

# A Farewell

W I N K F R A N K L I N

Global Wisdom 

**A**FTER ALMOST TWENTY YEARS with the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), I want to use this last opportunity as president to share some perspectives on our work. In order to appreciate IONS' contribution to the field of consciousness studies, it may help to understand how we perceive this time in history. IONS' very existence is founded on the assumption that we are living and participating in one of the great transformations of consciousness on this planet.

When the institute was founded in 1973, Edgar Mitchell believed that the United States and much of the modern world were entering a time of major transformation. Not only was the economy shifting from a national, industrial base to a global, information and learning base, but, far more importantly, our society's worldview—our values, beliefs and fundamental underlying assumptions about reality and how the world works—was also shifting.

This shift still involves the death of an old era and the birth of a new one—leading to radically different answers to age-old questions asked by every society and generation: *Who are we? What is real? How do we explain the world? How do we know? What is important? How shall we live?*

These are, as I said, ageless questions, so of course there are no final answers. Each of us has our own answers, and even these change at different stages of our lives. Likewise, different cultures offer different responses to the perennial questions. Together, these issues and our answers (whatever they are) continue to significantly influence both our individual decisions and institutional policies.

Think how your own answers to these questions have changed over time, and consider how they have motivated you and influenced your life. Now imagine the impact

of an entire society shifting its worldview and arriving at new answers—a profound paradigm shift. I deeply believe that this is where we are today, and that this shift is cause for much of the individual and collective confusion and fear (as well as excitement and optimism) experienced in contemporary society.

Let's contrast some aspects of what might be considered a twentieth-century, Western industrial/technological worldview with what I will call an emerging twenty-first century, integral/global worldview. [See fig. 1, page 32.] Admittedly, I have polarized these perspectives to make my point, but I think not unfairly so. As you read through this table, sense in your body how different it feels to hold these two worldviews. Recognize, too, how these different beliefs and assumptions would shape our perceptions and hence our experience of the world. Try to sense what it is like to accept a world that is “both/and” distinct from “either/or”; a world that is whole beyond fragmentation and separation; a world that is relational as well as atomistic and mechanistic, where there is no single cause for anything. Realize how firmly we are attached to a world of single, identifiable causes, whether in our personal health, our relationships, or societal problems.

# Perspective

## *Leadership and Inner Authority*

Willis Harman, my predecessor as president of IONS and a mentor of mine, used to say that he had turned his entire life over to his higher self. That is, he no longer made decisions with his conscious mind, even in minor matters, but instead relied always on his inner, subconscious guidance. One of the dilemmas I faced as president of IONS (and I think this is an issue for leadership in many circumstances) has been how to lead without assuming a role of external authority. I can also assure you that most of us, including me, relish having an external authority at times so that we can avoid the personal responsibili-

ty that goes with exercising our own inner authority.

A crucial question for all of us is “*How shall we live?*” At IONS, we have tried to avoid the trap of thinking we know how our members or others should live, so this becomes very tricky territory. Clearly there is no single “noetic” way to live. Yet if our work is meaningful, it must shed some light on this inquiry. I think some general guidelines have emerged from our work that may be helpful:

**SELF-WHOLENESS**—*bringing our whole selves (physical, biological, psychological, and spiritual) to whatever we are doing;*

**DEEP ENGAGEMENT**—*being fully awake, bringing our full attention and commitment to our activities;*

**COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP**—*being in relationship* >



*with others, even through difficulties, because so much of our work requires that we work together;*

**SERVICE AND HUMILITY**—*serving the whole, knowing that we each bring only partial answers, and that our individual perspectives are limited.*

In times of cultural shift, our established worldviews begin to fall apart. Gaps or anomalies that illustrate inconsistencies between our underlying beliefs and assumptions, and the reality we are experiencing begin to appear. In time, we experience breakdowns in our institutions, the economy, and our ways of life. Eventually, breakdown gives way to breakthroughs in understanding and science, leading to new worldviews and ways of being. This, I believe, is what occurred in the transitional time when we moved from being a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial/technological society. I believe a shift of that magnitude is occurring again today. [See fig. 2.] Note that during such transitional times, our collective worldviews lead the changes in the economy, society, and ways of life rather than the other way around.

In our personal lives, many of us recognize the power of our self-images and beliefs. We experience it daily in our health, our participation in sports and business, and in our personal interactions. Though not so easily recognized, our collective images and beliefs are equally important at the societal level. Today, the Western worldview that has led to the technological nation-state is faltering. New guiding images are taking shape, though certainly not yet fully formed. IONS has been using the term “global wisdom society” to call attention to the central characteristics of a particular cluster of twenty-first century emerging worldviews—recognizing we are all interconnected in multitudes of ways into layers of global systems, and that this global diversity can serve us magnificently in the future if only we learn to harness it. We have an opportunity to combine diverse ways of knowing from science, spiritual practice, and personal experience into a wisdom that can result in much better use of both our natural resources and powerful technologies.

Many of our existing institutions are breaking down. Ideas that many of us were raised with, along with some behaviors that we are very accustomed to, and ways of life that have been comfortable and that have worked for us in the past, no longer seem appropriate. New worldviews, values, beliefs and fundamental assumptions are working their way into our consciousness. We are in the midst of turbulent



FIG. 1

times between competing worldviews. This period is particularly challenging, stimulating, and potentially creative—both individually and collectively.

## IONS' Purpose and Programs

Thirty years ago, this perspective led to founding the Institute of Noetic Sciences. And today this continues to be our purpose: *exploring consciousness for a world awakening through frontier science, personal inquiry, and learning communities.*

**FRONTIER SCIENCE.** Our research programs explore and help shape the new story or guiding vision, underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions for a global society. The term “exploring” is carefully chosen because none of us knows fully what the new vision is. We are in an inquiry and discovery process. We also are identifying and helping to legitimize both ideas and individuals who are researching important aspects that will come together to create the new worldview.

Our bet (“the noetic bet”) regarding the emerging worldview is that:

- *Reality is more than merely physical.*
- *Everything and everyone are interconnected.*
- *We are participants in our own evolution.*

These are our core “noetic” hypotheses—that reality is multidimensional, extending beyond the physical; that our universe is deeply interconnected within and between dimensions; and that we have virtually unlimited human potential to cultivate.

IONS' key research strategy is to provide modest seed grants to highly innovative, bold researchers—offering them both recognition and encouragement. A second strategy is to convene topical symposia highlighting key ideas and assumptions of the emerging worldview. And our third strategy is to sponsor research conferences that enable isolated “noetic” researchers to learn of each other's work and to connect and reinforce their efforts.

I can draw a parallel here to the work of IONS a decade ago in the mind-body health field when we, along with a small group of collaborating organizations using similar strategies, laid the groundwork for the recent explosive growth in mind-body and complementary health.

**PERSONAL INQUIRY.** The second facet of the noetic approach to exploring consciousness is to assist our

members in their personal inquiries. We are developing transformative learning programs to cultivate human capacities that will be essential for an inner-directed, global worldview in the twenty-first century. These capacities include attention, intention, awareness, perception, love, compassion, empathy, forgiveness, gratitude, awe, and connectedness. Our guiding assumption is that we can facilitate the learning of, if not actually teach, these qualities. Just as we in the West have been educated for an industrial/technological society in the twentieth century, we can develop educational opportunities appropriate for the twenty-first century that will move us toward global wisdom.

Currently, we are engaged in assembling a faculty and developing a “curriculum” that will be offered through residential programs on our campus in Petaluma, California, through internet-based short courses available around the world, and through audio and video tapes.

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES.** The third dimension of our noetic strategies is cultivating learning communities that bring together researchers, colleagues, members and seekers from all walks of life, traditions, and cultures. Together, in nearly 300 local community groups, we are exploring consciousness, and asking, “*How shall we live?*” These noetic communities are open to members and nonmembers alike. They are primarily engaged in inquiry and exploration, questioning and listening—much more so than arriving at answers. They are exploring new ways of being deeply engaged in the world; learning how to listen and learn from each other; and how to adapt to others, rather than attempting to change the world to suit

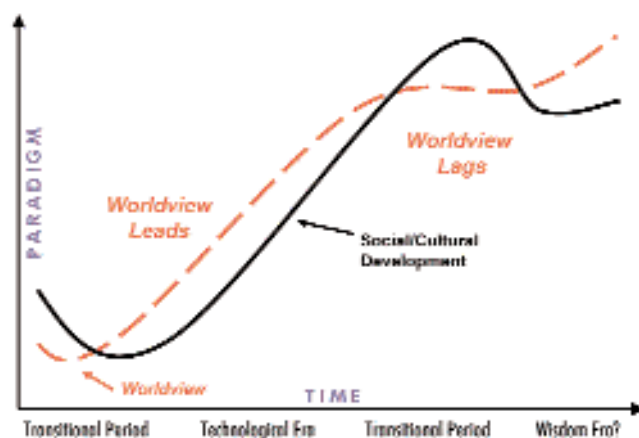


FIG. 2

their own needs. A new activism is emerging that begins by fully acknowledging the centrality of our inner life—an activism entirely consistent with the objective of global wisdom. Our biennial conference (September 17-21, 2003)—which, for the first time this year, we are sponsoring with a partner organization, the Association for Global New Thought—will focus on the theme of collective wisdom and spiritual activism.

In addition to working with our membership and immediate colleagues, we are also seeking to stimulate public discussion of the deeper, central issues that will form the basis for future worldviews. This quarterly magazine (*IONS Review*) is our primary vehicle for outreach. We also reach out via broadcast radio through our continuing collaboration with New Dimensions Radio (NDR). NDR is in conversation with IONS about establishing a cooperative recording facility on our Petaluma campus. This would enable NDR and IONS to broadcast live from our campus, both over radio and the internet. Our interactive web presence is a growing link for our community that reaches around the world.

## *Grounding the Vision*

With the acquisition three years ago of our campus and retreat facilities in Petaluma, we now have a place to ground all that we are doing—for now, we are calling it a “Global Wisdom Center,” a place for exploration, discovery, learning, dialogue, and the joining of science and spirituality. Our aim is to create a place that will nurture the global wisdom so much needed in the twenty-first century. Already we are being joined by partner organizations who wish to participate in this dream.

It was a bold step to commit to buying the Petaluma land three years ago for \$8 million that we didn’t have. I confess to having spent sleepless nights anxious about our ability to make ends meet. I recently had time to take a long walk on the land, to sit quietly on the east ridge, and listen for the land’s wisdom. I emerged from that experience absolutely certain that our purchase was the right move—that we are supposed to be here, and that

in time we will be joined by the appropriate partners to create a sacred, healing, global wisdom center. As is often the case, we did not have all the details figured out when we bought the property (for example, who would be our partners), but we were on target with the basic vision—a *global wisdom society in which consciousness, spirituality, and love are at the center*.

Who would have guessed thirty years ago when Edgar Mitchell founded IONS that today we would be standing on this beautiful campus, have an exceptional membership, community group network, research laboratory and programs, a quality magazine, internet capacity to link members around the world, as well as a truly committed and wise board of directors, circle members, and devoted and talented staff?

I can vividly remember when IONS’ budget was \$300,000 annually. Today, it is \$4.5 million, a fifteen-fold increase. It seems clear to me that the opportunities and the need for IONS have increased even more than fifteen-fold over the years. I can well imagine another fifteen-fold increase over the next twenty years, which would require an annual budget of \$70 million. That may seem preposterous now. But keep in mind that when we started working in the field of mind-body health, it seemed outrageous then to think of an Office of Complementary Medicine in the federal government with an annual budget of more than \$100 million. Bold visions push the boundaries of what previously seemed possible. I’ll paraphrase Willis Harman for my parting words:

*‘Perhaps the only limits to human potential are the limits of our imagination—and our commitment.’*



WINSTON FRANKLIN is the former president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) and a trustee of the Fetzer Institute. He held the positions of executive vice-president and CEO of IONS beginning in 1984 and was elected president in 1996. Prior to his employment with IONS, he pursued twenty years of public service and management of foundations, governmental and nonprofit research organizations, and spent ten years as an entrepreneur and venture capitalist.