STUDY QUESTIONS

Korten, When Corporations Rule the World

Part One: chapters 1-3

1. According to Korten, how should we evaluate the worth of technology in our lives? How should we evaluate the worth of jobs and income within the same framework?

2. How much has world economic output risen since 1950? What have been the psychological, social, political, and environmental consequences of this rise?

3. What is the “threefold human crisis” according to Korten? What are the dimensions of each? What are the current and likely long-term consequences of each of the three components for you, your family, your community, and the nation?

4. What does Korten see as wrong with the mainstream definition of GNP (or GDP) and the use of it as the principal indicator of “progress”? What does he see as an alternative?

5. What does Korten mean by “cowboy economics” and “spaceship world”? What is the clash between the two? What are the long-range implications for you, your family, your community, and the nation?

6. Who does Korten see as most responsible for the contamination and destruction of the world’s natural resources?

7. By what standards does Korten define “progress”? By these standards, to what extent have the U.S. and the world made “progress” since World War II? What does Korten claim needs to be done in order to make “progress” as he defines it?

8. What is Korten’s opinion of “globalization,” as we have experienced the process so far? How does he see it as affecting local and national societies around the world? What does he think we need to do about it?

9. If Korten’s ideas are more or less valid, then why do we as individuals, families, communities, and nations live the way we do?

10. Can you envision anything that could slow down, modify, or even reverse globalization or some of its aspects?

Part Two: chapters 4-7

1. What is a “corporate charter”? What is its history? According to Korten, what are its positive and negative sides?

2. What are the agendas of business corporations, and from what dynamics do they arise?

3. What evidence does Korten cite in arguing that business corporations are the world’s dominant governance institutions?
4. What are the beliefs of “free market” advocates, and what are the premises of these beliefs in neoclassical economics?

5. From Korten’s perspective, what is wrong with these beliefs and premises? How do they go together with the notion of “unlimited growth”?

6. What is cost “internalization” and cost “externalization”? What are examples? How, according to Korten, do power and cost externalization go together? What are examples?

7. In what ways, according to Korten, do competitive markets depend on strong government?

8. What, according to Korten, are the interlinked sectors upon which a health society depends? What does each sector involve, and how do they intersect?

9. What does Korten mean by “Cloud Minders”?

**Part Three: chapters 8-12**

1. What, from Korten’s standpoint, is at stake in “community versus corporate interests” in the globalizing economy?

2. How is “elite consensus” built?

3. What, according to Korten, is the “buying out of democracy,” “marketing the world,” and “eliminating the public interest”?

4. From Korten’s perspective, what is “development”? What has been the effect of post-World War II politics and economics on colonialism?

**Part Four: chapters 13-17**

1. How is money delinked from value? What are two common ways to create money without creating value?

2. In what ways is finance “predatory”?

3. What is “corporate cannibalism”? What is “weeding out corporate social responsibility”?

4. What is the “race to the bottom”?

5. In what ways is the global economy “discarding people”?

**Parts Five & Six: chapters 18-23 & Epilogue**

1. How is “the local” becoming disempowered?
2. What, says Korten, should be the guiding principles for the creation of healthy societies?

3. What does Korten mean by “sustainable livelihoods”?

4. What is Korten’s “agenda for change”?

5. What does Korten say about the supposed differences between the “old” (i.e. manufacturing based) and “new” (i.e. high tech) economies?

6. What, from Korten’s perspective, is the only true measure of prosperity?

7. From Korten’s perspective, what are “life’s guiding principles”?

8. What is “civil society,” what foundation does it rest upon, and what is its relevance to Korten’s agenda for change and notion of “life’s guiding principles”?