

weapons—e.g., chemical, atomic, biological—but have difficulty ensuring their control and limiting access to them.

In short, more than ever, we find ourselves in the position of the sorcerer's apprentice!

A way of expressing the idea of the responsibility that accompanies the exercise of the great powers afforded us by reason is nothing other than conscience: for, indeed, how can we feel the weight of the responsibility that accompanies power if we have no conscience—if we are neither aware of, nor care about, the consequences of our actions? And, *mutatis mutandis*, what is true for the individual applies also to societies.

This conscience, or ethic of caring, must be applied throughout society, at every level: government, corporate and academic, with the individual as the foundation. The reason is straightforward—the paradox that lies at the heart of what is termed the “tragedy of the global commons”, namely the effect where the pursuit by each individual of prosperity undermines the common basis of that prosperity.

The significance of each individual's shift toward a new consciousness cannot be overstated: the current situation is of an urgency rarely encountered in human history. The individual is now in a situation where his or her smallest private decisions—combined with those of others, of course—can bring about veritable catastrophes. And, it is not just people in wealthy societies who too often abuse our planet—for example, by operating gas-guzzling vehicles; adding to the scale of the problem is the behaviour of individuals in developing societies who adopt the lifestyles of those in rich societies, and often do so without recognizing the need to use new technologies to avoid pollution.

Consciousness Raising: Building the Momentum

But the story here is not all doom and gloom. There are individuals who have adopted and demonstrated this ethic of conscience, individuals from whose actions we can derive momentum, until the ethic of conscience becomes an integral part of each individual's decision-making process. More and more in-