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Pre-Conference Workshop

Wednesday, May 15 | 9:00AM – 12:00PM

Location: Marriott Kingsgate Conference Center | Cincinnati, Ohio

Authentic Sustainability

Exploring Paradoxes, Pitfalls, and Pathways in Conversations for a Better World

At some point, every one of us has contemplated more environmentally sustainable ways of living and working, from simple acts like recycling a soda can to bigger changes in business strategy and public policy. However, when we try to have a conversation about our ideas, someone has branded us as a “holier than thou” jerk, or we have refrained from speaking or acting because we worry they might. We get stuck and only maybe later notice that we had a choice in the matter.

This work explores various pitfalls of sustainability, or recurring conversations in the sustainability discourse that correlate with the experience of being stuck. This work explores why we get stuck in pitfalls and how we can escape them. It points out how advocates for the “flourishing of human and other life forever” undermine that flourishing in the way we engage with people every day. It reveals some persistent tensions and ambivalences we all experience that generate paradoxes of sustainability beneath the pitfalls. When we distinguish these pitfalls and underlying paradoxes, we can identify them in our lives and our conversations, and are then free to explore pathways out of and around what would otherwise remain latent traps. Our intention is for these pathways to lead to greater freedom, volition, authenticity, integrity, and effectiveness and that they will contribute toward a transformation of the sustainability “movement” or dialogue – to support the flourishing of our lives in the pursuit of the flourishing of all life.

Workshop participants will explore and be left with:

- A theoretical model explaining the persistent existence of pitfalls
- Awareness and ability to identify pitfalls real time
- Experience participating in the pitfalls and pathways self-reflective exercises
- Expertise to deliver the material and lead exercises within their classroom or organization
- Training in coaching participants through the self-reflective inquiry of identifying pitfalls and creating pathways in their own lives



Gabriel Grant

Gabriel Grant is a doctoral candidate in Leadership and Sustainability at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and the founding director of the Byron Fellowship Educational Foundation. His research focuses on the relationships and possible pathways between micro level flourishing of individuals, flourishing organizations and communities, and at the macro level, a flourishing planet. Gabriel holds an MPhil in Leadership and Sustainability from Yale University, an MS in Ecological Systems Engineering and a BS in Physics from Purdue University. He is also an active sustainability consultant with 14 years of experience whose clients represent a diversity of sectors including: social entrepreneurship, transportation, energy, information and communication technology, commercial and residential development, municipalities, and cultural institutions. His academic, professional, and non-profit ventures are committed to the dream of all life flourishing together through people experiencing their life as a calling.