—Chapter Three—

Accepting New (and Ultimate) Responsibilities

"We are made wise not by the recollections of our past but by the responsibility we take for the future."

— George Bernard Shaw

"Perhaps we can now accept our responsibility to the earth, and our heritage from it, which we must protect if we are to survive."

—Charles Lindberg

"Welcome O Life. I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."

—James Joyce

I first introduced the concept of Cultural Maturity with the next of our seven themes, and fittingly. Everything else hinges on whether we will be capable of the depth of responsibility the future asks. Nothing could be more important as we look ahead.

Uncertainty and responsibility are closely linked. New responsibilities follow from our ever-greater capacity to affect our worlds—for both good and ill. Our future wellbeing will depend increasingly on our success as planetary stewards. New responsibilities also accompany today's loss of once-defining cultural rules and mythologized truths. In a new way, the truths we use to guide our lives are ours to determine.

And responsibility's new significance takes expression in even more encompassing ways. We will look at how the best of new thinking makes us newly responsible within understanding itself. We find we can never wholly cleave the person who knows from the act of knowing. There is also that critical new sense in which we have become ultimately responsible as cultural beings. We have become newly responsible not just for our actions, but also for consciously articulating—and explicitly making manifest—a new chapter in our human narrative.

As with uncertainty, Cultural Maturity reframes responsibility, gives it a fuller, more creative meaning. Thankfully this is so. If it did not, the burdens of today's new responsibilities would be more than we could bear. The concept of Cultural Maturity doesn't answer whether we will succeed or fail at all today's new responsibilities ask. But it makes more understandable what succeeding will require of us and supports success being possible. Once reconceived, responsibility provides a powerful guiding principle for making our way in the challenges ahead.

We start with two additional responses from the stretching exercise (the topic of the first, morality, of the second, education's future):

Ruth (a parent): My concern is pretty different from what I've heard so far—more personal, about being a parent. But I think much is related. Being a responsible parent today requires some new kinds of skills—and more than just skills.

CJ: Give me an example.

Ruth: Okay. My daughter is fourteen. About a year ago I happened to walk by her room. She and a couple of friends were talking—in hushed tones. They were discussing sex.

I left before they knew I was there, went down to the kitchen ..... and freaked. I'd been a pretty wild kid. I got pregnant in my last year of high school and had an abortion. After that I became very much the straight arrow. I got married and have been a good, church-going wife and mother ever since.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, my own teenage experience, I avoided dealing with the inevitability of Jane growing up and becoming interested in sex. My first impulse when I saw the time had come was to prepare the classic "save yourself until marriage" speech. And I actually started to deliver it.

After her friends left, I confronted Jane and told her what I had heard. I started the speech ... and stopped before the words came out of my mouth. I realized I was talking more to my own fears than to my daughter.

CJ: What did you do?

Ruth: I left and went out on the porch, gave myself a chance to cool off. I found myself thinking about my own first sexual encounters. A lot had changed since my mother's generation. But I saw that sex was likely going to present even more complex questions for Jane than it had for myself. Certainly there is AIDS. But it is not just that. While I had more options than my mother, Jane has more still. And an awful lot of what I saw as freedom was really less liberation than a reaction to the old rules. Today's world just has more to consider.

Anyway, I waited out there until I felt I could listen as well as talk. Then I went back in.

CJ: Did you feel more comfortable?

Ruth: Not at first. For a while I just kept my mouth shut and listened—both to Jane and the ongoing battle in myself.

I could feel different parts inside of me fighting to be in charge. The part that believes in clear moral rules, the part that had started to give the lecture, was most obvious. It is well intentioned—and it speaks from good experience. I was often pretty stupid about sex as a teenager. And the abortion was more painful emotionally than I could have begun to anticipate.

But another part inside of me was in its own way just as convincing. That part comes close to arguing that *not* having sex before marriage is immoral. My marriage wasn't that good. If I'd waited, taken some time to grow up—which probably would have meant greater sexual experience—I likely would have chosen someone very different.

As I listened to Jane, and to these battling parts, I began to realize that really mattered didn't have that much to do with sex. I want Jane to be healthy and happy. I want her to value herself and I want the relationships in her life to be as fulfilling as possible. Depending on the circumstances that could mean many different choices.

CJ: What was it like to recognize this?

Ruth: It scared me to admit that I didn't have clear rules to pass on, that I couldn't just tell her "do this, and don't do that." I felt like I was shirking my responsibility as a parent. But when I stood back, I realized this wasn't so. I wasn't saying the choices Jane might make don't matter; right choices matter more than ever today. It's just that simple answers—of any sort—don't cut it any more. I wasn't dismissing the need for moral responsibility. I was standing for a more difficult kind of moral responsibility—this almost in spite of myself.

CJ: How did it go with Jane?

Ruth: Pretty well.The fact that we were just able to sit together and talk—even though there was much we didn't talk about—diminished my fears significantly. Jane told me some about what she had been thinking. And I ended up sharing some difficult experiences from my own adolescence—some things I'd not told anybody else.

I felt a lot of gratitude as we sat there. Most was for the strength—and responsibility—I felt in Jane. I saw that she was already asking some pretty difficult questions—and all-in-all making good decisions. But I also felt gratitude toward myself—for my growth as a parent. I was understanding more deeply what responsibility is ultimately about.

In my better moments, I envy Jane for the questions she gets to ask. She doesn't have the security that the old rules promised. But I don't think many of the old rules are capable of keeping their promises today.

CJ: I think the kind of moral conversation you and your daughter engaged in is something quite new, and new in ways that will be increasingly important. You spoke of your wish to be a more responsible parent. The weakening of traditional assumptions means that in a whole new sense we become

responsible not just for doing the right thing, but for determining just what the right thing might be. That requires much greater responsibility of Jane. It also changes dramatically what it means to be a responsible parent.

Ruth: That makes sense.

CJ: .You took a role that was more humble, but also ultimately more sophisticated and powerful than we would have seen with parenting in times past. And your daughter assumed a much more active and empowered kind of responsibility. You were each manifesting culturally mature leadership.

Stanley (a university professor): My question also concerns responsibility. I'm interested in how education would change if we made responsibility for a healthy future more overtly its task. What we teach is part of it, certainly. But I'm most interested in implications for how we approach the educational process.

CJ: Say more.

Stanley: I ask students to take a lot more responsibility in their learning than I did ten or twenty years ago—as do most of my colleagues. I've thought of this mainly in terms of being a more effective teacher. The added piece I got from your conversation with Ruth is its direct relationship to the future. Taking greater responsibility in learning should help students develop the greater capacity for responsibility the world will increasingly need.

CJ: The learning process itself becomes about responsibility.

Stanley: Exactly. I still set tough learning goals—most often a lot tougher than before. But I more frequently leave how to reach them up to the student.

I encourage students to do independent projects, often using portfolios that document their work as a supplement to, or even replacement for, written tests. I also make greater use of class discussion, often with the students in charge. And I always try to keep questions of what ultimately matters—what is really worth working for—forefront. If we don't have ready-made answers in the same sense as in times past, we need to practice asking the hard and important questions.

CJ: I'm struck by how your approach fosters not just responsibility in a general sense, but also more specific capacities that will be needed in a world without clear guideposts—attention to values, capacity for critical thinking, creativity, initiative.

Stanley: And a lot of what I do addresses such capacities directly. How we work rewards both careful thought and original thought. It also emphasizes creativity in the sense of collaborative work—if we are to come up with effective solutions, we need to get good at solving problems together. I'm also always looking for ways that students can give their conclusions concrete expression—and not just verbally but through use of different media and in the larger world. We need to practice speaking out, taking stands for what we feel will bring the most rewarding results.

CJ: How do students respond?

Stanley: Generally well. The increased responsibility is more than some students initially find comfortable. But overall I've felt encouraged. I ask a lot more of students. But we end up with greater classroom involvement and in most cases higher achievement.

CJ: Great.

Stanley: One of the reasons I enjoyed your conversation with Ruth is how directly you tied what she did to broader changes. I get some credit for students' positive response, but I suspect the larger reason that the results feel so alive—for both myself and for my students—has to do with how these approaches reflect what we need to be doing. They help prepare students for the kind of responsibility and leadership today's—and tomorrow's—world will require.

CJ: Is what you do primarily a shift in responsibility—from professor to student—or is it more than this? I ask because understanding just what today's new responsibilities ask of us is key. Just some liberal notion of empowering those who before have lacked power—student (as opposed to teacher), patient (as opposed to doctor), or religious adherent (as opposed to religious authority), or citizen (as opposed to elected official) is not new. Certainly what we need is not just some turning of traditional authority hierarchies on their heads.

Stanley: Responsibility increases all the way around. Without question it does for the students—I don't spoon feed nearly as much. But just as much it does for me. I can't fall back on last year's lectures. Also, I can't rely on tests to motivate as I once did. And because students are more involved, they ask tougher questions. I have to be much better prepared.

But greater responsibility it only part if it, though just what more is going on is harder to put into words. The responsibility required of both students and myself feels different. It is a more involved and dynamic kind of responsibility—for everyone. This makes much more possible. But it also requires more of everyone involved.

CJ: How do you see this?

Stanley: What we do requires people to bring more of themselves to the task. Conversations almost always involve personal feelings and discussions of

values along with facts and analysis. Our interactions also require us to bring more aspects of the questions we look at into the room, draw on diverse viewpoints and multiple kinds of expertise. What we do requires everyone to be more aware, more questioning, and more comfortable with inquiry that is complex and multifaceted.

There is also a deeper sense in which we are in it together. Certainly there is the sense in which we are more in it together in the room—inquiring together. But, at our best, it can feel like we are in it together in a larger sense—that we are rolling up our sleeves and trying to get at what most matters for everyone today.

CJ: What you describe definitely supports needed new leadership, and not just positional leadership. Greater responsibility is required of all of us. I think of the growing importance in medicine of patient responsibility. Health care professionals are better appreciating how much patients alone can know about their health.[1] Many of the most important conversations in religion concern where spiritual authority most appropriately resides, how much should lie with the individual and how much with more formal religious authority.[2] And greater citizen responsibility is certainly pertinent—and increasingly so—to good government. How you teach is consistent with all these authority-related changes.

Stanley: I have a quote from Herman Goering at the Nuremberg trials on the wall of my classroom "The people can always be brought to the bidding of

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1 Only the patient lives in his or her body. There is also the importance of factors only the patient can control such as exercise, diet, and stress. Well-informed patients are also more likely to follow through with whatever kind of treatment is called for. Such greater patient responsibility becomes increasingly important with chronic illnesses—which will consume an ever-greater percentage of health care resources.

2 Such questioning drove the Reformation, but what we see represents a whole new step in such inquiry. Today's conversations pertain ultimately as much to our conceptions of God (and the sacred more broadly) as to how much authority should be personal and how much more appropriately the domain of priestly/ministerial ranks.

leaders."[3] Being sure his words are not true in the future is a big part of what motivates me as a teacher. I think what we are talking about has to do not just with good leadership, but as much with good "follower-ship." When policies fail, our common response is that we need better leaders. But as much we need better citizens, people willing to stand for values that can take us forward, make needed sacrifices, and engage actively and creatively in the decision-making endeavor.

CJ: I like that.

Stanley: It seems to me that it's not so much that we haven't taken responsibility than that we've chosen to give it away. Nobody can really tell me what to do with my mind, or with my body—or with my soul.

CJ: Perhaps, but I think the degree and kind of responsibility we are talking about would have been too much to manage in times past. For most it would have been incomprehensible. One of the functions of polar images of authority—teacher and student, doctor and patient, government and governed, divine truth and human ignorance—has been to keep the need for this magnitude of responsibility at bay (for both sides of the equation). If the concept of Cultural Maturity is accurate, our times make more powerful and creative relationships to truth and authority newly essential—and for the first time in our history perhaps within our reach.

Stanley: That does make sense, and I think at some level I've known it. Working in the way I do has made teaching feel much more significance than just a good and interesting job. For me it has come increasingly to feel like a calling. I think this is because how I teach has to do with something larger than myself and something that today has particular importance.

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[3] Goering's words continued in ways that even more specifically supports needed changes: "All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for ... exposing the country to danger."

CJ: The kind of responsibility I see you teaching for supports not only mature personal and institutional leadership, but also the kind of leadership as a species needed for any future we would want to be a part of.[4]

Responsibility and the Future

The biblical admonition that "Unto whom much is given, of him shall be most required," today assumes whole new layers of significance. The future will require not just greater responsibility than in times past, but whole new levels of responsibility. It will also require a more mature understanding of what responsibility is ultimately about.

Certainly today there is much more to be responsible for. Some of today's new responsibilities relate specifically to Cultural Maturity. But even where the connection is not so obvious, the need for a newly sophisticated sort of responsibility is hard to escape. It helps in getting started to tease out some of the most important new responsibilities.

The new responsibilities conferred by our overwhelming dominance as a species most immediately stand out. I think of Apollo astronaut Rusty Schweickart's warning that "We aren't passengers on spaceship earth, we're the crew. The difference ... is responsibility." Today we confront both the brute consequences of our human numbers and the unintended effects of our actions. Like it or not, our success as a species has made us not just a particularly interesting product of the planet's evolution, but at least for this brief period in creation, responsible for the continued vitality of that evolution.

Related are the new responsibilities that follow from our ever-more Janice-faced inventive capacities. Genetic engineering, atomic energy, and emering nano-tachnologies get the most press for their two-edged implications. Later I will propose

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[4] It is important not to confuse the more responsibility-based education this dialogue points toward with polar advocacy for more experiential or "alternative" educational approaches (as apposed to more didactic methods). Chapter Ten's look at education's future addresses how equally dangerous traps accompany these opposite educational philosophies.

that it is the information revolution, the sphere of advancement that could ultimately most support needed changes, which also has the greatest potential to be our undoing. The need for responsible choice with regard to our inventive capabilities is nothing new. But the scale of potential consequence if we choose poorly certainly is. I am reminded of the words from the *Bhagavad-Gita* used by Robert Oppenheimer to describe the atomic bomb: *I am become death, the shatterer of worlds*.[5]

Each of these is important and new, but as or more significant are a sequence of new responsibilities that relate more directly to ourselves. Leading the way are the more personal new responsibilities that accompany today's loss of familiar cultural guideposts. We've seen how the truths we use to guide our lives have become increasingly ours to determine. We've also seen how such determination is demanding at a level we have not before encountered. We can fantasize that the diminishing power of cultural dictates brings unbounded freedom. More accurately what it brings is the need to be much more conscious and precise—and more deeply responsible—with choices of every sort. The depth of moral responsibility implied in Ruth's conversation with her daughter is not something we would have seen prior to the time in which we live.

There are also the more particular new responsibilities we face because of the growing inadequacy of mythologized notions of authority. David Hume presaged Goeing's words in observing that "Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few."[6] Whether the pertinent authority polarity is president

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5 As important as the dangers are new responsibilities that follow from the more positive effects of invention. It would be irresponsible not to bring forth the greatest benefit possible from our ever-more-wondrous tool-making capacities. As we communicate instantly around the planet, apply computer technology to dramatically labor-saving ends, and manipulate life's primordial code to treat previously intractable diseases, we become responsible both for fully realizing new possibilities and for ensuring that new possibilities are fairly shared.

6 We easily assume that democracy as an institution takes us beyond such abdication of responsibility. But this is not ultimately true. It is important to remember that the Nazis came to power through electoral processes. (The second of the introductory dialogues in Chapter Six looks specifically at how this mythologizing tendency remains in modern government and what getting beyond it will require.)

and populace, teacher and student, doctor and patient, priest and supplicant, or parent and child, in new ways we are—as Stanley put it—in it together.

A related further piece ties to the newly critical importance of Whole-Person/Whole-System identity and relationship. In all parts of our lives, we need to take new responsibility in the whole of who we are. I've described how love in times past has been based on giving away parts of ourselves for safekeeping. We've observed, too, how relations on the global stage have historically had more to do with ascribing idealized or demonized parts of ourselves to others than recognizing other peoples for who they actually are. Whole-Person/Whole-System identity and relationship is by implication more fully conscious and accountable identity and relationship.

In this chapter, we will see, too, how responsibility's new picture also extends into how we conceive of truth itself. Truth becomes less once-and-for all not just in being separated from cultural precept, but also because it becomes less separated from ourselves, less something we can understand at arm's length. We also confront that critical sense in which we have become responsible not just for how wisely we play our part in humanity's story, but also for crafting that story. When we surrender established cultural truths—and not just familiar ones, but cultural truths in any absolute sense—in the end we surrender our species narrative as a whole. We become responsible for articulating what today it means to live purposefully. We become responsible, too, for choosing in ways consistent with a purpose-filled future.

Responsibility and Maturity

Why do we see this broad array of new responsibilities? The question is important not just because it supports understanding what today's new responsibilities ask of us. Its answer supports understanding how successfully engaging their considerable demands might be an option.

If all this responsibility were a product only of circumstances, being hopeful would be hard to justify. The sheer magnitude of responsibility would certainly overwhelm us. We are saved by the fact that the larger portion of what we see follows

directly from Cultural Maturity's changes. The greater portion of today's new responsibilities reflect changes not just in what we find around us, but in who we are.

Even where what we encounter is not directly a function Cultural Maturity, its changes alter how we interpret what we see. It is simply true that the world is getting more crowded and the effects of our physical presence on the world around us more severe. Such is similarly the case with the increasing consequence, for both good and ill, of what we invent. But that we might frame these challenges in responsibility terms is a product of more than just new facts. Historically, we have often been all too ready to deny the damage inflicted on the biological and physical worlds by our dominance—indeed to exalt it. Celebration had been an even more unquestioned response to growing technological prowess. Ecological damage and the risks that accompany the unthinking application of new technologies are today less acceptable is only in part because potential consequences are more severe. As much, our willingness to question is a product of our greater ability to recognize systemic effects, and more deeply still, a growing appreciation for how such harm to the world around us also makes us less.

The other new responsibilities I noted more explicitly reflect changes in ourselves. We may experience them as external demands, or products only of progresses inevitable march. But in fact we would not see any of them, certainly not manifest in the ways that we do, without Cultural Maturity's changes. This is so equally with the need to surrender guideposts and take new responsibility in the choices we make, with the importance of assuming greater authority in both our personal and collective lives, and with the specifically integrative challenge presented by Whole-Person/Whole System identity and relationship. It is so, too, with the challenge of understanding truth in more embracing ways, and with the task of engaging the human story from a place of greater awareness and ownership,

That Cultural Maturity contributes to what we see at least supports understanding. But the significance of Cultural Maturity's roles as far as whether we will succeed in addressing new uncertainties is deeper. That new responsibilities are related at least offers that we might more easily get out minds around what they require of us. But most important is how the same changes that create much in this lengthy list of new responsibilities also create the capacities needed to address them.

While Cultural Maturity confers immense new responsibility, at the same time it brings with it, at least in potential, both the ability to tolerate responsibility's greater demands and the specific new skills engaging them effectively will require.

We could think of what today's new responsibilities ask of us in terms of any of the seven themes that organize this book. For now we can highlight both their close relationship one to the other and the possibility of addressing them by noting how each requires our now familiar "bridging" of past assumptions. Each of these needed new responsibilities, along with the capacities necessary to effectively take them on, reflect Cultural Maturity's more whole-ball-of-wax engagement with realities than in times past were polar and mythologized.

Recognizing that we are "not just passengers on spaceship earth" involves leaving behind our historical status as beings wholly separate from, and above, nature. Accepting deep responsibility for the affects of invention engages a maturity of relationship between ourselves and what we as tool-makers create—psych and techne if you will—not witnessed in times past. Stepping beyond idealized notions of authority is explicitly about "bridging"—both "followers" assuming new initiative and positional leaders assuming new, more mortal and engaged leadership postures. And today's need to assume new responsibility in the truths we apply—and in culture's story more generally—is a direct expression of bridging between individual choice and the psyche of culture.

That Cultural Maturity's changes help us make sense of today's new responsibilities and provide perspective—and even skills—needed to address them supports that engaging them effectively is within our means. It doesn't make things easy. The new responsibility's and their considerable demands remain. But it does make what is needed more understandable and appear more possible.

And appreciating Cultural Maturity's role provides other kinds of reassurance. It helps us recognize that much in the need changes is already happening. There is also how culturally mature perspective affirms the worthiness of taking on today's new responsibilities. It helps us see how they are pertinent not just to the practical tasks of future wellbeing, but also to addressing the future of human significance. They are about a critical new kind of human success and achievement. And, as we will see, mature perspective also offers surprises. For example, recognizing Cultural

Maturity's role suggests an important sense in which the needed new responsibilities, while more demanding than what we have known, are also in important ways simpler, at least more direct, in what they ask of us.

Set in this context, Cultural Maturity itself becomes our time's ultimate responsibility. The future depends on our ability to find (and maintain) the place within ourselves, personally and collectively, where the greater perspective, and more encompassing acceptance of responsibility Cultural Maturity describes becomes not just possible, but common sense.

The remainder of the chapter gets us more deeply at what is new in responsibility's new picture. We will look at a couple of ways Cultural Maturity alters the posture and process of decision-making. We will use responsibility's new picture as a lens for a more extensive examination of underlying developmental and cognitive changes—and use these recognition in turn to further fill out mature responsibility's picture. We'll also delve into ways Cultural Maturity alters the truths we must draw on if we are to make responsible choices.

Responsibility Twice Over

A first way culturally mature responsibility is new ties directly with observations from the last chapter about the diminishing influence of culture's past parental function. Culturally mature responsibility is a double responsibility, responsibility "twice over. " We become responsible not just for making sound determinations, but also for determining just what makes sound determinations sound. This is so equally for personal decision and decision of a more collective sort.

Historically, determining what is ultimately right to do has not been our concern, not personally to any significant degree, nor in any conscious sense collectively. That is not to say deliberation has not before been important. And broader philosophical contemplation has always had a place. But each of these has always taken place within severe limits. To appreciate such limits, we need only look at how narrowly our views in times past needed to vary from the accepted to be considered heretical—often with dire consequences. Out of sight and out of mind, the "cultural psyche" was making the larger portion of such determinations for us.

As culture guideposts and mythologized truths prove increasingly not just limiting, but misleading—and often dangerously so—such determination, both personal and collective, becomes increasingly a human task. Cultural Maturity makes us responsible in new ways not just for making good moral choices, but for discerning what good moral choices might look like: not just for making profitable business decisions, but for asking freshly what it means to profit; and not just for establishing sound international policy, but for envisioning just what kind of world we want our policies to result in.

Each stage of culture has conferred new responsibility—the age of kings more than that of god-kings, our modern age of the individual more than that of royal decree. But this is different. We witnessed increasing freedom with the changes of times past, but culture's major truths remained assumed, and assumed invariant—which has served us well. Our religious, political, or scientific certainties have shielded us from magnitudes of responsibility that would have been impossible to endure. Personal maturity has always in a more restricted sense offered that we might stand back from the decisions we make and better understand on what they are based. But with Cultural Maturity, this added ingredient becomes wholly encompassing in its significance. It applies to every personal and collective choice we might make.

Just as important as this recognition of greater choice—and for our tasks, perhaps even more important—choice assumes a new depth of significance. We see something different fundamentally from greater responsibility only in the sense of choosing between more options. I've emphasized how we can't stop at some simple abandonment of absolutes if we are to effectively address challenges ahead. If current changes ended in a world with infinite option, but where what we choose does not particularly matter, we have accomplished nothing—indeed much worse than nothing. To go no further would be precisely to abdicate responsibility.

Ruth's daughter's confrontation with multiple options in sexual behavior was not at all about one choice being as good as another. Rather it was about her seeking to make deepest sense of the place of sexuality in a meaningful life (and specifically in her life). The same was the case with Stanley's examination of changes in the defining relationships of education—and beyond. A "bridging" of the worlds of teacher and student, doctor and patient, or president and populace is not about making

the truths of education, medicine, or governance some mere whim of the individual. Rather it is about responsible participation in a markedly more sophisticated, complex, and potentially powerful relational world.

That mature responsibility is necessarily a double responsibility makes responsibility a more demanding enterprise. But it also opens the door for much more mature—aware, context-specific, and effective—decision-making. The new freedoms that come with today's changes more directly reflect what gives freedom significance. They become tied specifically to questions purpose. We will see how responsibility's new picture also links responsibility to more sophisticated and complete understandings of truth itself.

Maturity's Two Meanings

This initial glimpse into how Cultural Maturity expands and alters the demands of responsibility provides good reference for filling out our developmental metaphor. Doing so at this point might at first seem a digression. But better getting at what the term maturity refers to is critical to our project as a whole. And our conclusions will loop back to provide essential insight with regard to responsibility hard to get in other ways.

How I've linked the word maturity and cultural change thus far points us in useful directions, but it could also be misleading. I've suggested the key distinction, but we benefit from elaboration. Maturity has two definitions with very different developmental implications. The first is where associations most readily go. But it is the second we must draw on if analogy is to usefully serve us. Certainly this is so if our concern is today's new responsibilities.

The idea that as a species we somehow need to "grow up" is not original. We find it both in social commentary and casual discourse—particularly in response in human ineptitude. But what Cultural Maturity refers to is fundamentally different from what is generally implied by such assertions. Certainly the implication goes beyond the importance of ceasing to do immature and stupid things. More, it goes beyond usual notions of what it means to grow up.

The first and most familiar association with the phrase “growing up” is to the transition through which adolescents become adults. Such maturity is about leaving behind childhood innocence and coming to live independent lives, finding professions, perhaps having children. With regard to responsibility, maturity in this sense is about assuming adult responsibility and adult authority (and leaving behind adolescent ways). This first definition is not without pertinent associations for today—ones that writers about the future have usefully drawn on it. As far as responsibility, such analogy at least highlights the need for more of it.

But drawing parallels with maturity's first definition can leave us short in ways that invite dangerous misunderstanding. Maturity's second definition shifts our attention to the developmental tasks of life's second half. The analogical implications of such "more mature" maturity are less immediately obvious if for no other reason than that most of the pertinent cultural tasks lie still before us.[7] But it is here that we find the needed associations. Once understood, our second definition provides particularly valuable guidance.

Maturity's first definition has historical parallels, but they lie with our past rather than the future. The first half of personal development is marked by growing individuality and independence. We see something similar with culture's story to this point. The invention of fire freed human migration. The Magna Carta affirmed basic human privilege. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed the right of the individual to the pursuit of happiness.

Adulthood finds best analogy in the most recent chapter of this progression—culture's Modern Age (seen in the West from the Renaissance into the twentieth century). The truths of modernity have their foundation in the delineation of the individual will and in independence from the constraints of nature and the irrational. In their timeliness, such achievements could not have been more inspiring.

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7 There is also how second-half maturity tasks are less easily described. (That Dilemma of Representation—See Chapter Six.) In addition, our time in culture obscures the significance of the second-half-of-life maturity we are using for analogy. We see this in how rarely today we witness the veneration of elders assumed in times past. (We will examine why what we see in developmentally predicted in Chapter Seven.)

But, as we've begun to see, the tasks of our time demand accomplishments of a different sort. Today's responsibilities are not just about greater freedom of choice, or even ultimately about just stepping beyond a parental relationship with choice. They invite entry into a radically new territory of experience. Here choice confers newly ultimate responsibilities and requires very different kinds of understanding. When facding today's newly demanding challenges, maturity's more familiar definition necessarily stops short. Indeed clinging to its assumptions would lead us dangerously astray.

Previous reflections on the workings of polarity help make the needed distinction more explicit. We've seen how culturally mature understanding requires that we creatively "bridge" disparate elements of experience—both more social juxtapositions such as masculine versus feminine, or ally versus enemy, and more conceptual polarities such as certainty and uncertainty. Growing up in the sense of becoming fully an individual and assuming the parental role is not about such linking, It is about identifying with the above rather than the below, about transcending dimensions of experience that might appear immature, irrational or chaotic.

Maturity in the sense needed for the future is something very different. While we confront profound questions, indeed questions with God-like implications, the authority needed to address them is not some ascension to a chair of final dominion (ourselves somehow becoming God). It is also more than just a further iteration of the Enlightenment's grand goal of bringing all of understanding into the pure light of awareness and realizing final control over the untamed. Indeed, many of the problems we face in today's world derive from just such hubristic notions of what right action is about. We are left in a pickle that cannot be resolved within the assumptions of our first definition for maturity. Any familiar notion of going forward threatens to take us in very wrong directions.

Some examples to illustrate: The human story thus far describes ever-increasing individual freedom, a growing ability to stand separate. But while much of what we have reaped, and will continue to reap, from our separateness is profound, the future cries out as much for a new appreciation of how we are related, a fresh understanding of caring, community, and the common good. Culture's evolution has also brought with it increasing human control—over nature, over our own bodies,

over life's deep mysteries. But while nothing more defines history than this growing human dominion, today its opposite seems equally a part of what is needed—a new humility to what we cannot control, a new sensitivity to when we should be listening as opposed to directing (whether the voice needing attention is the natural world, our tissues, or the unfathomable). In parallel with each of these, culture's progression has produced ever more complex and wondrous inventions. But while new technologies will play an essential role in shaping our human future, just as important for our wellbeing will be new appreciation for the limits of technology as a human solution and an ever-deeper commitment to assuring that what we create serves ultimate good.

A person could argue equally well that culture's job is to go forward and that its job is to go back, and indeed the positions of many well-intentioned people either claim or imply that going back is what we should about. We often see overt claims with more religious or spiritual ideologies and at least suggestions of this sort in the more extreme of liberal and environmental positions. Many debates about the future become little more than games of tug-of-war between these two equally partial options.

Any concept of maturity—and any notion of responsibility—able to provide more than the most superficial guidance for the leadership tasks ahead must be able to resolve such seeming contradictions. It must provide us with a fundamentally different kind of image for the future. Cultural Maturity does just this. It can take some effort to get our minds around how it does so. But our second definition of maturity provides a good start.

The changes that mark this second kind of maturity in our personal lives become most apparent as we approach midlife. Sometimes we see earlier intimations. Related shifts are common, for example, in people confronting death or serious illness. But midlife makes the most ready reference. Life then makes very specific, and specifically new, demands of us.

A first relates to changes in our relationship with parents, both real and internalized. With the heroic maturity of young adulthood we leave our parents physically. Midlife challenges us to let go of our parents not just physically, but symbolically—mythically. To move forward, we must step beyond viewing our parents either as more than human (using our images of them to create illusions of

safety and specialness) or as less (making them excuses for our failures). If we are successful in confronting the developmental tasks of midlife, this is when we first truly leave our parents. Importantly, it is also the time when we really first meet them—simply as people.

And a new, more mature relationship with parents represents only the first in a sequence of developmental tasks. Midlife is also a time for acknowledging limits, for grappling in new ways with what may and may not be possible. It also produces new perspective. It is a time for looking back and looking forward, for reflecting on the big picture of our lives. It is a time, too, for challenging old goals and asking afresh—and with a new depth—questions of identity and purpose. And it is a time for learning to hold the often-confusing ambiguities, complexities, and paradoxes that make us who we are in fuller ways.

These developmental challenges extend through the second half of life. Mid-life is just when most people confront the threshold tasks of second-half development. But that threshold does mark a distinct break. Stepping across it brings a fullness of ownership in one's life story—and a fullness of responsibility with regard to that story's full depth and complexity—that we have not known previously.[8]

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8 If we are to accurately apply the mid-life analogy, it is important that we separate what commonly happens at mid-life with our imaginings about it. Midlife is arguably the period in life that involves most fundamental reexamination. But fewer people experience midlife as a time of literal "crisis" than is popularly assumed. And even when they do, the ultimate outcome for most people has more to do with shifting internal perspective than dramatic external change.

People may fear (or hope) that midlife will involve a new marriage partner, a new profession, or going off to Tahiti for the remainder of one's years. But such images most often represent more a projecting of the internal symbolism of change than changes that would in fact enhance a person's life. Some people make dramatic and important external changes at midlife, but most who successfully engage its developmental tasks make only limited external change. This is not at all to downplay midlife's significance. The internal changes that take place in some way reshape how people hold and experience every aspect of their lives. I mention these differences just to put changes in perspective.

Later we will look at the possibility that the current common fascination with cataclysmic cultural images—whether spiritual, technological, or environmental—derives from a related confusion about what the transitions of maturity actually entail at a cultural level. Spiritual, technological, and environmental challenges do require real action and change of a fundamental sort. But polemically cataclysmic imagery, whether of salvation or terminal catastrophe, is likely more an expression of the

Personal maturity and Cultural Maturity are not the same and it is important to recognize the differences.[9] But culture's needed new picture of responsibility does reflect each of these elements of second-half-of-life maturity. We've observed how Cultural Maturity involves surrendering the safety of culture's past parent-like authority. It also requires better recognizing limits—from environmental limits to the limits inherent to human understanding. Certainly it brings new perspective to the human story—past and future. Cultural Maturity requires not just that we invent and achieve, but also that we invent and achieve in the ways that are most life-enhancing. And it offers that we might learn to think in ways that better hold the contradictory elements inherent to any deeply perceived world of experience.

Maturity's first meaning adequately captures our familiar definition of responsibility—responsibility as being accountable for one's actions and willing to shoulder one's load, the responsibility of being a good person and doing good work. With regard to the future, such responsibility will be essential. Going forward will require ever-greater commitment to getting life's jobs done and done well. But we need our second definition to get at what ultimately is necessary.

Earlier I used the word wisdom to describe leadership's future imperative. The needed new responsibility is not just responsibility for doing what one is supposed to do, or even acting intelligently. It is for acting wisely—and in a newly complex world where cultural guidance with regard to just what acting wisely might mean becomes much less useful. Again, this is not wisdom in the idealized sense we find with romanticized notions of the sagacity of elders, nor a siding with the spiritual as we see with most references to "perennial wisdom." But defined as I have here, as a set of developmental imperatives, wisdom becomes quite specifically the task.

Responsibility in young adulthood is about gaining knowledge and about establishing one's place in the world—in work, in love. Leadership in life's second half, to the degree we are willing to take on the requisite developmental challenges, is

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symbolism of change than the manifest realities of change (as we tend to find with such symbolism when we encounter it in more personal systems).

9 Psychologizing the social is a common source of misleading and naive thinking. The key to avoiding the most obvious traps lies in noting differences and similarities and, as far a possible, identifying what underlies perceived parallels—both of which we will do throughout this book.

about perspective, proportion, questions of meaning, and recognizing the magnitude of life—the underpinnings of maturely wise action.[10]

Besides helping us understand what culturally mature responsibility is about, this more precise analogy also serves to affirm the power and importance of Cultural Maturity–and culturally mature responsibility—as accomplishment. Second-half-of-life personal maturity produces an essential filling out of our uniquely human capacities. Cultural Maturity does this more broadly. Culturally mature responsibility becomes an expression not just of something positive, but of something with rich and even ultimate significance.

Creative Responsibility

Much in how culturally mature responsibility is new has less to do with particular choices—even wise ones—than how we go about making choices, with responsibility as a process. A key piece in this is familiar from our look at uncertainty's new picture. Mature responsibility comes to wear a more creative—exploratory and experimental—face.

At a first level, this result follows from a simple loss of handholds—we need to seek out what is to replace them. But more ultimately is involved. Later we will see how Cultural Maturity's cognitive changes make the kind of thinking needed for mature responsibility explicitly creative. We will see, too, how this more creative cognitive picture provides the capacities needed to make the needed more sophisticated responsibility possible.

In fact, the whole notion that process is an appropriate consideration when it comes to responsibility is new. Doing the right thing, conventionally, was just that. There is a job to do and we do it. At least we confront that what constitutes responsible choice in a culturally mature reality is most often a moving target. Later we will see how this creative interpretation has even deeper significance. We face the

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10 I use many "words of wisdom" as illustrative quotes in these pages, many drawn from times well past. All those except some of the most current relate to personal maturity rather than its cultural counterpart. The limits inherent to this translation must always be kept in mind.

inescapable fact that goals and intent today represent only part of what we must draw on for fully responsible action.

This is not to diminish the importance of clear intent and pre-established goals. I want to be confidant that an engineer will design a safe bridge or that a surgeon knows everything possible to support my operation being a success. But it does give responsibility a more creative meaning. Ruth's daughter's task was not so simple as figuring out and applying a new measure for morality (though that in itself would not be easy). Both the "figuring out" and the "applying" would require ongoing processes of reflection and experimentation. Stanley's description of his classroom was similarly less of an environment defined by the learning of new right answers than of a shared commitment to inquiry. Responsibly engaging big-picture questions of global wellbeing and human purpose, in the end, requires a similarly exploratory relationship to questions of truth and right action.

Thinking of responsible decision-making as a creative process might at first seem to make it less precise, less rigorous. But when the territory in which decisions are being made is itself in flux, in fact, it makes decision-making more precise. Add that Culturally Maturity's changes alter circumstances in particularly dramatic ways and how understanding itself is changing and the conclusion becomes even more irrefutable. Culturally mature truth is more solid truth not because it presents final answers, but because it provides the feedback needed for mature consideration.

I often use exploratory metaphors in my therapy practice—for helping people confront both questions of basic life direction and more specific life decisions (with regard to profession, relationships, where to live, values to hold). Such metaphors help people shape their lives in ways that best honor their unique identity and contribution. In a sense such questions have always been exploratory. But in the past, cultural dictates—for both good and ill—have dramatically restricted options.

For people of more rational bent, I might talk about such inquiry as like the best of scientific experiments. Well-done experiments engage the experimenter in a sequence of creative responsibilities. The first is for asking a good question, one worthy of the experimenter's time and focus. Next comes responsibility for crafting experiments and developing hypotheses that might shed new light on that question. Finally comes responsibility for obtaining the most accurate and useful results.

Making good choices in a well-lived life tends to be messier than this. But when external guideposts are limited, we necessarily engage in a similar kind of progression. We start by selecting a worthy creative starting point (if the question concerns work, selecting an endeavor that excites and could prove fulfilling; if it concerns love, choosing someone who we feel caring for and who could be good for us). And we experiment. We learn and we try things out. And we listen for what brings fulfillment. In the process, we learn about ourselves (and, with love, the other person). And we examine the unique shapes choices can take (how we might approach work, or how to engage love in ways that best reflect two people's unique natures and their growing connection).

When approaching life experimentally, we need to be exceedingly honest with regard to what works and what does not. Like good science, a creatively-lived life is only in a limited way about getting the answers we want. With both, the most irresponsible thing one can do is alter data so as to better fit our hopes. The task is to seek out what is creatively true. It is through this that we make choices that are right and choices that matter.

Science metaphors are likely to get blank stares—or worse—from people of more emotional or intuitive bent. But the metaphor of the artist's creative process works equally well. I might talk about composing a piece of music or how a painter applies her craft. The artist's first responsibility is to discover a worthy creative impulse—a possibility one is deeply drawn to. Next comes trying out different ways to give that impulse expression. Lastly, there is the task of discerning what works and what does not. Artistic expression is about listening for what is beautiful and exploring different ways to make that beauty manifest. Like with good science, eloquent artistry requires incorruptible self-honesty—fudging the results gets us nowhere. And in a similar sense, we cannot know ahead of time exactly where that honesty will lead.[11]

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11 People can object to such use of experimental/exploratory metaphors. For example, some can find them initially a bit heady, too analytical. This is particularly common if the topic is something like love. My response is that engaging love (or life more generally) as a process does require greater awareness. (Later I will describe how culturally mature perspective requires bringing more conscious discernment—though something ultimately more than analytical discernment—to all kinds of

Exploratory language can be applied just as usefully to responsibility of a more collective sort. The question of how we best manage the often-contradictory potentials of modern invention makes good example. I've proposed that many of our most important advances, along with promising good, also present significant risk. Responsible management will be critical. But responsibility in the sense of just doing the right thing can be of only limited help. Most often it is not at all clear—except to those of dogmatic persuasion—just what doing the right thing would mean. Evaluation commonly involves complexly interwoven causal factors, and there is always the possibility of wild-card events. In the words of Freeman Dyson, "If we had a way to label our toys good and bad, it would be easy to regulate technology wisely. But we can rarely see far enough ahead to know which road leads to damnation."

Faced with such uncertainty, how do we best respond? Some people reflexively call for extreme caution. Others may assert that free and open discovery is the only hope we have. And looming over choices with regard to specific technologies is the question of whether responsibly managing human invention and

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questions for which simple being, faith, or subjective passion have been the more appropriate kind of engagement in times past.)

In an opposite sort of objection, a person might claim that experimental imagery is just too imprecise—too "loosy-goosy." Again, using love as an example, a person might argue that it leaves out the most important ingredient in relationship—commitment. But in fact approaching love as a creative process in the end implies greater attention to commitment. Certainly, commitment can be one of the most powerful tools we have for making relationship's creative life possible and sustainable. More, the absence of clear guidelines in a culturally mature reality gives articulating commitment and determining its forms ever-greater importance. Even if the commitment choices we make are very traditional, they need a deeper level of personal commitment to sustain them. What the exploratory metaphor adds to traditional notions of commitment is a better appreciation for how the rules for success in love—and the meaning of commitment—change when we no longer have the luxury of established goals and procedures. The same applies to decision-making of all sorts.

Exploratory metaphors do risk biasing understanding toward the more unformed and uncertain aspects of formativeness (we tend to associate exploration and experimentation with beginnings). They thus must be used carefully. But because the beginning aspects of formative process are those that in our time tend to feel most foreign, such metaphors, if used skillfully can be provocative and particularly powerful.

its consequences is really even possible. The drive to be tool makers may be simply unstoppable, impervious to self-reflection.

A creative/experimental frame provides at least the beginning of a way beyond the apparent impasse. Such perspective begins by pointing out that management as we customarily think of it may not provide the right image. In the end we can't control invention any more than we can once and for all control the outcome of love, the creation of a work of art, or the results of scientific experimentation—and we would not want to. It continues by emphasizing that a lack of final control does not save us from responsibility—indeed quite the opposite. We may not yet know how to most effectively carry out such shared creative decision-making, but we can be sure our wellbeing will more and more depend on it. Looking back a hundred years from now, if we are at all successful at devising social structures and mechanisms for making such choices, we will surely regard them as some of our times' greatest achievements.

Such more creative responsibility demands more of us. At least it requires that we leave behind narrow assumptions and allegiances. Ideology throws us into a polarized world where the needed creativity becomes very difficult. But step beyond absolutist beliefs and not only do we begin to make headway, often wholly unexpected solutions present themselves.

Addressing the future of nuclear power provides a good example. The specter of global climate change has reopened the question of whether nuclear power makes sense. To engage the question creatively, we must start by examining whether our responses have less to do with with nuclear power's appropriate future role than with ideology. People of more liberal or environmental persuasion might reflexively respond "no" to the question—with the immediacy of their response giving away its ideological roots. Adherents to an equally ideological technological gospel might just as reflexively answer "yes"— seeing the question as a chance to again champion a favorite cause. Culturally mature responsibility is more pragmatic. It is willing to reflect, to measure the risks and the uncertainties against the rewards. In the process it is also more creative.

Insights from a think tank on nuclear waste disposal convened by the Institute for creative Development[12] highlight how such more mature perspective can reveal unexpected possibilities. The question of how to deal with nuclear waste commonly reduces to an either/or with neither answer of much help: store it so we are absolutely sure it will do no harm for hundreds of thousands of years into the future (which is impossible) or pretend it is not a problem (when it very much is a problem). The think tank members proposed that a better solution might be to store it in a retrievable form for a few thousand years, which we can do with current technologies, and figure out what to do with it at that point. This might initially seem like just putting off a hard decision, but, in fact, it represents a most creative solution. By the time we retrieve the waste, the more dangerous parts of the radiation will have dissipated. We will most likely also have come up with good uses to which the remaining radioactive material could be applied. This solution does not answer the question of whether increased use of nuclear power makes sense. But it illustrates the kind of thinking that a post-ideological, more creative and pragmatic sort of responsibility makes possible.

An exploratory framing of responsibility translates readily to the more encompassing task of making sense of what the future asks. Part of the responsibility we hold for the future lies with appreciating how absolutely the future defies final prediction. While notions like Cultural Maturity and the ideas of Creative Systems Theory can serve as crude maps, such maps provide only general direction. In ages past, this amount of uncertainty would have been too much to handle. Like children with their parents, we found it better to leave the future to more reliable agents. Today, nothing more defines our time—and the excitement of our time—than the need to take ownership in the exploratory creation of a human future yet beyond what we can imagine.[13]

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12 In 1992. I'll describe some of that think tank process in Chapter Six.

13 I've used two terms with subtly but significantly different implications to speak of this aspect of culturally mature responsibility: experimental and creative. The difference is significant because the word creative implies a kind of organization and possibility for prediction, or at least an underlying generativity, that the less committal term experimental does not. CST suggests that creative is the more precise term. Indeed it argues that it must be. Cultural Maturity makes sense only within an explicitly creative understanding of responsibility.

With the last chapter's look at uncertainty, we saw how mature perspective makes uncertainty a different sort of notion, one that "bridges" the usual dichotomy of certainty and uncertainty. We looked at how a creative interpretation makes this result understandable. We see something similar with responsibility. The old dichotomy juxtaposed responsibility in the sense of doing all the prescribed things with irresponsibility. Cultural Maturity's more whole-ball-of-wax picture produces a specifically generative sort of responsibility with cognition's new workings mediating its possibility. While uncertainty and responsibility have each always been creative in their ultimate implications, what we see today is new. With Cultural Maturity's changes each becomes more expressly creative, with the option that we might engage each of them in more conscious, sophisticated, and ultimately effective ways.

Awareness and Responsibility

How is it that today's new responsibilities appear as they do? What exactly produces this responsibility-twice-over, more specifically creative picture? Our developmental metaphor has provided a start toward understanding. But to fully grasp either the depth of the challenges involved with culturally mature responsibility or the likelihood that we might effectively address them, requires that we reflect further on Cultural Maturity's cognitive mechanisms.

I've described the cognitive changes that produce culturally mature perspective as a dual process, at once a new, more complete stepping back, and a new depth of engagement with our full complexity. Over the sections ahead we take a more extended look at this cognitive restructuring.

Here we make out start with the topic of awareness—the new significance conscious awareness assumes with culturally mature perspective. Cultural Maturity's changes alter awareness in fundamental ways, ways deeper that we are likely at first to consider. Not only do they alter how we think about awareness, they fundamentally alter how awareness functions.

Being that we conventionally think of conscious awareness as performing the leadership function in our psyches, it is not surprising that the topic of awareness

might provide reward. For a similar reason awareness and how it functions relates directly to how we experience the tasks of responsibility. In the words of Antoine de Saint Exupery, "To be a man [a person] is, precisely, to be responsible." The fact that we are conscious and capable of choice is what gives the concept of responsibility meaning.

That awareness is important to consider is nothing new. Pulitzer prize winning author John Nable Wilford beautifully summed it up: "Alone among all creatures, the species that styles itself wise, *Homo Sapiens*, has an abiding interest in its distant origins, knows that its allotted time is short, worries about the future and wonders about the past." And awareness's significance has always provoked debate.[14] But what we see today is specifically different than what we have seen before. How it is different has implications for every part of our lives.

In the traditional picture, awareness is who we are, captain of the cellular ship—a venerated point of clear and final perspective. The Enlightenment's stated grand task was to bring all of truth into the light of such awareness. This view—linked with appropriate cultural guideposts and rationality's new preeminance—gives us our first definition of responsibility (and with our efforts toward the Enlightenment's goal, its modern form).

We could well describe the core task of culturally mature leadership and responsibility as that of being even more conscious than in times past. And depending on what we mean that would be right. But this observation is of limited use—indeed can easily lead us astray—if we don't clearly understand awareness's new picture and its implications.

Key changes in awareness's role come with each half of Cultural Maturity's two-part cognitive reordering. Previously I described that reordering in terms of intelligence's multiple ingredients, and, for now, that approach will suffice. First we

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14 That its significance might be controversial is understandable. The question of consciousness presents what might seem an unresolvable predicament. We have no way to step back from our subject. Using our conscious awarenesses to make sense of conscious awareness is a bit like trying to touch one's nose with one's nose. I like Ambrose Bierce's definition in his *Devil's Dictionary*. "Mind: A mysterious form of matter secreted by the brain. Its chief activity consists in the endeavor to ascertain its own nature, the futility of the attempt being due to the fact that it has nothing but itself to know itself with."

see awareness leave behind its Age of Reason marriage with rationality. We become better able to stand back from the whole of our cognitive complexity. Because our intelligences are how we understand, ultimately this is a stepping back from complexity more generally, at least as we are capable of making sense of it. Second, awareness assumes a more engaged, less arm's-length relationship to intelligence and to experience as a whole. We become more obviously participants not just in the living of our daily lives, but also in how we understand.

We've always been capable of a certain "meta-perspective," the ability to stand back from experience, and to a more limited degree to our thoughts. But this degree of stepping back is new. And this more deeply engaged, more specifically Integrative Meta-Perspective[15] is certainly new.[16] One result is awareness's new picture. Another is the possibility of more all-the-crayons-in-the-box systemic understanding.

In a sense, the new vantage that results is even more grand than what we encountered with Enlightenment perspective. But awareness's new role is also in important ways more humble. We don't get to stand back in the same final arm's-length sense. There is also how the old picture was not only polarized—with intelligence, awareness, and rationality set opposite more subjective proclivities—it was also mythologized. Mythologizing is most obvious with social dynamic (as with national allegiances) or with personal relationships (as with love and leadership). but mythologizing is just as present in how we've viewed conscious awareness, our not quite unique, but certainly rare capacity for self-reflection.

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15 Another formal CST notion.

16 Philosophy has always been about perspective on the human condition, but in the end it has allied with light and reason (with what is logically true—even if what we are logically arguing for is the inadequacy of logic or the irrefutability of God). Mystical traditions have taken an opposite tack. While they stand back in their own way, in the end they identify with mystery, with what cannot be brought into reason's light. Descartes' dualism acknowledged each world, but left them wholly distinct—a bit more inclusive picture but not one that could ultimately satisfy. With Cultural Maturity's more specifically Integrative Meta-Perspective, we step back from the whole of internal complexity. This provides a start toward appreciating not just the fact of that complexity, but what each part of complexity contributes, what each may be blind to, and how each part collaboratively links with the others. (See Chapter Eight for a more detailed historical teasing apart.)

Few truths become more obvious when practicing the craft of the psychotherapist than how different the reality of conscious awareness is from how the conscious mind has tended to view itself. (Comic Emo Philips once quipped: "I used to think the brain was the most important organ in the body, until I realized who was telling me that.") In fact, that conscious awareness is limited in what it can grasp is exactly as it should be. The larger part of our functioning works best without volition's interference. Recall Kipling's centipede who walks gracefully with its hundred legs until praised for her exquisite memory.[17]

Increasingly our picture of the functioning of awareness is coming to better match this reality. A central achievement of modern psychology and psychiatry has been the elucidation of more complex and multi-hued pictures of our inner workings. The oft-used psychological metaphor that compares the psyche to an iceberg, part visible, part submerged, gets us started in the right direction.[18] Awareness's task becomes that of recognizing as much of this multi-hued complexity as we are able and making the most life-enhancing choices from within the options it reveals.

The last century confirms this more encompassing—at once more expansive and more humble—interpretation. From widely disparate quarters we encounter observations that reflects where an Integrative Meta-Perspective takes us. The most striking illustrations highlight new appreciation for how intelligence is multiple. Physicist Niels Bohr observed, "When it comes to atoms, language can be used only as poetry."[19] Modern medical research demonstrates how mind and body, far from being separate worlds, interlink through a complex array of communications

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17 Linking awareness and will, Psychiatrist Carl Jung put it this way (in *Man and His Symbols*), "Where there is a will there is a way is the superstition of modern man." He went on to observe that "what we commonly call 'self-knowledge' is a very limited knowledge."

18 But only that. The notion of a separate "unconscious" is best included with earlier notions that straddle worldviews. The acknowledgement of a role for darkness in the workings of the psyche represented an important step beyond the Enlightenment formulation. And certainly there is repression—experience placed out of sight and out of mind. But the notion of "an" unconscious remains a polar formulation. Better we speak of a psyche made up of diverse ways of knowing that access information in manners variously amenable to conscious reflection.

19 His thought continues: "... the poet too is not nearly so concerned with describing facts as with creating images and describing mental connections."

molecules. And educational circles endlessly debate whether IQ adequately measures the whole of intelligence (the most recent round in this controversy the well publicized contention that we need also to measure EQ—emotional intelligence[20]).

Cultural Maturity predicts we should witness a growing capacity to appreciate all the diverse parts of intelligence's workings, both those before often shielded from consciousness and those we may have identified with it. In addition, we should better recognize how various pieces may work together (and to have them work together in more conscious and explicitly complementary ways.) [21]

Culturally Mature awareness's broader vantage has a price. It requires humility to all that necessarily lies forever beyond awareness' reach. But we gain in return a greater maturity and fullness of perspective and an important new step in our potential generative potency. Just where this takes us ties back to our previous creative framing of responsibility.

Imagine being a composer writing a symphony. Ask yourself what the right role for conscious awareness should be in the symphony's creation if it is to be most powerful and beautiful, Clearly that role is not to write the piece, for conscious awareness can write only what it knows—nothing new would be created. But just as much, the task of conscious awareness is not simply to get out of the way. We use it to affirm the importance of creating, to commit the time and attention that the symphony requires. We use it to consider where we are going and to bring together needed resources. We use it to create the safe places needed for deep creative work. And we utilize conscious awareness to refine our sensibilities, to better appreciate the uniquely sonorous voice of the bassoon, or the subtle and critical differences in the

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20 Following on the work of Peter Salovey, John Mayer, and David Caruso and popularized by Daniel Goldman. CST proposes that EQ represents only one additional "crayon" in intelligence's more all-the-crayons-in-the-box picture. See Chapter Four.

21 Recognition of the importance of stepping back from how we think—and new appreciation for thought's complexity—has not been limited to the sciences and social sciences. I am reminded of the words of Pablo Picasso (a reflection I suspect of both the period in his life and the creative tasks of our time more generally): "I have less and less time … and yet I have more and more to say. And what I have to say is, increasingly, something about what goes on in the movements of my thought. I've reached the moment, you see, when the movement of my thought interests me more than the thought itself."

emotional tone of a flute or a piccolo, to better understand the geography of musical creation, the hills and valleys of crescendo and arpeggios, how one movement intricately plays into the next like a lush forest transitioning into a broad plain.

Culturally mature responsibility becomes different from more familiar concepts of responsibility in the same way the function of awareness in musical composition is different from awareness' more familiar Enlightenment interpretation. The composer's reflective responsibility is not to craft (no matter how elegantly) a predefined product—that would not be composition. Rather it is to help bring forth the commitment, sensitivity, and perspective needed for the artistic effort. It is the same if we are creating relationships, communities, organizations, or societies when reliable handholds are absent. Mature responsibility becomes a measure of the imagination, courage, and integrity we bring to our personal and collective choices. We may not get to know what the ultimate outcome of our efforts will be. But we can know that anything that helps us bring these qualities to bear increases the likelihood that what results will enhance life.

All We Engage

The term Integrative Meta-Perspective is a mouthful, and I endeavor to avoid new language, particularly complicated theoretical language, whenever possible. But what the term describes has critical significance for our project. Appreciating just how it is different from what has come before it takes us a long way toward the needed deep understanding of Cultural Maturity's changes and responsibility's new demands.

So far in introducing Cultural Maturitys new cognitive picture I've focused in intelligence's workings. But I've also noted that our multiple intelligences represent only one of three major new ingredients that go into Cultural Maturity's new, more complete picture of inner complexity. The other two ingredients are just as important to acknowledge and understand. In the end, our three ingredients intersect and work together in their expression. But each highlights particular aspects of what we see.

I've repeatedly implied the second ingredient—the re-owning of past projections. The term projection may be unfamiliar to some readers, but we know

when it plays a role. When we say someone is being adolescent or reactive, projection is influencing what we see. With projection, we attribute aspects of our personal and collective selves to other individuals and larger systems—externalize psychological elements. Mature systemic understanding requires that we recognize our projections and reincorporate them—engage them as aspects of ourselves.

Projection manifests in some form most any time we find polarity. We tend not just to keep poles distinct, but also to place one extreme or the other outside ourselves. The most pointed example brings us back to "chosen people/evil other" dynamics in relationships between nations, religions, and ethnicities: We've retained the light and project our darkness onto others. But what we project need not be parts we make distasteful; as much it can be aspects of experience that we particularly appreciate. When we mythologize leadership we project aspects of our own power. When we idealize a potential mate, depending on our gender, sexual orientation, and temperament, we project various more masculine and feminine polar aspects. And even with a polarity like objective and subjective that might seem only conceptual, our projections can color our beliefs and how we see the beliefs of others.

Integrative Meta-perspective involves re-owning past projections and stretching to get our arms around the more complete picture that results. Doing so propels into a more demanding, but also more multi-hued and potential-filled world of experience.

The third ingredient turns our attention to parts of ourselves that in times past we might have known well, but which for developmentally appropriate reasons we have put out of awareness. With each major period in culture, we leave behind the defining assumptions of our current cultural stage. With Cultural Maturity, we reconnect with what before we've left behind. We will examine this dynamic closely in Chapter Seven, but a basic introduction with special attention given to the implications for realities we are just now stepping beyond helps further fill out how mature perspective changes experience.

We see the most immediate manifestation of this dynamic with how today we are being challenged both to see beyond the rationalist, materialist, objectivist, and individualist assumptions of the Modern Age and also to make sense a more

encompassing picture. In times past, with such passing of one age to the next, we would have relegated the previous worldview to ignorance (or worse). With maturity's changes, the task is different—more specifically integrative. With Cultural Maturity, Modern Age sensibilities become part of a larger multiplicity of perspective. We recognize them as aspects of the needed, all-the-crayons-in-the-box understanding. Something similar applies to truths of times past more generally. This more encompassing engagement with ourselves as developmental beings in a further way brings alive the full richness of our complex natures.

We are left with the important question of where this highly complex set of changes ultimately takes us. In fact, it produces an ultimately simple, single gesture result. We've seen hints of how this might be so. Certainly these three ingredients are suggestive of themes we've touched on.

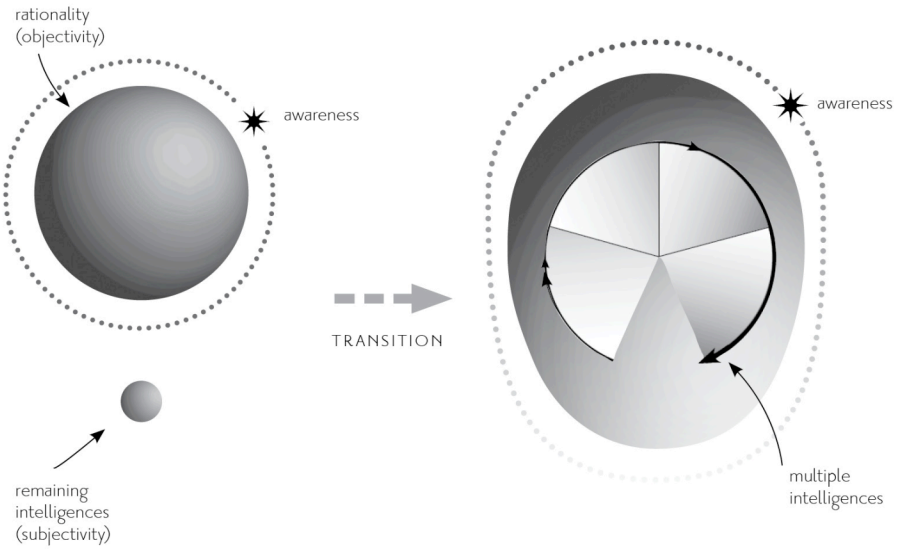
For example, each in different ways supports"bridging" what have before been polarized beliefs. Intelligence's more integrative picture inherently "bridges" facts and feelings, objective and subjective, mind and body. The re-owning of projection offers that we might get our arm's around all manner of either/ors that we missed in times past because half of what they are about seemed not to do with us. And deeper engagement with realities of times past offers that the implications of "bridging" might apply to temporal concerns we well as wholly present tense questions——from the political, religion, and assumptions of different times in the human narrative to how we think of the larger relationship of past, present, and future.

Related is how each points toward more Whole-Person/Whole-Systems understandings, and at all scales. Together they produce our more complete, whole-ball-of-wax picture of identity and relationships. And it is a specifically dynamic, more "living" systemic picture, if for no other reason than that it better includes all of who we are.

But we can go further. We appropriately ask what our three ingredients when taken together describe. Earlier I proposed that thinking of culturally mature responsibility as creative worked not just because it provided a helpful metaphor, but because it reflected the changes in how we think that new responsibilities

require (and that largely creative them). Creative Systems Theory proposes that our three ingredients reflect defining aspects of the mechanism that gives us formative process. They come together in the inner workings of our tool-making, meaning-making—creative—natures.

In chapters ahead, we will look more specifically at how our three ingredients contribute to culturally mature cognition's more explicitly generative picture. They way our multiple intelligences work to support and drive our innovation capacities will be a continuing theme in these pages. With regard to projection, we will see how polarities juxtapose in ways that are specifically "procreative." And if, as Creative Systems Theory proposes, culture evolves in ways that reflect our more general creative natures, we should expect the larger systemic landscape revealed by a deeper appreciation for past ordering realities to be similarly creative. For now, the important recognition is that we can usefully think of our our Integrative Meta-perspective as a more specifically Creative Meta-Perspective.



ENLIGHTENMENT OBJECTIVITY
("FROM THE BALCONY" PERSPECTIVE)

CULTURALLY MATURE AWARENESS
(MATURE META-PERSPECTIVE)

A Creative Meta-Perspective

We can debate whether a creative frame is the best way to capture where Cultural Maturity's newly Integrative Meta-Perspective takes us. But however we interpret our three new ingredients, the result is a more dynamic and complex overall picture. It is also a picture from which new ways of thinking about difference and detail begin to make sense. In chapters ahead, we will examine how an Integrative Meta-Perspective is necessary if we are to craft the new "pattern language" concepts effective future decision-making will necessarily rely on. In the end, such concepts follow naturally from it.

Beyond Objectivity's Reign

The changes that some with this specifically Integrative Meta-Perspective support the important recognition that the tasks ahead require not just thinking in new ways, but thinking about truth itself in new ways.[22]

An Integrative Meta-Perspective at least makes us more conscious of the truths we use. We can think if this as a major further new responsibility conferred by Cultural Maturity—for bringing more aware perspective to the information we use to make choices. It also changes our felt relationship to truth. Truth perceived from a mature vantage becomes more discriminating and nuanced–mythologized perceptions and favorite more partial views have to give way (and uncertainty becomes inescapable).

But an Integrative Meta-Perspective also fundamentally alters the kind of information we draw on and how we conceive of it. In Chapter Eight we will take this topic on in earnest.[23] But a conclusion suggested earlier that follows directly from where an Integrative Meta-Perspective takes us provides a good place to start: While

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22 As should by now be clear, I don't shy from the word truth as is often the case with many thinkers, particularly those of a post-modern bent. In fact, I think the kind of focus and commitment to discernment the word implies is key. But I do apply the word in a very specific sense—or one might say in an ultimately generic sense. I use it to refer to information of any sort we find useful in making choices. Truths become creative tools rather than conceptual endpoints.

we become better able to stand back, at once the truths we most reliably draw on become less arms-length. This conclusion is both important to appreciate and too often misunderstood.

We can think of it as following from the fact of "bridging." With the Modern Age, objectivity reigned. With an Integrative Meta-Perspective "objective" and "subjective" are not opposites in quite the same sense. This is not at all to make truth just subjective. But it does mean that responsible decision-making becomes more personal and requires greater awareness

Like with other characteristics of culturally mature truth, we encounter something similar with the changes of personal maturity. Second-half-of-life maturity brings with it a growing appreciation for how deeply what we see is linked to how we see. Our truths become more consciously tied to who we are. This is much of what makes wisdom at once more humble and ultimately more precise than simple knowledge.

Similarly, Culturally Maturity's cognitive changes mean we can never fully leave ourselves out of the picture. "Fact" becomes as much a product of who is doing the understanding as what we wish to make sense of. Ruth and her daughter, and Stanley and his students, each needed not just greater knowledge of their subject, but greater knowledge of themselves. More collective choices similarly require deeper understanding of who we are together as communities and nations—and as a species.

Some version of this recognition can most always be found in the best of modern thought. Twentieth-century perspective in the social sciences emphasized that we can understand other cultures, other individuals, or even ourselves, only through the filters of our own biases and through the necessarily limited mechanisms of our own understanding. Nothing more defined twentieth-century art than how its purpose had as much or more to do with the viewer's unique response as any notion of artistic statement. And while our place in truth is most obvious when the topic is ourselves, we find its recognition also in the hard sciences. The classical physicist studied his or her quarry as if from beyond a sheet of plate glass and the classical biologist as if it lay on a dissection table. In contrast, the best of twentieth-century science argues that

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[23] See Chapter Eight.

the observer can never be wholly cleaved from truth's equation.[24] I think of the famous assertion of Werner Heisenberg that "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning." In a new sense we become responsible not just for the truths we choose, but in the fabric of truth itself.[25]

Our more systemic cognitive picture helps make sense of what we see and also helps alert us to where our thinking can go astray. We can think of this relational picture of truth as following directly from a maturely systemic picture of awareness and intelligence. Attach awareness to one part of intelligence and project the rest, and it seems very reasonable to divide the world into some observations that are objective and others that are subjective. Appreciate the whole of our cognitive complexity and perceptions similarly become more of a whole. We can still talk about different observations having different kinds of significance. Terms like objective and subjective still have a place. Certain aspects of intelligence organize experience more in material terms, others more in the language of poetry. And certain aspects of experience are similarly best explained in more material or poetic terms. But because no one part of intelligence gets the “objective” last word, objectivity as we have known it loses its status as final and supreme truth.

A way this conclusion is frequently misinterpreted introduces a common conceptual trap. A person accurately observes the limits inherent to Age of Reason objectivity then uses the resulting picture to argue for an almost opposite conclusion. Truth becomes only subject. This basic traps manifests in multiple ways. We see a particularly contemporary version in popular Post-Modern interpretations that make truth only in the eye of the beholder. Alternatively, the resulting more “participator’ reality can be interpreted as evidence for an “all is connected” picture of ultimate

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24 We find the most familiar example in Einstein's proposal that what we observe is always relative with regard to what/who does the observing. The link in quantum mechanics is even more fundamental—about not just the where and when of truth, but whether we are to find truth at all. Later we will look at how arm's-length perspective presents fundamental difficulties when it comes to understanding life (and even greater difficulty when it comes to understanding ourselves as conscious life).

25 Note that this more engaged relationship to truth by itself implies uncertainty. Max Plank put it this way with regard to science: "science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature ... because in the last analysis we ourselves are part of the mystery we are trying to solve."

truth. Not at all new, we find a more limited version of this associative leap in the writings of most any religious tradition.[26] From the Talmud: "We see things not as they are but as we are." We also encounter related polar misinterpretation that reflect more romantic, humanistic, or philosophically idealist views. Here the polar identification is with the feeling dimension rather than simple subjectivity or spirit.

The kind of "participatory" reality we are interested in is not what we see with any of these ultimately ideological interpretations. An Integrative Meta-Perspective does fundamentally challenge objectivity's reign. But the result is a picture that provides much greater detail and appreciation of difference, not less.

An Integrative Meta-Perspective challenges objectivist and subjectivist arguments equally. We will see how, in the process, it not only makes for more precise discernment, it makes possible the particular kind of precision addressing critical future questions will requires. The developmental/evolutionary perspective this book draws on, for example, makes no sense without it. Limit the study of history to what we can objectively verify—which is what we commonly to do—and our past becomes little more than a chronicling of leaders, inventions and wars. Such excludes much of what is most important to understanding who we are.[27] It also leaves us helpless to understand the tasks ahead as anything more than an extension of what has been. Onward and upward or collapse and failure—or for some in the romanticist camp, idealized dreams of ultimate transformation—become the available options.

The "Crux" and "Multiplicity" Aspects of Truth

An Integrative Meta-Perspective alters not just truth's general characteristics, but it also its particulars. Later we will look closely at how its changes inform specific

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26 Limited in the sense that personal truth becomes subjective, but not ultimate truth.

27 The chapter to come lets us be more precise in this regard. We will see, for example, how a deep understanding of history as something that evolves requires an appreciation for the diverse ways intelligence manifests at different cultural stages—the primacy of bodily intelligence in tribal realities, the dominant role imaginal intelligence plays in the mythic high cultures like ancient Egypt, or the new ascendency rationality assumed with the Modern Age. We will look closely a just how this progression works and also at its ultimately creative underpinnings.

"pattern language" concepts. But before we go there, we need to examine a more basic way culturally mature perspective alters truth's particulars. It fundamentally alters how we divide them up.

This recognition was hinted at in the previous section's reflections on the end of arm's length truth. In times past, it has worked to fit truths into two large categories. Depending the questions that concerned us, we might frame these opposing worlds in different ways—subjective versus objective, inner experience versus outer experience, spiritual versus material—but the general two piece picture stayed generally unquestioned. Integrative Meta-Perspective changes not just how we experience the contents of our two categories, but the categories themselves. Understanding how this works can be initially tricky to grasp. But this recognition is key to developing the practical discernment tools needed for making culturally mature decisions.

An Integrative Meta-Perspective produces two related changes at this most basic level of distinction. First, while for practical purposes it still makes sense to talk about two basic kind of truth, each kind itself becomes a "bridging" notion. This is the case with any way of thinking that can ultimately help us.

A couple shorthand ways of speaking about how we divide up truth help make sense of this. First, we can call these two big categories the "crux" and "multiplicity" aspects of truth. We want to get at what it most fundamental; and we want to identify the important parts and pieces. We can also recognize that the opposed ends of various polarities are different in related ways—polarities have a recognizable symmetry. We will look at how this works closely in the next chapter. For now we can talk simply of any polarity as having "left-hand" and "right-hand" aspects.[28]

The important recognition in getting started is that traditional understanding made truth's "left" hand and truth's "crux" essentially synonymous. And it did something similar with truth's "right" hand and truth's "multiplicity." In contrast, culturally mature "crux" and "multiplicity" discernments themselves "bridge" polarities. Conclusions in each case not only include both hands of truth, the two hands become creatively linked. Later we will return for a second recognition that

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[28] Psychology speaks of any polarity having "archetypally feminine" and "archtypally masculine aspects. Later we will look closely at the "procreative" implications of such language.

follows ultimately from the first. “Crux” and “multiplicity” discernments themselves stop being separate in the absolute way we have perceived them to be in the past. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

While the first basic distinction can initially be hard to get our heads around, even the most basic of culturally mature truths must somehow reflect it. And any at all inclusive conceptual framework must make it a basic premise. Comprehensive approaches to understanding have always had at their foundations juxtaposed “crux” and “multiplicity” concepts. Any culturally mature overarching approach necessarily starts with this recognition that “crux” and “multiplicity” now assume whole new meanings.

The most precise way of describing the new element is that each kind of truth becomes specifically systemic—and in the particular deep systemic sense an Integrative Meta-Perspective makes newly possible. In times past we’ve tended to speak of “Crux” discernments in the language of “essences.” We referred to getting “to the heart of things.” Historically, we addressed “multiplicity” concerns with categories and nosologies—conceptual boxes. This could be boxes of any sort—kinds of cars, species of animals, departments in a university. Culturally mature “crux” discernments are not about essences. They are about taking into account everything involved. Similarly, as we saw in the last chapter, the best of thinking about parts today requires that we leave behind traditional this-as-opposed-to-that thinking. At least when our parts concern is anything more than the trivially mechanical, we need thinking that gets us beyond the polar assumptions of times past.

The simplest way to put it is that each kind of discernment becomes a newly whole-ball-of-wax notion—or even more simply, one that “bridges” polarities. That this is so follows directly from where an Integrative Meta-Perspective takes us. Every sort of notion becomes a “bridging” notion within an Integrative Meta-Perspective’s all-encompassing vantage. This applies to particular truths. Even more fundamentally it applies to the categories that always before have divided truth into opposing camps.

Our “box of crayons” image helps clarify where this takes us. Culturally mature “crux” discernments become not about essences, but about holding the whole box (along with appreciating that box’s particular creative significance). Culturally

mature “multiplicity” discernments become about the contributions of specific “crayons.” Whatever the particularly crayon, the vibrancy of colors and the implied creativity of the task helps capture that we have moved beyond the cut-and-dried assumptions of times past.

Let’s take our two kinds of truth one at a time. In doing so we can both further clarify what is new and examine some of what that newness looks like in application.

The idea that mature responsibility is a double responsibility at least affirms the importance of being more conscious in our making of “crux” discernments. If responsible choice demands seeing beyond culturally specific dictates, the truths we use must somehow get at the deeper needs established truths have existed to support. Just as important is the recognition that getting to the "heart of the matter” in this context becomes fundamentally different from the pasts more poetic interpretation This is not heart in the sense of feelings versus thoughts or some spiritual essence as apposed to “the facts.” “Crux” in this context becomes an explicitly systemic notion, about somehow considering everything that plays into significance. Both recognitions become essential. We must address what matters with both a new directness and with a new completeness. Otherwise our choices become arbitrary (and thus far from responsible).

If Ruth's daughter' was to be engaged in anything more than an escape from cultural constraints, she needed to somehow relate her feelings to a more fundamental sense of what makes choice healthy. And that fundamental sense would need to reflection not just some abstract principle, but the inclusion of everything involved. For Stanley's challenge to the traditional teacher/student relationship to be at all responsible, he needed to somehow measure the results of his experiments against some more basic sense of what education, beyond its established assumptions, must ultimately be about. In a similar way, his measure needed to engage everything that goes into education’s larger significance.

It is something we see in a more circumscribed way with maturity in personal development. Second-half-of-life changes bring a greater ability to set aside inconsequentials and diversions and get at what most matters to us. Key to wisdom is better getting at the crux of things. But “crux” in this sense is not about ignoring

details. It is about capturing how details of various sorts come together to create a full and meaningful life.

In chapters ahead we will visit the importance of being more conscious with regard to this "crux" aspect of truth's task in relation to other current challenges—and challenges of every scale. We will look at the importance of separating the institutions of government from the purposes of governance and our images of community from what in fact makes connection community. We will look at the power of examining not just the conclusions of religion or science, but what it is that religion and science ultimately teach us about. And we will see how separating our ideas about progress from the more fundamental question of what it means to progress is an essential step if we are to effectively address the larger question of guiding story. We will see, too, how in each case, our distinctions must be newly comprehensive in their grasp.

A specific Creative Systems Theory notion addresses this expanded "crux" task. Creative Systems Theory describes how good decision-making necessarily starts by asking the pertinent Question of Referent. Our referents provide the bottom-line feedback we use to make our way—what we must ultimately refer back to. By asking Questions of referent, we bring new, more conscious attention to this most basic of concerns.

In a sense we have always asked such questions. But culture's rules have protected us from deep and direct engagement with them.[29] Cultural dictates reach toward what-most-matters concerns in a crude way. We can think of broad moral dictates as ways we've collectively codified acts that are likely to enhance life. But they are rough, one-size-fits-all generalizations. And they have their origins in a polarized, parental relationship to truth.

When clear guideposts abandon us and decision-making becomes necessarily more exploratory, addressing Questions of Referent consciously and accurately takes on newly essenitial importance. In addition, "crux" answers that work become of a

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29 For good reason. We might assume that what cultural dictates and mythologized truths primarily most protect us from is complexity. But just as much they protect us from simplicity—truth at its most essential. Greater uncertainty and greater responsibility are parts of it, as are the consequences of each of Cultural Maturity's defining tasks.

new, more encompassing sort. We draw necessarily on more complete sorts of measures. The necessary point of departure, today, when addressing any truly important questions becomes identifying the pertinent, specifically Integrative Referent.

Beyond Cultural Maturity's threshold, truth's "crux" becomes explicitly different from poetic, philosophical, or spiritual notions of "essence" or "core truth." Mature responsibility requires that we draw not on essences as opposed to substance, or inner core as opposed to the world of things. We want to know what makes all these things together, at a particular time and place, purposeful and life-giving. Culturally mature "crux" truth becomes whole-ball-of wax systemic truth.

We see something directly related with "multiplicity" concerns. Certainly we need to be more conscious in our "multiplicity" considerations. A major function of culture's parental absolutes has been to protect us from being overwhelmed by serving as shorthands for more multi-faceted truths. As such absolutes less and less benefit us, we become responsible for confronting truth's detail more directly. We also need to engage "multiplicity" concerns in ways that are more complete.

This follows directly from where an Integrative Meta-Perspective tasks us. Culturally mature "multiplicity" truths similarly "bridge" polarity's, and at every turn. In the process, where our concern is anything more than the most mechanistic of tasks, our truths become less one-size-fits-all—more nuanced and differentiated. They take us beyond the reality of simple categories—difference as separately analyzable boxes (from gender roles, to traditional job categories, to academic disciplines)—into a fundamentally more dynamic and personally engaged world of experience. In the process, they offer that we might discern in ways that are more nuanced and better able to get at what is important.

An earlier observation at least supports why this is essential. I've described what Creative Systems Theory calls the Dilemma of Differentiation. With any process of discernment we face the quandary of how to analyze, divide reality into parts, without ending up in an ultimately machine world. (while also avoiding the opposite, running from distinction into an "all is one" naïve holism). Later we will

look at this dilemma and its implications in detail.[30] For now, we need recognize only that if the answers to our "multiplicity" questions (or, in the end, just as much our "crux" questions) are to succeed at being Culturally Mature, they must somehow address this Dilemma of Differentiation. They must help us think in ways that not only honor the fact that we are alive, but alive in the particular way that makes us human.

Systemically conceived "multiplicity" distinctions do just this. We've seen how any "bridging" propels us into a more dynamically systemic reality. Culturally mature "multiplicity" discernments escape the Dilemma of Differentiation's curse of deadness by being themselves "bridging" notions.

A good place to see where this takes us is with the way culturally mature "multiplicity" concepts include context an inseparable part of what makes something true. With regard to responsibility, we better see how what is responsible at one time or place may be not in another. The most life-giving act for a five-year-old may be very different from that for a fifteen-year-old as may that for a person of one temperament or cultural background from another. That such distinctions are important may seem obvious. But when rules of responsibility are fixed and absolute, they are easily missed.

We could say truth becomes more relative. But the term relative helps us only if we leave behind its popular anything-goes, eye-of-the-beholder interpretation. (Einstein's relativity was not relativistic in an anything-goes sense. It was about how very different things become true when the world is viewed from specific perspectives. The same applies here.) Relativity as arbitrariness begs the question of responsibility.[31] Better is the observation that truth becomes newly systemic. In a culturally mature world, responsibility based on singular truths ceases being responsible—standing firm in the face of complexity stops being strength and

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30 See Chapter Five. One things we will examine is how the Dilemma of Differentiation challenges not just conventional thought, but also the more common of systems formulations. Systemic understanding is unusual for the diverse—even opposite—worldviews it can be used to justify. Mechanistic systems ideas can be used to justify machine models of existence. More spiritually framed formulations can be used in ways that do little more than support all-is-one conclusions.

31 See "Pragmatism and Relativism" in Chapter Eight.

becomes instead only ignorance and dogmatism. Any complete conceptual perspective will help the decision-maker tease apart truth's often complex and subtle contingencies. In the end, that which makes something responsible is always tied as much to when and where as to what.[32]

Again we see something we encounter in ways that are more limited with second-half-of-life personal changes. With maturity in our individual lives we get better at recognizing subtle differences and interrelationships. We become increasingly impatient with the simplistic in all its various guises. In the process, we come to better appreciate how truth is inescapably contextual and always an expression of evolving and interplaying factors.

This importance of contextual relativity has been an important new theme in the best of twentieth-century understanding. Certainly this was so with regard to temporal context. We became increasingly sophisticated in our appreciation for how truths in human systems of any scale can vary between one time and another. Modern developmental psychology makes increasingly subtle distinctions between the very different ways we see the world at different times in our lives. In a related way, anthropology has helped us become more sensitive to how deeply our collective truths are linked to when in culture's story they originate. From multiple directions, we came to better see how any conception of truth is impoverished, if not dangerous, when we ignore time as a determining ingredient.

In a similar way, we saw increasing sophistication through the last century with regard to more here-and-now "spatial" contextual variables. We encountered growing appreciation for the importance of acknowledging and understanding human diversity. Writing and research in the last century gave ever-more focused attention to how people of different ages, genders, personality styles, or ethnic backgrounds might interpret their worlds in different—often startlingly different—ways. We began to

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32 It is not that we have ignored such differences in times past—between men and women, between difference ages in a lifetime or stages in culture. But we have described them in protectively simplified ways. Each culture has its concretized ways of describing differnces. And most often differences have been mythologized. Men and women are polar opposites; tribal cultures are either denigrated as heathens as romantically idealized. Cultural Maturity challenges us to surrender culturally-specific definitions and mythologized/polarized notions of difference—to more directly and complexly address what makes differences different.

better recognize that what is a responsible act for one person may not be for his best friend, and how acting responsibly toward one person (or larger system) may not mean the same thing as acting responsibly toward another.[33]

In later chapters immediately ahead we will look closely at what making effective "crux" and "multiplicity" today involves. We will also look at conceptual approaches that produce the needed more sophisticated discernments. We will look, too, at some surprises that come with a more systemic vantage. For example, Chapter Eight proposes what ultimately makes "crux" distinctions different "multiplicity" distinctions has more to do with the questions we ask, and where we happen to be looking, than truth itself.

For now, the important recognition is that Cultural Maturity gives "crux" and "multiplicity" wholly new meanings. The new picture follows directly from how an Integrative Meta-Perspective produces more specifically systemic understanding. Concepts of every sort become "bridging" notions. "Crux" distinctions become whole-box-of-crayons distinctions. And "multiplicity" distinctions, while they are specifically concerned with parts, never forget that parts, too, are systemic, vibrant and dynamic crayons rather than simple categories. In times past, "crux" and "multiplicity" referred to two halves of a polar relationship. With Cultural Maturity "crux" and "multiplicity" distinctions each themselves hold polarity's opposites. In the process, they provide the possibility not just of more nuanced discernment, but also discernment that better honors who we are.

Responsibility and a Creative Frame

I've used the word creative to speak metaphorically about what mature responsibility requires of us, what responsibility becomes at the level of process. I've also linked it to Cultural Maturity's cognitive changes. I've proposed that the new ingredients that an Integrative Meta-Perspectives incorporates, taken together, reflect the underlying mechanisms of formative process. We've seen,

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33 This means both recognizing stereotypes and better discerning meaningful differences and

too, how a creative frame helps with the more encompassing task of a story for our time. The new story becomes about engaging an important new step in our evolution as tool-making, meaning making beings. It is about at once more fully stepping back from, and more deeply engaging, our tool-making natures and what becomes possible when we do.

We've also seen how we can think of Integrative Meta-Perspective making understanding itself creative. A creative frame provides a basis both for better understanding what it means to understand and also for making highly detailed discriminations. Creative Systems Theory uses a creative frame in this way as the basis for a comprehensive "pattern language." It proposes that creative organization manifests not just in how we think, but in how we see the world, and more, in the forms we give our personal and collective lives—beliefs, relationships, physical structures, institutions. We are pattern-making creatures and the ultimate source of those patterns, according to Creative Systems Theory, is our tool-making—read creative—natures.

In pages ahead, we will see how Creative Systems Theory uses a creative frame to address both the "crux" and "multiplicity" aspects of culturally mature truth. What Creative Systems Theory calls Whole System Patterning Concepts address the first. Our Questions of Referent provides one example. Whole System Patterning concepts offers big-picture guidance for making choices and tools that help us avoid having the magnitude of the choices we face overwhelm us. Chapter Eight and the Appendix provide a detailed look.

Patterning in Time and Patterning in Space notions address change and interrelationship respectively. The next two chapters provide introduction for these two complementary vantages for making "multiplicity" discernments. Patterning in Time concepts describe how an appreciation for cognition's creative mechanisms makes possible deep and detailed understanding of change in human systems of all sorts. Patterning in Space notions describe how a Creative Meta-Perspective contributes richly to our understanding of more here-and-now systemic relationships.

With regard to responsibility a creative frame at least helps gives responsibility a somewhat friendlier appearance. Responsibility is not everyone's

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their implications (another important future topic).

favorite word—appropriately if we conceive of it only in terms of burdens to shoulder. Thinking of responsibility as a creative task at least makes it a more alive and dynamic sort of challenge. As we have seen, it also makes it a more directly addressable sort of challenge.

A creative framing of awareness and responsibility lets those inclined toward really big picture pondering place Cultural Maturity's changes within an even more encompassing—indeed an ultimately encompassing—creative picture. Where it takes us is primarily of philosophical interest, but it makes for a provocative sort of reflection.

We can start with creation's beginnings. Life brought consciousness in the manner of simple sentience onto the world's stage. Human beings, and to a more limited degree other higher creatures, added reflective awareness, the ability to think consciously about things we are aware of. More specific to we humans, and perhaps unique, is that ability for meta-perspective, the capacity to reflect on our inner experience (and in the case of philosophical and psychological sorts, on how thought itself might work).

Cultural Maturity's changes are obviously not defining in the same sense as these most fundamental of evolutionary leaps, but the advent of Integrative Meta-Perspective is usefully seen in relationship to this progression. Certainly it represents a significant modification within our particular chapter. As far as human responsibility and the question of whether that chapter will have a long-term future, it is most likely a critically significant modification.

Responsibility and Hope

We are left with a more particular version of our question of hope—whether we up to all that today's new responsibilities ask. A lot might suggest that we are not. The shear quantity of new responsibilities easily overwhelms us. And this look at how Cultural Maturity changes responsibility, being that in a way it only makes responsibility's burden greater, might not immediately seem to provide relief.

We get some respite in the recognition that responsibilities that might appear to come "out of the blue" follow directly from Cultural Maturity's broader changes.

At the least, new responsibilities come to make more sense. There is also how they become aspects of a single task. More ultimately important is how Cultural Maturity provides us with the tools we need to engage that task. It also helps us see how responsibility's new challenge is most worthy, how it represents not just an essential task, but an important kind of human realization.

These observations also further support the earlier assertion that the kind of thinking—and, added here, the kind of leaderships and responsibility—the future will require may be something for which we are natively primed. This chapter's observations about the workings of conscious awareness and intelligence support that the ingredients required for such thinking and responsibility may be inherent to who we are—to our tool-making, meaning-making natures. Our developmental metaphor supports this conclusion and adds the implication that today's new responsibilities and the more sophisticated discernments they require represent timely endeavors.

We find additional hope in an apparent paradox noted earlier. Cultural Maturity's new picture, while it is more complex than what it replaces, is also in an important sense simpler. At least it is more complete. I've referred to the more encompassing picture of social interrelationship that comes when we step beyond our need for evil others. I've also spoken of the greater completeness of identity and relationship that comes with mature love. Here, we've added the greater completeness of engaging truth more directly, of better including contexts and contingencies in our discernments (including ourselves), and of a fuller picture of the workings of intelligence and awareness.[34]

The same paradox viewed from a different angle makes culturally mature responsibility, while extraordinary (it reveals depths of richness not usually recognized), at once, more ordinary. In the end it is about nothing more than trying to consider all that is involved. Like with the sense of proportion we find in our later years if we successfully confront the developmental tasks of personal maturity, Cultural Maturity offers a view of the world that is more sophisticated and at once less dramatic and sensational than what we have known before. No longer mythologized, truth better reflects what is in front of us. This doesn't mean

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34 This and other apparent paradoxes become "logical" if we hold intelligence in the needed more integrative fashion Cultural Maturity advocates.

objective—we are participants in what we see. But from here our view includes the important pieces and doesn't falsely elevate one at the expense of others. In the end, culturally mature responsibility is about nothing more than better appreciating just what is. It is about perceiving things more fully and immediately. This may not be easy or comfortable, but neither is it esoteric.

Culturally mature responsibility is about the citizens of two countries who before have known each other only as demonic projections attempting to appreciate each other's commonalities and differences (the real rather than mythic ones). It is about a man and a woman attempting to see each other just as they are—separate from the convoluting lenses of polar symbolism. It is about addressing questions of morality unadorned, separate from cultural assumptions and conflicting religious dogmas. It is about seeing culture's big picture cleansed as much as possible from ideological needs and social biases.

Culturally maturity responsibility bridges the complex and the simple, the amazing and the mundane. In the end it sees such polarities as opposite sides of the same, related conceptual coin. Culturally mature responsibility discards the coin and moves on

The Price and the Prize

The price that accompanies culturally mature responsibility is high. Such responsibility requires new levels of conscious awareness and a breadth of perspective not before needed. It requires us to question not just familiar truths, but arm's length truth in general (while at once committing ourselves to the most precise of understanding). It also requires a more personal and sophisticated relationship with authority. In the end, it requires that we put ourselves on the line in how we live both our personal and collective lives, this at a level that before would have overwhelmed us.

And, again, the price we pay for stopping short is much higher. Refusing to take responsibility for the risks as well as benefits of invention invites catastrophe. Ignoring the deep stewardship that any responsibility relationship to planetary wellbeing will requires puts us equally in danger. Giving away personal power

increasingly guarantees irresponsible leadership and leaves us vulnerable to exploitation and empty cynicism. And just as much it leaves us short of the needed maturity in relationships, both with those we love and with ourselves. In the end, because today's most critical questions require the kind of understanding culturally mature responsibility makes possible, stopping short leaves us unable even to recognize the tasks of our time, much less address them.

The prize is commensurately great. Besides making possible effective action (by bringing forth wisdom and perspective), mature responsibility opens the door to new levels of fulfillment. It connects us with a new completeness in our personal selves and in our human natures. It makes possible greater depth in relationships of all sorts. And it greatly increases the possibility that the role of our species on the planet might be an ultimately positive one.

Weaving Threads

The short version:

> Everything ahead depends on our capacity for responsibility—both our personal happiness and our future as a species. The need for human responsibility has never been so inescapable.
>
> The future calls not just for greater responsibility, but for a new, more mature kind of responsibility. As traditional societal handholds become less reliable, we become responsible increasingly not just for doing the right thing, but for determining just what doing the right thing should entail. Such mature responsibility requires not just a recognition that we must stand willing to choose, but also a fullness and humility of human understanding that we have not known before.
>
> The good news: Cultural Maturity's cognitive/developmental changes provide the new perspective needed for such responsibility and help make the needed more complete and creative understanding possible. If the concept of Cultural

> Maturity is accurate, such responsibility should come increasingly to define human purpose.

Another way we could talk about culturally mature responsibility is that it is what responsibility becomes in a world where change cannot be escaped. We turn now more specifically to that theme of change.