

# Leading by Nature

## Foreword to Giles Hutchins' Book

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Giles since his first book *The Nature of Business* was published in 2012. I remember so well reading it with excitement and resonance, so pleased to see a fellow author addressing the big questions of our time. Questions such as:

- How can organizations function the way nature operates?
- How can we learn through biomimicry, not just ways of making our products more natural, but also the whole way we organize and collaborate as humans?

Here was a truly radical thinker and writer, taking us back to our roots in the 'more-than-human' world of the earth we live, not on, but from. Again, in his latest and now fifth book Giles is both inspirational and radical. Inspirational in showing what leaders and organizations need to do to be future fit for what the planet now requires, and radical in the true sense of taking us back to the roots of life.

Giles takes us back to the wisdom we have lost in the so-called developed world, since the so-called 'enlightenment', while we have been busy trying to control, dominate and exploit the world about us, for materialistic gain. We have acquired great material and knowledge benefits and humans have flourished in terms of numbers, physical health and longevity and access to resources. But at what cost to the wider ecology and our own species deeper well-being.

In this latest book Giles provides many signposts and tools to help us on the journey, which is both a journey back and a journey forward. A journey back to living and learning with humility, from the wider ecology around us. A journey back to, not just reading, but learning and practicing the ancient wisdom traditions in a 21<sup>st</sup> century way. A Journey forward to a new consciousness needed, if we have any hope of facing the complexity of the many inter-related challenges that face both our species and the whole planet.

His title "Leading by Nature" is a beautiful paradox. Not 'Leading Nature' which is what we humans have disastrously attempted for far too long. Not 'Leading Naturally' for as this book well shows we have to rediscover the way back to our true nature and our right place within nature. But 'Leading by Nature', letting nature and life lead through us.

Regenerative has quite recently emerged in many fields of study, including biology, animal behaviour, anthropology, social sciences, urban renewal, ecology as well as studies of leadership and

organizational behaviour. To regenerate is the capacity of any living system to respond to major trauma and challenges from its environment, by dying to its old way of being and generating a fresh way of both responding externally and recreating itself internally.

Giles shows that there are two fundamental aspects to this regenerative capacity:

1. sensing and responding to the world around you with systemic awareness
2. deepening one's own self-awareness.

He shows how we have to open our eyes, senses and perspectives, both to the all the systemic levels we are nested within, while also becoming still enough to connect with the depths within us. This dual movement requires us to refrain from reaction and rushing to solve the myriad of problems that confront us. But deepen our inquiry both outwards and inwards.

These are described by Giles as two waves, dancing together, the Yin and the Yang, the inbreath and the out breath.

The great but simple systemic realization is that every systemic level we are nested within – such as family, community, team, organization, cultures, species, ecologies, the one shared planet, the wider cosmos- is also nested within us. The ecology is not something out there. We are part of it, and it is part of us. It flows through us in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the millions of microbial and bacterial beings within us, that digest our food.

The great but simple lesson on this 'regenerative journey', is to treat every problem as a challenge, and every challenge as your next generous teacher, who has come to open you up to a wider perspective and a fuller way of being.

As Giles tells us *"Every day is a learning journey"* and in this book he generously offers us many ways of expanding and deepening our learning.

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