

## **Ecology, Economics and a Spiritual Basis for Resource Stewardship**

(An Excerpt from Michael Richards *Sustainable Operating Systems/The Post Petrol Paradigm*)

The etymological root of the word **economics** is found in the Greek language: *Oikonomia* is literally translated as “home management”. Economics measures the in flow and out flow of resources and energy within *our home* planet. Economics is the management of our life support system. The planet Earth is the base system that we engage for resource and energy exchange to support our life. The earth is our home. All living things engage in economic relationships through the trade of energy and resources. We can build a conscious and connected economic science by understanding our place within this integrated global exchange of energy and matter. Most economists ignore these underlying economic structures and only measure human commerce. Such false economic science does not factor in the very real environmental costs of human industry and activity. Real costs have been ignored for two centuries, and now come home to roost as global warming, resource depletion and environmental degradation.

**Economics** and **ecology** are actually the same science, the science of the *interrelationship of all life*. To build an effective new economy we must first understand this whole system, then we see how the parts within the whole behave as a living ecology. Our home is the basic unit of the human economy. Historically, all commerce started as **home-based industry**. I founded Sustainable Operating Systems to build the new ecological economy *from the ground up*. We have assisted with the launch of 300 family enterprises in 22 nations that utilize renewable resources. Within this new economy, open trade takes place as free-agents choose to engage in mutual life support/economic relationships. I authored “**SUSTAINABLE OPERATING SYSTEMS/The Post Petrol Paradigm**” to document this emerging ecological economy. This book is not just about theory, it provides practical tools to build a sustainable society. A just society begins with a just economy, a just economy is brought about by an ecologically aware human community. *This change requires a very dramatic paradigm shift.*

As great wealth has accumulated at the very top in the USA, the rest of society has not benefited proportionally. In 1960 the gap between the top 20% and the bottom 20% was thirty-fold. Now it is eighty fold. Thirty years ago the average annual compensation of the top 100 C.E.O.’s was 30 times the pay of an average worker. Today it is 1000 times the pay of the average worker. *The Financial Times* published a study by American economist Robert J. Gordon, who found “little long-term change in workers’ share of U.S. income over the last 50 years.” Middle class Americans are being squeezed, as the top ten percent have captured half the total income gains in the past four decades. The top one percent have gained the most, more in fact, than all of the bottom 50 percent combined.

A recent book, *Economic Apartheid in America* describes how thirty zip-codes in America have become fabulously wealthy while whole urban and rural communities are languishing in unemployment, crumbling infrastructure, growing insecurity, and fear for their future. *This is not the just America that was envisioned by our founding fathers*. This is deeply disturbing in a country with the inherent promise for equal opportunity for “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”. Our collective memory resonates with the hallowed idea of “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Reality no longer reflects the original American dream. Great progressive struggles have been waged throughout history to make sure ordinary citizens, and not just the super-rich, share in the benefits of a free and open society. Citizen groups support broad social goals of affordable medical coverage for all, decent wages for working people, safe working conditions, a secure retirement, and clean air and water, but there is no longer a government “*of, by, and for the people*” to deliver our common aspirations. Elections are simply purchased by well funded special interests. Elected official then operate as special interest mercenaries. A small oligarchy is choking democracy to death. Concentrated wealth totally controls our political agenda. America no longer works for most of America. Louis Brandeis, one of the greatest Supreme Court justices in US History stated; “You can have wealth concentrated in the

hands of a few, *or* democracy. *You cannot have both*". I established Sustainable Operating Systems to reverse this very alarming situation.

Federal economic measures such as **Gross National Product** only measure *gross dollars in circulation*. Official policymakers have no criteria in place to measure if those dollars create value or destroy value. Building bombs and blowing up cities, to provide contracts for multinational corporate war profiteers to rebuild the destruction are all part of the **GNP** equation. GNP only measures *cash flow*. Your health and a sustainable Earth are not even on the agenda. Fifty % of your Federal dollars are squandered on the death and destruction of the war machine. In the book, Sustainable Operating Systems, I offer a new scientific economic metric: **Gross Productive Output** (GPO). *GPO measures progress, productivity and real value*. It does not assign economic value to gross resource waste, the mass murder of war, and disease. **GPO** measures war, waste, environmental degradation and disease as what they actually are; *huge economic loss*. In present economic theory, such non-productive loss is just measured as *more money in the bank* for the Petrol-Paradigm Oligarchy that operates the military/industrial complex. Our current official economic system defers the huge environmental and social loss to future generations. *Such deferment is highly immoral*. Our present system steals from our grandchildren and damages our planet. The war machine has hung a millstone of federal debt around the neck of each child in America. I call you to real change and conscience. An ecological economy is one element of this change.

Ecology is the study of life's whole system. Real ecology and real economics are thus a spiritual and scientific discipline. Economics is the measure of the flow of energy and resources in the planetary ecology. Ecology is the study and documentation of all elements of life on Earth as a **whole system**. The health of the whole is necessary for the health of each part. *Life exists only as a unified system*. Knowing this scientific fact, and integrating your own life with this reality is absolutely essential for life to continue to grow and thrive on this planet.

For centuries the global human community has been growing increasingly disconnected. We are disconnected from the vital life of this planet, disconnected from each other in disintegrating communities and families, *profoundly disconnected from our own earthbound souls*. The antidote for our present environmental, social, political and spiritual disintegration is reintegration of each person with this **whole system of life**. Integration with our planet and one another is essential for personal and human survival. There is only one life on this planet. *Connect with it*. The Latin root word of religion is *religio*, which simply means "reconnect". False religion is divisive, destructive and now pervasive on planet Earth. A global scientific and spiritual paradigm shift is our most urgent need.

My book is offered as a **community survival guide** for life on our home planet Earth. Life emerged on this planet through a dynamic integration of elements; made vital by Divine energy. Elements apart do not exist as Life. Life is a whole system of **Integrated Elements** that are *animated by spirit*. Being "holy" is not about separating yourself from life as an ascetic recluse, but rather it is the exact opposite, to be "*wholey*": to actively immerse oneself in the human and planetary ecology, to live as a vital part of the whole. The divine destiny of the human community is to celebrate our profound participation in the **Sustainable Operating Systems of Life**. Conscious ecological integration brings us into spiritual enlightenment.

No priest, minister, imam, rabbi or guru can bring you to this vital consciousness. A teacher can lead you to the water, but only you can drink it in deeply. You enter into this state through a deep ecological embrace of all life. All concept of "other" is swallowed in Oneness. This effort is actually a "*non effort*". Just like Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree, we enter spiritual enlightenment as we *simply let go and fall deep into the well of our own real being*. Access to spirit is available to saints and sinners,

kings and paupers alike. My book provides a guide for a radical shift in the daily life of humanity. *We change our thinking, and thus change our life.* **Sustainable Operating Systems** offers a practical life support system to integrate your life and community with the ecology of all Life. Welcome home to Earth. The Garden of Eden is in your own backyard. Go till it.

This article is an excerpt from: **SUSTAINABLE OPERATING SYSTEMS**/*The Post Petrol Paradigm*

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