



CHARTING DEMOCRACY

NAVIGATIONAL AIDS FOR SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZING

Meg Wheatley = G.O.D.

"I believe participation is not a choice. You can't avoid including people, because life is about the creation of new systems through relationships and through inclusion.... So it's not only in times of stability or rapid change that we see the failures of autocracy, I would say. If you're trying to create a healthy organization, one that can sustain itself over time, simply legislating and dictating behavior and outcomes doesn't work at all." -Meg Wheatley

By Ed Democracy

Well, maybe I should say GODDESS since she is a woman. She certainly fits the definition of GODDESS in my book. But, the title might have been a little less controversial and the acronym would be more unwieldy:

G.O.D.D.E.S.S.: Good Organizational Dynamics Democracy Ease Simplicity Self-Organizing

Although, to me, Meg Wheatley means Good Organizational Dynamics (GOD), her first book was, "Leadership and the New Science" (www.kaneandassociates.com/summary2.htm), so it's more about new & old than good & bad.

The "New Science" is quantum physics. The "old" science is Newtonian mechanics. As I understand Meg's experience with the old corporate management culture, she went from frustration, to vacation, and, then, while reading a book on quantum physics, to inspiration – truly a quantum leap. She saw that if the old corporate management culture was a product of the Newtonian machine, then Quantum physics should allow conception of a new collaborative leadership culture.

The differences between the Newtonian vs. Quantum worldviews seem to sort out something like this:

NEWTONIAN	QUANTUM
+ static	+ dynamic
+ linear	+ interconnected
+ serial	+ parallel
+ parts	+ wholes (holistic)
+ closed	+ open
+ finite	+ infinite
+ unchanging	+ changing
+ mechanistic	+ organic

As my Oceanography 101 textbook described the new scientific worldview, "nature is a self-organizing, stable, dynamic, chaos." As Meg Wheatley puts it, "for many years, I've been interested in seeing the world differently. I've wanted to see beyond the Western, mechanical view of the world and see what else might appear when the lens was changed. I've learned, just as Joel Barker predicted when he introduced us to paradigms years ago, that 'problems that are impossible to solve with one paradigm may be easily solved with a different one.'

I've been applying the lens of living systems theory to organizations and communities. With wonderful colleagues, I've been exploring the question: 'How might we organize differently if we understood how Life organizes?' It's

been an exploration that has helped me look into old patterns and problems and develop new and hopeful insights and practices. It has also increased my sense of wonder for life, and for the great capacity of the human spirit."

Meg's new book is, "FINDING OUR WAY: Leadership For an Uncertain Time" (<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/findingourway.html>) In Finding Our Way, Meg focuses on the experiences she and others have had in putting new theories into practice in the real-life, day-to-day work of people around the world. Here is a beautiful and powerful statement by Meg Wheatley about her new book :

"An Invitation to the Reader

There is a simpler, finer way to organize human endeavor. I have declared this for many years and seen it to be true in many places. This simpler way is demonstrated to us in daily life, not the life we see on the news with its unending stories of human grief and horror, but what we feel when we experience a sense of life's deep harmony, beauty, and power, of how we feel when we see people helping each other, when we feel creative, when we know we're making a difference, when life feels purposeful.

Over many years of work all over the world, I've learned that if we organize in the same way that the rest of life does, we develop the skills we need: we become resilient, adaptive, aware, and creative. We enjoy working together. And life's processes work everywhere, no matter the culture, group, or person, because these are basic dynamics shared by all living beings.

Western cultural views of how best to organize and lead (now the methods most used in the world) are contrary to what life teaches. Leaders use control and imposition rather than participative, self-organizing processes. They react to uncertainty and chaos by tightening already feeble controls, rather than engaging people's best capacities to learn and adapt. In doing so, they only create more chaos. Leaders incite primitive emotions of fear, scarcity, and self-interest to get people to do their work, rather than the more noble human traits of cooperation, caring, and generosity. This has led to this difficult time, when nothing seems to work as we want it to, when too many of us feel frustrated, disengaged, and anxious.

I invite you to join me in this work of creating more capable, harmonious,

creative, and generous organizations and communities. There is a simpler way, and we each need to play our part in bringing it into robust practice." [TO READ THE ENTIRE TABLE OF CONTENTS & OPENING, GOTO: <http://www.margaretwheatley.com/popups/popup.frontcover.html>]

Meg is President of the Berkana Institute (<http://www.berkana.org>). Berkana's philosophy is that, "the leaders we need are already here". They, "define a leader as anyone who wants to help, who is willing to step forward to make a difference in the world.... Berkana's work in the world is based on a whole and coherent theory about how life organizes."

Please share your thoughts on sustainable organizing, links, or column ideas on our website at: www.can-so.org/chartingdemocracy or call 615-3744

(This Charting Democracy ran previously in February of 2006)

Honoring MHNO's Organizational Development Chair:

Good
Organizational
Dynamics with
Delores'
Eclectic
Social
Syntax

Helpful WEB Links for Sustainable Organizing:

BERKANA - RESOURCES: Tools To Help People Understand Each Other
<http://www.berkana.org/resources/toolstohtml>

Creativity -- Six Thinking Hats - <http://www.edwarddebono.com>

Consensus Building - <http://www.cbi-web.org>

Dialogue - <http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html>

Integrative Conflict Management - <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace>

MHNO - MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM (Anyone can join the MHNO at any time)

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