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## The Pendulum Swings

(recounting five great endeavors of the human species)

By F. Nelson Stover

In the land between forest and savannah, the Pendulum of Decision swung.  
Whether to keep walking on four paws or to start walking on two legs,  
Became a challenge confronting individuals and species across Africa.

A vertical body stayed cooler, having no heated backside facing the blistering sun,  
And nimble hands could carry food home to growing families  
Once tricky balancing skills were mastered across the rolling landscape.

Upright backs allowed female's pelvic opening to gradually expand  
Permitting delivery of off-spring with larger brain capacities  
While everyone's vocal chords loosened to enhance tonal variations.

After three million years of experimentation and effort by unnamable ancestors  
The lands of the ocean-bound continent in the tropical sun  
Became filled with humans committed to upright travel in community.

At the edge of the northeastern land bridge, the Pendulum of Decision again swung.  
To stay in familiar forests or to venture into unknown landscapes  
Prompted deliberations among the complacent and the concerned alike.

Daring ventures and periodic painful tragedies  
Allowed the capture, care and control of fire for cooking meat  
And providing dependable heat on cold winter nights.

New found animal friends like horse, dog and cow  
Had social patterns compatible with the two-legged species  
Permitting easier travel, additional energy and a protein-enhanced food supply.

After nearly a million years of exploration and discovery  
Virtually all of the life-sustaining niches of Planet Earth's land  
Had been visited by the roving vanguard of the human species.

Population density increased in each bioregion, the Pendulum of Decision again swung.  
Whether to learn the cycles of their present place or keep exploring  
Challenged clans and tribes across the Blue Marble.

Settled sages marked the solar cycles and named the stellar bodies.  
Stories of seasonal patterns enchanted children  
And reminded citizens when plants and animals would become available.

Using their particular languages, symbolic representations and cultural patterns  
Tribes developed sophisticated social systems and appropriate technologies  
Allowing reflection on their situations and an understanding of their environs.

For more than thirty thousand years, the Indigenous Ones enlivened their locales.  
Their spirits pulsed to the rhythms of the surrounding flora and fauna  
And they knew themselves ingrained in the four elements and directions.

For the fourth time, the Pendulum of Decision once again began to swing.  
Along the rivers of the temperate climates in Mesopotamia and China  
Individuals and societies debated the merits of tending crops rather than foraging.

Secure and sufficient food supplies allowed social stratification and political protection.  
Manufacturing classes produced tools, arts and comforts  
As societies tapped into energies stored in wood, sun and fossil fuels.

New explanations emerged to help citizens comprehend the world in which they lived.  
The gods cared for priests who cared for people who cared for plants  
As social hierarchy and historical progress became foundations of wisdom.

Fueled by carbohydrates and proteins from farms, pastures and plantations,  
The Human Species seemed to manage the progress of the planet  
While growing in numbers and consumptive capacity for ten thousand years.

Now again, across the Planet, in villages and cities, the Pendulum of Decision swings.  
Each one choosing whether to continue rampant extraction of non-renewable resources  
Or to invent lifestyles promoting the mutual enhancement of all species.

Those electing to participate in creating the Ecozoic Era draw on past wisdom  
Yet learn the Universe's ways of communion, differentiation and autopoiesis  
And build sustainable systems of social and environmental interaction.

Scientists utilize schema of incommensurate numbers to refine quantum calculations,  
Sociologists understand that each individual actively participates in creating tomorrow  
And sages find the Holy in every moment and action.

The unborn creatures and unmanifested potentialities of countless future eons  
Await their turn on the time-space stage of reality  
And the celestial clock ticks as the interminable future  
Passes through the embodied present  
To join the by-gone actors in the annals of history.

