

## CHRONICLE 19: THE JOURNEY FROM HEART TO HANDS

Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, is known as “The Green Patriarch” because of his concern for the environment. He once said,

*“It is a long journey from the head to the heart; and it is an even longer journey from the heart to the hands.”*

Many of us often feel badly about what climate change is doing to our world. We may even make the journey from head to heart. But then we often seem to get stuck. We have difficulty making the journey from our feelings about climate change to doing something about it.

The psychiatrist R.D. Laing described the problem on the journey from heart to hands this way. .

*“The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.”*

Albert Einstein wrestled with this same problem. Here is his take on why we fail to “think and do” and make the journey

*“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”*

So what are the road blocks on our journey from heart to hands? There seem to be two of them: the first road blocks are on the personal level and the second are on the systems level.

**The Personal level** Most of us are very busy raising families, holding down a job, sometimes more than one, running businesses, caring for elderly parents, struggling with our own health problems, volunteering in the community. It is often very difficult to take on more commitments.

In addition, climate change is so complex that we often don't have any idea about how to deal with it. So we do what we know we can do and hope for the best.

## The Systems Level.

We must revisit the first part of the journey—from head to heart. We live in a world of specializations. Thus, many of us tend to think of the damage to earth as an environmental problem. But this is our optical delusion of our consciousness. We've locked ourselves into Einstein's prison.

The cause of the “environmental problem” is the underlying systems that we have created. They are attacking and raping Earth. All our systems, in one way or another and to varying degrees, are complicit: the economic, political, social, legal, educational, environmental, and religious systems and institutions. They are all shoring up the existing systems and, most of the time, not holding these systems accountable.

So what to do?

We begin by realizing the scope of the problem. It is a global problem that is causing irreversible transformations in all aspects of our lives and in our civilization. To quote our children and grandchildren, it is a “humungous problem”—something we have never dealt with before. But we can't deal with it on a global level because we don't live on a global level. We can only deal with it on a community level—and communities all over the world are trying to do this.

It is a “wicked problem”—a problem that is difficult (or even sometimes impossible) to solve because of the interlocking systems influencing one another. It can only be dealt with on a trial and error basis. If something works we keep doing it. If it doesn't work we try something else.

It is a problem that will continue to create irreversible transformations in our life on Earth and the systems sustaining us. Though we must change the systems to make them compatible with a living Earth, we need to develop alternative systems and transitions. As Buckminster Fuller used to say, *“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something build a new model that makes the old model obsolete.”*

Finally, this struggle will continue for generations to come. We need approaches to help the next generations to deal with the problems they are inheriting from us.

So the journey from heart to hands is a difficult one. In our next chronicles we will talk about the struggle with climate change at the local level and the development of community climate change cultures.

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