**OUR VAST MOSAIC**

**GTI Roundtable on 'The Problem of Action'**

**An exchange on**[**How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action**](https://greattransition.org/publication/how-do-we-get-there)

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December 2017, <https://greattransition.org/roundtable/problem-action-bruce-schuman>

**Our Vast Mosaic**

In the context of critical transition, Paul Raskin places before us one of the greatest philosophical and technical challenges in history, and invites us to propose a plausible pathway forward:

The challenge is at once plural and unified. The Great Transition of which we speak entails a systemic shift that manifests across a vast mosaic of themes, issues, and places. This sparkling heterogeneity urges an ecumenical change strategy that validates plural points of leverage under a canopy of unity. Taken together, the many forms of progressive action already underway from local to global scales could well be the harbinger of a systemic social agency.

How could those many forms of progressive action be coordinated?

**Major Dimensions of an Adequate Response**

This response to Raskin’s inquiry suggests the development of a holistic and inclusive network system, defined across the full range of human experience, in a form that supports his “pluralistic but unified” approach and incorporates the vast and detailed data-processing capacity of the Internet.

There is nothing simple about any such network. Though it should be built from the best elements world civilization has brought together, it must be understood as unprecedented in many ways. Many new possibilities are emerging because new technologies and new insights are available to us. We are experiencing a “new paradigm,” involving new possibilities in science, governance, and philosophy. We are exploring comprehensive integration across many sectors of human experience, with implications for every facet of life.

Raskin speaks of a “vast mosaic.” We must develop a systematic compilation or interpretation of all pertinent elements of this mosaic—literally thousands or millions of individually identifiable elements, brought together through well-organized collective brainstorming and detailed individual interviews. These include social sectors, technical factors, academic and scientific disciplines, political and social issues, and principles of governance, all gathered together “under a canopy of unity.” Bringing these elements together in an organized way is a huge task, comparable in scale and complexity to the emergence of Wikipedia or Amazon but defined in a convergent mathematical system and designed in a format that can evolve and expand under creative influence.

To the degree that this mosaic today is fragmented, partial, scattered, or in substantial conflict with itself, we must develop means to survey our situation in a high-level way, and begin the careful process of negotiating and enabling balanced intercultural and interdisciplinary connections between fragments or contending elements. Concerned organizations must work together around their common areas of specialized expertise, regardless of small differences. Leading cultural institutions must be encouraged to adopt an ethic of constructive cooperation rather than confrontation and competition.

As a guiding map and container for all facets of this work, we should begin to propose and refine an integral model of knowledge that helps us see how all facets of our understanding are linked in some ways to all others. Just as human culture is fragmented today, so, too, is human knowledge. While recognizing and respecting traditional boundaries between scientific and academic disciplines, we must overcome divisive tensions that separate academic or political sectors by developing integrating models that support smooth negotiation and collaboration. There is work here for both scholars and engineers as well as facilitators and negotiators.

We should develop and adapt a universal guiding ethic of community and cooperation, based on the best insights of the world community, grounded in innumerable sources, and compiled and validated in a systematic way. As Raskin says, “engaging a rapidly changing world and embracing new waves of participants requires an adaptive strategy and spirit of co-creation. Not least, we need to cultivate a politics of trust that tolerates proximate differences in order to foster ultimate solidarity.”

For me, the task is to combine our guiding insights into a single framework, embracing and incorporating the full potential of our moment. It is the solidity and clarity of this framework that can create our capacity for activism, and without such a framework, we are feeling our way forward in an overwhelming sea of fragments—no doubt well-intended and hopeful on their own, or brilliant and precious, but incomplete and shifting under our feet, leaving us unable to act together with certainty and without a trustworthy foundation for agreement.

**Basic Attributes and Guiding Memes**

It seems there are a few simple principles that for many of us guide this emerging vision. Our project must be

* Intercultural (we must include every culture),
* Interdisciplinary (we must include every academic or scientific discipline or cultural sector),
* Absolutely inclusive (we must include every person who wants to be included),
* Co-creative (we must listen to one another and work together in a spirit of mutual respect), and
* Fundamentally cohesive and integral (we must be guided by wholeness).

We must conceptualize a way to act together that embraces these ideals, that combines elements from everywhere throughout civilization, that empowers and authenticates collective thinking, that nurtures the best and most graceful in human beings.

**The Ethic of Co-Creation**

As conceived here, the most important and dominating element holding together the entire project is a common ethic and “co-creator’s agreement,” through which all participants agree to work together in a spirit of respectful co-creation and listening. Confirming this agreement is the core and foundational requirement for entering the “widening circle” of this project.

Participation involves significant skills and patience. The problems are huge and complex, multifaceted and controversial, and approaching and resolving them in many cases will involve methods and theories that do not exist today. Everyone will be challenged and entering unfamiliar territory. We must create a safe and viable space for participation by talented people who are giving their best and are prepared to work within an evolving framework we cannot fully foresee. A shared ethic of trust and respect will protect and empower this project.

**Many and One**

It seems that the instincts of many people today are guided by an emerging holistic meme or conceptual archetype that contains everything they are sensing about the emerging new world, and many of us seem to know we can trust it. This notion is “oneness,” a fundamental concept in both philosophy and religion, as well as in science and mathematics. Within this framework, with endless fluency, the one becomes the many—the many becomes the one. These are fundamental principles governing the form of any concept, and our collective instinct for oneness, understood in many ways, undergirds many of the best ideas for guiding an inclusive and transformative movement for a world that works.

We seem to know that globalization IS universalization. The process of globalization and intercultural encounter drives the universalization of ideas. This idea seems to hover over everything, in ways we can trust. But this principle is so transcendent and abstract—at the same time exceedingly simple yet embracing such overwhelming complexity—that this universal guiding form or concept remains elusive. We are still feeling our way forward. This issue is a scientific revolution in progress.

**Part and Whole**

A case can be made that this process proceeds under the guidance of the most ancient and classical of philosophic insights, arising today in hundreds of alternative new interpretations that remain somehow the same. The primal wholeness of being has been differentiated. Unity has become multiplicity and plurality. Boundaries based on these distinctions have been drawn and institutionalized. Our task is to clarify and untangle this process.

History and civilization have created boundaries everywhere. But global intercultural encounter is transforming and transcending these boundaries. A hybrid new global culture is emerging as a result. Every region—every nation—every academic specialization, every “department”—is defined by boundaries as both whole and part, both one and many. Balance in all these facets becomes essential for collective cohesion across these boundaries, whether they are real or imagined. This balance in all things in the context of wholeness is the key to global justice. It is the key to global health and planetary homeostasis. In the context of this ideal, no facet is excluded, all voices are heard, all influences recognized, all contingencies placed in relationship.

The leading cultural visions for ethics and authenticity from everywhere come together in this process of coalescence and encounter. The design spans levels of abstraction, stretching from the absolute inclusive breadth of humanistic holism to the highly specialized particulars of empirical science.

**Dialogue and Co-Creative Negotiation**

Informed dialogue in a context of careful listening and mutual respect is our common bond, our point of encounter. This is the point of intercultural fusion, where the creative power of human differences can meet in the fire of newness. It is in this crucible that our common agenda can be formed, our activist initiatives be defined. What shall we do? How shall we decide? These are the essential issues of our new inspired democracy—a new democracy that we might hope could extend in its same general form across every level of scale, extending from the intimately local (the family dining room table), to regional and national and global. Could we hold all of this together in wholeness, under a single guiding meme?

In the context of dialogue, our common ground and universal common ethic can be forged from every source of authentic wisdom within our civilization.

**Primary Memes of the Integral Vision**

In this context, we foresee the growth of a consciously selected and intentionally defined network process, interconnecting “forces for good” anywhere they might arise, guided and bonded by a common allegiance to the whole and to the success of evolution and civilization. Perhaps this network is not governance—or perhaps it is. The network builds from its natural leadership finding common resonance in the simple, and radiating influence from those connections, in a gradual process that maintains its balance and nuance at every moment, self-correcting as it grows.

Global governance and the “optimization of democracy” can be defined as a network design that seeks stability and balance at every point, in an interconnected grid governed by allegiance to the whole.

The network can embrace well-organized and disciplined systematic methods, capable of gathering and organizing huge amounts of data—brainstorming, cataloguing, indexing, cross-correlating, across all semantic or political boundaries.

The network must aim to overcome the “silo effect”—specialization, isolated localization producing fragmentation and blind misunderstanding, incommensurate systems and frameworks that cannot support cooperation.

The network is bonded by an integral guiding ethic of co-creation and dialogue, guiding and governing our collaboration at every point of difference.

As our understanding evolves, we are collectively guided by the master vision of part and whole, of many and one, of plurality and unity, extending across all levels of human experience.

The design embraces fractal levels of scale, organized like Google maps that telescope across huge global regions to focus on intimate local issues and concerns.

Don’t argue positions and policy agendas until a fully inclusive framework is developed that spans all disciplines and all positions on any issue at any level of scale. It is this framework that can heal our confusion and our rage.

People are confused and dismayed or depressed and resigned today, because they don’t see how this puzzle can come together. But under the context of these primary guiding principles, even at vast scale this all seems so natural, so simple, even classical.

**Activism: The Widening Circle**

What we should do:

Convene a core group of activists with a passion for this kind of work.

Develop an initial comprehensive framework and project design, defining an initial basis for inter-organizational cooperation at expert levels.

Establish a core body of basic principles and practices governing our “co-creative relationship” or “co-creator’s agreement.”

Develop formal methods for collaborative brainstorming and comprehensive data management, looking for formats that can be whittled down to broad simple generalities, but explained in detail as appropriate.

Identify agencies anywhere that seem to be serving this broad cause in some specific way.

Create an entry point for these agencies and any individuals who might want to participate around areas of specific expertise and motivation.

Make it possible and easy for individual unaffiliated people anywhere to engage with this process, through allegiance to our simple common ethic of co-creation, enabling direct participation through elements they find appealing.

Develop methods for outreach that contact special people and groups who might not be ready to become directly involved but might participate on an occasional or brief basis through quick electronic questionnaires.

**Global Cooperation**

Can we design a “global network for cooperation” that includes all elements of human experience, guided by a collaborative spirit of high wisdom and grace?

There are agencies and talented people everywhere who are contributing critical elements to this process. We should be looking everywhere for these people, supporting and incorporating their work.

This is clearly a vast undertaking with a complex architecture and innumerable moving parts. We should see it as no less complicated than a modern automated factory or the supply chain system that today delivers products to customers overnight.

Elon Musk is building fabulous complex systems. So is Jeff Bezos. So are YouTube and Facebook and Google. Shouldn’t the visionary humanitarian global movement strive to match their capacity? Why should we reach for anything less?