



TRAIAN ALEXANDRU FILIP

# WE MUST DO WHAT WE CAN

BY DIANE HARVEY

John Kaminski's essay "What Do We Do?" states our collective predicament succinctly, comprehensively, and with poignant accuracy. He asks all the right questions, and he asks them in the right way. Since creative thinking can only arise from the way in which questions are framed in the first place, this is half the battle. Ultimately, the very answers we seek are hidden away inside the quality of the questions we ask. The problem is that few people ask the right questions: the questions based on the premise that everyone and everything matters. And fewer still burrow into difficult questions until the concealed inward layer where answers exist finally becomes apparent. While none of us has all the answers, these great questions belong to everyone, and deserve our best consideration. And although one person can only offer the partial and limited conclusions of individual character and experience, there is no other place to begin.

My understanding of what we can do is that we must do what we can. And we don't know what we can do until we try. It's no use quailing at our inadequacy to the task of reinventing civilization. Imperfections are no excuse in the face of dire necessity. Only through each of us offering what we know and can do, will we ever understand the great potential inherent in what we know and can do together.

I believe we can do any number of things. We can begin by accepting the terrible facts about the way things are right now. By that I don't mean to agree with any of it, but rather, to accept once and for all that we really do live in maddening times and to go on from there. In order to do this honestly we dearly need those whose gift is to tell us the truth about the worst. Without the gift of knowing the worst, we can't even begin to make our peace with the facts.

Then we can discover how to sweeten every aspect of what we have left. Most of us have a tendency to sink into despair, or to become more or less permanently angry about we see. The first big battle then is often learning how to maintain a reasonable equanimity in the face of ever-increasing insanity. Negative emotional reaction to rising lunacy is no help, although most of us experience some degree of this or another. It's far more useful to tune to the frequency of emotional non-resistance employing the mind for understanding and problem solving. And while heart-felt feelings of any kind are a pure and useful substance for understanding, automatic emotional reactions are merely the waste products of the solar plexus. Feelings of the heart exist quite apart from the habitual emotions that serve only to disguise them. We can't hear the guiding voice of the heart whenever we are slaves to our own emotions — or anyone else's.

Intensifying self-awareness, and retraining habitual reactions to personal and world suffering is always a good place to start and to come back to on a regular basis. Working on external problems takes our focus away from ourselves, and that is something most of us experience as a welcome relief. Except that the conditioned energy we bring to any work will characterize every bit of it including whatever subconscious programming we brought along for the ride. As always, transformation of the world still begins at home.

We can also keep in mind and heart the inestimable value of all individuals who are able to care about the whole. Those who can see through the general craziness are in short supply at the moment, relatively speaking. Whoever perceives the systematic madness carries a tremendous burden of aware-

ness, during the most tumultuous and difficult moment in human history. This is quite a heavy load to bear up under. For some, there is an attending depth of loneliness and isolation from society that is the exact opposite of what most people naturally want. Few human beings relish being outcasts and objects of ridicule in the eyes of those they are trying to help. It is vital to realize that depth perception and sincere caring adds immense value to life, regardless of what the majority thinks or says, and irrespective of what happens outwardly in the world.

From the realization of personal value and personal power, talents and creativity can be set loose in the direction of problem solving. The proven ability to find and act on solutions, of any size and in any area of our lives, generates willpower and a healthy sense of purpose. And it's not a big leap from having will and a sense of purpose to realizing that we can use it to help create a new world from the ashes of this one.

Whoever wishes it already has gifts and talents to offer toward the regeneration of life. This is where practical changes arise first: as revelations within our own minds and hearts. Little by little, as each of us finds a niche where we can fit our talents into this world, change happens. It's true that in our lifetimes we may not see the results on a scale we would want. But the greatest lesson of all is to give our best without expectation of reward, including the reward of seeing the kind of change we hope to see in our own lifetimes.

We know there is no aspect of our national life that does not need transformation. Each of us represents a microcosm of this larger problem. This also means that each of us is a small piece of the world already in our power to refashion and regenerate. The sole antidote to widespread corruption is regeneration. We begin with ourselves and move out from there into the world and then back again, in an ever-changing polarity of focus. The world can only grow wiser as we do: no more and no less.

And even now, despite the darkness and the suffocating craziness all around us, strong green shoots are growing up through cracks in the walls. Everywhere we look closely enough an evolutionary revolution can be found in the very midst of the chaos. Examples are ubiquitous and worth nourishing wherever they are sprouting up. Life is reborn each time a single human being abandons agreement with the gruesome corporate model of survival. Whenever factory food is renounced in favor of supporting local organic farming, a new and viable relationship to earth takes root. Every time one person changes habitual negative reactions to existence, the face of humanity has been changed, however modestly. Each instance of telling the truth about our civilization in a way that other people can hear makes a small dent in the paradigm of denial. Whenever and wherever anyone is at work on changing the political system the revolution is already well underway then and there. And we know that all these kinds of alterations are happening every day. We know that there are hundreds of thousands of people who are participating, in small or large ways, in changing the world one person at a time: the only way it has ever been done.

The redemption of our society on a grand scale may very well not occur anytime soon. Nevertheless, the new world is already being built, one person, one family, and one group at a time. There are innumerable small coterie of rational people working together in effective ways, already deeply immersed in regenerating one aspect of the world or another. There are groups dedicated to alternative politics, alternative agriculture, alternative energy and alternative everything else. Experimental models of a better way of life are quietly arising everywhere, scattered across the landscape, and for the most part unconnected in our minds. But they are there, and understanding just how many there are is heartening. The tendency to dismiss the world of working alternatives, because this world is not yet the prevailing one, overlooks the natural processes of evolution. The future inevitably shows up a little at a time. What is new and better always begins on a small scale, in relative obscurity, and in direct opposition to the prevailing winds.

Many of us agree there is a strong likelihood of widespread material catastrophe coming along one of these days. We believe this must probably occur before we will find room and opportunity to build a humane and self-sustaining social structure on any broad scale. Old consciousness embodying the old paradigm is crystallized, stubborn, powerful, popular, selfish and stupid as hell. It shows no signs of willing transformation, and such intransigence inevitably equates to eventual self-destruction. But even so, this need not result in our remaining passive: quite the contrary. We might expect new forms of life to be built for the most part on the ruins of the old ones. It wouldn't be the first time. And there will never be a better way of life for everyone if we don't develop specific alternatives ahead of time, and have a practical portfolio of blueprints to offer. First come the small-scale experimental models, finding viable new ways of relating to all forms of life. Only then, when we find out what really works will we be fully prepared to build a new country. There are many people working hard now for the sake of the future we all want to see. And without them, the ones who begin anew regardless of current conditions, we would have nothing at all — not now and not later.

The worst case scenario most of us can imagine is that we might actually have the power to destroy our own planet. We might prove collectively too ignorant to learn to live reasonably together and in harmony with our one-and-only environment. Yet even if that happens, no individual or group effort to live sanely in this universe was ever wasted. Energy is neither created nor destroyed: but it can always be transformed, and in this is the beauty of our existence. Each of us is going to leave this physical body behind when we go anyway, no matter what. The meaning of our lives here is found entirely in how we spend them. Planting seeds for the future in the nooks and crannies of a dysfunctional and dying civilization takes immense courage, creativity and dedication. No matter what happens next, we can either give our utmost, despite all opposition, or we will find that we have not lived at all. And spending our days in the strenuous effort to create the prototypes of a better world, one small incremental step at a time, in the face of tremendous obstacles, is a glorious thing to do. We must do what we can, because no matter what happens next, doing what we can is the right and beautiful and wise way to live.

Diane Harvey's article appears on [merak@sedona.net](mailto:merak@sedona.net).

## I WISH MY NAME WAS MILLIE

I wish my name was Millie  
I know it may be silly  
But I wish it was because it's not  
Instead my name is Lily.

—LILY DEUFEL (AGE 8)

(By the way I don't wish that, it's just a poem!)

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