Horses Haul Manure
East and West:
The Politics of Transformation

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I. Prologue: The Defining of Terms

Ours is an age characterized by double vision. The Cold War ends, yet nuclear proliferation has become our latest threat. The "Evil Empire" breaks apart, but ethnic, religious and other contentious forms of narrow identity have arisen in its place. The promise of a new world order in the Middle East (and elsewhere) takes on new life, only to be soured by sustained distrust. We have been told to look for "a thousand points of light." Or was it bright? Or fright?

None of this confusion is new in history. History is the record, the story of this double vision, this Janus-like experience -- of hope born and crushed, of trust and mistrust coexisting within personal lives and communities. While not a new story, what is more basic to human life than whether we live by hope or whether we despair? Life's essential dilemma is how one hopes in the midst of persistent bad news. How are we to be hopeful when the grounds for hope are so elusive? How does one engage in a hope that is not naïve?

It takes no cynic to see that we are living in a broken and apprehensive world. The fragility of existence, social and psychic, is transparent. Environmental destruction is extensive. Eastern Europe has been devastated by decades of pollution. Parts of Africa are beyond reclaiming, perhaps for centuries. Priceless forests everywhere have been stripped, altering climates for lifetimes. The social climate, despite certain seeds of hope, is equally disturbed. Communistism mushroomed astastically wherever soils are ripe.
And in this country, profound ambivalence thrives. Since the mid-1960s American self-confidence has been severely shaken, a fact not entirely to be regretted. Often engaging in hubris, we are coming to recognize that true greatness must acknowledge its own contradictions. The present discouragement and anger over domestic problems long-ignored exist side by side with a deep longing for healing and social reconstruction. Do the politics of 1992 augur anything of significance? Do we have the energy and will to insist that the political leadership be effectively responsive to social needs? If this widely felt longing is to generate a genuinely new reality, how do a society and its people addicted for decades to the "good life" (for those who can afford it) come to see themselves as part of a larger whole? Part of a body politic, domestically and globally, that functions interdependently with the body politics of other peoples? How do we see our true self-interest as inseparable from the true self-interest of other human communities?

This concern is not new. The Sung dynasty philosopher Chang Tsai (1020-77) wrote these famous words a millennium ago:

Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small being as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore, that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I regard as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.

Tu Wei-ming's comment on these words is perceptive: "The sense of intimacy with which Chang Tsai, as a single person, relates himself to the universe as a whole reflects his profound awareness of moral ecology. Humanity is the respectful son or daughter of the cosmic process." I agree and would elaborate. First, this passage expresses a profound awareness of a moral ecology and rings a clear bell for ecologically concerned humans in our day. Second, its ethic is based upon an ontological vision of the entire web of existence. It is an ethic of care, not just an ethic of justice, as the Christian feminist Sallie McFague puts it, in her Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age. And third, Chang Tsai was amazingly prescient, ten centuries ago, of how intimately linked human destiny is with that of other sentient beings.

This paper basically asks the question of how human beings engage in the politics of transformation. How do we translate vision into practice, into policy with viable self-renewing means? "Politics" in this paper means "the forms and process of becoming a community." The political order exists within us, between us and all around us, even in our usual political definitions do more to divide than unite us. How do we move from the single-issue politics of a group's self-preoccupation to a politics that sees all problems as part of a larger task, all legitimate forms of social and cultural identity as part of a broader human heritage, and all resolutions of conflict as necessary to our common well-being?

The politics of transformation consists of the vision and the energy to move beyond narrow definitions of personal and social identity to a sense of who we are, in our uniqueness, alongside others, whose uniqueness is equally significant. In our more generous and less anxious moments, we know the reality of this broadened
definition, but we typically lack the will and therefore fail to create the means to move consistently in that direction. John Kenneth Galbraith has recently called ours the "culture of contentment," which he sees especially evident over the past decade. By implication, he is saying that we need to face the ease with which we settle for contentment and to own the actual discomfort that exists throughout our society.

It is my thesis as well that we must start by acknowledging the basic brokenness of personal and socio-political existence. This brokenness is fundamental, but it is not determined by forces outside ourselves. As Reinhold Niebuhr said in the 1930s, "sin is inevitable but not necessary." However, sustained and universal our brokenness, it is not the final reality or meaning of human existence. This claim resembles the Buddhist assertion that "life is suffering," which again does not mean that suffering is what life is all about. It is paradoxical that the more deeply we recognize the broken nature of personal and social reality, the more profoundly we become aware of the need for and the possibility of transformation. In the depths of the abyss, as Miguel de Unamuno put it, "Man is all the more man . . . the greater his capacity for suffering, or better, for anguish, [which] is something far deeper, more intimate and more spiritual than suffering."  

The perception of brokenness in oneself and within the world is capable of generating a transformed imagination of what is possible. Encountering one's own dark side, while recognizing the same in others, creates a deeper vision of kinship. In John Donne's words, "The vision of the goodness of creation comes only after a vision of evil. . . . It was Dostoevsky who spoke of kissing the earth, Dostoevsky who is . . . better known for his vision of evil and suffering."  

The second part of this paper is therefore about the politics of imagination and how one envisions oneself belonging to a more inclusive whole, thereby revealing, as it were, the brokenness of brokenness. Or, as Lao Tzu put it in his wonderfully laconic way, "He who is sick of sickness is not sick."  

The paper's concluding section deals with the politics of ritual. Extending the basic theme of transformation, it contends that the process of facing brokenness not only triggers new visions of possibilities but also new means of reordering our personal and social existence. Aristotle's vision of the ancient polis has evolved into our own vision of a political and natural eco-system. The task for men and women as political creatures is to sustain forms and means of affirming universality and inclusiveness alongside the nurturing of uniqueness and difference. Not just one, not just the other -- both uniqueness and universality. This challenge has always been the central political problem. We are concluding what has been the most destructive century in human history; the fashioning of a politics of transformation has become not only urgent but an inescapable mandate.

To elaborate on my allusive title, I quote from the verse that inspired it:

When the Tao is present in the universe,
The horses haul manure.
When the Tao is absent from the universe,
War horses are bred outside the city.
In Chinese thought, the Tao represents not only universality and uniqueness but the eternal balancing of their interconnection. It is described as "becoming one with the dusty world, with th 10,000 things." The One and the many thrive together, not in separation. Such is the power that transforms brokenness, fixed imagination, and stasis into their opposites. And, in symbolic ways, when horses do haul manure east and west, the Tao's fertilizing power is greater than dynamite!

II. The Waters of Marah:
The Politics of Brokenness

It is impossible to imagine, except analogically, the brokenness of another person or community. The experience of Moses and the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for forty years, tasting the bitter waters of Marah, is one of history's most graphic scenes of brokenness. The "waters of Marah" was to become an ironic metaphor for a people wandering endlessly in life's deserts, haunted by dreams of a new existence, a promised destiny. Mumbling against their plight, the Israelites could not have foreseen the evolving shape of their destiny. If a people's dream becomes reality from time to time, they can endure its absence with dignity. But, as Langston Hughes asked, "What happens to a dream deferred?" The possibilities are myriad, but the deepest tragedy occurs when dreams become illusion and substitute for reality.

Several months ago, while preparing for this paper, I happened to see the stage classic Death of a Salesman for possibly the fourth time. The production, staged at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and set in a black family in Westchester County, affected me more than any I had seen before. I was struck particularly by the universality of the play's theme. Arthur Miller had a similar response to a production in the People's Republic of China. To me, the play's universal appeal is its unflinching, yet humanly tender recognition that we humans fall back upon illusion when the truth about ourselves or our society hurts too much. The courage to face brokenness, after all, requires hidden strength - the courage of a Dilsey, the black cook in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, the tent pin of a collapsing Yoknapatawpha world.

A major theme of Death of a Salesman is the way in which our illusions about the past continue to live within us, overriding our capacity to envision new realities. Avoidance of reality, obsession with illusion blinds us to genuine possibility. The play is a brilliant montage of dream and reality interflusing and becoming confused. Willy Loman's past and present dreams conjured in this viewer's mind the past and present dreams of our nation's self-perceived glory (or those of the former Soviet Union or of China): the flags, the marches, the "compulsion to be first." Nostalgia steps in, marshallng images of strength, drumming out intolerable self-doubt. As Miller writes in his stage notes, An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. . . . The entire setting is wholly, or, in some places, partially transparent. The roof-line of the house is one-dimensional. . . . [This serves] as the locale of all Willy's imaginings.
Past dreams mask present reality. Willy experiences two worlds at once: the painful "world" that doubles for reality and the dream "world" that assuages the realism of pain. Brokenness is the world's bitter taste. Reality is not the preferred world of Willy Loman. What exists, instead, are flashbacks within flashbacks, daydreams within daydreams, continuing flight from life's hurts.

Willy's wife, Linda, knows that his disease of soul is fatal, but she helps him cope. At times she strikes one as the play's center of gravity; at other times, as a frazzled co-dependent. In any case, she loves this man. Watching the play, I had a sense that Willy Loman is America now: hurting, confused, lacking self-confidence and believing that "everything will be all right" if only we can get back to where we were when we never lost a war or when we were the "best salesman that ever was" or when we were "liked by everybody." Willy's two sons, at the end of the play, represent polar opposites: Biff, who has begun to awaken from illusion, and Happy, who at Willy's Requiem says to Biff:

All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have-- to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him."

One interesting effect of this play is that it collapses temptations within the viewer to condemn the actions of Miller's characters; one sees the same tendencies within oneself and within one's culture at large. It seems natural to extend the play's themes about illusion and reality to the human condition itself. While brokenness need not be the cause of self-delusion, it cannot be healed unless delusion is confronted directly. Brokenness compounded by escape is a recipe for deeper malaise.

The whole career of Elie Wiesel, from surviving the Holocaust to becoming "a messenger to all humanity" (as Robert McAfee Brown refers to him) is an example of brokenness faced, healed, yet never forgotten. In the same vein, the words engraved on the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem read "Remembrance is salvation." Once healed, one does not forget -- one does not dare to forget -- one's own brokenness or that of others.

It is precisely the experience of a "broken connection," as Robert Jay Lifton uses the term, that requires attention. To live in illusion is to be disconnected from life. But so too is living in disillusion. Arising out of extensive interviews with survivors from several contexts (including Hiroshima, the Chinese cultural revolution and the Vietnam War), Lifton's studies focus on the importance and the difficulty of grieving, on the process by which one confronts death, and on imagery relating death to the continuity of life. "Much of that imagery consists of death equivalents -- image-feelings of separation, disintegration, and stasis." He discovered that the survivors with whom he had extensive therapeutic association "were not able to move out of a condition of stasis and genuine brokenness unless they confronted their death-like condition. A grief not confronted is a grief denied."

Lifton discusses the condition of "broken connection" on many levels. Fundamentally, it deals with images of death and life, and of the symbolically broken connection between them.
His research indicates the equal importance of images of continuity or life equivalents such as connection, integrity and movement. Modern existence is frequently the experiencing of broken connections of various sorts. Lifton's point is that life-promoting connections are possible provided one confronts and learns to handle factors within oneself and the human community that resist the facing of death or death equivalents such as injustice, collapse of communal order, profound disillusionment, and the like.

The key to laying hold of the energy providing the means of ultimate transformation is concerted willingness to face death. Confrontation of the traumatizing death experience may lead to a readjusting of life in new images making possible renewal of life.  

Lifton's two-fold approach (realism in the face of death equivalents and hope when they are seriously faced) is, implicitly, what I am calling the politics of transformation. Both recognize the commonness of conflict and situations of fragmentation. And both stress the importance of confronting these situations and learning how to experience them in different ways.

Working on this paper provided me with a chance to pay tribute to H. Richard Niebuhr, who was not only my first intellectual mentor but whose theological perspective remains an indelible influence. A posthumously published volume, Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith, includes a powerful chapter entitled "Broken Faith" from which I would like to quote. Niebuhr's own wrestling with faith and faithfulness partake of the same agonía that Unamuno calls the "tragic sense of life," though Niebuhr's words are even more graphic:

But to our personal life which begins with such a sense of promised brightness there comes, whether in childhood or adolescence or later, the great disillusionment. Things are not what they seem. The great tragic note which runs through all human literature and philosophy -- the distance between appearance and reality -- is sounded. Behind the splendor of life there is the petrification of death. The virtues of our families and our friends cover deep shamefulness. There is shame within ourselves. We also are not what we seem. Behind the pleasure and the kindness about us there is wretchedness and cruelty. The odor of death, the feeling of betrayal, the sense of pollution, invades all our existence. That things are not what they seem and that what they are is infinitely sadder, darker and more disappointing than what they appear to be -- this is the theme which runs through Greek and modern tragedy, through Eastern and Western philosophy. . . . Through the pages of literature move the Oedipuses and Hamlets, deceived in those they love and in themselves.  

What is self-contradiction to an individual is a communally conflicting dilemma to society, literally a living with antinomies. The book that awoke me initially to the fact of contradiction in human life was Gunnar Myrdal's An American Dilemma (1944). After spending a year in poverty-stricken China in 1945-46, reading Myrdal's classic made it clear to me that the overriding American dilemma was one that promised equality for all yet denied it to those with black skin. Raised in a wealthy suburb in the 1930s, I had only begun to discover that
"things are not what they seem and that what they are is infinitely sadder," Myrdal's "dilemma," in its evolving forms, remains the self-destructing sickness that dissipates our national energy. Of course, African-Americans are not the only unempowered group in our society these days. The promises haunt us still and the waters of Marah remain bitter for those who are denied inclusion and status. Until American society discovers a deeper capacity for inclusiveness and generosity of spirit, it will experience the painful price of contradiction.

It would be simple to collapse the problem and settle for a diminished promise. The promise, however, is the essence of what America means. The requirement, obviously, is to transform promises into reality, though the brokenness that America manifests is part of a human brokenness found in all societies. As Niebuhr noted,

> What we contemplate our human history, this network of interpersonal relations, it is not difficult to describe it as the history of treason. When one reads the story of nations and notes how broken treaties and deceitful promises mark each page, one wonders why anyone at any time should accept another promise, write another treaty. There is no area of human conduct — not economics, not religion, not the family — which is free from the wreckage of broken words. . . . Treason begots distrust, distrust treason.

In discussing the tragic sense of life, the experience of living with both doubt and faith, both brokenness and the promise of wholeness, Miguel de Unamuno (speaking of the man of flesh and blood, not humanity in the abstract) mentions the temple as

> a place where men weep in common. A Miserere sung in common by a multitude flailed by destiny is worth a whole philosophy. To cure the plague is not enough, it must be lamented with bitter tears. Yes, we must learn to weep! Perhaps that is the supreme wisdom."

Out of this abyss of despair, [we will see how] hope may emanate, and how this crucial point may serve as source for human, profoundly human, effort and action, may serve the cause of solidarity.

The politics of brokenness may serve, paradoxically, to activate the politics of transformation. The human condition is ineluctably stained by brokenness, yet it contains the fragments of a destined wholeness. We are acquainted with grief and sorrow, yet we live with the hope of restoration. "What a chimera then is man!" writes Blaise Pascal, paraphrasing Psalm 8.

> What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depositary of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe! Who will unravel this tangle?"

It is precisely by acknowledging our divided condition, our incomplete grasp of reality, our ambivalent feelings about our neighbors that we begin to imagine previously unimagined forms of a human society in harmony with itself and with the natural order. We only begin to "unravel this tangle," for at the core of these new imaginings we discover the limits of our understanding. We can imagine only what
we are able to imagine. The deepest experiences of healed brokenness allow for humility to emerge and then we see, quite clearly, the limits of our vision.

A beautiful expression of this insight, arising out of the experience of Rachel Carson as scientist and as human being, serves as transition to the next section. Carson’s perspective is an axial shift of thinking about human perspectives upon nature. In fact, one detects a note of tragedy implicit in her assessment of the damage done to the environment by our failure to perceive the limits of our ability to comprehend. The tragedy arises not only from an insensitive ethical stance but from a distorted epistemology. In Chapter 1 of The Edge of the Sea, Carson recounts her experience of nature’s “otherness.” At night, with her flashlight, she walks by the water’s edge and spots a small ghost crab. In an excellent article describing this encounter, Vera Norwood writes,

The night, the individual crab, the alien seascape all conspire to deny her a comfortable sense of identification with the world she sees . . . . This grasp of the “elusive,” “tantalizing,” “obscure,” “unsolvable” meaning of nature, coupled with her understanding of the very human need to make patterns, is the basic source of the trespasser images. For Carson, one of the most important aspects of human interaction with nature is the realization that the protean quality of the natural world cannot be caught by our pattern-hungry minds but that it is our “nature” continually to seek the pattern.13

This sense of nature’s “otherness” deepens further Carson’s respect for its intrinsic worth, totally apart from whatever utilitarian value it may have for humans. Vividly aware of nature’s exploitation by human beings, she recognized how the virtual “interconnectedness of all life becomes sinister as we come to understand the webs of death interwoven with the webs of life” . . . [and come to see] the consequences of human interference in nature for all life.14 In Norwood’s words, Carson’s place as a limited individual, able to deconstruct traditional frames of reference and offer new visions, is the result of her lifelong fascination with what [Thomas] Kuhn calls “progress toward no goal.” This fascination is the source of searching along the beach at night for encounters with the mysteries of life.15

It is a profound human experience that in the midst of brokenness and with a sense of our limited vision, we become open to these mysteries. These experiences are the birth pangs of a transformed and transforming imagination.

II. Water into Wine: The Politics of Imagination

The epistemology of Rachel Carson is an apt point of departure for asking what is meant by the politics of imagination. Experiencing the limits of one’s ability to comprehend can be the start of a transformed imagination. Coming to terms with the causes of broken and distorted understanding, personal and communal, is requisite if imagination is to become “unstuck.” In trying to understand the meaning of transformed imagination, the language of metaphor is perhaps the most appropriate. This section is therefore
an exercise in metaphors of transformation.

Among the more striking examples that I recall in recent years is an incident in Richard Attenborough's film Gandhi. Toward the end of the film, Gandhi was in Calcutta undergoing one of his sustained fasts in protest of the violence between Hindus and Muslims. The extent of the violence was immense, and it appeared that Gandhi's fast was to no avail and that his strength was ebbing. The most vivid scene entailed his conversation with a fanatic Hindu who begged Gandhi to rescue him from the hell to which he knew he was destined for having just killed a young Muslim child. The man's eyes were bulging in a combination of rage, fear and guilt. The imagination of fanaticism was fixed on one karmic consequence, and the man was terrified at the prospect. A wan but lucid Gandhi, lying on the bare frame of a bed, took the man's hand and said, "There is a way out of your misery." The man looked incredulous, uncomprehending. Gandhi continued, "The way is to adopt a orphaned Muslim boy... and... to raise him as a Muslim!"

The clarity of that "solution" and the crazed man's recognition of it was a stunning example of transformed imagination. Naturally, we do not know the sequel, but the parabolic significance was as striking, perhaps, as turning water into wine. What had been literally inconceivable became a potential reality -- in this case, a way out of hell.

Among the more intriguing metaphors of the human capacity for both destructiveness and restoration is that of Bull Mountain, conceived by the Confucian philosopher Mencius (c. 372-289 B.C.E.). It illustrates how imagination cuts both ways, how transformation itself is ambiguous. Discussing with his students a certain nearby mountain, Mencius points out its present denuded state.

The trees of the Niu (Bull) Mountain were once beautiful. But can the mountain be regarded any longer as beautiful again, being in the borders of a big state, the trees have been Hewed down with axes and hatchets? Still with the rest given them by the days and nights and the nourishment provided by the rains and the dew, they were not without buds and sprouts springing forth. But then the cattle and the sheep pastured upon them once and again. That is why the mountain looks so bald. When people see that it is so bald, they think that there was never any timber on the mountain. Is this the true nature of the mountain? Is there not also a heart of humanity and righteousness originally existing in man?28

As one would expect from a Confucian, Mencius' principal point is not an environmental one. Rather, he observes that, like the natural environment, the natural "heart of humanity and righteousness" in each person needs cultivation and care. "Without proper nourishment and care, everything decays," says Mencius, but with such attention everything flourishes.21 In discussing the meaning of self-cultivation and its neglect, the modern Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming writes that the true Confucian sage (chun tzu) possesses a "heart that cannot bear to see human misery" (pu-juen-jei chih hsin), akin to Unamuno's leader who is able to weep.22 The opposite kind of person, the hsiang-yuan (enemy of virtue),
"experiences no pain or suffering; nor is he capable of any real praxis... there is virtually no transformative potential in his modus operandi."

One who can heartlessly bear the pain and suffering of those around him is seriously deficient not only in sensitivity but in basic humanity." In contrast, the chun tsu takes "humanity to be his burden." Identification with pain and suffering is constitutive with one's quest for ultimate self-transformation. Self-cultivation thus becomes 'an attempt to open oneself up to the universe as a whole by extending one's horizon of feeling as well as knowing. The more one knows... the more one is sensitized.'

Among the early Buddhist examples of healing through deep suffering is the story of Kisa Gotami, who lost her only child, a young son. Her anguish was such that she could not face the reality and refused to bury the child. Days passed, and the neighbors became alarmed, urging her to visit the Buddha. While sympathetic, the Buddha advised her to make the rounds of each house in the village, requesting a grain of mustard seed from any family where death had not occurred. At the day's end, she returned without a single mustard seed. The universality of pain suddenly struck her. In Lifton's sense, she had in some authentic way confronted mortality itself. She could then bury her son and, while continuing to mourn his passing, she was able to release her attachment to grief. As she experienced this change, her own capacity for compassion emerged. The more she realized the extent of human suffering, the more she knew and expressed her kinship with all beings.

Four years ago my wife and I had the privilege of hearing Elie Wiesel speak in Osaka. He had been invited by the Japanese Jewish community to give a series of talks throughout the country. His hosts had arranged for him to visit the Hiroshima Peace Park and the unforgettable museum that commemorates the event of August 6, 1945. Surprising his hosts, Wiesel refused to go. He felt that the Jewish community in Japan was implying a comparison between the Holocaust and Hiroshima, two tragedies happening at about the same time. He stubbornly resisted this parallel, and only after much persistence did he agree to go, quite reluctantly.

To anyone who has visited that site it is no surprise that a man as deeply sensitive to suffering as Elie Wiesel would be profoundly affected. The words we heard him use to describe this visit, just a day after he had been there, were another instance of how acquaintance with grief and long identification with suffering deepen one's capacity to think new thoughts. Obviously moved by the visit to Hiroshima, his previous refusal to juxtapose these two events was completely transformed. Instead of seeing them in parallel fashion, as had his hosts, he saw them as incomparable. Each was utterly unique; they should not be compared.

In A Search for God in Time and Memory, John Dunne offers an image that provides metaphoric perspective to the stories just discussed. Dunne asks the reader to imagine an immense circle with all human beings standing on its circumference.

There are an infinity of points on the circle, and each man stands at a different point, but there is only one center. The task of each man... is to go from the...
circumference to the center. What locates a man on the circumference is the partiality of his actual self; what lies at the center is the integral self.8

As one moves toward the center, one not only moves closer to other men and women but toward one's own wholeness. The circle is typically a symbol of completeness, of universality, from which nothing is excluded. But to remain on its circumference is to harden the distance from other beings. The center is the pivot, equidistant from each point on the circumference, without which it would not be a circle. As each point along the circle's rim represents uniqueness, so movement toward the center affirms this uniqueness yet narrows the separation between itself and other movements toward their center. Being "centered" is, in fact, what serves to diminish the distance from one's own integrity and from another's "integral self." As we approach our own centers, we move closer to each other; we become more inclusive. As we "wise up," we care more. In Dunne's imagination, this movement is the reconciling of "uniqueness and universality."9

In the Buddhist story of Kisa Gotami, this movement is transparent. In the case of Elie Wiesel, broken and disillusioned by the Holocaust experience, it is more complex. One sees in his writings how Wiesel's lifelong identification with those who suffer parallels the movement within his own life from "actual self" to the deeply "integral self." For him, the Holocaust is no mere paradigm of man's capacity for evil. It is an outburst of8

unthinkable inhumanity. In witnessing to this event, Wiesel's spiritual movement "from repudiation of hatred to affirmation of anger" is one in behalf of humanity.9

Equally central is the way in which he retains not only the memory but the continuing awareness of how broken the human community remains and how easily we become trapped in our separated points along the circumference.

This living of a two-fold vision is precisely what I mean by transformed imagination. It is an expression of powerful hope within the context of profound sobriety. To engage in such sobriety is, of course, a threat to one's self-assurance. It is to be reminded that we do not move in some uninterrupted fashion into ever deeper insight, nor toward continuing affirmation of our fellow beings. Self-deception and aversion toward others remain live possibilities. To counter forms of human deception and distrust, one begins by examining one's own capacity for self-deception, the soilbed out of which sprouts disengaging with others. Odysseys of spirit entail continuing transformation. Without growth in self-understanding, forgiveness and compassion are academic. We do not see their necessity. As Pascal put it, "we have an idea of happiness, and cannot reach it. We perceive an image of truth, and possess only a lie."10

In this condition of relative darkness, at least two demands confront us. Both are forms of what Victor Turner calls "liminality." One is discovering what it means to become human; the other is accepting the risk entailed in genuinely identifying with others. These are, of course, mirror images. The first relates directly to the concept of transformed imagination; the second concerns how one learns to practice the reality one is beginning to imagine. Just as one's knowledge of self never obscures the
deeper mystery about selfhood, so the practicing of one’s humanity is a continuing discovery of what personhood and community mean. The latter is inevitably a risk because of the essentially conflictive nature of human affairs.

In his book *The Way of All the Earth*, John Dunne touches on the first of these two demands. In the Upanishads, he writes,

> the question "How can the knower be known?" is meant to be unanswerable. The very posing of the question, though, shows a kind of wisdom, a realization that man never knows what he is. There is a way of seeing in the dark, it seems, but it consists more in seeing the darkness than in seeing the things that are hidden in the dark. "How can the knower be known?" means "How can man know what he is?" There is a word in the Upanishads for what man is, Atman, but it is like an algebraic symbol for an unknown quantity. The word signifies what we would know if we knew what man is.\(^\text{10}\)

Dunne continues by saying that Brahman stands for the question of what God is, and that if we knew the answer to the one, we would know the answer to the other. Essentially, what Dunne means is that we need to find ways of seeing in the dark, or living in the midst of continuing uncertainty, or understanding within the limits of our ability to comprehend. To live on the border between the known and the unknown is to experience liminality. To live on the border between the known and the unknown is to experience liminality. To live on the border between the known and the unknown is to experience liminality. In Rachel Carson’s words, "out there, just at the edge of where-we-couldn’t-see."\(^\text{11}\) Even more, to realize that the unknown exists at the heart of the known is to live a liminal existence. It is the requisite for self-understanding.

In both the Socratic and the Confucian traditions, the inescapable assignment is self-understanding. To the degree that it remains a question, in Dunne’s language, then epistemology, ethics and politics are a continuing search for insight into what can never be completely known or practised. As Rainer Maria Rilke put it, when you do not know the answer to the question that is deepest in your heart, try to love the question. To love the question about one’s integral self is to take it so seriously that one allows it to remain a mystery. The same is true about the genuine selfhood of another. The threat that this unknown quantity presents, in that one must live with the question, is a demand that remains insistent.

In authentic forms of self-discovering (whether of the Buddha nature or the *imago dei* or true humanness), we comprehend the coexistence of ourselves with other forms of reality and we come to know that they exist as nonobjectifiable subjects never completely knowable by us. Nevertheless, our worlds are indissolubly one with their worlds. This sense of oneness, accompanied by a sense of mystery, becomes a more profound reality than the one we normally construe. As a result, one perceives the fundamental emptiness of all images of selfhood, of society, of political power that are antithetical to our deepest visions of wholeness.

The Chinese at their deepest -- whether Buddhist or Taoist or Confucian -- have a vision of wholeness. Their vision incorporates an understanding of true, evolving patterns and their dynamic interconnections, and of humanity’s well-being as we become one with the
simplicity and the complexity of this ontological reality, right in the midst of never being able to fathom its meaning.

In the Confucian tradition, as in all religious philosophies, one must learn to become human -- a task that is not self-evident. As the Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming (1471-1529) expressed it:

If people do not work at it... they do not realize that selfish desires are born every day. It is like the dust on the ground: if it is not swept away each day, then another layer is added. If you apply genuine effort, then you will see that the Tao is endless and infinite. The further you delve into it, the deeper it is.46

Life is thus the process of learning to become what one is in potential. In other words, the potential is actual, invisibly present; the task is to actualize this infinite potential for becoming human, Self-cultivation is the process both of discovery and of expression. Because this process is always set in the context of human relations, it is inevitably a political as well as a personal assignment.

In Tu Wei-ming’s words,

The quest for an authentic relationship [between person and person] becomes essentially a problem in self-transformation... which necessitates not only the awareness of an other but also the experience of mutual dependence... 47

Self and society therefore are not... two irreconcilable entities but are two mutually dependent aspects of the same dynamic process.48

The imagination of men and women transformed enough to see this mutual dependence is the seed ground for creating a politics of transformed imagination. The political process is then woven into a larger process of consummating a reality that already exists (i.e., actual, ontological interdependence). The varied means of expressing these continuously new images of reality is the second of the two demands mentioned above, namely, how one learns to practice, to give shape to the difficult art of genuine identification with others. This art is the focus of the following section.

IV. New Bottles for New Wine: The Politics of Ritual

In traditions that value both ethics and liturgical practice, a dialectic exists between doing good and serious reflection upon goodness. One finds this dialectic, to mention just two examples, within the Confucian and the Jewish traditions. A typical Chinese formulation would be:

Knowing without acting cannot be considered learning, and knowing without acting cannot be considered fully comprehending the true pattern... Knowing is the beginning of action, and action is the consummation of knowledge.49

The words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel are similar in spirit:

A Jew is asked to take a leap of action rather than a leap of thought... to do more than he understands in order to understand more than he does. Right living is a way to right thinking.50

Socrates taught us that a life without
thinking is not worth living. Now, thinking is a noble effort, but the finest thinking may end in futility. . . . The Bible taught us that life without commitment is not worth living; that thinking without "roots" will bear flowers but no fruits." 14

The commitment at stake is the discovering of one's humanity in union with all other human beings and with the natural order.

The doing of good, that is, practicing one's humanity, is essentially what the Chinese mean by li (ritual acts in harmony with the Tao) and what the Jewish community understands as mitzvah (sacred acts, "points of eternity in the flux of temporality"). The Confucian philosopher Hsun Tzu (312-238 B.C.E.) and Rabbi Heschel are explicit about how ritual orders, purifies, energizes and eloquently expresses one's deepest emotions of joy and of sorrow. The link between rites and conduct is essential. The human creature has an enduring need to transform and channel desires and emotions in ways that edify oneself and the human community.

In Hsun Tzu's words:

Through rites Heaven and earth join in harmony. . . . and all things flourish; men's likes and dislikes are regulated and their joys and woes made appropriate. . . . He who dwells in ritual and can ponder it well may be said to know how to think; he who dwells in ritual and does not change his ways may be said to be steadfast. He who knows how to think and be steadfast, and in addition has a true love for ritual--he is a sage. 15

Heschel sees mitzvah as an act of wondrous appreciation for living in covenant with God and God's creation.

It is in such appreciation that we realize that to perform is to lend form to a divine theme; that our task is to set forth the divine in acts, to express the spirit in angular forms. . . . It is not enough to do the mitzvah; one must live what he does. The goal is to find access to the sacred deed. But the holiness in the mitzvah is only open to him who knows how to discover the holiness in his own soul. To do a mitzvah is one thing; to partake of its inspiration another. And in order to partake we must learn how to bestow. 16

The act of bestowing is the movement from a sense of appreciation to God, outward toward the neighbor. Heschel insists, "It is not enough to help thy neighbor; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor.' 17 This commandment takes seriously the political reality of an interdependent world.

It is interesting that both of these figures use musical metaphors to discuss how understanding one's humanity and expressing it are called to be in harmony. Hsun Tzu writes,

Through the performance of music, the will is made pure, and through the performance of rites the conduct is brought to perfection, the eyes and ears become keen, the temper becomes harmonious and calm. . . . All the world becomes peaceful and joins together in the joy of beauty and goodness. . . . Music unites that which is the same; rites distinguish that which is different; and through the combination of rites and music the human heart is governed. 18

In a more personal vein, Heschel views human deeds partaking of a larger harmony.
For a mitzvah is like a musical score, and its performance is not a mechanical accomplishment but an artistic act. The music in a score is open only to him who has music in his soul. It is not enough to play the notes; one must be what he plays."

Words of this sort may sound idyllic, but neither Hsun Tzu nor Heschel can be accused of naiveté. Both lived in extremely turbulent times. The harmony they envisioned was to be crafted out of disordered social and political conditions. "The world is in flames," wrote Heschel, "consumed by evil. Is it possible that there is no one who cares?" Hsun Tzu advises his readers to watch and see how people will act if social constraints are lifted:

[One] will find that the powerful impose the weak and rob them, the many terrorize the few and extort from them, and in no time the whole world will be given up to chaos and mutual destruction. It is obvious from this, then, that man’s nature is evil..." 60

One who reads their works carefully finds clear thinking about the reality and causes of human brokenness and about the necessity of transformed understanding of this brokenness. Heschel’s words are haunting: "What we feel primarily is our inability to feel adequately..." All that is left to us is our being horrified at the loss of our sense of horror." 60

If we are to understand the implications of genuine ritual, it can only be in the context of such realism. "It is the act of bringing together the scattered forces of the self." And since selfhood and solidarity are indelibly wedded, it is also the bringing together of a fragmented body politic known as the "human community."

In his fine book The Magic of Ritual, Tom Driver provides insight into how ritual can serve to generate social change.

It is precisely when we do not know in our conscious minds what we ought to do that the ritualizing impulse, laid down for us in structures older than consciousness, is brought into play. Ours is an age that needs both the marking of known ways that are worthy of repetition and the groping for new ways in situations with scant precedent... [When we do not know what to do, confronted with] challenges that baffle and frighten us, we have to rehearse in the dark, so to speak, without a script." 60

Driver’s insights mirror what has been happening around the world in different contexts — namely, that emerging forms of political reality are helping to show us why our political mechanisms so often fail to meet crucial social needs. These new forms obviously include the women’s movement, environmental groups, the peace movement, and scores of others. As one recognizes how frequently they incorporate ritualized action, one dares to hope for an effective politics of transformation, if not the wholesale transforming of politics. It must be added, of course, that rituals can be demonic, with the power to destroy, as well as liberating and restorative. Nothing ensures that transformation is always healing. For this reason, Driver says, "We must see to the redemption of our rituals."

In distinguishing between "ritual" and "ritualizing," Driver writes: "Whereas received rituals guide practitioners along known paths, ‘ritualizings’ create pathways in response to new moral obligations."
He discusses at length the three main functions of ritual — the making and preserving of order, the fostering of community, and the effecting of transformation. Inevitably, political concern is for the balancing of order and change.

Following Victor Turner, Driver discusses the role of ritual in the tension between "structure" and "anti-structure" and in the differences between society and community. "If we say that rituals have an ordering function, we should recognize that they have also an opposite one — to disorder and refashion the ways life is lived." In the midst of order lies the seed of disorder (and vice versa), just as we noted earlier that the unknown (and the unknowable) is always in the midst of the known. The implications are important, for they suggest that while ritual serves as the glue holding society together it can also be a disruptive catalyst needling society to become genuinely inclusive — not just to be more open in spirit but to create avenues for people to relate to each other that make genuine the meaning of human community. In this manner, the politics of ritual contributes to the broader politics of transformation. Quoting Roy Rappaport, Driver adds: "It is . . . in the nature of liturgical orders to unite, or reunite, the psychic, social, natural, and cosmic orders which language and the exigencies of life pull apart." The vision and creation of a broader, more humanly sensitive community is what rituals have the power first to portray, then to prompt. Because rituals are by definition enactments, they move people to do, express, think and feel in ways beyond those to which they are accustomed.

Because it is performance and not verbal description or exhortation, ritual brings the far-away, the long-ago, and the not-yet into the here-and-now. Because it is performance, ritual produces its effects not simply in the minds but also in the bodies of its performers.

Many examples of such enactment could be cited, for instance, the role of people sponsored by the Carter Center in Atlanta, who participate in conflict resolution within stalemates that may be centuries old. This experience would make an excellent case study of how ritualized action can stimulate the process of luring entrenched and antagonistic parties to open up to each other. Skill and imagination are needed to encourage people, within an atmosphere of relative safety and nonpublicity, to venture beyond where they have dared to step before.

Another example of courage and ingenuity is a project in which Broadway actors and directors have been donating time to a New York state penitentiary to help inmates and guards see each other through different eyes. By engaging in dramatic performances within the prison, they frequently experience role reversal. Both groups work out frustrations, animosities and distrust, and individuals begin to examine their own cluster of prejudices. The stage becomes a low-risk, limited world; the script allows for complete candor, spoken with impunity; the actors take on their own antithetical self (as Yeats called it), the self that normally goes ignored but is crying for ways to express itself. In this make-believe world, one uncovers different voices lurking within. Through articulation, one discovers forms of freedom from the clamant voice we have
learned to settle for. The tough, secure, defensive self experiences the strange freedom of being vulnerable.

I conclude this section by providing three examples of how transformative rituals have contributed to new forms of political reordering. In all three, brokenness is both experienced and healed (repeatedly), and the capacity to envision new possibilities is regained. Each has made its impact on my life, two of them directly. They are, respectively, the civil rights movement, the rapid spread of support groups, and a small but globally influential community in Japan.

These cases have a clearly ritualistic dimension; each offers important social perspectives; and, in all three, ritual and social change have profound interaction. Each exemplifies the need not only for new wine but for new wine skins, new wine bottles. When conventional forms of politics prove insufficient for critical tasks, they need to be challenged and then supplemented by new forms and fresh processes. It takes little imagination to predict that these challenges will become more insistently in the coming generation.

1. The Civil Rights Movement

One of the bright spots in this century is the emergence for the first time in history of a large-scale movement of nonviolent resistance to unjust social, political and economic structures. Spanning the same decades as those of virtually continuous warfare, the Holocaust and the costly stalemate between two super powers is the movement begun by Mohandas K. Gandhi in South Africa, continued by him in India, and expanded to the United States under Martin Luther King, Jr. The marches, the music, the message and the nonviolent means were as carefully orchestrated as a complex movement can be in an era of turmoil and dynamism. The ritualistic expressions of this movement continue to echo, reminding us of the promise of freedom -- in the same way that the Passover is celebrated to remind us of the fragility of a people's freedom.

A history of this extended movement could easily be written, assessing the impact of ritualized behavior upon the participants and the wider society, influenced as they were by media coverage. Driver contends, "Without such ritualization, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States could not have occurred, nor can any other liberation movement in the world." Because of the correlative nature of ends and means, the discipline of nonviolence is infinitely more demanding than other types of performative ritual. Gandhi frequently spoke of nonviolence as both the end and the means. It taxes the energy, emotions and will of all involved. Practicing nonviolence was seen as essential to stimulating legislative changes and modifying people's behavior, eventually their attitudes.

The impact of Gandhi, King and their followers has established their movement as among the great paradigms of political transformation in human history. It set a new standard for what human communities must become, and it developed means of resistance that are as significant as the goals it sought. Experiences of brokenness were the points of origin, but confrontation with this condition inspired a taste of communitas that society had previously denied. By encountering a social order founded on fixed canons of exclusion and
by using humane means, the dreams of a changed society became partial reality.

These changes had their effect around the world, dramatizing the equal human worth of all persons. And yet, while the movement achieved extraordinary success, the problems of racism persisted. Driver warns, "Communitas is not only an ideal or a principle of bonding, [there must be continuing] experience of it." The riots in Los Angeles following the Rodney King trial confirmed a previously self-evident fact: Community cannot emerge from unhealthy social and economic conditions.

The Bush administration’s inadequate understanding of this fact perpetuates situations of brokenness with their deep racial and class divisions. A symbol of this lack of understanding was Bush’s soliciting advice primarily from the old leaders of the civil rights movement, as though the clock could be turned back, rather than from leadership trusted by a new generation of African-Americans and other peoples of color.

If the dreams of the original civil rights movement are to be regenerated, they must recognize present realities. The dream in the 1960s was that legislative change and economic opportunity would herald social change. The danger in the 1990s is not naivete; rather, it is skepticism that authentic change is possible. From this skepticism arise frustration, cynicism and the inclination toward violence of one kind or another, all of which are expressions of sustained and systemic brokenness.

2. The Mushroombing of Support Groups

Beginning with the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in the mid-1930s, the United States has been the seedbed for support group movements. It would be difficult to count the number, but these groups share a similar modus operandi. In virtually all cases, they are a response to an incurable sickness or a chronic disease that originally seemed refractory to "cure." In cases of terminal illness no cure exists, but, as with those dying of AIDS, deep forms of healing are possible. The almost universal psychological and spiritual experiences of loneliness, anger, guilt and fear have stimulated the creation of vital support mechanisms.

Son of an alcoholic, brother of an alcoholic, former spouse of an alcoholic who later married another alcoholic (who both died of drink), I had a sober beginning. I am therefore not unfamiliar with that disease, which, until AA was founded, was generally regarded as incurable. The now well-known syndrome of co-dependency is a "hangover" from an earlier age when spouses and children and friends walked on eggs rather than confronting the alcoholic. In many cases, they still do, but we have come a long way.

AA's sister groups dealing with abuse in the family, trauma after miscarriage or stillbirth, other forms of chemical addiction, terminal illness among children, and a host of other human tragedies all function on the premise that one need not endure anguish and suffering alone, and on the realization that those who have been afflicted by the same ailment and have worked their way through resentments, fears and loss of self-esteem are frequently the best able to help.

The support group movement is an immensely important human response to many situations of brokenness. I use
support groups as an example in this paper, in part, because they encourage the afflicted person to face his or her affliction or brokenness. That is the basic reality test. The Twelve-Step process has been adapted in many support groups; its practice is literally a ritualistic one. The transformation from self-delusion to honesty is a complete reversal of years of living in a very confined world. However painful, self-confrontation is the only path to healthy self-acceptance. With acceptance comes the possibility of letting go anger, guilt and self-contempt. One finally learns to breathe easily, with nothing to hide. The community of the once-broken and now-healed is experienced as reality. It then becomes natural, for the first time, to reach out to others in their need. What started as a radically isolating experience evolves into a deeply communal extending of self.

3. Asian Rural Institute (ARI)

Two hours north of Tokyo by car is a unique institution that trains a different group of men and women each year from all over Asia, many parts of Africa, Oceania and the Caribbean. Thirty to forty participants come together for nine to ten months, leaving their families behind, to learn new agricultural methods as well as community-organizing skills to help their friends and neighbors develop fresh approaches to the problems they face. The community of ARI, now twenty years old, was founded by a Japanese friend of mine, Toshihiro Takami, whom I knew at Yale Divinity School during our time as students.

ARI was established because of Takami’s commitment to serving the needs of those living in poor circumstances in Third World countries. The community is based on spiritual principles, but it does not proselytize. The staff are primarily Japanese Christians with long experience in agricultural work. Those who come as participants are from extraordinarily different backgrounds in terms of religion, ethnicity, career choice, age and facility in speaking English (the basic medium of instruction).

In the summer of 1985, we spent five weeks at ARI, working along with others at every sort of agricultural task. I have never been in a more diverse community in my life. During our time there I had regular opportunities for discussion with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Indian Christian tribal peoples, exploring how it felt to be part of a community founded by Japanese Christians (Congregational-style). On every working day, a morning gathering was led by different members of the community in rotation. This time of singing, quiet, prayer and a ten-minute talk was conducted by Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Marxists. It was the spiritually centering moment of each day, it was a ritual within the larger ritualized experience of a common life. Without that occasion, day after day, the community would have had a hundred points of focus but no center. Takami led this gathering once every two weeks, and, because of the high regard in which he is held, these were times of even deeper meaning. I asked my friend Abdul from Tanzania whether he would recommend ARI to his fellow Muslims as a place to consider attending. "Oh, yes," he said, "I have never before met and talked with, and learned from, and worked alongside
people of different religions. Oh, yes, I will urge them to come." When one lives among people who are so diverse, the question naturally arises what it is that makes this a community in spirit. What is the thread that holds it together? The answer to that question, I came to realize, is that all the participants are committed to a life of service to their fellow human beings. There are no ego trips, no self-preoccupation, no tendency toward excluding others. ARI struck me as a model of inclusiveness, which helped to explain the joy that was clearly evident. Obviously, these people were not ignorant of human brokenness. They were also proud of their uniqueness, which they shared freely with others. And they were quite aware that while they lived in different worlds they were all part of a larger human world in which the sharing of resources, know-how and human concern gave their various worlds a universal dimension, in both breadth and depth. They are changed by their year in Japan, and on their return home they help their own communities to rethink dysfunctional ways of doing things. ARI has nearly 800 graduates, spread all over the indigent areas of the world. Their influence in local situations has been immense. They are part of the healing process that lies at the heart of any politics of transformation.

V. Epilogue: A Coming Back to Terms

As should be clear by now, a politics of transformation is responsive to personal and communal human suffering. Indeed, when imagination is sensitized to human anguish and reaches out in compassion it becomes committed to finding humane, nonviolent and constructive means of transforming society. This discussion has focused on a grassroots kind of politics that is not at all restricted to using conventional political means. It is typical of grassroots politics that the need for transformation is felt from below long before it is seen from above. In any case, it is impossible to limit the concept of politics to the so-called realm of politics. We are all "political animals," as Aristotle made clear, but we are not only political animals. We are different breeds of cats: We are artistic animals, spiritually seeking animals, sexually active animals, economic animals, scientifically curious animals, and the like. Paraphrasing an ancient Jew, "Politics was made for man, not man for politics" (as it were).

The more inclusive one's world becomes, the more imaginatively one searches for possibilities. But, is the process, there is a catch. One comes to see and hear forms of anguish one had not known before. This exposure ushers in frustration and burnout, which is the weakness of compassion by itself. Hence, Buddhism's reason for linking compassion with wisdom, for without discovering renewable inner resources the well runs dry: "One cannot give what one has not got." Grounding oneself in a reality deeper than society, combined with extending oneself within society, is also the "one thread" of early Confucian teaching.26 This one thread connects self-cultivation with benevolence to others. That is, if one seeks to extend one's energies and resources, then it is imperative that one renew one's inner spirit. The basic metaphor is one of
centrifugal and centripetal forces in balance.

The process of transformation is thus spiritual and political at the same time. As H. Richard Niebuhr phrased it,

We are bound to each other in trust and loyalty only as we are mutually bound to some third reality, to a cause, to which both "I" and "Thou" owe loyalty and on which we depend. We can and do believe each other because we recognize in each other a loyalty which is more than mutual promise keeping.  

As with ritual, however, such a common loyalty can become destructive. Examples are legion in both politics and religion. The demonic can be exercised from persons or communities, but it cannot be banished from existence. We live in an uncertain world as imperfect creatures, our intolerance for uncertainty is one of our greatest problems. Reinhold Niebuhr put this idea beautifully: "Man's problem is not that he is finite, but that he has trouble living with his finitude." Man’s tendency then is to absolutize his own ends and means.

We have no choice but to keep choosing, imperfectly—whether to be part of an all-inclusive world, socially and ecologically, or to live in worlds that continue to be mutually exclusive in spirit and in political ways. Authentic choosing is to see oneself within a fabric whose strength depends upon the well-being of the whole and all its parts. It is no contraction both to affirm our visions of a genuine polis (a cosmo-polis) and to recognize how systematically we rupture this commonwealth, raping its human and natural resources, to which we are indelibly linked. The irony lies in our prouness to self-destructiveness. Our well-being lies in a transformed imagination that sees the entire world, social and natural, as a lovely but fragile, self-renewable process of incredible complexity and infinitely changing interrelated parts. Lao Tzu raised the marvelously rhetorical question: "Do you think you can improve the universe?" Each person and each society answers this question in its own way. We can only seek to improve our relationship to all parts of this universe (the social, the cosmic, the biochemical, the psychic dimensions) within ourselves and between ourselves and our fellow beings.

A changed vision of wholeness is similar to that of Rachel Carson’s. It is not a new shift; it is a return to a nonadversarial relationship to the earth and all its creatures (human and other creatures). Ancient men and women may not have lived this dream with perfection, but at least it was their dream. For us, it represents a break from forms of anthropocentrism to a more inclusive embrace of all life, a biocentric vision as it were. For us, as well, it represents a shift from placing primary value upon independence and separate destiny to a far greater affirmation of interdependence, within which genuine uniqueness and pluralism can be honored. And, for us, it represents the deepest possible realization that in being socially and environmentally sensitive and responsible, we also become existentially brothers and sisters to all human members of this biosphere. From such a vision we become more able to practice the ontological reality that we are, in fact, intimately connected. That is no sentimental vision; it has enormous
implications for changed social, political and economic patterns.

We are beginning to realize that the psychological, political and religious entities in which we have boxed ourselves are frequently incommensurate with the immense economic, environmental and social tasks that lie before us. And yet we have repeated recourse to the creation of new nations that are spawned from tribal feelings of insecurity and resentment. We dust off antique and narrow forms of ethnic identity, only hardening our existing divisions. The world's central assignment for the next century is to create more inclusive and viable entities, ones larger than nation states, and to encourage plural forms of social identity that honor but do not absolutize differences. This task is the prototypic political assignment. And at that, as the late Austin Warren, a respected literary critic at the University of Michigan, put it, "We begin... always."
NOTES


2. Ibid., p. 43.


5. Tao Te Ching, Chapter 46.


8. Ibid., pp. 138-39.


12. Ibid., p. 81.

13. de Unamuno, Tragic Sense, p. 21.


17. Ibid., p. 754.

18. Ibid., p. 755.

19. Ibid., p. 759.

21. Ibid., p. 57.


23. Ibid., p. 384.

24. Ibid., p. 316.

25. Ibid., p. 381.

26. Ibid., p. 387.

27. Ibid., p. 385.


29. Ibid., p. 164.


36. Ibid., p. 195.


39. Ibid., pp. 82-83.


42. Ibid., p. 316.


45. Ibid., p. 367.


48. Ibid., p. 369.

49. Ibid., p. 316.


51. Ibid., p. 191.

52. Ibid., p. 50.

53. Ibid., p. 132.

54. Ibid., p. 149.

55. Ibid., p. 190.

56. Ibid., p. 183.

57. Ibid., p. 163.

58. The often-discussed “one thread” in the teaching of Confucius is essentially one’s loyalty to the Way (chung) and the extension of benevolence to others (zhi). The first is a balanced self-cultivation rooted in the natural and social cosmos; the second is an extension of one’s humanness to all other beings. Neither “can be understood apart from the li [rituals of practicing one’s humanity (or jen)], and only in support of each other do they constitute jen.” (Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Reweaving the ‘One Thread’ of the Analects,” *Philosophy East and West* 40 [No. 1, January 1990], p. 28.)

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