



Hazel Henderson

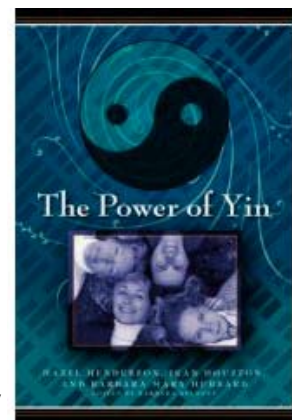
The Yin of Economics, 30 Years On: Part 1

by David Zweig, Senior Editor

Editor's Note: Last week we offered an excerpt of the new book, *The Power of Yin: Celebrating Female Consciousness*, a "trialogue" conducted in 1977 and 1978 by three women who subsequently became fellows of the World Business Academy: Hazel Henderson, Jean Houston, and Barbara Marx Hubbard.

While Jean is the Hellenic scholar of the trio, when thinking of Hazel the Greek terms polymath and autodidact come to mind. And also sibylla, which means "prophetess." In fact, throughout history, literature is rich in examples of women who see the future before men do: Cassandra, Sarah, and Joan of Arc to name but three. In many cases, particularly in the Bible, the term "prophet" becomes indistinguishably linked to the term for "leader." In Hazel's case, the ambiguity could not be more apt. Today the world financial markets are shaking at a prospective avalanche of bad mortgage debt. These bad loans did not materialize overnight. We simply chose not to see them, and not to measure them. Hazel has been warning about this kind of economic malfeasance for decades. Beyond warning, she has tirelessly worked at international fora to effect large scale changes in public policies and private corporate practices.

My goal was to talk to her about her book, but true to form, as you will see, Hazel steered most of the conversation to the present and the future. In this portion of the interview, she largely talks about the direction in which much of the world has been moving in the past three decades, and how she managed to stay in front of the pack.



Signposts

What was it like for you to come upon that manuscript after so many years?

HH: It was kind of a fluke. I still don't know how it was that the manuscript moved with me from Princeton to Gainesville Florida in the 70s, and then over here to St. Augustine in the 80s. I came upon it at the bottom of the drawer. I sat down to read it and I thought, "Well actually, not that much has changed since we recorded this." None of us have the incentive to try to update it. Then I thought well just before I discarded, I would make a copy and send it to a publisher friend in New York. It was just a wild shot in the dark.

Three weeks later he said, "Oh yes! We would like to publish this." He did not think it needed to be changed. We did not change a word of it.

DZ: Much of the first book dealt with establishing the premise of the importance of an integral approach to how we go about dealing with the world, and that is closely attributed to the female mind, much more than men. I couldn't help but think about Geraldine Ferraro's being named as vice president in an obviously losing cause seven years after all of you met. That was supposed to be a big deal because she was a woman. Now in 2008 the front runner for President is a woman in what could be a victorious campaign.

HH: I guess that is a change. But she has not won yet. It is a sign of the times, I think, that you have Angela Merkel doing a wonderful job in Germany, and Michelle Bachelet in Chile, and of course in the Nordic countries you have had women prime ministers galore. There almost was one in France; I did not think that would come for a long time.

DZ: Why is the U.S. lagging behind in that respect?

HH: it's probably due to the size and structure and power and frankly, the militarism, in this country. That is the benchmark of the macho approach to things, isn't it? You wonder whether we are coming to some sort of tipping point between the macho approach and the more Yin approach. You just don't know how much further the macho approach can go.

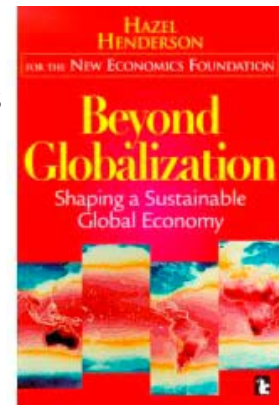
DZ: It's a generalization, but it seems to be imploding under its own weight. Very early on you were into self-organization which is much different from the male command-and-control paradigm.

HH: Yes! I was so deeply involved with that for so many years because of starting Citizens for Clean Air, which was my first NGO in the 60s in New York. I have been involved with NGO's and organizing civic activities for most of my life I'm. I wrote one of the very early articles on this, not a book, called Citizen Action for Clean Air. It was really about citizen self-organization and innovation. Innovations always come from the periphery of society, anyway. Paul Hawken's book *Blessed Unrest*, which I have not read, is probably describing a phenomenon that is becoming more and more obvious.

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I went a couple of times to the [Porto Alegre World Social Forum](#). In *The Power of Yin* we refer to these activities as "swarming". It is very holistic. If you go to Porto Alegre or any of those World Social Forum meetings, the diversity in terms of issues is absolutely incredible. And yet, the unity is absolutely incredible as well. They speak in terms all of "we the people", "we are here together", "we are learning together". It is very heady and exciting. You do see how it is possible for incredible diversity to peacefully coalesce around new policies.

I wrote a very small book called [Beyond Globalization](#)—the one I call my Little Red Book . Basically I was just taking all the wonderful policy ideas and came out of Porto Alegre World Social Forum that they were trying to get out in a sensible way. But, instead of having the media able to report coherently on what was happening, they had to do all kinds of theater. Then they got misunderstood. In the back of that book I listed as many of those groups as I could, from every continent—all different kinds of issues. Yet, when put together were extraordinarily coherent public policy ideas about currency, taxation, and the way they looked at the macro economy. From their own experiences they knew what was wrong with the IMF. They always knew what was wrong with the World Bank. They knew what was wrong with the Washington Consensus recipe for economic development. And yet they were grassroots people.



DZ: This was not coordinated?

HH. No. It was only coordinated and that they would use the Internet to get together. It was wonderful arriving in Porto Allege, which is an absolutely beautiful city, a very European looking city, to have the mayor and death have the mayor and the city council welcoming everybody. When he got to the airport it was all "Welcome World Social Forum." There was a big parade down the main street. Think of this in contrast to what happened to those groups in Seattle. They were maced and pepper sprayed and God knows what.

DZ: You mentioned the Internet. It is interesting to see how your thinking has changed around technology and the media since 1977. You now have a media empire spanning three continents! You told Barbara Hubbard that her high tech gear in 1977 was a turn-off, and that what would attract people would be the power of her ideas. Now it appears to be a both-and.

HH:(Laughs). Oh yes, I am constantly amazed at what I am learning about the actual capabilities of the hardware, the ways people are connecting. The most exciting thing to me is the way audiences are fleeing from mainstream media onto the Internet. They don't know what to do about it. What is so funny to me is that mainstream television went down a blind alley. They thought it was about HDTV and of course that's really only for pornography and sports. If you're interested in content, forget it! You're not going to get content from the mainstream media. People would rather look at a small screen on their laptop for the content they want than anything in high definition. That's kind of a maturation now isn't it.

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DZ: Pornography...we're back to the power of men.

HH: I think so, but I think it will be different when we move into more of a partnership form of society. Riane Eisler has been a great friend of mine for many, many years and I think she has made a huge contribution to spitting out the possibilities of partnership,

DZ: Riane's work has always heavily referenced gender and the role of women in hierarchical societies. You have not always addressed it head-on. She has. Is that just a difference in semantics, or tactics, or something else?



Fritjof Capra, Ph.D., physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California, which promotes ecology and systems thinking in primary and secondary education.

He is the author of several international bestsellers, including *The Tao of Physics*, *The Turning Point*, and *The Web of Life*, and *The Hidden Connections*.

HH: I am always rooting for her. I can remember that we were both together many years ago at Esalen, before she published [The Chalice and the Blade](#), at a meeting that was convened by [Fritjof Capra](#). We were sitting around and she had sent me the chapters of the chalice and the Blade. I said to her, "My God, Riane, I fear for your life if you publish this book!" Because that is what it was like back then in the late 70s. I had another friend who had published a very overtly feminist book similar to *The Chalice and the Blade*, going back to the early Minoans and all of that. It was called [The Reign of the Phallus](#), by a woman called Eva Keuls, a professor of philosophy at the University of Minnesota. She went to all of these locked up rooms in the British Museum and some of the other museums in Europe where they had all of these early artifacts, vases and paintings, from the height of the Greek civilization. It was all about homosexual men. All she did with this book was to take photographs of hundreds and hundreds of urns and plates and pictures. She wove a story about ancient Greece on the absolute evidence. She was absolutely crucified!

Riane and I are debating one thing at the moment, and I think we have actually resolved it, because Riane is a great systems thinker. I had with her calling for a new economics of caring because the economists would rush in and say, "Okay. Yes. Great. Give us lots more grants and we will study and map the Caring Economy.

We had a meeting that was convened by me and the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation in 2004, to which I invited Riane. Basically, we were saying the very opposite: we want to limit the discipline of economics, not expand it. The worst thing that could happen in the world would be for economics to take on all this new subject matter of caring. They don't have the skills. They don't have the training. They don't even care! (*Laughs*).

DZ: An interesting irony. The business of measuring is male.

HH: Very much so.

DZ: you have been in the vanguard for years of saying we measure the wrong things.

HH: Yes. I decided very early on -- about the time we were doing About

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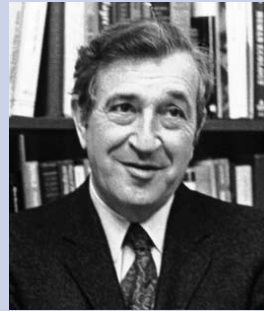
Power of Yin—I was at the US Office of Technology Assessment. I was on the statutory advisory Council there. Here's me, a citizen-activist, who never went to college, serving with these 12 really macho guys all of whom had either Nobel prizes or were presidents of high tech universities. There was the secretary of defense, the comptroller general.... basically, I had decided at that point that I really enjoyed this head game. I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation and—remember I had never gone to college—I was so desperately learning everything I needed to know. I had published a lots already but I am basically self-taught and I am just a big information hound. I absolutely love it.

And so being with all these brilliant people—there was Jerry Wiesner who was then the head of MIT, and Harold Brown who was the secretary of defense—totally brilliant people—I began to realize there were all kinds of tools that one could use in the discourse, and not just English, but you could use the tools of measurement.

I was beginning then to examine all the faulty tools of measurement like GDP that were driving over us over the cliff. So I thought that the only way that I could argue this was to come up with better tools of measurement. By 1991 when I published *Paradigms in Progress*, I had developed my own set of alternative indicators, which I called Country Futures Indicators. That was basically a play on what the risk management magazines used use basically risk management indicators country risk indicators were deplorable! It was treating the country like a black box with only two variables coming out of the top: one was the ability to service external debt together with GDP growth. They weren't interested in looking inside the box to see what kind of social or human capital there was, and what kind of economic assets there were, all of the things that are really the basis of a good economy.

DZ: I think they merely saw them as debt sponges.

HH: Yes. Absolutely. That was how I got further and further into this business of using measurements and different measures as a way of getting into the debate. That was when I began to discover how difficult it was with the mass media simply spitting up these numbers, where editors didn't even understand them. They would just go slavishly down to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and get the numbers and rattle them off on TV without the slightest comprehension. And we are still working on that one! On [Ethical Marketplace radio](#) I did an editorial this June called "It's Time to Fix the GDP." I have been writing about this for almost 30 years!



Jerome Wiesner...
President of MIT 1971-1980...science advisor to JFK and Ike... advocated for arms control and unmanned space exploration...Nixon enemies' list...recorded blues musicians with Alan Lomax.



Harold Brown...U.S. Secretary of Defense 1977-1981...doctorate in physics from Columbia at age 21...director of Livermore Labs at 33... President of CalTech at 39...SALT talks...clashed with Brzezinski over detente.

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And I realized that it was really media that was standing in the way. Well, not only media, but also the inertia of statisticians and the paradigm of neoclassical economics, the traditional economics. That's just as difficult to overcome because the people in those professions don't want to have to rewrite their textbooks, don't want to have to admit they were wrong, don't want to write down their intellectual property, and so there can be a conspiracy of silence.

To be concluded next week.

Hazel Henderson is Founder, [Ethical Markets Media, LLC](#), and Series Creator and Co-Executive Producer of its TV series. She is a world renowned futurist, evolutionary economist, a worldwide syndicated columnist, consultant on sustainable development, and author of *Beyond Globalization*, and seven other books. Her editorials appear in 27 languages and more than 400 newspapers syndicated by InterPress Service, Rome, New York, and Washington DC. Her articles have appeared in over 250 journals.

She sits on several editorial boards, including *Futures Research Quarterly*, *The State of the Future Report*, and *E/The Environmental Magazine* (USA), and *Resurgence, Foresight and Futures* (UK). She co-edited, with Harlan Cleveland and Inge Kaul, *The UN: Policy and Financing Alternatives*, . Since becoming a full-time TV producer, Hazel has stepped down from her many board memberships, including Worldwatch Institute (1975-2001), Calvert Social Investment Fund (1982-2005), and other associations, including the Social Investment Forum and the Social Venture Network. She remains on the International Council of the Instituto Ethos de Empresas e Responsabilidade Social, Sao Paulo, Brasil. Hazel remains a Patron of the New Economics Foundation (London, UK) and a Fellow of the World Business Academy. The first version of her Country Futures Indicators (CFI^y), an alternative to the Gross National Product (GNP), is a co-venture with Calvert Group, Inc.: the Calvert-Henderson Quality-of-Life Indicators (Desk Reference Manual, 2000), updated regularly at www.calvert-henderson.com.

In addition, she has been Regent's Lecturer at the University of California (Santa Barbara), held the Horace Albright Chair in Conservation at the University of California (Berkeley), and advised the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment and the National Science Foundation from 1974 to 1980. She holds Honorary Dr. of Science degrees from the University of San Francisco, Soka University (Tokyo) and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts (USA). She is an active member of the National Press Club (Washington DC), the World Future Society (USA), a Fellow of the World Futures Studies Federation and a member of the Association for Evolutionary Economics.

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