other, human progress arose from the conquest of nature, and the Earth is a resource to be used for human benefit. We'll look at that story in a little bit more detail and a little later in this presentation. But the first question to ask is where did that story come from? And how was it different from other stories that humans have told about the cosmos in history and around the world.

Jeremy Lent: [00:14:20] And I think to really understand what happened at that time, we have to look at what came before, all the way back to the beginnings of humanity's attempts to understand the world. Basically, to humanity's first stories that put meaning into the universe, like those from that - Lascaux cave in France, from about 30,000 years ago.

[00:14:44] And the thing is humans are driven to pattern meaning into our world. That drive is what led earliest humans to develop language tools and culture. And with these kind of root stories that are mysterious to us, but we know meant something to those early nomadic hunter gatherers. And because we have this drive to pattern meaning into the universe, that's what I call the "patterning instinct." It's something that everyone has. And the reason I think we can call it an instinct is because even she has it, an infant. As soon as she's born, she starts like learning language nobody tells her You need to hear what we're saying and figure it out. She has this instinct to take all this random stuff around her - the noise and actions - and start to pattern

meaning into that, in language. And as she gets older, she does the same with the culture that she's born into. And early humans patterned meaning into the universe, similarly.

Jeremy Lent: [00:15:47] So, yeah they'd look up at the starry sky. And everywhere around the world they created constellations, patterns of meaning, in things around them. And similarly they did so with all the kind of amorphous and otherwise random stuff that happened around them in the universe. And generally the patterns were created by underlying concepts of nature that then sort of structured the pattern for everything else. And those patterns of thought led to the stories that each culture creates, which determine their values. And it's those values that actually shape history. By the same token, the stories we create today are the ones that will shape our future.

Jeremy Lent: [00:16:26] So I'm going to look, in this presentation, at some of our traditional stories. Then a closer look at the modern story of separation. And then spend some time towards the end looking at what it takes to get towards an ecological civilization that David's been talking about. So beginning with those traditional stories... Well we spent about 95 percent of our history as humans as nomadic hunter-gatherers. And the root story that they had about the universe is that nature is a giving parent. From this core assumption, a whole bunch of other stories emerge, such as all living beings are family.

Jeremy Lent: [00:17:07] We all have an intimate relationship with spirits. We can trust nature to meet our needs. Everything is connected - all aspects of the world - humans, animals, ancestors, spirits, trees, rocks, rivers all related parts of a dynamic integrated whole. And the natural environment is fully alive and has intrinsic value. And first, from that, a network of meaning was formed where everything relates to everything else, whether it's tangible or intangible, past present or future. In the words of an Aboriginal elder, Daisy Utemorra - still alive today, that talks about her indigenous roots and she says all these things: the plants and the trees, the mountains and the hills, the stars and the clouds... She says we represent them. You see those trees over there, we represent them. I might represent that tree there - might be my name there, in that tree.

Jeremy Lent: [00:18:03] Now that story changed with the emergence of agriculture. And with agriculture came the beginning of separation. I love this image of a fence. It's kind of iconic in agriculture, because it's about how humans separated themselves from nature; the cultivation from the wild. And humans also separated themselves from other humans. But even with the separation, nature was still filled with cosmic power. Natural objects are intrinsically divine. And every agrarian civilization shared the sense of the mystery of the natural world, which is both differentiated infinitely and also somehow an organic unity. This has been called by many "the sense of the one and the many." And you can see this in many of the underlying stories of early agrarian civilizations around the world. We can look for example at Ancient Egypt which had a pan-theistic cosmology, where even the various deities were all aspects of a single transcendent

kind of creator God, who didn't just create the universe. This creator God was the universe. This is an ancient Egyptian prayer that says: your two eyes are the sun and the moon, your head is the sky, your feet to the netherworld. You are the sky. You are the earth. You are the netherworld. You are the water. You are the air between them... This is like this amazing statement of pantheism.

Jeremy Lent: [00:19:32] And similarly if we go across to ancient Egypt we see a similar story. The Upanishads are imbued with the idea that Brahman's divinity is manifested in each and every part of the universe. Here's one Upanishad talking about the manifestations of Brahmin. He is the fire and the sun, and the moon and the stars. He is the air and the sea, and it goes on... He dwells in human beings, in Gods, in truth in the vast firmament. He is the fish born in water, the plants growing in the earth, the river flowing down from the mountains. So again, you see how that that early hunter-gatherer idea is kind of transformed, but is still there in these early agrarian civilizations.

Jeremy Lent: [00:20:20] We move over to ancient China, there. And early Taoism looks at the mysterious ways in which the forces of nature show up in the world around us. And then in traditional China, and as it got more, as it developed its civilization about a thousand years ago, during the Sung Dynasty. The philosophers and sages there synthesized original ideas of Taoism and Buddhism and Confucianism into an integrated understanding of the universe. And Chung Yee one of the philosophers talking about how the supreme ultimate is the Tao. And then leading philosopher Zhu Xi said how, fundamentally, there is really only one supreme ultimate, yet each of the ten thousand things has been endowed with it, and each possesses the supreme ultimate, in its entirety.

Jeremy Lent: [00:21:14] So just like the early hunter-gatherers again, the Chinese saw everything is related dynamically to everything else, through the cycles of yin and yang, in the - as they described in the I-Ching, the Book of Changes. And they saw nature... That kind of core story about nature was: it's a harmonic web of life. That's an ecological story. Tu Weiming was talking about that in his plenary talk the other day; how heaven, Earth and humanity resonate with each other - kind of creating this kind of universal web, where the slightest movement of one part causes undulations in the entire network.

Jeremy Lent: [00:21:52] So how did we get to our modern story of separation? Well it really began with the ancient Greeks. And this is a picture of Aristotle and Plato. So, you can see Plato pointing up to the heavens, because he was really consummate in taking the idea to the time and creating the most powerful story that really became foundational to western civilization. And it was a story of a split cosmos, divided between a heavenly domain of eternal abstraction and a worldly domain polluted with imperfection. And that's the foundational story of what we call nowadays dualism. And traditional Christianity inherited this view of a split universe. So, we can

really think of other Christianity as the first systematic dualistic cosmology based on this Greek model, where the source of meaning is in this transcendent God, this external God in the heavens. While the natural world lost any sense of sacredness and is now just a stage for the human drama to be enacted. And you know this worldview - this Christian worldview - was actually the incubator for the Scientific Revolution, for the scientific way of thinking. And it gave this notion of the world being a machine, that underlay the new stories of the Scientific Revolution, beginning in that 17th century. And along with that idea of the world as a machine, came this idea of conquering nature. Francis Bacon probably the greatest prophet of that, of this new scientific age talked about how we can establish and extend the power of dominion of the human race itself, over the universe, through our scientific understanding, and render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.

Jeremy Lent: [00:23:45] So what is the modern version of this separation story look like. Well, one way of thinking about it is that - let's think of an image that we're all used to, you know, a newscaster talking about the economy, or whatever. It doesn't really matter though, what she's actually - the words that she's actually saying, because underlying those words, she's saying a much deeper story of our age. She's telling us that we are all individuals, separate from each other in the natural world. She's telling us that we're all naturally selfish and that unbridled capitalism works so well, because this invisible hand ensures that everybody acting selfishly, somehow results in the best possible outcome for humanity.

Jeremy Lent: [00:24:28] She's telling us that nature is a machine that we can engineer and what makes humanity great is to conquer nature and that through technology, in some mysterious way, infinite growth is possible on a finite planet. And she's saying, "And, oh by the way, everything is meaningless. So, just fill it with consumerism." These are these are the underlying messages that we hear every day and all around us. And what are the results? Well, basically, it's this technology driven zombie-lifestyle; that each of us and everyone that's separate from each other. They're connected to their technology; they're oblivious to each other's existence, even though they're two feet away.

Jeremy Lent: [00:25:12] They're also equally separated from the food they're getting. Yeah, to them they're not thinking about where this food actually came from. It's just that they pass a few dollars over and they get their Chick-fil-A back, and that's their separation from the Earth. It leads to this incredible inequality of our time, the greatest inequality in history - where these six men, unbelievable as it is - own as much wealth as half the entire world's population. It leads to us ransacking the Earth through the exploitation of nature. And of course the existential crisis of climate breakdown, but not just the climate breakdown - this total ecological overshoot. And so, these are some of the things that even, that may have been touched on a little bit in in the parliament here. But we need to get the sense of how profoundly they're affecting us.

Jeremy Lent: [00:26:03] And the fact is, as it was pointed out just the other day, and one of the keynote questions... Sixty percent of all the animals around the world have been wiped out since 1970, and it's continuing at the same rate, every year. And we're looking at the sixth great extinction of species in all the billions of years of life on Earth. Only this one of course is human caused. We're looking at the total, virtual total annihilation of coral reefs worldwide, this century. We're looking at - the fact is this is a statement from leading U.N. scientists, that at the current rate of degradation, our top soil around the world can only support about 60 percent more harvests. Looking at what I find the most unbelievable of all statistics that by 2050, there will be more plastic by weight in the ocean, than fish.

Jeremy Lent: [00:26:56] So where's all this going to lead? Well of course you know, as many in this room are aware of, there's this serious possibility of collapse of our civilization. And because of that, half measures aren't enough. You know solar panels and just getting our energy from solar rather than fossil fuels. Yeah, we need that, but that's not even close to what we're talking about; we need a transformed foundation for civilization. A fundamentally different story.

Jeremy Lent: [00:27:25] Which leads us then to this idea of: what would it look like to move toward an ecological civilization? Well first we might ask: what is an ecological civilization, really? Well I see it as a scientifically validated return to the spiritual insights, based on hunter-gatherers, and other early agrarian stories. It's a vision of a global cultural and economic system that would promote sustainable flourishing for humans and earth. And it's aligned with those underlying worldviews of the one-in-many that we looked [at] earlier, shared by earlier civilizations around the world. And an understanding of the deep interconnectedness of human activity with natural systems, and the recognition that actions resonate throughout the entire web of life.

Jeremy Lent: [00:28:17] And it involves insights from modern systems science, with dimensions - some of you are familiar with some of the modern sciences of complexity science, systems biology and chaos theory. And fundamentally, it gains insight from the study of ecology - how living systems self organize. And ecology offers us a model for how humans can also self organize, in ways that could actually permit sustainable flourishing.

Jeremy Lent: [00:28:48] So what are some of these insights? Well one is that all living entities are complex, self-organized dynamical systems. And along with that, is this attribute that complexity sciences recognize of reciprocal causality - the fact that each part of the system affects the whole, even while the system, as a whole, is affecting each part. It gives us insights that everything is connected but in non-linear ways. So in the famous question that Edward Lorenz, the founder of chaos theory asked, all the way back in the 1970s - he said, is it possible that the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could lead to a tornado in Texas? And also, where we find that each system is fractally connected within larger systems. So what's a fractal? A fractal

is a pattern that repeats itself at different scales. It indicates self-organized activity, and we see it everywhere in the natural world. You see it in the patterns of coastlines, the patterning on the leaves. We see the patterns of lightning.

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Jeremy Lent: [00:00:00] Lungs and our bodies and of course in the patterning of neurons in our brains that form our consciousness. And Earth's scientists have increasingly begun to recognize that nature itself is a fractally-connected organism, where each cell on Earth is part of an organism, which is part of a community. Each community is part of an ecosystem, and each ecosystem is ultimately part of the total Earth system of nature, which - and sometimes it's called the "wholarchy" as opposed to a hierarchy. A wholarchy is this concept of the system that incorporates all other systems within it. So this, of course, takes us back to the notion of "the one and the many" as we were looking at before. And then if we ask ourselves, "well what's the story then of the ecological civilization? Well, maybe the most essential way to summarize that story is simply we are all interconnected in the web of life. So, an ecological civilization values life rather than corporate power and financial wealth generation, as the basis - the basis - for societal organization.

Jeremy Lent: [00:01:18] And I've and thought about this and I can come up with a proposal for seven possible principles that could underlie an ecological civilization. These are not sort of edicts or final ideas. They're really just kind of starting off points for a conversation that I'm hoping we can really have the next couple of days, and beyond, about what does an ecological civilization really incorporate within it? So, with these principles, just take a quick look at each one.

Jeremy Lent: [00:01:48] The first one self-organization that each party co-creates the whole. Well, you know, that leads to the inherent right of every person to participate in political power. That top-down, bottom-up reciprocal dynamic we looked at before, we'd be seeing that in community, national and global scales. It leads to this notion of social equity, recognizing the inherent dignity and value of each individual and group within the larger system. Then there's the principle of symbiosis; that living systems prosper when they develop multiple symbiotic relationships, which ultimately means living for the common good. So, that little bird wants the food between the the crocodile's teeth, and and that crocodile is very happy to have to have his teeth cleaned by that. So each party contributes and receives reciprocally, reflecting each other's abilities and needs.

Jeremy Lent: [00:02:47] Another principle is that principle of wholarchy - that each is part of a greater whole. The health of the whole requires the flourishing of each part that forms that whole. So each part thrives then, by optimising for its own existence, within a network of relationships, enhancing the common good and that has major social justice implications. It

means that there have to be adequate conditions for flourishing and all these different scales of income, nutrition, housing, health care, educational needs - for everyone to flourish, for the whole to flourish along with others.

Jeremy Lent: [00:03:23] There is a principle of locality and that society should be organized based on bio-regions, not necessarily based on the political borders that we have right now. This is a map of California that looks very different from from other maps because it's based on the bio regions. The reality that regions have different needs and affinities, based on their ecological context. And communities connect with the land rather than global flows, so that local production leads to local consumption to the greatest possible extent.

Jeremy Lent: [00:03:55] There is a principle of embeddedness that humanity's place is embedded within the natural world. And so when we destroy the complexity of the natural world we undermine the well-being of all organisms, including ourselves. And again Tu Weiming gave this great quote for the neo-Confucian [Transcriber's note: could not understand words.] that I just love, and which captures this: "Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother and I, a small child find myself placed intimately between them." Or in the words - the profound words - of this slogan at COP 21, in Paris: "We are not fighting for nature. We are nature defending itself."

Jeremy Lent: [00:04:36] There is a principle of sustainability, and thinking out at least seven generations. And I'm sure that many people here are familiar with the Iroquois Confederacy and statement. If you're not: "Every deliberation we must consider the impact on the next seven generations." Well that requires a harmonic resonance between human activity and ecological systems, and praising technological innovation for its effectiveness in enhancing the flourishing of living systems rather than minting millionaires.

Jeremy Lent: [00:05:06] So the final principle - and I'm just putting it out there - is humility; recognizing the unpredictability of complex systems, realizing that human activity on one part of a system frequently affects the entire system in unexpected ways. Someone once said recently, "All of our biggest problems we're looking at right now were once solutions." So our approach to the natural world should be like it says in the Tao Te Ching: to be reverence, like guests.

Jeremy Lent: [00:05:40] So, just to to conclude there've really been just a couple of great transitions in human history, as we've looked at here: from hunter-gatherers to agriculture about ten to twelve thousand years ago, from agriculture to the scientific revolution about 400 years ago. I think many of us are aware that right now, we are entering into the stage of the next great transition. It could be one of collapse, but it could also be one that leads us to a fundamentally different foundation for civilization. And it would be different from those other great transitions in a couple of very important ways. One is the speed - that whatever's going to happen, whether

it's collapse or this ecological civilization we only have a few decades for it to happen, not hundreds or thousands of years.

Jeremy Lent: [00:06:29] And there's an intentionality to it. Those other great transitions happened through self-organized processes that led to these phase transitions. This one is only going to happen if enough of us around the world realize the need for it, and consciously change our own values and behavior. So, if and when this transition happens, this would represent really a unique achievement in human history. And what is daunting and exciting about it is the fact that each one of us, today in the world, are the ones who can actually have an impact in leading to this possibility of what really could be available for humans in the future.

Jeremy Lent: [00:07:11] So now, let us kind of move to maybe a bit of a conversation. I just sort of put this up here for people who sort of want to go deeper into these questions. Both David and I have written these books, on these topics and you'll find a lot of rich material in both of those. Thanks very much for that.

Jeremy Lent: [00:07:36] What you want to do? Do you want to get into questions, or do you want to have a little conversation?

David Korten: [00:07:51] Well, I want to have a little conversation between the two of us.

David Korten: [00:08:21] I want to just say if you enjoyed Jeremy's presentation and found it had the insights, you'll love his book. This I think is the only book that Fran and I have, intentionally, each bought our own copy so that we can have our own notes and study. It's also a very long book, but it covers everything.

David Korten: [00:08:52] I mean I've never seen a book that goes so deeply into both eastern, western through the total history of the human experience. So, it's an extraordinary accomplishment. And as I think I may have said earlier, you may not have heard of Jeremy before, but you will be hearing from him a great deal, as we move forward. He's one of the leading thinkers and speakers on this topic. I want to just add one thing here, at this moment, in terms of talking about the wonder of Earth.

David Korten: [00:09:34] And I think we'll get into more of this in the next session was with Matthew Fox and his discussions of creation spirituality and his order of the Sacred Earth. But one of the things that to me is so truly extraordinary is the scientists are now telling us that they estimate there may be 2 trillion universes, in the world, in the cosmos... Galaxies. Galaxies in the cosmos are in the universe.

David Korten: [00:10:08] Now that's a lot of galaxies, and each of those galaxies has billions of stars imagine how many planets there are. And we certainly haven't found all the planets, by any measure. But all of those that we've identified, we still have not identified any planet that we have reason to believe has conditions on the surface similar to the conditions of this planet, and the conditions essential to life.

David Korten: [00:10:37] So we talk about this extinction - the significance of that. That in terms of the universe, the sacredness of creation. We're in a very special place, with an extraordinary responsibility. So I'll just leave with that as we move forward. And Jeremy, as we begin to look forward, could you say a little bit more about what you feel the different philosophical traditions, or I mean the - well, the most interesting to me is between the eastern and the western and how the western got so focused on individuality. In the eastern there's more community. But what do you see as the contributions of each to the story as we move ahead and what would be the implications for... Where's the leadership most likely to arise between east and west?

Jeremy Lent: [00:11:45] Yeah. Thank you. That's really, I'd say, a profound question.

Jeremy Lent: [00:11:51] You know sometimes, as I've been talking and in interviews and talks about what my book says, a lot of people assume that I'm giving this message that really and east asia we have this integration based on interconnectedness,.

Jeremy Lent: [00:12:13] And in the West we have this kind of this dualistic and separation and therefore there's something sort of intrinsically good about the east asian way of thinking and intrinsically bad about the western ways of thinking. And we need to sort of just, you know, discard this kind of mechanistic worldview and all that stuff that comes from that. You know honestly I feel that the way forward is much more a matter of integration of the qualities of what we get from both those worldviews, into one that can truly allow us to move forward sustainably.

[00:12:48] So from East Asia, we definitely get the sense of the interconnected harmonic web of life, and there's no question that we are right now in... The worldview at the moment has this incredible imbalance, because the, some of those ways of thinking, the conquering nature that mechanistic world view have been so successful that they've led us to this - this pathway towards cataclysm. But that doesn't mean that some of the ways of thinking from the West should be discarded. That's. And that some of these ways of thinking led to this concept of science and technology, that we can be also grateful for. And there are many many things I think all of us are so glad we have, whether it's in health, just understanding of nature, ability to communicate around the world. So many things that we really would not be looking at right now were it not for that some of those fundamental ideas from Western thought.

Jeremy Lent: [00:13:54] And along with that comes this idea from Western thought of universal laws and the very concept we have a justice or human rights, or some of these sort of things that should apply to all people around the world. These are... Many of these things are actually fruits of Western ways of thinking. So I think that what an ecological civilization can be doing is taking the best of those two, and creating something that would be absolutely new; something that we've not seen before, but that integrates each of those two sort of core worldviews into one that could enable true flourishing - in a world that has technology and as well that has connectivity too.

David Korten: [00:14:53] I'm going to open it up for questions in just a moment, and I hope we'll have a real conversation in the group. You mentioned our search for meaning and that's something that draws us in to the creation of these conceptual frameworks. What is your sense of the purpose of creation that you're understanding? [Audience laughs]

Jeremy Lent: [00:15:29] Well, you know I actually have done a lot of thinking on this and this framework of Liology that David mentioned earlier, actually kind of exposed that in some ways. The actual word "liology" comes from the traditional Chinese word "li" which talks about their organizing principles of how the Tao expresses itself, and "ology" is of course "the study of." So, it's like the study of these organizing principles. And as I spent a lot of time asking there, and asking what does actually "meaning" mean? You know the answer I came from too, is this sense that it's really a function of connectedness. That where, if we look at where meaning comes from, it actually comes from the amount of and the quality of connectedness of things around us.

Jeremy Lent: [00:16:26] So if you think of what does a word mean, you look it up in the dictionary and it gives you find other words that it's related to, so you can triangulate into the meaning of that of that word. And then when you look ultimately where do all of these concepts come from? They come from our embodied existence and our connectedness within our own bodies, our connectedness with the earth. And so really meaning is a function of connectedness and when people feel that life is meaningless and it tends to be because they're feeling disconnected. And of course we know our society has this epidemic of disconnectedness.

Jeremy Lent: [00:17:02] So from that we can almost understand spirituality itself as being and connecting with the fundamental source of connectedness. And if we think of this self-organized way in which everything is connected, that the meaning itself becomes intrinsic in our lived experience. And so we don't look then elsewhere externally. We don't even need to look to that some Creator-God or whatever we can just look to our embedded existence within that connectedness for the meaning right there. [Audience applauds.]

David Korten: [00:17:44] Let me follow up on that. This is a conversation between Jeremy and I. It's not just an interview. So, let me tell you I've come to think about that question. If we look

at what we're learning about the unfolding of creation - and the fascinating thing to me is that the science story of that unfolding directly parallels Genesis. And it is, you know, it starts with the big bang. This gaseous cloud. Now if you think of the underlying foundation of all creation, being a some sort of creative spirit... You know I kind of imagine myself being that spirit-person; we're all products of that spirit, that we could experience it.

David Korten: [00:18:43] It's really very frustrating. It's really boring just being one and nothingness. I'd really like to know what my possibilities are. Which is also part of our better creative human drive. So I burst forth in this gaseous cloud and we start to form particles and so forth and they get more and more complex, and we develop these solar system galaxies. And on one we get life established, and so forth.

David Korten: [00:19:17] And you know if you just look at the trajectory... What is the purpose of creation? Well, what does creation do? Well, it seems to be continuously evolving, and a process that I think about as learning. Learning how to do it, toward ever greater complexity, beauty, awareness and possibility. And then you realize that that is a whole of all of these particles, species, organisms and so forth - all of which ultimately are creating, contributing to that process.

David Korten: [00:20:00] And then you think well, gee, humans... As far as we know, we're creation's most daring experiment, in the possibilities of a self-reflective consciousness, and awareness of our own being. And with ability to make choices beyond any of the other products of creation that we're familiar with. It kind of puts us in a special position, in terms of thinking about what is our contribution to this process.

Jeremy Lent: [00:20:38] Yeah. You know I think that it leads to this whole realization that, you know, here we are with this this power that no other creature on Earth has had, to actually create, causes amazing destruction. And yeah and humans have now become a natural force of nature. I mean, we've moved more earth; we've done more to the actual geo-makeup of the earth, than other sort of natural forces. And we are leading to our own destruction, at this point.

David Korten: [00:21:16] And then the destruction of Earth's capacity to support life.

Jeremy Lent: [00:21:19] Yes. Exactly. Which, I mean there's a question to that of course we don't know yet, if even, will things get so runaway... There are some like Jane Clanton [Transcriber's note: not sure of the name referenced] and others who have talked about some scenarios where we will literally become like Venus, where things get so extreme that we really literally put an end to life. There's other scenarios where we managed to collapse our civilization soon enough that the earth itself will sort of move to a new equilibrium. And who knows as

humans may still potentially be part of that equilibrium. But then we've destroyed everything that we have built, up till now.

David Korten: [00:22:02] Great. So. We're here to figure out how we take that latter course, so we become Earth healers and become contributors to the unfolding of creation, and its creative process. From your study of past civilizations' deep change in society, what have you learned about the possibilities for rapid human change. .

Jeremy Lent: [00:22:29] Yeah. I find that so interesting and what I have looked at is that actually, you can think of human societies like complex systems - like essentially, just like ecologists we've been talking about. And they're, those complex systems can be incredibly resilient. You can have cultures remaining, as in China is a great example. Similar culture going for millennia without actually changing their fundamental worldviews. So, but then they do change. And you can actually look at these changes that are either coming from an endogenous, like internal, or an exogenous variable, causing the equilibrium of this kind of complex system to suddenly shift out and find itself in a new equilibrium. So an example of an endogenous shift is say something like these new ideas that arose from the scientific revolution, that led to this worldview that started to just transform things - that led to the Industrial Revolution. All these things happened internally.

Jeremy Lent: [00:23:34] An example of an exogenous shift is really interesting, is like well, how did China change so drastically in the last century or so. With, in that case they were fine internally, but then they got humiliated - generation after generation of Chinese leaders got humiliated - by the brutal conquest of the West. So even though they didn't get actually colonized, they got just degraded so much. So new generations of Chinese in the early 20th century started to say: throw out all this neo-Confucian crap - like we've got to look to this new way of thinking. And they actually became neo-dominant; survival of the fittest is what it's about. Then they incorporated a Western idea of communism. And then of course in recent times incorporated the Western idea of capitalism.

Jeremy Lent: [00:24:25] So, you see this change happening when something falls apart. And I think when we're looking - I think the implications are so important for right now - because we're looking at a situation where we know we're headed for this collapse. And even though most of the world are still in this kind of zombie place driven by billionaire owned mass media telling them everything's fine. We know that as time goes on, year after year, they're going to say more and more: this is not fine; we've got to look for a different set of values. Well right now we're seeing the bad side of that, where increasing number of people are looking to those values of this kind of fascistic and hate-driven, fear-driven values. But it's just as possible - and this is our work in my view, all of us, to actually put out a comprehensive and coherent, meaningful set of values that those people can shift, so that in the next ten, twenty years or so, as things really fall

apart, they say, "There is an alternative; there's something else." So instead of like an Occupy Wall Street, where they knew what they were against, but weren't sure what they were for. And that new generation can say: "We know what we're for."

David Korten: [00:25:46] Yeah. Some you know China has officially made a commitment to ecological civilization in their national constitution. Now in my [Transcriber's note: couldn't hear the word] in that conversation, I feel very strongly that China is positioned to essentially make the decision for humanity it is poised to be the last great imperial capitalist empire on Earth, finishing the driving of the collapse of Earth's ability to support at least human life. But it is also positioned, in a way no other nation seems to be to make a commitment to a new civilization - an ecological civilization, and to set the example for the rest of the world to follow.

David Korten: [00:26:51] And I want you to know John Cobb, who is going to be speaking in this parallel session tomorrow, in this in this room, has now joined us. And John is very much a part of that conversation in China, and I assume tomorrow, John, that you will say more about what's happening in China and what we see is the contribution of that. And John and I always specifically talking about the the institutional implications.

David Korten: [00:27:24] So with that I do want to open it up for audience participation and are really eager to hear... I would like to ask a friend to come up and actually monitor that, but I know you had your hand up first. So why did you go first and then from there I'll turn it over to a friend to keep track of whose hands were up. Well you could come up here, and I know this is really awkward, but there's no way we can pass the microphone to you.

Audience member: [00:28:09] So, first of all I want to congratulate you on for what you all do. It's so gratifying to be here. And my question is really a footnote, that I think an important thing can happen. And it has to do with agriculture. So our concept of agriculture comes from the old world. I work in the upper Peruvian Amazon, and I'm regenerating a pre-Colombian Amazonian, anthropogenic soil the most sustainable third time site in the book that's sequesters 20 percent of CO2 with is bio-char. So the civil - that soil gave rise to many civilizations in the lower Amazon and they slowly climbed up the mountain. But the earliest began in the lowlands. And the reason I'm saying that is because agriculture in South America, and I think in all of the Americas I'm not sure - I'm very sure about the Amazonian region. There is no fence. There is absolutely no separation between the forest - the forest is a garden. The forest is a garden. There is no wild and domesticated. And it's still alive today. Myself, many of my staff are na.. Indigenous. We work together. And so I've known these things. And of course it was destroyed with the Spanish invasion, where most everybody died and they forgot, and they adopted "slash and burn" to quickly grow something, because almost everybody died.

Audience Member: [00:00:00] Really, there's hardly anybody left. But this soil spreads all over, and what you see in Machu Picchu - many of you have gone to Machu Picchu - I mean this was a center of mega-biodiversity in cultivars. When we separate cultivars from wild, which they don't. And there's been a lot of work on the Amazonian forest. It's not a virgin forest, never has been. So there is there, it seems to me, a very profoundly different notion of agriculture. And we need to bring it up, because when we - you know this way of culpability of agriculture bothers me, because it does not need to be that.

Jeremy Lent: [00:00:54] Great points. Thank you.

Fran Korten: [00:00:56] Do you want to respond to that at all?

David Korten: [00:01:01] Well yeah. OK. I think what you just outlined is a very profound part of our situation. Any of you who've seen the most recent issue of Yes magazine, it's basically about the mental health crisis in the United States, that results from the disruption of our relationships. And it drove me, then to write a column on the US site that some of you may have seen. But it pushed me to think about the difference between our contemporary experience and exactly the experience that you outlined for our earlier ancestors. And to think about particularly the way a young person was growing up, living in a village with a community, with a tribe. Not only the whole family, but the whole tribal family of people, it would be related to - the individual would be related to, throughout their life. And every moment of every day is in direct connection with nature. That is how we evolved to live, and that is part of our becoming connected to our mutual interdependence, and the foundation of our deeper systems of values.

David Korten: [00:02:37] Now then, flip that around and think of all the ways in which our modern society separates us from one another and nature. From the monetization of relationships, that now most of our connections and exchanges there's a monetary transaction in between, and we have to get that money from the people who control the creation and allocation of money, which should be the banksters. And that essentially dehumanizes every relationship. Then you think about our housing, and - I don't know, what is it - something like 30 percent of Americans now live in single person apartments, and don't know their neighbors. Growing numbers of children are living in a single parent household and the parents out in several low income jobs, trying to make enough money. So the child not only doesn't have any contact with an extended family or community, has no contact even with their their mother or their primary caretaker. Imagine the implications of that. That is fundamentally destroying us, psychologically. And, but once you get that framework in mind, then you begin to realize, "wow!" What are all the ways that we can rebuild community?

David Korten: [00:04:05] How does that relate: to how we think about money; to how we think about the economy; to how we think about our infrastructure? The design of cities relationships between urban and rural areas, and so forth... You want to?

Jeremy Lent: [00:04:18] Yeah, yeah. Thanks and just to add one more element to the point that you raised, which is so true and so important. You know, I don't know if, how many of you are familiar with this great book, Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer, where she talks about the same kinds of things, but in the North American ecosystem, and how - basically traditional approaches learned that the sustainable ways of interacting, and not having those boundaries, just as you say. And I think maybe one of the ways we can learn when we say, how does this apply to an ecological civilization is, you know, what are the big boundaries we have right now? As David was just talking about is city living versus rural living.

Jeremy Lent: [00:05:08] And I think one of the newer developments that could be so powerful is this notion of really getting sort of eco-farming type activities within cities. So, you know, right now 50 percent of humans are living in cities, and by middle of this century it's going to be more like 70 percent. So we have to find... And that's actually not bad for the ecology, because the actual footprint is less for people, when they're living densely together. But we need to find ways to actually, again, break down those barriers and let nature be part of that urban environment, so that we don't have to then rely on, you know, sort of big, big sort of agri-business to bring food in; that we actually get self-sufficient, in that way. So that's kind of one of the ideas where those principles can apply to the future.

David Korten: [00:05:58] Yeah. The GDP, if we do all this, the GDP will go down and the billionaires will have smaller fortunes then. [Audience applauds.]

Fran Korten: [00:06:10] So, what I want to do is take three questions in a row, and then let our panel respond as they will. OK? So, let me start with you in the dark hat. Yes?

Audience Member: [00:06:26] Thank you so much, you all. I would like to begin with this problem of farm cross-civilizational dying off. When you mention that Christianity, and often in the Hellenistic world view, But it didn't begin with only Christianity. I mean it happened when Christianity part of the empire. So therefore only Christianity didn't reproduce that dualistic worldview. In fact cross-civilizationally speaking unlike Christian empty words and not shared by very interesting confluence of this spirit of devotion the spirituality of Krishna and Buddha on the sense of nothingness. Secondly about the very idea of the ecological civilization, It may seem that ecology is only about connectedness, but in nature there are also points of disjunction. Therefore, how do we think about the ecological as simultaneously a process of convergence and the divergence and this disjunction is the societal realm that reflect the fundamental challenges. And finally a little more thinking about the ecological as both the inner and outer, and the kind of

complexity in the Indic tradition, the inner itself has different kind of qualities. And you know, so therefore, the ecological civilization as a way of finding non-dual modes but also the complexity of the both the inner and the outer.

Fran Korten: [00:08:23] The second question. In the green shirt, you had your hand up early on. So I'm going to...

Audience Member: [00:08:45] Alistair Moodie from Scotland. I want to come at it from a different direction, because really what you're describing is huge cultural change. How will that happen? I'm a psychologist and psychotherapist, as well as a minister. And it concerns me deeply as to how we will get it. You see, you're describing a lot that is very rational. But what we know, about the way we're living in the world is that it's hugely irrational - but in that frame. But, you know, who's changing? So I think we have to go deeper, to see it as a profound spiritual crisis and a degree of alienation, a light show a picture of a technologically driven zombie... Because although you've referred, I think David did, to the fact that we as human beings are able to, we have a self-reflective consciousness, the fact is that most people, most of the time do not employ self-reflective consciousness. We anesthetize ourselves in all sorts of ways, not only with our technology, but also with a mood changing substances - some legal, some illegal. We distract ourselves endlessly. And then we are, we fill up that alienation and emptiness we know with material goods, things. So we are addicted to consumerism. So where to begin to sort all that out, you know? And that's what I'm concerned about. And I think and I'm hoping that maybe we'll get some clues from from you, Matthew, in terms of how we really get to touch hearts and minds. How do we change hearts and minds, in our world so that we... And I think, actually my hope is because I'm one of the baby boomer generation and we've absolutely failed, the world. I was listening... The best speaker I've heard this week is someone who's 18 years of age, a young woman and I'm sorry I don't have her name at the moment. I hope to find out that name. But that's the hope. That people like that young women, who are rejecting the prevailing culture in our world, and who are wanting to... And maybe that's the hope for the next, as well the Axiom Age, that people will get to the point of saying this is this life is crap the way that we're living is totally unacceptable and we need a new way. So it has to be I think, somehow however inspired, a new spiritual revolution that does not depend on any kind of supernatural belief, but that's maybe principally about that deep profound appreciation for how special our planet Earth is, probably how unique and how important it is that we treasure Planet Earth and all forms of life within it. And so that's my kind of question to you two: what are your thoughts about that need for cultural transformation?

Jeremy Lent: [00:12:16] Thanks and if you want to give a shout out to the person.

Jeremy Lent: [00:12:20] Kehkashan Basu.

Audience Member: [00:12:21] It is. Yes.

Jeremy Lent: [00:12:25] Yeah, yeah. Apparently. Yeah I knew exactly what I said staring back and I was equally impressed. Yes. Her name is Kehkashan Basu. She's 18 and you know just looking at her speak just gave me this sense of the hope, that in spite of everything, the potential is out there for just such great leadership from our younger generation, and such transformation possibilities. .

Audience Member: [00:13:05] Despite our problems we've been a very successful species because we are up to 7.7 billion. So to achieve these change in the story and to address or get to that ecological civilization, how do we address population? As E.O. Wilson said, we need to be leaving half the Earth to nature. So unless we address that pillar of the problem, you know... So I want to know what you think of that. Thank you.

Fran Korten: [00:13:35] So with that, I'm going to give this back to you two, to respond to those three questions.

Jeremy Lent: [00:13:42] So should I start?

David Korten: [00:13:43] Go ahead.

Jeremy Lent: [00:13:45] Yeah. Yeah, thanks. Such great richness in the room. It's just such an honor to be a part of this group and let me just address that final question first because... Yes population is an issue. But population is not the issue. Because in fact, the one billion most affluent people in the world are the ones who are consuming the vast majority of the world's resources. And so, and absolutely we need to address the population issue. And the way to address it is really simple. Everyone who studied it knows the answer. Educating girls. [Audience applauds.] And it's straightforward. And particularly educating girls in Africa, because it's sub-Saharan Africa that's going to be the source of virtually all of the increase in population, over the next few decades. It's simple. It just needs the political will to make it happen. That has to happen both for the quality of life of a key part, as well as population growth. But that's not the real issue. The real issue is the overconsumption and the like, the basically, we have the human population massively hypnotized by a global transnational corporate model, which owns the media of all of what people hear. And it's just as we were talking about - the zombie lifestyle - they basically hypnotize people to say: "you need to consume more." That's the way these transnational corporations... And 69 of the largest 100 economies in the world are transnational corporations. They need to grow in order for this system to continue. They need to grow shareholder value. They need to grow profits. They need to grow consumption. So their very existence is fundamentally opposed to everything we're

talking about right now. I think that's the fundamental we need to be aware of. And so before touching on the others let me just say if you have any.

David Korten: [00:15:40] OK. Interesting. The first statement was about the extraordinary complexity and I think, you know, the deeper I get into this the more I realize that the complexity goes even beyond our human imagination; it's just breathtaking. At the same time, we have, as humans, we have to deal with the everyday life and how we organize to meet our needs and so forth. And so we've got to get the best stories we can, on the process that we're in now - of bringing in bits of understanding from all the different sources of human knowledge - is an essential part of our of our process. But underlying that is also the thing that you intimated, that I mentioned that we're a species with a capacity for self-reflective consciousness, but we don't use that all the time. And in a way it's only a few of us that have really come to recognize the power of our stories, and that the story we're born into is not necessarily the full story. And so awakening that or creating more awareness that our stories are a choice, and that they have powerful implications. And, you know, one a little bit of equivocation here: I like stories that reflect reality, but I also realize that part of the criteria in selecting our story has to be our recognition of the implications of it. Will that story help us move toward greater peace, equality and balance with Earth.

David Korten: [00:17:32] In terms of population, it is a huge problem. Fran and I, back in the 1960s were among the world's leading authorities on managing population programs. You're absolutely right - educating women, but also making sure that means of fertility control are freely available to everybody who wants them. And Fran in particular when rural living in Central America. Came to realize there that the women were absolutely desperate to limit their fertility, quite in contrast of what the church's teachings were. So these are all, these are all huge implications. But the larger piece of this is in contrast to our conditioning, to consume more and more, because we're stripped of all of the sources of meaning. So, you know, if you're feeling meaningless and desperate and so forth, go shopping - you'll feel better.

David Korten: [00:18:32] But what we need to be moving toward is a world of spirit, of material sufficiency - in a sense voluntary simplicity, which recognizes that material consumption is not a source of our satisfaction. That our sources of satisfaction, ultimately are spiritual, and relational, and love and all the things that we've been talking about here. But they also... That is not separated from the institutional realities, and how is it that we meet our needs for daily food, water and a stable climate, and so forth, and that gets us into the institutional. So the process of connecting all the dots.

Jeremy Lent: [00:19:12] So, in fact, let me just follow on from that to kind of touch and just to add a little bit more on Alistair's question. So, how does this actually happen, and how do we go from sort of the head to the heart or whatever. And I do think that your point, David, is the sort

of launching pad of that - that actually this story that we're bombarded with from the media is a false story of humanity. It's a story of separation; that we're all selfish, we're all rational - all this stuff.

Jeremy Lent: [00:19:44] And we know, billions of people around the world know that's not true. That's why people are fundamentally dissatisfied, because what we are as humans... Well actually, one of the defining characteristics of humans is what's called our shared intentionality, like things that we have that, and too that we share with some, with other animals, but we have as structural parts of the way in which we communicate: things like altruism, compassion and the empathy. These are the things that... A sense of fairness. These are the things that drive human society. That's how we actually evolved as human beings. And you know when we actually focus on that, that's the hope of how we can transform billions of people's ways of thinking, in relatively short time because that actually touches people's hearts and such as in what they know in their heart is true: that they do care about their fellow person; that they do care about quality of life; they do care about nature.

Jeremy Lent: [00:20:41] And you know, in a way, it's just... David mentioned the word love. And it's love is the power that can conquer all. Because we can actually think of love... I actually defined it in my biology framework as the realization of connectedness. That is what love is, whether between two people or the whole universe; that sense unconditional love is that realization of connectedness. All we really need to do is allow people to just get a little clearer and put off some of the trappings of what they've bombarded with every day, and touch into their own reality and we've won.

Fran Korten: [00:21:28] OK. Let me take two more questions, because we have very limited time. I think you've had your hand up for a while. I'll give you a concluding moment. Let me take a second one. Yes. OK?

Audience Member: [00:21:53] This question has two parts to it. [Transcriber's note: couldn't hear the first few words.] The first part - here is a statement we've all heard: Think globally act locally. We've heard a lot here wonderful things about thinking globally. I'm wondering what we can say about acting locally... And then specifically there is a movement, which for a while was centered in a village called Totnes, in England called the Transition movement. There are now duplicates around. What is your reaction to that? Can you say anything? What do you think about that?

Fran Korten: [00:22:36] Thank you I appreciate your conciseness. OK. We have a second one here.

Audience Member: [00:22:44] First of all I'd like to congratulate the speaker. I think they've done a great job and I certainly agree with you. My worry is that it goes back to Machiavelli and paraphrasing - most of you might think I may have it right. He was a person that said that democracy was... or he doesn't like democracy, is absolutely impossible [Transcriber's note: couldn't hear a few words.] in the world, in the various states. And that eventually, it may not happen the first century, the second, but eventually the third century, basically about this time the United States is in right now, and will have to collapse, because of the greed. And that was something of the American Constitutional writers were quite aware of, and they said we have to create a system that deals with these factions, because these factions are very much into greed, and themselves. We call it corporations - you call it whatever you wish. And these fractions are going to destroy that the ability of a democracy, and the ability of a country to think the way you think of people the way you think in terms of the culture. How do we confront, with love of course. How do we confront these people? I can remember an economist, for example, that I happen to know that said: "Altruism is impossible; It doesn't exist. How do you even talk with people like that? How do we help them understand that love can exist.

David Korten: [00:24:05] By not taking Economics, is a good idea! [Audience laughs.]

Fran Korten: [00:24:12] All right. Who's going to take this side?

Jeremy Lent: [00:24:20] So I'll do it and then if you want to, you can just pick up after this.

Jeremy Lent: [00:24:25] Yeah. Thanks Rob. So just to touch on that that first question. I think, yeah, it's about... Really I see transformative action as existing in kind of three planes. One plane is within ourselves, is transforming our own way of relating with ourselves recognizing our very definition of self, as this interdependent, dynamic with everything around us. And also to look at the different ways in which we have frames, have patterns of thoughts that we've inherited from this kind of patriarchal and atavistic world view. And actually, always be consciously asking ourselves, "What am I taking for granted that I could be thinking in a different way." And that kind of leads that next level of community, that you we're touching on and answer your question I think Transition Towns are great. I think that's just the kind of things that we need.

Jeremy Lent: [00:25:22] And one thing that... David and I were talking last night, and this question of we could all think of it in terms of local, or global, or short term versus long term, you know, these things that need to get done to create this whole global change, this ecological civilization. But the reality is the things that we do today, are the same things that we need to do to create that ecological civilization too. So, changing things in our cities, doing the things that we're doing right now - just doing things, like making commitments to eat less meat, and doing or making commitments to buy organic, so that we're actually investing in our local systems, back systems that are doing... Those are incredibly important, but they can't be at the expense of

engaging in global political action and national political action, because we have to make sure that all of us are moving together to change those systems that continue this this devastation we're on. And to touch on your...

Audience Member: [00:26:28] Is there a third level?

Jeremy Lent: [00:26:28] Sorry. Oh the third level is the global level, so one being individual, second being local community, third being global, systemic. So, I'm kind of blanking out right now, because what you said was so profound and then. And it was the issue of greed, right. Thanks, and how we touch on that. And I think that leading with love is really what we have to do, and we have to rely on the modern technologies that allow us to become more empowered than ever before. So you know that new ecological civilization should not be against technological paradigmatic shift. So, the corporations have had so much power partly because they've had such great hierarchical organization - if the CEO decides he wants to make one change in his culture, he can make that decision. Within 24 hours, you can have 500,000 people around the world recognizing they need to do something a different way. And we have never that as a global grass roots organization of people, living from their heart. But with the Internet, we do have that possibility. And we have possibilities of different forms of democracy that could be part of that ecological civilization - things like liquid democracy and using the blockchain technology, things like that. There are some really amazing ideas out there. And I think what we need to do is incorporate those in this whole vision of ecological civilization we're talking about. So thanks.

David Korten: [00:28:14] Okay. I think we're already over time. But some of these issues - if you're interested in pursuing further - Matt and I will be talking, in the next session in this room, about the relationships between life and money and the implications for the organization of both. And I think we'll go much further into this.

David Korten: [00:28:34] The big piece is that if we're to have a future, we have got to bring ourselves into balance with a living Earth. The ability of Earth to self organize, to maintain its generative systems. Organizationally, the only way that you can do that - and organization is essentially my academic field- is to organize locally. If each place on Earth - the people in each place on earth - are living in balance with their local natural systems, and meeting their needs within that, then Earth will be in balance. As long as we're organized the way we are now - so that the richest people in the world reach out to wherever the resources are left, to take them for their profit and personal consumption - it ain't gonna work. There's no way we're going to come into balance. This gets us deeply into democracy, though what we've called democracy actually is mainly electing a few representatives at the top of essentially a hierarchical and authoritarian imperial system. And we'll look in the next session more about how life organizes, where the decision making is actually always local extreme... I mean it's an extreme form of democracy,

beyond anything that we have ever talked about, as far as I'm aware of, and we'll begin to explore more of that.