

The Second Annual Feasta Lecture
Trinity College, Dublin
4th July, 2000.

FEASTA *review* 1

the civilising of global society

DAVID C. KORTEN

*We live at one of the most critical and exciting moments in all of human history.
We face both the necessity and the opportunity to reinvent society.*

It is a substantial privilege to present the annual FEASTA lecture and to be part of your effort here in Ireland to challenge the destructive forces of corporate globalisation and global capitalism. And I want to thank my good friend and colleague Richard Douthwaite from whose work I have learned so much for his role in arranging this presentation. Since you have already had lectures from Herman Daly, Richard Douthwaite, and Vandana Shiva, you are already fully familiar with the limits of corporate globalisation and the ideology of economic growth. So I'm going to concentrate on sharing some of my most current thinking on understanding the deeper roots of our crisis and the nature of the global citizen movement that is emerging to counter the destructive forces of global capitalism.

The citizen protests in Seattle the end of last year brought the World Trade Organisation meeting to a stand still and focused world attention on an increasingly visible tension between two extraordinarily powerful social forces.

One is the force of corporate globalisation driven by a once seemingly invincible alliance between the world's largest mega-corporations and its most powerful governments. In the eyes of its proponents, the integration of national economies into a seamless global economy is spurring economic growth through the expansion of trade to bring material prosperity to all the world, spread democracy, and create the financial resources and new technologies needed to protect the global environment. But, most of all, it is making many of these proponents very rich and powerful, which may have something to do with their enthusiasm.

The second force is the global democracy movement being advanced by a planetary citizen alliance known as global civil society. Before Seattle '99, this force found expression in the national democracy movements that played a critical role in the break-up of the Soviet empire and the fall of apartheid in South Africa—and in other great progressive social movements of our time, such as the civil rights, environmental, peace, and women's movements.

The corporate force is centrally planned by a well-organised and well-funded corporate élite and, PR rhetoric notwithstanding, the driving motive is a competitive drive for profits. The citizen force depends largely on voluntary energy, is self-organising, and is grounded in a deep value commitment to democracy, community, equity, and the web of planetary life. Although it has no identifiable organisational or institutional form, it is taking on a striking sense of coherence and acquiring the power to at least make the corporate élites very nervous. Its impetus comes from the awakening of millions of people of every nationality, race, and religious affiliation to the contradictions of corporate globalisation, which, contrary to its claims, is enriching the few at the expense of the many, replacing democracy with an élitist and authoritarian corporate rule, destroying the environment, and eroding the relationships of trust and caring that are the essential foundation of a civilised society—all in the mindless pursuit of money to further enrich those who already have more money than they could possibly use.

Let's look more closely at the story of the Seattle WTO protests that the corporate media pretty much missed. My home is on Bainbridge Island, a 35-minute ferry ride from Seattle, so Seattle is rather like my home town. The media portrayed the demonstrators as anti-trade. In fact the issue that brought 70,000 people from all around the world to Seattle's streets was democracy. They were protesting corporate rule-of which the WTO is a powerful symbol. The violent response of the police with plastic bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray dramatically confirmed the demonstrator's worst fears about the state of democracy in America and the openness of the WTO process to citizen input.

The Seattle protests also signalled a historic shift in progressive politics in America from the politics of identity and special interests to a politics of the whole. It gave expression to a grand convergence of social movements that is giving birth to the global democracy movement. Union workers, environmentalists, members of the faith community, feminists, gays, human rights and peace activists and many others acknowledged the reality that either we work together to build true

democracy and create a world that works for every person, for every living being, or we will have a world that works for no one.

The churches mobilised around the call of Jubilee 2000-debt forgiveness for low income countries-giving expression to a growing awareness among people of faith that the call for economic and social justice is a foundation of Christian teaching. Labour unions reached out in solidarity with all the world's workers in a call to guarantee basic rights and living wages for all working people everywhere in a realisation that, in a global economy, unless all workers have rights and living wages, none will have them. Environmentalists and union leaders joined in common alliance out of a realisation that there will be no jobs without a healthy environment. And that without secure jobs and labour rights, the environment will be destroyed in the struggle for survival.

Then there were the real heroes of Seattle, the youth who put their bodies on the line in the face of brutal police violence to bring the WTO meeting to a stand still. Tired of being manipulated and lied to by a system that is stealing their future, they spent months training one another in the principles and methods of non-violent direct

We are witness to the emergence of an epic struggle between corporate globalisation and popular democracy.

action, preparing themselves for a highly decentralised consensus-based mode of organising that modelled the radically democratic societies they intend to build. They proved that radical democracy can be highly effective, even under violent assault by the brutal forces of a police state.

Similar demonstrations against corporate globalisation of comparable or even larger scale have become common place around the world, with notable examples in Geneva, the U.K. France, Brazil, India, Thailand, and many others.

We are witness to the emergence of an epic struggle between corporate globalisation and popular democracy. Though it most certainly involves issues of class, it is more than a class struggle. It is a struggle between humanity and its institutions-between life and money-between two cultural belief systems that stand in stark and irreconcilable conflict.

Catholic theologian Thomas Berry traces the underlying problem to the false premises of an obsolete scientific story that has diminished our image of ourselves and deprived our lives of meaning. He makes the case that our survival as a species may depend as much as anything on discovering a new story that gives us a reason to live—a story that helps us ask one of the most basic of questions: why? It is the story of a living cosmos and the human search for our place of service to life's epic journey. The easiest way to demonstrate the significance of Berry's insight is to recite to you a version of the new story grounded in discoveries from the cutting edge of contemporary science that places our current dilemma in its larger context.

This story begins a very, very long time ago—perhaps as much as 15 billion years ago—when a new universe flared into being with a great flash—dispersing tiny energy particles, the stuff of creation, across the vastness of space. With the passing of time these particles self-organised into atoms, which swirled into great clouds that coalesced into galaxies of countless stars that grew, died, and were reborn as new stars, star systems, and planets. The cataclysmic energies unleashed by the births and deaths of billions of suns converted simple atoms into more complex atoms and melded atoms into even more complex molecules—each step opening new possibilities for the growth and evolution of the whole.

Each stage transcended the stage before in order, definition, and capacity as the drama of creation unfolded. It seemed that a great intelligence had embarked on a grand quest to know itself through the discovery and realisation of the possibilities of its being.

More than eleven billion years after the quest began there was an extraordinary breakthrough on a planet later to be known as Earth. Here the cosmos gave birth to the first living beings—microscopic in size, they were the simplest of single-celled bacteria. Inconsequential though they seemed, they embodied an enormous creative potential and, with time, created the building blocks of living knowledge that made possible the incredible accomplishments to follow. They discovered in turn the arts of fermentation, photosynthesis, and respiration fundamental to all life. They learned to exchange genetic material through their cell walls to share their discoveries with one another in a grand co-operative enterprise that created the planet's first global communication system—billions of years before the Internet. And they transformed and stabilised the chemical composition of the entire planet's atmosphere. As the fruits of life's learning multiplied, individual cells evolved to become more complex and diverse.

In due course, individual cells discovered the advantages of joining with one another in clusters to create complex multi-celled organisms -converting the matter of the planet into the splendid web of living plants and animal with capacities far beyond those of any individual cell. Those among the new creatures that found a niche in which they could at once sustain themselves and contribute to the life of the whole survived. Those that proved unable to find or create their niche of service expired. Continuously experimenting, interrelating, creating, building, the evolving web of life unfolded into a living tapestry of astonishing variety, beauty, awareness, and capacity for intelligent choice.

Then, a mere 2.6 million years ago, quite near the end of our 15 billion year story, there came the most extraordinary achievement of all, the creation of a being with a capacity, far beyond that of any creature that had come before, to reflect on its own consciousness, to experience with awe the beauty and mystery of creation, to articulate, communicate and share learning, to reshape the material world to its own ends, and to anticipate and intentionally choose its own future. It was the living spirit's most daring experiment and a stunning co-operative achievement.

Each of these creatures, humans they were called, was comprised of from 30 to 70 trillion individual living, self-regulating, self-reproducing cells. More than half the dry weight of each human consisted of the individual micro-organisms required to metabolise its food and create the vitamins essential to its survival. All together, it took more than a 100 trillion individual living entities joined in an exquisitely balanced co-operative union to create each of these extraordinary creatures.

These new beings-these humans-had such potential to contribute to the journey of the whole. Yet their freedom to choose their own destiny carried a risk. Failing to recognise and embrace their responsibility to the whole, they turned their extraordinary abilities to ends ultimately destructive of the whole of life, destroying in a mere 100 years much of the living natural capital it had taken billions of years of evolution to create.

Some attribute this tragedy to a genetic flaw that doomed humans to the blind pursuit of greed and violence. Yet the vast majority of humans were generous and caring. More compelling is the argument that the ideology of what humans called their Scientific Revolution stripped humans of their sense of meaning, called forth their greed and violence, and made generosity and caring seem somehow naive. This ideology taught that matter is the only reality and that the universe is best thought of as a giant clockwork set in motion at the beginning of creation and left to run down as the tension in its spring expires. It further taught that life is only an

accidental outcome of material complexity, consciousness an illusion. Though such beliefs defied logic, denied the human experience, stripped life of meaning, and were contrary to reality they became a foundation of the dominant Western culture.

Thomas Hobbes, a noted philosopher of the Scientific Revolution, elaborated on these flawed beliefs to articulate a theory of human behaviour and a moral philosophy that ultimately became the theoretical and philosophical foundation of humanity's dominant economic system. He argued that since life has no meaning and human behaviour is determined solely by appetites and aversions, good is merely that which gives oneself pleasure; evil that which brings pain. The rational person seeks a life of material indulgence unburdened by concern for others. These beliefs became the foundation of a cultural system known as modernism and an economic system known as capitalism.

Though there was much ado about a conflict between scientists and theologians, they actually arrived at a mutual accommodation in many of their core views. In an act revealing of human hubris, Western theologians had long before created their God in their own image, an elder male with a white beard who ruled a kingdom called heaven. This God was so powerful that by the estimate of the Western religions, he created the cosmos, the earth and all its living beings in a mere six days-presumably for the sole benefit of the humans he created on the sixth day. On the seventh day, his work thus done, he took a rest.

The main issue on which scientists and theologians were inclined to consequential differences centred on whether or not God returned after his vacation to tend to the needs of those humans he chose to favour. The theologians generally believed that he returned to keep a book on who, by his rules, was naughty or nice, reward the worthy with material abundance, and punish the unworthy with sickness and poverty. Some noted that by this characterisation God bore a striking resemblance to a mythical figure humans called Santa Claus.

Those with wealth and power were, by definition, worthy in God's eyes and the poor and powerless were unworthy. Thus it was that Western theology affirmed the righteousness of both materialism and political oppression and absolved humans of responsibility either for one another or for the earth. Furthermore, since humans were the end product of creation, not an instrument of its continued unfolding, it followed that what ever the deficiencies of the world as any individual might find it, it was to be accepted as God's will.

Some believed that God would return, in his own good time, to establish peace and justice for all. Others looked to the afterlife for perfection and considered their time on Earth as something akin to a short layover in a cheap hotel on their way to paradise. Either way it was in the hands of a god who resided apart in a far place.

Nowhere was the rejection of human responsibility for the lot of society greater than in the economic system humans called capitalism. One of capitalism's defining features was a consumer culture cultivated by saturating the media with an endlessly-repeated message that consumption of whatever product was advertised would bring meaning and love to the empty and lonely lives of the otherwise unworthy. When consumption inevitably failed to substitute for meaning, more consumption was prescribed as the solution.

Increasingly the creative energies of the species turned to building institutions dedicated to endlessly increasing consumption through a process called economic growth. Growth became such an obsession that no one seemed to care what was consumed. Nor did they seem to notice that the basic livelihood needs of the many went unmet while a fortunate few gorged themselves on luxuries. Indeed, a privileged minority became so obsessed with the futile attempt to fill their empty lives with stuff they failed to notice that the growth they so prized was destroying the life support system of the planet and the social fabric of the society, and the lives of billions of people.

Even more perverse was the role of what humans called money—a mysterious kind of sacred number that was created out of nothing by banks by loaning it into existence. Though most humans had little idea where money came from, they were socially conditioned to accept it in exchange for things of real value like their labour, food, land, and shelter. Since money was the ticket that allowed people to accumulate stuff, those who already had so much stuff they didn't know what to do with it turned their attention to accumulating sacred numbers called money that banks happily stored for them in computers. As this accumulation served no evident purpose, its practitioners turned it into a competitive game in which the winner was the one with the most financial assets. The top players were called billionaires. A well-known magazine called *Forbes* regularly published their current scores and rankings.

This game became life's purpose for those few who had the means to play. The most dedicated redesigned human institutions to allow them to achieve ever more inflated scores. Any human with extra cash was encouraged to join in by placing it in the hands of professional gamblers called money managers who traded

currencies, bonds, and corporate shares in a great cyberspace casino called a financial market. In the course of their play, the money managers moved trillions of dollars around the world at the speed of light, trashing the currencies and economies of hapless countries whose policies displeased them and the share prices of corporations that produced less profits than they expected. In the wake of their moves whole governments fell and hundreds of thousands lost their jobs.

These corporations were a frightfully perverse sort of legal entity designed to allow the accumulation of massive financial power with little or no accountability for the consequences of its use. Some corporations were served by the labour of hundreds of thousands of people and received

millions of dollars in subsidies from government. Yet the law stipulated that only shareholders were entitled to share in its profits. Employees were expected to leave their personal values at the door when they reported for work. Workers could be fired without notice or recourse. Whole communities were abandoned when a corporation found it more profitable to move its factories elsewhere.

To satisfy the money managers, corporations gave politicians huge sums of money in return for which the politicians voted corporations subsidies and special privileges. Tiring of the inconvenience involved in doing deals with politicians one country at a time, the major players created something called the World Trade Organisation-or WTO. Here unelected trade representatives loyal to the corporate interest established international rules that obliged all countries to extend special rights and privileges to global corporations. Incredibly, the WTO could require any country to change its laws to conform to WTO rules, even though such action might be contrary to the interests and preferences of its own citizens. Invariably the rules of the WTO gave corporations ever-greater freedom to roam the world converting the living wealth of society and planet into money.

One of capitalism's defining features was a consumer culture cultivated by saturating the media with an endlessly-repeated message that consumption of whatever product was advertised would bring meaning and love to the empty and lonely lives of the otherwise unworthy.

They turned the natural living capital of the earth into money by strip-mining forests, fisheries and mineral deposits, producing toxic chemicals and dumping hazardous wastes. But it isn't just natural capital they placed at risk. They also turned human capital into money by employing workers under substandard working conditions that left them physically handicapped. They turned the social capital of society into money when they paid substandard wages that destroyed workers emotionally, leading to family and community breakdown and violence. They turned the living trust of public institutions into money by bribing politicians with campaign contributions to convert the taxes of working people into inflated corporate profits through public subsidies, bailouts and tax exemptions.

Then, as the year 2000 dawned, a remarkable thing happened. Millions of humans started waking up, as if from a deep trance, to the beauty, joy, and meaning of life. They began to reject consumerism and took to the streets by the hundreds of thousands demanding a restoration of democracy, an end to corporate rule, and respect for the needs of all people and other living things. The process of building a new politics and a new consciousness was set in motion. It was, however, yet a tiny spark of hope in comparison to the forces of corporate capitalism that were consuming the Earth.

There are indications that humans may be on the threshold of a new intellectual and social maturity as new scientific findings continue to demonstrate the fallacies of the old story and its underlying belief systems. Yet so far they still resist coming to terms with the social implications of their scientific understanding that matter exists only as a continuing dance of flowing energies, that creation is an ongoing self-organising process, that life is fundamentally a co-operative process, and that earth's successful species are those that learn to meet their own needs in ways that serve the larger web of life.

Perhaps with time they will come to grasp the deeper philosophical implications of these findings. For example that the material world is largely illusion, conscious intelligence is the ground from which all else is manifest, and humans are an instrument of creation's continued unfolding-not its end accomplishment. Though embodied in ancient human wisdom, humans largely dismiss these and other truths as superstition. Perhaps their rediscovery will bring them a renewed sense of life's profound meaning, inspire a search for their own place in service to life's incredible journey, and lead them to transform their values and institutions in ways that unleash potentials within their being beyond their current imagining.

This story, of course, is our story, the choices are our choices. The challenge before us is to transform a global society dedicated to the love of money into a global society dedicated to the love of life and the continuing exploration of its possibilities.

To help us better understand the nature of this challenge, I want to establish a framework that may help us understand the ideal of a civil society and the larger possibilities of the global democracy movement. This framework divides society into three primary spheres of collective life: polity, economy, and culture.

THREE SPHERES OF COLLECTIVE LIFE		
SPHERE	FUNCTION	POWER
POLITY	set and enforce rules governing relationships between members of society	threat: monopoly of coercive police and military power
ECONOMY	produce and exchange valued goods and services	exclusionary: control over access to means of living
CULTURE	define values, symbols, and beliefs that provide meaning and identity	normative: determine what is valued and legitimate

* Polity is the sphere in which rules are formalised and enforced regarding the rights and obligations that govern relationships among members of the society. It holds the threat power inherent in its monopoly over police and military power.

* Economy is the sphere that organises the production and exchange of valued goods and services. It holds the exclusionary power inherent in the ability to control access to the means of living, as well as to material luxuries.

* Culture is the sphere in which the society defines the values, symbols, and beliefs that are its sources of meaning and identity. It holds the normative power to determine what is valued and to legitimate institutions and the uses of the power resources of polity and economy. Though cultural power may seem weak compared to the powers of coercion and exclusion, it is ultimately the decisive power in any society, as it is the foundation on which all else rests, including the powers vested in the formal institutions of the polity and the economy.

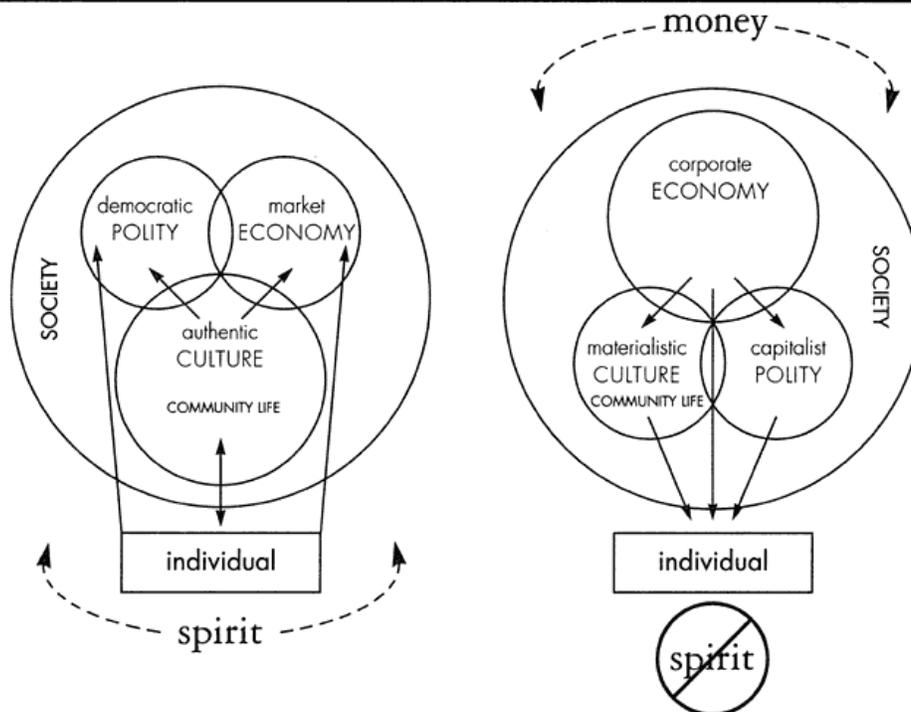
To complete our framework setting, let's turn to the question: What is the meaning of the term "civil society"? Is it simply another term for the institutions of the nongovernmental, non-profit sector as implied by its customary use? Or is it something more? Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, in their classic study *Civil Society and Political Theory* trace the idea of a civil society back to ancient Greece and Aristotle's concept of a *politike koinonia* or political community, later translated into Latin as *societas civilis*, or a civil society. For Aristotle the civil society is an ethical-political community of free and equal citizens who by mutual consent agree to live under a system of law that expresses the norms and values they share. The law thus becomes a codification of the values and practices of the shared culture and is largely self-enforcing. The requirement for coercive intervention by the state to maintain order is minimised because the necessary coherence of society is achieved primarily through self-organising processes that maximise the freedom of the individual in return for voluntary self-restraint that flows from a sense of shared values and civic responsibility.

The common contemporary practice of treating civil society as synonymous with all the varied organisations that are both non-governmental and non-profit-essentially the residual institutional space not occupied by the institutions of government and business-captures nothing of the more profound idealism embodied in the classical Aristotelian concept of a civil society. I think it also significant that our use of the term civil society is most often evoked by groups and individuals engaged in a struggle to reclaim social spaces for democratic engagement by free and equal citizens. This suggests we might properly use the term civil society in two ways. The first is to refer to a society that has achieved the ideal of democratic civility. The second is to refer to those elements of a society that are actively engaged in expanding the social spaces in which the practice of democratic civility is both practised and valued as a step toward the creation of a civil society in the larger sense.

Now let's put the pieces of this puzzle together to see more clearly how the ideal of a civil society contrasts with the existing global capitalist economy. This schematic

representation of a civil society, which is adapted from a book on Shaping Globalisation by my Philippine colleague Nicanor Perlas, incorporates the underlying premise of the cosmic story I shared with you earlier that all being is a manifestation of a spiritual energy or intelligence. I realise that there will surely be some among you who find this premise in conflict with your own belief system. I honour that and ask only that you consider with me the ways in which our views of society and human possibilities may ultimately depend on our spiritual beliefs. One of the tragedies of our time is that we rarely discuss such issues with one another, even in private, and thus rarely subject our deepest beliefs to critical examination.

SOCIETY: CIVIL OR CAPITALIST ?



inspired by Nicanor Perlas, Shaping Globalization.

As a Hobbesian denial of the existence of spirit leads logically to a rejection of individual responsibility for anything other than one's personal material gratification, a recognition of the spiritual foundation of all existence leads naturally to a profound and freely embraced sense of responsibility for the whole and the mindful personal engagement individual in community, political, and economic life that is the necessary foundation of a truly civil society.

An authentic culture is the product of the active community life of individuals who are in contact with the spiritual energy that expresses itself through them. The

shared values, symbols, and beliefs of an authentic culture are in turn the foundation on which the civil society's more formalised institutions of polity and economy are built. The life-affirming values of an authentic culture lead naturally to the creation of an authentically democratic polity based on a deep commitment to openness, active participation in political discourse, and to one person, one voice, one vote equality and the kind of consensus based decision making that our youth were practising in the streets of Seattle and in other equally sophisticated protest actions around the world. They also lead naturally to the creation of an authentic market economy comprised of local enterprises that provide productive and satisfying livelihoods for all, and vest in each individual a share in the ownership of the productive assets on which their livelihood depends. Such a society would be radically self-organising and predominantly co-operative in the manner of all healthy living systems, and would maximise the opportunity for each individual to develop and express their full creative potential in service to the life of the whole.

The contrast between a civil society so defined and our contemporary capitalist society is stark indeed. In the capitalist society denial of the spirit results in a self-aggrandising materialism that looks to money as the defining value. Global financial markets that value life only for its liquidation price become the ruling institution. The control of productive resources becomes consolidated in global mega-corporations answerable only to the managers of huge investment funds who in turn are answerable only for the financial returns produced on their portfolios. The wages of working people are suppressed to increase the returns to those who already command vast financial holdings. Economic affairs are centrally planned by the heads of corporations that command internal economies larger than those of most states. Through ownership of mass media, influence over school curricula, commercialisation of the arts, and mass advertising, corporations dominate the processes of cultural regeneration-reinforcing the values of materialism and consumerism that strengthen corporate legitimacy, lead us to accept corporate logos as the sources of our identity and meaning, and alienate us all from our sense of connection to both our inner spirit and to the web of planetary and community life.

Similarly, the concentration of financial power in the corporate-ruled economy combines with media control to allow corporate domination of the institutions of polity. The result is a one-dollar, one-vote democracy that concentrates control over the rule-making system in the hands of a wealthy élite and a persistent bias toward the passage of laws that favour yet further concentration of financial wealth at the expense of life. The excluded majority become increasingly alienated from

political participation-lose interest even in voting, and by default yield even more power to big money.

As dependence on money for access to the necessities of life and the sources of identity increases, individual attention comes to centre on making money at the expense of spiritual and community life. Spiritually impoverished and dependent on corporations for money and what it will buy, individuals face enormous pressure to embrace the values of the corporate culture. Ideals of equity are out the window and individual freedom becomes largely illusory as the majority of people find themselves deeper in debt and giving ever more of their life energies over to the imperatives of the money machine. Those for whom the corporate system finds no use are simply discarded like so much trash.

Because it is destructive of life and spirit, the capitalist economy must be considered a social pathology. Even its apparent capacity to create vast wealth is largely illusory, because though it is producing ever more sophisticated gadgets and diversions, it is destroying the life-support systems of the planet and the social fabric of society. It is therefore destroying our most important wealth. Its institutions function as cancers that forget they are part of a larger whole and seek their own unlimited growth without regard to the consequences.

It is a powerful testimony to the reality and power of humanity's spiritual nature that millions of people all around the world are waking up from the cultural trance into which they have been lulled by capitalism's relentless siren song of material indulgence. Their resistance is not confined to street protests. They are also engaged proactively in creating civil alternatives, protecting nature, democratising the polity, rebuilding local market economies, and applying the values of civility in their own organisations. The resulting enclaves of civility are both expanding and melding. We call it globalising civil society, but we could as well call it the civilising of global society. Either way it is an extraordinary and increasingly powerful self-organising, bottom-up process of cultural and institutional transformation only partially understood even by its leaders.

One key to understanding the nature and significance of what is happening is to realise that though it has its political dimension, what is becoming manifest is predominantly a cultural movement that draws its increasingly powerful energy from a deep, yet still largely unrecognised global-scale culture shift toward the values of an authentic or integral culture. This values shift is creating the cultural foundations of a truly civil society.

Paul Ray, a values researcher tracing cultural change in the United States provides a compelling framework for documenting and understanding this shift, which of course is happening not only in the United States, but as well all around the world. Ray identifies three major cultural groupings.

CULTURE SHIFT IN AMERICA		
GROUP	VALUES	ADULT AMERICANS
CULTURAL CREATIVES	family, community, environment and feminism, diversity, personal growth and spiritual development	50 million (26%) and growing rapidly
MODERNS	materialism, consumerism, and the drive to acquire money and property	93 million (48%) and steady
TRADITIONALS	traditional ways of life and gender roles, religious fundamentalism	48 million (25%) and declining rapidly

* The Modernists—who are still the largest cultural group in America—actively prize materialism and the drive to acquire money and property. They tend to spend beyond their means, take a cynical view of idealism and caring relations, and value winners. Their numbers are relatively stable.

* The Traditionals want to return to traditional ways of life and traditional gender roles. They tend toward religious conservatism and fundamentalism. They also believe in helping others, volunteering, creating and maintaining caring relationships, and working to create a better society. Their numbers are in rapid decline.

* The third group—Ray calls them the Cultural Creatives—is a product of the reaction against modernism's lack of authenticity. Its members are distinguished by the embrace of the values of an integral culture that honours life in all its dimensions, both in their inner spiritual experience and in their outward commitment to family, community, the environment, internationalism and

feminism. They have a well-developed social consciousness and are generally optimistic about the possibilities of humankind. They are interested in alternative health-care practices, personal growth and spiritual development, and they are careful, thoughtful consumers.

Most significant in terms of our present discussion, as Ray documents in his forthcoming book, *The Cultural Creatives*, most Cultural Creatives are activists. The typical Cultural Creative is likely to be involved in several groups working for social change. Furthermore, most social change initiatives in the United States, including those involved in the Seattle protests, are headed by Cultural Creatives. Cultural Creatives are the vanguard of the global democracy movement-and their numbers are growing fast. Now 50 million in number in America alone, they are 26% of the adult American population. As recently as the early 60s they were less than 5%.

Politically and socially active, the Cultural Creatives are crafting a new ecological and spiritual world view, a new literature of social concerns and a new problem agenda for humanity. At the same time they are pioneering psychological development techniques, restoring the centrality of spiritual practice to daily living, and elevating the importance of the feminine-all building blocks of a civil society.

Yet Cultural Creatives remain invisible to the corporate media, which is dominated by modernist values. And their values are unrepresented by a political system that is still defined by the struggles between moderns and traditionals. Unaware of their own numbers and potential power, most Cultural Creatives feel culturally isolated, out of step with the mainstream, and politically disempowered. To actualise their true potential as a force for change, they must first become visible to one another and to the larger society. For this reason, perhaps the most important consequence of the Seattle WTO protests was the message it sent to Cultural Creatives everywhere in the world that they are not alone in their discomfort with the cultural, economic and political forces of modernism and corporate globalisation and their belief in the possibility of creating a better world for all-even in America, the world centre of materialism and corporate arrogance. Most cultural creatives I know found it to be a powerfully energising moment.

A variety of international surveys reveal that the patterns identified in America by Ray are part of a generalised global trend toward an embrace of the values of an authentic or integral culture. The pattern includes a loss of confidence in hierarchical institutions-including those of government, business, and religion-and a growing trust in their inner sense of the appropriate. Interest in economic gain is

decreasing, while desire for meaningful work and interest in discovering personal meaning and purpose in life is increasing.

Beyond the struggle to resist the destruction being wrought by the global corporate juggernaut, the civilising citizen movements are awakening to two critical priorities. One is to articulate and demonstrate alternatives to corporate globalisation in order to counter the fatalistic modernist mantra that "There is no alternative." The second is to recognise that the movement's greatest strength is cultural power and to devote serious attention to helping Cultural Creatives recognise that they are part of a large and increasingly powerful cultural group, find one another, and strengthen the alliances that are linking them into a global mega-movement. The greater the visibility of this new cultural formation the greater its power and the more rapidly disaffected moderns and traditionalists will be drawn to its ranks.

A great deal of my own energy is going into an organisation called The Positive Futures Network, publisher of YES! A Journal of Positive Futures, which is working on both of these agendas by telling the stories of those who are working for the deep changes required to create a world that works for all and by providing people with the information resources they need to connect with one another and to link the movement's many elements. It just happens that I've brought some sample copies of YES!, along with subscription forms for those who are interested. Or check it out at yesmagazine.org on the web.

Overall, the goal of claiming the cultural mainstream may be more nearly within the reach of the civil society movements than even the most optimistic of us may imagine. Once this happens, transformation of the institutions of polity and economy to complete the civilising of society will follow.

I believe we live at one of the most critical and exciting moments in all of human history. The ability to choose is one of the defining characteristics of life. As a species we find ourselves confronted with a profound choice-to take the step to a new level of understanding and function in service to the whole of life or to risk our own extinction. We face both the necessity and the opportunity to reinvent human society. I find the creative possibilities incredibly exciting. Though the optimistic thrust of my comments may suggest I consider the outcome to be foreordained, that is far from the actual case. I am in fact only presenting what I consider to be possibilities to sharpen our understanding of the options. The great struggle between humanity and its institutions-between a culture of life and a culture of money-is far from resolved. But let us hope that Aristotle's dream of a

truly civil society—a dream shared by countless millions throughout human history—is an idea whose time has finally come. It's in our hands.



Biographical Sketch :



David C. Korten holds MBA and PhD degrees from Stanford Business School and taught for five years at Harvard Business School before joining the Harvard Institute for International development to head a Ford Foundation project to strengthen national family planning programmes. He moved to Southeast Asia in the late 1970s, working first for the Ford Foundation and then as a regional advisor on development management to USAID. Eventually, disillusioned with the official aid system, he spend the last five years of his fifteen in Asia working with NGOs identifying why

development was failing.

*He came to realise that the deepening poverty, growing inequality, environmental devastation, and social disintegration he was observing in Asia were also being experienced in nearly every country in the world. Moreover, the United States was actively promoting policies that made matters worse. For the world to survive, the United States must change, and he returned to the US in 1992 to help bring that change about. He has since written two highly influential books, *When Corporations Rule the World* (1995) and *The Post Corporate World: Life After Capitalism* (1999).*

=====

This article is from the first Feasta Review, a 204-page large format book. Copies of the book are available for £15 from [Green Books](#).