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We survived, barely, the destruction of democracy and that is a joy. The US constitutional mythology is 'Government by the people for the people'; but the conservative right believes "No, no, it means government by and for the people with money and power. Government for all the people is evil – it is socialism!" For someone born into the chaos of England at the end of WW2 this is pathetic. The US cut off Lend-Lease aid to Britain a few weeks before I was born, in part because the people had elected a socialist government who promised a National Health Service and a Social Security system after six years of war. Food was rationed carefully for more than 7 years, which improved my family's health, and keeps me growing food 70 years later!

The reconstruction facing us now is a staggering task. The political shift gives us hope, but so much is still buried by the misuse of human power in both the real world and in our fabricated virtual worlds. We are several steps removed from having the skills and moral guidance to deal with reconstructing human society in the face of COVID, the Earth's climate crisis and the loss of so many species.

Indigenous peoples understood their integral part in the living interconnected world that is essential for the future of all life. Yet their wisdom is still mostly ignored. Worse, for more than a thousand years, their deep understanding was a heresy to be crushed by the ruling priests, as it was a threat to their power. This year has exposed the grim side of three centuries of white racism. In contrast it is very difficult for churches to confront the dark side of their history, so their moral guidance is often too shallow.

Science worships objectivity and human control. Capitalism worships money and exploitation by the rich. Western religions worship a God who is safely distanced from their institutional power. Politicians worship power, money and the freedom to create false realities to generate fear. As information is fabricated and traded to serve politicians and capitalism, the virtual world threatens to take over our human institutions.

This framing in terms of human power means little connection to the living interconnected Earth system of which we are just one part. Yet it is the future of the Earth that will determine the future of humanity. How can we recognize and reconnect to what lies beyond human power and rationalization?

Long ago I was trained as a scientist, but fifty years ago I knew that science was not enough. So I started exploring in parallel the sacred traditions across the globe to understand directly our relation to what was called the creation. On Earth this is the living interconnected web of life that was not made by humanity. Much is beyond words – you can surrender to it and glimpse this real world, and occasionally she talks back in a language you can understand. This can be both a breathtaking experience and a real shock.

Look at what we have now. We have scientists who think they have the solutions for our climate and health crises, if only the people would listen to them, the 'experts'. Following a long arrogant tradition, the public gets no part in their discussions, but the public are expected to do as they are told by the educated and powerful. Yet almost half the public does not trust these elites and won't obey.

Many other absurdities are apparent to the public. The religious right sanctimoniously talks about protecting the unborn, while supporting policies that will kill thousands of millions of unborn children this century. The Earth's human population is already far above a sustainable level, and declining birth rates are a glimpse of hope. Yet leaders grumble that this is a threat to our consumer society, even as our consumer society is destroying the essential web of life.

The truth is that self-interested elites are not touching the human heart. We must gather our community groups and listen deeply to the diverging opinions, as well as the strands of deep wisdom that unite us. In Europe, nations are turning to citizens assemblies to weigh up climate policies in the face of divisive politics. After this US election this will be difficult here, but it is still essential. With a wise moderator, people can listen to each other and discuss directly the profound issues that will dominate our lives and the lives of our children. In contrast, non-overlapping virtual worlds feeding off political self-righteousness simply trap us in conflict.

Last week it was so warm and sunny that I had the joy of picking some of my winter crops of lettuce and spinach. The sharing of food with the hungry is one thing that has united our small Vermont communities.

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