**FOUNDATIONS FOR THE GOALS AND THE WORK OF SUSTAINABILITY**

According to the Random House College Dictionary Revised Edition (1988), the word “**sustain**” means to “support, bear up, uphold, hold up, underpin, or prop. It also means to “maintain, keep up, prolong, or experience.” Through the work of sustainability, the condition we are seeking to maintain, support, or underpin is **balance**. Balance is the preferred state in Nature,

in humans and in the cosmos. Balance is a stable condition - created by the cancellation of negative forces – with equal opposing positive forces. How so?

Let us consider the imbalance between two forces that are particularly important in work of sustainability – the forces of movement and stillness. You may think of them here as “acts of commission” or “activity” and “acts of omission” or “inactivity.” Pollution, waste proliferation, resource shortages, excessive extraction, uneven distribution, over-processing, overproduction, overconsumption, inefficient or rampant disposal, inadequate re-purposing, and environmental degradation all can be linked to human-initiated imbalances in the relationship between movement and stillness.

Therefore, the true goal of sustainability is the perpetuation of life through the restoration and maintenance of balanced conditions. *Sustainability is perpetuation with balance – in all areas of human activity.* This has served as my self developed, working definition for sustainability for many years. This view does not allow me to limit or defend sustainability as primarily a theoretical, abstract, or intellectual construct. For the sake of clarity and effectiveness, the concept or idea of sustainability should expressly manifest the roles of behavior and practice at produce conditions.

As you well know, as humans are seeking to reinstitute sustainable conditions because we exist in, support, and perpetuate conditions that manifest the *absence of stability*, or the lack of balance.

Sustainability should be seen as an imperative. Why? Because sustainability relies on the essential characteristics that define the nature of the relationship between human beings and the physical environment. Quintessentially, it is a dependency relationship. We depend on the natural environment for our existence, it does not depend on us for its own. We also adapt to the environment and modify the environment. We know that the built environment is only possible because of gifts made available through physical environment. So obviously, if human beings fail to sufficiently reestablish and maintain sustainable living practices and conditions, and properly scale our efforts, we can and will cease to exist.

In closing, I offer some guiding principles for strategies in the re-establishment of sustainable conditions and practices. Here are four questions we should ask ourselves: First, is what am I planning, desiring, or doing - *life-affirming*? Second, is what I am planning, desiring, or doing -*just*? (Meaning fair, balanced, and harmonious.) Third: is what I am planning, desiring, or doing *for the greater good of the individual, the collective, and continuum*? (Meaning, I am motivated by principles, as opposed to my preferences?) Fourth, am I considering *the purpose, function, and movement of the action, object, system, or operation* in relationship to other known interacting objects, systems, and operations?

(This essay is from an unpublished paper I wrote in February 2015, entitled: *Sustainability: Answering Three Questions*.)

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