
Introduction:

Alter Egos Respond to Korten's Seminal Study

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This symposium constitutes a second go-round on Korten's (1995) major book *When Corporations Rule the World*. And your editor trusts that this does full as well as useful duty to a major book of our times.

Some Background

In the first iteration (Golembiewski, 1997), a cadre of reviewers -- a collection of scholarly, consultant, and change agent perspectives, among others, often in complex combinations in individual reviewers -- had their several says about Korten's analysis and prescriptions. The presentations of these papers at the 1996 Academy of Management meetings were well-received by a large and enthusiastic audience, which energetically participated in a session of nearly three hours. Your editor also hears good things about the reception of the electronic publishing of these papers in *Public Administration and Management: An Interactive Journal*.

These experiences motivate Round Two, as it were, again using the Academy of Management meetings as the kick-off site, that in 1997 being Boston. In Round Two, the editorial charge is that the several

reviewers become alter egos, in effect viewing Korten's contribution through the eyes of some powerful persona -- beginning with Andrew Carnegie and including the plural authors of *The Federalist Papers*. The table of contents above details these several personae, as well as their alter egos, in the order of their appearance in this symposium.

The general rationale for this second go-around seems largely transparent to your editor, and perhaps I can make the usefulness of this symposium as obvious for readers. Perhaps primarily, the approach enlarges the reach-and-grasp of the commentary about Korten's powerful book, and that is seen by your editor as almost a good-in-itself. Moreover, the alter ego device can help bring to bear on Korten's work perspectives that are otherwise unavailable -- many of the central personae are long dead, for example, and the present device in effect resurrects their ideas for yet another round of service to the worlds of thought and action. And finally, but only for present limited purposes, the alter ego device may free some reviewers to develop a useful position that deserves visibility, but is best done at a distance from the reviewer's own conclusions or beliefs -- not as one-liners, or snippets, but in the depth called for by the alter ego device, as well as legitimated by it.

Orientations to Alter Egos

Brief introductions to the several targeted personae follow. The intent is not to gild any lilies, for the texts do that well enough themselves. Rather, the reader's mind may be usefully stimulated by a few orienting descriptors.

1. Daniel A. Wren as Andrew Carnegie. In this initial approach to alter egoing -- "Andrew Carnegie: A Scottish Immigrant's View of the Corporation" -- an eminent business historian introduces us to the thought of one of the leading figures in the early development of the corporate form to which Korten gives telling attention. Perhaps even moreso than to Carnegie's thought, Wren directs suggestive attention to some of the context which underlays Carnegie's thought-in-action. This putting-in-context constitutes a service in itself.

In addition, Wren gives us far more. There is no telling how individual readers will respond to the projection of Andrew Carnegie, but to this reviewer Carnegie represents both a resource and a comfort for those concerned about Korten's hard-hitting analysis. Your editor was prepared for Carnegie as Social Darwinist, and hence as a stark opponent of the views toward which Korten's argument directs basic support.

This direct opposition simply is not the case, Wren advises as Carnegie's alter ego. Your editor leaves discovery of Wren's reasoning and evidence to the persevering reader.

2. Delmer D. Dunn as *The Federalist Papers*. The choice of this wellspring of our political thought for Del Dunn to alter ego seems quite evident. If nothing else, America will be a central national actor in any scenario that Korten can envision, and Dunn seemed to me correct in the challenge expressed in part of the original title of his work -- "Our Past Informs Everybody's Future." Professor Dunn has thought better of that matter, and his contribution below carries the title *The Federalist Papers v. When Corporations Rule the World*.

Professor Dunn is a respected scholar of American institutions, and he is a valuable alter ego for expressing the "values and attitudes" represented by *The Federalist Papers*. The challenge is substantial. Not only are *The Papers* at the heart of our national institution building, but they constitute a collective product of three earlier eminences -- John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison.

Dunn's game plan is direct. In effect, he asks: How does America's past inform a critique of the international future which concerns Korten? Dunn focuses on four problems in *The Papers* related to:

- creating greater prosperity;
- promoting peace;

- preventing foreign intervention;
- controlling power

Clearly, this constitutes a critical short list of concern to all those who embark on institution building, or the criticism of them.

3. Paul C. Godfrey as Mary Parker Follett. A personal letter constitutes this third exemplar of alter-egoing. Godfrey's contribution puts the essential matter directly in its title -- "Creating A Global Neighborhood: Mary Parker Follett Responds to David Korten." This introduces into the dialog a social thinker who was in many ways too far ahead of her times. Some of her contributions go back over a century ago. But their appeal keeps them surfacing; as Godfrey does in a "letter" from Parker Follett to Korten.

In sum, management theorist Godfrey pens a "letter" that emphasizes both critical disjoint as well as profound integrative potential in the contrasts of the ideational worlds of Korten and Mary Parker Follett. "Her" letter emphasizes deep philosophical differences on numerous particulars, with he being in the postmodernist tradition and she a modernist philosopher. But Godfrey as alter ego emphasizes that both Parker Follett and Korten see humanity's positive future as depending substantially on the quality of neighborhoods and face-to-face interaction within the global setting.

Nonetheless, Parker Follett expresses concern in her letter about Korten's program for action. Absent a clear emphasis on, and commitment, power-with vs. power-over, "she" worries that his reforms will be only old wine in new bottles.

4. William B. Wolf as Chester I. Barnard. This fourth pairing of prominent and alter ego has several special qualities. Thus, Barnard is a successful man of practical affairs who also had strong intellectual instincts as well as a substantial bibliography attesting to the power of those instincts in gaining large rations of Barnard's time and energy.

Moreover, Wolf is a scholar who has a long-standing interest in the persona he seeks to represent. Certainly, as a matter of degree of close association over a long period of time, this pair is unique in this symposium, and this uniqueness encourages careful reading because the alter ego may speak with special credentials about Barnard's probable reactions to Korten's book.

How does alter ego Wolf envision that Barnard would respond to *When Corporations Rule the World*? As usual, the alter ego will have to do the heavy work, but some brief orienting cues may help readers. On balance, Barnard/Wolf is concerned that Korten's book "lacks a holistic sense of the world we live in" and, indeed, that a truly-comprehensive sense is ultimately beyond any of us. Hence Barnard/Wolf encourage a pessimism that "human beings can control the evolution of their society," which implies sharp limits on how and why Korten can approach his goal of fundamental transformation. But the present pair also encourages an optimism that constructive actions can be taken, but as constrained by that inherent indeterminacy which Korten is seen as insufficiently reflecting.

At the same time, the point of Wolf/Barnard is not that Korten is too hard on existing institutions. Indeed, Barnard/Wolf suggest two major features of our worlds that might have been given greater attention by Korten, and which would strengthen his case for the need for reform. These two features are: our governance values as well as institutions; and organized crime.

5. Gordon A. Walter on Gandhi. The final selection in this Symposium strikes this editor like the proverbial 2-by-4. "Gandhi and the Politics of Development in the New Millennium" urges on Korten a worldview that Walter/Gandhi see as different from that underlying *When Corporations Rule the World*. In this process, Walter also poses numerous challenges for the reader -- to take a different perspective, and perhaps especially to "break the frame" in major particulars.

Now, Walter does not so directly speak as Gandhi as (for example) does Paul C. Godfrey propose to speak for Mary Parker Follett. Rather, Walter speaks about Gandhi's system of thought/action. Either way,

Walter clearly gets one's attention, and challenges the reader's synapses to be prepared to fire away with sufficient speed and force to keep up with the relentless argument -- built on Gandhi to apply to Korten's book, but obviously reflecting Walter's insistent mind.

On this point, your editor can speak from personal experience. Walter had my individual attention even before he briefly included your editor in a list of contributors of ideas having "fundamental managerial importance." This list falls in-between, as it were -- short of Gandhi's approach from "the opposite end of the poverty/affluence continuum," as well as trafficking with the "tyranny of nobody" that Walter associates with "modern, mass, bureaucratized systems...."

That set my synapses to firing, and prompted an ongoing review of my sense of purposive change in the context of the full argument Walter develops. Preserving a dynamic balance has a high priority, clearly, if Walter at all reasonably relates to one's turf. Hence, your editor's engines are working away to assess that reasonableness, a valuable exercise whatever the outcome. Your editor wishes other readers a similar growth-presenting challenge.

Readers may profit from perspective concerning how Walter-as-Gandhi sees Korten's book. Fortunately, Walter contributed a long chapter to the first symposium (Golembiewski, 1997), which also contains a brief sense of Korten's reactions to several commentators on his book, including Walter's. Here, Walter-as-Gandhi provides more grist for several analytic mills.

Editorial Notes

The editor's hand in this symposium can be characterized by two modes. Thus, the editor-as-energizer participated actively in the choice of alter egos and the personae that they would represent. An attractive list of personae-plus-alter ego was developed, and some day the efforts of the full list may see the light of day. But that cannot be the case now. Some Boston presenters are not able to meet the present production

schedule. Fortunately, electronic publication will permit a later insertion in the symposium of any now-missing papers, at any convenient point in time. These missing papers target such luminaries as Mikhail Gorbachev, George Soros, Chris Argyris, and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, among others. Needless to note, their insights into Korten's work will be missed.

In addition, the editor-as-easy-rider also characterizes this symposium. That is, the papers below were all revised at least once, but the Editor took great pains to have each alter ego freely represent the inspiring persona. This reflects the intimate character of the alter ego bonding, as well as the subtlety of many issues and interpretations.

References

- Golembiewski, Robert T. (1997) Ed. Symposium on David C. Korten's *When Corporations Rule the World*, Parts 1 and 2. Public Administration and Management: An Interactive Journal 2(1) and 2(2).
- Korten, David (1995). When Corporations Rule the World. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.