



### TURNING SCARCITY INTO CREATIVITY

All around us people are talking about ‘austerity’ and ‘austerity measures’. This may be a harsh reality for some but for many of us, it is far from where we actually are right now. The very word conjures up images of gloom, impoverishment, denial, hardship. If we use the word and hold to this perception, we are likely to believe that the quality of our lives will be threatened and that we will suffer loss of material wealth, comfort, status; maybe we will have to go without food and basic requirements – perhaps we might imagine losing our jobs, our homes. Such future imaginings build within us ‘states of mind’ that have the potential to evoke anxiety, fear, frustration, despair, rage, panic even hatred. Emotions that become activated in us, can unconsciously drive our behaviours, leading to patterns that can amplify an increasingly negative, potentially destructive spiral within, between and among us. Unless we tune in to what is playing out internally, we become slaves to an ‘inevitability’. In imagining ‘it’ coming, we hasten its arrival. Our future catastrophic fantasy becomes real in the present because in our minds, we have started living as if it has arrived already.

Being trapped in this particular mindset shows us that we are caught in a frame of thinking that has us playing a ‘finite game’ - a game with fixed rules, whose purpose is to produce a winner (and therefore losers); that has us seeing only certain things as ‘useful resources’, certain people as ‘legitimate players’. When we view our context in this way, we limit our options for action. We get stuck. And whilst in the short term someone might win, in the long term we all lose. This is where we are headed as we propel ourselves towards extinction, in pursuit of perpetual growth and financial profit – no matter the cost to people; no matter the cost to our planet.

It does not have to be like this. But to break out of this self-created prison, we need to develop the capacity to notice what we do not currently notice (within, between, among and around us); we need to grow our ability to play with multiple realities and infinite futures; we need to become masterful and expansive in seeing, sensing and re-framing. We need to learn to play an infinite game – where everyone and everything is a potential player and ‘plaything’; and where the purpose of the game is for us all to KEEP PLAYING.

What might it take? There is a paradox: to deal with outside, we need to dive deep within. If we do not develop our internal reflexive and reflective capabilities we will never be able to effectively and systemically act for the good of ourselves, others and the planet. If we are blind to what drives our own internal patterns and behaviours, we will forever be unconscious, delusional actors, potentially reaping havoc on the people and world around us; and in so doing, we will be caught in our own crossfire.

Learning to play the infinite game calls on developing our Adaptive Capacity. This speaks to both an inner personal mastery and a wider systemic appreciation that enable us to see from many perspectives or vantage points; to explore myriad possibilities for action and to have the ability to take action at many different levels of a system (intra-personally, inter-personally, or structurally from local to global levels). When we are in this place, we find that we need never again stay stuck. There will always be something we can do.

So, I can choose to think of ‘austerity’ and get myself locked into something that saps my energy and limits my options. I know this place well and it cripples me. I begin to believe that I have to charge more for my services; I think I need to stop doing pro-bono work and become less generous in giving people time and attention. And then I remember that I can re-frame the finite game and instead, invite myself to ‘turn scarcity into creativity’. Where does this take me? It reconnects me to what gives meaning to my life: inspiring leaders and seeking to make a difference to people’s lives, helping to ‘illuminate, connect and liberate flow’. I decide also to re-frame my contracting from ‘exchanging my talent and time for money’ and instead move to dialogue that invites ‘exchanging value for value’. And so this summer, I offered myself and my expertise in service to a bigger purpose. And in the mountains of Switzerland I have found myself surrounded by amazing people doing amazing things, and we are in a bountiful cauldron sharing and learning and co-creating. I may not be earning what I might in other contexts, but my life is enriched; I am fulfilled and touched in ways so profound that no amount of money could match it. ‘Turning scarcity into creativity’ helps me realise that when I get anxious about ‘earning enough’, the ‘enough’ I actually need is way less than my fearful imagination would have me believe. What I need to learn over and over again is that sharing what I have brings connection and sustenance beyond imagination; and out of that, a different kind of abundance becomes possible which seeds itself over and over again. Austerity? Bring it on! And let it bring out the best in and between us. It might just help us save our planet and the human race.

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