

Dear Students, Colleagues and Friends,

Mr. Weaver was right when he wrote that 60 years ago. Nature IS an open book. Each of us have the right and the extreme privilege to experience the library of nature. One of my favorite ways to “read” is to study the march of different organisms around me as we go through the year. I wrote about the procession of frogs and toads in spring, published this week by the Chicago-based *Center for Humans & Nature* here: <http://bit.ly/TPKHvp> .

As we consider Mr. Weaver’s harmony in 2014 though, we have a much more beleaguered library with which to interact. We are being pressed to operate our businesses, homes and communities in greater accord with Earth’s Operating Systems<sup>1</sup> in order to continue to even hold a library card. Typically when we consider business, we’re used to examining initial investment, quarterly earnings and such. We also look at capitalization – where the costs to acquire “x” are included in the price of “x”. It sounds simple, right? In communities and at home, although we might look at those things in a less technical way we still have to consider value propositions.

“How will the community be served through this investment?”

“I’d like to have “y” but I just can’t afford it because then I’ll have to get “z” and “q” to go along with it or make it work.”

These are all every day questions and observations. But the real challenge and responsibility arises as we look at each of these entities not as elements in isolation, but as a system . . . and study how they interact with other systems environmentally, socially and economically. In the past, we had a much broader field of options because we didn’t have to deal with the effects of over 7 billion people on Earth. Now, because all of us need food, water, shelter and space, our choices have become more restricted if for no other reason than Earth and its natural resources are subject to limits and boundaries that we keep pushing. But we don’t like to talk about that. *I* don’t like to talk about that.

“What do you mean if I eat ice cream every day I’m going to experience a change to my individual corporation that I won’t like? Not fair!” I protest.

We all chuckle at my ridiculousness and yet we all participate in a cavalcade of similar actions. Really, when you get right down to it, how would my unrealistic pout about the negative consequences from too many jamoca shakes be much different than a community being “surprised” that overreliance on pipes and concrete to handle stormwater would result in a larger number of work orders to fix those pipes and concrete? And how could a business complain about higher operation costs at a plant if they insist on using high pressure washing systems for all their cleaning and don’t attend to leaks as a part of regular operating procedures.

And yet, we all do these things.

So, what am I suggesting? I’m really just asking a question. What if we looked at nature as more than just something to look at, listen to or experience in some other “fun” way? What if we really looked at how nature handles and utilizes limits and boundaries, cyclic processes, dynamic non-equilibrium and the elements of sunlight, water and gravity<sup>2</sup> that are unique to our planet? What would happen if we operated within those boundaries or in accord with them? I’d be ten pounds lighter for one thing.

Companies could save water and money on soap if they painted walls needing regular cleaning with [Lotusan](#), a paint that mimics the structure of a lotus leaf shedding dirt more easily than its counterparts.

We could enrich our neighborhoods by investing, not just in the heart of them, but at the [edges](#) like fungi. Brightworks discovered this when working with Mexico City-based architectural firm [Taller de Operaciones Ambientales](#) who employ biologist to build more vibrant and sustainable communities.

You could save a long walk for cooking and drinking water at your home in Chile, Peru, Guatemala or a number of places in Asia simply by asking how a small African desert beetle gets water for itself like the folks at [FogQuest](#) did.

“But what about the cost?” we ask. As we look at charts illustrating our impact on the environment or lack of clean water for an increasing number of the world’s people, declining supplies of petroleum and increasing supplies of intense storm events I have to reflect that question back to the questioner. Yes, what about the cost? Our definition of capitalization – where the costs to acquire “x”

are included in the price of “x” has been a woefully incomplete one. What could happen if we moved beyond enjoying the calls of the frogs to incorporating their operating strategies to make our world livable enough for someone to write a celebratory essay on how we adapted by mimicking nature in another 60 years?

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<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> These are concepts taught by the [Biomimicry 3.8 Institute](#) and their strategy-exploring tool [AskNature](#). Check them out. Utilize them; and help build a better world.

***Give good people good information and they'll do good things.***

(If you've just received this single [newsletter](#), it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)