



# **REGENERATIVE LEADERSHIP**

The DNA of life-affirming  
21st century organizations

**GILES HUTCHINS & LAURA STORM**

## Praise for *Regenerative Leadership*

“This is the must read book of 2019. I couldn’t put it down.  
The clarity, inspiration, synergy and wisdom of this book is **breath-taking**”

DR LYNNE SEDGMORE CBE,  
FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF 157 GROUP, CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

“The world is changing fast and organizations are not keeping up with the pace of transformation. **This book invites leaders to catalyze the necessary regeneration** to not just catch up, but to lead the world into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

CHRISTIANA FIGUERES, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY UNFCCC 2010-2016

“Giles and Laura bring their vast experience and deep wisdom to create an **evolutionary blueprint for a sustainable future** for business, people and the planet”

RICHARD BARRETT, PRESIDENT OF THE BARRETT ACADEMY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN VALUES

“**This book is full of wisdom and determination!** A book that will inspire leaders to pave the way towards practices in harmony with our inner nature and the ecosystems we depend on. **Just what we need to succeed in the 21st Century.**”

TIM FLANNERY, PALEONTOLOGIST, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND CONSERVATIONIST

“**Storm and Hutchins confront the challenge of redesigning the world to deliver a sustainable future** with vision, energy, and creativity.”

DAN ESTY, ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER & POLICYMAKER, AUTHOR OF BEST-SELLING GREEN TO GOLD

“A **must read** for anyone who wants to shape a regenerative organization.”

JEAN-CLAUDE PIERRE, CEO SCOTT BADER

“Seeking inspiration in the natural world, the principles in *Regenerative Leadership* provide a **framework for a more inspired path forward in business and life.**”

RYAN GELLERT, CEO EMEA PATAGONIA

“Hutchins’ and Storm’s *Regenerative Leadership* **shines a bright light on one of the most critical, and least understood capacities required of anyone and any institution seeking to work regeneratively** – understanding and living into the three-fold dynamics of what the book calls the DNA of regenerative leadership.”

PAMELA MANG, CO-FOUNDER OF REGENESIS AND CO-AUTHOR OF *REGENERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN*.

“Hutchins and Storm demonstrate that they are clearly at the forefront of a new leadership paradigm that maps an emerging model for sustainable organization in any institution that wishes to thrive.”

KINGSLEY L. DENNIS, AUTHOR OF *THE SACRED REVIVAL – MAGIC, MIND & MEANING IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE*

“This book succinctly brings together the importance business leaders have in redefining and supporting their organizations and communities to do more good.”

NIGEL STANSFIELD, PRESIDENT OF INTERFACE EAAA

“Hope is what Giles and Laura offer, exploring the wisdom, rules, and models for thinking, being, and doing that the natural world offers us. Business leaders will enjoy this mind-expanding journey.”

ANDREW WINSTON,  
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIST, AUTHOR OF *THE BIG PIVOT* AND CO-AUTHOR OF *GREEN TO GOLD*

Laura Storm and Giles Hutchins delineate how an economic and social transformation is brewing, with a new regenerative paradigm at its heart. If this is our future, we could avert the worst of the ecological crisis, and live happier more connected lives as well.”

TRISTRAM STUART, FOUNDER FEEDBACK.ORG & TOAST ALE

Storm and Hutchins share their deep passion and expertise to show you how to ignite shared purpose and break down the silos of information and trust that are stopping you and your people from making their greatest impact on the world. Future generations will thank you!”

DR. TAMSIN WOOLLEY-BARKER,  
PRINCIPAL AND FOUNDER, TEEM INNOVATION GROUP AND AUTHOR OF *TEEMING*



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The cover features three overlapping watercolor circles: a large light blue one in the center, a smaller yellow and orange one at the top right, and a teal one at the bottom right. The text is centered within the blue circle.

# **REGENERATIVE LEADERSHIP**

The DNA of life-affirming  
21<sup>st</sup> century organizations

**GILES HUTCHINS  
& LAURA STORM**



## **This is our Reason for Writing this Book**

As we complete this book, Laura has a baby underway and between us we have 3 young daughters under the age of 7 – the question constantly ringing in our ears is: What world are we passing on to them? How could we do all in our power to help inspire new ways that allow them to be whole human beings on a planet where ecosystems thrive again?

We have to steer this ship in a new direction as the way it's heading is catastrophic. That's the reason for writing this book: Helping leaders navigate out of our current predicament by offering a new regenerative leadership approach where organizations flourish, ecosystems thrive and people come alive.

**This book is dedicated to our children and our children's children. Not just Lilly-Belle, Hazel, Roxie and the new baby on its way; all children of this magnificent planet of ours, and all life on Earth.**







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# Introduction:

## Welcome to the Journey of a Lifetime

As we write this Introduction millions of school kids and students are protesting, striking from school every Friday, and demanding adults take action to address climate change. The School Strike for Climate movement was started by a 16-year old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg, so concerned by the state of the planet she had to do something. So instead of going to school after the summer holiday in 2018, she sat down in front of the Parliament buildings in Stockholm. As the days went by more and more students joined her and in January 2019 she was invited to address the world leaders at the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Here she said in a speech addressing world leaders:

*“We are now at a time in history where everyone with any insight of the climate crisis that threatens our civilization and the entire biosphere must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be. We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint is, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform the bigger your responsibility. Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don’t want your hope, I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act, I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire, because it is.”*

On March 15, 2019 the climate strikes happened in over 2000 cities across 123 countries gathering millions of people. And Greta has now been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

There is no doubt. We are living in a time marked by great upheaval and change, where the breakdown of global systems has become impossible to ignore. Leaders – both political and business – are being forced to cope with rising challenges: resource scarcity; high levels of stress in the work place; unpredictable, frequent and disruptive innovations; rampant social inequality; constant competition for top talent; increasing volatility and changing stakeholder expectations; rapid digitization and globalization; mass migrations and refugee populations; fragile supply chains; mounting social tensions; political extremism; endemic violence; Brexit; Trump; and rising sovereign and consumer debt levels the world over.

You get the picture.

On top of all this, biodiversity is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the climate of our planet is changing faster than expected, putting additional critical pressure on all our systems.

“The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.”

Sir Robert Watson, IPBES Chair

We have created production systems that are based on a linear, take-make-waste approach focused on immediacy and dehumanization. We have created financial systems based on short-term profit maximization that ignore life and debase human integrity. Our organizational systems are dominated by hyper-competition, power-and-control hierarchies, and rising stress. In our current environment, the few benefit at the expense of the many.

The old systems and structures of a post-industrial hyper-consumerist culture are slowly breaking down. The old ways cannot go on, and through this breakdown, we are witnessing pioneers all over the world birthing the conditions for a new way. These pioneers believe there is a better way – to live and do business. They are reconfiguring systems and structures and instilling new business practices that actually contribute to life on Earth rather than destroying it.

It may be easier to continue doing what you've always done, and it may seem sensible amid all this uncertainty and volatility to stick with what you are comfortable with. But in the long run it eats you up inside, weakens you and undermines your organization's vitality and its stakeholder ecosystem.

The real question you have to ask yourself is: How can you help a new way to break through amid these challenging times? How can you act as if we indeed are in a time of crisis and help design new thriving ways?

How could you become what we call a **Regenerative Leader**, who contributes to a future where organizations flourish, ecosystems thrive and people come alive?

“We are now entering an Age of Unreason, when the future in so many areas, is there to be shaped, by us and for us – a time when the only prediction that will hold true is that no prediction will hold true; a time therefore, for bold imaginings in private life as well as public, for thinking the unlikely and doing the unreasonable.”

Charles Handy, organizational culture specialist

Are you up for thinking the unlikely and embarking upon the unreasonable? Are you up for acting as an adult and realizing our collective house is on fire?

## About This Book

We – the authors, Giles Hutchins and Laura Storm – have worked in the fields of sustainability, leadership, climate policy, and executive coaching and consultancy for more than 40 years combined. We have been leaders in global organizations and have spent years gathering insights and best-practices from businesses across multiple fields and sectors.

Together we have created a DNA model of a new regenerative way of living and leading, where purpose, people, planet, and profit can thrive collectively.

We have collected pieces of the puzzle from multiple disciplines – from biology, psychology, sociology, economy, anthropology, neurology as well as methodologies such as permaculture, circular economics, biophilia, biomimicry, cradle to cradle, and much more.

We apply a variety of ideas and concepts drawn from theories and methodologies relevant to systemic transformation, some of which have been available for a while now, some which are more recent arrivals, some cutting-edge. While it is important to root these concepts in research, frameworks and theory, this book is first-and-foremost written to **inspire a new leadership paradigm**: New leadership practices, new business models, new ways of collaborating and creating value. It is aimed to stimulate, guide, and support the wave of *Regenerator* pioneers who are rising-up for action in myriad ways during this metamorphic moment we're living through.

This book is born from our passion to help pave a new regenerative way with you.

In the pages ahead we share with you a comprehensive approach to developing a new kind of regenerative leadership that allows you to create life-affirming futures wherever you are and whatever you lead: a team, a start-up, a mature business, an NGO, a multinational corporation, a city region, or even a country.

We share tried and tested tools, real-world business examples, personal practices, and a peppering of **insights from nature**, and **business examples**, also sign-posts to **Dive Deeper** if you wish to explore things in greater depth.

Look for these symbols:



Insights from Nature



Business Insights



Dive Deeper

## Who is This Book for?

*Regenerative Leadership* is intended for anyone who is interested in exploring and undertaking transformational change within our systems, organizations, and communities.

We invite board members, executives, line managers, intrapreneurs, change agents, practitioners, cultural creatives, politicians, media executives, designers, and entrepreneurs to rise up to what we are being called to create collectively: A new way where ecosystems thrive and people come alive. A new way where our youngsters do not have to skip school and take to the streets to fight for a living planet.

This book is designed to help provoke thought, action, and interaction in you the reader; therefore, we have included questions, insights, reflective quotes, and examples at every turn. Our hope is that you blend reading through this book with journaling, reflection time, walks in nature, conversations with colleagues, and your own pioneering plans to make our regenerative future a reality, not just for tomorrow but also for today.

We need curious, dedicated, passionate people like you and we're thrilled to have you reading this book.


Welcome to the *Regenerator* journey of a life-time.





# PART I

## **Breakdowns & Breakthroughs**



**“A people without the  
knowledge of their  
past history, origin,  
and culture is like a  
tree without roots.”**

**Marcus Garvey,  
political leader**



## Going Back in Time to Find the Root of Our Current Crisis

When looking around the world today, as conscious human beings we might see the erosion of ecosystems that sustain all life, the trash and plastic islands in our oceans, the declining insect populations, the shrinking of the world's forests, climate change, soil degradation and polluted rivers. Then we might also see the volatile political climate, the worldwide social inequality, the increasing levels of stress, depression and burnout, even among our young. Both our outer and inner landscapes are under great strain.

How do we change this situation? Where to start? What to prioritize first?

Before diving deeper into the state of the world, we – the authors – would like to take you on a journey back in time, in order to gain an understanding of human history culminating in today's world. We want to explore what has shaped today's society – our relationships, culture, organizations and leadership – and the underlying issues creating the inner and outer strain we witness today.

So buckle up, and get ready to go on a fascinating journey back in time.

## The Connection Between Genders and our Connection with Nature

Research shows that humans started to venture out of sub-Saharan Africa around 100,000 years ago and began to colonize various habitable places around the globe (Overy, 2006). In central Asia and Europe anthropologists have discovered archaeological evidence, dating back to around 10,000 years ago (8000 BC), that indicate *Homo sapiens* lived rather peacefully in egalitarian communities, with a close sense of community where males and females were valued equally. Research also shows little evidence of widespread aggression, social division or hierarchy, but instead plenty of time for art, dance, and communal life (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

During this epoch, humans lived in close proximity with wild, undomesticated nature and appreciated a strong sense of connection with the living Earth. Scientists studying ancient cultures and their religions have found a common thread across ancient cultures throughout the world where Sky God and Earth Goddess were worshipped. This was a masculine-feminine communion often described as a sacred marriage. A deep communion with nature and with the masculine-feminine qualities found within life was foundational to these ancient cultures (Britannica, 1998). The cultural norm in these cultures was to uphold a deep sense of reverence for all life; everything was understood to be part of a greater whole. Humans understood their purpose on Earth as not only living to survive but also being custodians of the rhythms innate within nature – custodians of the Earth.

“For 99% of the time we’ve been on Earth, we were hunter and gatherers, our lives dependent on knowing the fine, small details of our world. Deep inside, we still have a longing to be reconnected with the nature that shaped our imagination, our language, our song and dance, our sense of the divine.”

Janine Benyus, biologist



**Dive Deeper:** Clearly it is naïve to assume that everything was a bed-of-roses during the dawn of the modern human. There certainly existed harshness and strife, yet there is detailed research that explores the equalitarian and convivial nature of our ancestors. For instance, you can look up Marija Gimbutas's work in the *Journal of Indo-European Studies* entitled *The Beginning of the Bronze Age in Europe and the Indo-Europeans: 3,000–2,500 BC*, and other studies are referred to in the work of Anne Baring and Jules Cashford's *The Myth of the Goddess*, Raine Eisler's *The Blade and the Chalice*, Rupert Sheldrake's *The Rebirth of Nature*, and Giles Hutchins's *The Illusion of Separation*.

## A Journey of Separation

Then a radical shift in climate and shift in society occurred from around 10,000 years ago onwards. By example, findings from a Middle Stone Age site in North Yorkshire, show that our ancestors survived a century-long drop in temperature of between 10 and 4 degrees Celsius (Nature Ecology & Evolution, 2018). This begins what anthropologist Steve Taylor refers to as the *Ego Explosion* (Taylor, 2005). Our sense of self-identity shifted from seeing ourselves as a part of nature to seeing ourselves as separate from nature. This heightening ego-awareness helped us gain a stronger sense of self and increased our self-agency and self-empowerment. It helped us survive heavy storms and harsh temperatures. And with this self-development we cultivated important aspects of our psychological, sociological and evolutionary development. This triggered the Agricultural Revolution bringing the domestication of livestock and widespread farming practices. Hunter gatherers now settled into permanent communities, growing crops, building homes and keeping animals for food and clothing.

These shifts are an important part of our adaptation and evolution to a rapid change in climate. Yet, this shift also came with a marked cultural shift: rising patriarchy, increasing stratification and division in society, the prioritization of Sky God over Earth Goddess, widespread militarization, the mechanization of weapons and tools for exploitation and domination of other humans and nature, the widespread use of currency, the advent of the written word, the right to own land, and many more cultural innovations.

This period marks a departure from being at one with nature. A *Journey of Separation* begins throughout the West, and goes through levels of incremental change in the centuries that follow: Hellenistic Greece, the Roman Empire, Medieval Europe and the Renaissance.

Throughout these cultural changes, a deep respect and connection with nature remains. Nature's wild wisdom is intimately interwoven with everyday human life right up until about 500 years ago.

### ***The Separation of Human from Nature; Man from Women***

Around 500 years ago (the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century) the climate changed again quite dramatically during what has been referred to as the *Little Ice Age*. Whilst climatologists debate the exact dates of the Little Ice Age and local conditions vary significantly, it seems that Europe experienced 80 years (approximately from 1460 – 1540) of heavy storms, harsh long winters, and cooler summers. This climate change significantly impacted living conditions and the ability to grow food, as rivers and canals (key transportation networks at that time) froze over and crops failed. Famines swept across large parts of the continent leaving people starving, sick, and malnourished – epidemics spread like wildfire (Appleby, 1980). This caused social tensions people started to become scared, frustrated, and increasingly wary of the forces of nature.

During The Middle Ages there was a pervasive dogma of Christianity portraying God as separate from nature; above and beyond, *His Creation* – and The Church, made good use of the growing fears and mounting social tensions. Those who are afraid are easier to influence and control. In searching for a culprit for the tension and starvation, the Church began to frame the forces of nature as the workings of the Devil. And many women were seen as more in tune with the wisdom of nature – its healing properties, plant remedies, herbal medicines, cycles, and insights – those who practiced this connection to nature were framed as witches in close liaison with the Devil.

In 1485, Pope Innocent VIII ordered an official 'witch hunt', which lasted nearly 300 years. This was perceived as the only method to cleanse society

of evil – to exterminate women who worshipped the ways of nature. Mass hysteria ensued, coinciding with the Church Reformation and the Thirty Year’s War. Europe experienced a time of great upheaval, out of which emerged a heightened sense of separation from nature. The Middle Ages, with its embedded cultural norms, gave way to a new worldview: God and Man were viewed as divorced from Nature and Woman.

Protestantism, Rationalism, and Empiricism were all on the rise and the Scientific Revolution was born. Great minds – Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, and many others – led the scientific and philosophic developments of the age, which helped solidify new societal views about man’s relationship with nature.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a prominent scientist, renowned philosopher, and legal prosecutor who served as Attorney General and ultimately Lord Chancellor of England, is often referred to as the ‘Father of the Scientific Method’. Francis Bacon was not only instrumental in the Scientific Revolution, but he also played a huge part in the witch trials, as a legal prosecutor. He believed that Nature *“exhibits herself more clearly under the trials and vexations of [mechanical devices] than when left to herself.”* (Merchant, 1980). As historian Clifford Conner writes in *A People’s History of Science*: *“The patriarchal imagery in Bacon’s writings reflected the social position of women at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Bacon invariably portrayed Nature as a female who was hiding her secrets. He wrote of the secrets “locked in nature’s bosom” or “laid up in the womb of nature”, and said “she would have to be forcibly penetrated in order to make her give them up.”* (Conner, 2005).

In Bacon’s book *The Masculine Birth of Time* he speaks of how nature must be made the slave of man (Bacon, 1603). Whilst we ought not single out Bacon, as he was one person in a collective shift supported by many, his views do provide a rich example of the heightening disconnection of human from nature and man from women that formed throughout the Scientific Revolution. For instance, in his work *Novum Organum*, he speaks of exploiting and interrogating nature through reductive experiments, by *“the hand of man she is forced out of her natural state, and squeezed and moulded”*, so



mankind is able “to penetrate further” beyond “the outer courts of nature” and “find a way at length into her inner chambers”. He continues: “Nature being known, it may be master’d, managed and used in the services of human life” as “the object of knowledge is the control of nature. Nature in itself has no purpose” (Bacon, 1620).

Today, we may find his words disturbing, but this thinking was part of a widespread sea-change in our collective worldview across the West. This thinking shaped the societies we have today, along with the cultural assumptions that nature is a resource to be exploited solely for human betterment.

From the Scientific Revolution onwards, nature was commodified into forestry, fishery, agriculture, and mining. Meanwhile, women (as they were said to embody and ritualize nature) were positioned as unruly and wild, therefore lacking in rational-analytic capability and in need of control and domination. During the witch trials starting in 1485 and lasting almost 3 centuries, millions of women were tortured and interrogated and hundreds of thousands were killed and burned in front of children, neighbors, and friends to set an example that being in tune with nature was no different from working with the Devil.

This widening separation and near complete severance of connection to our natural environment and our feminine essence caused us to turn our back on hundreds of thousands of years of deep integration with nature’s ways and equality between the genders. Within a matter of decades, both women and nature came to be seen as wild and devilish, in need of control. This was the beginning of the prioritization of masculine traits over feminine traits.

Every human being exhibits both masculine and feminine traits, yet over recent centuries, masculine qualities have been perceived by society as superior to feminine. The table here lists some of the qualities identified as typically masculine or feminine.

MASCULINE TRAITS	FEMININE TRAITS
focus on own needs	compassion toward others
competitive	collaborative
assertive	receptive
protective	nurturing
goal-oriented	relationship-oriented
rational thinking	intuitive feeling
independence	interdependence
mono-task	multi-task
bias for action	bias for flow

Rational-analytic reductionism was the hallmark of the Scientific Revolution. The French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes, another one of the prime movers of the Scientific Revolution, felt compelled to reject the notion of nature as living, sentient, interconnected, and imbued with wisdom. Separating nature from mind (or spirit) was the necessary pre-condition for mechanistic reductionism – the drilling down into parts, ignoring interrelations or systemic sentience. In 1630 Descartes wrote to the Catholic theologian Marin Mersenne, “*God sets up mathematical laws in nature, as a king sets up laws in his kingdom*” thereby excluding any form of consciousness and sentience from nature (Berman, 1981). Nature became a mere outer-form of matter, perceived as nothing more than a collection of building blocks that collided and coalesced through deterministic push-pull forces.

The philosophers Thomas Hobbes and Isaac Newton also contributed to reductionism. Notably, Hobbes’s basic assumption was that humanity and nature consist of atomized, competitive units embroiled in a “*war of all against all*” (Leviathan, 1651) a flawed assumption that is still with us today, one that influences Neo-Darwinism, where the whole process of evolution is seen as a process of selfish domination. Still to this day when we talk about how nature works, many automatically refer to the harsh struggle for survival in a dog-eat-dog world of ruthless competition.

*Survival of the fittest* no longer portrays Darwin's original intention of *fitting in to our niche*, instead it's come to signify the domination of others through power and control justifying war, imperialism, and selfish behavior because supposedly *it is in our nature*.

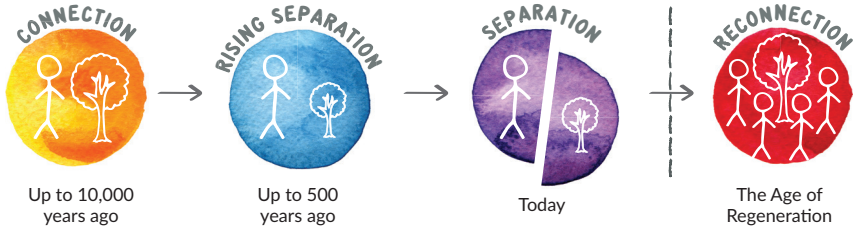
This is how many interpret the world around us. Even today's nature documentaries highlight the competitive aspects and down-play the collaborative dynamics at work. This skewed perspective influences how we behave and relate in business, in politics, and in society at large. Competition is one, but there are many dynamics at play in nature. Life thrives in myriad ways, largely through networking, partnerships, and collaboration. Ruthless dog-eat-dog competition is actually *not* the norm. However, in recent centuries, we have conditioned ourselves to see life in a certain light, one which undermines our human potential to connect and coexist.

The period of the Scientific Revolution made great strides in material progress and scientific insight that we benefit greatly from today, yet this dis-connection from nature – our natural habitat – and domination of the feminine creates an imbalance in us as a collective and as individuals. A deep, deep wound, so to speak, that manifests as a psychic trauma within our species. This collective trauma and imbalance is the underlying cause of increasing fear, anxiety, egotism, individualism, and consumerism. When we don't feel complete or whole on the inside, we start searching ever more 'out there' to fix a deep wound which is 'in here'.

As the models below illustrate, this collective Journey of Separation encompasses the separation between humanity and nature, and also between feminine and masculine. The first two stages of the journey (connection and rising separation) occur in ancient times, with heightened separation occurring around 500 years ago. This third stage is still with us today, with early signs of a fourth stage emerging – one of healing, reconnection and integration.

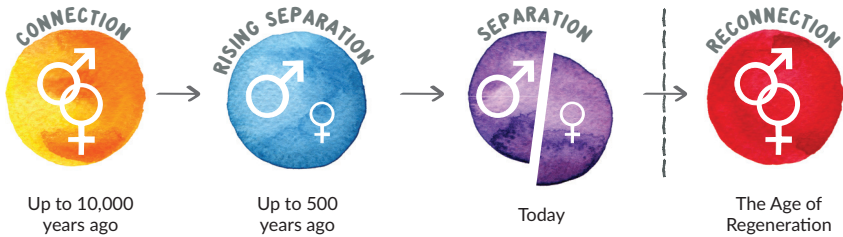
# THE JOURNEY OF SEPARATION

## HUMAN NATURE SEPARATION



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## FEMININE-MASCULINE SEPARATION



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**Dive Deeper:** This relationship between rising patriarchy, the subjugation of women and feminine qualities and the dis-connection of humans from nature is explored through a wide body of research. There are many books covering this rich and deep area of interest. Some of the titles worth reading are: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, *Eco-Feminism* by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *The Death of Nature* by Carolyn Merchant, *The Myth of the Goddess* by Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Blade and the Chalice* by Raine Eisler.

In order to heal this split, we must focus on reconnection and re-integration. Social ecologist Gregory Bateson foresaw how the separating of mind from matter – spirit from nature – creates all sorts of problems. For Bateson, this separation is an error of the most fundamental degree. This error, Bateson

saw woven into Western habits of thought at deep and partly unconscious levels, undermining our capacity to flourish sustainably on Earth. He felt that it is what pits humanity against nature and provides for our prevalent worldview of survival through competition, in what he viewed as *“an ecology of bad ideas”* breeding parasitic humans, purely self-centered and destructive of their host environment. He noted that if you, *“see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration, the environment will be yours to exploit...If this is your estimate of your relation to nature and you have an advanced technology, your likelihood of survival will be that of a snowball in hell. You will die either of the toxic by-products of your own hate, or, simply, of over-population and over-grazing”* (Bateson, 2000).

Today’s prevalent worldview separates mind from nature and therefore views it as an array of senseless resources to exploit with no ethical consideration except in terms of the value it has to us humans. With this mindset, our likelihood of surviving as a race is, as Bateson said, *“that of a snowball in hell.”*

## ***The Separation of the Inner from the Outer***

Central to the Scientific Revolution’s reductionism is the focus on the parts rather than the whole. This method of breaking everything down into isolated bits to be analyzed in an objectified and isolated way has its benefits. It helps us reduce complexity and simplify, which makes the overwhelming reality of the world we live in easier to access. Reductive analysis has played an important part in our Western evolution, bringing great strides in many areas of our lives and enabling material advancements in technology, food production, transportation, and medicine. Yet, this reductive perspective leaves little room for understanding or tuning in to the wider inter-relational dynamics inherent to ourselves, our relationships, and all living systems.

In the centuries following the Scientific Revolution, life has come to be perceived as machine-like, a clockwork series of push-pull causalities comprised of independent objects operating in a mechanistic predictable way. These natural laws and universal principles, it was assumed, could only be fully

understood in reductive analytic ways. After having analyzed the objectified parts and projected fixed rationale onto the complex dynamics of our existence, only then can we understand everything about human nature, life, and the universe.

Descartes conceived of the universe as a gigantic machine. He was keen on developing a comprehensive natural philosophy, a new vision of the natural world, all explainable through mathematical explanations. Clearly, the view that everything throughout the universe could be explained, measured, and defined had a powerful allure.

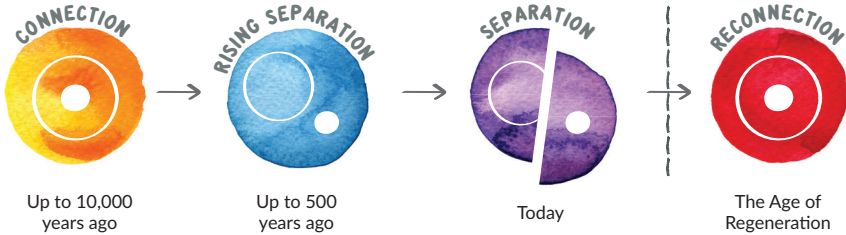
This analytic, hyper-competitive, threat-tinted lens through which we learned to view the world reduced our innate intuitive sense, our empathic connection, and sensorial embodied experience of life. It shut out key elements necessary for our wellbeing and key pathways necessary to our whole-body intelligence. It exacerbated a sense of separation of matter from mind, nature from spirit. The great mythologist Joseph Campbell noted that this, *“separation of matter and spirit, or the dynamism of life and the realm of the spirit, of natural grace and supernatural grace, has really castrated nature. And the European mind, the European life, has been, as it were, emasculated by this separation”* (Campbell, 1988).

As a culture, we no longer felt a deep empathic connection with life but instead focused primarily on outer forms of technological innovation and material progress, while deprioritizing inner wellbeing and consciousness.

The separation of inner (mind) and outer (matter) creates a wounding duality that divorces us from the immense richness of knowledge and wisdom we can only tap into when our inner-outer ways of knowing are integrated. This inner-outer dynamic is a fundamental area of our lives that has gone through the same Journey of Separation that the dynamics of human-nature, and masculine-feminine have.

# THE JOURNEY OF SEPARATION

## INNER-OUTER SEPARATION



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Even in this century, many of us don't know what it means to have a strong inner connection, or how we feel in our own body about certain situations. *Do you?* Do you know how it feels to be strongly anchored within; at peace and grounded in yourself?

Many leaders today deem bodily reactions and insights as irrational and unreasonable. Our relationship with nature's innate wisdom may often be seen as hippy-dippy and not to be taken seriously. Intuition is something that is not really understood, and viewed as questionable. Any such irrational thinking we might mock as second-rate or woo-woo. In any given situation, many of us go immediately to our brains, to analyze the situation, while disregarding any intuitive insight or gut-feeling. We react (one might say 'habitually *re-act*') instead of taking a pause, breathing deep, and addressing a challenging situation wisely.

We have unwittingly removed ourselves from ourselves and out of our natural reality! Just look at the way we approach living. Have you ever looked to outside comfort – a new gadget, shopping spree, special food, a weekend getaway, an extreme sport experience, maybe even a date or an affair – when feeling confused or troubled inside? Have you ever put in more hours at work in an attempt to feel (temporarily) good or worthy? While we busy ourselves with outer 'doing' we are numbing our inner 'being'.

“All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone”

Blaise Pascal, mathematician and philosopher

With all this in mind, let’s now take a look at our brains where research shows that a heightened left-brained hemispheric way of attending has occurred in tandem with a separation from nature, a prioritization of the masculine over feminine and the outer over the inner.

### ***The Domination of the Left-brain Hemisphere over the Right-brain Hemisphere***

Neuroscientist Iain McGilchrist has extensively explored left-brain hemisphere dominance in our Western culture. The left-hemisphere of the brain, according to McGilchrist’s and other neuroscientists’ findings, focuses on the parts of the problem by decontextualizing, narrowing down, and abstracting the problem in a closed system. This of course, helps us analyze and find a solution to the problem at hand. However, only a solution in the context of an isolated closed system, not in a living, emergent, complex system – like a business environment. By the same theory, the right-hemisphere of the brain focuses on the whole of the problem by broadening perspective, forming connections, and viewing the problem within an open system; we seek context, think creatively (out of the box) and develop greater understanding. It is both the knowledge of the parts (left-hemisphere) and wisdom of the whole (right-hemisphere) that we need to solve today’s problems.

“The model of the machine is the only one that the left hemisphere likes”

Iain McGilchrist, neuroscientist

The qualities of the left-hemisphere have enabled us to form a civilization based on advanced technology, rationality, mechanistic sequencing, and control. This way of processing gives us a sense of power and domination



over our world, which is alluring and comforting, yet it reduces down our capacity to perceive nuances, relationship dynamics, subjective feelings, and the bigger picture. That is to say, it shuts us off from the realness of life.

“Part of the way our left hemisphere neo-cortex works in order to analyze the world and solve problems, is to break things down into their constituent parts to create boundaries. To make sense of the world we apply the analytic scissors and create cuts in the seamless web of life, but we then forget that it is our own thinking that has created the cuts and the boundaries, and we think the cuts and boundaries exist ‘out-there’ in the world”

Peter Hawkins, leadership specialist

In his profound work *The Master and His Emissary*, McGilchrist explores this rise of left-hemispheric dominance in Western culture: “*There are obvious continuities between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. They share the same marks of left-hemisphere domination: the banishment of wonder; the triumph of the explicit, and, with it, mistrust of metaphor; alienation from the embodied world of the flesh, and a consequent cerebralisation of life and experience.*” He goes on to note: “*Democracy as Jefferson saw it, with its essentially local, agrarian, communitarian, organic structure, was in harmony with the ideas of the right hemisphere. But in time it came to be swept away by the large-scale, rootless, mechanical force of capitalism, a left-hemisphere product of the Enlightenment*” (McGilchrist, 2009).

Left-hemisphere management and monitoring approaches have helped us to analyze, quantify and control to great effect. There is no denying that. Yet it has come to dominate too much of our societal and organizational design. This imbalance in our brains goes hand-in-hand with the imbalance of our human-nature relation.

## Left vs Right Brain Hemisphere Qualities

The table here lists qualities associated with the left-hemisphere and the right-hemisphere. This helps us see how left-hemisphere qualities have shaped and dominated many areas of society and business today.

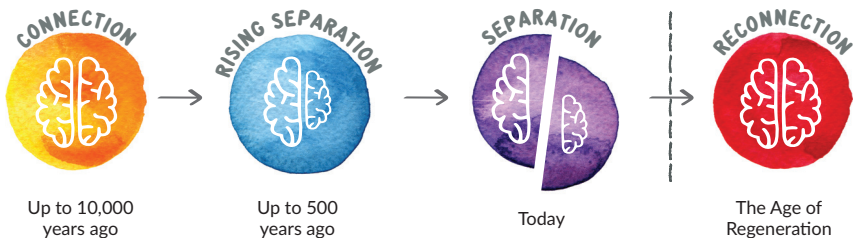
LEFT-HEMISPHERE QUALITIES	RIGHT-HEMISPHERE QUALITIES
you vs me	we are all one
linear	systemic
causal	relational
focuses in on the parts	seeks to understand the whole
structure and order	out-of-the-box creativity
polarization	seeing through tensions

Although (scientifically speaking) you can't really talk about a 'separation' of the two brain hemispheres, the Journey of Separation does reveal a trend of rising 'domination' of left over right hemisphere – just like we have seen with the 3 other areas of human-nature, masculine-feminine and inner-outer.

These 4 areas and their collective Journey of Separation are closely coupled.

## THE JOURNEY OF SEPARATION

### LEFT-RIGHT BRAIN SEPARATION



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Harvard-trained brain scientist, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, had a stroke that affected her left-hemisphere, which meant that she got to experience the world solely through the right hemisphere. Having studied the brain for decades, she was suddenly experiencing the profound differences between the two hemispheres from the inside out – through her own body. Dr. Taylor tells of how peaceful and vibrant she felt when her brain could only perceive the world through the right-hemisphere, seeing everything around her in brilliant colors and hearing only wonderful, music-like sounds. It was only when the left-hemisphere shut down that her worries simply disappeared and she would feel at one with everything. There was no separation between herself and the world. Everything was interconnected.

Yet when she slid into the left-hemisphere for a few minutes at a time, she was able to understand the severity of her situation and could use her analytic skills to call for an ambulance and explain in medical terms what was happening. Then back again she would slide into the worry-free oneness of her right-hemisphere, enabling her sense of self to connect with life.

In an interview, she explains: *“In the right brain experience, everything is connected. We are one with all that is. We require cells in the left parietal region in order to define the boundaries of where I begin and where I end. When those cells went offline, then there was no physical boundary. I was energy. I am energy. We are energy.”*

When the interviewer asks her in what ways this experience changed her she responds: *“I used to focus my mind on science, in the lab, on the cells under the microscope, on theory and ideas. That whole world was what drove me. Now, I’m much more connected to the bigger picture of humanity and our relationship as human beings to the planet...my left hemisphere was driving my character before in the doing world...But now, I live it in a completely different way. My decisions are totally driven based on my intuition – if you will – about how things feel energetically for me.”* (Sounds True Podcast, 2018).

Dr. Taylor has integrated her first-hand experiences into her research, which has profoundly changed her approach to studying the brain. She has become a strong advocate for a more integrated left-right hemispheric approach to life.



*Dive Deeper:* You can watch Dr. Taylor's fascinating TED talk about her experience *My Stroke of Insight*. She has also published a book by the same title.

## A New Journey of Reconnection

### *The Rise of Systems Thinking*

Over the past few decades the rise of Systems Thinking has helped us think in terms of interconnections, patterns, and processes. It recognizes the interconnected nature of business and life at large, and views the whole system as greater than the sum of its parts. Whilst mechanistic thinking helps the understanding of isolated parts, Systems Thinking fosters the understanding of complexity, change, and relationality.

A focus on understanding the parts of the system needs to be adequately balanced with a focus on understanding the inter-relationship of the parts within the wider system context. The whole-system, the whole-brain, the whole-body. Intuitively we know that life is not only made up of building blocks that can be rationalized, measured, and monitored for improved efficiency and effectiveness. It may give us comfort to believe that everything can be quantified and put into neat and tidy boxes or translated into numbers in tables that can be calculated with an excel formula, but that ain't how life really works.

Leaders of the future must embrace both – an understanding of the *parts* and how they *interplay*. Underpinning the ability for the leader to embrace both is the re-connection and re-integration of left and right-hemisphere, inner and outer, masculine and feminine, human and nature.

It is time to cross the threshold and begin a new *Journey of Reconnection* – a communion of all 4 areas.

# THE JOURNEY OF RECONNECTION

## DISCONNECTION/SEPARATION



Today

## RECONNECTION



The Age of  
Regeneration

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## *Outer & Inner Sustainability Must Go Together to Succeed*

Despite the fact that many good things are happening – for instance, the increasing adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across many sectors – the rise in sustainable business is not having the impact needed to address the inner-outer stress across our social and ecological systems in a timely way. Sustainability strategies, SDGs, CSR policies, and circular economics focus mainly on outer aspects while overlooking the deeper underlying issue – a shift from mechanistic to interconnected thinking.

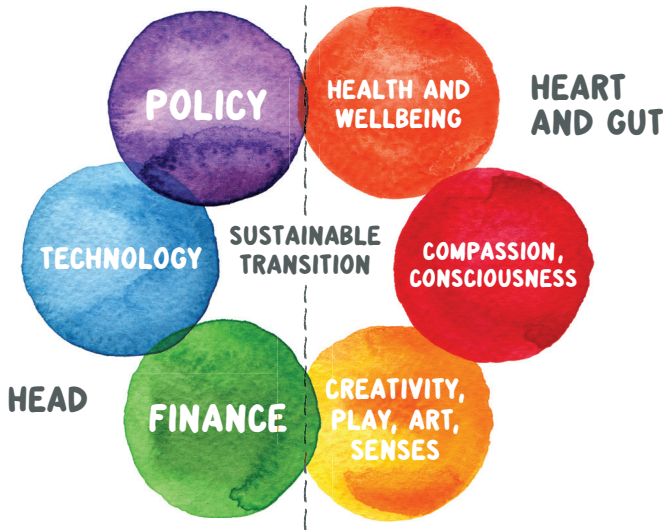
Certainly, the global traction gained by initiatives such as circular economics and SDGs is very promising, yet so often these initiatives are being implemented with the same old mechanistic mindset that created the problems in the first place. The SDGs are often implemented in an old-school mechanistic way with more things to measure and control in silos. We end up doing ‘outer’ stuff differently while still being dis-connected, stressed and out of kilter with life itself. Hence, the change these initiatives help mobilize is incremental rather than transformative.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

Albert Einstein, physicist

We have both – Laura and Giles – worked in the field of sustainability for decades and been lured in to addressing sustainability as either a technology we have to scale, a policy framework we must lobby for, or a financial and operational mechanism to implement. These particular approaches are what we call *outer sustainability*. Outer sustainability is, no doubt, an important part of the sustainability transition; however, if that is all we focus on, we will create further imbalance. We must also address *inner sustainability*, which is sustainability that fosters creativity and play, wellbeing and whole-body intelligence, applies nature’s wisdom, thinks in interconnected systems, and takes into account an individual’s sense of purpose within the whole. As the model below illustrates, it all goes together as part of a transition toward sustainable regenerative cultures.

## OUTER AND INNER SUSTAINABILITY



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You may think: *Do we have the time to care about how we feel inside when we are in the midst of a crisis? Isn't the most important thing right now to scale the right technologies and get the right kind of policies and processes implemented?*

Well, yes, certainly there is a need for urgency. However, if we rush in with solutions that apply yesterday's logic and continue operating in the same old unbalanced ways, we waste time and resources and just get more of the same.

The UNFCCC COP Climate Change process is a great example of how we won't get the results we need with purely an outer focus. Laura was Director of the Copenhagen Climate Council and was heavily involved in the process leading up to the COP15 in 2009 – the big UN climate summit that, at the time, many thought would provide a legally binding world treaty on climate change (a successor to the Kyoto Protocol). In the final months leading up to the December 2009 COP15, negotiations crumbled, things fell apart, and there was a huge battle of egos behind the scene. This led to the Danish lead negotiator, who had spent years building trust amongst his counterparts, being fired. The Danish hosts then tried to bulldoze through an agreement without taking the time to listen to and respect all the different perspectives from both developed and developing countries. The negotiations broke down. Heads of States fled the scene, and international press called it *“the greatest failure of global politics ever”* (Vidal, 2009). A great opportunity (along with resources and time) was wasted due to an imbalanced left-hemispheric, hyper-masculine outer-focus.



**Dive Deeper:** If you want to know all the details of the political drama that went on during the COP15 process the Danish climate policy expert Per Meilstrup wrote a behind-the-scenes book interviewing all key officials, negotiators and politicians. The book is in Danish and called *Kampen For Klimaet* (the fight for our climate) yet a detailed summary of it can be found in English: *The Runaway Summit: The Background Story of the Danish Presidency of COP15, the UN Climate Change Conference*.

Six years later, Laura was involved in the Paris COP21 which was seen as the second chance to negotiate a legally binding global climate treaty. This was an entirely different experience. The summit was led by Christiana Figueres (the Head of the UNFCCC) and Nicolas Hulot (Lead French negotiator and long-time passionate environmentalist), both of whom took time to listen to all parties, specifically including spiritual leaders and faith community representatives, while ensuring that all developing nations and island communities were fairly heard. It was a heart-led process prioritizing what some may have perceived as the *soft fluffy stuff*. And it worked wonders.

Six months prior to the summit, lead negotiators, Heads of State, NGOs, faith communities and spiritual leaders were invited by the French President and Christiana Figueres for a one-day summit to share from the heart their response to the question: *Why do I care about the planet, and what legacy do I wish to leave to my children?* There were tears and genuine personal connections made between key parties. This one-day summit laid important groundwork for reaching a successful outcome six months later at the COP21 where an unprecedented global agreement was made. Instead of a process run by big egos, there was dialogue, transparency, partnership, empathy, authenticity, vulnerability, and respect.

Let the UNFCCC COP's shift from Copenhagen to Paris be an example for all types of change processes across various organizations, institutions and communities.

## **Reconnection to Life**

Most people today rarely see the whole-system they're engaged in as they go about their day, whether they are shopping, vacationing, or delivering upon KPIs, all of which influence a variety of systems, relations, and structures far beyond the immediacy of the activity. People have become so separated from understanding their actions as part of a greater whole, that they barely give it much thought while working or shopping. *Which growing methods, materials, transportation means, and workers have been involved in making your new trousers, for instance? Or growing the salad you snack on for lunch? Or in making your household cleaning products?*



Your cute Christmas elf does not come from Santa's warm and rustic factory at the North Pole, but is probably mass-produced with harsh chemicals, from declining resources, maybe even by unprotected child labor. *Not cute at all.* We are so often too busy to see that we are creating the ripple effects, all the time – either positive or negative ripples emanating from us and through our decisions, transactions and choices.

To summarize, the widespread problems we face today have a deep underlying cause. Having examined the evolution of *Homo sapiens* over the centuries, we can see the effects of the growing imbalance between humanity and nature, masculine and feminine, inner and outer, and left-brained and right-brained awareness.

We must acknowledge that we are all human beings longing to integrate imbalances within us and around us. We must move forward with a different consciousness than what created the problems in the first place. We must integrate the perspectives of the left and right brain hemispheres, the inner and outer aspects of our selves, masculine and feminine qualities, and the relationship of humanity and nature.

As a human race, we have forgotten how to connect with our outer nature *and* our inner nature. It is vital that we remember, or relearn, how to read the patterns, relationships, energies, insights, and intelligences innate within life. Without this reconnecting to life's logic, we will be unable to find our way to a more balanced structure or coherent business paradigm that enables our people and our planet to thrive in the years ahead.





**“We are what we  
repeatedly do.”**

Aristotle,  
philosopher