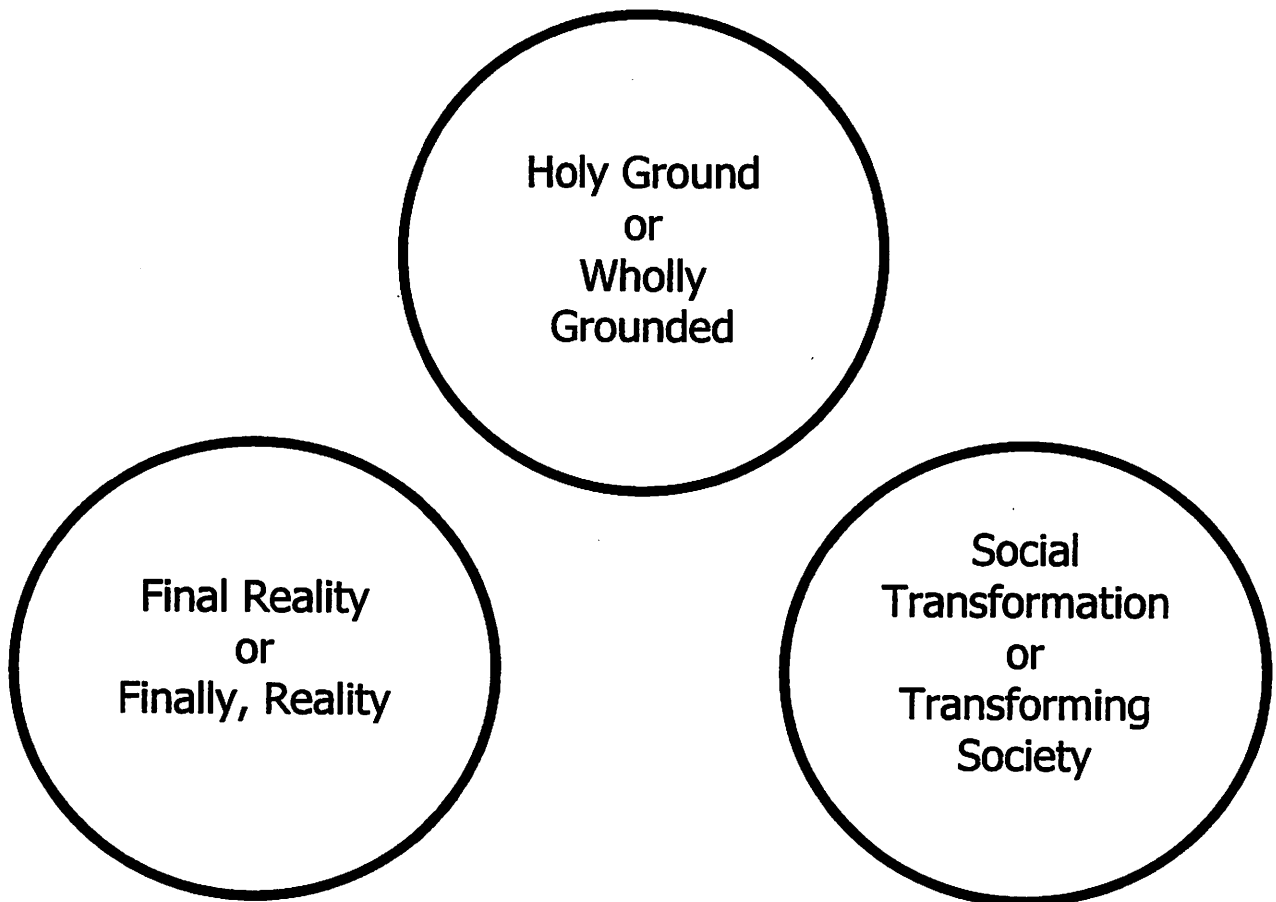


Foundational Understandings

A Universe-referent Trilogy
For Anyone
In the 21st Century



Based on a series of sermons by:
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Delivered to
The Unitarian Universalist Church of Greensboro
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Dedication

This trilogy is dedicated to Rev. David Reese – my mentor, colleague and friend – who for 40 years kept encouraging me to continue moving from beyond the familiar No Longer into the uncharted Not Yet. His passion for the profound will never be forgotten.

F. Nelson Stover

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Comments and input are deeply appreciated.

F. Nelson Stover

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Greensboro, NC
July, 2006

- 1. Final Reality or Reality, Finally** – Acknowledging that we all live in a Cosmogenic Reality in which each element actively, or passively, participates in the creative process which births every tomorrow.
- 2. Social Transformation or Transforming Society** – Participating in the process of building a world conscious of the fact that we all live amid a communion of subjects (not just a collection of objects) in which each entity has species specific rights.
- 3. Holy Ground or Wholly Grounded** – Tapping the interior resources that come from being at one with the Universe in all its numinous and material aspects and which finally sustain one on the long journey of life.

Introduction

This paper has been written from the same notes used to preach a series of sermons at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greensboro. Each of the three sections is designed to be self contained, yet they share many of the same themes and augment each other at certain points. While they are presented here in the order in which they were given in July 2006, the reader may well be advised to begin with the one which most fascinates them, then read the other sections as they see fit.

While many of the ideas here are drawn from other contemporary and historical sources, no attempt has been made to provide extensive footnotes or other bibliographical information. This work can be done in other forums.

Section 1

Final Reality or Reality, Finally

Seeing

The time has come to realize that an interpretation of the Universe – even a positivist one – remains unsatisfying unless it covers the interior as well as the exterior of things; mind as well as matter. The true physics is that which will, one day, achieve the inclusion of man in his wholeness in a coherent picture of the world.

In fact I doubt whether there is a more decisive moment for a thinking being than when the scales fall from his eyes and he discovers that he is not an isolated unit lost in the cosmic solitudes, and realizes that a universal will to live converges and is hominised in him.

In such a vision man is seen not as a static centre of the world – as he has long believed himself to be – but as the axis and leading shoot of evolution, which is something much finer.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
Paris, March, 1947

Look Deep, Listen Deep

The stone said to me,
"I am not dead,
My particles spin and whirl like dervishes
Dancing to the music of the Universe.

My stillness is illusory,
I'm pure light captive for a while, and
Another secret I'll tell you,
I'm mostly space; my firmness is also an illusion;
But look more deeply,
You'll see, there's some of me in you."

And then the lily asked me,
"What do you see?
My lustrous color has dazzled your eyes, but
Can you see in me the stone, which became earth
The sweet mother that holds me to her bosom?

Can you see in me the ardent sun
Which woke me, warmed me and spoke to me
Of the season of exuberance?

Can you see in me the monsoons of Asia
And the Amazon River?"

Then they asked,
"Do you know how grand you are?
Oh, to contemplate such things."

© Dan Glenn
August 29, 2002

Final Reality Or Reality, Finally

Though our lives overlapped by nearly forty years, I had only a few opportunities to meet with Ella Kite, the maternal grandmother of my wife, Elaine. Nonetheless, many of the moments we did have together provided rich insights into the complexities of existence in the times in which we both walked on Planet Earth. I remember quite clearly the day in 1969 when she and I, along with the rest of Elaine's family, watched the televised coverage of the *Eagle's* landing on the lunar surface. Some moments after the landing, Neil Armstrong stepped out of the capsule, climbed down the ladder and actually walked on the surface of the moon. Like most people, Ella had a hard time grasping the fact that the crew of this craft had been traveling 17,500 miles per hour to escape the gravitational pull of the Earth and thus journey into orbit around the Moon. She reminisced that in her day the fastest anyone could travel was about 25 mph if they rode on the back of a galloping horse. In my later reflections on her observation, I realized that in terms of maximum speed of travel, Ella was born into a world more like that of Genghis Khan or Hannibal than the one in which she was ending her life.

The magnitude of change that occurred during the 20th Century rivaled, or exceeded, that of any previous time on the Planet not only in terms of speed of travel, but in a host of other aspects of daily living. The technological advances of this century changed our individual and collective perspectives. Seeing the Earth rise over the rim of the Moon provided a new image of the oneness of the Blue Marble and led to an indelible awareness of the fragile nature of life on Spaceship Earth. Tapping into the vast reserves of fossil fuels led to cheap energy thus allowing travel across land and sea such that material goods could be easily interchanged and individuals could visit distant destinations formerly reserved only for the most adventurous explorers. Early experimentations in telecommunication led to the development of high-speed Internet connections available in homes across the US and in Internet Cafés from Calcutta and Katmandu to Accra. Thus, information formerly only available to the social elites in wealthy nations became available – in theory and frequently in practice – to a large proportion of the inhabitants of the globe. Along with the technological changes, came changes in social norms and living patterns. Women in the US got the right to vote in 1921. Students from China to Chile demanded new freedoms of study, morality and political participation.

The flurry of growth and change of the 20th Century, however, fostered considerable confusion and turmoil at the beginning of the 21st Century. Rampant debilitating diseases infected huge portions of the populations, especially in Africa, in the form of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The

HIV/AIDS virus crippled national economies and shattered family bonds, not only in Africa but also in the US and around the globe – the poor were particularly hard hit. Economic policies, especially those of the final decades of the 20th Century, widened the gap between the richest sectors of the global society and the poorer elements. This often led to deep seated frustrations especially among the younger men seeking ways to participate in building a future for themselves and their families. Environmental degradation reached alarming proportions as the extractive economies polluted the air and water resources to extremes beyond which the natural processes of the Planet could restore a habitable balance. Yet another tragic situation – one that got little attention – involved the collapse of meaning among much of the rapidly growing middle class in all societies. Having a house full of stuff, even really nice stuff, didn't fill the hollowness within ever growing numbers of people. Even though some stores advertised "Satisfaction Guaranteed" on the walls of their buildings, lucid people knew that even by acquiring everything therein true and lasting satisfaction would not be found.

The fundamental tragedy of the early years of the 21st Century lies not in the social unrest or environmental disasters but rather in the inability of any of the human institutions to effectively respond to the situations in which they find themselves especially when relating to the natural world. While the tsunami which killed thousands of people in Indonesia and around the Indian Ocean at the end of 2004 definitely counts as a disaster of monumental proportions; the deeper problem was that most of the people who suffered had no adequate mental model to describe what happened to them. Some of the religious leaders tried to convince their followers that their personal transgressions had led to their unfortunate demise; some public officials tried to instill anger and hatred at evil empires whose actions supposedly caused such calamity. Few people in the low-lying lands which meet the world's oceans understand that deep in the ocean floor giant tectonic plates are grating against one another. When pressures mount, cataclysmic disjuncture causes tidal waves of cataclysmic proportion which travel across vast reaches of ocean irrespective of any human policies or constructions.

This limited understanding of the nature of the reality in which we live is not limited to the fishermen of Sri Lanka. Few of the best educated Americans know whether the distance from Washington to Madrid is greater or less now than it was at the time when Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean [it is slightly greater]. Few Indian intellectuals know whether the distance from Mumbai to Lhasa is greater or less now than it was when Asoka led his armies across the Gangetic plain [it is somewhat less]. While these changes will not affect the travel time on trips made this year or next, they do – nonetheless – characterize the dynamic Planet on which we live.

Our general unfamiliarity with geological dynamics that drive the Blue Marble points to a more wide-spread naivety about the fundamental governing principles

of the Universe itself. In particular, I want to enumerate three pervasive properties which have direct effect on the way individuals and societies act and relate to one another. The first property – that *the Universe emerges in a time-developmental context* – affects how we understand change and growth. The second property – that *the Universe changes in quantum discontinuities* – affects how we understand times of chaos and transition (like the one in which we find ourselves at the beginning of the 21st Century). The third property – that *the Universe is a Cosmogenic Reality in which all aspects are participating in creating the future* – affects the way we see our role in relationship to other species. While each of these could be subject matter for entire courses of study, a brief examination of each will suffice here.

One of the primary intellectual changes that the early Jewish leaders instilled in their society had to do with the notion of progress. They changed the popular celebrations from rehearsals of the recurring cycles of nature to remembrances of important historical events. One clear example of this is seen in the Passover rituals. The Egyptians had a long history of celebrating the return of Isis from the underworld as a remembrance of the annual flooding of the Nile at the coming of spring. The Jews took many of the ritualistic symbols used by the Egyptians, and added others of their own, to commemorate a one-time happening in the history of their particular journey as a people. In so doing, they began to acknowledge a one-way direction through time as an ordering principle of society.

The Hubble telescope has collected pictures of galaxies and nebulae from the far distant fringes of the Universe. Some stunning photos show the birth of stars from clouds of gases that may be billions of years old. Giant supernovae eruptions are seen providing fertile ground for more complex molecules as well as heavier stars and celestial objects. When combined with studies of deep ocean trenches and archeological evidence from ancient rocks, a pattern of ever increasing complexity emerges over the span of eons. The ancient Jews knew that – like it or not – once they left Egypt there was no going back. In a similar way, the time-developmental growth of the Universe, in all its aspects, means that each present moment offers and irreversible platform from which to initiate the future; the past is gone for ever and can not be reentered but only remembered. We live in a Universe in which there is no going back.

Electron microscopes have enabled human eyes to probe the complexities of minute structures while space-borne telescopes have scanned the vast reaches of space beyond our cluster of galaxies. Along with seeing beautiful structures and intricate patterns, observers have observed that vast expanses of nothingness fill chasms of all orders of magnitude. The Universe we live in is not a continuous alignment of thingies sitting one next to another but rather a loose tapestry with immense empty spaces punctuated by small collections of matter. For example, when you stir a teaspoon of sugar into the hot tea, where does the sugar go? Really, it goes in between the water molecules; creeping into gaps in an apparently full space.

A similar condition of discontinuity exists in what are often called Quantum Leaps. This property was noticed at the atomic level where electrons spin around nuclei in defined orbit shells. An electron is either in one shell or it leaps up to another – none are half way in between. Throughout the Universe, levels of stability exist and change happens when something leaps from one stable position to another. It's a bit like walking – first you stand on one foot, then on the other; moving from one place to another you can't have both feet off of the ground, for long.

Our individual lives are like this also. In the summer of '66, I was going along fine – graduating from high school, enrolling in college, passing classes, getting summer jobs and minding my own business. Then Elaine walked in to my office and offered to make curtains for the windows. After a few Saturday evening dates, the old patterns I'd adopted by myself went out the curtained window and my life took a new direction as a part of a two-person family. In each individual's life, on-going patterns get interrupted by events, decisions and intrusions which cause new patterns and relationships to be forged. We see, throughout history and around the globe, rhythms of stability -> chaos -> and reorganization.

A third property that we have come to grasp in the latter parts of the 20th Century involves the Cosmogenetic nature of our Universe. This is to say that, wherever we look – in ourselves, in the galaxies, in the past, in the forests or in the seas – we notice the same laws, patterns, propensities and principles at work. This pervasive presence of commonness manifests itself in species specific ways – dogs care in dog ways and humans care in human ways – but the similarities are unmistakable across the vastness of time and space. As Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme have pointed out in their book "Universe Story", three important governing themes of our Cosmogenetic Universe can be expressed as *autopoiesis*, *communion* and *differentiation*. Autopoiesis refers to the power each thing has to participate directly in the cosmos-creating endeavor. Communion points to the ability of diverse elements of the Universe to unite together for mutual benefit. Differentiation points to the on-going collapse and disjuncture in which things come apart and become unique. Each of these three plays an essential role in the Universe as a whole and our personal lives in particular.

Whether trying to comprehend the social strife in war torn nations or attempting to determine a personal vocational direction, the story we tell about the Universe in which we live informs the decisions we make and the actions we adopt. Citizens of the 21st Century have a deep well of previous experiences from which to draw when attempting to make sense of their world. In this section we will draw from the well of the tribal peoples to recover some of their insights about the human interaction with the non-human world, in the second section we will draw from the well of the contemporary religious traditions as they have sought to guide social change over several millennia and in the third we will draw from the

well of the various mystical traditions who have found a common ground in touching the profound depths of human existence.

Since early cave dwellers painted bulls and suns on the rocks in European caves and along Australian outcroppings, the human species has been a story telling creature. Somewhere around 5,000 years ago a major transformation began to occur in the way that human beings lived, related to one another and their surroundings and, thus, understood the world in which they lived. The formation of cities and the beginnings of agricultural practices coordinated and protected by governments and armies required a change in the foundational understandings of human beings. The focus of attention shifted from harmonization with the natural cycles to controlling individuals as well as crops, animals and the environs. If a person is interested in running a disciplined social system, they are not (on the first hand) interested in personal feelings and intuitions. Most of what we are taught in schools and popular culture about how humans should function in relationship to their environment and each other is founded on the wisdom of the transition into the agricultural era with augmentations instituted when the control of the environment was taken to extremes with industrialization and the extraction of fossil fuels.

Sensitive citizens of the 21st Century are realizing that the domination of each other and the environment is having counter-productive results and, in fact, may be causing much of the social unrest and environmental degradation that is becoming obvious. Sources of wisdom about alternative understandings remain in the Aboriginal tribes of Australia, the tribal people of India, the First Nation peoples of the Americas, the Pagan traditions of northern Europe and in other similar remnants of long-distant eras. Within these traditions elders still teach the healing properties of particular plants, imaginative stories retell the creative interactions among the species and social practices promote long-term sustainability of the human settlements within the particular environs.

I had the opportunity of living in Australia for four years and during part of that time Elaine and I served as house parents for 6 Aboriginal teenagers that were attending high school in Perth. They knew how to read the clouds and were far better at predicting on-coming rain than the TV meteorologists. Much to the chagrin of some of the other “westerners”, the teenage boy caught a bird in his bare hands one day – his quick speed, amazing ability to walk quietly and his understanding of the habits of birds produced what, in his traditional village setting, might have become dinner. I had the chance to meet the children’s father one day and he began to tell me about the time that he had walked from the center of Australia to his home on the northwest coast. I was aware that this thousand-mile journey would have been through mostly desert and asked him how he found water. “Simple,” he replied, “you watch the lizards.” He proceeded to tell me that lizards with their tongues hanging out are going toward water and should be followed; lizards with their tongues in are coming from water and their tracks should be retraced.

Modern society has a great deal to learn from these often denigrated pre-modern traditions. Their wisdom contains many practical insights and powerful spiritual connections into the non-human realms. Residents of some remote islands in the Indian Ocean had maintained for centuries stories about great waves that followed the disappearance of the waters from the beaches. Just before the '04 tsunami struck they all headed for high ground and suffered no loss of life as a result. Before the dark nights of winter were co-opted by the Christians for the celebration of the birth of Christ, scores of peoples celebrated the winter solstice and the return of the light. The longest day – the summer solstice – likewise has been acknowledged as a spiritually significant occurrence. In Greensboro, a group of women decided to celebrate the Summer Solstice in 2005. They acquired permission to use the city park and, somehow, word got out that there would be a public celebration. Thousands of people (including a disproportionate number of women with their daughters) showed up to walk amid the gardens, watch the fire dancers, to be with one another and to commune with their world on such an auspicious day. Modern society has much to learn from people who are continuing to tap into this wisdom from the earliest phases of the human journey on Planet Earth. These teachers include tribal elders and others, like the Community of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS), who are actively revitalizing ancient traditions.

Yet in the drive to recover perceptions and celebrations from these diverse sources, care must be taken to avoid including assumptions about perpetual cycles that non-longer remain valid in what is now known to be a time-developmental reality. While these sources of wisdom can teach much about how human beings relate to the non-human world; the poetry they used to convey these understandings can not be interpreted as explanations for phenomenon now visible in other ways. The combination of increased scientific knowledge with the massive capacity of the human species to affect the dynamic environmental rhythms of the Planet in the 21st Century requires a new story about how creativity happens in the Universe in which we live.

The last great creation story of the western world involved a god who completed his project by including the human species on the 6th day and then took a day's rest. A set of rules for living in this world was conveyed to the established leadership who taught everyone else how to behave. The role of good humans was to fit in to this well-defined creation. In times of turmoil, the rules sometimes required modification but the general picture of the nature of reality changed little over the past several millennia. Yet, as discussed in the earlier parts of this section, such a world view will not foster creative solutions to unblock our common pathway into the future.

Instead of telling a story a static creation with normative patterns guiding predictable practices, we need to convey an understanding of a Cosmogenetic Reality in which every particle and person, everywhere, actively (or passively) –

consciously or unconsciously – participates in shaping the next moment. These times require new language, new words from which we can not shy away, in order to convey a new framework for our daily living. When we say that throughout this Cosmogenetic Reality each particle participates in shaping the future, we are not saying that just any old thing can happen any old time. Mostly the rocks lying on the ground today will still be lying on the ground, in the same place, tomorrow and the day after. This will be true here as well as there, except when the particular rocks happen to be lying along a deep-seated fault line which is feeling the stress of the pressure of adjacent continental plates sliding in opposite directions. Finally, two sets of rock formerly content to lie side by side may shift in a cataclysmic fracture. If this fracture occurs under a deep ocean, the resulting tsunami may have devastating effects on even the most self-conscious, peaceful and law abiding human society that may have chosen to live on a shoreline in the wave's path.

By paying attention to the creative process which is happening at every moment, at every place, and which never ceases, a new level of appreciation emerges for the fear and fascination that surrounds moments of decision. One might imagine the dialogue between a caterpillar feeling itself at the end of a journey and a butterfly exploring new realms of flight among the flowers. Such an encounter is poignantly portrayed in Earth Mama's song, "Butterfly", about times of decision. These experiences are known by each of us and numerous movies and other popular media are helping probe these moments of creativity. In the movie "Racing Stripes" a zebra and a young woman encounter moments of decision when they elect to go beyond normal expectations to create new possibilities for themselves.

An important element associated with heightened sensitivity to the perpetual creative process involves what names are given to the experiences related to this intensified self-conscious participation in this process. When you are wondering about which way to go, struggling with the alternatives and then get a glimmer of a clue about which way to choose – do you call this Fate, Luck, Good Intuition or Seeing the Smiling Face of God. I remember one time when I was building a wall in the back corner of the ground floor of our house. Ken Williams, my father-in-law, who was a master teacher and an experienced builder of single-family homes, came over to observe the project. Though he was quite ill and barely able to walk, much less actually assist with the work at hand, he placed his chair at the point where the two walls were to meet. He asked timely questions which aided my design as I proceeded to bring the two structures together. Knowing well from his vast previous experience where the hard choices were going to have to be made, once the corner was in place he was "tired" and had to leave. At times of decision – big decisions or trivial ones – we do, sometimes, see beyond ourselves and gain wisdom from that which comes from beyond, which we may call the Smiling Face of God.

Sometimes, even when we know what is required, whether it be the need for black students to sit a lunch counter until old stereotypes crumble or the need to complete a long overdue project by working late into the night, we initially feel that we have inadequate energy and resources for the task. Then something comes, like Touching the Hand of God, and we step over the chasm of weariness having tapped into a source of energy beyond the food we have eaten or the muscles we have developed in our legs and arms.

At other times amid confusion, chaos and calamity we may find ourselves Feeling the Breath of God which seems to bring stillness to the storm and a serenity which fosters fortitude beyond expectation. This may happen while sitting still with the dog on the front porch or walking down the hallway of an office building. At these times, doubt and confusion are blown away by the breath of nothingness and clarity and resolve appear like the distinctive colors of the garden flowers emerge from the grey dawn as the morning sun creeps over the eastern treetops. These experiences happen frequently – especially when one is paying attention to them – the name you give to them has important consequences.

If a person has chosen to live in a world of ever-repeating cycles, their fundamental tasks focus on harmonizing their actions with the ebb and flow of the world around them. If a person has chosen to live in a world created by an external force, then their fundamental tasks involve trying to learn the rules and abide by them. If a person has chosen to live in a world in which the real important elements lie outside the realm of daily existence, then their fundamental task is to avoid the complexities of daily living and get to some other, possibly better, place. If a person chooses to live in world that operates as a Cosmogenetic Reality in which every person, pebble and particle is participating in creating the shape of tomorrow then the whole of everyday existence – every decision and action – takes on monumental significance and the doorway to profound living appears in every moment.

The science classes in our schools, many of the popular movies, people's daily experiences and the ever increasing sensitivity to human beings' impact on the environment are combining to cause more and more people to reexamine their conception about the nature of the world in which they live. The easy way out of the dilemmas caused by this dawning awareness is to jazz up previous patterns and understandings, set old poetry to new music and ignore the complexities that can not be resolved in this process. These easy escapes from the challenge of the 21st Century rarely really solve the problems at hand and often lead to deeper frustration as the futility of the patches become apparent.

This paper serves as an open invitation to listen deeply to the emerging wisdom of contemporary science, to recover lessons from our ancient ancestors regarding the human interaction with the natural world and to joyously accept challenge to actively participate in the process of creating tomorrow. The shape

of tomorrow is not now known. The task of moving from the No Longer into the Not Yet goes on, everywhere, in the wildness of the present. The Universe, in its numinous and material aspects, accepts the input of each individual of all species as each tomorrow becomes manifest.

Each human being has two big decisions to make, perpetually: 1) To look deeply and honestly and the Universe in which they live or to blindly reduce their vision down to the easily manageable proportions and 2) To decide what kind of story they will tell about their everyday existence – one of bold encounters with all of reality or one of frustration with the mundane doldrums of human existence (or something in between).

As you go about your daily tasks, actively seek to encounter the depths of the interconnected web of life. Listen carefully to the ever-present silence.

Section 2

Social Transformation or Transforming Society

The Great Work

We are now experiencing a moment of significance far beyond what any of us can imagine. What can be said is that the foundations of a new historical period, the Ecozoic Era, have been established in every realm of human affairs. The mythic vision has been set into place. The distorted dream of an industrial technological paradise is being replaced by the more viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community. The dream drives the action. In the larger cultural context the dream becomes the myth that both guides and drives the action.

Thomas Berry, "The Great Work", 1999.

Help Shape the Future

Optimism and pessimism are beside the point. The key is not to predict what will happen, but to help shape the future. This task is a collective one.

Today we can declare that extreme poverty can be ended not in the time of our grandchildren, but in *our* time. The wealth of the rich world, the power of today's vast storehouses of knowledge, and the declining fraction of the world that needs help to escape from poverty all make the end of poverty a realistic possibility by the year 2025. ... Will we have the good judgment to use our wealth wisely, to heal a divide planet, to end the suffering of those still trapped by poverty, and to forge a common bond of humanity, security, and shared purpose across cultures and religions?

Jeffrey D. Sachs, "The End of Poverty", 2005

Social Transformation or Transforming Society

Ella Kite – the maternal grand mother of my wife, Elaine – lived in Oaktown, Indiana, one of those small southern Indiana towns that maintained the friendly rural atmosphere long into the 20th Century. In the months before Elaine and I got married, her parents suggested that I should meet Mrs. Kite. On one of those typical fall days when the Indiana sun warms the crisp not-yet-winty air, we arrived at the Kite house in late afternoon. As I got out of the car, Elaine suggested that I should take my coat indoors with me; I left it in the car. After dinner, Elaine and I decided to take a walk around Oaktown. I asked Elaine to go to the car and get my coat while I put my shoes on. She said that since she had already told me bring my coat in, I should go get it myself. Grandma Kite took Elaine aside in the kitchen and told her that “you should do whatever your man asks you to do or you might loose him.” Elaine still did not go get the coat. In the span of three generations many of the rules and guidelines for how men and women interrelate have changed.

Having experienced, in the 20th Century, a pace and scope of social change ranking among the most dramatic of any century in human history, the human species began the 21st Century in deep turmoil. As movies like “An Inconvenient Truth” have documented, the *environmental degradation* of Planet Earth has reached crisis proportions, primarily at the hands of the human species. The widening gap between the richer and poorer segments of society and an unprecedented level of interconnection among peoples of all nations fostered *social unrest* that affected typically unstable nations and usually complacent and safe ones as well. The third arena of turmoil has received less attention but nonetheless plays an import part in the transition into the 21st Century. During the second half of the 20th Century, the rising middle class grew in size and prosperity driven by a seemingly insatiable drive to acquire goods, to consume. Yet signs of *the collapse of the good life* are beginning to appear as the slow food movement attracts supporters and attention turns from quantity to quality of life.

Whatever list of one makes for the “Top 10 issues of the 21st Century”, the fact remains that by and large the issues can not be solved from the operating principles and world views that carried the human species so well through most of the 20th Century. As we discussed in Section 1, the understanding that the human species exists in a Cosmogenetic Reality in which each person, pebble and particle participates in shaping the future represents a radical shift from previous conceptions of the process by which tomorrow arises. Yet, once this idea dawns on an individual, organization or society the subsequent changes in their patterns of working together, conceptualizing the future and talking about

their present situation are transformed in unimaginable ways. This Section focuses on how individuals and groups behave once they get a glimmer of this new operating framework for the 21st Century.

Planet Earth finds itself in a unique position due to the current presence of the human species. In 1950 there were more people alive than dead. That is to say if one could count all of the creatures that might be called human that have existed between the beginning of the species and the year 1950, more than ½ of these beings were still alive in 1950 – more people were on the planet in 1950 than had lived in all the other years combined since the species began maybe as many as 3 million years ago. Furthermore, this massive presence of a single species is drastically enhanced by the technological capacities that have been developed. Human ingenuity can move mountains – this task will not be done by squirrels, clever as they may be. THAT the human species is affecting the future of the Planet is hardly a question for debate, the extent of the impact and the direction of change can be studied, analyzed and modified.

As long as people think that they are living in a static world where the fundamental task of the good person centers on doing what is right, little attention is paid to how change happens. In previous centuries the pace of change was often slow enough that the static conception seems to fit, most of the time, with the general experience of most people. The pace is different today. In Brussels Belgium they have established an Automobile Museum in which the cars are displayed in chronological order from the earliest horseless carriages to the contemporary luxury cars. As I walked through the spacious exhibit, I was struck by the wild diversity of the early attempts at powered travel. Some vehicles were wide, some were narrow; some had big wheels, some small; some had lights, some didn't; and they all were powered by different fuels and engine types. By the end of the exhibition most vehicles had gasoline engines, 4 rubber tires and were within inches of the same width and height.

The Automobile Museum provides a vivid example of how change occurs. In times of creative turbulence when old patterns are failing to meet current challenges, a host of potential new modes of being will emerge. These new forms will pop up here and there, sometimes cognizant of each other, sometimes dissociated with others. Each new response will attract, encourage and promote other responses – some quite similar, others even more radical and unique. After some time the most effective responses will proliferate, and others will fade away along with the past forms. In the field of study focusing on Chaos Theory, these initial responses are often called "Strange Attractors". The journey of rising turbulence followed by the presence of strange attractors followed by new ordering principles can be discovered throughout the natural world. People who have woken up to the need to find new patterns of social behavior in the 21st Century need to become "Strange Attractors", to precipitate the new form of human community on Planet Earth.

Part of the difficulty people are having at the beginning of the 21st Century comes from the fact that many of the guidelines for goodness that our parents taught us are no longer adequate for the situations in which we now find ourselves. My father led me to believe that if you were nice to women they would do as you said – this doesn't work in my household or at my office. My father-in-law was convinced that people could never cut down too many trees; I'm no longer so sure about this as I look at the devastation behind my house where 300 acres are being paved for an air cargo shipping hub. The state geologist told the residents of Findlay, Ohio in 1897 that the more natural gas they used, the more would be produced by their newly found wells; none remained in the 21st Century. As Thomas Berry once said to me, "Doing right, isn't."

Pick any book (holy or secular), follow all the rules; many if not most of the pressing issues of the 21st Century will remain unaddressed. Wait patiently for the next rising of the moon or the next season or the next sociological age; your waiting will not resolve the matters and continuing to act based on out-dated understandings may well exacerbate the problems. Hope for some outside power or presence to appear with a new plan or potion only to come to understand that the Universe itself awaits the unfolding of the 21st Century.

Every element of the present – all the numinous powers and the materialized aspects – is contributing to the shaping of the future. Put another way: we live amid a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. Grasping that the Universe contains a communion of subjects provides a critical insight into the changed perspective that is required to address the underlying issues of our age. The world we live in can not be imaged as simply a pile of resources for the human species – magnificent leading edge of creation – to consume for its personal gratification. Rather, every rock, fern and fish – each in its own species specific way – joins with the human species in being Planet Earth and in shaping their common future.

In Section 1 we briefly reviewed how the wisdom of the First Peoples (the Pagans, Tribals and Aborigines) could assist us in understanding how the natural world functions and especially how our species interrelates with other species. People interested in fostering social transformation are well advised to heed the wisdom of the great religious traditions that carried the human species into the 20th Century. Each of these – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism – were born in times of social unrest and the wisdom they gained on their journey through these periods remains in their teachings, writings and practices. In this paper, I will briefly examine the Judeo-Christian tradition, my birth religion, as an example; but a similar analysis could be done for the other traditions by scholars or individuals raised in any one of them.

The precise reasons that Abraham and his people left Ur of the Chaldees may remain obscure but they seem to have felt the winds of change blowing through their times. Likely they were trying to adapt to the ways of agriculture – taming

the plants and animals. They were living in closer proximity to one another and needing to recognize the individual's rights to property. By the time that Moses led his people out of Egypt he realized the need (after sitting several days alone on the mountain top) to reshape their picture of god and to codify the principles by which they would live and work. These early formulations have shaped our societies for the subsequent three millennia.

Each of these great religious traditions includes great wisdom on how people should interrelate with one another and how they should participate obediently in an ordered society. In their own ways, these traditions point to ways for caring for the needy and the outcast and for passing on the social wisdom from one generation to the next. These lessons can frequently be helpful in the present circumstances. However, often the particular issues being dealt with are either irrelevant or outdated. One of the most visible inadequacies involves the treatment of women who were rarely given an equal political and social status deemed essential in the 21st Century.

Intertwined with the social principles, the great religious traditions also contain deep insights into the human journey into consciousness and how to relate to the radical unknowness which everyone encounters. While the particulars of daily existence have changed dramatically over the centuries, the dynamics of personally growth in relationship to self-awareness, social sophistication and affirmation of the ground of being have maintained surprising similarities over the centuries. Students of all persuasions can appreciate the frustrations, dilemmas and insights of the ancient fathers, and mothers, as they increased in stature and grew in favor with god and man.

Moving into the 21st Century, global society has to find creative ways to both affirm and yet to move beyond these great forces from the past. Most of these traditions were highly place specific as they grew from particular peoples inhabiting particular locales. In a time of heightened mobility and global interconnectivity, final reality can no longer be contained or constrained by place – nor be interpreted to give certain peoples specific rights to designated places. While most of these traditions contain passing references affirming the natural world, the driving forces which initiated these perspectives were leading people to control, dominate and use the natural world and to overtake and conquer to societies that were not moving in this direction. These elements of the great religious traditions do not serve them well going into the 21st Century.

Moving forward, the process of fostering social transformation, of participating actively in the Universe's dance into tomorrow, involves four phases: a) seeing injustice in its largest possible context, b) acknowledging your personal and collective role in sustaining the problem, c) abolishing the problem within yourself and the organizations with which you are affiliated and d) actively leading society into new ways of thinking and acting. These steps are formulated loosely on the thinking of H. Richard Niebuhr and can be applied to social transformation at all

levels of society. In this paper, rather than set out specific issues to be remedied, I will, rather, seek to illumine the general process to be followed when a person or group become aware that they, themselves, are called to become active participants in the creative process that is birthing tomorrow.

I was born at the end of the 2nd World War in the now depleted oil fields of southern Illinois and raised in an all white suburban environment in central Michigan. During my sophomore year of high school our church youth group traveled to Wadley Alabama for a two-week work camp. When our bus stopped at a service station in Tennessee, I encountered for the first time three bathrooms – men, women and colored. This experience struck a deeply discordant feeling in my being. As the 1960's unfolded, I became increasingly committed to resolving issues of racial injustice and eventually set out on a life-long journey of social transformation that eventually led me to the villages of India and Egypt. My wife and I went oversea confident that the biggest problems of injustice lie in the poorest communities of the developing nations.

Two events helped me see the global problems of injustice in a larger context. When we lived an Indian village, Elaine was working with the women to establish pre-schools and pre-natal health care facilities; I was working with the men to expand agricultural opportunities and in particular to begin local dairy operations. One day when I had to take the jeep into Bombay (now Mumbai), Elaine asked me to stop by Don Bosco High School to pick up 10 50-pound bags of powered milk for the pre-school children. This milk was being given away free by this Catholic Church who was getting them from the US government who was buying milk from the American farmers with the tax-payers money to artificially keep the prices of milk at "acceptable" levels. These seemingly well intentioned actions were making it totally impossible for me to figure out a way to make dairy production economically viable in the Indian villages where year-round sunshine and available land should have fostered a vital dairy industry. Which villager would buy milk – even good fresh milk – when free milk was available from the ladies who were friends of the church with American friends?

Author's note: Anyone who wonders why some people are angry at nations like the United States might consider the impact of situations like these on local economies and especially on young men trying to start their climb up the economic ladder of success.

The second encounter with a similar problem helped me to sharpen my understanding of the scope of the issue. When we lived in a village in Egypt, Elaine sent me grocery shopping one day in the nearby town. On my list was "a pound of beef". I knew a local butcher who spoke enough English for me to visit by myself, so I paid him a visit and told him what was on my list. He gave me two choices – fresh Egyptian beef or frozen imported European beef. "What's the difference?" I asked. He told me that the European beef was half the price. Once again I realized why the Egyptian farmers were having difficulty selling their products

when the well-meaning and generous European governments were helping their farmers by buying their products, freezing them and shipping them to Egypt.

By the time in 1990 that Elaine and I were deciding where to spend the last halves of our lives, I was becoming clear that many of the root causes of the economic and social problems that I had seen in the 3rd world could, in fact, only be resolved by changes in the life styles, economic patterns and world views of my peers in the country from which I had set out nearly 20 years earlier. When striving to see problems in their larger context one must discern carefully the structures, systems, policies and belief systems which sustain the presence of the problem.

In 1975, some of my female acquaintances came to me asking for my assistance in getting more equal participation for women in the organization with which we were associated. Before I talked with them it had never occurred to me that most of the leadership roles were being held by men and that frequently women, did in fact, get secondary responsibilities even in situations where gender had no actual relevance. I was following in my father's footsteps and never realized that this slighting of the women in our group might be a problem. But, on closer examination, it soon became clear to me that everyone would benefit from equalizing the roles that men and women played in leadership, training and symbolic activities. I discovered that my own way of speaking – using “men” when I meant “humans”, for example – was a symptom of the same problem. Thus, to undertake the task of expanding the rights of women, I had to begin by discovering that as a man, I was a part of the problem.

A similar situation had occurred a decade earlier as I was dealing with racial injustice. To move beyond widely accepted social stereotypes, I had to pay careful attention to the words I used to describe people from ethnic backgrounds other than myself. I had to self-consciously strive to make friends with people unlike myself. More importantly I began to notice how the organizations of which I was a part did or did not include people of diverse backgrounds. The songs we sang had to be changed or edited and even the rituals that gave significance to our daily activities required amending to insure that they were inclusive of all races and genders.

Human society strives for balance, peace and harmony. Creative solutions that meet the needs of all the people will find acceptance once they are made available. But the new must first find embodied form somewhere. Once a small group of people begin to respond to the pain and suffering of their time in a fresh and vitalizing manner, old ways can be left behind. Sometimes these transformations require changes in legislation, massive public awareness campaigns and even delicate political negotiations. But, change does happen when groups and individuals dare to step beyond the safety of the sameness of the No Longer adequate and create that which has Not Yet become.

Each person, every day, has the choice between continuing to accept the present conditions and taking risks in the endeavors of building a different social form for the future. Active participation in the process of social transformation changes from a task reserved just for the elites and becomes the role of everyone when one understands that the Universe, itself (as we discussed in Section 1), is perpetually in the process of creation – a dynamic that involves every particle and person.

Sitting back and watching – becoming a couch potato on the stage of history – is certainly an option. Though the richness of the future will be every so slightly diminished. Cynicism – actively discouraging those who are building the future – often appeals to the weary. While the pace of moving into the future can be altered, the process can not be stopped. Like the ostrich that sticks its head in the sand and refuses to see what is going on around it, people may choose to close their eyes to injustice and become insensitive to the pain of themselves and those around them – but the hurting does not go away.

Though the options for doing nothing abound, I am personally optimistic about the vast numbers of people who are actively working to create vitalizing and inclusive responses to the challenges of the 21st Century. Internet connectivity – while certainly aiding those bent on disruption and chaos – provides cost-effective channels for disseminating ideas and analysis. Examples of participatory and inclusive social structures have emerged in all cultures and demonstrate possibilities for citizens of all cultures. Grassroots movements are emerging as vehicles for expanding the access of local citizens to express their opinions in the global dialogue. In countless ways, at the local and global levels, human society is moving toward: Sustainable Environmental Practices, Participatory Social Structures and an Inclusive Profound Spirituality.

As Teilhard de Chardin wrote more than 50 years ago, “The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices and build the Earth.”

As you go about your daily tasks, listen to the wind. Hearing, decide where to invest the one life you have.