

Chapter 10

I am a water steward

'I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy...and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation and we scientists don't know how to do that.'

Gus Speth

Having crossed the line for unsustainability some 50 years ago, we continue to move in the wrong direction on the total global bottom line. This is not to say that there has been no progress, there has. But it is as if the destructive forces are stronger than the restorative effects.

I think Gus Speth is right. We, as scientists don't know how to do that. But we as human beings do know how to create a spiritual and cultural transformation. We can change and transform as we have done for generations. The stairways of maturity are mapped ahead; we need to create in ourselves and in our hearts whatever it means to transcend Graves' first-tier stages and go to the fearless, generous second-tier stages. At all times there will be people at all stages of maturity, so we must invent ways to guide them forward without falling too heavily into the shadow sides of each stage. In all our experiments there will be frustrations and room for improvements, but that is not a reason to despair, that is a reason to keep moving forward.

Standing here at a crossway between a vision of a better world and a nightmare of a collapsing unsustainable earth, I wonder if we have two ways of doing it. Either we can peacefully, voluntarily and pro-actively move towards a better and more just world or we will have to 'save the world' with forced hands, in panic and with significant losses in our wake. So many trends point at our human proclivity to

the latter road. But look again: so many people want to move via the first way, momentum is building. They just don't know how to do it. We need to acknowledge the difficulty and jointly invent the road ahead.

Sometimes I still catch myself at a loss in all this. But I have promised myself that when I get overwhelmed with apathy and only see desecration and banality around me, I will take a deep breath, close my eyes and connect to my heart of hearts. And I will remember that I am a water steward because I choose to be.

A water steward is a warrior who does not give up.
 A water steward is a poet, who sees possibilities for beauty.
 A water steward is a deep ecologist, who continues to learn about nature and its needs.
 A water steward thinks seven generations ahead and acts in that faith.
 A water steward understands the power of many small steps.
 A water steward is an experimenter always learning by doing.
 A water steward reconnects where connections have been severed.
 A water steward is a diplomat, who negotiates needs and solutions.
 A water steward knows technologies and analytical methods that can solve difficult water problems.
 A water steward keeps integrating and improving the water system for all.
 A water steward keeps working for a greater vision – regardless of the difficulties.
 A water steward understands natural law.
 A water steward helps and supports fellow water stewards.
 A water steward is part of a water fellowship.
 A water steward is humble, respectful and thankful when it comes to water.
 A water steward stands in full height.
 A water steward understands how deeply intimately we are connected with water.
 A water steward understands the world as 'a Gaia world' and understands the role of water there.
 A water steward will eventually see a new world emerge.

'The difference between the possible and impossible is that the impossible takes longer time.'

Fridtjof Nansen