

## Love as a Great Transition Story

Duane Elgin  
Great Transition Stories  
duane@duaneelgin.com

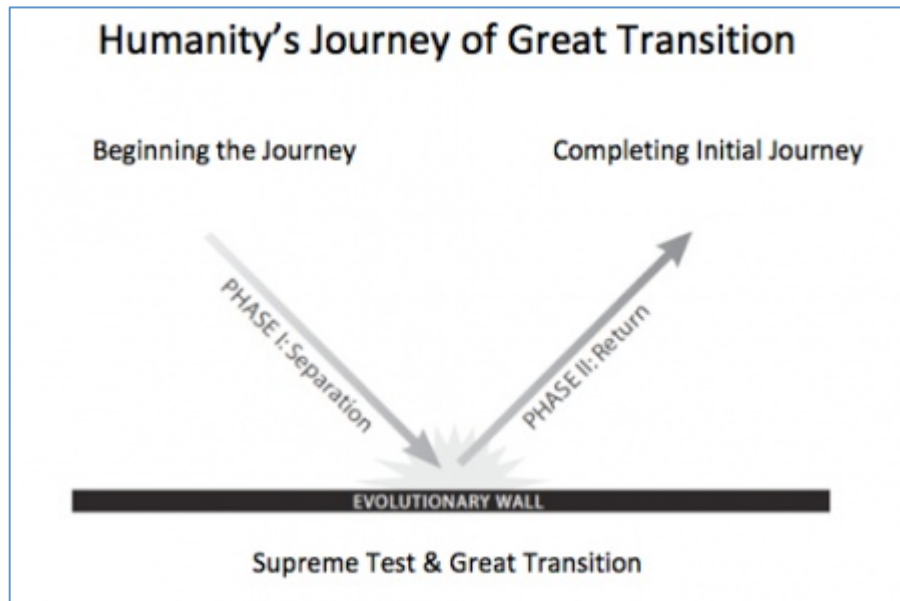
**Abstract:** The stories we tell shape our view of ourselves and the path we take through this time of collective awakening and global turning. We have the ability to consciously choose narratives that offer realistic beacons of hope to guide our way through the Great Transition. To achieve authentic and lasting reconciliation as the foundation for our future, we require the power of love and compassion as a practical basis for organizing human affairs.

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*Author Biography:* Duane Elgin is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and social visionary who looks beneath the surface turbulence of our times to explore the deeper trends that are transforming our world. In 2006, Duane received the International Goi Peace Award in Japan in recognition of his contribution to a global “vision, consciousness, and lifestyle” that fosters a “more sustainable and spiritual culture.” His books include: *The Living Universe: Where Are We? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* (2009); *Promise Ahead: A Vision of Hope and Action for Humanity’s Future* (2000), *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* (2010, 1993 and 1981), and *Awakening Earth: Exploring the Evolution of Human Culture and Consciousness* (1993).

Humanity has entered a time of profound change. We are pushed by necessity and pulled by opportunity. The push is a growing systems crisis, evident in the breakdown of financial institutions, climate disruption, resource depletion, unsustainable populations, and more. The pull is the opportunity to rise to a new level of human maturity, partnership, and freedom. The combined push and pull at a global scale make this truly a time of profound turning, transition, and transformation for humanity.

Collectively, we have been on a long journey of development, differentiation, and separation. We are now approaching an 'evolutionary wall' where we are running into ourselves and our choices for the long-term future. If we pull together in cooperation, we can build new relationships with one another and the Earth. The Great Transition diagram below depicts very simply the 'great turning' or transition that is now required for a sustainable human journey.



It is vital that the human community come together and consciously co-create visions and stories of a sustainable and thriving relationship with the Earth and one another. The stories we tell shape our view of ourselves and the path we take through this time of collective awakening and global turning. We have the ability to consciously choose narratives that offer realistic beacons of hope to guide our way through the Great Transition.

For thousands of years humanity has been divided by mistrust engendered by ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and other differences. Now the circle has closed, the Earth is seen as a single interdependent system, and the future of humanity is inescapably bound together in our collective choices. A promising future requires that we transcend our history of mistrust and find common ground. In turn, to achieve authentic and lasting reconciliation as the foundation for our future, we require the power of love and compassion as a practical basis for organizing human affairs. Awakening compassion is a realistic foundation for human relations as it is a part of the "common sense" of humanity. This narrative, then, explores the growing scope of human affiliation and kinship as we learn to open our hearts and our trust at a global scale.

Compassionate love is a transformative power that we cannot quantify or measure, yet it brings incomparable strength and resilience into human relationships. "Love," said Teilhard de Chardin, "is the fundamental impulse of Life . . . the one natural medium in which the rising course of

evolution can proceed.” Without love, he said, “there is truly nothing ahead of us except the forbidding prospect of standardization and enslavement—the doom of ants and termites.”

A compassionate love can provide a vital “social glue” to hold us together as we face the challenges ahead. If we pull apart, an evolutionary crash seems assured. If we come together authentically, however, we have the real potential to achieve an evolutionary bounce. And to pull together, we need to reconcile the many differences that now divide us. We need to discover harmony where there is now discord. We need to cultivate the respect and regard for others that ultimately come from a foundation of love.

Love is the deepest connecting force in the universe, and thus a vital ingredient in our evolutionary journey toward wholeness. The unfolding of love is not different from the unfolding of awareness. Jack Kornfield, esteemed meditation teacher put it this way: “I will tell you a secret, what is really important . . . true love is really the same as awareness. They are identical”. If we can learn the lesson that love will further our evolution and that the greater our love the greater our awareness, then we are aligned for success in our journey home. With love—or a maturing awareness—as a foundation, the hallmark of the emerging era could be the healing of our many fragmented relationships. If that were to occur, it truly is possible to imagine a future that works for everyone.

A compassionate or loving consciousness has ancient roots, but it is taking on a new importance as our world becomes integrated ecologically, economically, and culturally. Because we now share one another’s fate, it is increasingly clear that promoting the well-being of others directly promotes our own. We have reached the point where the Golden Rule is becoming essential to humanity’s survival. This ancient ethic, which is found in all of the world’s spiritual traditions, advises that the way to know how to treat others is to treat them as you would want to be treated. Here are some of the ways the Golden Rule has been expressed:

- “As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.” --Christianity (Luke 6 : 31)
- “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” --Islam (Sunan)
- “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” --Buddhism (Udanavarga)
- “Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.” --Hinduism (Mahabharata 5 : 1517)
- “Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.” --Confucianism (Analects 15 : 23)

As diverse and divisive as we are, the human family recognizes this common ethic of compassion at the core of life. This indicates there is a basis for reconciliation within humanity.

### ***The Power of Love***

Love and compassion not only have ancient roots; history also attests to their impact and enduring power. Compassionate teachers through the ages such as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Lao-tzu have all lacked wealth, armies, and political position. Yet as the late Harvard professor Pitirim Sorokin explains in his classic book *The Ways and Power of Love*, they were warriors of the heart, and have reoriented the thinking and behavior of billions of people, transformed cultures, and changed the course of history-- “none of the greatest conquerors and revolutionary leaders can even remotely compete with these apostles of love in the magnitude and durability of the change brought about by their activities.” In contrast, most empires built

rapidly through war and violence—such as those of Alexander the Great, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and Hitler—have crumbled within years or decades after their establishment.

We may imagine love to be quite utopian, but consider the alternatives. In not choosing love we are left with law and the prospect of global bureaucratic stagnation. In not choosing law we are left with force and the prospect of either global devastation or global domination. If we value our freedom and vitality as a species, we are obliged to do no less than learn to love one another as a human family. With the prospect of genuine reconciliation, we can begin a historic process of healing that will enable us to honor our differences and work together for a future that benefits us all. Global reconciliation and cooperation offer a practical and promising pathway into the future.

To live sustainably, we must live efficiently—not misdirecting or squandering the Earth's precious resources. To live efficiently, we must live peacefully, for military expenditures represent an enormous diversion of resources from meeting basic human needs. To live peacefully, we must live with a reasonable degree of equity, or fairness, for it is unrealistic to think that, in a communications-rich world, several billion persons will accept living in absolute poverty while another billion lives in extravagant excess. Only with greater fairness in the consumption of the world's resources can we live peacefully, and thereby sustainably, as a human family. Without a revolution in fairness based upon an awakening of social compassion, the world will find itself in profound conflict over dwindling resources such as arable land and fresh water. A world in conflict seems unlikely to mobilize itself quickly and unable to respond to critical problems such as climate change and the end of cheap oil. Therefore, only with greater equity can we expect to live peacefully, and only with greater compassion can we expect to live sustainably.

The “cost of compassion” is surprisingly low: The United Nations Human Development Report of 1998 reported expenditures for pet food, perfume, and ice cream in the developed nations vastly exceeds the total resources needed to eliminate world hunger, immunize every child, provide clean drinking water and sanitation for all, and to offer universal education. If we live moderately, we have the material means to establish a decent standard of living for everyone.

### ***Love in Action: Reconciling Our Many Divisions***

The following are major areas where humanity must engage with a spirit of loving reconciliation (each of these areas is a major story unto itself):

**Generational reconciliation**—Sustainable development has been described as development that meets our needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. At present, industrial nations are consuming nonrenewable resources at a rate that will handicap future generations. We have the opportunity to reconcile ourselves with generations yet unborn. We would be wise to use as our example the Iroquois, who, in making major decisions look at the expected impact seven generations ahead.

**Economic reconciliation**—Disparities between the rich and the poor are enormous, and they keep growing. Reconciliation requires narrowing these differences and establishing a minimum standard of economic well-being for all people. Economic reconciliation also suggests that wealthier individuals and nations would begin to voluntarily simplify the material side of life and shift increasing attention into psychological, cultural, and spiritual growth and to assist those living in extreme poverty.

**Racial, ethnic, and gender reconciliation**—Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation profoundly divides humanity. We cannot create a promising future unless we develop mutual respect for these differences. Healing these relations will transform the psychic wounds of humanity's history.

**Religious reconciliation**—Religious intolerance has produced some of the bloodiest wars in history. Reconciliation among the world's spiritual traditions is vital to humanity's future. We can discover the core insights of each tradition and see each as a different facet of the larger jewel of human spiritual wisdom.

**Species reconciliation**—Living in harmony with the Earth is essential if we are to survive and evolve as a species. Our future depends on the integrity of our ecological system, whose strength depends on a broad diversity of plants and animals. We have the opportunity to reconcile ourselves with the larger community of life on Earth. We can move from indifference and exploitation to reverential stewardship.

Although there is continuing conflict in each of these areas, there is also new hope for reconciliation through the power of compassionate love.

**Images**

