



Coping With Economic Diseases Is The Key Challenge Of The 21st Century

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Part 1
The Central Theme

One of the greatest challenges of the 21st century is to be able to cope with economic diseases.

Economic diseases are, for example, those that result from

- The present form of economic growth and development.
- The climate change and ozone layer depletion.
- The pollution of air, water, earth and space.
- The urban sprawl, excessive poverty and malnutrition.
- The mismanagement of our health care system.
- The loss of biodiversity and other renewable resources.

The present economic paradigm, inserted in a process of globalization, has become the greatest modifier of our entire lives. It is economics and business that bear a great responsibility on the state of our physical and human environments today and, thus, on the state of our material and spiritual welfare - both, individual and collective.

Thus, there is a need to eliminate all forms of economic and business violence both at the gross and subtle levels of our existence. This is to say, violence in relation to production, consumption, trade and other forms of exchange.

It is important to note also, that economics and business are not

running on their own. They are interdependent of each other as well as linked to all the rest that happens in the world at the subtle and gross levels of our existence.

Many people in the world feel hopeless about modifying the directions of human change and transformation. This desperation people feel today is so great and, at the same time, so perverse, that we often hear sentences like these: “There is nothing we can do about it”. “This is the price we have to pay”. Or, “It is a necessary evil”.

For example, any negative aspect of globalization, poverty, inequities, corruption, loss of civil rights, insecurity, etc. belongs now to the category of the “necessary evil”.

It is essential that we break down such a fallacy of the necessary evil. In economics and business, all that has created by us human beings is impermanent and changeable. It is up to us to change the course of our personal and collective human transformation. However, there is a fundamental law of change that is not to be forgotten: New human transformation will not be the result of the old paradigm that created the problem. In actual fact, it is always the case that more of the same will yield more of the same.

But, what is this new paradigm of change we need now? Where is the golden key that actually opens the door to that new paradigm and, thus, to new forms of human change and transformation?



Part II
Is There Anyone In The Cockpit?

The first understanding we are to have in search of that golden key is that there are people, like you and me, behind all existing economic and business systems. Yes, there are people in the cockpit and in the engine room of business and economics, whether you see them or not. Thus, the continuous atomization of economic and business –grouping us as producers, consumers, and traders, for example– dehumanize the process and gives us this impression that there is no one in the cockpit.

On my personal life, for many years, I have been in the engine room of many important decisions –for small that engine room it was. Not only making decisions that would affect me as a person, but, most importantly, decisions that would greatly affect the rest of the world as well. And, while in that engine room I agonized about certain decisions, for which I bear full responsibility for the outcomes. In the material world, many of us are or have been de-facto in the cockpit of decisions that affect the natural and human environments.

But, the general public is also in the cockpit of many decisions as well. The general public is not like a lame duck being affected by someone somewhere in the system. For example, each of us is responsible for the decisions we make at the level of daily consumption. In particular,

-It is up to us to consume a small or a large quantity of a product that may have been produced in a violent way regarding indecent working conditions, destruction of nature, or the elimination of sentient beings. It is up to us to invest our capital in companies that are producing in unacceptable ways or to invest in environmentally responsible companies.

-It is up to us to read the labels of the products we consume, and to make the appropriate decisions as regards purchases of such products.

-It is evident that we are seeing more and more a shift towards conscious consumption, although much more is needed to affect the course of business and economics. Unfortunately, there is a lack of leadership and tremendous apathy permeating those key places of decision-making. We need good people to make a difference.

Similarly, in relation to public policy positions, it is we, together, who elect public officials. With the same token, it is we who have to take them out of the office, if they do not perform. It is up to us to exercise our civil and political rights. Thus, only to say that economics and business are responsible for the state of our human welfare –in a very atomized way-- is also tantamount of saying, at the same time, that

we, ourselves, are behind the negative outcomes of those decisions.

-We are the core of all causes and conditions as regards what is happening in economics and business.

-We must see clearly the responsibilities we bear for the many economic diseases we experience today and, thus, it is incumbent upon us to change the present situation.

Also, and in the same vein,

-It is us who are spending nearly one trillion dollars in weapons and destroying the lives of people and the environment.

-It is us who spend more than 300 billion dollars in drugs and, thus, annihilate so many young people and children. Those who produce drugs and consume drugs are human beings.

-It is us who spend more money on cat and dog food than on assisting the poor people in developing countries.

-It is us who are stopping processes and possible avenues for generic drugs for those who have contracted HIVAIDS.

In addition to these material decisions made by people like you and me, it is essential to accept that we are in the cockpit of our spiritual decisions too. We are in the cockpit of our moral and ethical decisions.



Part III
Are We Numbed?

We must not make someone else responsible for these decisions and their outcomes. Also, as a justification for inaction, many people think that we need to learn 'something' in order to engage and make some decisions to supporting material and spiritual welfare in a practical way. This is legitimate and acceptable. But, I think that there is more to our apathy than just lack of knowledge. Let us explore some important questions:

-Why is it that most people are numbed and indifferent to the destruction of the environment?

-Why are we insensitive to our material and non-material interdependence?

-Why is it that we are indifferent to the destruction of the natural environment anywhere in the world?

-Why is it that if someone is sick, others do not really care?

-Why is it that, only after a few weeks, there was no more interest in the Asian Tsunami?

Let me share some thoughts and experiences to address some of

these questions.

First, most of the world operates at higher levels of toxicity to maintain its inner and outer equilibrium. Our human body can maintain its equilibrium at very high levels of toxicity. This is why the drunken person always states that can drive. But, only those who are not drunk can hold the keys from the drunk driver. Today, we are not only drunk out of alcohol. There are many other forms of toxicity we should be aware of. One of them is ego or material power. How many people make decisions just to gain more external power? The dilemma here is to make sure that those who are making decisions for us are only 'drunk' because of love and compassion.

Second, to develop programs of human health and welfare, it has become easier to accept a human adaptability model (rather than a human health model), and be at higher levels of unbalances in relation to our natural state of being. Today, medicine is not addressing the causes and conditions of diseases, particularly of those diseases that result from the deterioration or contamination of our environment. Instead, medicine is only attacking the symptoms, without changing the environment that are the main causes of diseases. This has led to a trillion dollars pharmaceutical industry, which produces the medicines that will maintain us in such state of toxic equilibrium. In addition,

technological change is being directed towards the development of external palliatives instead of solving the causes of diseases that plague humanity.

Third, most of the people that make decisions do not understand the negative impacts of this toxic state on our inner (spiritual) development. Most of us have difficulties understanding how the destruction of the natural environment caused by most economic and business activities (cutting trees, destroying the wildlife) affects our spiritual growth. There is no sensitivity to this form of interdependence and, thus, the need to develop human consciousness and awareness. If one accept the Eastern say that “the outer is like the inner and the inner is like the outer”, the destruction of our outer environment not only reflects the state of our inner environment, but it also limits our capacity to develop such inner environment. Our spiritual development is now compromised and can be mutilated by the destruction of our natural external environment.

Fourth, we are in an advanced state of sensorial degeneration. As we reach equilibrium at higher levels of toxicity, we begin to be numbed and cannot sense the rest of the world and, for example, seeing more destruction does not disturb us. This process clearly begins by the shutting down of our sensorial system. Our senses connect to our

inner perception or wisdom and this capacity to sense the world also degenerates. To have a healthy existence in the material world, it is not only important to be able to see and have a healthy eye system, but we also need healthy sight's wisdom. The same applies to other sensorial capacities and organs.

The above issues often raise other fundamental questions for which there are no complete answers. In particular: Are we beyond recovery? Have we passed the point of irreversibility? My answer is 'No'. There is a clear possibility to reverse the present trends and change the whole process of human transformation.

Thus, we need to shift our minds to ask: What will it take for people to make the turn that is needed? Will the change come because we proactively decide to reach more peaceful states of our human reality?. Or, Will the change result because it will be driven by more conflicts and violence?

Currently, it seems that most changes taking place are the result of violent events, like September 11. As a result people are deeply touched and their path and inner changes greatly modified and distorted, for example, as a result from fear. Today, even those who proclaim peace and freedom are pursuing non-peaceful means to do so.

It is us that have to reverse those trends. If, we do not do it, Nature will. This is not a non-sense statement as there is an infinite interdependency between the material and the non-material world and between our outer and inner environments. Thus, it is very possible that we may see the wisdom in Nature taking the lead, and bring about the appropriate forms of change and the new equilibrium that is needed.

So, it would be no surprise to see that Natural Law and Natural Wisdom will be moving us to reflect and to change towards the desired direction. Many of those who have been deeply affected by the Asian Tsunami are frequently asking these types of questions and looking for solutions. They also understand the existence of inner tsunamis which result from unbalances and bottling up negative emotions. These inner tsunamis drive people towards other forms of transformation and change.



Part IV
The Ten Means To Cope
With Economic Diseases

The present situation demands that we heal the world. The world desperately needs to heal. Let me offer some specific baby steps to healing the world:

1. The Mahayana (focus on the human collective). To think about economics and business for the benefit of the human collective and not for just a few. This is not just an issue of equity and justice, but also an issue of balancing the already imbalanced process of human transformation. We are failing at the level of the collective. The value system of economics and business is individualistic in nature. It does not open the window for those values that embrace every being and sentient beings. It is selective and not universal. It is competitive and not cooperative.

2. The Causes (understand the ultimate issue in transformation and evolution). To understand that the ultimate cause of economics and business diseases is human consciousness. Even money is human consciousness expressed in a material way. Money could never provide the functions of exchange and unit of account if there were not an agreement on the embodied trust and awareness to do so. The ultimate cause of matter is non-matter. The ultimate source is our levels of consciousness. Thus, a new economics and business will only come as a result of a new level of human consciousness.

3. The Conditions (create the proper enabling environment for change). To create an enabling environment for change that includes both our outer and our inner environment. Material development is important and, therefore, our material environment outside us is very central to a sustainable society. Equally important is our inner environment so that spiritual growth can also take place. In the end, and as we reach higher and higher levels of human self-realization we will see that the “outer environment is like the “inner environment”, both of them forming one holistic reality. Through education, health, nutrition, morals, ethics, culture, institutional arrangements, etc., we would be able to create new enabling environments, so that we come successfully to environment peace.

4. The Eco-morality (exalt the importance of morals and ethics). To know whether we are moving towards the “right” direction. Whether the process of human transformation has to be changed and in what direction. In this respect, economics and business cannot exist in a moral and ethical vacuum. As a matter of fact, these are immersed in a given ethics and morality, which come as a mirror image of the value system they promote. We must develop a new form of eco-stewardship. It is important to develop a new eco-morality. It is a morality based on love and compassion.

5. The Spirit (bring the non-material and sacred). To realize that human change must not only be dominated by material economics and material business. The time has come to embrace the non-material and the sacred in these two activities. This means that we have to bring a new horizon and a new set of objectives within a vision of humanity where we have a disease-free society, a peaceful society, a drug-free society, and much more. We must bring the spirit into economics by making it the science of abundance rather than the science of scarcity. This implies to have as a core goal of business and economics to nurture the values of life. A major investment has to be done to enhance and expand our spiritual capital.

6. The Self-Realization (embrace the being and becoming in action). To know that life is an experience. Economics and business are also an experience. They happen mostly as a result of the human desire for doing, having and knowing. But, these are not enough. In addition, we must develop the business and the economics of being and becoming. Economics and business must create the space and time for human self-realization in that process. A process that includes work and the working conditions, production, consumption, distribution, trade and much more. Each and every aspect of economic and business must contribute to the human self-realization of one or more dimensions of our lives.

7. The Content (change the thematic content of the strategy). To acknowledge that too much emphasis has been given to the thematic and content elements of economics and business. This is important, as education cannot exist without a curriculum. What is the curriculum of economics and business today? The large majority of people believe that there is only one course in that curriculum: profit making and material gains. Many expect that this curriculum should also include sustainability, human development and more. It is time we debate the content of these two as they are important aspects of our lives.

8. The Container (expand the capacities of the subject of change). To focus on the container. In the end, even a perfect curriculum will yield nothing without a careful attention to the container: we, the people are the container. We only can do what we can do. To reach new levels of human welfare we must expand the capacity of the container. In many ways, it is all about the container. This is to say, we must expand our capacities. We may have the most effective strategies, but if they are not understood, embraced and practiced by the key actors in private or public policy, the whole effort will be wasted. This is why it is so important to have a comprehensive and consistent human resources development strategy. Without such strategy, economic and business will benefit a few and create problems for most. For too long we have focused on the content. Now is the

moment to change such an approach and focus more on the content.

9. The Universal (get engaged in the search for total inclusion). To adopt universal and all inclusive human values. The engagement in economics and business must be for the benefit of all. It must be as simple as that. Exclusion creates more problems and violence around the world. Universality is the space that holds everyone without judgment and attitudes. In a world of so many people, it is essential to live in the realm of the universal and to make peace with the environment.

10. The Interdependency (become sensitive to the welfare of every being and sentient being). To know that we are one and we are all. The more we feel one, independent, and isolated from the rest, the more negative the outcomes of economics and business will be. Higher realms of human progress and transformation are, by definition, collective. Thus, we must become fully aware of the impacts we have on others and the impacts others have onto ourselves and act with this awareness. A community of love, compassion, reciprocity and generosity are preconditions for human renewal.



Part V
The Three Important Next Steps

Let me offer three next steps.

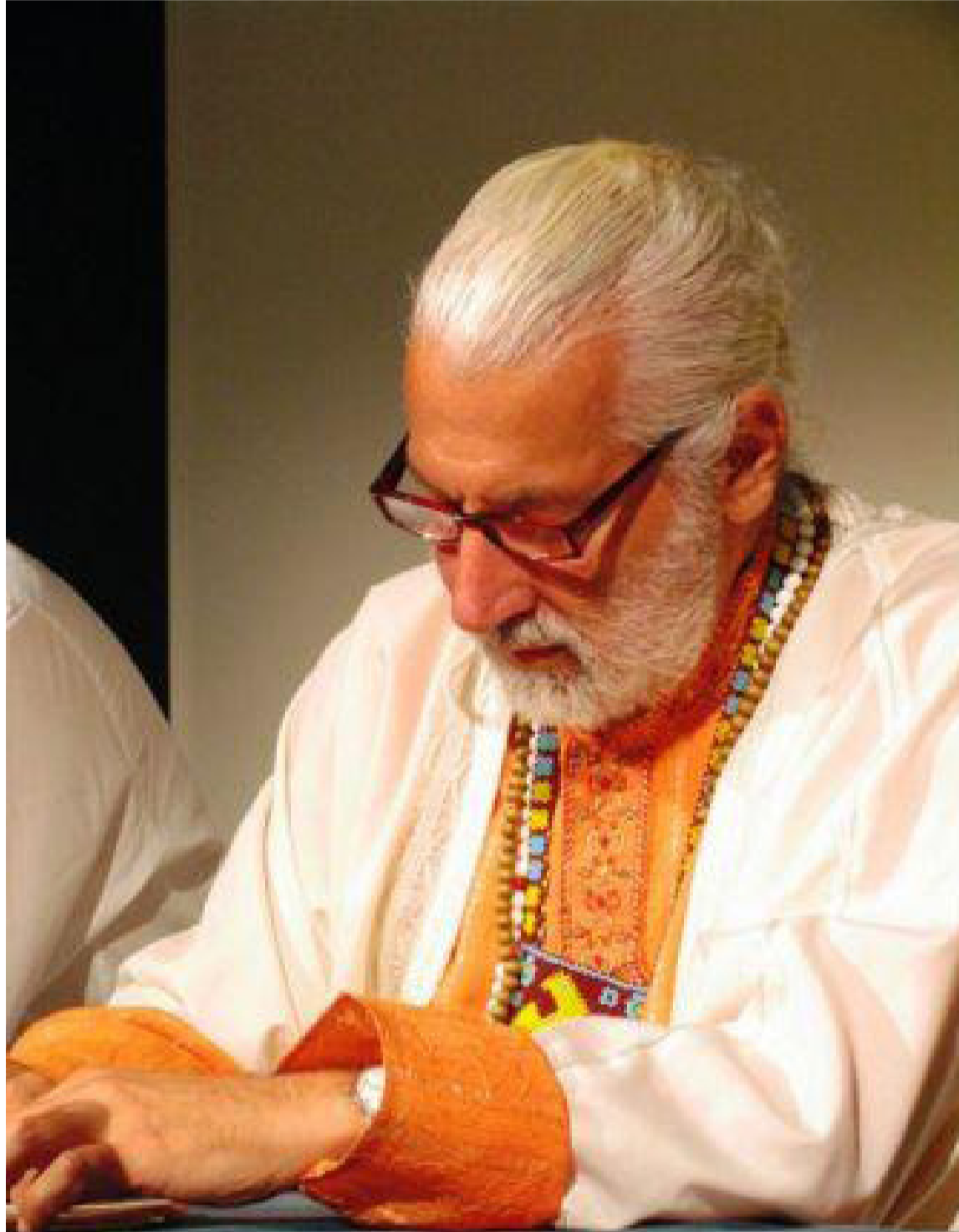
The message(s). We must understand what Economic Diseases are and why and how they relate to the destruction of the Environment. We also need to make Peace with the Environment. It is essential that we carry these messages everywhere. That we reaffirm these messages and that we make these messages ours.

The integration. These messages will have no meaning for others and ourselves, if we do not integrate them in all we do. We can continue making advocacy statements that compete with other forms of advocacy. The time has come to embody these messages in our professions, in our relationship with others, in all aspects of our lives. Integration needs time, needs space, needs emptiness, and so many things.

The actions. Once we have integrated these messages, go into action, into a new way of doing business and economics and into new ways of consuming or distributing material goods and services. In every forum we are it should be mandatory to bring the core content of the debate today into their debate.

Let us not proclaim without acting. Let us not act without integration.

Let us not integrate without the proper message.



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