

Foreword

by Matthew Gilbert

As I write this, a barrel of oil approaches \$150; floods, droughts, tornadoes, and typhoons wreak unprecedented havoc in certain parts of the world; and the global economy seems poised on a downward spiral. Perhaps by the time you read this, things will have improved; perhaps they will have become worse. Either way, it seems clear to more and more of us that we have collectively created an unsustainable way of life for most of the world's people and jeopardized our very existence as a species.

I first found out about Ed Bourne's book when it was submitted to a colleague at New Harbinger. The company had recently entered into a copublishing relationship with the Institute of Noetic Sciences, where I'm director of communications and acquisitions director of our new imprint, Noetic Books. I was stunned by how closely Ed's narrative mapped onto a new study we had just released, *The 2007 Shift Report: Evidence of a World Transforming*, and further impressed that he was inspired to write this book by Willis Harman, the late former president of IONS and a renowned visionary thinker.

We wrote that report to help answer the questions we kept hearing: What is going on? Why is all this happening? Where is all this leading? We began by noting the influence of a powerful worldview—scientific materialism—that arose in response to the religious fanaticism and conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It elevated reason, objectivity, and the primacy of the physical universe, and focused on the study of parts instead of wholes. While providing an abundance of impressive advances in

such areas as technology and medicine, it also promoted a separatism that has been encoded into many of our institutions. This has led a majority of people to prioritize their own needs over the good of the commons, to disassociate their own well-being from that of the world around them, and to see nature as nothing more than an inert source of raw materials and a vast receptacle for the garbage and toxins of an industrial and consumptive lifestyle. All of this is underwritten by a deeper story that human life is a random accident and human beings are basically no more than complicated machinery run by genes and neuronal programming. As for religion and spirituality, they are merely evolutionary adaptations to keep us interested in staying alive.

It's a dismal scenario, to be sure, but then look at the stories that feed us every day. For anyone who reads the papers, scans the Internet, listens to the radio, or watches the nightly news, the world seems relentlessly hopeless and complex. Economic uncertainty, ecological collapse, ethnic conflicts, religious extremism, heartbreaking poverty—these harsh realities depict a world filled with fear, pain, and fragmentation while reinforcing a belief that there is little we can do about it. No wonder sales of antidepressants keep spiking upward.

Yes, the evidence is compelling that the arc of human existence is on a self-destructive decline, but it's vitally important to distinguish between breakdown and *emergence*, because once the pieces are put together, there is no denying that another reality is fighting through the cracks of the dominant narrative. It is this story that Ed Bourne rigorously presents in this homage to our potential.

In calling our current moment in time a “rite of passage,” Ed shows readers a landscape of fundamental shifts that are broad, deep, and ultimately life-affirming. He presents some dominant themes of a new overarching worldview—a conscious universe, multidimensional realities, interconnected minds, and life beyond physics—and describes the shift as “a movement away from a materialistic to a humanitarian-spiritual orientation toward life.” These are awfully big ideas, pushing the boundaries of our conditioning and beliefs, but our collective future is at stake and this is not a time to be reticent. Braving the currents of postmodern malaise, Ed, and the Institute, and many others believe that we are just beginning to tap into our potential as human beings despite, or perhaps because of, the multiple crises that we are facing.

This new story remains largely unreported. It reflects not an evolutionary model of randomness and survival but an evolution of human capacities that may alter the course of history and that a growing body of data from psychologists, paleontologists, neuroscientists, and quantum physicists are beginning to acknowledge. It's also a story that was further explored in the Institute's second worldview analysis, *The 2008 Shift Report: Changing the Story of Our Future*.

Over the past several decades, new scientific discoveries, along with a surge in grassroots initiatives addressing social and economic injustices, have begun calling into question that view of the universe—and in essence ourselves—as ultimately cold and mechanistic. Credible studies are finding that we're as hard-wired to connect and collaborate as to compete; that genes—as well as the brain—are malleable; that altruistic behavior enhances our immune system; and that at a subatomic level, everything is connected—literally. On the field of daily human endeavor, thousands of groups and millions of people are saying no to the madness of our time—a tacit acknowledgment that we have been sold a bill of goods about our potential and who we are. The story being told of a conniving, selfish, survival-driven species is in fact a small part, perhaps even a footnote, of a larger story in which the wisdom of our spiritual traditions and the findings of new science are finally beginning to converge.

As science and human progress are inextricably linked, the twenty-first century is finding a way to bring the highest potential of both back together. While changing paradigms is never easy, an evolutionary acceleration seems to have been unleashed, and worldview is at the center of it. Worldviews both large and small shape how we see the world, how we structure our institutions, and how we find meaning in what we do and where we're going, individually as well as collectively. The influence of modern science on worldview—the assumptions we make about how the universe works and the means we use to test those assumptions—is significant. How we've internalized this paradigm into our own being is also significant, perhaps even more so. So while marching on the World Trade Organization and confronting misuse of power remain necessary acts of defiance, marching against the dominant paradigms that live in our own hearts may have even more far-reaching effects. For the ultimate change will be a change in our

consciousness and in our assumptions about the best way to live in this complicated world.

This is the gift of Ed's book. It provides a road map for how to get from where we are to where we need to be and why such a journey is both vital and inevitable. A metaphor often used to describe the development of our species is that we are struggling through adolescence, slowly groping toward adulthood. In drawing the lines between new scientific research and spiritual exploration, we may just be uncovering the nascent signs of a collective maturing, perhaps foretelling a coming Age of Reenlightenment.

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