

## A more compelling game

*(The CobaltSaffron team has selected the following letter, shortened and edited for this newsletter, as an appropriate follow-up to last month's What's at Stake? The letter, previously published elsewhere, was originally written in response to questions about environmental issues, but in the context of this newsletter, the ideas of community and resolution are meant to include a larger spectrum, as referred to in last month's issue.)*

As with any loosely assembled community with related intentions, there is a huge amount of energy waste; this itself a metaphor for the thing environmentalists hope and intend to change. Much of this comes from inefficiency in concept and construction between the underlying intentions and viable result.

Efficiency in design between perception (comprehension of data) and action (precision of applied force) is largely about eliminating friction and dysfunctional opposition. The most common form is the addiction people have to the experience of war. That is, most people prefer the sensation of purpose that comes from having an enemy and a cause to actual resolution and progress. Transcending the dichotomy, or getting off the two dimensional platform, necessitates creative brilliance in presenting the variables such that the opposing energies and their representatives simultaneously perceive a greater gain in a common struggle. The struggle part is essential, as no one wants to lose their identifying purpose and investment in its structure, which is dependent upon the continued well-being of the enemy. Consequently, the deeper work is about imagining, designing and convincing others of a better game, one that is simply more fun to play. Whatever that game is, it has to have enough resistance to make it challenging; a vague notion of "harmony" is interesting to no one. And what is to be gained from playing it has to be clear and appeal to existing values.

As I've stated before, the current paradigm used by environmentalists in general, and the climate-is-changing-because-of-us community specifically, is most often based on the absurd assumption that accurate conveyance of information will wake up the conscience and corresponding intentions of others. This is simply unworkable. Imagination does not reach inevitability—the point at which it makes something happen—until there is the perceived need to do so now. The only way around that actuality is the perception of something as compelling as need. Self-gain, happiness, harmony, health or "what is right" doesn't work, as none of those are sufficiently compelling to activate a deeper source of imagination and its intuitive expression, causing real evolution. The game and goal, as currently articulated, does not motivate because it does not feed existing values, nor does it replace those with more compelling ones.

So, there are three existing dimensions to play this out within. One, some kind of program to guide the values of the ignorant up to a level at which they can experience motivation, but this is almost impossible, because the current dynamic is exactly what they actually want; in general, this is what is already in place. Two, exploit the existing power infrastructure by infiltrating it with goodies to sell (“You’ll get a tax reimbursement for every mile you don’t drive”), thereby imposing positive authority, which will only work up to a point (negative authority won’t work at all). Or three, increase the aspect of perceivable need, either by actuality, as in working to *accelerate* the actual problem so that it reaches a point of inevitability, or by connecting the idea of evolution toward resolution to existing values. In this last case, we’re talking about the essential problem in all dualism, internal and external—you want to be happy and you don’t; men and women; Palestinians and Israelis; Christians and Muslims, and on and on... Part of this can be done by isolating and convincing the collective conscience of worth, for example, the idea that one’s children will suffer more if you don’t do something now. But, historically and currently, this fails to ignite the imagination enough to warrant sufficient sacrifice. The implication there is grave, but there you go.

Which brings us to the edge of the unknown. Ultimately, this is THE subject for humanity, and also for each individual. How to design a relationship between conflict and imagination such that they both fulfill their purpose but do so within the actuality of evolution. (Conflict: natural resistance that gives birth to or cause for imagination; imagination: resolution so as to get to something superior.) That is, how to connect want to need, and get out of the circle of neurotically imposed problems that serve no real purpose?

*“how to get out of the circle of neurotically imposed problems that serve no real purpose?”*

In the case of the worldwide blatant annihilation of natural resources, including the more obscure and less immediately recognizable impact on climate change, there is in place a purposeful ignorance, which I think is largely motivated by the desire for a collective challenge that would subsume existing dichotomies—that things become so bad that we have to really change the existing dynamic. In other words, the only way two opposing sides can become one side is to have a common enemy that is better than the existing one. The same paradigm is used, but is transposed onto a larger platform. Short of that, there has been no historical group transcendence or transformation of opposition or of imposed ignorance.

The thing is, how then to assemble existing dispersed energies and opposing values such that they attend the same event with the same intentions? You could look at this like crowds assembled in a stadium, and I think you have to think like this, because a small portion of the population is not going to make much happen in terms of serious changes in our relationship with nature. As a friend of mine once pointed out, which events consistently fill stadiums? Sports, music and religion. Or, more specifically, elite representatives that perform compelling theater within those frames.

Perceived entertainment value gathers more resources than anything else, internally and externally. This was the original idea and function of art. As of now, the entire process surrounding solutions to climate change or water and carbon abuse has been pathetically dry and uninspiring. The focus is way too heavy on the work and “be careful” side. I’m not talking about U2 giving a concert for the environment, where the money

will be distributed to those who want to fund another war; somehow the actual engagement of the subject has to compel, has to be more fun than not to do so.

With a vague sense of some kind of greater harmony or peace at the end of negotiations and consequent lifestyle alterations—in any arena, including Tibet vs. China, man vs. woman, or environmentalists vs. arrogant consumers—there simply lacks enough for the imagination to click in and work toward realization. Perhaps there is a chance that collective effort can assemble into a linear line toward resolution, but that will necessitate both a viable, attractive goal and a compelling process toward it. For now, the problem is more interesting than the solution.

Darrell Calkins

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## Comments

Thank you for your comments about the previous issue of CobaltSaffron. Excerpts from a few we received:

“Wow!!!! This newsletter is one of the most inspirational and insightful things I’ve ever read. It should go out to every human being on the planet. It is brilliant. Also, to me, it’s written on a “simpler,” more digestible level—any adolescent can understand. I just can’t get over it...sorry; again, it is brilliant on so many different layers...”  
S.S., *California*.

“I read the latest newsletter last night in bed. It was very dark and quiet ... the streets outside were quiet, the sky above was quiet. I enjoyed and appreciated the interview very, very much. That last remark stopped me in my tracks: "And there is a clock ticking away somewhere." I know you are accused of operating with a great deal of paradox, but, frankly, it's never been an issue for me. Maybe I'm dense, but I do see the paradoxes—they just don't bother me. In fact, I appreciate them. For me, "what you see is what you get" could not be more boring.”  
D.P., *California*.

“I feel totally unable to express what service these newsletters provide me, but I can say that it does change the way I breathe, the way I see and the way I think, and it encourages and supports me to try a new way of being. These moving condensed pieces of art provide a service beyond any expectation if only one is willing to read them with a bit of care as pearls just born in front of your eyes. It is essential for me to stop and say thank you Darrell and everybody who contributes and supports this project.”  
R.R., *England*.

“I just reread your magnificent #13 and the comments (I like reading and re-reading your newsletters on weekend early quiet mornings, leisurely) and was intrigued especially by S.L., Belgium’s comment re: #11 about masters and using those qualities in order see them in others. His comment compelled me to re-read and re-appreciate your #11, A True Master, purity, plain authenticity. So thank you Darrell and thank you S.L.”  
J.J., *California*.

**Upcoming event:**

RETREAT TO THE SOURCE

23 - 30 April 2006, Gascony - France

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