

## Chapter 3

# Politics of Being: Harnessing Spirituality and Science for a New Development Paradigm

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### Abstract

This chapter presents a spiritual or wisdom-based approach to development, its rationale, conceptualization, methods and examples of applications. The politics of being proposes that societies explicitly make the fulfillment ('being') of all its members – humans and non-humans – their main goal, which should guide the development and implementation of public policies. It stands in opposition to the current development paradigm focused on economic growth or 'having', and rooted in a set of modern western values – individualism, materialism, reductionism, anthropocentrism, etc. By nourishing our relational nature, the politics of being can address the root causes of the meta crisis the world is facing, reconciling human flourishing with sustainability and supporting the cultural evolution that is needed. It proposes a dialogue between wisdom and science, the two main areas of knowledge, to guide its design and implementation. It conceptualizes 'being' as the actualization of our truest 'being' and our highest 'being'. This means that societies should provide the right conditions for their human members to express themselves and fulfil their healthy aspirations, as well as to develop human virtues and qualities. Wisdom traditions and spiritual teachings offer relevant insights into the nature of human fulfilment and the process of spiritual evolution that can be applied to societies. They emphasize the cultivation of spiritual values and qualities such as love, peace, happiness, life, mindfulness, mystery and the understanding of interconnectedness. In recent decades, these qualities have become areas of scientific research and been at the core of social change and development initiatives. Together they can serve as the foundations of the politics of being and allow to identify actionable public policy agendas in many sectors mainly based on existing examples.

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Applied Spirituality and Sustainable Development Policy, 41–69

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doi:[10.1108/978-1-83753-380-020231003](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83753-380-020231003)

*Keywords:* Spirituality; wisdom; sustainable development; evolution; culture; institutions; development paradigm; public policies

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

This chapter proposes a spiritual or wisdom-based development paradigm termed ‘politics of being’, in which societies pursue ‘being’ – instead of ‘having’ or economic growth, – as their main collective goal. To help frame this new field of research and action, the chapter presents its rationale, conceptualization, methods – in particular how to bring wisdom traditions and science together into a fruitful dialogue – and examples of applications in many sectors. It also identifies the different scientific and social fields where the seeds of this new paradigm can be found and shows how the politics of being can provide an integrative framework in which all relevant claims and initiatives can fit together. After presenting the need for a cultural evolution and a new development paradigm in the first section, we will introduce the ‘politics of being’ concept next and followed by how spiritual values can serve as its foundations, before highlighting concrete, actionable public policies agenda that can embody and advance this new vision for our societies.

## **The Need for a Cultural Evolution**

### *An Evolutionary Civilizational Crisis*

With the COVID-19 pandemics and the war in Ukraine, it has become clear to many that our world has entered a stage of systemic crisis and disruption. Our crises are not only economic or related to public health; they are also environmental, social, political, food-related, energetic, demographic, ethical, cognitive, etc. This meta-crisis points to an overall obsolescence of our current model of development focused on economic growth.

This model is itself embedded in a specific cultural programme: the modern paradigm and its set of values – materialism, reductionism, individualism, humanism, anthropocentrism, scientism, etc. Together these values shape a worldview and cultural narrative that Charles Eisenstein (2013) calls the ‘story of separation’, in which human beings see themselves as separate from each other and nature. This cultural programme, which originated in the west, has spread throughout the world, first through colonization, and then through globalization. Though it has brought in the past benefits to societies (e.g. economic and technological development, human rights, etc.), it is becoming more and more mal-adjusted to the present world’s conditions and its destructive effects have become unsustainable.

While this worldview reflects scientific understandings of reality that often date back to the 19th century, the evolution of science and cultures are now allowing a

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<sup>1</sup>The content of this chapter is derived and adapted from [Legrand \(2022\)](#).

new story to emerge, that Eisenstein calls the ‘story of interbeing’, which highlights our fundamental interdependence with one another and the natural world. This change in narrative has been called different things. For instance, MIT professor Otto Scharmer describes this as moving from an ego-system focused entirely on oneself to an ecosystem awareness that emphasizes the well-being of the whole (2016).

This vision allows us to characterize the civilizational crisis our societies are facing as an evolutionary crisis, which impels humanity’s cultural evolution from the narrative of separation to that of interbeing, for the sake of its own survival and flourishing.

This crisis results from an imbalance between humankind’s material and technological power and the relative underdevelopment of the consciousness, wisdom and ethics we need to manage this power and the increasing complexity it has brought to our world. Humanity has seen its power multiply, to the point that many scientists consider that human beings have become the dominant influence on climate and the environment, characterizing a new geological epoch called ‘anthropocene’. But our development path has not allowed the kind of human growth necessary to build a wiser society that makes good use of this power.

On the contrary, modern values and our current model of development keep fostering a certain inner underdevelopment, as illustrated by a global mental health crisis (Marcus et al., 2012), a sharp decline in interpersonal trust in some rich countries (Algan et al., 2019; General Social Survey data, 2022), the ethical failure of our societies (Rahn & Transue, 1998; Sachs, 2012), and our inability to understand reality systemically (Morin, 2008).<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, our technological power keeps expanding rapidly, particularly with the development of artificial intelligence, biological engineering and our capacity, in the near future, to drastically transform human beings.

Our technology, if used wisely and ethically, could solve most of our problems. However, its current misuse may provoke the collapse of our civilization, whether through climate chaos, the sixth mass extinction of global biodiversity or a nuclear war.

### ***The Cultural or Collective Inner Transition***

While it has long remained the major blind spot of global sustainability efforts, cultural or inner individual change is increasingly recognized as a fundamental dimension of sustainability and our response to many challenges the world is facing.

The 2020 Human Development report, published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), affirms that ‘nothing short of a wholesale shift in mindsets [...] is needed to navigate the brave new world of the Anthropocene’ (Conceição, 2020).<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the 2022 IPCC assessment reports on climate

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<sup>2</sup><https://ourworldindata.org/trust>, Accessed on 6 October, 2022.

<sup>3</sup>Conceição (2020, p. 412).

change mitigation and adaptation (IPCC 2022a, 2022b) also highlight the role of inner transition and the transformation of our beliefs and values as a lever for accelerating sustainable development. It builds on a growing body of scientific literature demonstrating the relationship between inner and outer transformation, and the importance of integrating inner dimensions into sustainability efforts (Wamsler et al., 2021) and social transformation.

While this literature often builds on knowledge and theories from different disciplines and fields of research, Donella Meadow's iceberg model from systems thinking is a common reference. The iceberg models recognize that our world's reality (events) is the visible manifestation of underlying patterns, structures and mindsets. The deepest part of the iceberg such as mental models or mindsets are the most powerful leverage points for systems transformations, though also the most difficult to activate (Meadows, 1999).

Concrete initiatives emphasizing the importance of inner transitions for sustainability, such as the Inner development Goals or the UNDP-convened Conscious Food Systems Alliance have also emerged in recent years.<sup>4,5</sup>

### *Wisdom Traditions and Humanity's Spiritual Evolution*

Representatives of wisdom traditions have asserted the need to address the human, ethical or inner dimension of this civilizational crisis. They were proactive in drafting the Earth Charter (2000) – 'a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century', initiated by the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> This document emphasizes the spiritual nature of this required cultural evolution by calling for 'a change of mind and heart', which reflects the general position of many spiritual leaders.

The fourteenth Dalai Lama believes that 'the fundamental problem [...] is that at every level we are giving too much attention to the external, material aspects of life, while neglecting moral ethics and inner values.'<sup>7</sup> 'So long as people give priority to material values, then injustice, corruption, inequity, intolerance, and greed – all the outward manifestation of neglect of inner values – will persist'.<sup>8</sup> The Indian spiritual and humanitarian leader Amma also agreed: 'In short, today we search externally for the causes and solutions to all the problems of the world.'<sup>9</sup> In our haste, we forget the greatest truth of all that the source of all problems is to be found within the human mind. We forget that the world will become good only if the mind of the individual becomes good. So, along with an understanding of the outer world, it is essential that we also come to know the inner world'.<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis has expressed this in his encyclical letter on care for our common home,

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/>

<sup>5</sup><https://consciousfoodsystems.org/>

<sup>6</sup><https://earthcharter.org/about-us/faqs/#ec1>, Accessed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>7</sup>His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2013, p. X).

<sup>8</sup>His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2013, p. XIII).

<sup>9</sup><http://amma.org/>, Accessed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>10</sup>Amma (2004).

*Laudato Si*, which has played an important role in reframing the ecological crisis: ‘The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast’.<sup>11</sup>

Many prominent spiritual teachers of recent times have also emphasized the need and possibility of a spiritual transformation of humankind in the near future. Pioneers include the founder of the Bahá’í faith Baha’u’llah (1817–1892), Hindu spiritual teacher Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) or Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955). This vision is becoming increasingly widespread among spiritual communities and contemporary spiritual teachers (e.g. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022), Eckhart Tolle (born in 1948), or Hindu guru Said Baba (1926–2011)), who are increasingly getting organized in support of ‘conscious evolution’ (see for example the evolutionary leaders network).<sup>12</sup>

The belief in humankind’s spiritual evolution is inherent to many spiritual traditions, for example those believing in reincarnation and the existence of the divine within living beings, that we can, life after life, learn to manifest more fully. These include many traditional cultures and religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Many interpretations of the latter seem to agree that we are moving out of the ‘kali yuga’, the ‘age of quarrel and strife’. The faith in the upcoming unification and progress of humanity is also present in numerous indigenous prophecies. The indigenous people’s track at the 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions was titled: ‘The Spiritual Evolution of Humanity & Healing Our Mother Earth’. Most religions also have an eschatological dimension: they are concerned with the destiny of humanity, which, after many crises, is said to be radiant in the end. This is illustrated in Christian concepts such as the ‘kingdom of God’ – which is generally considered to be the central theme of Jesus’s teaching, and, according to some interpretations, means the earthly fulfilment of God’s will – or the ‘new Earth’.

### ***An Ongoing Transformation***

We can see several signs that this spiritual transformation is not only possible, but ongoing. Scientific development has considerably extended our knowledge and power not only over nature but also over our very human condition and now describes a vision on the world that is much more compatible with core spiritual teachings. Together with science, globalization and the development of information and communication technologies, especially the internet (also known as ‘humanity’s brain’), are evolutionary forces in themselves, which have deepened our sense of interconnectedness. Humankind is experiencing an unprecedented process of information exchange and synthesis through which it can either get lost or get to know itself, reflect on its history and consciously choose what direction

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<sup>11</sup>Holy Father Francis (2015). The quote is taken from Benedict XVI (Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry, April 24, 2005).

<sup>12</sup><https://www.evolutionaryleaders.net/>, Accessed on 20 October 2022.

to evolve in. These are important conditions for a collective spiritual transformation.

According to Ronald Inglehart (2018), the most recognized political scientist studying the evolution of values on a global level, in ‘developed countries’, the unprecedented prosperity and security of the post-war era has already brought about a great cultural change. With most of the new generations taking survival for granted, these societies have seen a shift from materialist to post-materialist values – which was part of an even broader shift from survival to self-expression values. Consequently, ‘spiritual concerns, broadly defined, are becoming more widespread in post-industrial societies’, (p. 75) while religiosity declines. Indeed, this deep cultural shift moves from prioritizing economic and physical safety, as well as conformity to group norms, towards increasing emphasis on individual freedom and autonomy, openness to new ideas, tolerance and empathy for out-groups (including LGBTQ+ and foreigners), gender equality, participation in decision-making, environmental protection, secularization, etc.

Inglehart shows that values mainly change through intergenerational population replacements as one’s basic values largely reflect the conditions that prevailed during a person’s pre-adulthood. This cultural change is considered the main driver of long-term institutional changes, which tend to occur quickly only when the cultural change has reached a critical mass and is then diffused in society through media and education. That is why while our underlying values have been changing for 50 years, societal changes are relatively recent. However, a recent decline in economic and existential security, associated with rising inequalities and immigration, is causing a cultural backlash and the return of survival values – heavy emphasis on group solidarity, rejection of outsiders, rigid adherence to cultural norms and obedience to strong leaders – among those who hold traditional cultural values and fear losing the world as they know it. This has invigorated xenophobic, populist and authoritarian political movements and is, according to Inglehart, the main cause for the rise of far-right populism.

While self-expression values as identified by Inglehart are tinged with a strong focus on individuality and do not necessarily correspond to the cultivation of our higher selves, they may represent one step in that direction, as part of an even broader trend towards the actualization of our true selves (see our definition of ‘being’ below). The spiritual dimension of the ongoing cultural change has been highlighted by sociologist Paul Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson (2000). Studying the evolution of social values, they have named the growing sociological group at the forefront of current progressive cultural change ‘the cultural creatives’. Among them, they distinguished a core group of more educated, socially committed and influential people who share a strong focus on spirituality. This led to them to identify an ‘emerging planetary wisdom culture’.

If we are serious about addressing the current challenges, we need to recognize that our politics should turn inward and address this question of a cultural shift, and more precisely, of a shift in consciousness. This should not be opposed to the many other policy reforms we urgently need, which are in some cases well-known but often not implemented. In many cases, it should rather be seen as complementary, two sides of the same coin, with inner change enabling outer change and outer change embodying and facilitating this shift in consciousness.

## The Politics of Being as a New Development Paradigm

### *In Search of a New Development Paradigm*

The civilization crisis we face calls for a new development paradigm. This is widely recognized and was at the core of the UN debate on the post-2015 global development agenda when then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, ‘The old model is broken. We need to create a new one’.<sup>13</sup>

Not only is our development model unsustainable, but it increasingly appears that material development is not the main avenue for societal happiness, in particular for high-income countries. If economic development can strongly increase life satisfaction in its early stages, once a certain level of material prosperity is reached, its correlation to life satisfaction plateaus (see Fig. 3.1). The same is true for the relationship between economic development and life

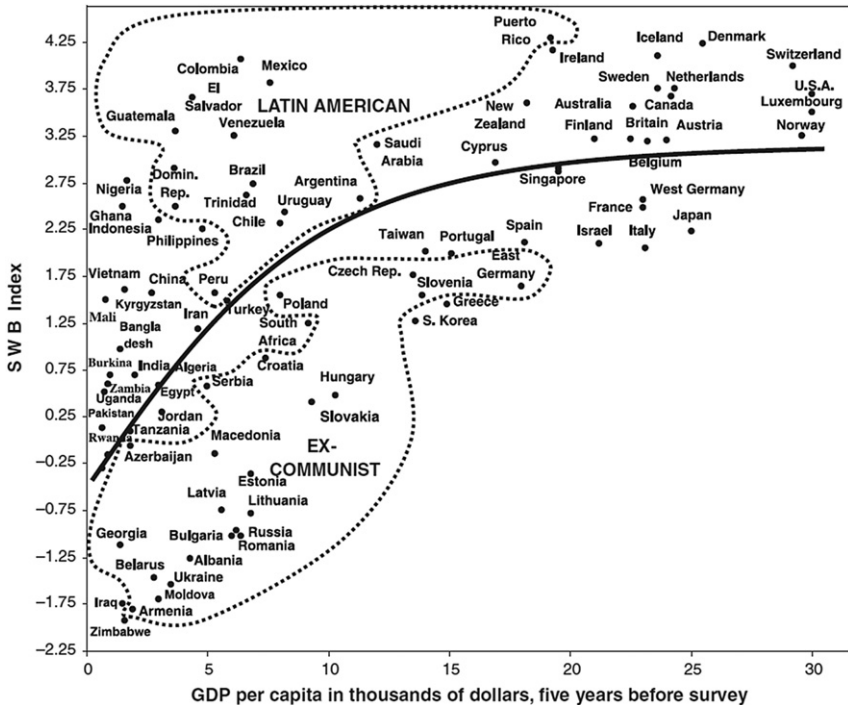


Fig. 3.1. Life Satisfaction by Economic Development. *Source:* Inglehart (2018, p. 148).

<sup>13</sup><https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/financing/new-paradigmjob-creation.html>, Accessed on 7 October 2022.

expectancy (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010 based on data from UNDP, 2006). In fact, the latter has started to diminish in the United States before the COVID-19 pandemics (Arias et al., 2022).

Economic growth and its main metric – Gross Domestic Product – have long been criticized and alternative visions and measures of development have been proposed. In particular, these include human development (UNDP, 1990) and sustainable development (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).<sup>14,15</sup> Cultural development has also been emphasized not only as the fourth pillar of sustainable development but its most fundamental dimension according to indigenous peoples, and many scholars have affirmed that true human development is cultural in nature (Schafer, 2022).<sup>16</sup> More recently, as part of the discussion on the post-2015 global development agenda, the Kingdom of Bhutan proposed ‘happiness’ as a new development paradigm (NDP Steering Committee and Secretariat, 2013).

The Earth Charter (2000) and its visionary approach to the new millennium offers a simple yet profound perspective on what this new development paradigm in essence should be. It affirms that ‘when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more’. This focus on ‘being’ gets to the heart of the matter and offers a vision that can potentially encompass alternative visions for a more integral, human, qualitative and sustainable development. This sentence has been integrated in the interreligious statement at the Rio +20 Conference, which claims that ‘to make development truly sustainable, our economic, scientific, and technological accomplishments should assist the processes of individual and collective, psychological, and spiritual development. We must reorient our economic bottom line to support this full human development if we wish to live in a flourishing Earth community’ (Jacob Soetendorp Institute for Human Values, p. 1).

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<sup>14</sup>For more updated information, see <https://hdr.undp.org/about/human-development>, Accessed on 7 October 2022. According to the Human Development Report website from UNDP, Development is ‘about giving people more freedom to live lives they value’. The Human Development Index is a ‘crude measure’ of human development based on life expectancy (health), years of schooling (education) and income per capita (standard of living).

<sup>15</sup>In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Sustainable development is often associated to three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 put sustainable development at the centre of the development agenda.

<sup>16</sup>Political declaration of Indigenous people at the Rio+20 International Conference on Self-determination and Sustainable Development. <https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/default/files/publication/2012/06/final-political-declaration-adopted-rio20-international-conference-indigenous-peoples-self-determina.pdf>, Accessed on 8 October 2022.



### ***The Politics of Being***

The Earth Charter suggests that the focus on ‘being more’ would apply only for countries or people that have their ‘basic needs [. . .] met’. At first sight, this seems congruent with the diminishing returns of economic growth in terms of life satisfaction and life expectancy (see above). It is also consistent with some psychological analyses such as the Pyramid of Maslow and its hierarchies of needs (assuming that basic needs have to be met before one can pursue ‘growth’ or ‘being’ needs), or sociological analyses such as the work of Inglehart’s and the transition observed in rich countries from materialism to post materialism and more fundamentally from survival to self-expression values.

However, there are also good reasons to argue that human development is always about ‘being more’. First, while ‘having more’ might get more attention from those whose basic needs have not been met, it still needs to be considered as a means (among others) for ‘being more’ rather than an end in itself. Secondly, studies have shown that people can simultaneously be motivated by different needs, without necessarily having their basic needs met (Tay & Diener, 2011), something even Maslow himself recognized (1987). Moreover, the paradigm of economic growth is rooted in western modernity and its strong materialistic values. Many low-income countries and communities – examples include Bhutan, Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as many indigenous people (see section ‘The Politics of Being as a New Development Paradigm’) – may be more naturally inclined than western countries towards development paradigms reflecting a ‘being’ focus, that are closer to their own cultural values. Failing to recognize these ‘being’ aspirations before basic needs have been met (assuming they probably never were from modern standards) seems like a highly condescending, dehumanizing and erroneous vision. Finally, the focus on ‘being more’ at the collective or individual level can also be the key to fulfil basic needs. Investing in personal development at scale, in particular for poor people, can have an important positive impact on the development of poor countries, as shown by the example of Nordic European countries and their ‘popular enlightenment’ (‘folk-bildung’) education policies in the 19th century (Andersen & Björkman, 2017). Furthermore, ‘being more’ may also be the key to build more solidary and equitable societies as pointed out by Indian spiritual and humanitarian leader Amma: ‘In today’s world, people experience two types of poverty: the poverty caused by lack of food, clothing and shelter, and the poverty caused by lack of love and compassion. Of these two, the second type needs to be considered first – because, if we have love and compassion in our hearts, then we will wholeheartedly serve those who suffer from lack of food, clothing and shelter’.<sup>17</sup>

The politics of being is the new development paradigm emphasizing ‘being more’. It applies to all ‘beings’ – not only humans – recognizing their fundamental rights to be. ‘Being’ here means the fulfilment or realization of our full potential

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.facebook.com/MataAmritanandamayi/photos/in-todays-world-people-experience-two-types-of-poverty-the-poverty-caused-by-lac/10155064627348302/>, Accessed on 8 October 2022.

(an obvious and widely accepted definition of human development), which, I propose, can be defined as our highest and truest being, in all its dimensions. Our highest being refers to the development of inner values, virtues, or qualities while our truest being relates to the process of becoming who we really are. They both converge in the manifestation of our true interbeing nature (see below). The emphasis on highest and truest being complete, balance and ultimately meet each other. Focussing only on our highest being is neither healthy nor sustainable. Self-improvement comes with many pitfalls (e.g., ego strengthening, disconnection from oneself, masking deeper problems, etc.). At the social level, the exclusive focus on righteousness can foster a hypocritical morality when it fails to recognize that it is fine to make mistakes, which are necessary parts of any evolutive process. People at all developmental stages should feel respected and supported in their journey. This focus could also slip into legitimizing new forms of social control. The social credit system in China offers us a glimpse of such risk. It assesses the trustworthiness of individuals, companies and government entities, and, based on their scores, offers rewards and punishments. Reciprocally, when the subjective quest to become who we are does not lead us to objectively develop the best in ourselves, as is often the case in individualistic societies, it is a vain attempt and comes with many social ills.

This definition of 'being' makes it similar to other terms such as spiritual or inner development, human flourishing (Keyes, 2005, 2007), eudaimonia (Huta, 2013), or to some extent, self-actualization (Maslow, 1987). A truly human development is not merely focused on the external material dimension but recognizes the primacy of the inner dimension, all the dimensions of being, as well as our relational nature. Thus, being is about realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, psychological, mental, ethical and aesthetic development in relation to self, others and the environment.<sup>18</sup> The politics of being recognizes that life is a spiritual journey and aims at aligning our institutions with our true reason for being here on Earth: becoming who we are, the best and most complete version of ourselves.

This definition of 'being' poses the question of our true nature. First, it has been recently discovered that mystics from all sorts of spiritual traditions attest to the same experience of our true nature – that of being one with everything that is, – which can be called for example oneness, unity consciousness or interbeing (Teasdale, 1999). This recognition of our deep interconnectedness at the level of our being echoes the recent emphasis in human science on our 'relational' nature (Walsh et al., 2021). We are made of relationships: from birth, we develop our identities and potential through relationships, and we live our lives and flourish within relationships.

Secondly, the question is about the goodness or meanness of human nature. On the one hand, spiritual teachings usually emphasize the fundamental goodness of our spiritual nature. On the other hand, as human beings living in a historical

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<sup>18</sup>Paraphrasing to some extent the definition of well-being proposed by O'Toole and Kropf (2012, p. 75).

reality, we have the potential for goodness and meanness. Our culture and social institutions play an important role in helping us manifest one or the other. For example, the dominant paradigm of retributive justice builds upon and strengthens our instinct for retaliation, while the practice of restorative justice allows all those involved to cultivate human values and qualities such as understanding, deep listening, compassion, healing, inclusivity, courage and responsibility.

While philosophers, from Aristotle to Confucius, have stressed the importance of the state and society to foster human virtues and qualities, the current domination of the story of ‘separation’ have on the contrary led to the institutional cultivation of greed, competition and selfishness, strengthening the root causes of our very problems. As one social psychologist (Miller, 1999) put it: ‘the image of humans as self-interested leads to the creation of social institutions (e.g., workplaces, schools, governments) in that image, which, in turn, transforms that image into reality’. The result is that we as a society believe we are much less altruistic than is true (Crompton et al., 2016; Harwood Group, 1995).

This led American political economist Elinor Ostrom (2009) – arguably the most influential scholar in institutional analysis – to affirm that: ‘designing institutions to force (or nudge) entirely self-interested individuals to achieve better outcomes has been the major goal posited by policy analysts for governments to accomplish for much of the past half century. Extensive empirical research leads me to argue that instead, a core goal of public policy should be to facilitate the development of institutions that bring out the best in humans’.

Institutions are often defined as ‘rules of the game’ shaping human interactions (North, 1990) and include laws, policies, organizations, social norms, etc.

The politics of being holds that all our institutions should be designed in a way that favours the daily experience, practice and nourishment of the greatest qualities in everyone – our intrinsic motivation and capacity for cooperation, altruism, care, understanding and creativity, etc. Virtues are developed with practice, as sages from Buddha to Aristotle have long taught. Together, this kind of human development can lead to the required wisdom to refine, adapt and wisely implement our institutions, in order to create a virtuous circle (see Fig. 3.2).

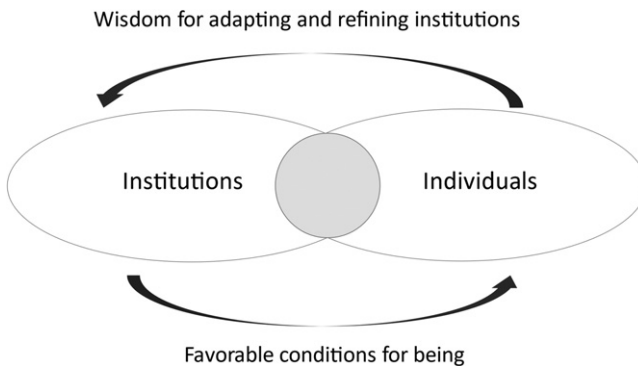


Fig. 3.2. Institutions and Individuals in the Politics of Being.

Spiritual teachings tell us that we cannot separate means from their goals. ‘There is no way to happiness; happiness is the way’, the Buddha once supposedly said. ‘Being’ is not something that can be produced mechanically by our institutions but those can invite everyone to cultivate their human qualities, while respecting their freedom.

**A Theory of Change**

How would a politics of being support the transformation of societies towards sustainability? Fig. 3.3 presents a theory of change for how inner development can support sustainability and collective flourishing.

First, is the recognition that the sustainability crisis is a human, relational crisis (Leichenko & O’Brien, 2020; Vásquez-Fernández & Ahenakew, 2020; Walsh et al., 2021; Wamsler et al., 2021), rooted in the story of separation. Our social and environmental crises arise from our disconnection with others and nature, which is itself linked to the disconnection with ourselves. Our current model of development, focused on economic growth, fosters and feeds on this disconnection through consumerism, greed and the focus on ‘having’, workaholism and the primacy of doing. It not only fuels excessive materialism, which has been shown to be associated with ill-being (Kasser, 2002); more generally, it impels people to prioritize what self-determination theory calls extrinsic goals (money, fame, image, conformity, etc.), on which our model of development relies for its continuation, over intrinsic goals (autonomy, social relationships, personal growth, mental health, physical fitness, etc.).<sup>19</sup> The former are those through which we search for others’ positive evaluation, while the latter ‘are inherently

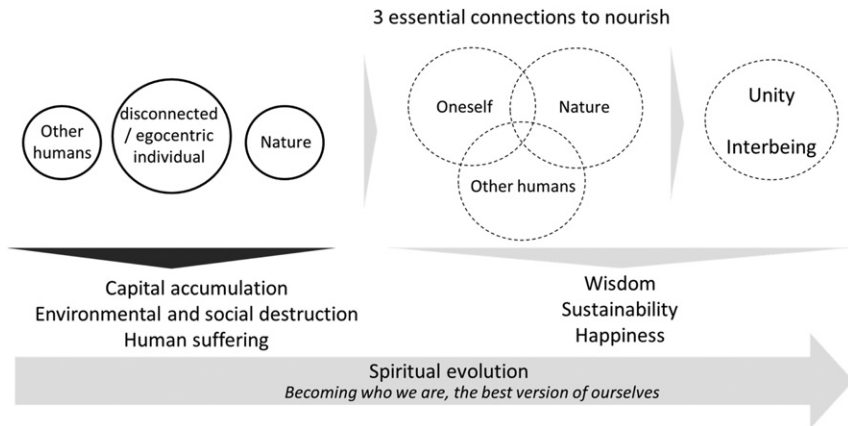


Fig. 3.3. The Inner Path to Sustainability, a Theory of Change.

<sup>19</sup><https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory/>, Accessed on 10 October 2022.

satisfying to pursue because they are likely to satisfy innate psychological needs' (Schmuck et al., 2000, p. 226). Prioritizing extrinsic goals not only reflects a sense of insecurity about oneself (Kasser et al., 1995) but leads to a lower level of subjective well-being and to suffering 'disproportionately from a host of maladies including anxiety, depression, physical symptoms, unpleasant emotions, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, behavioural disorders, lower levels of self-actualization, less vitality, less life satisfaction and fewer pleasant emotion' (Ahuvia & Izberk-Bilgin, 2013, p. 490). The scientific literature also shows that those who pursue extrinsic goals tend to have attitudes and behaviours towards others and the environment that are more harmful (Thompson et al., 2013).

Second, a close link can be established between our connection with others, nature and oneself on the one hand, and our well-being on the other. The quality of relationships, in particular with a partner and family, is generally recognized as the most important factor for individual happiness (Demir, 2013; Waldinger, 2016). At a collective level research also highlight the social (cf. social capital, Sachs, 2015; Helliwell et al., 2017, 2019) and cultural (Ye et al., 2015) foundations of happiness, well above economic factors. Moreover, science is documenting the important psychological well-being, cognitive and physiological benefits of interacting with nature (Keniger et al., 2013), and how it strengthens our pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Nisbet et al., 2009). Research also highlights the social health benefits of urban nature.<sup>20</sup> As for the importance of the connection with oneself, research has indicated the importance of prioritizing intrinsic goals for our happiness (Ahuvia & Izberk-Bilgin, 2013). More fundamentally, premodern philosophical and spiritual traditions all over the world for centuries have emphasized that happiness fundamentally depends on us, and our attitudes towards life rather than our life conditions. In that perspective, the concept of eudaimonia – sometimes translated as 'flourishing', or equivalent to 'being' – which goes back to Aristotle, emphasizes the cultivation of moral virtues and human capacities (Huta, 2013).<sup>21,22</sup> Eudaimonic life pursuit has been shown to be a central determinant of our individual well-being (Peterson et al., 2005; Vella-Brodrick et al., 2009). Eudaimonic well-being has also been identified in turn as a driver of pro-social and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Ahuvia & Izberk-Bilgin, 2013; Brown et al., 2005; Huta, 2016).

To summarize, science shows that what we call 'being' or eudaimonia can reconcile human thriving with sustainability through increased prosociality. The human capacities and virtues associated with 'being' can be cultivated, including through educational programmes and spiritual practices such as meditation (Baer, 2015; Bristow et al., 2020; De Vibe et al., 2012; Keng et al., 2011).

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<sup>20</sup><https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/>

<sup>21</sup>Although 'flourishing' includes also positive emotions often associated to 'hedonia' to which 'eudaimonia' has been often opposed to.

<sup>22</sup>Huta (2013, p. 201) defines eudaimonia 'roughly speaking' as including 'states and/or pursuits associated with using and developing the best in oneself, in accordance with one's true self and one's deeper principles'.

While in the ‘having’ paradigm, environmental and social limits can be considered as hindrances to economic growth in the short term; in the ‘being’ paradigm, our connection with others and nature are on the contrary the foundations for human flourishing. This is recognized in alternative development paradigms rooted in indigenous or traditional worldviews such as Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness or the *buen vivir/vivir bien* Andean political philosophy (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011; NDP Steering Committee and Secretariat, 2013; Solon, 2008).

The spiritual understanding or our true interbeing nature (Teasdale, 1999) allows us to comprehend why the spiritual development process of ‘being more’ naturally lead people to an increased sense of connectedness (or oneness at a very advanced stage) with all that is, from which stems prosociality and service. By becoming who we are, we also tend to express the best human qualities, associated with our relational nature.

## **Spiritual Values as the Foundations of the Politics of Being**

The seeds of the politics of being can be found in new fields of scientific research, as well as social change and political initiatives rooted in some specific values, which lie at the core of spiritual teachings. They constitute different communities, organized to promote these values as new lenses through which to look at our current challenges – each contributing their part to the new story of interbeing – or new paradigms to transform our societies.

### ***Understanding of Our Interconnectedness***

New ways of thinking are needed to overcome the reductionistic mindset that characterized modern science and help navigate a more and more interconnected and complex world. Over the last decades, systemic thinking (Meadows, 2008) has emerged as a critical alternative to address many of our current challenges in an integrated manner, moving beyond sectoral and disciplinary silos, as well as direct linear causality. As mentioned above, the iceberg model emphasizes mental models or paradigms – or participants’ ways of being (Scharmer, 2016) – as the most powerful leverage points for systems’ transformations (Meadows, 1999). Changing the goal of the systems and relationships among actors are also highlighted as particularly important for systems change in that perspective.

Complexity theory arose from the recognition of the fundamental complexity of natural and human systems, and the inherent uncertainty and nonlinearity associated with it. Its ambition is to evolve our very concept of science, its methodology, epistemology and ontology (Morin, 2008). Developmental psychology tends to consider the complexity of our meaning-making the main measure of a person’s developmental stage (Commons et al., 1998; Kegan, 1982; Wilber, 2001).

Integral theory intends to develop a comprehensive view of our reality through its division in four ‘quadrants’, corresponding to the interior and the exterior of

the individual and the collective reality, as well as the consideration of different stages of personal, behavioural, cultural and social development (Wilber, 2001). It has led to the development of new approaches in many sectors including integral politics, health, education, business etc. (Wilber, 2001).

These new ways of thinking, based on the recognition of our interconnectedness, echo traditional wisdom (Meadows, 2008) and in particular spiritual traditions emphasizing the need to overcome dualistic thinking, such as Buddhism (e.g. the concept of right view) or Taoism (e.g. the yin-yang philosophy) (Legrand, 2022).

### *Life*

Another influential value is that of life, and the recognition that we as human beings are not separate but part of nature (Descola 2014; De Waal, 2016) – a living system: the Earth and even the Cosmos, – and, as such, we should organize our societies according to and in harmony with natural principles and laws. Those have been the subject of contemplation of virtually all wisdom traditions – in particular indigenous cultures – and are considered to reflect a cosmic sacred order whose names – Tao, Dharma, Maat, etc. – often translate to (right) ‘path’ or ‘way’, as well as ‘justice’. These principles and laws include reciprocity, mutuality, balance, self-organization, circularity, localism, unity in diversity, etc.

The environmental crisis calls for aligning all our social institutions and systems with ecological principles. Indeed, as illustrated by the development of biomimetics (Benyus, 2002), nature is increasingly a source of inspiration and innovation – not only for the development of new technologies but also for redesigning our economic (e.g. circular economy), agricultural (e.g. agroecology), organizational (Laloux, 2014), or urban systems. This is at heart of new political visions and movements such as China’s commitment to become an ecological civilization (Xi Jinping, 2017) and the buen vivir/vivir bien movement in South America.

### *Happiness*

As mentioned above, the development of happiness science (historically linked to positive psychology) is going hand in hand with a growing influence in policy-making (O’Donnel, 2013) and development efforts.<sup>23</sup> Beyond the example of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan, the governments of New Zealand (which adopted in 2019 its first ‘well-being budget’), Scotland, Iceland, Wales and Finland for example have also officially committed to building wellbeing economies.<sup>24</sup> This interest is due to the recognition that happiness is a natural end to pursue for societies, and that it can be a key lever for sustainability (see above), as well as being associated with many positive effects on health, social functioning

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<sup>23</sup>See for example <https://worldhappiness.report/>, Accessed on 13 October 2022.

<sup>24</sup><https://weall.org/wego>, Accessed on 13 October 2022.

and work performance (Government Office for Science, 2008). This can explain why the wellbeing paradigm is becoming influential in many sectors through concepts such as positive education, positive health, positive organizations or positive leadership (David et al., 2013).

### *Love*

Happiness's best friend is love, the most positive emotion: it is the state of mind that most activates areas in the brain associated with positive emotions, contributing greatly to our well-being, health and development (Fredrickson, 2013). Scientific studies show that parental love is the key source of all human development: physiological, emotional, psychological, cognitive and behavioural (Khaleque, 2018). It is the foundation for secure attachment, the basis of our empathic and relational capacities that are indispensable for our happiness and our social functioning (Davis, 2017).

As mentioned above, science is now challenging the story of separation and the vision of selfish human beings to offer a new agenda for societies – cultivating empathy, – around which a new field of scientific research is developing (Seppälä et al., 2017). Educational and meditation-based programmes, such as the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT), have been proven effective in cultivating compassion, empathy and cooperation (Goldin & Jazaieri, 2017). New social change initiatives rooted in this vision are emerging such as the Charter for compassion, which supports hundreds of initiatives committed to help their local and national communities grow compassionate and better address social and environmental issues.<sup>25</sup>

### *Peace*

The development of peace studies since the creation of the first academic department of peace research in 1959 has led us to increasingly understand peace not only as the absence of overt violent conflicts – ‘negative peace’ – but rather also as collaborative and supportive relationships between groups or nations – ‘positive peace’ (Galtung, 2017). It has turned the lens from outward physical violence towards more inward structural violence, defined by Johan Galtung as the systematic ways in which a regime prevents individuals from achieving their full potential, such as through institutionalized racism or sexism.

This has led the United Nations to promote the concept of a culture of peace, which emphasizes ending all forms of oppression – political, social, economic and cultural – and the peaceful settlement of conflicts.<sup>26</sup> A culture of peace is similar to what Eisler and Fry (2019) calls a ‘culture of partnership’ (as opposed to ‘cultures of domination’), which prioritizes feminine values of care, equity, collaboration and non-violence. Examples of cultures of partnership include modern Nordic

<sup>25</sup><https://charterforcompassion.org/>, Accessed on 13 October 2022.

<sup>26</sup>Resolutions 52/15, 53/243 and 53/25 of the UN General Assembly.



countries, as well as traditional societies in different parts of the world. These cultures hold a unique potential to support human flourishing and sustainability, in particular through gender, economic and racial equity, as well as by freeing children from violence (Eisler & Fry, 2019; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

### ***Mindfulness***

Science has recently evidenced a wide range of potential health, wellbeing, socio-emotional and cognitive benefits associated with the practice of mindfulness – the non-judgemental awareness or presence to what is happening inside and outside of us – meditation (Baer, 2015; Bristow et al., 2020; De Vibe et al., 2012; Keng et al., 2011). In a stressed-out multi-tasking culture, where a multitude of messages are constantly competing for our attention, secular mindfulness is increasingly considered a major resource that is being harnessed in many sectors including business, education, health, justice, etc. This has led the British Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) to publish a report titled ‘Mindful Nation UK’ (Mindfulness Initiative, 2015), highlighting why and how public policies in these four sectors could harness the potential of mindfulness, in particular to deal with the mental health crisis and its huge costs for the country.

### ***Mystery***

Modern science has the potential to deeply transform our worldviews and consciousness, as more and more it tells the story of an energetic, vibrant and maybe even conscious reality, made of parallel universes. As new instruments will continue to push the limits of scientific observations towards more and more subtle aspects of reality, and our societies grow spiritually, we will become more inclined to look deeply, at the collective level, into the many mysterious aspects of the reality that connects us to the spiritual dimensions of our lives – from new forms of energy to subtle bodies, spirits, or psychic powers. Many puzzling phenomena that could easily be scientifically verified or denied have not received enough attention from the scientific community, often because of a lack of interest or distrust, or simply out of professional disincentives shaped by the current scientific paradigm. A politics of being would make this a priority for our societies and would better take into account the subtle and vibrational nature of reality in its public policies, in particular for example in the field of human health, landscape management (and the associated traditional ecological knowledge) and agriculture.

### ***A Vision of the Good Society***

These values arguably constitute some of the highest human ideals and qualities, and reflect a perfection or absolute that is beyond them. Recognizing that their cultivation is the way to the good society is not new, this has been the dominant view in western philosophy since Plato, who emphasized truth, goodness and

beauty. Known as the transcendentalists, these values have been considered properties of being, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church considered them to ‘reflect the infinite perfection of God’.<sup>27</sup> They are also fundamental foundations of the Politics of Being and characterize cultural and spiritual evaluation. This list of values is not exhaustive and also includes freedom, a central aspect of progress or even the nature of human development according to Sen (1999), which was also regarded by German philosopher Hegel (1770–1831) as the essential quality of mind or spirit whose realization history is moving towards.

At a collective level, the focus on ‘being’ emphasizes the cultural nature of development, as the cultivation of these highest human values. In fact, these are implicitly acknowledged by most countries as our North stars as they constitute the lexical field of most national mottos.

## **An Agenda for Action**

The scientific literature and social change initiatives associated with these values allow us to identify concrete public policies with existing examples of applications that constitute an actionable agenda for the politics of being. This policy agenda represents a ‘second-stage’ investments in human development, emphasizing its inner dimension, replacing or complementing more traditional policies. These investments can be direct – through education, mental health and childhood well-being policies – or indirect – addressing concrete social needs through institutions that cultivate human qualities, as in the case of restorative justice. We present some of these as examples, without pretending to be exhaustive.

### ***Early Childhood and Family***

As mentioned above, childhood wellbeing and parental love is decisive in building not only our capacity to flourish, but also to contribute positively to our communities. Thus, investing in childhood well-being can generate very positive returns for society (Kirby, 2017; Lynch & Vaghul, 2015). These investments can include developmental screening and guaranteed access to quality nutrition, education, health care, social protection and trauma prevention and healing for all children. Parental leaves policies and parenting programmes can also be priorities for public action.

### ***Education***

Rather than filling brains with knowledge, educational systems should be redesigned to support ‘being’, which would better prepare pupils to succeed in the 21st century. Many well-tested educational approaches can support this including personalized educational curricula, topic-based teaching (instead of structuring

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<sup>27</sup>In paragraph 41 in part one, section 1, chapter 1. IV. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM), Accessed on 14 October 2022.

curriculum by disciplines) positive education and socio-emotional learning (Bonniwell, 2013), character and values education (Berkowitz, 2011), cooperative learning (Johnson et al., 2008). The Finnish educational systems, often highlighted as a successful example, integrate most of these approaches (Korpela, 2017). In fact, while it is traditionally feared that the focus on individual characters and personal skills could supplant the time needed to learn content, studies show that, on the contrary, these approaches can generate benefits in terms of well-being and character, while improving academic achievement. Improving children's personal capacities just helps them learn better.

### ***Work and Organizations***

Evidence is growing that values-driven organizations (Cameron et al., 2004, Sisodia et al., 2007), as well as more decentralized and adaptable organizations based on trust, empowerment and the development of human socio-emotional capacities – sometimes called ‘Teal organizations’ (Laloux, 2014) or ‘liberated companies’ (Carney & Getz, 2016) – may be particularly suited to thrive in complex and uncertain environments. Enabling legal frameworks could support and incentivize these companies by recognizing their specific organizational and managerial practices and the objective of ensuring employees’ flourishing as part of their specific purpose, which can also include other social and environmental benefits. A universal basic income or a minimum guaranteed income can also enable people to engage in a wider range of self-fulfilling and socially useful activities, transforming our relationships to work for good while decreasing inequalities.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Health***

The World Health Organization (1948) definition of health as ‘a state of complete mental, social and physical well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ should inform the redesign of our healthcare systems and public health policies. A new paradigm for health is needed from one based on sickness, whose increasing costs for an ageing population appears unsustainable (World Economic Forum, 2019), to one centred on prevention and well-being, in which individuals are more responsible for taking care of themselves.

Mental health is a major determinant of people’s well-being (Layard et al., 2013) and is closely associated with the definition of human flourishing (Keyes, 2005). It also significantly influences our physical health (Vitteta et al., 2005). Part of this influence is indirect through our lifestyles (physical activity, food, sleep, drug, alcohol, tobacco consumption, stress, etc.), the main cause of chronic diseases, which now represent 75% of global healthcare expenses (World Economic Forum, 2019). Despite the fact that mental health is a major public health

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<sup>28</sup><https://basicincome.org/basic-income/>and <https://basicincome.stanford.edu/>, Accessed on 15 October 2022.

problem (Vigo et al., 2016) with huge costs for societies (OECD, 2012) and that effective treatments exist (Layard et al., 2013), access to treatments is very low: in rich countries, less than a third of people who suffer from mental illness receive treatment and care (Layard et al., 2013). Mental health should be made a public health priority as part of a new integrative medicine paradigm that considers all the dimensions (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual) and the determinants (social, environmental) of health, and integrates conventional medicine with complementary therapies.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Food and Agriculture***

A study has shown that a ‘planetary health diet’ could support both human and planetary health, and identified public policies to support its adoption (EAT-Lancet Commission study 2019). The way we eat is fundamental not only for our physical health but also for our mental health (Jacka et al., 2013), which in turn can affect our food behaviours (Torres & Nowson, 2007). Thus, the promotion of a ‘planetary health diet’ should go along with access to mindfulness-based interventions that have been proven effective in promoting healthy eating and treating eating disorders (Beshara et al., 2013).

The ongoing paradigmatic change in agriculture goes from industrial agriculture and the dysfunctionality of a growth-based model relying on external inputs to small-scale, multifunctional agro-ecological farming systems working with nature and embodying some of the highest human values presented in section 2. Public policies to support the transition to agroecology have been identified and include shifting public support and procurement, as well as research and education (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, 2016).

### ***Nature***

The required paradigm shift in the way we consider and relate to our planet - as a sacred living entity, of which we are part - is best embodied at the policy level by recognizing the rights of nature, which is already occurring in many countries (Chapron et al., 2019). Recognizing the rights of nature questions our unlimited right to exploit the Earth and helps us seek a balance between the rights of people, corporations and nature. It invites our legal systems to probe: what do we really need as human beings to thrive? The acknowledgement of nature as a subject of rights could go along with the legal recognition of severe environmental destruction as a crime, as well as ensuring the custody of sacred sites by indigenous people.

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<sup>29</sup><https://integrat.ivemedicine.arizona.edu/about/definition.html>, Accessed on 15 October 2022.

### ***Justice***

As mentioned above, the politics of being includes the promotion of restorative justice as an alternative to the current domination of retributive justice. Restorative justice is based on a non-adversarial process involving all stakeholders through dialogue, focused on healing and reintegration. While the retributive justice paradigm is at the root of the current criminal justice system's crisis in many countries (Penal Reform International, 2016), restorative justice displays very high satisfaction rates from victims and offenders, offers a potential to reduce the costs of doing justice and increase the response to crime efficiency and performs at least no worse and probably better than conventional approaches in terms of reoffending (UNODC 2006; Walgrave, 2011). Ultimately restorative justice's effectiveness depends on the quality of these programmes, which heavily rely on human qualities, whose advancement is at the core of the politics of being.

### ***Economy***

Our economic systems need to be redesigned to ensure the satisfaction of everyone's basic material needs and support the expression of our full potential – including spiritual, artistic, or cultural content and experiences, as well as care works – within ecological boundaries rather than the interest of a few (Raworth, 2017). All the current economic institutions need to evolve, including:

- Economic globalization to better regulate and limit international trade and capital flows, so as to decrease the international economic competition, which hinders the rise of social and environmental standards, and increase economic resilience.
- Corporate governance to give a competitive edge to organizations supporting the public good, to foster small, cooperative and public companies (Korten, 2016) and to give more voting rights within companies to employees and external stakeholders.
- Intellectual Property Rights to adjust to the new reality of the digital economy and foster an 'open revolution' in which 'all digital information is open, free for everyone to use, build on and share; and where innovators and creators are recognized and rewarded', generating important gains for societies (Pollock, 2018, p. 5).
- Monetary systems to support the public emission of money (Benes & Kumhof, 2012), the adoption of a global currency (United Nations, 2009) and the promotion of local currencies.

Investments into a global green new deal to foster the climate and ecological transition (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019), as well as reducing inequalities – and the important associated social and health problems (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), including with a guaranteed minimum income are other important priorities.

### **Governance**

Liberal democracy is increasingly questioned for its current ineffectiveness, particularly its inability to take the long-term and common good into account. This discontent has more to do with the way it does not work in practice, rather than the central principle of self-governance behind it (Inglehart, 2018). Democracy needs to evolve beyond its current form of ‘adversary democracy’ (Mansbridge, 1980), in which political parties compete for power, spurring polarization and paralysis.

This implies a deepening of democracy through greater citizens participation – through a more direct, deliberative and digital democracy, integrated to representative democracy – a better balance between competence and popular control, as well as a better regulation of social media and the influence of money over politics (Berggruen Institute, 2020). This kind of ‘intelligent governance for the XXIst century’ (Berggruen & Gardels, 2013) shows a striking parallel with the governance system of the Baha’i faith that have been considered since its origin more than a century ago ‘an embryonic model to be adopted voluntarily when the world sees its advantages, acknowledging that it is not simply institutions and procedures, but that it depends on the requisite values, norms and commitments’ (Dahl, 2017). In fact, the development of civic virtues and key (inter) being skills, including our capacity to listen, to keep an open mind and discern the truth, to understand each other and solve conflicts in a respectful and peaceful manner, is instrumental to the functioning of such deeper and wiser form of democracy and should be actively promoted through public policies.

Ultimately, the politics of being will have to be enacted in our political Institutions and, in each country, a special council – the ‘wisdom council’ or ‘being council’ – would be established to ensure that national efforts are serving this vision and that societies and cultures do evolve towards ‘being more’.

### **Conclusion**

**Box 3.1** synthesizes 10 core messages associated with the Politics of Being. This concept applies, not only at the individual but at all levels. ‘Being more’ means for all nations to cultivate the universal values highlighted above, which can provide the ground for world unification and a ‘civilization of the universal’, in which all nations can contribute their specific ‘genius’. Indeed, ‘being more’ means also for nations to define and pursue its own version of the good life (and not a single common metrics such as Gross Domestic Product) and of the politics of being, which calls for a deep reconnection with themselves. As ‘sociocultural change is path dependent and cultural heritages are remarkably enduring’ (Inglehart, 2018, p. 11), to evolve, nations need to reexamine their own traditional wisdom – most often rooted in the story of interbeing – and history (often disrupted by colonization). Our collective inner lives should be brought at the centre of public debate, through regular psychological assessment and efforts to heal collective traumas, as a gateway to ‘being’.

**Box 3.1. Politics of Being: 10 Core Messages.**

- (1) *We need a collective shift of consciousness, a cultural evolution of a spiritual nature, to address our current challenges.* It is already ongoing, and we are currently facing an evolutive crisis, which requires individuals and societies to look inward and transform.
- (2) *As a wisdom-based, science-informed approach, a politics of being can support this evolution.* Its main goal is to support the fulfilment of all beings, that is to say the realization of our truest and highest being. ‘Being’ is a wiser and more adequate development objective than ‘having’; it applies to the whole Earth community.
- (3) *Cultivating our fundamental ‘interbeing’ or relational nature is instrumental to allow us to live in harmony with one another and the Earth community.* Our spiritual nature makes us interconnected at the level of being with everything that is. Only by recognizing their interconnectedness and sustaining the whole can each part thrive.
- (4) *Societies progress as they increasingly honour the highest values, qualities and ideals, such as freedom, goodness, beauty, truth, understanding, life, happiness, love, peace, etc.* These are spiritual qualities in the sense that they reflect an awakened human being or divine perfection. Science and practical initiatives shaped around these universal values can help us design a politics of being. Cultural development relates fundamentally to an evolution of our values, which shape our worldviews and institutions.
- (5) *The focus on being, the highest values, wisdom and science, provides a simple conceptual framework for a politics of being, which can integrate all relevant claims and initiatives.* As such, it can help unify this vision and strengthen this movement.
- (6) *Our institutions should help cultivate human virtues.* They should acknowledge and facilitate the expression of our potential for goodness, cooperation and intrinsic motivation.
- (7) *Concrete and actionable policy recommendations supporting this agenda already exist in many sectors.* A politics of being can bring them together and scale them up, articulating them in a coherent and meaningful narrative.
- (8) *Spiritual teachings and wisdom traditions, through dialogue among them and with science, have much to bring to inspire, help design and implement a politics of being.* They are our most valuable common heritage, able to offer a profound understanding of human nature, as well as practical knowledge and tools for inner, and ultimately social, development.
- (9) *Each nation needs to reconnect to its own soul and wisdom to develop its version of a politics of being that can support its development and help*

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

it bring its unique contribution to the world. Unity in diversity is the key to harmonious coexistence of nations in a globalized world.

- (10) *Healing trauma is, for individuals and societies, the gateway to being. It is fundamental in order for new ways of being and living together to be possible, and for the whole Earth community to flourish.*

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