

An Invitation

~~Every day each of us makes countless choices just like turf grass because this is how we do things in America.~~ From the food we eat to the houses we live in to the cars we drive, we live in a bubble of unreality disconnected from our roots as humans, as a biological species, and as citizens of planet earth. I invite you to join me in a journey to ~~flex-expand~~ your worldview into one ~~steeped in the reality based on the context up~~ upon which our healthy existence depends. As we take this journey, I hope you see how your everyday decisions are actually moral pivot points and also how your spiritual life can expand into a rich, enjoyable, and moral philosophy that can **You lost me here—how does a philosophy withstand geological time? withstand the test of geological time.**

I hope this book motivates you to escape from mainstream American culture and to recognize your power and responsibility as you spend your money, vote, monitor your elected representatives, make decisions at work, and parent your children. What we choose does matter, possibly more than any individual can imagine.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into four sections: ~~G~~getting perspective on this time and place; ~~Wrong-headed misconceptions~~ humans as part of the natural world; ~~Foundational concepts to~~ understanding asome bigger pictures; and what we can do. ~~“Yes, we can solve this mess!”~~

Section I—p~~Putting things in perspective is a critical first step in modifying our behavior as individuals and as a species. You can't know where you want to go unless you understand where you are and where you've been. And you can't tell if you're making any progress unless you have benchmarks as starting points.~~The slice of time in which we live is tiny compared to earth's history and we are only one—one!—of 1.8 million known species on the planet. ~~As~~ Americans, we live in a bubble of unreality ~~constructed of systems around us, all of which were~~ designed to increase consumption. Our patterns of overconsumption damage These systems haven't served us well in terms of the environment, injure our physical and psychological health and, well-being, and threaten our continued existence, and stress levels. Fortunately we have

many ways we can opt out of mainstream American culture that doesn't entail giving up electricity and living a life of deprivation accepting the "hippie commune" lifestyle.

Section II—in order to make ethical choices we need to recognize that we are a part of the natural world and act accordingly. in a time, species, global context, it is important to free our minds of wrong-headed assumptions that have become deeply embedded in the American worldview and to adopt more accurate assumptions. The first and most important accurate assumption is the idea that Although humans and all of our activities are a part of nature, —we have let through our religious traditions and scientific/technological advances; lead us to believe we are separate and different have progressively expelled ourselves mentally from the natural world. Extreme views of this sort assert that humans control nature—what an insane way to look at the world! All one has to think about is Hurricane Katrina to see the folly of that unfounded arrogance— bIn fact, because humans are inextricably bound to our home on earth, we are evolving right along with the rest of nature. Next is the spiritually isolating and wrongheaded idea that humans are We are not a destructive parasite on the earth destined to destroy everything we touch. This thinking leads us to set aside tracks of land without humans, “natural areas and wilderness,” to preserve nature while But we can't go on we wantonly destroying ing the renewable foundations of the ecosystems upon which we depend on. All species modify their environment—the key is to redesign our activities to fit those that promote human well-being in the context of the time-tested constraints that non-human species live by—essentially to re-knit the living world back into our everyday lives. Third Finally, our society and its members cannot continue to make truly ethical choices decisions if the our primary decisions are consideration we use is restricted to based only on cost and the economy. As in all other species, food and water are foundational to our well being. But because we've unknowingly allowed poorly regulated financial interests to progressively co-opt the basic functions of ecosystems into mass-produced monocrops that bring great wealth to a few and fill our stomachs with cheap food, we have set ourselves on course for food poisoning, famine, and deprivation. Similarly, our use of water has been a comedy of errors driven by I, me, now demands and by corporate profit. Fortunately, some people have been thinking in more productive ways so we can change what we're doing to be in line with nature's rules while improving the abundance and cleanliness of water and the nutritional value of food. What superficially appears cheapest is not

always best for us or for the rest of nature, and some things shouldn't be purchased at all even if they appear cheap. ~~The deferred costs of years of living “cheap” are now coming due and the price is so high, we literally can't afford to continue this myopic I, me, now behavior.~~

Section III—~~with the foundational concepts from Section II in mind, the third section of this book addresses broad topics critical to a time, species, global perspective~~We live inside a web of interrelated systems. First, we ~~are~~ all share “commons”—resources like the oceans, air, biodiversity, and quiet and darkness that we all need and have a right to but don't have to pay for. ~~Decades of careless use have damaged some of these commons, and others are in danger of collapsing. subject to what Garrett Hardin called the “Tragedy of the Commons”—the inevitable destruction of resources we all have a right to but don't have to pay for.~~ Globally, the most immediately and dangerous result of ~~the~~ failing commons is the loss of productivity of earth's oceans. Because fishing has become a technologically-driven enterprise of scooping whole populations of species out of our oceans while killing all of the “bycatch,” the complex food webs of the seas are crumbling. ~~Fortunately there are solutions to this problem—catch shares and ocean preserves will allow the oceans to again become a sustainable source of abundance for earth. The second topic delves deeper into~~ Commons are one example of how this system in which we are embedded works. ~~We live in the context of interdependent levels of organization in and around us.~~ From molecules to minds to global economics ~~there we live in~~ are nested levels of organization ~~with emergent properties that form interconnected complex adaptive systems.~~ Individual or social ~~C~~ choices at one level have impacts at many different levels. The food we eat, for example, impacts ~~affects~~ the expression of our genes and our personal health as well as; ~~it also impacts~~ the health of ecosystems in vast ~~track~~ tracts of land around the globe. Impacting both those levels is our culture—the processes of growing ~~food~~, selecting ~~food~~, and preparing food; ~~it~~ and the rituals associated with eating it are key cultural cornerstones. ~~As we Americans have migrated to industrially produced, microwaved, quick food eaten on the fly, we have lost our ability to socialize with our families and friends as humans have done during meals throughout their evolutionary history. In this context,~~ e Each choice we make, from the ~~our~~ food ~~we eat~~ to how we measure our national prosperity, puts a selective force on many levels of biological, cultural, and global well being. ~~Third, with an understanding of our power as selective agents in the multi-level complex adaptive systems in and around us,~~ Thus, we have a deep ethical

responsibility to choose our personal and social goals carefully. ~~Unintended consequences from poor land use decisions reverberate around the globe to threaten the well being of all living things, ourselves included. Purposeful living with a time, species, global perspective puts selective pressures on all these systems to move the human endeavor toward a sustainable relationship with other people and the world around us. Essentially, we must make peace with the land if we are to prosper in the future.~~

Section IV of this book is about Freedom and prosperity are possible when we make ethical, sustainable personal and social choices. To prosper in an ethical way as individuals and as a species we must free ourselves from unnecessary ~~have freedom from obligate~~ consumption, ~~a goal that can most easily be reached by recognizing which of the choices we make act as the drivers of the rest of our choices.~~ By carefully choosing where you live, what you live in, what you do inside your home, and what you do for recreation, free time, health, and a rich spiritual life bloom into abundance. As you make these time, species, global considered and responsible choices, the rest of living things near you and in other places on the globe will also prosper. ~~At this point reasonable people feel their own limitations and many feel a sense of hopelessness. After all each person is only one of more than six billion on earth.~~

How can only one person make a difference that reverberates around the globe to transform our destiny? This book wouldn't be complete without bringing a group of innovators to your attention. ~~They, and millions of people like them, who~~ are already on board with a time, species, global perspective. ~~All we have to do is to quit being stupid about our activities and change will occur quickly. The result of the recent U.S. election is a testament to how millions of people can wake up simultaneously and become agents of change. To quote Barak Obama, "We can do it!" Finally in section four,~~ we must make peace ~~is~~ with each other, a goal that is possible only if we free ourselves of destructive, obligate consumption. ~~Few of us stop to question how we humans have evolved such complex war machines to solve conflicts that inevitably arise. It's only humans and chimpanzees among the mammals that attack and kill one another to solve conflicts. And it's only hH humans that~~ have developed organized conflict (war) into the foundation for entire economies and unique "moral" codes. There are lessons we can learn from the ancient systems of nature on how to avoid and solve conflict. Honoring diversity rather than forcing a monocrop of our economy/culture on the world would be a first step. Of all the topics

covered in this book, this issue is most centrally a woman's issue and may be the core issue that must be solved ~~if we are to as we~~ move to a sustainable future appropriate ~~infor~~ this ~~new~~ millennium. ~~If we can accomplish all of this, then the future of life on earth is bright and the unfolding story of life on earth can continue with humans as active partners in an appealing future.~~

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There's nothing easy about what I'm advocating; this isn't a 1000-easy-ways-to-save-the-earth kind of book. Instead, I am advocating a different way to look at the world so our choices allow us to have hope for the future. This means all sorts of things must change, ~~not an easy goal~~. But as those around us see how we can **greedy people don't care about spiritual growth** prosper economically and grow spiritually even with things like the global financial meltdown occurring around us, then more people will make decisions that will avert a truly threatening global ecological meltdown. ~~Hopefully, w~~With the background you gain ~~'ve gotten~~ from this book, you will be able to discern ethical choices from the cacophony of green wash spewed out around us each day. Through the actions of local individuals acting in right ways, the great unfolding, evolving story of the universe will continue to include humans. That, I think, is a future worthy of our very special species.