The World in 2030

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The SGI Quarterly aims to highlight initiatives and perspectives on peace, education and culture and to provide information about the Soka Gakkai International’s activities around the world. The views expressed in the SGI Quarterly are not necessarily those of the SGI. The editorial team (see above) welcomes ideas and comments from readers. For permission to reprint material from this magazine, please contact info@sgiquarterly.org.
This year, 2015, is the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted in 2000 to address the many faces of extreme poverty and have guided much of the international development agenda ever since. It is also the beginning of the Sustainable Development Goals, a new set of international goals focused on 2030. What kind of world will we inhabit in 2030? Two key factors influencing this outcome are, on the one hand, the intensifying global environmental crisis and, on the other, the rapid pace of developments in science and technology. Both seem likely to significantly alter life as we know it in the coming 15 years.

Sadly, for some 1.3 billion people in the world today, the most pressing questions about the future are more immediate—will they be able to fend off starvation and the ravages of preventable diseases that continue to claim the lives of thousands of children and adults daily? Whatever changes the world undergoes in the coming decades, our progress can only be meaningfully measured against the welfare of these individuals.

What is certain is that the future will be shaped by our actions and attitudes now. Conversely, however, our responses in the present are greatly influenced by what we believe the future will be like. A dismal view leads to apathy and despair; an optimistic view leads to hope and action.

As Noam Chomsky writes, “Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so.”

One great source of optimism is knowing that there are committed people working energetically in all spheres of society to find solutions to existing problems and move civilization toward a lasting peace. The SGI movement will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2030 and will continue making efforts to promote a philosophy of peace and respect for all life.

In the end, it is, as SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes, “the solidarity of ordinary people that, more than any other force, will propel humankind in our efforts to meet the challenges that face us.”
There is no “one” person who bends history; we are all going to have to do this job. The good news is that we can do it. We do not have to wait for the politicians; we are lucky enough to be living in an age where we have the capacities, technologies and tools to do absolutely wonderful things as individuals and as a global community. The world today is interconnected in absolutely fundamental ways. Our connections are becoming increasingly immediate, and the possibility of a truly global community exists now more than ever before.

We have within our hands, within our time, within this generation, the realistic ability to end extreme poverty. This shocks a lot of people. It seems utopian and naive. But the fact is, if we actually spent a little effort on it, the problem would turn out to be vastly easier to solve than we might imagine. The hardest part of all of this is not the costs, it is not the unimaginable difficulties of certain places, and it is not the harrowing challenges of economics or the environment or finance. The main challenge is really our ability to focus on what is within our reach right now.

I want to begin with one of my favorite remarks of US President John F. Kennedy. He said, “First: Let us examine our attitude toward peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads
to the conclusion that war is inevitable—that mankind is doomed—that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made—therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings.”

Today, people believe that solutions to other problems are impossible—that poverty cannot be solved, that climate change and issues of the environment cannot be addressed. As John F. Kennedy said, “That is a dangerous, defeatist belief.” He is right—it leads to the conclusion that we are doomed. None of these problems are beyond a solution if we overcome the fear, which is the greatest obstacle of all, and understand the nature of the challenges, the power of the technologies that we have and the practicality of our solutions.

What is this problem of absolute poverty? How can it exist in the 21st century, in a time of incredible capacity to produce, to grow food and to control diseases? And how can it be that we are not yet addressing this issue?

It is not a matter of blaming the poor, because many of the poor that I have seen are hard workers, focused on the future and very loving and caring of their children. They simply lack the most basic means because, for example, their local clinic is 20 kilometers away or their water source is not even a well and is just an open spring that is dangerous to drink from. They cannot afford the five dollars that it would cost for an insecticide-treated bed net to protect them from malaria for five years.

Probably the hardest thing for us to understand is what it means to have nothing. Nearly one billion people are in that state on the planet, where you cannot escape without a helping hand. When you have nothing, no bank is going to lend you the money, and you cannot save your way out of poverty. You need every ounce of your energy, your income and your food supply merely to survive. You cannot pull yourself up by the bootstraps when you are barefoot. What our leadership refuses to see are the necessary steps to move from a state of such powerless existence to a place where people can save and invest for their future. They are such small steps.

I did not understand what it meant to have nothing for a long time. I worked in many poor places, but I had not worked in the poorest places and could not imagine what they were like.

I was overwhelmed when I began to work in tropical Africa in the mid-1990s, even after having worked in India, China, Bolivia and many other poor places. Nowhere had I seen the truly extreme nature of disease. I had never experienced so much death around me before. It took me a few years to understand we were doing nothing to help because we put up a wall of confusion around ourselves.

It took a long time to realize this fact because there were so many speeches, so much professional concern and so many declarations regarding all our efforts and everything we were doing. I only fully understood in 2000, when I was flying to Durban, South Africa, for the International AIDS Conference. I was reading a World Bank paper which did not mention antiretroviral medicine. In a four-page scientific paper the words “antiretroviral medicine” were not even mentioned because donors did not want to acknowledge the medicine, as if it was some secret. What the article did say was that the World Bank would help finance bereavement training. It would help enterprises restructure. It would advise on how to have human resource programs in the midst of a high-disease burden. At that point, I questioned a lot of colleagues, and it turned out that the Western world was spending $80 million, roughly three dollars per infected person per year, to address this issue up to 2001.

The problems of AIDS, malaria or food insecurity are not the great mysteries of the universe. They are the mysteries of our inattention.

For a long time, I hoped that someone would sign a check and we would get programs going. I have realized that it is not going to happen that way. I have realized that it is going to happen when we understand the stakes, the opportunities, and when we make direct connections.

Let me focus on malaria, a mosquito-
borne, tropical disease, because it is the perfect example of a scourge we can end. Africa’s malaria incidence is by far the worst in the world. This is because of the kind of mosquito they have, the high temperatures and the ample mosquito breeding sites.

One hundred years ago, even ten years ago, we did not have the tools to combat malaria. Now, thanks to modern processes, for example making bed nets that protect against mosquitoes, help is here. The nets are made in an ingenious way, which includes a mosquitocide. If you protect everybody with these nets, you can drive the malaria burden to zero.

The nets cost five dollars and last five years. The estimated cost of providing sufficient bed nets for people in the malaria region in Africa is $1.5 billion. Every minute, the United States spends $1.2 million on the Pentagon. Every day, we spend $1.7 billion on the military. It seems to me that 22 hours of the Pentagon budget would fix this problem. Our security would be raised profoundly in terms of goodwill, in terms of understanding and in terms of human connection.

It is clear that the health problems of the poor have solutions. Issues for agricultural productivity also have simple solutions.

A while back an agronomist took me out to the fields and said, “See the yellow on that maize stalk. It is an indication of nitrogen deficiency because this farmer is too poor to buy a bag of fertilizer.”

If you give a 50-kilogram bag of fertilizer to a farmer with a half-hectare farm, he can triple his production. This can happen within one season, not with years of training and a generation of change, but just with a bag of fertilizer.

Twenty years ago, the World Bank said that the problem of African agriculture is government intervention. They advised that the government get out and let the markets take over. They were wrong. The market is not designed to solve the problems of people who have no money.

A few years ago, my colleagues and I worked with Kofi Annan, then UN secretary-general, and we decided that we needed action.

We started in western Kenya, in a place called Sauri Village. People had walked many kilometers to come, and we sat in the sweltering school hall. I asked them about malaria. Everybody had it. I asked them, “How many of you have bed nets?” There were two or three hands raised out of the 250 or so people in the room.

I have heard so many incorrect rumors such as, “Maybe they don’t like bed nets,” or “Maybe they are too hot and they bother people.” I asked this roomful of people: “How many of you know what bed nets are?” I thought that maybe they didn’t even know. Every hand went up, of course. I asked, “How many of you would like bed nets?” Every hand stayed up and people got very excited.

A woman in the front row stood up and, through the interpreter, said, “But, Mister, we can’t afford bed nets.” They know what bed nets are. They would love bed nets. They just can’t afford them.

We talked about fertilizer the same way, and they knew exactly what the situation was. This wasn’t about changing some deep cultural habit, it was just about poverty.

There is nothing that can’t be done in a straightforward fashion, in partnership, to address these problems. We launched a program called Millennium Villages, of which Sauri is one. These are villages committed to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the goals to fight hunger, poverty and disease. The Millennium Villages now cover about 600,000 people across Africa.

Governments, NGOs and companies are all partnering on the Millennium Villages Project. The chairperson of the first company I talked to, Sumitomo, which makes bed nets, immediately said, “I will provide bed nets for every sleeping site in all of the Millennium Villages for free.” It didn’t take 20 years to see the results. It took a few days to cover all the sleeping sites.

There are solutions. They are within our hands. We have no time to lose; our safety and security depend on it.

We are the generation in history that can end extreme poverty. The year 2025 is our rendezvous date. By the year 2025, we will end extreme poverty.

I have no doubt that by doing so, we can make the most important connection of all, across every racial divide, religious divide, linguistic divide, class divide and any other divide you can think of. Human-to-human contact is so powerful. It is essential and the path to peace on the planet.

We have within our hands, within our time, within this generation, the realistic ability to end extreme poverty.
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is executive director of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Formerly deputy president of South Africa and a veteran of the antiapartheid struggle, she has devoted her career to issues of human rights, equality and social justice, and has worked in both civil society and government.

In this interview, the SGI Quarterly asks Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka to reflect on the future in light of UN Women’s key objectives of the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and gender equality.

SGI Quarterly: How would you assess progress in the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the past 15 years, and what more can be done?

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka: The MDGs played a critical role in galvanizing attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment. As a result, we have seen important gains in some areas, such as girls’ access to and enrollment in primary education. A good start was also made in reducing maternal deaths and infant mortality. But progress has been unacceptable slow in vital areas such as increasing women’s access to decent work and to safe, reliable and hygienic sanitation facilities. Progress has also been uneven within and among countries.

Although the MDGs made gender equality a global priority, their targets were narrowly framed and did not address several fundamental issues. We know from the experience of the MDGs that broader progress will not be possible unless gender equality and women’s empowerment are integrated thoroughly across all policy areas and outcomes and at all levels.

SGIQ: Although many countries have passed legislation to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment, an overwhelming number of women and girls continue to suffer great inequality. How can we ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are successfully achieved by the year 2030 as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

PMN: It is true that we have made progress in gender-equality legislation, but laws alone are not enough, especially where traditional practices are deeply embedded. Discriminatory laws that blatantly diminish women’s opportunities remain— for example, laws that restrict land ownership, property title and inheritance or that limit the jobs women can do. There are still 128 countries where laws discriminate in some way against women.

We urgently need to increase the representation of women at all levels of decision-making. Women are virtually
voiceless where advocacy is most needed—where the laws are made and implemented.

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be a central priority in all aspects of the new SDGs. Our aim is nothing less than full equality, a Planet 50:50 by 2030, with substantial progress made over the next five years.

In order to reach this goal, we need better data, stronger accountability mechanisms and greater investment in gender equality from governments, the private sector and the global community. We need the full participation of civil society in holding duty-bearers accountable and in supporting them to implement their gender-equality commitments; and we need investment in civil society to support the work that they do.

Achieving gender equality requires reconfiguring power relations and breaking the social norms and gender stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and restrict men and boys to certain roles. That includes redefining our deeply ingrained perceptions of masculinity.

Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century.

**SGIQ: What role can civil society play in bringing about this change?**

**PMN:** The fact that women’s rights and issues like violence against women are in the public discourse today is due to the incredible efforts of a vibrant and determined civil society.

Women’s organizations have been champions of change, but we need gender-equality advocates everywhere. We must create a broader social justice movement with gender equality at its core. That means trade unions and workers’ movements must also get on board. It means that men must refuse to be bystanders and actively work to change social attitudes and behaviors. And the media must take responsibility for accurately representing women’s lives, for giving equal time and consideration to their stories and perspectives and for not perpetrating or perpetuating stereotyped and objectified images.

**SGIQ: Can you share some examples of how certain countries have successfully improved conditions for women and girls?**

**PMN:** UN Women’s Safe Cities Global Initiative against sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence toward women and girls has generated a number of innovative results through partnerships with mayors’ offices, national governments, cooperatives. A first in the region, they collectively raise cattle and provide many members with their only option to earn an income. Training on business development has helped the cooperatives flourish.

For the peace negotiations to resolve Colombia’s long internal conflict, UN Women has rallied women to claim their right to participate and provided evidence on gender considerations under each item on the agenda. These moves contributed to the inclusion of gender issues across the talks. The government appointed two women to its five-member delegation—none sat on it before—and designated a woman negotiator with specific responsibilities to raise gender concerns and consult with women’s groups.

**“Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century.”**
Building China's Ecological Civilization

By Xu Chun

Sustainable development is an approach grounded in care and concern for the survival of humankind, demanding that we look at development from a broad perspective. It is an approach to development that acknowledges the interrelatedness of people, resources and the environment. If any of these elements lack sustainability, it is impossible for the economy and society to achieve development that is sustainable.

Thirty years after opening up its economy and instituting reforms, China has entered a phase of very rapid growth. This compressed temporal and spatial development has created complex issues for Chinese society. The environmental problem China confronts is multifaceted, with implications for the very structure of society. It is beginning to adversely affect China’s economic and social development. Some industrialized regions exhibit the characteristics of postindustrial development, and the environmental problems caused by factors such as excessive emissions from motor vehicles and industrial pollution are indicative of a lifestyle of high consumerism and wastage. On the other hand, the environmental problems in agricultural regions are related to methods of agricultural production adopted in those regions and include problems such as the excessive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers that degrade soil quality, as well as pollution associated with livestock and poultry farming. To meet these challenges, it is crucial that modern China develop as an ecological civilization.

This could be described as a new pattern of human civilization replacing industrial civilization. The growing tensions between humans and nature created by industrialization are resolved through ecological thinking and approaches. The concept of an ecological civilization does not reject the goal of material prosperity that drives industrial civilization, but, utilizing the benefits of science and technology, it pursues a deeper understanding of the laws of nature and of our relationship with the natural world in order to establish the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

The building of an ecological civilization within the unique socialist structure of Chinese society has to be in line with the development of human civilization as well as China’s process of modernization. There are two difficult issues: How do we proceed on the path of ecological civilization while accomplishing our goal of industrialization and ensuring that China’s development continues at a rapid pace? How do we reconcile the seemingly antagonistic goals of environmental protection and development and ensure that protection of the environment leads to economic development that serves the interests of people, enterprises and the whole country? It is vital that we focus on the following: maintaining ecologically sound production processes; observing moderation in consumerism; promoting greater environmental awareness among the public; ensuring modernization of agricultural regions, where industrialization and urbanization are in line with sustainable development and interaction between man and environment remains harmonious throughout.

An ecological civilization, from the standpoint of sustainable development, adheres to the principles of harmony, recycling, collaboration, moderation, prioritization and humanity: resolving eco-environmental issues through improving people’s well-being; abiding by the laws of nature while establishing sustainable industrial structures, production processes and modes of consumption; with moderation as the yardstick, adopting modes of production and lifestyles that exhibit self-restraint; the creation of eco-friendly environments and enhancing their capacity for sustainability; allowing ecosystems to “rest and recover” with emphasis given to caring for the natural environment; and constructing a framework for the development of an ecological civilization with the government taking the lead and enterprises forming the bulk of the framework. In such a framework, civil society organizations and enterprises forming the bulk of the framework. In such a framework, civil society organizations should provide the necessary driving force and encourage the participation of all citizens. This will generate the momentum that pushes the government’s public policy toward a more scientific and democratic approach. © TPG/Getty Images

Photo credit: © TPG/Getty Images

Xu Chun is professor of philosophy at Peking University, Beijing. Her research interests include environmental philosophy, social development theory and ecological civilization.
Asian Renaissance and the Global Future: 2030 and Beyond

By Rakesh Kapoor

Futurist Rakesh Kapoor discusses the key changes that are likely to occur in Asia over the next 15 years and how these will impact the world in 2030.

Some of the determinants and trends that will shape the world in 2030 include huge demographic and economic changes, disruptive climate change, widespread technological advances and automation, a changing balance of power between East and West and a ferment arising from a reassertion and reassessment of cultural and religious identities. Individually, each one of these drivers of change will be significant, impacting the nature of global reality in 2030, and will have far-reaching consequences going well beyond 2030. However, if one were to try to imagine the world in 2030, taking into account all these drivers together and the impact that unforeseen wild cards could have, it would be difficult to predict the global situation at that time. All that can be said with certainty is that the world will be more complex, ever changing and uncertain.

One of the most significant markers of the 21st century is the reemergence of Asia as the economic powerhouse of the world. Asia was home to nearly two-thirds of the global population in 2000. By 2030, with steadily declining global fertility rates, Asia’s population will start declining too, but the economic share of Asia will only increase over the next 15 years and for another few decades thereafter. On a purchasing power parity basis, Asia’s share (excluding Japan) of global GDP increased from 9 percent in 1970 to 28 percent in 2010, and will be 39.5 percent in 2030. By 2050, this share will be 48 percent (50 percent including Japan), climbing back to a level that existed for a millennium before 1820. Seen in this perspective, the last two centuries were an aberration. While Asia will grow economically, population in the developed countries will age rapidly. Europe, Japan and China will have the most aging population and high dependency ratios (more old and young dependents per 100 working-age adults), followed by the US, Southeast Asia and Latin America. India, Africa and West Asia, on the other hand, will have a much younger population, driving their economic growth.
Within Asia, China’s meteoric rise has been the most remarkable. It is a popular assumption today that this rise will continue to 2030 and beyond and that China will challenge the US as the global superpower. But this assumption seems misplaced. China’s economic growth may well continue, albeit at a substantially slower rate, eventually overtaking the size of the US economy. But China is unlikely to be able to challenge the US as the global superpower for many decades yet. A number of inherent weaknesses will contribute to this likelihood: the export-led economic growth model based on state control and massive overinvestment that is now running out of steam and threatening to erode the credibility of the Chinese state; a rapidly aging population leading to huge labor shortages and the end of cheap labor; a rising middle class and very high inequality, leading to the pressure of instability; the absence of a powerful and alluring ideology, since China is a “capitalist” society with a Marxist-socialist ideology; and China’s inability to deal with religion and with its minorities. The US, on the other hand, continues with its military might and potential to grow steadily with its abundance of land and resources, strong culture of innovation and ability to attract capital and young immigrants.

Nevertheless, Asia, with India, Indonesia and other dynamic economies besides China, will have economic might, thus altering the balance of power between East and West. As Kishore Mahbubani, the Singaporean diplomat-thinker, writes in The New Asian Hemispheres, the two most salient features of our historical epoch are: “First, we have reached the end of the era of Western domination of world history (but not the end of the West, which will remain the single strongest civilization for decades more). Second, we will see an enormous renaissance of Asian societies.”

**Cultural and Religious Resurgence**

The Asian renaissance is beginning to happen in various ways, with a resurgence of culture and religion, seeking ways to coexist and find a new balance with capitalism and modernity. Although there is also the risk, in this process, of imbalance—as has happened with the torchbearers of radical, fundamentalist Islam, with violence and terror as their weapons. The resurgence should become stronger in the near- to medium-term future, as economic clout gives Asian countries greater cultural confidence, and as the challenges of sustainable consumption and climate-induced disasters and disruptions force us all to rethink assumptions and lifestyles and seek solutions for sustainability and stability.

The work of Asian scholars illustrates these creative stirrings. Rajiv Malhotra’s book Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism and Pankaj Mishra’s From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals who Remade Asia are examples. Zia Sardar’s work on Islam in the modern world is instructive. In two volumes of The Asian Future: Dialogues for Change, Asian scholars such as Sulak Sivaraksa, Tu Weiming, Chandra Muzaffar and Arief Budiman discuss how Asian countries can retrieve and draw upon their cultural sources to broaden and influence the concept of modernization.

**Climate Change**

The issue of the impacts of climate change—on food production, water, sea level rise, livelihoods, health, disasters and forced migration of populations—is fraught with uncertainty, which itself will characterize the world in the 21st century. The implications of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s high and low emission scenarios to 2100 are highly variable. The year 2030, itself, may not see severe impacts, but since greenhouse gases, once emitted, stay in the atmosphere for a long time and continue to affect the global climate for many decades, actions taken in the next 15 years will be critical in shaping the course of global warming in the mid and late 21st century.

To combat climate change, a much greater thrust on renewable energy and energy efficiency is required, as is a much greater level of cooperation between North and South than has been forthcoming. But it is difficult to see how climate change can be mitigated and sustainable levels of resource consumption attained without a major cultural change based on a different ethic of consumption and sharing. Once again, traditional values of austerity, frugality and simplicity to be found in Asian societies and the attempt to balance capitalism with culture, religion and spirituality will be pertinent. It is important to clarify, however, that the turn to simplicity, spirituality and sustainability is also gaining ground in the West.

**Technological Change**

While advances in technology will bring wonderful gains for human beings in the next 15 years, the combined impact of information technology and other technologies is affecting the human self and the brain in disturbing ways, as the British neuroscientist Susan Greenfield notes. Young people, and even adults, are “longing for experiences rather than searching for meaning.” Although Greenfield writes from the perspective of neuroscience, yet again this shows that traditional values and the balance between capitalism, modernity and culture are highly relevant in the 21st century.

In the next 15 years, an economically powerful and culturally resurgent Asia has an opportunity to work toward a global future characterized by a meaningful transformation to sustainability and spirituality and to nurture the deeper, authentic self despite the ubiquitous and often numbing presence of technology and virtual reality. Such a future world will be more balanced, more in sync with human well-being, and thus more civilized.
The Value of a Futurist
By Thomas Frey

Thomas Frey explains why thinking about the future is important and offers 10 intriguing predictions for the world in 2030.

As a futurist, people often ask me how many of my predictions have come true. I find this to be a rather uncomfortable question. It’s uncomfortable, not because my track record hasn’t been up to par (actually, a high percentage of my predictions have come true), but because accuracy of predictions is a poor way of measuring the value of a futurist.

To put it into perspective, the future is a force so massive that the entire universe is being pulled forward in time simultaneously. We have no choice in this matter. The future will happen whether or not we agree to participate. There is no known way for us to speed it up, slow it down or even try to stop it. The pace with which the future is unfolding is constant and, at the same time, relentless.

In a world filled with MBAs and number crunchers, there is a constant push to reduce our analog world to digital analytics so we can accurately measure our return on investment. But not everything is measurable in this way. What’s the value of a new idea, a new strategy or adding awareness to a previous blindspot?

Too often, our ability to focus on one all-consuming detail blinds us to the oncoming train that is about to destroy an entire industry. Ignorance is a valuable part of the future. If we knew the future, we would have little reason to vote in an election, host a surprise party or start something new. Once a future is known, we quickly lose interest in trying to influence it. For this reason, our greatest motivations in life come from NOT knowing the future. So why, as a futurist, do I spend so much time thinking about the future? Very simply, since no one has a totally clear vision of what lies ahead, we are all left with degrees of accuracy. Anyone with a higher degree of accuracy, even by only a few percentage points, can achieve a significant competitive advantage.

The Reaction Paradigm
As a futurist, it is my job to help forward-thinking companies weather through or simply avoid stormy trends and achieve a more profitable, vibrant and successful future.

French novelist Marcel Proust once said: “The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes.” The most successful companies don’t just outcompete their rivals, they redefine the terms of competition by embracing one-of-a-kind ideas in a world heavily steeped in “me-too” thinking.

Most companies operate within a paradigm of reaction. When bad (or good) things happen, they continue to forge ahead. They may or may not adjust their way of doing business. This unswerving reaction paradigm occurs, frankly, because it takes all they can muster to keep the doors open, make payroll and turn a profit.

It’s a tough world out there, and one widely held belief is that we’re all just trying to chip away at the world in order to make a buck. In this line of thinking, when things happen, you just do your best to hang on, and hopefully do better next time around. These are companies that are always preparing themselves for the next disaster.

Other companies plan for the future. They understand that markets shift, technology evolves and unexpected waves of mayhem occur. These companies often do better than the previous ones.
because they have the resources and foresight to weather this type of storm. Their leadership has given some thought to the murky future ahead of time and allocates resources to various strategies for adapting to the ebb and flow of these natural occurrences.

In the end, it becomes easy to see that the greatest companies are those that take control of their own future.

Researchers at Gallup have identified a hierarchy of connections between companies and their customers—from confidence to integrity to pride to passion. To test for passion, Gallup asks a simple question: “Can you imagine a world without this product?” One of the make-or-break challenges for change is to become irreplaceable in the eyes of your customers.

The future cannot be our only priority. Otherwise, we lose our ability to function in the present, and here is where it gets confusing. Near-term futures invariably take precedence over long-term futures, but our ability to prioritize importance is directly tied to the context of our own future thinking.

Our ability to tap into and leverage the power of the future is directly tied to the number of times we think about it. The more we think about the future, the more we expand our understanding of it. And the more we understand the future, the easier it becomes for us to interact with it.

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**Ten Predictions for 2030**

1. Over 80 percent of all doctor visits will have been replaced by automated exams.
2. Over 90 percent of all restaurants will use some form of a 3-D food printer in their meal preparations.
3. We will see a growing number of highways designated as driverless vehicles only.
4. A Chinese company will become the first to enter the space tourism industry by establishing regular flights to their space hotel.
5. Over 20 percent of all new construction will be “printed” buildings.
6. Over 50 percent of all traditional colleges will collapse, paving the way for an entirely new education industry to emerge.
7. The world’s largest Internet company will be in the education business and it will be a company we have not heard of yet.
8. We will have seen the revival of the first mated pair of an extinct species.
9. Forest fires will have been reduced to less than 5 percent of the number today with the use of infrared drone monitoring and extinguishing systems.
10. Over two billion jobs will have disappeared, freeing up talent for many new fledgling industries.

Reading through the predictions above, you probably experienced a number of thoughts ranging from agreement to amusement to confusion to total disagreement.

As with most predictions, some will be correct and others not. But the true value in this list comes from giving serious consideration to each prediction and deriving your own conclusions.
When fact and myth are integrated, the “head” and “heart” can open up realms of human knowing we never could otherwise have imagined. Such is the epistemology—the theory of the structure of knowledge—that can expand human experience into new paradigms of insight.

—Alistair McIntosh

When fact and myth are integrated, the “head” and “heart” can open up realms of human knowing we never could otherwise have imagined. Such is the epistemology—the theory of the structure of knowledge—that can expand human experience into new paradigms of insight.

—Alistair McIntosh

The future city of science fiction is a place without a past. A tabula rasa, its foundations rest on the belief that in and of itself technology will solve all of society’s ills. All neon lights and jetpacks, this city is the apex of materialism, a place where “bigger is better.” But this is the city of science fiction, not of science fact, and as the saying goes, “Science is stranger than fiction.”

Since 2009, I have been exploring the question of how nature would design a city. My research has focused on the potential to develop city-scale resilience to major natural-hazard events through the mimicry of the behaviors, relationships and systems of flora and fauna species. The inspiration to explore how ecosystems respond to meteorological and geological phenomena came in part from a lifelong love of the natural world. But more significant still was a compelling body of data that indicates humanity has much to learn from nature.

Prior to embarking upon my research, I perceived natural hazards in much the same way as others—they were a problem to be solved. However, the more I read and the more observations I made, the clearer it became that there might be another way to perceive natural hazards.

Disruptive Innovation

Meteorological and geological events are fundamental components of Earth’s operating system. When a natural hazard occurs, it releases and/or redistributes nutrients, clears space for new growth and allows for experimentation. In places where natural hazards occur with frequency, we find indigenous flora and fauna species that have evolved novel ways in which to harness the potential of these events while mitigating some of the threats. For example, several species of Australia’s national flower, the Banksia, have seed-bearing follicles of which the opening is stimulated by wildfire. These and other native species are thus able to rise like a phoenix from the ashes. Seen from this perspective, natural hazards become phenomena that allow for “disruptive innovation,” sometimes being integral to biological evolution.

However, it’s not only in respect of natural hazards that flora and fauna show immense capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions, and we see evidence of this all about us, recorded both empirically and anecdotally. We see it in the way in which flora and fauna respond to the changing seasons, shifting their behaviors, relationships, locations and, in some instances, even their colorations and/or their forms to both mitigate problems and harness opportunities. In a forest, the trees’ survival is a consequence of myriad mutually beneficial symbiotic relationships with diverse flora and fauna species. Below ground, tree roots intertwine with fungi to form mycorrhizal networks through which nutrients are exchanged. Above ground, insects, birds and mammals inadvertently participate in a tree’s reproductive cycle by propagating pollen and seeds.

In these and many other ways, ecosystems, and the indigenous, migratory and invasive flora and fauna they comprise, exhibit resilience to environmental change through perpetual adaptation. As a martial artist, this behavior brings to mind the Bruce Lee quote, “You must be shapeless, formless, like water,” together with the question of how future cities and their various components might also “be like water,” such that they work with and not against elemental forces.

Ideologically, this city is the antithesis of the tabula rasa of science fiction. This is a future city with a past and a place in which all that came before contributes to shaping all that is yet to come. But neither the past nor the present defines this city, for this city is and will always be a work in progress.
Catalyst for Creation

My research has led me to believe that the most profound difference between the organization of ecosystems and anthropogenic systems, such as cities, is in the nature of their materiality. Life isn’t built to last; life is built to reproduce and, as and when necessary, to evolve.

Ultimately, the question of how nature would design a city has led me to explore the concept of destruction as a catalyst for creation. While the concept of the city as ecosystem is nothing new, scientific and technological advances have created radical new ways and means of designing, producing and distributing the fabric of our cities. For example, breakthroughs in nanotechnology have enabled material scientists to replicate manifold biological mechanisms, including superhydrophobicity (high water repellence), as found in species including *Nelumbo nucifera* (Indian lotus); self-repairing membranes, which are a function of all flora and fauna species; and thermoregulation through evaporative cooling, as found in many mammalian species including primates. In the years and decades ahead, we can anticipate lifelike materials becoming a common feature of our day-to-day surroundings. Self-repairing materials will extend the life of wide-ranging items. Passive thermoregulation in buildings reduces the need for air conditioning and heating. Amongst other things, superhydrophobicity more or less mitigates the need for cleaning some surfaces.

“...This is a future city with a past and a place in which all that came before contributes to shaping all that is yet to come.”

Many structures will appear more lifelike, both in respect of their engineering and their architecture. In mimicking the composite structure of living materials, such as bone, scientists have equipped designers and architects with the means to create entirely new forms, the construction of which is far more efficient than conventional practice today. Whereas the industrial revolution brought mass-produced homogeneity, the postindustrial era will bring back bespoke design, often informed by the end user. Most goods will either be produced locally using microproduction technology, such as in-home and in-office 3-D printers, or made in factories set up to mass-produce one-off designs. In either scenario, the citizen becomes integral to the research and development process and is presented with manifold more capacity to design their personal and community environments.

Whereas the past several decades saw cities around the world become more uniform in their design and operation, the latest scientific and technological developments point to a more diverse, interesting and individual urban future. We might consider a smart city platform, such as the Urban Operating System™ developed by Portugal-based technology company Living PlanIT, as the equivalent of a mycorrhizal network in a forest. The UOS™ is able to aggregate and process real-time data from many millions of sources around a city. In doing so, it is able to inform such things as the management of resources including water, energy, waste and transport. In short, the UOS™ joins the many dots that comprise the connected city of the future.

We find ourselves at the beginning of a new epoch, an ecological age in which we are increasingly equipped to unravel life’s mysteries and, in some instances, to replicate the seemingly magical phenomena to which we bear witness. Consequently, that which was so readily discarded during the Industrial Age, yet which took at least 3.8 billion years to evolve—biodiversity—is once again held in the high esteem it so deserves. The cities of the future are being defined by science, but it is spirituality that will, in the words of Alistair McIntosh, bring “head” and “heart” together to expand our “human experience.” What lies ahead will likely defy imagination and, yet, will exhibit some of our very oldest and most universal beliefs.
What is it about our time that inspires a new story of the universe and our place in it?

Due to the discoveries of modern science, our generation is the first to catch a glimpse of the real dimensions of the universe, the unimaginable immensity of it, its origins, the glory of its unfolding. This glimpse changes everything. When told in many different ways, for all age groups and cultures, this story has the possibility of giving us a perspective that almost nothing else does. This is a realization that we are part of a living Earth with its complexity and its beauty. This is an awakening to the wholeness of Life, with both its whole and its holy forms—both whole and holy. We don’t have language to fully describe this insight. It’s thrilling. It’s wonder-inducing.

So where does the story start?

At the beginning there is a “great flaring forth”—a roaring force from one unknowable moment, this origin moment. It lights me up to think that from this emerge the first stars, the first galaxies, the first planetary systems. Any one of these alone would inspire a lifetime of meditation. That single moment gives birth over time to the elements—hydrogen, then oxygen, nitrogen, carbon—all from the explosion of supernovae. From the creative processes of galaxies and stars and finally planetary systems over 10 billion years, our sun, our Earth, our moon emerged, and eventually humans were born. This is staggering, indeed mind-boggling, and we are the first humans to begin to understand this.

It took another billion years for the first cell to emerge, and from that cell came all life on the planet. Did it come from the deep-sea vents? Did it come from an asteroid? All we know is that Earth became ignited with life. So we have multicellular life from the bacteria early on and much later with birds and fish and insects—the tree of life not so much branching as exploding outward. At the same time, Earth began its adventure of conscious self-awareness, from a primitive sentence at the cellular level all the way to our own dreaming, meaning-making, symbol-forming selves.

Cultural transformation often begins when people get a new vision of who they are in the midst of the world. Is that part of what you’re hoping the universe story can do?

What we are experiencing is a worldview shift of immense import, one where we humans are entering into a fresh understanding that we are part of a developmental universe. If we can see ourselves as coming out of, as birthed from, these dynamic, changing, evolutionary processes—from cosmic beginning to Earth to life to human beings—there will be a huge change of human consciousness and identity. It’s certainly as large as the Copernican Revolution. It’s on that order of magnitude.

What does the story inspire us to do? What is our work, as part of the unfolding universe?

We are in an extinction spasm currently. We are shutting down the Cenozoic Era, which began with the elimination of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Our great challenge is to imagine how a new era of Earth’s history can emerge. Our work in the world is not just a stopgap to extinction.
or a stopgap for pollution or fracking or whatever it might be. We are part of the Great Work of laying the foundations of a new cultural and biological era, what Thomas Berry called the Ecozoic Era.

Our work is to align ourselves with evolutionary processes, instead of standing in their way or derailing them. So our human role is to deepen our consciousness in resonance with the 14-billion-year creative event in which we find ourselves. Our challenge is to construct livable cities and to cultivate healthy foods in ways that are congruent with Earth’s patterns. That is what biodynamics and permaculture and organic farming are trying to discover: How do soils work? How do bacteria work? How do nutrients work? We need to broaden our ecological understandings so we can align ourselves with the creative forces of the universe.

We can talk about this in every ecosystem, whether it is oceans and fisheries, rivers and estuaries, meadows and forests. We have scientific and ecological knowledge about how these ecosystems are working. We need to use that knowledge to support, restore and renew these ecosystems.

The United Nations has issued yet another report, saying that the world is not moving nearly fast enough to prevent major disruptions of food supplies, inundation of coastal cities, massive movements of refugees, widespread extinctions. Yet your work seems to be based on a beautiful hope. What do you hope for? What do you expect? Do you think humankind will make the turning toward this creative participation in an unfolding universe?

It’s a really important question, indeed a haunting one. We all share the sadness of our times, the despair we can feel around us and the struggles of individuals and institutions. So I think we have to acknowledge that these are extremely difficult times—that we are being drenched with dispiriting news of all sorts: terrorism, Ebola, war, refugee camps and the destruction of species and ecosystems. Truly horrific news, there’s no question about it. What is our resilience in the face of this?

It is in the nature of the universe to move forward between great tensions, between dynamic opposing forces. As Thomas Berry said in his article “The New Story,” if the creative energies in the heart of the universe succeed so brilliantly in the past, we have reason to hope that such creativity will inspire us and guide us into the future. My greatest hope would be that these life systems are so powerful, are themselves so resilient, that we can take inspiration from the natural world and its fantastic, intriguing mystery and complexity. In this way, our own generativity can become woven into the vibrant communities that constitute the vast symphony of the universe.

There are hundreds of thousands of people on the planet who are aware and ready and already participating in this epic story. They want to help write the story into its future, participate in its unfolding, so that we get through this hourglass of loss and extinction, of sorrow and mourning. We need to articulate this sorrow and ritualize our grieving; the humanities can help us do that. But we need to create, in this hugely difficult birth passage, new ways of being vibrant and mutually enhancing creatures on this planet.

These perspectives are explored further in the Journey of the Universe project, a collaboration between Mary Evelyn Tucker and evolutionary philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme that includes an Emmy Award-winning film, a book and a series of video conversations. Visit: www.journeyoftheuniverse.org. These materials can also be found on Amazon.
The working population of sub-Saharan Africa will triple to 1.25 billion by 2050. By 2035, the number of Africans of working age (15 to 64) will exceed that of the rest of the world. In the coming decade, as 100 million Africans join the workforce, the world will be compelled to focus on the needs of Africa.

The global economy reaches only 10 percent of the African working population. This implies that even at global levels of industrialization and the service economy, Africa would never generate the jobs required to alleviate poverty and to evolve from scarcity, poverty and misery into a society that offers its citizens a chance to evolve toward dignity.

Clearly, we need to find alternative approaches to address the need for large-scale job generation. The Blue Economy, which has been described as the philosophy of zero emissions in action, does not embark on a strong critique of present development models; it points out that there are opportunities to do much better. When I proposed this zero emissions and zero waste idea as the standard for a new competitive industry in 1991, it was considered a dream by many. With the support of the United Nations University and the Japanese government since 1994, zero emissions has turned into a new standard. Now, 21 years later, having implemented nearly 200 projects based on the Blue Economy model, mobilizing $4 billion in capital and creating 3 million jobs, it is clear that a better approach to inclusive growth and fast-track development is possible.

Zero emissions proposes that everything gets used; nothing is wasted. This is achieved by cascading and interconnecting, just like nature does. Instead of a blind focus on cutting costs and eliminating people in the primary and secondary sectors, we concentrate on generating more value with readily available resources, embracing innovations in technology but also adopting new business models and payment systems that ensure more money remains circulating in the local economy.

Mpho Parks Tau, the executive mayor of Johannesburg, South Africa, embarked on a pragmatic review based on this Blue Economy approach: what material and financial resources does the city have which could generate more water, food, power, health and jobs, alleviating...
poverty and building a community? A team of 135 members of the Blue Economy network associated with the Zero Emissions Research Initiatives (ZERI) Foundation reviewed in detail the local resources, matched them with needs, tradition and culture and proposed 29 initiatives.

These initiatives were subsequently integrated into a system dynamics model. Instead of using macroeconomic data to look for trends in the global economy, this model searched for equations, feedback loops and multipliers, providing the mayor with a tool to make transparent decisions on obvious opportunities for meeting basic needs, growing the local economy at double-digit rates and improving purchasing power.

Projects were prioritized using such criteria as anticipated number of new jobs, time required to achieve results and level of impact on individual livelihoods. Instead of basing decisions on stand-alone projects, all initiatives were integrated into models that unveiled and empowered interconnections that reinforced themselves. We unraveled a myriad of synergies that supported decisions and expanded impact as a result of extra value generated in and circulated throughout the emerging local economy. The strategy was inspired by the theoretical framework of the economic plan set forth by the late Saburo Okita, a former Japanese minister of foreign affairs who led a program during the 1950s and 60s that aimed to double income within 10 years and that greatly accelerated economic growth in Japan.

**The Johannesburg Project**

The initial portfolio of six clustered initiatives is only the beginning of a long-term strategy to dramatically transform the economic tissue of Johannesburg, the industrial powerhouse of Africa, ensuring equity, participation, transparency and delivery.

The project clusters include the creation of local micro-bakeries that operate on solar and thermal electric power. Building 13,500 bakeries will facilitate local production of bread that includes fruit seeds and peels, eliminating the need for sugar and salt while maintaining taste and improving mineral and vitamin content. This triggers the creation of a “multifunctional oven” that produces bread heated by a hybrid solar installation that provides heat and power, generating light at night as well as power for charging cell phones. This creates a convergence in the community. The system is locally manufactured.

“Zero emissions proposes that everything gets used; nothing is wasted.”

The mayor’s Blue Economy initiative addresses food security, complementing starch from bread with protein from mushrooms cultivated by 7,000 small urban farms working with local organic waste streams from parks and gardens. The leftover substrate is ideal chicken feed, and the fresh substrates and produce are processed and dried in the multifunctional oven that in the winter also provides heat for the bakery families.

The city is facing major shortages of power and water. An integrated approach will ensure more of both. Power will be generated from the flow of water through the city using gravity and depressurizing valves to provide a smart network that generates energy, especially at peak times, to power not only pumps but also clinics and police stations and operate an information network on water consumption that is autonomous from the grid.

More energy is generated from the creation of biogas for public transportation from wastewater sludge blended with organic solid municipal waste, cutting the load on landfill sites while adding value. The imposition of tough bylaws set a new standard for very water-efficient toilets, saving billions of liters of water and megawatts of power.

Construction rubble is converted to paper, creating new jobs and transforming 100,000 tons of construction waste into an income stream, as has been proven in China, without consumption of water or cellulose from trees. Later, mining waste will complement the construction debris. These initiatives will generate an estimated 100,000 jobs in Johannesburg in the short term and more than 300,000 in the long term. The capital investment is triggered by the city’s core budget in the order of 10 percent of the financial requirements for the projects, while market forces will take over after the concepts have been proven.

This program is part of the “bottom-up scenarios” that the ZERI Foundation is organizing in order to design sustainable cities around the world based on initiatives that are locally viable, driven by readily available resources and leveraged by the purchasing power of the city to kick-start new industries. If we want to achieve a better world, we cannot do more of the same and expect different results. We must embark on a creative science-based approach while being prepared to assume calculated risks.
When I was 19, my parents retired and moved back to Jamaica, which was the dream of many people from the Caribbean who had come to England in the late '50s and '60s. My siblings and I remained in the UK. I was the youngest of six children and I felt abandoned. With no one to keep me on the straight and narrow, my life consisted of drinking, partying and unstable relationships. I lived for the weekend, being completely reckless, not caring about anything.

After finishing school, I worked for a small printing company in Nottingham where I experienced racism and bullying on a daily basis. I had not experienced this kind of treatment before and could not understand how people could be like this. I wanted to leave the job but needed the money, so I stayed and tried to bear the daily insults.

This was the lowest point of my life. It was at these times that I really needed my parents' guidance. I remember crying in my bed at night and even thinking about ending my life.

One day in a health club, I met a dancer who was doing a show in town. We struck up a conversation about dance. I enjoyed dancing in nightclubs and I had wanted to be a dancer from around the age of 10, but because people from my background never did that sort of thing, I forgot about it until this conversation. This man encouraged me to go to London to audition for a dance school. I knew nothing about formal dance but decided to try my luck. I found a dance teacher, did six ballet classes, auditioned and won a place at a very good musical theater school.

After graduating, I was fortunate to get a place in a prestigious contemporary company, and danced for several companies after that. Some time later, while on holiday with my wife in the south of France, I went to see a performance by my favorite dance company. At the theater, surrounded by white, wealthy people, I felt extremely uncomfortable, remembering my past experience of racial discrimination.
“I had wanted to be a dancer from around the age of 10, but because people from my background never did that sort of thing, I forgot about it.”

The main character in the ballet we were watching was a black male dancer, whose performance was truly magical. Seeing him in the center of the stage being given a standing ovation, a new determination was born within me. In that moment there was no sense of discrimination. Time seemed to stand still. I decided I wanted to become a world-famous dancer, overcome my low self-esteem and help create a world free from inequality and discrimination.

I threw myself into dance, and as my career developed, a problem that I had previously tried to ignore became much more of a concern. I had what appeared to be in-growing hard skin, which would press on the nerves in the center of the balls of both my feet. This caused severe pain when dancing, resulting in me experiencing more and more injuries. Although I was fortunate to be given important roles and even have a ballet choreographed for me, I felt I could not fulfill my potential with this foot problem.

A Larger Life

It was around this time that I overheard someone at a dinner party talking about Nichiren Buddhism with my friend. I was fascinated and began to experiment with the practice at home the same night. I became involved in the SGI shortly after.

I continued dancing and was fortunate to gain a place in a company dancing with the world-famous dancer Sylvie Guillem, which to me was amazing proof of the power of my Buddhist practice. However, I was still experiencing pain in my feet. On one occasion, I sought advice about my problem from a long-standing SGI member. I expected him to encourage me to overcome my condition, but he suggested that I change direction. I was stunned and for a moment I became angry. Dance was my life.

Holding his fist in his hand, he said that if the fist represented dance, the hand around it represented my life. But, he said, stretching his arms out, my life was actually much bigger and vaster and dance was only a part of it. He continued, saying that I could probably expect to dance at the highest level for another two to three years but then would have to start thinking about changing direction anyway, so I might as well do it sooner than later. When I heard that, I remembered the passion I had once felt to rid the world of racism and discrimination. Deep down, I knew I had in fact been limiting myself. After this, I began to think seriously about how I could use my life to create more value, with or without dancing.

Over the next few years, I began the process of moving from being a professional dancer to seeing where else I could apply my skills. A close friend of mine had been working in school and community-based projects supporting children through training in conflict resolution and peer mediation. I was employed to support these children to gain confidence in themselves and to overcome problems at school. At the same time, within SGI-UK I took on national leadership responsibility for the young boys group, helping them develop their faith and friendships. This responsibility really mirrored the work I was doing in schools and also in the development of my family life, as by then I had four young boys.

Through all these experiences, I gained a real understanding of the importance of supporting the social and emotional development of young children. As a child, I had struggled with writing and spelling and had developed strategies to avoid these kinds of activities. Because of this experience, I naturally found myself able to empathize with children who were struggling.

With some encouragement from friends within the SGI, I applied for a Master’s degree in movement psychotherapy, something I would otherwise not have had the confidence to even attempt.

I graduated as a movement psychotherapist in 2007 and have since worked with men suffering from schizophrenia, in forensic mental health and also with children suffering from sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse and other difficult mental health and social problems. I also co-run a charity with the aim of supporting young people with emotional difficulties who are at risk of being excluded from education.

Through my Buddhist practice, I have grown in ways that I could not have imagined. I also feel passionate about my current responsibility as a men’s leader in SGI-UK, helping men face their own challenges and grow in their humanity. The more responsible and compassionate men there are in society, the more we can be a great example to young people who are struggling to find positive role models in their life.

Last year, I determined to overcome dyslexia, which had prevented me from writing about my experience. Soon after this, I was contacted by a national newspaper to write an article about black people practicing Buddhism in Southeast London. In it, I was able to share my conviction with the readers and express my determination to tackle inequality and discrimination in society.

I have changed my weaknesses into strengths and made them the driving force for my development. I am determined to create a society where young people are truly happy, valued and nurtured to become capable leaders for the future.
The Mastery of Science and Technology

Dialogue between Jim Garrison, Larry A. Hickman and Daisaku Ikeda

As scientific technology continues to rapidly transform the world, how do we ensure that technology is serving people rather than people serving technology?

Daisaku Ikeda: Dewey, as if anticipating the problems that society would run up against, warned that human beings might be reduced from the masters of scientific technology to the tools of it. The tendencies toward quantification and mechanization that he warned against led to a society in which people were forced into a standardized mold and treated as a uniform “product”—one of our world’s great problems today.

The establishment of a sound ethical system is an urgent issue in today’s science-based society.

Jim Garrison: I primarily teach courses in education for teachers from all disciplines, and I have noticed a disturbing pattern. Students with degrees in science or engineering are confident in the powers of these disciplines but rarely have exposure to courses in the philosophy or ethics of science. Meanwhile, those without a background in the techno-sciences are much more likely to distrust science and technology and may even see it as a definite evil.

Many of the nonscientists among my students often participate in the contemporary rage against reason. What they are rightly rebelling against is scientism: the narrow, dogmatic use of scientific results rather than the tentative methods of hypothesis, testing and revision that are never absolutely certain. Dewey, too, rejected “The Quest for Certainty,” which is the title of his most extensive work on the theory of knowledge (epistemology).

Generally, few students, regardless of background, have been exposed to ethics or philosophy of any kind. There are now more offerings in the curriculum at Virginia Tech, and I am starting to see positive results in my classes.

Larry Hickman: I advise students of science and engineering to study the histories of their own disciplines and acquaint themselves with the work being done by philosophers that addresses the ethical dimensions of scientific and technical change. Their professional lives will be greatly enriched, I advise them, by the study of philosophy, and courses in the humanities will...
prepare them for the ethical decisions their professions will demand.

Dewey thought that philosophy at its best is a kind of liaison officer helping the various disciplines to communicate with one another.

Ikeda: Dewey insisted that development of a wholesome society must rest on the formation of a new individualism: “It is through employing them [science and technology] with understanding of their possible import that a new individualism, constant with the realities of the present age, may be brought into operative being.”

He also wrote, “The greatest obstacle to that vision is, I repeat, the perpetuation of the older individualism now reduced, as I have said, to the utilization of science and technology for ends of private pecuniary gain.”

Garrison: From Francis Bacon, Auguste Comte and others, Dewey took the notion that the sciences can allow humankind to take control of its destiny intelligently by engineering a better future, but only if we are caring, careful and fully reflective.

The problem is that thus far the science of nature in the hands of global capital has tended to make nature the unwilling servant. Worse still, it has turned science on human nature and made human individuals themselves unwilling servants of techno-science.

Dewey often made the classical Greek observation that anyone who takes the purposes of his conduct from another is a slave. Thus far, the power of science has been used by the rich and powerful to enslave the minds of the masses.

Ikeda: How to open enslaved minds to the possibilities of freedom, independence and humanity—this is the challenge of humanistic education. In light of Dewey’s ideas on this, Professor Garrison, how do you think modern education should be reformed?

Garrison: Dewey believed we must accept the place in history into which we are born and then strive to transform its muddy waters into beautiful blossoms. So, we must accept the capitalist economy along with the techno-sciences we have inherited. However, if we can realize the promise of pluralistic democracy, we can put science and capitalism to new purposes for the good of the people.

Instead of education as molding human resources into interchangeable parts for the global production function, we must reaffirm moral equality and educate every individual to actualize his or her unique potential to make unique contributions to the democratic community.

Ikeda: You have explained Dewey’s view of education with a wonderful metaphor. As you know, the Lotus Sutra, the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism, also employs the simile of the lotus flower blooming out of muddy waters.

The Lotus Sutra teaches a way of life in which, though we exist within the difficult reality of our world, as it swirls with greed and hatred, we can shine radiantly with the noblest humanity and contribute to society—just as the lotus rises to flower in purity from the muddy waters.

Ikeda: The key is to become strong, wise and good, and make what life presents to us into opportunities for creating value.

Regarding technology today, short-term profit is the driving force, and there is fierce competition to make new discoveries and findings without sufficient examination of their effects on either human beings or the natural world. As a result, technological and scientific advancement is destroying the natural world and the very foundation of human life, and threatening our ecosystem.

This reminds me of something [second Soka Gakkai President Toda said: “One cause of people’s misfortune today is that they confuse knowledge and wisdom . . . Knowledge may serve as a door that opens the way to wisdom, but knowledge itself is definitely not wisdom.”

Garrison: The disaster of techno-science in the contemporary social context of global capitalism is that we apply knowledge without wisdom. The old individualism places knowledge before wisdom, because it wishes to use knowledge to exploit nature and other human beings. The new individualism seeks to use knowledge wisely to alleviate suffering and liberate human creativity and self-expression.

The problem is not the techno-sciences but the purposes to which they are put. First, I believe that we must avoid the excesses of scientism, so that we can properly understand the power of science as a cultural phenomenon. We must avoid harnessing the power of science to traditional purposes, which often tend to oppress individuals and groups.

We must release critical, creative intelligence, as refined by modern science into all cultural domains, including religion, the economy, philosophy, the family and individual life. Humanistic education emphasizing cultural criticism, creative imagination and social responsibility cultivates such new individualism, which resembles what you, President Ikeda, call the human revolution in a single life.
What led you to become a teacher?

Fred: Ever since my early childhood, I’ve always yearned to share whatever knowledge I could get with others. I think I was born with a talent for teaching: when I was little, I used to gather my friends around me and teach them what I had learned at school. As I grew older, my interest in teaching as a profession developed, and eventually I decided to become a teacher.

Fueanglada: I was inspired by my mother, who had a deep respect for the teaching profession, and also by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, who encourages people to recognize the value of each individual. These influences eventually led me to the determination to become a teacher.

How do you view your role as an educator?

Fred: Teaching is a sacred vocation. I see my role as providing the necessary foundation upon which students will develop their lives. My own growth and development are essential for this. I need to put my heart into my job so that I can inspire my students, and I must have a sense of responsibility and compassion for their welfare. Ultimately, my role is to help students grow and awaken to their inherent potential and to the dignity of all life. I want to help them raise their self-esteem.

Fueanglada: New developments constantly affect education: societal and cultural changes, new teaching methods, changes in education management and modern media technology. All of these can have both positive and negative impacts on the students. This is why teachers have such an important role in helping students get the most out of their education.

Teaching, I think, is a really noble occupation. Teachers are in the unique position of fostering capable people who will be responsible for the future development of society, and I’m committed to being a part of this endeavor.

How do you motivate students who might not be interested in learning?

Fueanglada: I try to help them understand the concept of cause and effect so they can see how their actions today will shape the future. I try to instill a sense of purpose in my students, reminding them that they each have a unique mission in life. I also encourage them to do their “human revolution”—to make positive changes in their lives—so as to bring out their inner potential.

Fred: I make an effort to engage in dialogue with my students so that I can understand them better and do my best to be empathetic and compassionate. In these dialogues, I try to explain the advantages of learning and help make the connection between theory and
practice through practical demonstrations. I also encourage group discussion and incorporate humor and fun. Above all, I try to positively influence students through my own attitude and behavior.

How do you stay motivated?
Fred: To stay motivated, especially in the teaching profession, is one of the biggest challenges, particularly when dealing with students who are not interested in learning, are rebellious or have difficulty learning. There are also organizational challenges.

I rely greatly on my daily Buddhist practice and the writings of SGI President Ikeda for support. I have been encouraged by his words: “The main thing is to be proud of what you do, to live true to yourself,” and “Ultimately what matters is your intention.” Also, making the effort to do extracurricular activities with the other teachers helps me stay motivated.

Fueanglada: I read SGI President Ikeda’s guidance and try to apply it in my daily life, trying my utmost to maintain an undefeated spirit. No matter what happens, I am firmly determined to do my best to carry out my mission as a teacher.

Can you name three attributes that are important in a good teacher?
Fred: Through my many years of teaching, I’ve come to understand that teachers must have their own sense of responsibility and compassion; they must sincerely try to help their students, even at the expense of their own time. Second, it’s important that teachers have empathy, always trying as far as possible to understand the students by putting themselves in their shoes. Lastly, teachers must continuously work toward their own growth and development, which itself is a committed effort to help the students grow.

Fueanglada: Teachers need to have love, compassion and care to help, support and encourage their students. They must exert themselves to the best of their ability to sincerely and impartially motivate their students to learn and to develop skills and good character. And teachers must set a good example through thought, words and actions.

How has your Buddhist practice influenced you as a teacher?
Fueanglada: My Buddhist practice has helped me see my true potential, undergo my human revolution and create bonds of friendship with others, as well as share happiness, hope and encouragement with those around me. Being a teacher enables me to demonstrate this potential fully. I also want to help each individual that I come into contact with recognize the value of human life.
Fred: Buddhism teaches us how to activate our inherent potential in order to overcome suffering and become happy, while helping others do the same. I apply Buddhist principles, to the best of my ability, to all aspects of my work as a teacher.

Buddhism teaches that all beings without exception possess the potential to be happy—to become enlightened. This has encouraged me to treat all my students with reverence, irrespective of their individual circumstances.

My Buddhist practice has also helped me realize that the influence I have on my students reaches far into the future, into eternity. It has also taught me that I am interconnected with my environment and that when I change, my environment will change.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?
Fred: Receiving immediate positive feedback regarding a lesson I’ve delivered, or seeing a student I’ve taught succeed in life . . . For example, there’s a former student of mine who was not serious in class. I made a particular effort to encourage him, and now he calls me occasionally to express his gratitude. Another student realized his dream of becoming a pharmacist through my guidance and encouragement.

Fueanglada: I enjoy being able to help raise capable people and contribute to the development of society. I have a profession that enables me to continuously develop my potential and be a good role model to others: what could be more rewarding than that! ✤
Okinawa Youth Peace Summit

On July 20 and 21, Soka Gakkai youth from Okinawa, Hiroshima and Nagasaki prefectures attended a peace summit at the Soka Gakkai Okinawa International Peace Center in Naha, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa (June 23, 1945).

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, who proposed the creation of the youth peace summit in April 1989, sent a message in which he emphasized that the determination to never wage war again is fundamental to securing a century of peace and humanity. He also proposed that the youth peace summit be renamed the “Antiwar Youth Summit.”

Over the years, Soka Gakkai youth in Okinawa have been involved in conducting surveys of people’s attitudes toward the Battle of Okinawa, as well as sponsoring peace forums. This year, some 34,000 people were polled. Questions ranged from basic facts about the Battle of Okinawa to questions about whether or not people had opportunities to discuss the war in their daily lives.

The summit also included an exhibition of artwork depicting the Battle of Okinawa. An 88-year-old woman who drew one of the paintings shared how she had cried as she painted her memory of the war and how it had required great courage. One elementary school student who viewed the artwork shared his determination to talk to as many friends as possible about the horror of war. Another student shared her wish to carry on the “spirit of peace” which the artists had imparted through their paintings.

Soka Gakkai Okinawa youth also started a campaign this year called “Peace Action—It Starts from One,” encouraging youth to learn from the war experiences of others and share what they have learned, working to bring together those who wish for peace.

Soka Gakkai Japan Youth Delegation Visits China

From June 9 to 18, a group of 18 Soka Gakkai youth from Japan visited China for a friendship exchange hosted by the All-China Youth Federation (ACYF), continuing a tradition of exchange that began in 1979. This year, the group visited several cities including Beijing, Tianjin, Yanji and Dalian.

On June 12, the delegation visited Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province, the first time it has been included as part of the itinerary. On June 13, they visited the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery in the prefectural capital of Yanji and laid a wreath in remembrance of the war dead. The youth also visited Yanbian Museum where they learned about the history of Chinese Koreans, as well as Japan’s aggression against China during the war.

Taro Hashimoto, head of the Soka Gakkai delegation, stated that he believed it was the wish of the citizens of both China and Japan to preserve peace for eternity and that it was the mission of youth to help actualize a lasting peace. The youth also conducted cultural exchanges with local residents in the area.

The ACYF is the largest youth organization in China. Former Chinese President Hu Jintao led the first youth exchange group from China to visit Japan in 1985.

Youth lay flowers for war dead at the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery
SGI Joins Faith Groups in Launching Statement Condemning Nuclear Weapons

“Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values upheld by our respective faith traditions—the right of people to live in security and dignity; the commands of conscience and justice; the duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations . . .”

So reads a statement calling on faith groups to speak out against nuclear weapons that was presented on May 1 at the UN Headquarters in New York as part of the official Civil Society Presentation at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

The SGI, together with other faith-based organizations, contributed to drafting the statement titled “Faith Communities Concerned about the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons.”

This initiative builds on joint statements by faith groups issued in April and December 2014 at conferences held in Washington DC and Vienna respectively that highlighted the devastating humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

The statement so far has been endorsed by individuals from over 60 different religious groups and by prominent peace activists. SGI Director of Peace Affairs Hirotugu Terasaki, in response to the devastation caused by the magnitude 7.9 earthquake that hit Nepal on April 25 and ensuing aftershocks, Soka Gakkai Thailand (SGT), Taiwan Soka Association (TSA), Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) and the Soka Gakkai in Japan made donations to various relief funds in the days following the disaster.

On April 27, a TSA representative visited the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Taipei and made a donation of 1 million Taiwanese dollars (US$32,642) to support relief efforts in Nepal coordinated by the Taiwanese government. Receiving the donation, MOFA Vice Minister Vanessa Yea-Ping Shih stated that TSA was the first organization in Taiwan to make a donation.

On April 28, at the Embassy of Nepal in Bangkok, Thailand, SGT presented a donation of 500,000 Thai baht (US$15,131). In Japan, Soka Gakkai President Minoru Harada visited the Embassy of Nepal in Tokyo on April 30 and presented a donation of 5 million Japanese yen (US$41,774). On the same day, Soka Gakkai Vice President Yoshiki Tanigawa visited the Japan Association for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Tokyo and made a donation of 3 million Japanese yen (US$25,064).

On May 30, Soka Gakkai Malaysia staged a concert at the SGM Culture Center to raise funds for the victims of the Nepal earthquake, raising 85,000 Malaysian ringgit (US$22,549), which was donated to the United Nations Children’s Fund.

Nations that nuclear weapons violate the deepest values of humanity,” said Dr. Welty, who read out the statement at the NPT Review Conference on May 1.

Signatories pledge, as people of faith, to communicate within their respective faith communities the inhumane and immoral nature of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks they pose, and to call for the early commencement of negotiations by governments on a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

To find out how to endorse the statement or view the latest list of endorsers, go to www.peoplesdecade.org.

Nepal Earthquake Relief

In response to the devastation caused by the magnitude 7.9 earthquake that hit Nepal on April 25 and ensuing aftershocks, Soka Gakkai Thailand (SGT), Taiwan Soka Association (TSA), Soka Gakkai Malaysia (SGM) and the Soka Gakkai in Japan made donations to various relief funds in the days following the disaster.

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Interreligious Panel on Euthanasia

On April 16, representatives of different religious traditions and civil society came together at the Stefan-George House in Bingen, Germany, to present perspectives on euthanasia. Pastor Olivar Zobel of the Evangelical Church of St. John opened the proceedings.

Barbara Schoppmann of the St. Hildegard Maltese Hospice in Bingen, explaining that a primary worry of many patients is not to become a burden to others, stated her concern that the choice of assisted suicide might be made on economic grounds or to lessen the burden of care on relatives. Udo Tessmer, chief executive of the International Society for Palliative Care and Life Support, stressed the urgent need to promote palliative services so that patients are aware of what is available to them.

Pastor Ulrike Windschmitt, chaplain at the University Medical Center of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, stressed that the starting position for Christians in the debate on euthanasia is the protection of life and the care of those who are suffering.

In his presentation, Dr. Hüseyin Kurt, who is a consultant for the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs in Frankfurt and works at a nursing home that offers care for Muslims, stated that from an Islamic perspective, because both life and health are gifts or loans from God, every individual is obliged to protect them. Only God may decide to end a life.

Yoshiharu Matsuno of SGI-Germany stressed the crucial role of compassion and the need not only to alleviate physical pain, but also to provide social and psychological support to overcome the loneliness and isolation people face in dying.

Nuclear Abolition Petition Submitted to UN

On May 19, SGI-USA youth visited the UN Headquarters in New York to present petitions signed by more than 8,500 youth calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. They met with Virginia Gamba, the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

These signatures, presented during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, were signed by youth representing nearly every segment of American society and from all corners of the country.

The petition stated: “We believe that popular opinion will be the foundation of an international norm for the abolition of nuclear weapons . . . We, the youth of America, pledge our commitment to expand the network of young people in support of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, as a step toward ridding the world of such weapons by the year 2030.”

This effort is part of the SGI’s larger global peace initiative. In 2013, Soka Gakkai youth representatives presented United Nations officials with the signatures of 5 million youth from Japan calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.
Life and Death

Our attitudes and beliefs regarding death have a great influence on our approach to life.

There is perhaps no greater grief than being parted from a loved one by death. And though we know with the surest certainty that our time here is limited and that no one can escape the impermanence of life, this does little to prepare us for the shock of death or to help us approach our own inevitable separation from this world.

Why are we born? Why must we die? What value can we create from this fragile existence? It was from the search for answers to these questions that Buddhism came into being.

Buddhism teaches that we should not shrink from the fact of death but squarely confront it. Our contemporary culture has been described as one that seeks to avoid and deny the fundamental question of our mortality. It is the awareness of death, however, that compels us to examine our lives and to seek to live meaningfully. Death enables us to treasure life; it awakens us to the preciousness of each shared moment. In the struggle to navigate the sorrow of death, we can forge a radiant treasure of fortitude in the depths of our being. Through that struggle, we become more aware of the dignity of life and more readily able to empathize with the suffering of others.

From the Buddhist perspective, life and death are two phases of a continuum. Life does not begin at birth nor end at death. Everything in the universe—from invisible microbes in the air we breathe to great swirling galaxies—passes through these phases. Our individual lives are part of this great cosmic rhythm.

Everything in the universe, everything that happens, is part of a vast living web of interconnection. The vibrant energy we call life which flows throughout the universe has no beginning and no end. Life is a continuous, dynamic process of change.

Early Buddhist teachings, however, saw this process as one of inevitable suffering and focused on the possibility of opting out of it.

Shakyamuni perceived that desire is the fundamental impulse that drives life onward, tying us into the cycle of birth and death. At each moment, impulses of various desires prompt thought, speech and action, which comprise the latent force of our individual karma. Through these causes and effects, actions and reactions, we shape ourselves and our circumstances from instant to instant, perpetuating a fluid process that has continued over countless existences. Moreover, Shakyamuni taught there is no permanent soul or self that has existed throughout all this time but simply the continuity of karmic energy that generates the illusion of an unchanging essence or self.

Eliminating desire, then, would cut off the energy that fuels the cycle of life and death, and at death, one’s life would be extinguished once and for all. This blissful state of annihilation—nirvana—was the final goal of early Buddhist teachings and continues to be regarded as such in many Buddhist traditions today. Life, in this perspective, is a cycle of suffering from which one can eventually escape.

The Lotus Sutra, however, brings forth a completely revolutionary view of human beings, asserting that there is a profound purpose to our lives in this world. This Buddhist scripture, which Nichiren and a lineage of Buddhist scholars before him regarded as the most complete and perfect expression of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment, emphasizes that the essential nature of our lives at any moment is that of a Buddha. Awakening to the truth of one’s inherent Buddha nature, one discovers this fundamental sense of purpose, and life takes on a completely different and fundamentally joyful quality.

But what is the Buddha nature and how does one
“From the enlightened perspective of Buddhahood, we are born freely into the world with a resolve to awaken others to their Buddha nature.”

awaken to it? In essence, the Buddha nature is the impulse inherent in life to relieve suffering and bring happiness to others. It is encapsulated in the Lotus Sutra by the statement: “At all times I think to myself: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a buddha?”

The phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that Nichiren advocated his followers chant could be described as the sound or expression of this primordial impulse—this vow—and the recitation of it as a practice that orients one’s life on this vow. Through the wondrous alchemy of this act, the incessant process of change that is life becomes a process of unending growth and transformation.

Our existence itself then becomes an expression of this vow. From the enlightened perspective of Buddhahood, we are born freely into the world with a resolve to awaken others to their Buddha nature. When we are awake to this purpose, the causes and effects within our lives become the causes and effects of Buddhahood: the particular circumstances of our lives and character, our sufferings and triumphs, become the means to demonstrate the power of the Buddha nature and form bonds of empathy with others.

This awakening to the Buddha nature is also sometimes described as an awakening to the “greater self.” SGI President Daisaku Ikeda comments, “The greater self always seeks to alleviate pain and to augment the happiness of others here amid the realities of everyday life. Furthermore, the dynamic, vital awakening of the greater self enables each individual to experience both life and death with equal delight.”

Our lives in the world of Buddhahood are not directed by our karma but by our vow, our sense of mission. We are fundamentally free. Unawakened to this reality, or when our lives become disconnected from this vow, we lead lives of “common mortals,” governed by and subject to the vicissitudes of karma.

The beauty of life derives from the great diversity of its expression. Likewise, in human society, the varied nature of our struggles and triumphs, the great variety of ways in which our lives take shape and come to an end, our short or long life spans—all of this, in the triumphant light of our Buddha nature, when we win over the sufferings of life, is revealed as meaningful and valuable.

The ultimate questions of life and death are, in the end, a matter of theory and belief. What matters is how we live, our awareness of life’s preciousness and the value we are able to create during an experience that passes, in Nichiren’s words, “as quickly as a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall.” Most of us tend to imagine that there will always be another chance to meet and talk with our friends or relatives again, so it doesn’t matter if a few things go unsaid. But to live fully and without regret is to extend oneself to others to the utmost, bringing one’s full being to the moment, with the sense that it may be one’s last encounter.

The Lotus Sutra’s view of life and death is one that continually opens our awareness to those with whom we share this life, urging us to develop rich and contributive lives. When we take action for the happiness of others, we feel a renewed energy and a sense of connection to our deepest essence. As we continue in these efforts over time, our lives acquire an increasing sense of expansiveness and strength. In this way we bring forth the most positive aspects of our humanity and create a treasured existence together with others. ✩
Introducing Common Threads, a tumblr page hosted by the SGI, with the aim of generating interest in topics related to the development of a culture of peace and stimulating a growing network of global citizens active in the pursuit of peace. The blog features articles written by a diverse range of contributors in the hope of providing a space for sustained dialogue and for exploring creative responses to a changing world. Common Threads can be accessed via www.sgi.org.

We welcome you to join the conversation by following us on tumblr and liking, reblogging and commenting on posts. If you are interested in contributing an article or recommending a contributor, please contact us at mail2sgi@sgi.org.
The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association of 94 constituent organizations with membership in 192 countries and territories. In the service of its members and of society at large, the SGI centers its activities on developing positive human potentialities for hope, courage and altruistic action. Rooted in the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, members of the SGI share a commitment to the promotion of peace, culture and education. The scope and nature of the activities conducted in each country vary in accordance with the culture and characteristics of that society. They all grow, however, from a shared understanding of the inseparable linkages that exist between individual happiness and the peace and development of all humanity.

As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with formal ties to the United Nations, the SGI is active in the fields of humanitarian relief and public education, with a focus on peace, sustainable development and human rights.