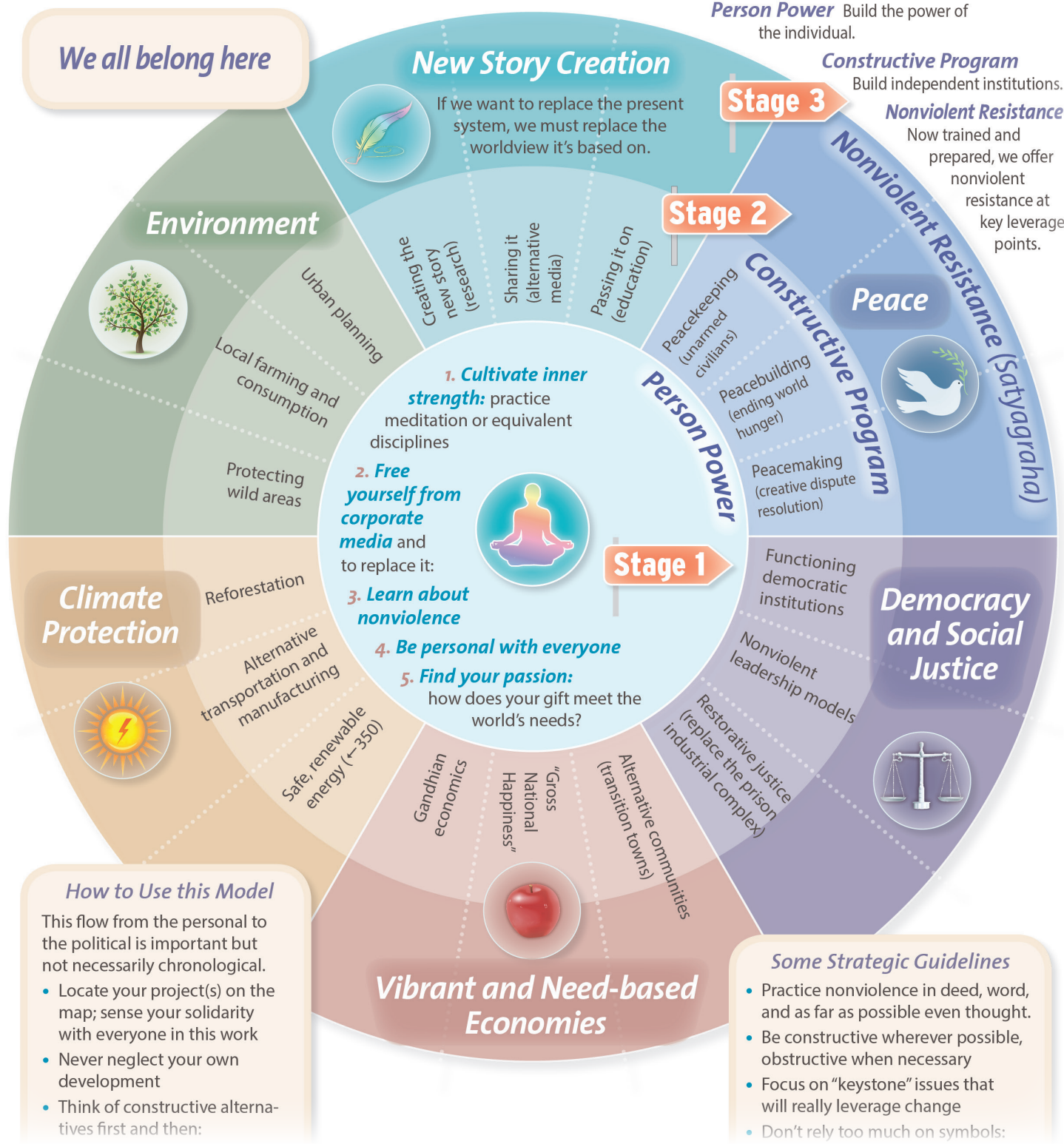


# Roadmap

From spontaneous protest to unstoppable movement: a comprehensive strategy



# A Vindication of Human Dignity: A New Narrative of Meaning and Creation

by Michael Nagler



It is time for humanity to rise to a new challenge. The mounting problems of our world are not due to any irremediable flaw in human nature; they are signs that we have outgrown the present stage of human development. More consumption of outside goods will not make us happy; the 'conquest' of others, or of outer space, will not bring a world of peace and security.

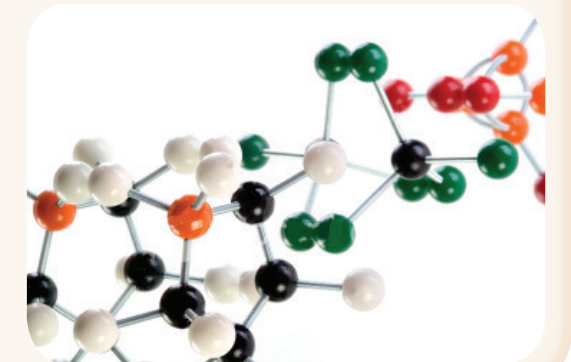
What stands between us and a much brighter world is our belief that we are separate from one another and our environment, that we are material beings who need to consume ever more external resources for our fulfillment. This image of ourselves has brought us into dangerous competition with one another and made us a threat to our own existence on this planet. We have come to accept that image in today's culture is largely through the influence of the mass media.

Where shall we turn for a more realistic and far safer image? As human beings we possess an immemorial tradition of spiritual wisdom and a more recent legacy of enlightened science which, taken together, bring an entirely different picture to light, one that is vastly more encouraging—and challenging.

Both modern science and the most ancient and reliable traditions of wisdom that have come down to us across all human cultures are unanimous that, to begin with, this vast universe did not come about by chance. It is obvious that the grand sweep of evolution has moved from inert matter to the development of life forms with higher and higher consciousness. We human beings are the cutting edge of that long unfolding (at least as far as this planet is concerned). Just as the macrocosm of the



New Story Creation is an important section of "Roadmap—from spontaneous protest to unstoppable movement: a comprehensive strategy" created by the Metta Center for Nonviolence. [See back for more detail.](#)





outer universe consists of matter, energy, and consciousness; the microcosm of the person consists of body, mind, and spirit—these three, but consciousness, or spirit is by far the most creative and potent. Nor is there any reason to think—and herein lies the challenge of our times—that our consciousness has reached the end of its evolution. Indeed, the mystics would add that great souls like Jesus, the Buddha, and in our own time Mahatma Gandhi are beacons of what is still to come. Their love and compassion had expanded beyond any limit; they were able to identify not only with their own inner circle or their own gender or race but with the well-being of all creatures.

Einstein, whose genius in this sense spans what we call science and spiritual wisdom, once gave beautiful expression to this unlimited capacity of ours in a letter of consolation to a Rabbi who had lost his wife:

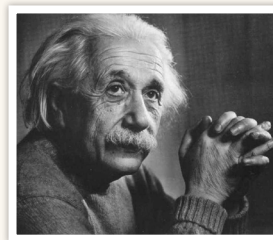
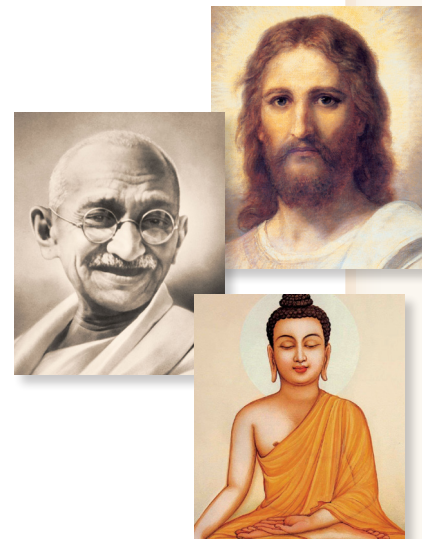
*A human being is part of the whole called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves; our thoughts and our feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.*

Today both an inner anguish of spirit and the sober recognition of the drastic problems facing life on Earth must awaken every one of us to take up the challenge of this “task.” Fortunately, as spirituality and science tell us (that is, the science of the inner world and the science of the outer world), we have vast inner resources, largely untapped, that can bring every one of us the wisdom and the capacity to answer that inner yearning and outer need.

It is time to assert that we are not the separate, material, fragmented and self-centered beings painted for us by our industrial culture. We are all part of one another and have evolved with a drive to be of service to one another and find our purpose in making our distinct contribution to the welfare of others. The cruelty and degradation that we see around us today, even in societies we deem ‘advanced,’ must be rejected as an aberration and the result of conditioning: they are a travesty of our innate potential.


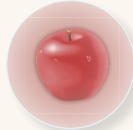


In faithfulness to our own inner feelings of worth and connectedness as they are reinforced by the finest traditions of wisdom and science, we affirm and take as guideposts of our way of life, that:

*We are all part of one another and have evolved with a drive to be of service to one another and find our purpose in making our distinct contribution to the welfare of others.*



- The mounting problems of our world are not due to any irremediable flaw in human nature, rather **we have the capacity to grow and evolve** along the paths marked by the great souls of our past, and in so doing create a better world.
- By virtue of the spiritual dimension of human being, **we are deeply interconnected** with one another and the surrounding reality of our planet. Our infinite diversity on the surface is not a threat but a natural complement to our deep, inner unity.
- Within certain limits **we are free** to rise above our circumstances and take charge of our destiny. Neither our chemistry nor our DNA nor any outside influences can determine our fate or deprive us of our basic freedom—and responsibility.
- We are not condemned to violence. The remarkable **rise of nonviolence** since the time of Gandhi and King, an important aspect of the unfolding of this new image of human nature, has shown that there is virtually no conflict that cannot be creatively resolved to the satisfaction and higher integration of all parties.
- Unlike the world’s material resources, our **inner resources** of love and wisdom, answering to our higher needs for bonding, autonomy, and meaning, are inexhaustible. To discover them is to relieve the burden that our present economy of consumption has placed on the Earth.

Fortified by this renewed awareness of our real nature, we envision a near future where our key institutions arise from this awareness, for example:

- the **criminal justice system** converted from a *retributive* to a *restorative* model 
- our extractive, profit-driven, **economy of wants** gives way to a vibrant, stable economy of *needs* 
- the war system is replaced by a **broad spectrum of peace institutions**, ranging from traditional *diplomacy* to *nonviolent intervention* (of course, fewer wars arise as we can outgrow our dependency on material resources and sense deep inner security) and perhaps most importantly 
- **educational systems, including the mass media**, take as their purpose the unfolding of the *potential of every person* 

It is entirely within the realm of possibility to create a world free of poverty, violence, slavery, the neglect of our precious children, and abuse of planet earth. We can draw upon the inspiration and the challenge of this picture to begin this great change.