Sustainability Essentials: Take 7

LEADING TO LEARN:
TOPPING THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

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In their 2009 book "*Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*", psychologists Kegan and Lahey present an "updated view of age and mental complexity". Where previously just two levels of mental complexity had conventionally been recognized — in the socialized mind and the self-authoring mind — now, they argue, there is neurological evidence of a third and higher state of mental complexity. This they call the self-transforming mind, which "leads to learn".

By way of introducing their case for the uppermost level of mental complexity, Kegan and Lahey opine:

> When we experience the world as 'too complex' we are not just experiencing the complexity of the world. We are experiencing a mismatch between the world's complexity *and our own at this moment*.

Any reader who has struggled through the entirety of the *Sustainability Concepts Paper*, will know the feeling. Kegan and Lahey go on to state the obvious:

> There are only two logical ways to mend this mismatch — reduce the world's complexity or increase our own. The first isn't going to happen. The second has long seemed an impossibility in adulthood.

The yet higher mental complexity of the self-transforming mind, of course, is the actuality that breaks through the supposed barrier of the "impossibility". S/he who has graduated to cultivate somehow a self-transforming mind — beyond the lowest mental complexity of the socialized mind, which has learned to follow, and beyond then the self-authoring mind of the leader, who has learned to lead — becomes a meta-leader, who leads to learn (amongst other talents).

The self-transforming mind (again, in the words of Kegan and Lahey)

> is wary about any one stance, analysis, or agenda

> is mindful that, powerful though a given design might be, this design almost inevitably leaves something out

> is aware that it lives in time and that the world is in motion, and what might

have made sense today may not make as much sense tomorrow.

Given this wariness of any one stance, analysis, or agenda, should we not be most wary of Sustainability itself, as some "grand design" for everything?

There is something troubling here. We have wrestled our way through the dense and expansive tangle of complexity about Sustainability, to tabulate 15 line items in the *Concepts Paper* (*Taking Stock: The 1-15 Template*), there to suggest these be *followed* in moving matters away from unsustainability: as if a *routine* so perfectly made for the socialized mind — which we then rank as bottom-most in any personal aspirations an individual might have to better herself or himself. Is there a lack of humility about the supposed inspiration and creativity of the self-transforming mind? Or does it contain self-redemption within it, at its core, in its capacity to strike down the edifice it may so painstakingly and lovingly have built up?

> Every so often, thou shalt abandon any one of the line items in the template of Sustainability and replace it with something other!

Should this *Take* itself come with just such an invocation?