

Isabel Rimanoczy

BIG BANG BEING

Developing the Sustainability Mindset

with a Foreword by Ervin Laszlo



A **Greenleaf Publishing** Book

Big Bang Being

Developing the Sustainability Mindset

A fascinating book that uncovers and deeply explores a question we've all pondered: why we do what we do. Isabel Rimanoczy walks us through carefully researched case studies to uncover the intriguing similarities – and differences – between people who dedicate their lives to the greater good. Immensely enjoyable and effortless to read, the author gets to the heart of the essential issue of how we can instill altruistic values to the next generation of leaders – and how they can do even better than us.

**Jeffrey Hollender, Founder, Jeffrey Hollender Partners;
Co-founder, Seventh Generation**

Anybody who has worked in the sustainability field for as long as I have has often asked themselves a key question, which Isabel Rimanoczy also poses in *Big Bang Being*: Why is the pace of change so glacial? And a key part of the answer, as she explains, is that we are dealing not just with vested interests but with vested emotions, vested behaviours, vested psychology and vested cultures. Changing all of these will be an intergenerational task, but important clues on how it can best be done can be found within.

**John Elkington, Executive Chairman, Volans; Co-founder,
SustainAbility; author of *The Zeronauts: Breaking the Sustainability
Barrier***

This is an ambitious and admirable book. Our challenge is to *be* as well as to *do*; and, as Dr Rimanoczy emphasizes, that *being* is a critical foundation for doing meaningful innovative things. Carl Jung emphasized that integration of all parts of us, particularly the unconscious, is the great challenge of maturity; and I would add that it is what gives true leaders the “mass” they need to really make a difference. This book focuses on how to both become and do: the inner as well as outward journey.

**Harry Strachan, Former Professor at INCAE and Harvard Business
School; Director Emeritus, Bain & Co.**

In *Big Bang Being*, Isabel Rimanoczy knocks the reader out of her comfort zone and questions Western society's core beliefs. *Big Bang Being* contraposes our traditional values of economic growth, achievement, comfort and independence with far more sustaining concepts – interdependence, collaboration, humility, and balance. Read and act on this fundamental wisdom.

Rick Schnieders, Chairman and CEO (Retired), Sysco Corporation

It is clear to any serious scholar of business that not all's right with the world, as Browning wrote. The problem is not the unceasing drive for more efficiency and more profits; the problem is that business is no longer

aligned with the worldly context in which it operates. One might say that business, if it ever had a soul, has now lost it, but it cannot recover it by following the myriad of green, sustainable, or socially responsible pathways being taught at now virtually all schools of business and management. The problem lies not in that metaphorical soul of an organization, but in the souls of those leaders and managers riding the wave of these new programs.

Isabel Rimanoczy's *Big Bang Being: Developing the Sustainability Mindset* comes from her understanding that how business executives picture themselves far beyond the next quarter's results is critical in determining whether the business will break out of the pack. Whether conscious of it or not, their underlying philosophy shapes these executives' aspirations and ways of operating. It drives them to create fair trade organizations that would look irrational in a class on supply chain management.

The world-view's underlying management education and practice is focused almost entirely on the left brain's notions of rationality and order.

The way we look at the world shapes our reality, making us partners in a creative process. If we see ourselves living in a fragmented, mechanistic, and "rational" world, if we experience at the same time extreme optimism and feelings of emptiness and paranoia, we may be subject to too much of a left hemisphere and too little of the balancing act contributed by the right hemisphere.

True sustainability that encompasses the historical aspirations of all human beings lies outside of the definitions and metrics that business uses. Managers have to escape these definition and metrics, but that will take a change in the way they think, exercising their right brains. Rimanoczy spends much of the book showing us how to do this. She is informed in this by the 16 leaders she interviewed as well as a wide range of spiritual and philosophical domains. One key that emerges is that executives concerned about their legacy are able to transcend the standard values that drive business: Economic growth, Achievement, Control, Wealth, Comfort, Independence, Competition, Knowledge, and Speed. She has included many practices she uses as a "legacy coach", doing just what she has written about.

People who intend to leave a better world after they has finished their life work do this by being the change they picture. Gandhi is most remembered by these words, "You must be the change you want to see in the world." The key to this lies in the word be. The title of the book refers to this kind of being in an exaggerated manner to show how far away from it most of us are today. Although business schools may find this message hard to swallow, it is critical to their and to our futures. If the state of the world continues to deteriorate, sooner or later the finger of blame will

point directly at business. Management schools would do well to consider putting the lessons in this book into their present curriculum on an equal or raised footing with everything else.

John Ehrenfeld, Executive Director, International Society for Industrial Ecology; Former Director, MIT Program on Technology, Business, and Environment; author of *Sustainability by Design*

In revisiting some of my favorite philosophical sayings recently, I was struck again by the comment of the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who said, “I am both a man and my environment. And in order to save myself, I must save it as well.” A few days later I received this book by Isabel Rimanoczy, who in a refreshing, thought-provoking way sheds new light on the Spanish philosopher’s thought.

Big Bang Being is a book so readable and accessible that it might almost appear self-evident. However, all her statements, reflections, and conclusions result from a thorough, passionate, and responsible intellect.

The book illustrates, suggests, and inspires the reader to take on a task that is demanded by the times in which we live: to develop to its fullest our humanity, our intellectual capacity, and our way of being. And to do it for ourselves and for others, so as to safeguard life on this wonderful planet. Ultimately, the task is to help save our environment, which is the only one we have, and in so doing, to save ourselves.

Silvia Zimmermann del Castillo, Argentine thinker and author; Director, Argentine Chapter, Club de Roma

I appreciate the way Rimanoczy distills lessons from the stories of the leaders she interviews. Instead of imposing theory she finds the common threads. Sixteen people’s lives offer insights into leadership that are useful for all of us.

Hal Hamilton, Founder and Co-director, Sustainable Food Lab

A stimulating and provocative guide for developing the sustainability mindset that we all need to acquire. Creative, serious, playful, and fun to read. Highly recommended.

James A.F. Stoner, Professor of Management Systems and chairholder, James A.F. Stoner Chair in Global Sustainability, Fordham University; author and co-author of *Management* (Prentice Hall)

Isabel describes her wonderful journey of addressing the environmental challenges facing our society, and she does it by emphasizing self-awareness and focusing on the meaningful experiences of certain business leaders. What motivates us to help? What do we expect from ourselves in the process? Why is it that we can achieve self-realization in this area more

than anywhere else? This book is a good starting point in beginning to reflect and then step into action to achieve, sustainability.

Marcelo Fumasoni, Vice President, Human Resources, Region Latin America and Canada, Novartis

A sound review of why business leaders and others find it difficult to embrace sustainability actions. But it provides clear suggestions on why and how they should act with the emphasis on personal values and ideas. It also shows why change will involve a huge struggle, and therefore time, but which can be hastened if those with the power to influence take quality time to reflect and pause. A core message is that beyond our addiction to speed, there is the need to be informed and stop the denial.

Chandran Nair, Founder and Executive Director, Global Institute for Tomorrow; author of *Consumptionomics*

In this book, Isabel Rimanoczy manages to both describe and to discover the essence of modern leadership. A resource that, in these times, seems to be in short supply. Precisely because of this absence, we are immersed in a social, institutional and, in many cases, economic labyrinth, from which we struggle constantly to find our way out.

However, as Isabel describes the research findings into the sustainability mindset, she highlights the keys to the challenge we face as we redefine the paradigm for a model of sustainability. The author challenges everyone to develop a strong bond with their environment, because humans are the only beings capable of making the needed change. Every decision we make is meaningful, and it is the combination of our actions that will create the proper environment in which positive change will take place.

Aleandra Scafati, Founder, Ecomujeres.com.ar; Director, Post Graduate Program for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina

The magic of a great storyteller is to take truths from the personal to a circle of friends and fellow travelers to the tableau of society, commerce, mindsets, and the world we live in. Isabel Rimanoczy's poignant stories, evocative questions, and quirky illustrations point to new ways of living and leading. Her *Big Bang Being* threads this journey with lessons from ancient wisdom and modern science, and speaks deeply and intelligently to the ties that bind us to nature and to one another. Food for the mind, the heart, and a better future.

Philip H. Mirvis, PhD, Senior Fellow, Global Network on Corporate Citizenship; co-author of *Beyond Good Company*

Rimanoczy is passionate about fostering an awareness in us of the importance of creating an environmental sustainability mindset. This book will help readers realize how to leave a personal legacy by committing to start their personal journey to make a difference in the world for future generations.

Nancy Zentis, PhD, CEO/Founder, Institute of Organization Development; Founder, South Florida OD Network

We need more “big bang beings” to truly win the fight for sustainable development. This informative and engaging book tells you how you can become one.

Oliver Laasch, Founder and Director, Center for Responsible Management Education (CRME); author and editor, *Principles of Responsible Management: Sustainability, Responsibility, Ethics* (forthcoming, September 2013)

Big Bang Being could not be more timely nor relevant. The street gladly believes that business leaders do not care for the environment as much as they care for their profitability and share price. I believe the two cannot be separated anymore. This book brings the point across with wonderful examples to emulate. A recommended read for all in the boardroom and top management.

Fernando Paiz, former chairman, Wal-Mart Central America

Other books by Isabel Rimanoczy:

Action Reflection Learning

Minervas Circles of Dialogue

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To my parents, and my grandparents,
for what they stood for.



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Foreword

Ervin Laszlo

Isabel Rimanoczy fills an important hiatus in our attempt to think out the strategy that is most likely to bring about an acceptable level of sustainability in our crisis-prone world. We know that the current economic political and even ecological and social system is not sustainable as it now functions, and we know that the change required for making it sustainable must be fundamental. But we are still not clear just what that change involves. Most of all, where to begin? It is here that this book offers truly invaluable information.

The classical thinking is that change must happen at the top; the political leaders must change their strategies. They must lead in a fundamentally different and better way. But the more recent thinking is that the leaders are not capable of making the necessary shift: they are too locked into their current position, being dependent for their power on popular favor in the electorate and, above all, for the support of the major lobbies that provide the influence and the funds for them to be elected, and, once elected, to stay in power. Thus the emerging wisdom is to concentrate on civil society – on the new-thinking alternative cultures, where sustainability is seen as a basic value. But here the evidence suggests that, here, if not the will, then the power to effect the necessary change is lacking. Civil society groups are as yet dispersed and do not possess the necessary clout to change economic and political systems – even if they are making important changes in the civic domain.

It would appear that we are locked into a hopeless situation. The requirement for change is growing, as both the economic-social-financial system and the associated ecological system are moving toward thresholds of irreversibility. The status quo is not

tenable, and is fraught with danger. If a major “tipping point” occurs before we are prepared for it, effecting the necessary change could be both extremely costly and high-risk. It may not be possible in practice. Do we then sit still and wait for disaster to occur? Or hope for a miraculous shift in the balances of power that decide our future? No, Isabel Rimanoczy tells us, we can turn our attention to an element in the decision-making structure of our time that we had not sufficiently exploited. This is business leadership.

Of course, attention has focused on business managers in regard to exercising responsible leadership, but the assumption has been, and still largely is, that they exercise such leadership if it’s in their own interest. Being responsible is good for business, so let’s make our businesses responsible – within the limits where it makes good profit. This is perceived as advanced thinking in business circles. The problem with acting on it is that what is good for business in the short term may not be good for society in the long. If what we need is fundamental change, serving the existing interests in the system is only to reinforce that system and make it more resistant to change. We need business people not as “facilitators” and “stabilizers” but as “catalysts” and “transformers.” But would that not ask business people to have the courage to go against their perceived interests? Would any business leader be willing to do that? Would he or she not undermine his or her own position and decision-making base if he or she does?

Asking this level of social altruism of business leaders seems far-fetched. But Isabel Rimanoczy shows us that it is not. There are business leaders who are motivated to “do good” even at the risk of not “doing all that well,” at least in the short-run. We had known that there are such people in the world, but they were believed to be mainly, or perhaps entirely, in the ranks of retired people, with a business background but no actual business engagement. They are well-meaning and possibly intellectually influential people, but not effective power-holders: important but not sufficient elements to effect real change. Business people must act as powerful business leaders on the job, exercising power with a transformative mindset.

It was not clear whether such people exist. Reading this book, we realize that they do. And we know something even more than that: we also know what makes them tick. What the critical factors

are that shift a profit- and power-oriented manager into a sustainability-oriented transformative leader.

And here is where another door opens: one that shows us that the transformation begins in our heart, in our mindfulness, in the values that lie behind our actions. Our Western, materialistic and consumption-based model has brought us collectively to a breaking point. As the visionary study of *The Limits to Growth*, back in the '70s, tried to show us, there is something that cannot continue the way it goes, and it's up to us to lead the change. The path to the urgent transformative change lies, however, not so much in the technical innovations, but foremost in the paradigm shift. We need, for once, to understand the interconnectedness of all that is; the systemic interrelationships; that human beings are part of Nature not above it; and that the experience of deep, spiritual "being" comes before any doing. If we can tap into this ancestral wisdom, which is seen in these business leaders but is also in every one of us, we may not be too late to build a bridge over the cliff we're heading for. This is what Rimanoczy suggests with the "big bang being."

It is of course always risky to generalize from particular instances. But in this case the risk is worth taking; it's an opportunity we cannot let go by. What we get here is extremely useful information. We could use it in addressing the business community, catalyzing the transformative mindset in key individuals who can become change accelerators. We need them, and we all can become one of them.

Ervin Laszlo

Preface

CEOs making a difference: why wait for retirement?

One glorious morning a few years ago I was sipping coffee and reading a magazine story about a corporate CEO who was about to retire and who was talking passionately about his next project – working in a philanthropic cause.

Yet another CEO retiree engaging in philanthropy, I mused. What is it about these retired leaders engaging in causes for the common good? Is it a fashion? Has it always been so and journalists just didn't report on it? I could imagine that after a busy corporate life, there may be a need to continue to be active, and maybe retirement is the perfect time to start thinking of leaving a legacy, but don't we all shape a legacy, daily, with the decisions we make and the interactions we have?

And, I asked myself, what about these leaders who are in the news every day? Were they aware of the impact that their daily decisions were having on the environment? On communities? Because multinational corporations, whose business strategies, processes, value systems and personnel traverse geographic borders, definitely do impact the lives of people across the entire globe! To engage, as a retired person, in causes to benefit society, is great, but I wondered what would be the effect on the world if leaders were to assess the impact of their decisions *while they were still in power*, and if they were to be mindful of this influence throughout their careers.

How would it shape their thinking? How would it inform their decisions? And I even posed myself an ironic question: If we all would consider the potential impact of the products we design, the services we launch, the materials we use, or the communications

we spread, and let that thinking guide our actions – would we still need philanthropy to such an extent?

It was shortly after this, that I first heard about how Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, had championed an unusual initiative. I learned that he had launched a program that required the African processors and suppliers of coffee beans in his company, as a condition for them to continue selling to Starbucks, to provide access to education and medical care to the coffee bean farmers. I was amazed by this news. The company didn't need to do this for business or political reasons, especially since it was not advertised as part of a PR campaign. As evidence of this, I had a difficult time even finding this story in the news. At the same time, the lives of people who Schultz himself might never meet were impacted by this decision, and I was struck by the innovative use of purchasing power to support a community. Why was Schultz doing it? I did some research and found that Schultz, having experienced the health struggles of his family and its difficulties in affording required treatments, was especially sensitive to the need for workers to have access to health care.

I was thrilled with this story, and wondered if there were other leaders who actually used their decision-making power and influence to make a difference while they were still in a leadership role. If this were the case, I wondered if we could understand what propelled them to do something that was not “business as usual.” It seemed that if we could identify the knowledge, skills, experiences, attitudes, or mindset that had guided these people, then perhaps we would be able to intentionally develop these competencies in the next generation of leaders!

Thus it was that I began my journey. I made the focus of my doctoral research at Columbia University to study what I found to be the unexplored phenomenon of leaders who champion initiatives with the aim of having a positive impact on the environment or the community.

The first challenge was to find them. Where were these leaders who were engaging in projects that made a difference, projects that were not at heart philanthropic endeavors, but instead were part of the business strategy? Who were these people taking these actions even though the latter were not part of their expected role? I was particularly interested in studying leaders who were not hired for their interest or expertise in CSR, because I thought we could sur-

face more valuable information, applicable to all kind of leaders, if we studied the non-experts. So I didn't look for the corporations' PR professionals, or Corporate Responsibility Officers. I was looking for business leaders who were not in charge of corporate donations to philanthropy, but were personally and innovatively fostering a different type of initiative.

I soon found myself immersed in a new world. My mailbox became filled weekly with books about sustainability, corporate social responsibility, profits with purpose, and leaders leaving legacies. I felt I was learning a new language, reading with amazement data describing the environmental conditions of the planet's resources, the CO₂ emissions and the distinction between the different greenhouse gases, the contributions of industrial practices and consumption, the social impact of our "Western" way of living, the dismaying projected impact of these forces in the future. I underlined paragraphs, made notes, drew faces of shock and fury in the margins, and at times put down the book because I was overwhelmed, and had to cry. I felt the urge to share what I was learning with others, yet this was not easy. I could barely understand this new language, and while I knew it was very serious and urgent to communicate, I didn't yet have the vocabulary. And when I talked about the "S" word, sustainability, I got a lot of blank faces. What, people seemed to say, was I talking about? Some looked at me with compassion and tolerance, others with blunt indifference, and some appeared to wonder how someone could be interested in such a tangential, distant, irrelevant topic. It is hard to imagine that this was, indeed, happening in the U.S.A. only six years ago. People just didn't talk about sustainability or the environment. Today, there is constant environment-related news in the media. Weather conditions make headlines every single day. The film documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* brought heightened awareness to many people, and Al Gore received a Nobel Prize. Some people later questioned its data, but it still drew great attention to the topic. CSR became an official "must" for large multinational organizations, and initiatives have been launched that have begun to change the ethical landscape within corporations. Chief among these are Principles for Responsible Investment;¹ Reporting Principles Initiative;² Principles for Responsible Management Education;³ The Oath Project;⁴ to name a few.

In my quest for understanding, I began to explore different questions and assumptions. Why were corporations engaging in

initiatives that were not required by the business strategy, yet were making an impact on the world? Who was behind those initiatives? The books provided me with stories and descriptions of technical innovations, yet nothing about the individuals leading the revolutionary efforts – the people who were, however, precisely at the center of my quest. Who were they and why where they doing it? Was it part of their need to leave a legacy? Were they aware of the potential impact they could have due to their role and status? Were they motivated by a sense of personal mission? Were they spiritual, maybe religious, people? Had they been traumatized by some personal experience and were they trying to convert the trauma into something positive? Was it a political tactic, a defensive PR strategy? Was it something related to how they grew up, or where they were raised? Perhaps mentors and teachers played a role? Were they inspired by what competitors were doing? Was it related to age, to guilt, to altruistic values? Was it a personality issue? I knew that we would not be able to replicate the environment in which they were raised, nor the traumatic experiences with other leaders. But, I reasoned, if there *was* something that adult educators could distill, influence, articulate, inspire, and aim at, we might have the keys to unlocking a different generation of leaders. It was worth the exploration.

In addition, I had questions about how they had gone about implementing their initiatives, how they “sold it” to their colleagues, Board, shareholders, and employees. What obstacles had they faced, and what had they found helpful in their journey that might inspire and help other leaders shorten their learning curve? What attitudes were essential? What mindset was critical?

I realized that books and published stories would not give me those answers. They featured initiatives but not the personal journey behind them. I found nothing about why some business leaders acted in a “business as *unusual*” way. A 2009 study by researchers Laura Quinn and Maxine Dalton⁵ suggested there was a “need for leadership theorists to better understand the factors prompting certain leaders to adopt a focus on sustainability.” Unable to find any academic research studies that addressed these questions, I made the decision to conduct my own research. For that, I had first to find these exceptional leaders. It was not easy, but I found them.ⁱ

ⁱ Of course there were certainly many more than the 16 leaders portrayed in my study, and many more emerging every day; I just stopped at this number for the purpose of my research.

I met with them, and our conversations were profound, intimate, moving, and of an unimaginable richness. “You are asking interesting questions,” and “No one ever asked me these questions before,” were typical of responses I received. There were moments of silence, moments of joyful memories, moments of pain, expressions of bliss. There were dreamy eyes, even teary eyes.ⁱ

The experience I had throughout these two years of interviews was one of the richest of my life. It has been a journey that transformed me profoundly. The interviews with these 16 leaders became the springboard for the broader exploration of the values and mindsets of our civilization that forms the bulk of this book. The interviews opened the door to a revision of what is holding us back in our progress towards sustainability. It was something so close to us that we would barely notice it. And at the same time, the key to a more sustainable world was also closer than we would imagine, right there in our souls. I discovered that it was personal, and also about people.

I would very much like to share my journey with you.

ⁱ Because of the nature of their stories' contents, all names are changed and the identity of the individuals and their organizations has been carefully protected.

Acknowledgments

Sitting down to write the Acknowledgments page made me pause and ask myself: Where did this book start? A 2003 workshop in Fort Lauderdale, at which Lynn Gray introduced an exercise called *The Amazing Achievement Award* came to mind. We had to write an acceptance speech for an award we were to receive in 2010. That was a turning point for me, as I suddenly realized that while I had a happy life, there was nothing I could think of that would deserve a special prize. In a short lapse of 60 minutes, I had the dramatic experience that my life was perfectly happy and ... meaningless! In a desperate attempt to overcome the shocking discovery, I crafted a dream: The amazing achievement award would be given to me because I coached leaders who decided to make a difference in the world, and they did great things as a result. Laying out the road to get there, I envisioned I could go back to school, start a doctoral study, write a book, and find a place to teach where I could meet those “leaders.” Thank you, Lynn! That event marked the beginning of a journey of self-discovery, personal development, spirituality, and growth.

When I found the right program at Teachers College, Columbia University, I had the support of my family and friends. On deciding to study business leaders making a difference, Professors Victoria Marsick, Lyle Yorks, and my special mentor, Jeanne Bitterman, encouraged me all along the way. Ernie Turner, my life partner, suggested a name for my dream: “You can be a Legacy Coach, to work with people who want to make a difference.” Joe Laur and my colleagues at the AEGIS program cheered me up with this idea and helped me with their ideas and contacts.

Then came the numerous leaders, who are behind the many lessons shared in this book. To each of them goes my deepest gratitude for having believed in this project, for their generosity, for the gift of their precious time, and for their willingness to pause and reflect, and candidly share their very personal stories. I realize

I was asking unusual questions, more interested as I was in your transformational journeys than in business stories and accomplishments. You became the real anchors of the ideas of a better world that is, yes, possible and within our reach.

Another milestone was laid by Professor Aixa Ritz, Director of Graduate Studies at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Fairleigh Dickinson University. She attended my session at the Transformational Learning Conference in Bermuda, where I presented the preliminary findings of my research. As I finished my session, she approached me excitedly and said: "This is fabulous! Do you have a course to teach how to develop the sustainability mindset?" I hesitated, because in my dream I had it, but in the real world I didn't. After a pause, I said: "I can have it." So I worked on the design of the program, which I continued refining and teaching in the years that followed. Then came my friend Doug Cohen, insisting I needed to meet Prof. James (Jim) Stoner, at Fordham, and introduced us. Prof. Stoner was intrigued by my course and decided we should champion it together for the university's MBA students. To him and the students of both schools goes my gratitude as well: We learned from and with them.

This book started several times over the span of the last three years. As happened to me before, I decided to put on paper "what I had to share," and ended up learning so much in the process that the contents became different and richer – and even surprising to myself.

Yet what made me pick up the project every time I had dropped it was the encouragement of my dear friends and colleagues. I have to thank my friend Clara Arrocaín who asked me "when do you start the next?" when I was still writing my previous book. And Prof. Jeanne Bitterman, who warned me: "Don't wait! Time runs." And Silvia Leon, who boosted my self-confidence, and Prof. Jim Stoner, who kept asking: "How are you doing with your book?" and suggesting we use it as class material in our jointly taught class at Fordham.

To the readers of my chapters: Boris Drizin, Jim Stoner, Paul Roberts, Maria Nathan, Martha Driemer (my mom!), Ernie Turner, Jim Young, a big thank you for your wonderful critique, feedback, suggestions, and encouragement. And my special gratitude to Tony Pearson, who developed infinite patience converting my sometimes "too Spanish" English into real English.

To Mariam Tamborenea, my soul mate in so many projects, I have to thank for inviting me to bring art and poems into the book, and for suggesting this powerful title, that, as she said, "you cannot

say it out loud without feeling the energy, it makes you zummm!" I am thankful for Matias Fernandez's great design for covers and to Chris Murray's careful and professional editing – the third time he is part of my writing journey! My gratitude goes also to my friend Hector Legrand, who worked hard in the production of this book; his rigorous and playful attitude made our interactions so enjoyable.

I cannot finish this list without thanking my friends, Veronica, Maica, Silvia, Jonelle, the Manzanitas, Jorge, Stephanie, the Minervas, and my family who nurture my heart with unconditional love, as well as my life partner Ernie, the sponsor of my dreams, and who helps me jump over any obstacle by providing his ideas, his visions, and his simple (and powerful!) two words: Why not?

To all of you, and to the many wise people whose thinking triggered and inspired my own thinking, on the shoulders of which we're standing today, my deep gratitude and my humble commitment to keep working to make this world a better place.



So what is the Big Bang Being? As with the cosmological model, this Big Bang starts in singularity, within each individual ... at our core, when we glimpse the little something that we had lost track of. For a short moment we see it, we have a fleeting experience, yet we recognize it, it is something very familiar. We have no names for it, no precise words to describe it. A feeling? We may be left with the desire to experience it again, whatever the "it" was. Perhaps, we get to that place again, sometime. As we spend more time lingering in that bizarre yet deeply familiar feeling, we begin to emanate a different energy into our environment. For a moment, or more frequently, we radiate something that we're not controlling, yet it is noticed by others. In the cosmic Big Bang, the Universe started as singular energy converted into particles and expanded. It happened rapidly.

The Big Bang of humanity follows the same pattern and structure. We're part of Nature, and so this shouldn't come as a surprise. Starting with a thought, a quiet minute, a moment of peace, a smile with no reason. Wavelike energy spreads and touches others. From person to person, even when we're not physically close. This doesn't matter, the same way it doesn't matter where the Twitter that may cause a revolution is written. Viral spread of light-ness. When we want to trace it back, we can no

longer find where it started. Because it happens in so many beings at the same time.

We all are ready for the experience, because of the invisible thread that connects us to the Universe. You will know when you see it. Stay alert, you're a key part of the Big Bang Being.

Introduction

Lieben und Arbeiten – Love and Work

When asked for the definition of mental health and fulfillment, Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, had two words: *Lieben und Arbeiten*, love and work. In this book we will find how 16 business leaders brought together their compassion, their caring for others and the world, with their work.

True, only on rare occasions are we able to meet the person behind initiatives that made a positive impact on the world, even less have an in-depth view into their feelings, concerns, hesitations, doubts, and most intimate thoughts. What is seen publicly is the initiative, the impact on the bottom line and the community, or sometimes on the environment. Yet it is their *personal* stories that can be most inspirational, since they draw our attention to the fact that amazing achievements start in simple ways, with just the thinking of one individual. And when we find out that the “exemplary individuals” have many very “human’ aspects that we identify with and find in ourselves, it brings us closer; and particularly, it may even trigger in us the question: If she could do it ... I wonder what could *I* do?

This book has been written for the many people I have met who are feeling some kind of unmet need to “do something” meaningful, something that provides them with a deep purpose, a profound (spiritual?) satisfaction. They sometimes seek it; sometimes they carry the unmet need alongside “business as usual,” occasionally having a moment where they realize that something is still missing in their life. By sharing with the reader the richness of the personal interviews I was privileged to conduct with a group of business leaders who made an impact on the world, I hope to build that bridge from their innermost soul to the soul of the reader, the other seeker. And the shortest distance between any two people,