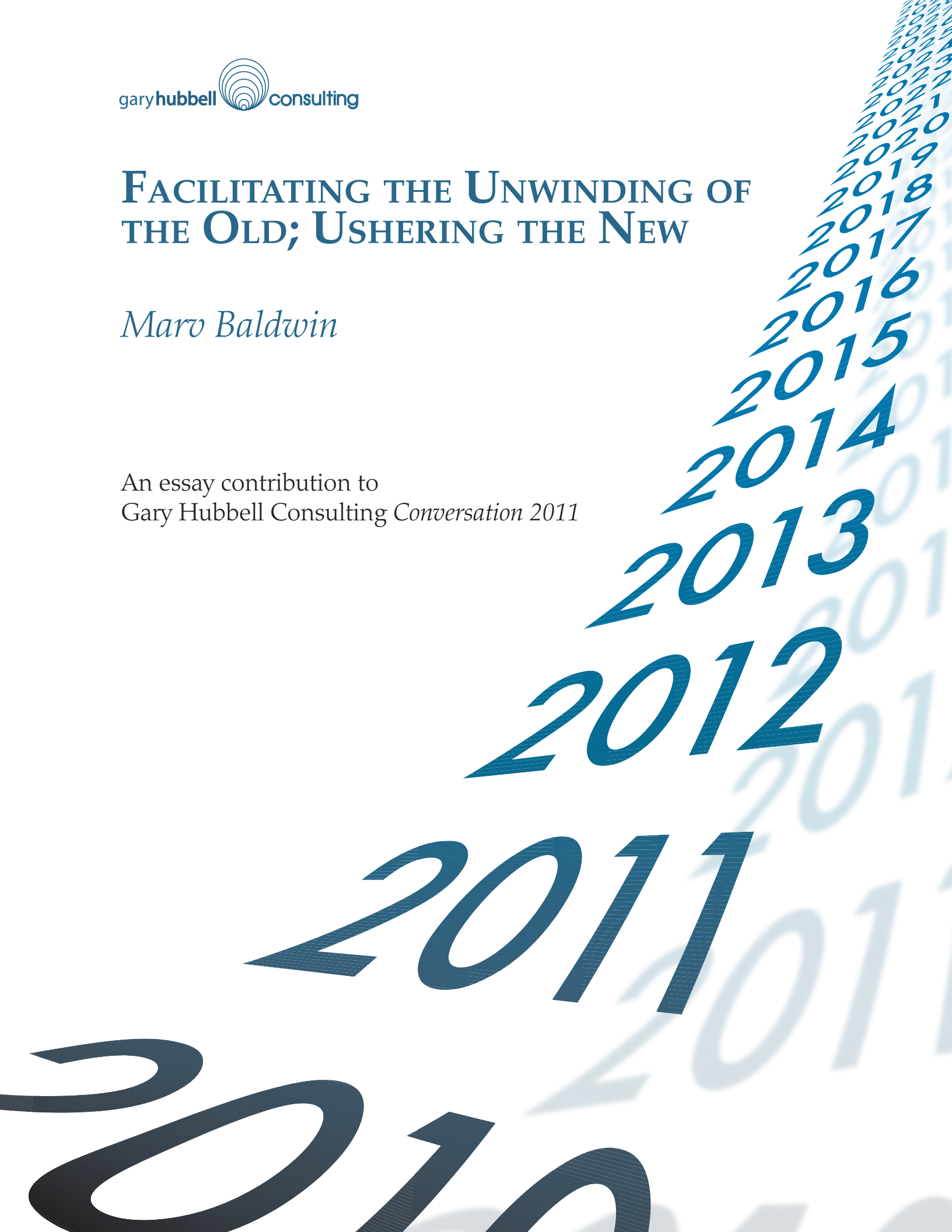


FACILITATING THE UNWINDING OF THE OLD; USHERING THE NEW

Marv Baldwin

An essay contribution to
Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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ABOUT GARY HUBBELL CONSULTING CONVERSATION

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals from throughout North America for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about philanthropy, organizational leadership, and social sector change. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the philanthropic environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each GHC *Conversation*, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of philanthropy.

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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Marv Baldwin has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Foods Resource Bank (FRB) since February 1, 2005.

"In Marv Baldwin our search committee has found just the individual FRB needs to make our Christian response to world hunger achieve its growth potential," said Susan Ryan, past chairperson of FRB's board of directors and chair of the search committee. "He is a young man of vision and strong spiritual values. At age 39 he has the leadership ability, integrity, energy, business experience, and passion to drive FRB's impact on world hunger for many years."

FRB, a faith-based non-profit organization, funds overseas food security programs ("helping people from the world's poorest villages feed themselves") from the sale of crops raised by U.S. community growing projects. Smallholder farmers and their families move toward food independence with dignity, while American volunteers, motivated by a desire to help others, discover that working together for a greater purpose enriches life in their own communities. Marv's initial experience with FRB was as a growing project leader.

Prior to joining FRB, Marv Baldwin was a district sales manager for Nalco Company's water treatment technology, where he excelled in achieving organizational goals and proved himself a skilled leader and team-builder. He is a dedicated volunteer himself, and knows how to motivate others to do the same. Wherever he and his family have lived, they have been fully involved in local church life and community-improvement projects. While living in California, Tennessee, and Illinois, Marv spearheaded fundraising and community outreach efforts—whether to build a new church or restore an old one, whether to rebuild a child development center or organize community growing projects for FRB. He views his assignment with FRB as an opportunity to do more of the same, but with national and worldwide impact.

A graduate of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, Marv resides in Western Springs, Illinois, with his wife Amy and their three children.

This is Marv's third *GHC Conversation*.

FACILITATING THE UNWINDING OF THE OLD; USHERING IN THE NEW

We must have the courage to face an unknown future.

By Marv Baldwin

We must be willing to think about what might occur and think about what our role could be in ushering in a preferred future. No matter our backgrounds, we have a common charge. It is up to us to do our part to create the framework and structures for a better future for our children & grandchildren. The Iroquois traditions charge us ... for the next 7 generations!

Just because we go through a difficult situation, it doesn't mean that the future is predetermined. The future is very much in our hands, in our actions.

- Sogyal Rinpoche,
Tibetan Buddhist Monk

So, first we must think about what a preferred future would look like. Take a moment before you read on and state what a preferred future looks like for your children, grandchildren or for future generations. Picture the year 2050 and state what that looks like. Think about politics, economics, social issues, spiritual paths, education, opportunity, population, agriculture, manufacturing, service, environment, etc. This is not an easy charge but we must do it, if we dare try to act in this time for a better future.

In my Christian faith tradition, we pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In essence we are praying for heaven on earth which is a bold thing to do and yet, we do it, often. For one who considers himself a Christian, we must confront our own faith each time we say this.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Jesus

Do we really believe that “heaven on earth” is possible? Are we doing all we can to usher it in? Do we accept that, based on our faith, God has left humans in charge and that we have the power, the strength, the where-with-all that we need to change the world for the better? Heaven on earth? Really?

I have come to view this as possible, in fact, I see it as our destiny. It is not pie in the sky, it is occurring in this moment. Our problem is simply this... we are looking for the wrong things to affirm the vision. We often view the emerging future as a threat to the status quo that we may not always like but we know and thus defend. It is our human tendency to resist change.

Recently I have heard people say things like “our children’s quality of life will be less than ours.” I think we need to respond, “what is your quality of life based on?” “What will our children’s quality of life be based upon?” This is an area that I see shifting and moving toward a new place.

Our recent past, particularly in the western world, has pushed us toward a preferred future based on financial position. Our preferred future will be based on a wide variety of elements, one of which is financial position. (An aside ...we have wrapped up the “American Dream” into a package that includes economic wealth and financial security, nearly to the detriment of everything else. I’m not suggesting that it shouldn’t be part of it but certainly only part. The American Dream, our assets are so much greater than financial. They include government by the people, innovation and entrepreneurialism, freedom of expression & religion, equality before the law, opportunity for all people, openness to a variety of cultures and traditions, etc. This combination comes together in a most powerful way as long as we don’t simply try to place a dollar value on them.)

“Without vision, the people perish.” As much as I think this is true, it is still difficult for me to start making claims about what the future ought look like. I have attempted to point some markers that I think will encompass our future.

With the new road for Egyptians emerging, we might be reminded that the good road to the future may also be a rough road. Part of the thing we must all be willing to do is envision the future without having all the answers of how we might achieve it. Further, we must be willing to persevere through some difficult changes and challenges if we hope to see a preferred future for future generations.

I Envision a Future...

- where people work together to better their families and communities
- in which people are present in the moment with one another and yet conscious of how current activities may affect the future
- that stops looking for differences and problems and starts to look towards alignment (not agreement) and assets
- in which people from all backgrounds respect one another and look to each other as sources of encouragement rather than as threats or in disdain
- that encourages innovation and creativity and allows that people may make mistakes and try new things
- which brings peace to all people and allows people to have dignity in their homeland
- where who we are is just important as what we do or accomplish
- where people do not harshly judge one another
- where people share readily with those in need
- where work is embraced and lauded
- when peace reigns and when people are satisfied and empowered by that peace
- when people do not look for problems to magnify or dramas to create
- where people use what they need but not anymore and leave things better than the way they found them

In every deliberation we must consider the impacts on the next seven generations.

-Iroquois Great Law Confederacy

... as we accept and embrace the emerging future.

The shift occurring in our time is disrupting the status quo and it is putting us on an arc toward a more just future. It is undermining materialism, status quo power structures, and hierarchy as we have known it. To most people in the western world it is unsettling. Some speak of welcoming in a new day and time but most fear the changes that these changes will bring.

Will we help usher in the new world we envision or will we attempt to undermine the arc which is our future to maintain our comfort with the status quo. Will we be able to allow ourselves to participate or will we, like Moses, be confined to the desert knowing that others will visit the “promised land” someday?

Will we be the generation that invites this change and helps usher it in or will we suffer the pain that will occur as we fight to hold on to the alluring past we so often adore?

We are heading toward greater justice for all people. It is our destiny. So are we willing to start proclaiming it and working with the arc that is inevitable or will we continue to try to maintain our position?

We can have worldwide justice (our preferred future) in our hand today if we release the status quo that we think we need and thus need to protect. Are we willing to be changed?

POSED BY OUR OWN FRAMES.

We have frames that drive us internally. They may be strong-lens “glasses” that affect our views on the world such as; we’re capitalists, don’t want to be taken advantage of, are victims or are in control. They guide us to simplify things or look at things from a community first perspective, the list goes on and on....

Further, they blend together in different ways and ultimately affect every moment, every decision.

The story of the fish trying to explain the water in which he is swimming perhaps best exemplifies the dilemma in which we find ourselves. It is important to try. One of the most important things we might do as humans is to explore and attempt to articulate some of the basic frames that undergird everything we feel, think, say and do.

For the past 2000 years we have lived with a frame that is going to become undone in many of our lifetimes. We have lived in the frame that our world population will forever grow. Today we have approximately 6.8 billion world neighbors and our population is still on the rise. Yet, things are changing radically because education and contraception have become much more available to women. Communication to young women is much more available and thus, women are having fewer children. This is quickly bringing us to the end of world population growth. This is a change in a framework that will affect every aspect of life and thus, how we might approach it.

Our frames are survival at their most basic level. They give us the basic info we need to make decisions and take actions on a daily basis. We have even come to the point of being able to defend them when other approaches and ideas threaten to undo them. Perhaps that is the best way to recognize them.

There are also other more primal responses that maintain our frames for us. Our desire for drama and mental exhilaration can lead to our defensiveness about our frames. Conversely, our frames set up arbitrary rules about who we are or how we think that can stoke the fires of mental response and reaction vs. cognitive thoughts and reasoning. Our brains are often hungry for simplicity and clarity, looking at things as black and white, on or off, etc. allowing our primal brain to be satisfied.

Our language of division is an example of the need we have for drama. In the world of philanthropy, we have simplified donors and benefactors, the needy and the rescuers, the victims and villains, without a second thought. These extreme positions provide a “food” that our primal brains crave.

In our daily conversations and interactions, we often push issues to extremes to get the fuel our brains need. Our current political climate in the US is a societal example of bowing to extremism. Although most people are fairly centrist in their views media knowingly and unknowingly gives us the extreme slant we desire to feed our brains what they desire.

POINTING TO A NEW LANGUAGE

As the future emerges with all the information and ideas available to us as they have never been before, with all cultures closer and our world shrinking through communications and travel, we see new ways of communication emerging that will bring about even newer ways.

A path for communication that seems to be emerging is what I will term “wisdom words.” Although this sort of communication has been taking place for centuries in various forms, we will begin to recognize it anew as we move into areas that require complex thinking and multi-disciplinary approaches.

Wisdom words speak to truth rather than being true per se. They convey the deeper meaning of things and convey the complexity of people, organizations, interactions, systems, ideas, etc.

The problem with this new, yet old, path is that it is built on a fragmented frame. Our languages tend to bring about categorization, by necessity and point us into areas of specialty. This is not a bad thing but it creates a language of limits whereas the language referred to here, does not.

It seems that the “language” I point to is at least partly built upon storytelling and the complexities, yet simplicity that that brings. It is built upon semiotics, the study of the use of signs and symbols to communicate ideas. It is built on the idea that we embrace complexity, understanding that to accept complexity is to also accept only partial understanding.

no one person knows what everyone knows

-Clay Shirkey
Author of “Here Comes Everybody”

It is no secret that the internet brings about opportunities to collaborate like never before. Yet, it seems we have not yet begun to tap the potential due to the old language barriers, hierarchies and silos we all work within. Many have begun to tap into communications in new ways. The new frontier will be exciting, uncertain and scary.

It is up to us to begin to think differently in order to utilize communications to usher in the changes that might bring about greater justice (Egypt as an example). In the case of materially poor people in our world, these new communication technologies offer opportunities for people to live “off the grid” and yet still allow an ability to “assemble” and work together in collaboration. Although the opportunities associated with these new technologies are obvious, our historical frames about communication, and the hierarchical approach to it is keeping us from fully realizing the potential!

This new language will be born, emerge perhaps, because of our desire to communicate more information or to communicate in deeper ways.

In my work, I often use farmers as an example. Farmers deal with a complex set of inputs; markets, technology, environment, people, business, equipment, soil quality, etc. The complexity often defies our limited ability to deal with the variety yet each day farmers make decisions and take steps forward to grow a crop, raise animals, etc. Much of our effort to communicate is expended in trying to explain that complexity in a way which is satisfying. The explanation in itself leads to false descriptions which emphasize certain parts of the whole but never fully recognize the complexity of the farmer, the farm and the organic process taking place.

There is a “wisdom word” or symbol or something that could in an instant convey all that the previous paragraph attempts to convey which we could actually understand and use.

This is the new language which is emerging in our time.

CONCLUSION:

What does philanthropy's role need to be to best serve people and communities as we experience this emerging future?

To facilitate the unwinding of what is; to help usher in a preferred future.