



LEAD WITH WE
SEASON 2: EPISODE 007
Lynne Twist – The Soul of Money Institute

Simon Mainwaring:

From We First and Goal 17 Media, welcome to Lead With We, the podcast where top business leaders and founders reveal how they build their companies to be high-impact and high-growth by putting We First. I'm Simon Mainwaring, and today I'm so excited to talk to Lynne Twist, a friend, a colleague, and also the co-founder of the Pachamama Alliance and founder and president of The Soul of Money Institute, someone who is both articulate and insightful about the future role that business must play. So Lynne, welcome to Lead With We.

Lynne Twist:

Thank you. It's wonderful to be here. Thank you, Simon.

Simon Mainwaring:

Lynne, we've got to know each other over the last decade, but many of you would welcome the chance to hear a little bit about your journey, from all the time you spent with Mother Teresa all the way through to Buckminster Fuller to The Soul of Money Institute today. So, give us a sense of that journey.

Lynne Twist:

Wow, well, that's like my whole life story, so I'll try to condense it a little bit, but thank you for asking. Well, as a young woman, a young mother, I got very deeply engaged with Bucky Fuller, Buckminster Fuller, and learned a great deal from him. And he had a mission of his life to make the world work for everyone with no one and nothing left out. And I kind of took that on myself. I love that phrase, make the world work for everyone with no one and nothing left out. And from there, I began working with something called The Hunger Project, which he was a co-founder of, and worked all over the world on hunger and poverty, primarily Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Bangladesh. That's where I met Mother Teresa.

And that led me to meet some of the most extraordinary people on this planet, including having my hands in the dirt with women in Ethiopia, after the 1984 to 85 famine, being in war zones after Mozambique's war, and really learning from some of the people that most of us would call poor, but are some of the deepest and most profoundly powerful teachers I've ever had in my life. And so, that led me to a life of meaning, of making a difference. And then as you know, I got involved with indigenous peoples of the Amazon, a completely different part of my life and a part of the world, when we started the Pachamama Alliance. So, there's a thousand stories in there, but that's kind of the arc of my life. And I'm so grateful for that question.

Simon Mainwaring:

We're all aware of the climate crisis. We hear things about loss of biodiversity and bees. We see the social fabric of our societies breaking down right now, but why is that important to business? Why do you feel that there's an important role for business to play?

Lynne Twist:

Well, it's clear to me and I think to everybody listening that business is the most powerful institution on earth. Business is more stable than governments. It's more responsible and responsive to the marketplace and people than governments are, or the churches. Other institutions that have really sort of governed and led society have fallen into dysfunction and disarray, while business has gotten stronger and stronger and stronger and more powerful. It is the most powerful institution on earth. Business is also capable of pivoting and making changes way faster than governments or religious groups, or even what I call the social profit sector, which is where I work. And so, to have business actually take responsibility for making the transition, the huge transition that we need to make to end the climate crisis, and have a sustainable socially just, really spiritually fulfilling future for all of life, that's the most powerful place to do the work that needs to be done. And I'm so grateful that you're doing the kind of work you're doing to make business aware of that more conscious, and play their rightful role in turning the tide right now in history.

Simon Mainwaring:

And I do think it's an opportunity, and it is a responsibility at the same time, if you're the CEO of a global enterprise or you're the founder or solopreneur who's wondering, "Well, that sounds great, and we're aware of the need." But can you help us understand, what's in it for those who participate? What benefits have you seen to companies, to startups, to executives, to employees by actually committing to this purposeful role, as well as their bottom line profit?

Lynne Twist:

Well, if you look at history and maybe that's too far back to go, but I remember learning that the East India Company was the largest institution on earth, and held more slaves than any company or any country in the world.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Lynne Twist:

And when the CEO and president of the East India Company realized that it was time to end slavery, and actually free the slaves in that company, it was really the beginning of the turning of the tide for the abolitionist movement, for example. That was a huge moment, I actually didn't know that before recently. The same thing is true with Ray Anderson, who has a beautiful... There's a beautiful story about him. He was the CEO of Interface Carpet.

Simon Mainwaring:

Yeah.

Lynne Twist:

And he saw the error of his own ways, the blindness of business, just profit-making and actually was one of the most toxic industries carpet-making in the world. And he learned that from his granddaughter and after a conversation with his granddaughter, he redesigned the entire company. I'm sure it was horrendously expensive, but what happened, they were the number one carpet manufacturer in the

world. And they retained that point of contact and that point of view and that ranking and they completely recalibrated the whole manufacturing cycle. They're still the number one carpet making company in the world. More profitable, more satisfied with their product, people are, and they know that they're benefiting the world, not taking from the environment, but actually they have a goal, I think by 2020, they may have met it to be a zero emissions company. And everyone is so much happier there, because they know they're not destroying the earth, but they're actually benefiting people and the planet.

Simon Mainwaring:

And they've actually released a net positive product carpet tiles that actually draw carbon out of the air. So they're actually not only doing less harm, they're doing more good. And they've released this tool, this EC3 tool, which allows the entire built industry to reduce its carbon footprint, to pull carbon out of the air. And so, it's this collaborative exercise. And help us understand, Lynne on one level, there's this innovation opportunity in terms of being purposeful, but on a human being level, on a citizen level, on a meaning and fulfillment in your life level, what are the risks that we're facing now in our future that we need to pay attention to as these ecosystems, as these living systems break down, which then really necessitate the business play a role, what are you so concerned about for our future?

Lynne Twist:

Well, it's no secret to any of us. In fact, we can feel it in our bodies, that the ecosystem is deteriorating and deteriorating and it's happening inside of us. We are part of the ecosystem. So, our health crisis, the pandemic is part of the ecosystem breakdown. It is not some horrible, horrible thing. It is horrible, but it's feedback. You could say that the climate crisis, the pandemic, the breakdown of a lot of the natural systems is not happening to us, it's happening for us to wake up and find our rightful role as a species to live in harmony with all life. And for business to actually realize that given an enormous power of business, the satisfaction, the fulfillment for people who work for a company that's conscious is a completely different ball game than working for a company that's just doing anything and everything to earn a profit.

Yes, that's important. But what about a social profit for the people of the company, the customers, and for the world, that's a different kind of business. That's conscious capitalism. That's the kind of company that I think everybody wants to work for and everybody wants to lead.

Simon Mainwaring:

It is. It's so much more fulfilling on so many levels for all of us individually. And the shocking thing is this isn't new, you had the privilege of studying with Buckminster Fuller and tell us a little bit about what he predicted 50 years ago? He saw this coming. What future did he lay out and what did he say in terms of the shifts we need to make?

Lynne Twist:

Well, Bucky said, and it's just amazing to me to recall this. Bucky said in 1976, probably before a lot of people here were even born.

Simon Mainwaring:

I was a wee little lad then, wee little lad in Australia.

Lynne Twist:

And I was a young woman. I wasn't a child, but I was a young woman. And I heard him speak at an event in Marin County, California, where he said that the world community had reached a particular point where we had crossed a threshold from a world of scarce resources, where there isn't enough for everyone where you need to make it at my expense, or I need to make it at your expense because there's not enough for both of us to a world where our innovation, our creativity, our genius was creating more and more with less and less.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Lynne Twist:

And that we had crossed a line, a really important line, a threshold. And now living, this is in 1976, in a world where you and I can both make it at no one's expense going from a you or me paradigm to a you and me paradigm, is going from a scarcity paradigm to a sufficiency paradigm. And he said that would change everything. But what your question is, he told that audience and I was in that audience, that it would take 50 years for us to realize this shift from a scarcity paradigm to a sufficiency paradigm. It would take 50 years, which is right around now, because all the institutions of humankind business, the economy, governance, education, even religion, is rooted in a you or me understanding of the world. And a you or me understanding of the world produces a particular structure inside of which we all live with all these institutions.

He said they would need to become... They will become, he said in 1976 in 50 years or so, so dysfunctional that we can't repair them. We need to recreate them from a different paradigm, from a you and me paradigm, a paradigm where everyone everywhere can make it at no one's expense. A paradigm where a world that works for everyone with no one and nothing left out and that's what's happening right now. I would say that the 2020s from 2020 to 2030, this decade is the most critical decade in humankind. This is the decade where we need to turn it around and we can, and we will. And business is the entity that can lead us.

Simon Mainwaring:

We are seeing a lot of positive signs out there. Just recently, we've seen the US rejoin, the Paris Climate Accord. We've heard from Davos, the World Economic Forum that shared this commitment to stakeholder capitalism. You've heard from the largest hedge fund manager or money management firm in the world, BlackRock, Larry Fink saying how we've really got to commit to keeping the climate emergency at bay and the rising global temperature below two degrees. All of these signals across the board demonstrate that the business sector, the private sector is waking up. Help us understand the relationship that you've observed between indigenous people or Aboriginal people around the world and their symbiotic relationship with the natural world, almost as guidelines or signposts for us, for how we need to reframe the role of business? Give us some of the key tenants of that?

Lynne Twist:

Well, I just love the name of your company. We First, because the real shift that I have seen people have, and I've had it myself by being with indigenous people in particular, their highest ethic is the good of the community is the we, is the ubuntu, they would say in South Africa. That is the highest ethic, and then

inside of the community being healthy and well, each individual is healthy and well. Our modern world has sort of trained us or brainwash us to be all about me, I, we individuate so much that we individuate almost at the expense of the community. And that shift from me to we, which is what you teach so brilliantly is the shift that we need on this planet, is the shift that I've learned from indigenous people. They do really like, no kidding, think about seven generations forward, not two generations, not their kids and their grandkids, no, seven generations forward, people that they will never, ever, ever know.

That's an extraordinary, extraordinary way to think. It does change the very nature of the way you live. And I've learned that the choices we make, I've learned from them, the choices that you and I, and everybody on this program make impact the future of life for 1,000 years, every decision and choice we make. Now, that could sound like a burden, but it actually ennobles your life and give your life a kind of meaning and integrity that we all crave. And it's from there that we need to find our transformation and hanging out with indigenous people has done it for me, and I recommend it highly. I want you to come to the Amazon and everybody else here.

Simon Mainwaring:

We'll all benefit so much if we get that opportunity and everything that we're doing is already underway. Every business, large or small is already midstream. So, in as much as nature is our teacher, indigenous people are students and we have a lot to learn. If you're a young company that's already out of the gate, or if you're a very large with a lot of investments and a lot of employees to take care of and a lot of customers to serve, what might you suggest is where someone can start if they want it to transition, you mentioned define your purpose, but then what do you do next? Do you look at your supply chain and say, "Are we doing more harm than we should? Can we do more good?" Do you look at your culture inside the company? Do you sort of re-imagine the type of products you make outright? What would you suggest?

Lynne Twist:

Oh, yes. [crosstalk 00:15:21]. And I know it's really hard to do that, but what's at stake is everything, what's at stake is life. I want to recommend that just a few days ago, I watched a 60 Minutes and Bill Gates, the wealthier, so the second now wealthiest man on this planet is taking on climate change with everything he has. And he has a lot, a lot of brain power, a lot of people, a lot of money, a lot of everything, a lot of power. And he said, "We're going to need to change absolutely everything about the way we live and we're going to have to do it fast." And I was so happy to hear that. I've met with that man. I love that guy. I know everybody respects him and that he's taken it on at this level is mind-boggling to me. He really gets what's required.

It's not a little bit of this, a little bit of that. It's transforming absolutely everything. And that is really the job and brave and bold and great leaders are the ones who are going to make that happen. The kind of people who are listening to this program, if they're drawn to this, people out there, if you're drawn to this, you are who we've been waiting for, for the world to transform. We really need a transformation, not just a change. So, the Trillion Tree project, for example, out of the Davos, that's huge. That's an example of a program that's of the magnitude that's needed now to change the game.

Simon Mainwaring:

I think it's so instructive that Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, Bill Gates, not far, well, actually, a fair way behind him now, they're both with all the abundance that they have, all the wealth that they have, they have really prioritized this. And you've met so many sort of well-known and successful people over the years and one thing that I've observed in the people I've met is that no matter how much wealth they have, at some point, they realize that fulfillment is an inside job. It's not an outside in where you get more and you get affirmation and you buy stuff. But rather what you give of yourself to others is what fills you up by how you give of yourself, the service you are to others. And I think this is a really powerful idea as to what true wealth is, as opposed to the amount of money that you have. And so, how would you challenge us to reframe these very, very common, but often just assumptive terms like success, wealth, money, prosperity, abundance? How should we think about these terms differently?

Lynne Twist:

Well, there's a whole book about that, that I [crosstalk 00:18:05].

Simon Mainwaring:

It's called *The Soul of Money*, I believe, highly, highly recommend to everyone.

Lynne Twist:

I give a two minutes synopsis of my book. Well, first of all, the word wealth comes from... The etymology of the word wealth comes from wellbeing, that's the etymology of that word. It's not really about money. And the etymology of wellbeing comes from the well of being, the well of being.

Simon Mainwaring:

Isn't that incredible? That's amazing and I've used wellbeing my entire life, and I did not know until right now, but it makes so much sense and it's right in front of us, right?

Lynne Twist:

Yeah. If you just think about the well of being that's endless and infinite, that's in you, that's in me, that's the true source of prosperity. And the well of being is overflowing constantly. It's like a spring. So, there's always, always enough, not more and more and more and more and more that needs to be accumulated. There's enough from the get-go because it's source. Source is different, it doesn't have an amount. It's about flow rather than amount, which is a whole thing I could talk about a little bit more on my book, but... So, flow is very different than a [inaudible 00:19:18]. You could say that money was invented 4,500 years ago by cultures, by our ancestors to facilitate the sharing of goods and resources so that everybody would have what they wanted and needed. It was all about letting things flow to where things were needed.

And money doesn't belong to any of us, it belongs to all of us or none of us, it just moves around. That's why it's called a currency. It's a current. It is like water. It's a carrier. It's not the point. It's carry, it carries. It can carry commitment. It can carry love. It can carry courage. It can carry grace. It can also carry disease. It can carry toxicity, but money and water are innocent. It's how we use them. And what our intentions are.

Simon Mainwaring:

Let me ask you this. A CEO might have an experience with you in the Amazon or an executive, and then they come back to their office or an entrepreneur, and then they've got to share it with their team. And this is a powerful shift in mindset, which has a lot of consequences for them. So, if somebody wants to commit to this approach, to this mindset, to this reprioritization as to what's important in their life, how do they communicate that? What have you seen in terms of how you move your company, your culture, the team that you've built to join you in this effort? How do you share it effectively?

Lynne Twist:

Oh my goodness. That's a tough question, but I'll just tell a couple stories. First of all, stories are really powerful and probably teach and shift people more than anything. So, people who returned from the rainforest into the belly of their beast, whatever company it is, often start by sharing their own transformation vulnerably, authentically and without guile. And that's the beginning of the transformation being transmitted. It's a transmission. The shamans that we work with in the rainforest and the elders, they say that every person that comes there and has the kind of encounter that I want you to have, and that I've had, impacts 1,000 people within the next year, by their just beings, without even saying anything, by the way they are. The inauthenticity that falls away, the heart that becomes more visible and available, the soulfulness with which they start to see the world and it changes their way of communicating, their way of acting, their way of seeing the world and people notice it. And they begin falling into that aura, that space.

I remember a time I was walking behind a shaman in [inaudible 00:22:15] territory, a man named Minari and we were walking quietly in the forest. It was just he and I, and he had a machete and he was cutting the path. There wasn't a path, and this is just intense reinforced jungle. And a certain point he stopped and he turned around and I looked around and I didn't know what he was looking at. I thought maybe there was a jaguar coming out or there something. He turn around and he said to me, "Do you feel them? Do you feel them?" And I didn't know what he was talking about. And I looked around and I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "There is a million souls all around us right now. Do you feel the millions and millions of souls?" And in that moment, I felt them. I felt the soul of the trees, the leaves, the ants, the snakes, the bugs. I felt the soul of every living, thousands of species that were around us. For him, they have a soul. And until he said that, I was swatting mosquitoes, trying to get the branches to not hit me in the face. After that one moment, the way I walked through the forest changed forever. And it changed the way I walk through life. It almost makes me cry to tell you this.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Lynne Twist:

And it's that kind of experience that changes the way one behaves in the world and people see that, their actions speak way louder than their words. Then of course, there's the Pachamama Alliance courses, which are online, which you can have your leadership teams take. You can get involved with conscious capitalism, learn the four pillars of conscious capitalism. You can get involved with B Corp. There's all kinds of training programs and consultants and supports. They can work with you, Simon. So, there's many, many ways to not just share the experience, but help with any kind of transmission and

then conversion. But what I really want to say is when you have a transformation, the way to transmit it is to tell stories.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Lynne Twist:

Is to talk about what you love, is to share your passion. And from there, the being's fear, I'll say around you starts to shift and then people step into a different space.

Simon Mainwaring:

I will say, growing up in Australia, in Sydney, where they give you a stick and a rock and you go out into the bush and you're barefoot, you really not to overstate it, but you really are connected to nature. And I grew up in the water and the beaches and Sydney, and as I've now lived for 25 years in different places around the world, away from Sydney, I am so mindful of how connected you are to nature in that environment.

Lynne Twist:

Yeah.

Simon Mainwaring:

The only thing you do is go outdoors. And what happens for the next 10 hours you'd come back to mum and dad, and God knows what you've done, but it is. It's a way of being, where you're, you're really deeply connected to nature. And I think everybody knows what we're talking about here, in those quiet moments of reflection, where you go, "I don't want to be rich for rich sake. I want to be happy. And when I'm on the commute home from work, or when I'm sitting, looking at a sunset on the beach, or when I'm watching my kids in the backyard," especially during COVID, you do reflect on what's important in your life. And the type of things that you are talking about are common to us, all their innate within all of us.

And I think there's this incredibly powerful opportunity for business to embrace that and to redefine the role it plays in rewriting our future in the service of the collective, both the living systems, and also the human ecosystems so that we can all have a future that we can be excited about, not just for ourselves, but for our kids.

I want to say, Lynne, thank you so much. I've sort of listened to you and learned from you for a decade. And I so appreciate your leadership and how expansive your heart is and how you're helping us understand the transformation you're talking about is possible within all of us. And without your leadership, it would not have been possible for so many people. And then as you say, the knock-on effect to those people to others. So, just huge gratitude, huge respect, and just thank you for sharing your insights today.

Lynne Twist:

Thank you so much, Simon. And thank you for all the people who put this program together. This is what people need. They crave it and you're delivering it. God bless you all. Thank you.

Simon Mainwaring:

Thanks, Lynne. Thanks for joining us on another episode of Lead With We, where I had the privilege of chatting with Lynne Twist, who shared with us how to better understand the role of money in our lives and how business can rewrite our future and how together we can develop a healthy and sustainable approach to the natural world. Our show is produced by Goal 17 Media, and you can find out more information about Lynne's work in the show notes of this episode. Make sure you subscribe to Lead With We on Apple, Google, or Spotify, and do share it with your friends and colleagues so they too can build purposeful and profitable businesses. You can also watch our episodes on YouTube at WeFirstTV. And if you'd like to learn more about purposeful branding, check out wefirstbranding.com, where we have lots of free resources and case studies. I'll see you on the next episode. And until then, let's all lead with we.