



*E-Journal of the World Academy of Art & Science*

# ERUDITIO

*“A multidisciplinary forum focused on the social consequences and policy implications of all forms of knowledge on a global basis”*

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## ***Eruditio Vision***

*The vision of the Journal complements and enhances the World Academy's focus on global perspectives in the generation of knowledge from all fields of legitimate inquiry. The Journal also mirrors the World Academy's specific focus and mandate which is to consider the social consequences and policy implications of knowledge in the broadest sense. The vision of the Journal encompasses major challenges facing global society and seeks to examine these issues from an interdisciplinary, multi-method and value guided perspective.*

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## In This Issue

The articles in this issue of *Eruditio* focus on a common theme: Paradigm Change. The need for paradigm change in every aspect of society has never been more pronounced. The COVID-19 Pandemic has made governments and other major stakeholders reflect on the need for an inclusive, multidimensional conception of Human Security to replace the narrow conception of national security which has for long confined thinking and policy to military security. Human Security encompasses all dimensions of human well-being, individual and collective, and the complex interdependencies which link these elements together. The articles in this issue identify and highlight the limits to contemporary approaches and call for new thinking and new strategies to turn challenges into opportunities across all socio-economic dimensions.

The leadership vacuum we face today will pose dire consequences in the near future if a change in thinking and policy is not urgently adopted. For the paradigm shift to be effected, we need catalytic strategies that convert ideas and thoughts into action and do not just remain at the level of rhetoric. The world urgently needs a radical reorientation or reinvention of the multilateral system for world governance, which is still dominated by concepts and strategies which go back for four centuries. There has already been an increasing emphasis on values and ethics post the pandemic, but the social sciences need to become more human-centered and integrate the objective and the subjective dimensions of reality in both theory and application. The advent of blockchain technology has undermined entrenched conceptions of money and how it can be created, opening up unparalleled opportunities to monetarize social value and apply it in a targeted manner for both economic welfare and social wellbeing needs, as examined in the Academy's project on the Tao of Finance. The marginal importance attributed to Arts in the world community needs to be replaced by one which recognizes their essential contribution as a complement to scientific forms of creativity, and their central role in the development of mind and the process of conscious social transformation.

The articles published in this issue bring out the core themes of the World Academy of Art and Science's projects, which are interrelated and cannot be dealt with in isolation. Just like the SDGs, they need to be addressed within a holistic framework that sees the connection between the parts and ultimately, their connection to the whole that the Society is.

### Editors

# **The King is Dead....Long Live the King: A Theory Concerning the Current Wave of Authoritarianism**

**David Norris**

International Consultant, Facilitator and Coach

## **Abstract**

*Not so long ago it looked as if the march of Western Liberal Democracy was unstoppable; like it was only a matter of time before every despot on the planet would be replaced by a well-functioning parliament protected by a well written constitution. It seemed like the rule of law would eventually and inevitably replace the rule of men. Something seems to have changed. Authoritarianism now appears to be blossoming, not only in the predictable parts of the world like Asia, South America and Africa, but also in the presumed bastions of democracy like Europe and even the United States. What is happening? This article proposes a theory to explain this phenomenon. It begins by distinguishing fear from anxiety and points out the way in which tyrannical leaders confuse the two to manipulate their populations. It then examines the human struggle between freedom and fear in two important periods of history—the biblical Exodus from Egypt and the Age of Enlightenment—to reveal how humanity has put its faith first in God, then in kings and finally in reason. But reason, having exposed its own limits over the course of the last century, has led us to a profound sense of meaninglessness. In fact, after about 400 years we have come now to the end of the Enlightenment period, which was also known as the Age of Reason. Gazing into the abyss of Post-Modernity and still unable to confront our own ontological anxiety, many are easy prey to wannabe dictators, who offer a feeling of refuge in a crowd rather than the individual responsibility of empowerment. The article concludes with the theologian Paul Tillich's insight that "the courage to be" free depends on the willingness and the ability to embrace the anxiety born of the experience of meaninglessness.*

## **1. Introduction**

Not so long ago it looked as if the march of Western Liberal Democracy was unstoppable; like it was only a matter of time before every despot on the planet would be replaced by a well-functioning parliament protected by a well written constitution. It seemed like the rule of law would eventually and inevitably replace the rule of men. Something seems to have changed. Authoritarianism now appears to be blossoming, not only in the predictable parts of the world like Asia, South America and Africa, but also in the presumed bastions of democracy like Europe and even the United States. What is happening?

At its root authoritarianism relies on fear, both for it to come to power and for it to remain there. There are two kinds of fear, which for the purposes of this inquiry I will distinguish as fear and anxiety. Fear has a specific object. It could be a fear of failing a test or losing one's job or not being liked by one's friends or starving to death or being killed by a perceived

enemy. Whether the fear is large or small, real or imagined, held by an individual or by a nation, it has a concrete and nameable object; it is a fear of something. Anxiety, on the other hand, has no specific object; it is the feeling of being threatened by something nebulous and not only unnamed, but unnamable. It is an uneasy sense of dread even to the point of terror. As such, anxiety is more a feature of the human condition than it is the consequence of any particular outward danger. Authoritarians are adept at tapping into this ontological anxiety, stoking it further and then presenting themselves as the solution to the problem they themselves are causing. They do this by attaching the anxiety onto specific fears—the terrorists, the Socialists, the Jews, the immigrants, the Blacks, the rapists and drug dealers—which they then claim they alone know how to deal with. As soon as anxiety is attached to a nameable fear, a group of citizens can be molded into a mindless mob that can be as violent as it is frightened. This is especially so during times of heightened uncertainty such as the world is now experiencing, when authoritarians can even more easily position themselves as the strong and capable captain needed to steer the ship of state through the fog. There are now at least five major concerns in the world that are available to wannabe dictators to fuel the anxiety and which lend themselves to being associated with particular objects of fear: the economic consequences of globalization, global climate change, jihadist terrorism, large numbers of people migrating from the developing world and the COVID-19 pandemic. There may soon be others.

While ontological anxiety is always present, it remains mostly in the background of the human condition. It becomes more obvious and more available to be manipulated during times of social, political and economic turmoil, when the larger order of things appears to be breaking down. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) captured this sense of a world unravelling most famously in his poem “The Second Coming”.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Though this poem was written in 1919, one can hear its reverberations in today’s endless rounds of TV interviews and press conferences, which are often filled with a lack of all conviction as well as a passionate intensity that tries to drown it out. And significantly, Yeats contextualizes the anxiety in terms of the unfolding of huge cyclical historical patterns. What we are experiencing today may well be the fulfillment of what he already envisioned a century ago and which is most memorably captured in the last two lines of the poem’s final stanza.

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

And so, we are left with more questions than answers about the particular epoch in which we find ourselves today. But I do believe they are the right questions in that they can lead us

to a deeper understanding of the time we now live in and the appearance of authoritarianism in it. To do this I will explore aspects of two important periods in our history.

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*“Entering the Promised Land requires not just an outer release from captivity, but also an inner transformation of consciousness.”*

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## **2. The Exodus from Egypt**

Let us begin this exploration with one of the oldest accounts of the struggle between freedom and fear. Of course, most historians believe it to be more myth than history, but nevertheless, even after Millennia it remains a cornerstone in the historical consciousness of our civilization. The Book of Exodus in the Old Testament tells the story of how the Jewish people, freed from bondage in Egypt, wandered through the Sinai Desert for 40 years before arriving in the Promised Land. I have been in the Sinai Desert where I camped and hiked for a week, and I can say from personal experience that it does not take 40 years to cross it. It might, however, take 40 years (which is approximately the span of two generations) to overcome a slave mentality. In fact, we read in the Bible that “God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said: ‘Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.’” Entering the Promised Land requires not just an outer release from captivity, but also an inner transformation of consciousness.

Soon after leaving Egypt, the Pharaoh changes his mind and decides to recapture the slaves he had just freed. The Israelites, seeing the approaching Egyptian army, tremble with fear and complain to Moses: “For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.” Moses responds: “Fear ye not...The Lord will fight for you.” And, indeed, God then parts the Red Sea and destroys the Egyptian army. But despite witnessing these astounding miracles, the Israelites before long once again give into their fears and long for the safety they felt back in Egypt. First, they complain to Moses that they will die from not having water to drink and enough to eat. God then provides them with water to drink and rains down manna from heaven to feed them. But even that is not sufficient to allay their fears and to trust in the God who freed them from bondage. Later, when Moses goes up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and he is gone so long that the people once again become fearful, they plead with Aaron, Moses’ brother, to make for them a god they can see to lead them. Aaron, clearly not a strong leader, gives in to the crowd and the result is the infamous episode of the Golden Calf. When Moses finally does descend from the mountain with God’s laws inscribed on two stone tablets, he is so outraged by what he sees that he smashes the tablets. The point that clearly emerges from the narrative is that human beings, even a chosen people, are easily prey to their fears and prepared to sacrifice everything for the feeling of safety. Whether that sense of security comes from a Pharaoh who holds them in bondage or a Golden Calf that they imagine holds them in its god-like protective embrace, it’s obvious that they are not yet ready to be a self-governing people.

Two major things are being accomplished as the Israelites wander for decades in the desert: the twelve tribes are uniting to become one nation and this nation is developing into a self-

governing entity under the rule of law. For example, while in the wilderness, the Israelites bring their everyday difficulties and quarrels with one another to Moses to be adjudicated. Moses is not a king; he is depicted as a teacher and a judge dispensing justice according to God's law. While sitting in judgement one day, Moses explains to Jethro, his father-in-law who had come to visit him, what he is doing:

“Because the people come unto me to inquire of God; when they have a matter, it cometh unto me; and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws.”

Jethro then offers him some valuable management consulting:

“The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee; for the thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel...Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain....And let them judge the people at all seasons; and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves; so shall they make it easier for thee and bear the burden with thee.”

Moses follows this advice and thereby establishes a judicial system with local courts operating at the lower levels and with himself as a kind of one-man Supreme Court. The Israelites are undergoing nation building, and it is to be a nation without a king—at least not an earthly one.

Throughout the Book of Exodus, the Israelites are often described as “stiff-necked”. In fact, God Himself says to Moses: “I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people”. Much ink has been spilled by Talmudic scholars over the centuries to interpret the meaning of this term. Though there is a general consensus that it means something like “stubborn” or “unwilling” or “resistant”, there is a good deal of debate regarding exactly what it is they are resisting. Without any pretense of being among the ranks of these scholars, I would like to offer my own interpretation. I believe that the resistance of the Israelites derives not from stubbornness at all, but rather from anxiety. It is the anxiety born of being asked to surrender to and trust in the unknown and unknowable. In fact, despite the many miracles that God has already performed for them, when they arrive at the border of the Promised Land and they need to prepare for battle with the Canaanites, they once again are unable to trust in God. They become frightened and even cry out that they feel too small to fight and would rather return to slavery in Egypt. God immediately punishes them by condemning them to continue their wandering in the wilderness until two entire generations have died out. The Promised Land, He says, will not be for them but for their children. To have absolute faith in God would require of them that they embrace the ultimate mystery; what Paul Tillich (1886-1965), the great Christian theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, referred to as the “God above God” which is simultaneously both “ground of being” and “abyss”. For Tillich faith in God encompasses a surrender to the anxiety inherent in the being/nonbeing dichotomy, which is



present in the awareness of death and which is at the heart of all existence. In this regard it is noteworthy that God several times says to Moses that He must shield His own face even from Moses, for it would kill him. And after Moses has spent 40 days and nights with God on Mount Sinai, when he descends his face beams so much light that he must wear a veil to protect the Israelites from its powerful intensity. Although the Israelites have experienced living under the protection of divine providence, they nevertheless are still unable to confront the terrifying awareness of their own existential vulnerability.

If we now jump to 40 years later, past the death of Moses on the border of the Promised Land and then many years after that, past the death of Joshua who succeeded Moses and conquered the Land of Canaan, and then even later than that to the time of the Judges, we read in the last line of the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Despite having been brought to the Promised Land, the Israelites have become a lawless nation with each individual acting in his own self-interest. In fact, the Bible tells us, it was a period of widespread corruption and depravity. The commandments that God had given them have been forgotten and even the priests of the holy ark have become dishonest. There is increasing social unrest including intermittent battles with the Philistines and other neighboring nations, occasional worship of local heathen gods and some of the tribes of Israel have even begun fighting one another. The order of things is breaking down, and though the Israelites are no longer slaves they are also not yet free.

Which brings us to the First Book of Samuel where we read that at this time the people of Israel go to Samuel, who now leads the nation as did Moses in the role of a judge, and they say to him: "Give us a king to judge us." God tells Samuel that with this request the people are not rejecting him as their leader but rejecting God Himself. Samuel, following God's instructions, then warns the people what they can expect from a king:

"He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders...and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become slaves."

But the people insist; they say: "Nay, but there shall be a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." These last words are the very same words that Moses had said to them as they fearfully watched the Egyptian army pursuing them. "Fear ye not," Moses had told them, "the Lord will fight for you." The people, however, no longer put their faith in God but rather in a king. They have come full circle from an involuntary bondage to a Pharaoh to a voluntary slavery to a king. Samuel selects Saul to be their king, "And all the people shouted, and said: 'Long live the king.'" Saul was the first in what would become a succession of kings and the



establishment of a hereditary monarchy under King David. The Israelites of the Bible did not achieve the necessary maturity as a people to be truly self-governing, I believe, because as individuals they were unable to be with their own human anxiety. Instead, they translated it into the fear of external enemies, and so they devolved into an authoritarian society no longer operating under the rule of law but rather under the rule of a king.

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*“Descartes shifted the basis for acquiring knowledge from a reliance on external authority and tradition to an internal method of rational thinking.”*

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### 3. The Age of Enlightenment

The next historical period is the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Age of Enlightenment. Obviously, this is such a profound, complex and rich time in Western cultural history, that it would be impossible to examine it fully here. Instead, I will focus only on a few relevant themes.

The philosophers of the Enlightenment period put their faith neither in God nor in a king, but rather in the light of reason. From the earliest recollections of human memory, and very likely long before, divine forces (regardless of which religion) played an active role in the affairs of human beings and human beings, in turn, were embedded in a world permeated by those divine forces. Major decisions of war and peace, life and death as well as the more mundane concerns of commerce and marriage almost always required the counsel of the priests. Though this was true until the Enlightenment, we can already see it waning in the preceding centuries with the emergence of Renaissance Humanism and the Scientific Revolution.

Though it is impossible, of course, to say exactly when a particular period of history began, a good case can be made that the Age of Enlightenment began with René Descartes (1596-1650) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). For Plato and the later Christian Neo-Platonic philosophers such as Saint Augustine (354-430), reason was man's means of apprehending the cosmic order of the outer world. Descartes, however, turned inward to view reason as man's means not of finding order but of constructing it. In other words, Descartes made man the source of his own certainty and using this as a starting point, he sought to devise a philosophy, which was based on a premise so self-evident that it would be irrefutable. With his famous “cogito ergo sum” (“I think therefore I am”) in 1637 he established not only his own philosophy but also one of the foundational principles of the entire Age of Enlightenment. Specifically, Descartes shifted the basis for acquiring knowledge from a reliance on external authority and tradition to an internal method of rational thinking. This also was Galileo's contribution to the spirit of the Age. Among his many scientific discoveries in astronomy, physics, mathematics and engineering, one of those for which he is probably most remembered is his observations of the moons of Jupiter, which confirmed Nicolaus Copernicus' (1473-1543) heliocentric model of the Solar System. But because the heliocentric model contradicted the teachings of the Church at the time, he was first examined by the Inquisition in 1615 and finally in 1633 condemned by it and punished with life-long house arrest and prohibition from publishing

his work. It was not merely that Galileo advocated for some new astronomical observations regarding certain celestial objects. His real crime was that he undermined Church authority by granting the power to determine the truth about reality to individual reasoning and scientific experimentation rather than to established dogma. He also was one of the first to say that the laws of Nature are mathematical and that the Church should have sway in matters of faith and ethics but not of science. By championing the scientific method and its independence from religious oversight, like Descartes, Galileo contributed enormously to the foundational principles of the Age that was just dawning.

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*“The freedom to reason for oneself led not only to questioning the position of the planets in the cosmic order, but also the position of the monarch in the social order and in due course to the political revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.”*

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At its heart the Age of Enlightenment, which has sometimes been called the Age of Reason, was a call for the freedom to think for oneself. In 1784 Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) wrote a short essay entitled, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”, the opening paragraph of which was a clarion call to the Age:

“Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not a lack of understanding but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding!”

Public education and discussion were encouraged and found a home in the salons, debating societies, Masonic Lodges and coffeehouses of London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and other European cities. Some debating societies were even open not only to upper-class men, but also to women and working-class people as well. Though the focus was at first primarily on a questioning of religious norms, it soon also came to include the political domain as well. This new openness and faith in the individual’s power and right to reason eventually brought a shift in the understanding of the social contract from being based on the Divine Right of Kings to being based on the consent of the governed. Inevitably, the freedom to reason for oneself led not only to questioning the position of the planets in the cosmic order, but also the position of the monarch in the social order and in due course to the political revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, both the heavenly and the earthly monarchies were simultaneously overthrown with the intention of creating a kind of secular Garden of Eden established by free-thinking men and women of all classes in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and universal humanism. We in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are the children and beneficiaries of that Enlightenment period and we have reaped many benefits from that inheritance. The

wealth and comfort of our society as well as our elected form of government derive directly from those free-thinking philosophers and scientists.

But there was also a down side to the reliance on reason. Descartes' separation of mind from matter freed the mind to use rational thinking and experimentation to determine truth for oneself rather than being forced to accept the pronouncements of orthodoxy and tradition. And this led to an exuberant outburst of creativity and optimism, which produced extraordinary progress not only in philosophy, science and political theory, but also in fields as diverse as economics, psychology and the arts. However, what was not so obvious, at least not at first, was that this liberating separation of self from world eventually became a gulf so wide that it isolated and reified the self while it simultaneously commoditized the world. In fact, as both self and world became more materialistic objects of study than living expressions of Nature, not only did the gulf separate subject from object, it also separated subjects from each other. Individuality led to individualism rather than to the envisioned community of noble inquiring minds. Although reason at first excelled as the self's tool for exploring the world in the service of creating and testing knowledge, it also eventually revealed its own limits. Already as early as 1686 in his "Discourse on Metaphysics", Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) pointed out those limits when he considered what in modern times would come to be known among neuro-scientists as "the hard problem"; namely, the unknown connection between a specific object in the physical world and the particular quality it produces in one's experience. For example, the tomato I see and the quality of redness I experience when I see it. And if we cannot explain the relationship between the objective world and our subjective experience of it, then ultimately, we cannot really explain anything—at least not anything meaningful to us.

Though reason may be useful for dealing with the practical matters of daily functioning, it is insufficient for addressing the deeper human concerns such as, for example, purpose or values or death. Another leading light of the Age, the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), even went so far as to write in his "Treatise of Human Nature" that "Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals". In fact, according to Hume, reason is subservient to experience, which he claimed is the actual source of all knowledge.

In the end, reason fails us because it is able to provide neither a profound enough understanding of reality nor the sense of being at home in it, both of which had once seemed so imminent. Instead, it has led us to a kind of meaningless nihilism. In fact, the term "nihilism" was often used by critics of the Enlightenment, having been popularized by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), an influential German philosopher and literary figure of the time. By exposing established orthodoxy as merely interpretations that had become entrenched myths, the Enlightenment philosophers introduced the possibility that each human being could use reason to construct his or her own interpretations. At first this produced an intoxicating feeling of emancipation, but eventually it became clear that if each one can have his own truth, then there is no more truth and the search for it itself becomes meaningless. Whatever brilliant theories and proofs we may devise and however useful their practical benefits may be, they ultimately leave us unsatisfied, because they do not connect us to a world in which we experience being at home. Rather they leave us ever more isolated from the world and from each other and relegated to the role of observer rather than participant. This sense of

loss and futility is perhaps nowhere more poignantly captured than in “Faust” by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). In the prologue, Mephistopheles is chatting with God about the current condition of humans on the Earth. God asks him “how all below is doing now”. Mephistopheles answers:

How men torment themselves is all I see.  
The little god of Earth sticks to the same old way,  
And is as strange as on that very first day.  
He might appreciate life a little more: he might,  
If you hadn't lent him a gleam of Heavenly light:  
He calls it Reason, but only uses it  
To be more a beast than any beast as yet.

Far from being the source of his freedom and happiness, reason (that “gleam of Heavenly light”) has become a torment and made man even more beastly than any other beast. And as for the fruits of reason, in 1751 the first volume of the famous multi-volume Encyclopedia was published in Paris to tremendous acclaim and quite a bit of notoriety. Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean d’Alembert (1717-1783), the two French *philosophers* who were the editors of this massive compendium, announced to the world that it contained nothing less than the groundwork for the basic facts and principles of all branches of knowledge, particularly in light of the major discoveries of the prior one hundred years. Such was the hubris of the Age, and it was probably inevitable that it soon would be exposed and humbled. Again, in “Faust” we read that all that knowledge actually amounted to nothing. In the words of Dr. Faust himself, who we meet in the opening scene where he sits “restless” at his desk:

Ah! Now I've *done* Philosophy,  
I've finished Law and Medicine,  
And sadly even Theology:  
Taken fierce pains, from end to end.  
Now here I am, a fool for sure!  
No wiser than I was before:  
Master, Doctor is what they call me,  
And I've been ten years, already,  
Crosswise, arcing, to and fro,  
Leading my students by the nose,  
And see that we can know – nothing!

. . . . .

Instead all Joy is snatched away,  
What's worth knowing, I can't say,

With the removal of God and King from human affairs and with the disenchantment of reality by generations of scientists and engineers who turned Nature into a resource to be exploited, man now finds himself alone in an empty world and so despondent in a life without meaning that he is even willing to sell his soul to the Devil in a desperate attempt to break out of the limits of his own mind, in which reason has trapped him. Though Faust

becomes outwardly wealthy, he remains inwardly poor. And we must not forget that the Age of Enlightenment led not only to the French Revolution, but soon after that to the Emperor Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy.

Which brings us finally to one of the best-known critics of the Enlightenment, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). We all know his anguished outcry that “God is dead”, but not so well known are the words that followed:

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”

Like the wealth and comfort, this anguish also is part of our inheritance from the Enlightenment. Using reason, we have freed ourselves from the myths of God and King, but in doing so we have trapped ourselves with the very tool we thought would free us. And now, like the Israelites in the wilderness, we are unable to break free of our own mentality. Reason has led us to meaninglessness, which has left us feeling small, desperate and filled with anxiety. The Promised Land remains as distant as ever.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Just as with God and the monarchy, reason has also been overthrown. All the brilliant philosophic and scientific advances of the past few centuries have brought us, step by logical step, to the strangeness of the post-modern world. It took only a few years after Nietzsche for us to arrive at Albert Einstein’s (1879-1955) insight that reality is relative, at Werner Heisenberg’s (1901-1976) insight that it is indeterminable (the Uncertainty Principle), at Karl Popper’s (1902-1994) insight that ultimately truth can never be proven, at Kurt Gödel’s (1906-1978) Incompleteness Theorems that demonstrate that axiomatic mathematical systems cannot be simultaneously complete and consistent, at the bleak emptiness, of Samuel Beckett’s (1906-1989) “Waiting for Godot” and at the mind baffling insights of Quantum Physics. With every step, ironically and paradoxically, we have used our rational minds to dismantle not only reality, but rationality itself. Reason has been turned on itself to expose its own limits. After about 400 years, we have come to the end of the Age of Enlightenment, full circle from Descartes’ quest for certainty to the reluctant acceptance of uncertainty. And I believe it is this strange and confusing period we currently live in, no longer strongly tethered to either reason or truth, that has also brought us inexorably to a Kellyanne Conway, who could look straight into the cameras and assert that there are “alternative facts”.

To live knowing that you ultimately do not know and, in fact, that it is not even possible to know, is to enter an abyss of profound meaninglessness. It was the experience of this abyss that Nietzsche gazed into and that Tillich, the theologian, considered the primary hallmark of our time. And in the political domain, it is this anxiety, born of meaninglessness, that plays

directly into the hands of 21<sup>st</sup> Century autocrats. Here is Tillich from his book, “The Courage to Be”, which first appeared in 1952:

“Twentieth Century man has lost a meaningful world and a self, which lives in meanings out of a spiritual center. The man-created world of objects has drawn into itself him who created it and who now loses his subjectivity in it...The anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness is, as we have seen, the anxiety of our period.”

Although we in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have given ourselves permission to rule ourselves, apparently, we do not feel entirely up to the responsibility. The autocratic rulers of our time are not politicians in the real and original sense of the term, they are actually cult leaders. The difference between a politician and a cult leader is that a politician will admit what is not known and will ask for people’s courage to deal with the uncertainty, while a cult leader will offer the pretense of certainty and the reassurance that he is the one with the necessary courage to do the fighting for them. Rather than empowerment, authoritarians offer refuge; they offer the comforting feeling of being part of a group, which grants a sense of belonging. They tap into the resident anxiety of their base and stoke it until it becomes attached to identifiable fears, which can be translated into explosive anger; and then the outburst of anger frees their followers from the feeling of helplessness, at least for a while, and alleviates the need for individual courage. Political rallies are almost indistinguishable from soccer games; they are a form of entertainment in which an audience passively watches from the stands while the leader performs. The performance is all about the home team winning and the audience participation consists of mindless mass chanting of slogans, which is not only allowed but encouraged. And afterwards the hooligans gather in the streets for a cathartic release of their rage.

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*“History moves  
in huge cycles;  
everything  
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but something  
fundamental  
remains the same.”*

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For the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, their anxiety was triggered by the prospect of total surrender to an invisible God. For us today, it is the confrontation with the bleak emptiness of a world bereft of all meaning. As Tillich might put it, so long as we cannot find within ourselves the “courage to be” in the face of the anxiety inherent in being human, many of us will continue to avoid the responsibility of freedom and will rather seek to be temporarily soothed by charlatans. We will be like the Israelites who said to Samuel: “Give us a king who will fight for us”. History moves in huge cycles; everything seems to change, but something fundamental remains the same. Donald Trump and all the rest of the current crop of authoritarians are not an aberration; they are fitting icons for our time.

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## COVID-19 and the Global Problem of Human Security

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### Abstract

*Human security is considered in the article as a global problem. Its importance was vividly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out last year. Attention is drawn to the growing global complexity and the human lag in understanding it. It has led to the inclusion in the global agenda of the question on how to bridge this distance which began to be called “the human gap”. It is noted that the current paradigm, through which States strive to ensure their security, is not able to cope with the emerging threats to the existence of the contemporary civilization. It is suggested that the task of ensuring human security should be considered as an integral part of the global development agenda. It is proposed in this paper to direct the efforts of scientists to the scientific discussion of this problem.*

The jubilee year 2020 left complicated memories and many questions for the future. It will be memorized as the year of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory, of the establishment of the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, of the creation of the UN and UNESCO. With the anniversary background, it has highlighted the growing danger of global confrontation.

It was a year of gains and losses, of despair and hope in the fight against the coronavirus, crisis and conflict, when humanity, emerging from the captivity of false ideas, turned to the special value of human life and the revealed inability of States and international organizations to effectively protect it.

The growing complexity of the world and the lag of a human being in its understanding have formed and put on the agenda a problem that has become known as the “human gap”. It was originally described back in 1979 in a report to the Club of Rome “No Limits to Education. Overcoming the Human Gap”.<sup>\*</sup> The accelerating complexity of world processes, of living conditions, devices, means, methods and products used today makes us sometimes unable to understand their essence and the possible consequences.

The perception of ethical issues has become more acute, especially on issues of bioethics, ethics of science and artificial intelligence, in which real existential risks appeared more and more clearly against the background of artificially developed visibility of tolerance.

The four “horsemen of the Apocalypse” that are currently most threatening to humanity, as stated by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, are geopolitical tensions, climate

<sup>\*</sup> No Limits to Learning. Bridging the Human Gap. Report to the Club of Rome. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1979. 159 p. ISBN 0-08-024705-9. <https://clubofrome.org/publications/no-limits-to-learning-1979/> Date of request 09.11.2020.



change, global distrust and the abuse of new technologies, who has clearly pointed out that the world is approaching the point of no return.

The first horseman, he noted, appears in the guise of very high and increasing geopolitical tension. Terror ruthlessly destroys ever new victims. The nuclear threat is growing. As a result of military conflicts and various oppressions, more people are forced to leave their homes and join the mass migration wagon than at any time since the Second World War. In the course of increasing global competition, fierce trade, economic and technological battles are unfolding in the struggle for markets and resources.

The second horseman is the planet's existential climate crisis, threatening millions of species with extinction.

The third horseman is a catastrophic decline in the level of trust in a society suffering from social inequality, discrimination, double standards and disillusionment with political institutions and the values they proclaim.

The fourth global threat is the reverse side of the new digital world in which technological progress is faster than the ability of a human being to meet it or even to realize it.\*

Permanently developing and improving technologies change the quality of human life, bringing huge benefits, but with them a huge harm and danger. Civilization processes are being reprogrammed and reshaped on digital platforms in the interests of the few against the interests of the majority. Human consciousness is subjected to manipulative influences and is gradually transformed under the impact of purposefully constructed information flows with a wide use of fiction and historical falsifications.

There is a growing alienation, frustration, dehumanization and desocialization of people. The moral and ethical principles, on which the construction of human society is based, are going to be destroyed, and instead alternatives are offered that contradict the very nature of a human being and his life destination.

Unknown digital crimes and opportunities are emerging and being used for inciting discord and hatred—"new slavery", discrimination and exploitation of people, for mass and permanent invasion of their privacy.

A little later, adding to the biblical image, the UN Secretary-General called the worldwide coronavirus pandemic the "fifth horseman of the Apocalypse", which joined the other four and increased the destructive power of each of them. He stressed that humanity is facing an epochal health crisis and the largest economic setback since the Great Depression. Countries are experiencing major upheaval, and the already fragile foundation on which the world stands is being shaken under stress and in need of global leadership.†

Along with global security issues, the attention of the world community is now increasingly focused on the problem of ensuring the security of each human being, of each individual. The States clearly did not cope with this problem. The COVID-19 virus,

\* Guterres A. Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary General's priorities for 2020. The official website of the United Nations. 22.01.2020 [Electronic resource] URL: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-01-22/remarks-general-assembly-priorities-for-2020>. Date of request 18.04.2020.

† TVC 22.09.2020: The UN Secretary General warned about the coming Apocalypse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/193101/>. Date of request 30.09.2020

instantly spreading around the world, has made us think that humanity can be destroyed no less realistically by biological means than by nuclear weapons. The ring of global risks of the contemporary world, which includes geopolitical, economic, social, technological and environmental threats, is increasingly compressed around every human being. The forecast of the World Economic Forum that in 2020 the protest of the civil society against deepening social inequality would increase, the instability of the geopolitical environment would worsen and the number of cyber attacks would increase\* has been fully confirmed.

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*“The first duty of the state is to serve and protect its citizens. It cannot be adequately met today by an emphasis on military power alone. It is necessary to counter the threats of environmental degradation, as well as to ensure the personal health and well-being of people.”*

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According to the President of the Global Security Institute, Jonathan Granoff, “the current paradigm, through which the most influential countries seek to ensure security, is not able to cope with many dynamic threats to the survival of our civilization”. † The first duty of the state is to serve and protect its citizens. It cannot be adequately met today by an emphasis on military power alone. It is necessary to counter the threats of environmental degradation, as well as to ensure the personal health and well-being of people. In fact, a military-based approach to security exacerbates adverse conditions, rather than encourage the cooperation needed to ensure sustainable life and development. It is more appropriate to use a scientific approach based on the understanding of the need to live in harmony with the natural world, respect and protect its regenerative processes, as well as the implementation of policies and practices in accordance with the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to guarantee human dignity.‡

Realistic solutions require an awareness of the current undeniable existential global threats to humanity posed by climate change, pandemic diseases, weapons of mass destruction, as well as the daily impact on people by hunger, poverty, unemployment, crime, social scarcity and inequality, political oppression and injustice. Economic and intellectual efforts invested in ensuring the security of the State protecting its territory from aggression and promoting national interests by military means do not solve the many problems of human security, which give rise to the diversity of the causes and conditions of the existing dangerous global instability. What is needed is a comprehensive approach that refocuses on energy, resources, and success rates of the human being, on the natural and social environment in which the human beings exist.

Human security must be ensured not only in the context of the global problem of violence, but also in terms of its social, moral and spiritual security. It should be considered as an

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\* The Global Risks Report 2020, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition//World Economic Forum. Geneva, 2020. P. 4-5.

† Granoff, Jonathan. President, Global Security Institute. Approaching Human Security. CADMUS, Scientific Journal of the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS). Volume 4, No.3, November 2020, 1-4. P. 1.

‡ Ibid. P. 2.

integral part of the global agenda set out in the UN General Assembly resolution A/res/70/1 of 25 September 2015, “The 2030 agenda for sustainable development”.<sup>\*</sup> Human security is implicit in all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, it permeates the fabric of 169 targets that should ensure these goals, but still in the vast majority of cases it is not a real security policy of States. The recent establishment of the post of a Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for relations with international organizations for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals demonstrates Russia’s increased attention to this issue.<sup>†</sup>

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*“A holistic and comprehensive approach to human security opens the way to a sustainable and prosperous future.”*

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The emerging modern concept of ensuring human security requires an understanding that the well-known ancient Roman maxim about achieving peace by preparing for war is too dangerous today. It has been repeatedly confirmed in the history of human civilization that preparation for war is capable of generating it. “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”—says the Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution.<sup>‡</sup>

The obsessive desire for global domination that its contenders were never able to accomplish in human history creates unfavorable conditions for achieving human security. The principles of cooperation based on mutual consideration of interests and the rule of law, on reaching agreements and resolving conflict situations through diplomacy and negotiations are being marginalized and replaced by a “position of strength” approach.

Comprehensive human security may seem like a distant ideal, but the ideal, as we know, is capable of gaining ground, generating the necessary changes in favor of its achievement. Working together to ensure human security cannot only strengthen cooperation between States, but also provide a much higher degree of security within countries, eliminating dangerous threats and freeing up economic, organizational and intellectual resources to meet human needs. The desire to ensure human security promotes the forming of a global culture of peace, understanding the value of human life and the need to move to a higher stage of human development, which the Great Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky saw in the future noospheric civilization based on the power of reason.

It is existentially important, however, to achieve not in the distant future, but as quickly as possible the effective neutralization of vital risks that threaten any human being literally at every moment of his existence. Making lower the level of external and internal threats will reduce costs by abstaining from non-productive expensive technologies and resources. The volume and accessibility of public goods will increase, which, in turn, will lead to the

<sup>\*</sup> United Nations General Assembly 21 October 2015 Resolution Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1 A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (un.org) [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf) Date of request 02.12.2020

<sup>†</sup> RIA Novosti. 5.12.2020. President of Russia Vladimir Putin has appointed a special representative of the President for relations with international organizations to achieve the sustainable development goals. <https://ria.ru/20201205/chubays-1587771571.html> Date of request 02.12.2020

<sup>‡</sup> UNESCO in brief: mission and mandate. <https://ru.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco> Date of request 02.12.2020

development of human social security and the possibility of constructive solutions to global problems.

A holistic and comprehensive approach to human security opens the way to a sustainable and prosperous future. It allows the use of values, skills, aspirations, best practices and experiences of different people, nations and cultures. The challenges posed by pandemic diseases, climate change, weapons of mass destruction and the threats by the development of new technologies and artificial intelligence are rapidly expanding. Their analysis and impact assessment are amenable to verifiable empirical methods that use scientific tools and require global cooperation. A fundamental shift in the understanding of their theoretical and practical content is needed to make the necessary changes in policy, and these changes must be systemic and holistic. It seems that to disconnect the regenerative processes of the natural world from the economic system is simply unrealistic, to continue focusing security tasks on the State rather than on people is increasingly unjustified, and to fragment approaches to human security and sustainable development is clearly counterproductive.

Human security should be understood as a multi-faceted, multi-level right of all people, extending to all aspects of human activity. Human security should be perceived as an integrated system that includes personal health, air, water, food, living conditions, rights and obligations, interaction with the outside world and protection from possible aggression and illegal actions. Human security should be an integral principle and the highest public priority without borders and national exceptions on political, religious or other grounds. The borders and national sovereignty of States that form the geopolitical landscape of the Planet cannot serve as an effective obstacle for cross-border threats, as the coronavirus pandemic has confirmed. The stability, the sovereignty and legitimacy of States are approved today not only by human drawn borders and written laws, but also by how in the given state the security of their citizens is ensured.

The problem of ensuring human security is complicated by the global problem of inequality, which takes on catastrophic dimensions, threatening a social explosion at points of extreme tension. As the UN SG stated, today 26 people own half of the Earth's wealth,\* while more than 70% of its population is experiencing insufficiency or lack of necessary income.† Social instability is growing dangerously as a result of increasing income and opportunity inequality and the widening gap between the poor and the rich. Social inequality generates, and will continue to generate new conflicts and threats to human security until a mitigation and subsequent comprehensive solution to this problem is achieved, in the context of the global development agenda, which, however, seems to be a very distant prospect.

Global threats to the physical destruction of people and the entire civilization are not only not eliminated, they are becoming ever more dangerous against the background of irresponsible reflections of individual politicians and the military about the possibility of a "limited nuclear war". It is necessary to reduce and then eliminate the threat of a global catastrophe, which would most likely end the history of humankind. It could be done by the joint efforts of States at the global level, but the "collective West" so far has not shown its readiness to cooperate in this vital issue for all.

\* TASS, 18 July 2020 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/8999053> Date of request 17.11.2020

† Lenta RU 18 July 2020 <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/07/18/bogatstvo/> Date of request 17.11.2020

The forming of a multipolar world is taking place in conditions that have become seriously and dangerously complicated over the past year. Along with the coronavirus pandemic, the Planet has been engulfed in a frenzy of trade wars and economic sanctions unleashed by the United States and its allies, which threatens global sustainable development. Concerns about global catastrophic risks have increased markedly. This is evidenced by a representative public opinion poll conducted by the international sociological service “Novus” on the order of the Global Challenges Foundation at the end of 2020\* in 10 countries of the world.† In the published report on the results of the study, global catastrophic risks are proposed to be understood as events or threats that can cause serious damage to humanity around the world, whether immediately or in the future, with a potential impact on 10% of the world’s population or more.‡ A majority of 10,154 respondents in the 10 countries§ surveyed believe that the world is even less secure today than it was two years ago. South Africa (73%), Australia (69%), Russia (68%) and Brazil (67%) account for the largest share of those who believe that the world has become less secure. Describing the current state of the world in one word, all participants, with rare exceptions, did not use positive epithets, applying such characteristics as “terrible”, “scary”, “frightening”, “chaotic”. In the first place, 7 countries, including Russia, came out with the definition of “pandemic”. The majority of the population in all countries surveyed view climate change, environmental degradation, political violence, weapons of mass destruction, pandemics, artificial intelligence, population growth, and extreme poverty as potential global catastrophic risks. The study indicates an increased general concern about the issue of human security and worry that States are often unable to cope with it.¶

Meanwhile, in the mass consciousness assertions that in a rapidly changing world the situation is developing in such a way that globalization will soon leave no place for nation-states in it, replacing their role by transnational corporations “with social responsibility,” are being increasingly implanted. This, in particular, is discussed in the book “COVID-19: the Great Reset”, which the founder and permanent moderator of the Davos Forum, Klaus Schwab, wrote in the summer of 2020 in collaboration with journalist Thierry Malleret. Assessing the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, the authors say that humanity will never be able to return to the life that existed before. They believe that a “new reality” is being formed in the world, radically different from the previous one.\*\* Some speak about the “new normal”, expressing their belief that the virus has been, in general, very useful, providing the opportunity for a quick reset.

The vision of the future, which leaves States, their Governments and peoples in the past, offering instead a “new reality” under the auspices of “socially responsible” transnational corporations, does not specify how in this case and by whom the functions of the State will be performed to ensure law and order, human rights and human security. In any case, the activities of transnational corporations and their priority focus on their own interests

\* Global Challenges Foundation. Global Catastrophic Risks and International Collaboration. Opinion poll 2020. Report. Date of request 18.11.2020

† Australia, Brazil, China, Russia, South African Republic, Sweden, USA, Germany, India, United Kingdom.

‡ Global Challenges Foundation. Global Catastrophic Risks and International Collaboration. Opinion poll 2020. Report. P. 6 The public’s perception of global catastrophic risks Date of request 18.11.2020

§ Ibid.

¶ Ibid.

\*\* Klaus Schwab. Thierry Malleret. COVID-19: The Great Reset. Forum Publishers. 2020.

and profit-making provoke serious doubts about their ability and readiness to be “socially responsible” enough to take on the social functions of the State.

Not only such theoretical reflections on the changes taking place in the world, but also the practical manifestations of such changes cause in some cases deep concern in the world community. The 2020 US presidential election was held against the backdrop of unprecedented attacks on human rights and security, resulting in mass humiliation of human dignity. The proclaimed principles of equality, freedom and democracy, which are nominally the values of American society, were literally turned upside down in the apotheosis of destruction that engulfed the country, which in many ways called into question human security.

In the European Union today, similar processes that destroy the foundations of civilization could be observed. Ideas of transhumanism, false tolerance and transformations on this basis, ranging from the transformation of the world and society to changes in human physiology, imposed by an aggressive minority, provoke conflicts in which violence often makes the value of human life and its security insignificant concepts.

Today, scientists and research centers, including such well-known “thought laboratories” as the World Academy of Art and Science and the Club of Rome, are thinking hard about the problem of human security. St. Petersburg scientist I. F. Kefeli proposed a new concept of “asfatronics” to denote the emerging theory of a comprehensive vision of global security problems.\* At the initiative of the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), an international project was launched under the auspices of the UN Office in Geneva, called “Global Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (GL-21). The discussions and events held during the anniversary year within the framework of the GL-21 project, as well as the online session on December 15-16, 2020, testified to the high relevance of this topic and the interest that the search for ways to implement it arouses in the world. The Academy, which is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, was founded by great scientists such as Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Robert Oppenheimer and other global thinkers and was initially formed as a movement against the use of scientific research results for purposes that could harm humanity. Then it went to the counteraction to destructive trends in the field of culture and art. In recent years, the Academy has participated in the international scientific congress on “Globalistics”, which was held at the Lomonosov Moscow State University on the initiative of the Faculty of Global Processes.

On May 20, 2020 the International scientific forum on “Global social transformations and civilization prospects” was held on the online platform of the Faculty of Global Processes of the Lomonosov Moscow State University with the participation of UNESCO, World Academy of Art & Science and the Club of Rome which raised the issue of human security, made especially important against the background of the corona virus pandemic outbreak. This topic was on the agenda as “COVID-19 and Human Security” of our next joint international scientific online forum with UNESCO, the Academy and the Club on December 22, 2020 initiated by the Faculty of Global Processes and the UNESCO Chair on Global Problems of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. The opening report of Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences A. G. Chuchalin prompted the session participants to discuss the relationship between the uncertainty of coronavirus infection and the global situation generated by a new virus of an unclear origin.

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\* Kefeli I. Asfatronics. On the way to the global security theory. St. Petersburg, 2020.



The scientists of the Lomonosov Moscow State University decided to rethink in relation to the realities of today's world, which has changed radically over the past, the famous report of the Club of Rome "Limits to Growth", which became a world sensation almost half a century ago. A scientific team under the leadership of MSU Rector Academician V. A. Sadovnichy started to develop a scientific paper titled "New limits to growth", designed to assess the state of the world and perspectives of its development. The issue of human security will be given high priority in the report.

Summing up the outcomes of the year 2020, it could be seen that COVID-19 as a new global threat turned out to be a real global transformation making the world different than the way it was before. It provoked a deep global economic and social crisis comparable with the Great Depression, if not exceeding it. This global crisis was not only to a great extent unexpected, but also unusual, because it was generated primarily not by economic reasons. Its origin took root in medical and social circumstances. The crisis rapidly acquired a clear civilizational character. It has led to radical changes in the genotype of civilization and to the transitions to a new historical era in the world's civilizational dynamics. It has caused pending changes in social and economic relations and in geopolitical configurations.

The question posed was, 'Was this crisis unavoidable and what can we expect?' Opinions were expressed that the present crisis should not be considered as a negative event only. It appears that the crisis along with all its negative implications might also have positive features playing a progressive role according to Joseph Schumpeter's "creative destruction" of old, outdated elements of social and economic systems and mechanisms, opening space for innovative development.

Characteristic of every crisis, the present one has its specific features. It is a kind of a hybrid crisis combining crisis in demography, crisis in economy, as well as social and political crises. They mutually deepen and amend each other. Another specific feature is the human factor. Without indulging in the discussion if it is a human-made virus or not, it could be stated that in the origin of the crisis there is a human failure to master the threat, teaching all of us important lessons about the inadmissibility of approaches that there can be a "little" or limited use of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical or any other means of mass annihilation. The world has proved to be too fragile for it.

The crisis was caused by a pandemic factor for the first time since the 13<sup>th</sup> century when about half of the population of Europe was killed by the plague.

The crisis will inevitably lead to changes in the character and correlation of global social transformations. It will obviously raise the social role of the State and the public attention to medical care. It will decrease the mobility of the population and slow down internal and external migration processes. It will digitalize the society and change the way of life.

The crisis is a serious global challenge and problem. The task of scientists is to elaborate approaches on how to master it.

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# Epicurus, Death and the Need for Power

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## Abstract

*Culture seeks to explain our existence in the universe and to provide information about how any given society should be structured in that universe. This structure consists of a set of roles and moral rules that should be followed in that society. Human beings are the only creatures who have sufficient consciousness to establish elaborate institutions to deal with the unfortunate reality of their death. Most cultures in the world have sought to avoid this reality by establishing myths about the continuance of life in another form, such as life in a paradise or in reincarnation, for example. Epicurus was an ancient Greek philosopher who understood that the inability to confront this reality could lead to personal distress and unhappiness. Now research is confirming what Epicurus believed, by demonstrating that the denial of death may not only lead to unhappiness but to sociopathic behavior in the form of an excessive need for power. Much of human history has been influenced by (mostly) men whose need for power has led many societies to engage in endless war and conquest. It's time to recognize this problem as we seek survival in a better civilization.*

## 1. Culture and Science

All living creatures on earth are born, live and die. However, the only species that has developed elaborate institutions in an effort to confront death is Homo sapiens. We have consciousness and this affects everything we do as a species. This is not to say that we are not limited in our behavior by natural laws, as scientists increasingly reveal to us through their research. But our consciousness has led us in an amazing variety of directions through the cultures we have created in order to survive as creatures. Anthropologists, especially, have also revealed this to us through their research.

Culture is socially constructed and includes a moral system that governs our behavior as human beings. This is again within the limits of nature, which, however, cannot fully explain culture since it is a human creation based upon our consciousness. Some social scientists, nevertheless, often attempt to explain our behavior as if it were governed by laws. This is because natural science has been so influential in society owing to its success in explaining nature and aiding in the evolution of both capitalism and socialism as economic systems. In other words, these social scientists would like to be regarded, symbolically, as if they were natural scientists, with all the material and psychological rewards, including the sense of certainty, that have accompanied natural science as a human endeavor.

Culture and science are both human constructs. They interact but they are not interchangeable. Science discovers laws that govern nature, while culture creates laws

that govern society. They would be interchangeable only if society were converted into a Newtonian mechanism. At times it would appear as if some scientists and engineers might be trying to accomplish this in their applications of scientific knowledge, especially in their efforts to replace humans with robots, or by supplying data analysis to allow greater influence and control over common people (Zuboff 2019). As society becomes more and more mechanized, often with labor saving devices, we seem to be evolving into such a technological reality (Ellul, 1964). This may be what the counterculture movement that began in the 1960s was actually marching against.

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*“Philosophy, as well as art, sought and still seeks to answer the many questions about human existence that science may not be able to answer.”*

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## 2. Epicurean Philosophy

The ancient philosopher Epicurus understood well the difference between science and culture (Dewitt 1954). In both cases he sought to create a culture that would allow humans to enjoy their life on this planet. In the case of science, he sought to diminish the fear that humans had of their gods, by exploring the laws that governed nature. In the case of society, he sought to create a culture that would diminish the fear that humans might have of one another. Confronting the reality of death was important as a prerequisite for accomplishing both of these goals.

In ancient Greece, science came to life and as was rediscovered during the Renaissance, it was an integral part of philosophy. Philosophy, as well as art, sought and still seek to answer the many questions about human existence that science may not be able to answer. One such question has to do with change and the uncertainty it might entail. This relates to the idea of the dialectic, and the limitations that might exist in the sought after eternal deterministic laws that scientists and many others seek to uncover. This question of change has concerned many thinkers, including Heraclitus, Hegel, Marx and Engels, Darwin, and Thomas Kuhn, among others.

Other questions concern the explanation for the actual form of any given culture at any given time and place on the earth. Currently the most important form internationally is related to capitalism, with its ideology of predatory individualism and its eternal search for growth (Czech 2013, Cohen 2020). The main focus of this growth mania is on money or wealth, believed to be the source of human happiness. But this also affects all other aspects of our existence on earth, including especially now that the natural environment, and also human psychology, must be made compatible with the growth mania. This is true of free market societies as well as centrally controlled ones, often under the name of socialism or communism, irrespective of whether they conform to the original meanings of these terms or not.

Epicurus was opposed to this growth mania and he created a small scale “Garden” outside of Athens in which life was to be lived in simplicity and frugality, with an emphasis on love

and friendship. These ideals have been sought and often realized in many so-called utopian communities throughout the western hemisphere and beyond, including now in experiments by “cultural creatives”. These cultural creatives were discovered quite by chance during survey and other types of research by Ray and Anderson (2000) during the 1990s and earlier. This research included over 100,000 interviews, 500 focus groups and 60 in-depth interviews. It has found that there were now, according to a more recent estimate, 200 million adults in North America, Europe and Japan, who were seeking a different type of culture similar to what Epicurus had imagined over 2000 years earlier. This is not to say that they are necessarily withdrawing to a separate “Garden”, but that simply wherever they are they are seeking a more simple and friendly life style. One might imagine that these experiments are a natural evolution of the counter cultural movement (Roszak 1995 [1968]) that began in the 1960s all over the world, from China to Czechoslovakia, to France, the United States and Mexico and other locations, as well.

As a philosopher, Epicurus was also a psychologist. Even his interest in natural science was motivated by his concern to alleviate superstition, which could cause so much torment among human beings. This is unlike so much modern science and engineering which are financed by the military as a means to dominate and control both nature and fellow humans in the interest of economic growth and the accumulation of wealth. In fact, the original utopian inspiration by Epicurus included, among other things, his insistence that people abandon the need for domination and control and come to terms with their own death, as stated above, if they were to enjoy the benefits of his Garden.

We may not be absolutely certain as to how this fitted into his overall philosophy, since most of his writings were destroyed in the subsequent evolution of Greek and European society under the influence of deterministic religion with its own interpretation of death. In other words, different cultures throughout history have created religions, mythologies and other forms of folklore to help account for death, including especially the possible continuation of life after death, such as in reincarnation, or in an eternity of heaven or hell, to help conscious human beings to deal with this unfortunate, but real phenomenon.

### 3. Research Findings

Recent research (Becker 1973; Solomon, Greenberg & Pyszczynski 2015) now suggests that the problem of dealing with death may lead to extreme forms of behavior amongst certain males—though not only—in the form of *a search for power and control over everyone and everything in their social and natural environment*. This may explain Epicurus’ insistence that people stay away from political life, filled as it is with conflict among power-hungry males. Males, of course, have always had a closer relationship with death: they were the hunters, as well as the warriors who protected their families and tribes from potential invaders. Women have always had a closer relationship with life: they gave birth and offered the love and nurturing that were and are so important to the survival of the species.

It is also important to realize that men also suffer the exploitation and humiliation of these few power-hungry males (and sometimes females) as much as, if not more than females; it is not exclusively a gender-based pathology. Nor is this to imply that all leaders are sociopaths. Many leaders seek to improve the lot of the people they serve. In fact, those with the need

for power often prefer to remain in the background, like the mafia bosses, for example, or the bankers, or the various secret service agents around the world. This is an existential problem throughout society, glorified by the prevailing ideology of predatory individualism so common in today's world.

Did Epicurus anticipate the findings of current research? Did he realize that the inability to deal with death would lead to sociopathic behavior by certain individuals? He must have, or why else did he insist on dealing with death as an important element related to membership in his Garden? Otherwise, this insistence would simply appear as a quirk or eccentricity in his philosophy.

Could this give us an opportunity to imagine a better world society without all the murder and violence that have characterized human history? Yes, but we will have to deal with the various ideologies that actually condone this violence, either directly or indirectly. An example of the latter is the role of, especially, mainstream economic science. It is based on the assumption, first articulated by Adam Smith, that each individual pursuing his own personal interests would produce the best overall social result. As with so many authors, I do not think that Adam Smith would agree with the many immoral interpretations of this assumption that have followed his original pronouncement. In this sense it would appear that he was not at all like Milton Friedman, who had announced publicly that "he was a moral person but that morality was a personal matter"!

This idea of morality as a *personal* matter flies in the face of everything that anthropologists and other social scientists have discovered through years of research about how culture is created. But it appears to fit nicely with the atomistic philosophy of Democritus, implemented in the physics of Isaac Newton, the prototype of good science, at least until the appearance of quantum physics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also fits nicely with the mathematics of neoclassical economic theory, which, as an economist friend of mine once explained, is "a normative, not an empirical science". In other words, it is a science that tells you what would result if you behaved in a certain way. This can be very useful *so long as it is not confused with empirical findings*, such as those discovered by ordinary science. This contradiction is also something which more and more economists themselves are discovering, as they, like Marx before them, seek to make their science more reality based (Fullbrook, 2004; Magnuson, 2007; Raworth 2017).

Atomism also fits nicely with the reality of capitalism as a system, which values individual initiative, ignoring the sociopathic forms that this might have taken in the evolution of this system of beliefs and behaviors over time (Bakan 2004). Especially now with the dominance of financial capitalism, we see individual behavior directed to the search for wealth through any means possible, unrelated to the production of goods and services, as was its original purpose (Foster, et al, 2021). If this, as now seems likely, actually were an illusionary search for immortality, this awareness could help us evolve into a more humane system, as the neo-Epicureans or cultural creatives seek to do.

All of this points to a deeper problem within current society. We are enamored with natural science; not without reason, of course, since natural science has vastly improved our understanding of nature and society, in a related way. However, it is foolish to believe that there can be a science of society in the same manner as there is for nature. Humans

are, of course, limited by their location in nature, as are other creatures. But it is culture in a dialectical relation with nature, and biology in particular, that ultimately determines our behavior, not nature by itself. Once a natural science discovery becomes known it enters human consciousness and becomes a part of culture. Culture then determines how this discovery is to be used (or abused), with possible feedback on our biology, to say nothing of nature in general, as current scientific research is uncovering (Laland 2017). In the prevalent predatory culture that has evolved since the Renaissance during the rise of mercantilism, industrialism and the technological society generally, these discoveries are often used to extend the exploitation and domination over both nature and fellow human beings in the search for “development”, in both free enterprise and centrally planned societies alike. This, at the same time, is not to belittle the important advances in human wellbeing that the welfare states have accomplished through central planning.

Culture varies considerably over time and space, as anthropologists have discovered. Culture is an intersubjective set of rules and roles that govern our thoughts and behavior as human beings. It is not deterministic in the same sense as science refers to nature, simply because the elements of nature do not have consciousness of the sort that has evolved in human beings. Human behavior can be predicted in the short run because of the durable effects of culture on human thought and behavior, and sometimes mathematical models can be developed that illustrate this durability. But subsequent knowledge of these findings by the people themselves can and does actually alter human behavior. This is the Heisenberg principle writ large. It is also the reason why those who dominate society at any given time will attempt to block knowledge about how society is actually functioning, as this would threaten their control. They do this by controlling the information available to people in society through the many channels, especially the institutions of education and communication, that are necessary to reinvent society over time.

#### **4. Economic Theory**

Neoclassical economic theory is especially important in this respect. It is based on the mistaken belief that it can explain and predict human behavior as natural science has done for nature. It has developed elaborate mathematical models that seek to explain human behavior in relation to economic needs. Its models, however, are hypothetical, not empirical, and thus their predictive reliability is quite limited, as we have seen over the past century and more.

Currently, there are two schools of thought in economic theory, one that emphasizes the role of the individual and the other that emphasizes the role of the overall system. This reflects a long-term problem in human societies that addresses the question of the individual versus the group. How can you protect the need for individuals to express themselves psychologically and existentially while protecting the survival of the larger group? In small scale, more primitive societies, this was much easier to resolve than in the much larger scale societies that followed the evolution of urbanization resulting from increments in technology (Boehm, 2012). In short, our ability as tool-making animals has obviously at some point outstripped our ability as social animals to adjust to the new forms required to use these tools. In addition, the size and scale of the huge transnational corporations and banks does not fit well with the idea of individual initiative, since any successful actual *individual* idea is likely to be bought out or destroyed by these giant “individuals” with their inordinate wealth and power.

In a recent book by John Rapley (2017), this problem is described in a most comprehensive way, as it occurred in the history of western economic thought, in relation to the societies it was meant to serve. Rapley sees the science of economics in an anthropological sense more as a religion than a science. He also describes the two schools of thought as one that theoretically emphasizes the individual versus one that emphasizes the group, i.e., the so-called “free market system” versus the planned economy. Questioning the belief by some that science could replace the need for morality with scientific truth, he describes the conflict between these two schools which theorize economic systems in a deterministic scientific manner rather than in an anthropological way. The title of his book, as well as the contents, suggests that the religion of neoclassical economics has reached a dead end, as Marx and Engels had well understood over a hundred years ago, and that some new system of thought must replace it (*Monthly Review*, 1949 to present; *PAE Review*, 2009).

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*“The Greek word “idoni” (ιδονή) has been mistranslated and distorted as “hedonism”, with a meaning that is the complete opposite of what the word meant to Epicurus. “Idoni” refers to happiness or well-being, not pleasure sought in debauchery and orgies, or in the endless acquisition of possessions as required by a materialist economic ideology.”*

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Another book (Atbashian 2016) discusses this question from the standpoint of the centrally planned economies, those labeled as communist or socialist for symbolic reasons. He lived under and describes the many known failures of the centrally planned regime in the Soviet Union. At some point he moved to the United States, where he now believes that the original inspiration of free market capitalism is being eroded by attempts to achieve equality, especially through the efforts of labor unions. He is generally uninformed about the conditions that led to the economic successes of the capitalist system—the enormous opportunities offered by the abundance of land and natural resources in an apparently unlimited American frontier, the economic benefits of slavery, the enhanced situation of the United States which suffered little or no destruction from the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, etc., to say nothing of the benefits of imperialism to the American, European and Japanese economies for the last several hundred years. He also ignores the corruption that characterizes late capitalism (Ruppert & Fitts 2020, Marshall 2021, forthcoming), much, as he claims, also marks the centrally planned economies. Thus, in the current situation of monopoly capitalism his discussion is as idealistic as that propagated by centrally planned economies, which is a distortion of the Marxism that has inspired those systems, in any case.

Not that we can avoid the questions that economics raises, i.e., the need for the production, distribution and consumption of necessary goods, especially food. But rather than that now, besides the questions raised above, we will also have to face the necessity of designing a culture that will not endanger our existence on the planet. The belief in unending growth, the



mantra of both of the current perceptions that dominate our thoughts, will probably not allow us to survive, at least not in any form similar to that to which we have become accustomed. In so far as the religion of economics is presented as objective science, with all of the symbolic importance of that word, it will be very hard to understand this. We will first have to recognize the difference between society and nature and the resulting difference between culture and science, and the manner in which truth is established in each of these domains.

Within this current culture, the idea of unending growth serves at least two purposes. First, it allows one to imagine that growth could ultimately erase the enormous inequalities and human suffering that have been created in accomplishing this growth throughout recent human history. This is known as the “trickle-down theory”, which to some degree has worked in the first world countries and for a small minority in the Third World, usually at the expense of the poor in both those settings. Growth is therefore sacred in this conceptual framework. Secondly, growth increases steadily the power and wealth of the power-hungry individuals who are seeking immortality through this process. Only an earth-shaking change in the conception of happiness could alter this idea. Moving away from the consumerist society towards a more Epicurean idea of a life based on simple pleasures surrounded by love and friendship could accomplish this. But this would undermine the whole ethos of growth, as well as the belief that amassing possessions could bring happiness.

## **5. Epicurean Solutions**

It is in this sense that Epicurus had amazing insight into human psychology over 2000 years ago, without any of the research that has explored this phenomenon in recent years. He realized that the inability to confront death could lead to sociopathic behavior, as described in the books by Becker and Solomon, et al. The anxiety that this behavior would likely produce could keep people from enjoying their life on earth. But his thought, generally, has been so misunderstood and misrepresented that many people simply dismiss him. For example, the Greek word “*idoni*” (ἡδονή) has been mistranslated and distorted as “hedonism”, with a meaning that is the complete opposite of what the word meant to Epicurus. “*Idoni*” refers to happiness or well-being, not pleasure sought in debauchery and orgies, or in the endless acquisition of possessions as required by a materialist economic ideology. “*Idoni*” must then be understood in relation to Epicurus’ dictum to live a simple life (Λάθε Βιώσας), with a minimum of possessions, luxuries and public attention. Most utopian communities have followed this dictum rather than hedonism, as is also implied by their need to separate themselves from the larger society.

Furthermore, Epicurus emphasized the need to live in such a way as to not harm other people. The anxiety produced by such behavior, concerning the possibility that justice could ultimately be implemented, would never allow people to enjoy happiness. An article in the American periodical, *The Atlantic* (Wood 2011), speaks about research on the wealthy in America and the fears that they have. As Wood (p1) says: “Money cannot buy happiness”, and, “The respondents turn out to be a generally dissatisfied lot, whose money has contributed to deep anxieties involving love, work, and family.” (p. 2) If you follow the dictates of predatory individualism preached by the religion of neoclassical economics you are not likely to be free of the anxiety that accompanies such behavior.

The Christian religion also embodies this principle in the golden rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. In other words, not harming others helps one to achieve happiness since it relieves them of the anxiety that the others will seek justice. The need for power cannot live together with happiness. As the poet Longfellow said:

If you knew the secret history of those you would wish to punish, you  
would find a sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all your hostility.

This is also why war is so glorified, where the possibility of revenge is so immediate and obvious. The religion of neoclassical economics violates even its own Christian heritage in this sense, all in the name of social science. All this while natural science is now questioning the devotion of economics to unlimited growth, which will likely destroy the very natural environment that would allow human society even to survive on the planet, let alone grow indefinitely.

It would seem to be an excellent opportunity to return to an *unadulterated* examination of Epicurean philosophy, as Marx did in the research for his doctoral dissertation, which he then embodied in his subsequent analysis of the predatory culture of the capitalist system, especially in his early writings. It also inspired his belief that a true communal culture built upon Epicurean principles could bring a vast improvement in human existence. But this, of course, would require that communism be recognized not only as a system but as a culture with human values, and where human consciousness would not be depreciated by confusing culture with science. This would also require a system where efficiency would not be measured only in money terms, but rather as a system where efficiency would also be measured in terms of happiness, health, education and general wellbeing.

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## The Future Cannot Be Withheld

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*There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.*

**– M. Gandhi**

### Abstract

*The World has been experiencing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic which has been recognized for its severe intensity. This pandemic has been affecting human beings not only in the medical sense, but equally or even worse in social, political and economical aspects. We have to understand that this pandemic will affect future society making it different in many aspects compared to what it is today. With no signs of it ending we have to try to understand all the possible consequences and use all human capabilities to fight the pandemic so as to overcome and go around with it, with much less possible harm to humans and the environment.*

The Earth has experienced many pandemics in its history. The contemporary one looks to be one of the worst considering the level of human development. This pandemic has destroyed human life in many ways, with no clear sign of how and when it is going to end. The pandemic has raised the level of poverty, inequality, unemployment, starvation and psychological awareness. Many human beings have become self-isolated, while the wheels of the global economy have almost stopped, thus leading to another “unprecedented recession.” The coronavirus pandemic has become a very serious problem, but we have to know that humanity is faced with other issues, not in any way less severe or dreadful: nuclear weapons and climate change. The difference between these being that we will hopefully recover from this pandemic, but it will be difficult, if at all possible, to find a way out of the other two issues. In addition, the world is in deep crises in many other issues, such as in different levels of development, inequalities, unequal distribution of power, often not having an adequate capacity for making decisions, and many more.

This is in many ways a crucial moment for human civilization. We have learnt of the weaknesses of the dysfunctional character of the entire existing world system. This pandemic is, in many ways, an important alarm from which we should learn what to do and how to behave in the future and to, at least, avoid, beyond many other threats, another global recession.

COVID-19 is an “unprecedented global crisis that demands an unprecedented global response”. The coronavirus has destroyed the health of numerous people, thousands of human

lives and millions of livelihoods, limiting everyday human freedom, and capturing millions of lives across the planet. With the pandemic persisting, the resulting economic damages are likely to result in many negative effects. The fact that people are being forced to continue to self-isolate and as a result are suffering psychological disorders cannot be neglected.

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*“The planet should be governed by knowledge and concern for the environment, and not by the aspirations of the politicians.”*

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The World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), one of the leading institutions of sciences and arts in the world, is devoted to look towards the future while recognizing the existing global situation, and feels responsible to stress the following points in the current situation:

- This pandemic (COVID-19) has shown that the world, regardless of its many differences, is more unique in many aspects than is accepted in real life, and in particular by the world leaders. The same threatening processes apply equally to any part of the globe regardless of race, religion, sex, and wealth of the population. There is no way to exclude any group from the processes which threaten the existence of humanity and environment on this planet.
- The economy should be based not on the benefits from goods, but rather on the benefits to human life and the environment at large, while providing their safe existence in long run. Everything else will destroy the earth earlier than expected. The ‘profit economy’ should be understood as the residue from an old philosophy that is unfortunately still being used as one of the main real parameters in economy.
- The science of human activity should help balance all on the planet, so that they can survive in a sustainable manner as long as we do not find the way to migrate from the earth to new surroundings. This questions the basic feature of scientists: their freedom to do research.
- There is a need to treat politics not as a means to govern the world, but as a way to govern the circumstances we face on the planet. In that sense it is extremely undesirable to carry on with the arms race, the environmental catastrophes as well as with the existing “economic rush”. The planet should be governed by knowledge and concern for the environment, and not by the aspirations of the politicians.
- It is not clear if the future society will be more human than the existing one. But, no doubt, this pandemic made it clear that we are going to live in a more restricted society and environment adapting to many new rules if we want to survive on this planet. Thus, it is obvious that humanity would need to live in the future practicing more restrictions and procedures that have been defined in advance. This has definitely affected the meaning of “democracy”.
- Humanity has to recognize, as much as possible, the coming threats. The climate change issue needs to be recognized with much more pragmatic attention by the policymakers,

the industry, and in particular the economy and technology-makers. As the climate crisis deepens and an unprecedented pandemic pushes us toward a global recession, we must break many existing chains and accept a more sustainable society. It seems that this coronavirus pandemic is definitely forcing us to rethink the world structure and the ways to build it, which has not been initiated until now by any other disasters including SARS. Thus, if we want to eliminate the deepening inequalities and further harming of poor countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for reinventing many global relations, especially those which remind us of neocolonialism—paving the path to a Global Green New Deal (GGND),—which means a world running on 100 percent renewable energy.

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*“The World Academy of Art and Science will continue helping society in building a prosperous, safe and healthier future by its activities aimed to further recognize key issues related to this pandemic and other similar challenges, so as to enable society to control them and keep moving forward sustainably.”*

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- It is very encouraging to learn that human beings have, in the past, succeeded in overcoming many extreme challenges. The contemporary situation requires that we should not end shelter-in-place by practicing restrictions generally. Before returning to normal activities, those who are most responsible need to act to ensure that the disease can be controlled while equally providing safe transition to normal life without letting the world face, if possible, many future outbreaks. Certainly, all efforts should be such that marginalized groups are not disproportionately impacted in this process.
- Working together through the [COVAX Facility](#) we have to understand that it “is not charity, but it’s in every country’s best interest. We sink or we swim together”.<sup>\*</sup> We hope that it is obvious that by practicing equitable and simultaneous access to new lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines this pandemic will end.
- It is crucial to recognize that not even a single side of the problem generated by the pandemic should be underestimated. Thus, the action should not take into account only the health effects of the coronavirus, but equally the economic and other consequences and changes that will affect millions of human beings as well as our environment. We should seek a solution that will return as many people as possible worldwide to normal life, while protecting society from a complete economic downturn that could take generations to recover fully. Certainly, we have to recognize that nationalism in its many forms, especially one practiced at the moment by some countries, namely vaccine nationalism, will prolong the pandemic. Certainly, humanity has to get prepared to deal with the consequences generated by this pandemic.

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<sup>\*</sup> Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, [WHO](#)

The World Academy of Art and Science will continue helping society in building a prosperous, safe and healthier future by its activities aimed to further recognize key issues related to this pandemic and other similar challenges, so as to enable society to control them and keep moving forward sustainably.

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# **Blockchain Platform for the Organization of a Political Party, Social Movement, International Organizations, Public Companies, etc.**

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## **Abstract**

*DG Agora is a P2P system for providing confidence and organization of power. It may serve not only for the establishment of new social organizations, movements, parties, and cooperatives, but also for democratic structuring and organization of already existing power organizations of private, state or cooperative characters, as well. In the text, we focus upon the potential of this system in the social, political and corporate life of a certain community or the whole society.*

## **1. What are the Issues of Contemporary Democracy?**

Since ancient times, the times of Socrates and Aristotle, the subject of democracy has been contradictory and has been discussed up until the present day. The basic issues have always been:

- Who rules and what are the civil rights and obligations?
- What are the limits of power—limited or unlimited?
- What are the targets and who is entitled to them? (i.e. are they in the name of freedom (the individual rights) or equality (the social justice))?
- Should the social government be direct or by a representative institution and what is the attitude to the subject: “elite-masses”?
- What role does class structure play in society (social-economic and cultural prerequisites)?

Today, direct democracy (except with referenda) is practically impossible in its pure form, but the representative form leads to increasing defects, changing the essence of government. A number of theories exist on how to improve the representative democracy, but they still retain weaknesses in one or another aspect.

“The experts”, who should represent the citizens are often unfamiliar, while the choice is limited to the candidates on party lists. The same holds true about the Board of Directors in companies or pundits in nonprofit organizations.

A different type of minorities—ethnic or with other specific interests, remain unrepresented. This is especially true of the young people under 29, of whom only 20% cast their vote in the USA.

It is difficult for the elected representatives, governors, directors and leader to be held responsible because they make their promises and programs ahead of elections and procedures, thus consequently possess the comfort of several years (4-5 years terms in different organizations) in which they cannot be directly subject to control or dismissed. In this way, the so-called policy of the election cycles emerges.

Last, but not least, conditions for corruption are established in the representative power and some business sectors because of the presence of a concentration of power. The concentration of power, for its part, leads to opportunities for the manipulation of society with the purpose of an increased concentration of power. Such a cycle is synthesized in one simple phrase of one great author: “The purpose of **power** is **power**” (George Orwell).

## 2. What is the Solution?

Liquid democracy gives the opportunity to combine the advantages of direct and representative democracy, while neutralizing to a great extent their disadvantages. It is a sub-type of delegating democracy and allows the operation of a mechanism for collective decision-making of the large communities. Liquid democracy establishes such system of voting, whereby the voter has the right to vote directly or to delegate this right to a confided person, who according to them has the competency to come up with the best solution.

By the act of delegation, those who are not competent will be mindful, while those who have specific knowledge will be able to apply their competency, while both subjects bear responsibility. The delegating person has the right to authorize various experts in different areas, without limitations, when the person will not exercise his right to vote. This is a model that essentially unites the good aspects of the two types of democracy—direct and representative (when on the one hand, the person exercises his vote for everything, while on the other hand, the person gives this right to another person or a party subject for a period of time, without accountability on their part).

Another characteristic feature of liquid democracy is its negotiability; i.e. authorizations may be granted to second or third subjects. This is a recommendation for voting, but not a blind authorization.

## 3. Advantages of Liquid Democracy

- *Truly democratic*

Unlike the other two types of democracy where personality is either overloaded or very weakly involved, here every person decides to what degree he or she will be involved.

- *Easy access and low-level entry*

To participate in this system, people who are already members have an easy mechanism to guarantee and confirm the authenticity of every new personality.

- *Cooperation is in the foreground before the competition.*

The important thing is not so much to win in the individual campaigns, but to gain the permanent confidence of those who support you.

- *Liquid democracy establishes and promotes responsibility, because in its essence there is an exchange of confidence, which attributes its value!*

If confidence is violated, the voting person has the right to exercise his right to vote alone, or to give it to someone else. Because anybody, at anytime may lose confidence, they will have a stimulus to vote in favor of the community/society, rather than that of their personal interest.

- *Liquid democracy gives a guaranteed access to the minorities, without the need of protectionist quotas or a strife to overcome the limitation through enacting a percentage threshold or other such policies.*

**In this model, when considering a larger scale, we will have a direct reflection and a real representation of a social structure.**

- *It leads to better and informed solutions.*

The confidence will be won by the most gifted, knowledgeable and experienced experts.

- *Liquid democracy is effective and has the capacity to build a new system for government and the organization of society.*

In the age of narrow specialization, only a few people may be competent on many issues, but through liquid democracy, people are included and active even via the granted choice of a competent and/or confided person.

#### **4. How can the model of Liquid Democracy be improved and introduced by means of the Blockchain Technology?**

*In order to realize the blockchain technology, it is easiest first to grasp that the Jacquard loom is already located on the Internet! We already operate in the digital world and thus we are already creating a history of online activity. What is offered by the AGORA 2.0 platform is to begin to build upon it by providing the confidence in an anonymous and decentralized way. P2P technology allows precisely this, the blockchain will only prove to us whether this is happening, or if this has already happened. The synergy with the blockchain technology will bring democracy, governance and decision-making to a new level, as well as a change of the status quo and a construction of a new paradigm for society's evolution. Blockchain provides the right mechanisms to exercise liquid democracy.*

The public life, the contemporary agora, is replaced gradually into digital space because it no longer finds soil in the physical world. The future path for civil, political or corporate involvement of personalities or communities is not by the physical presence of meetings but by an active involvement and construction of a network of horizontal relations in the digital world and contemporary online platforms.

**Among the most essential issues remains the issue of confidence! This is the reason there should be a guarantee for the citizens concerning the authenticity and invariability of their choice, of the already granted or assigned confidence.** Blockchain technology will allow the establishment of an Eternal public record of these relations, without violating the anonymity of individual persons.

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*“DG Agora is a digital SAAS created to empower public companies, large NGOs, political parties, governmental bodies and civil movements with a novel cost-effective communication system that brings engagement of their shareholders, members, stakeholders and voters in an inclusive secure way and makes it possible to apply liquid democracy for a much more fluid and transparent governance.”*

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The mediation in the undertaking of socially significant decisions by the system of the representative democracy not only in political dimensions, as we already demonstrated, is a phenomenon which is proving its growing inefficiency. Each concentration of power in a separate individual almost always distorts or makes mercenary the social expression of will. Through blockchain technology we can establish a system for issuance of authorizations, allowing anyone to be able in real time to empower their own personal representatives or to take away their confidence and power.

## 5. What is DG Agora?

DG Agora is a digital SAAS created to empower public companies, large NGOs, political parties, governmental bodies and civil movements with a novel cost-effective communication system that brings engagement of their shareholders, members, stakeholders and voters in an inclusive secure way and makes it possible to apply liquid democracy for a much more fluid and transparent governance of investor and shareholder members relations.

There will be no more costly communication with investors and shareholders, no more ineffective general assemblies and poorly uninformed decision making!

DG Agora equips interested stakeholders with a powerful digital tool to engage with their customers, maintain trust and develop agile and transparent approach in a situation of sensitive societal and managerial matter like shareholders' activism, real-time sociology and patients' democracy.

There will no longer be disengaged members and uninformed voters. DG Agora brings inclusiveness, continuous engagement with its members and tools to understand the data behind this interaction for precise and cost-effective decision making.

It is done by bringing in the most sophisticated system for exercising opinion for effective governance, known as liquid democracy for concrete business cases. Impossible until now,

DG Agora achieves it by deploying Blockchain technology and a deep understanding of the communication processes.

DG Agora allows every user (depending on the segment—a shareholder, asset manager/member of a cluster/NGO or member of a party) to vote in all kinds of general assemblies, board meetings, elections or voting events via a smartphone—practically from any place and in any time. DG Agora serves segments which are:

- Huge organizations such as UN, World bank, OECD for communication with members and stakeholders, decision making, distributing of funds, etc.
- Nonprofit Organizations—discussion and communication with donors and members, pool for collecting of opinions;
- Civil movements for self-organizing, self-legitimizing and power proving (in front of authorities), etc.
- Government and local authorities for organizing digital referenda for governance, redistribution, decentralization, etc.
- Political parties for internal organization, real time discussions, real time sociology, decision making, consensus building, getting influence, etc.
- Corporations and Public companies for shareholders' activism (attracting new shareholders for new IPO companies, and SRCs for decentralizing and unbossy governance)—a decision making tool for shareholders annual meeting, internal employees discussion, clients and stakeholders communication for feedbacks and co-creation of solutions, etc.

All of the above segments are in a rapid change and a high pace of adopting digital solutions to improve governance and transparency.

The platform seeks niche deployment of technology and functions for specific cases like social movements structuring, policy digitizing, shareholders' activism, companies with fragmented clientele, and companies in a need for better stakeholder engagement. Our comparative advantages are: facility to customize the product for different use cases, security and high quality Blockchain technology, team connections and deep understanding of the market.

DG Agora is co-founded by three team members with unique combination of skills and experiences. Mariana Todorova is the ideologist and inventor of the platform. She is a recognizable futurist with a PhD, an ex-politician, trend-scout, speaker and book author, head of the Bulgarian chapter of Millennium Project Think Tank and fellow of World Academy of Art and Science. Ivan Vankov is among the most respected IT specialists, an experienced software architect, lecturer and noble figure in blockchain community, co-founder of the widely successful Plastic Bank Project backed by IBM and currently in implementation in 5 countries. Lyubomir Stankov is a Blockchain enthusiast with over 20 years of experience of running his own business, and a member of the MENSA community.

The management structure is already in place as well as the formation of the Advisory board comprised by influential figures in the international scene of entrepreneurship,

Blockchain for governance, policy making and prospective studies. The core team is set-up including tech team, MVP version of the product is released, the platform was presented at important events, key users were identified and letter of intent is expected.

In the 10 years horizon, DG Agora aims to be among the global leaders of providing liquid democracy as a service to domestic and supranational political parties, regional (municipalities), national, federal and state departments/governments and non-governmental organizations with large member communities.

Our objectives are to start the service in the civil sector and then to transfer it to political parties, corporations, cooperatives, communities, etc.

## 6. What is Blockchain?

Blockchain is an approach for the storage of information into a computer network, which is a constantly growing list of computer records, called “blocks”, connected with each other and encrypted cryptographically. The chain of blocks contains information for all the operations/ transactions ever performed in the database, starting from the very beginning. Each block contains information of the previous block. This provides for the chronological totality of the chain back to the first block.

Each block consists of a headline part and a list of transactions. The headline part of the block includes its own “hash”, as well as a hash of the previous block, the hashes of the transactions and additional service information. The information in the blocks is not encrypted and is accessible. This technology has been invented to guarantee security by its own design, because it does not allow modification of the data.

## 7. How can we be sure that no one may change the information?

### (Some technical aspects)

When there is a constructed process between two or more sides, this process (the platform) will be observed by all of them. Blockchain removes the centralized point; in other words, in the case of the parties—the party monopoly which concentrates the power on who can be chosen as leaders and what ideas and causes can be formulated and defend will exist. In the case of the distributed ledger—each one of the participants has their own copy of the data. In the case of electronic voting and the election system, they will possess the results simultaneously with all the rest. *While for the blockchain party platform this will mean that each person in real time will be able to see the rating of the offered persons and ideas. Each person registered on a network level will have the same information infrastructure, which is synchronized simultaneously. The distribution of information to all the participants makes its manipulation practically impossible.*

Blockchain technology (Distributed ledger technology) is a guarantee against the intervention in the information; because all the participants have the same information available. Each person in the chain may review and audit the data. If someone tries to change the information, the entire blockchain will collapse. This would happen due to the fact that each block contains information about the previous block. Within the framework of the so-called smart contract, we clarify the rules of work and the actions in concrete steps (A, B, C, D...).

While the smart contracts are a program code (chain code). The program code has the capacity and the capabilities to be perfected and made complex. That is, it guarantees to the user a process of repeated action. Only they (the smart contracts) may be able to read the ledger.

A number of actions may be performed in the set condition that step B may be performed only when step A is a fact. The same applies to C, which may require a simultaneous or consecutive performance of A and B, etc. The operation is not performed at one centralized place, rather it can be performed from any location. Thus, confidence between the participators, which initially do not have confidence, may be guaranteed.

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# Accessing the Untapped Resource of Humankind through Critical Cultural Action & Embodied Arts Praxis

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## Abstract

*To powerfully access humankind around the world to act systemically, we must engage an authentic critical praxis, reflecting on direct experience in connection with strategic action. Only by understanding power can we transform it. Through the development of critical cultural action, everyday people learn to understand power; how its structures are embedded in society; and, then, have the knowledge to take effective local action. Creative, somatic and sensory information are crucial and powerful aspects which have been left out of most efforts for social change and which hold much potential for healing, social transformation, social justice and systemic action in the everyday. An emphasis on embodied praxis makes the entirety of the human being relevant and meaningful and enables a humanising global agenda that incentivizes us to explore all dimensions of our humanity. A global grassroots curriculum with a profound humanising incentive coupled with somatic competencies, enables us to cradle the traumatic wounds of our global crisis that keep populations divided, and can set a solid foundation for transformative global healing and social change. The acknowledgement and embrace of our suffering in a meaningful and intentional way can go hand in hand with the transformation of it. Cultures imbued with a critical, embodied artistic praxis can cultivate deeper understandings of what it means to be human, of possibilities for human development, and new possibilities of ways to relate to ourselves as well as to each other and hence open important pathways towards a new social architecture.*

*The smallest incidents of our social life contain all the moral and political values of society, all its structures of domination and power, all its mechanisms of oppression.*

– **Augusto Boal**

## 1. Accessing the Untapped Resource of the Humankind

Activism and efforts for sustainable development are currently focused on third sector NGOs and organisations working on world poverty and environment etc. However, in order for activism to be sustainable in the long term we will need small-scale, micro-activism to redistribute the work of social justice into many hands rather than a designated few. Furthermore, social sciences have clearly revealed that there is no isolation of social phenomena. Specialised fields such as the Anthropology of Development have highlighted

that the structures and behaviours which sustain poverty, the environmental crisis and world issues are embedded into everyday lives. And hence, everyone has the possibility to take action for the profound level of social change required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The question is how? This paper brings forward key methods to access the untapped resource of humankind for global social change. We put forward forms of critical cultural action and embodied arts praxis. These frameworks can be multiplied, scaled out and utilised in diverse contexts, to engage and accelerate global social change and systemic action on world issues.

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*“Praxis is an experiential form of learning by which one understands and generates knowledge through direct experience. By giving everyday people tools, resources and facilitators to develop a critical praxis we can unlock everyday experiences to generate social leadership and the broad-based social transformation required for achieving the SDGs.”*

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## 2. Introduction: Levels of Systemic Action

Social systems can be understood as functioning simultaneously on three interrelated levels: the macro level of government and international social institutions, the meso level of organizations and communities, and the micro level of individuals and small groups. Activism tends to focus on the macro and meso levels, leaving out the incredible untapped resource of humankind.

### 2.1. The Importance of Working at the Micro-Sociological Level.

Working at the micro level with everyday people closes the gap between theory and practice through being informed and connected to everyday realities. Furthermore, it works to support change in the relational fabric of our lives so that structural shifts carved for a new social architecture can correspond with authentic transformations in attitude and behaviour. As Adrienne Maree Brown points out: “What we practice on the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.”

Social norms are articulated and maintained through various forms of social control—from laws (macro level social control), to company policy (meso level), to peer pressure (micro level). All of the injustices and global issues we face also play out in the lives of everyday people. By focusing on the intimate injustices playing out in the context of the present moment between people who are directly, mutually, and concretely affected by them, we activate agency and engagement. We ‘bring home’ the rhetoric of global issues by making them personal and meaningful through direct everyday experience. By being meaningful, personal and engaging in context, we can access the untapped resource of the humankind.

We not only need to just access the untapped resource of humankind, but we need to do so in a way that engages them to act powerfully and systemically on our global issues.

Somatic and sensory information and embodied praxis hold that tremendous potential for unlocking major levels of transformational social change. Somatic theory (Gendlin, 1978; Hanna, 1970; Johnson, 1983; Yuasa, 1987) suggests that cultivating embodied consciousness produces/elicits an altered state of consciousness, and Hanna (1970) suggests that this shift in consciousness can serve as a locus for resistance against oppression. More specifically, many somatic practitioners (Johnson, 2003) argue that being comfortably anchored in a solid, felt experience of the body in relation to other bodies is so phenomenologically different from the experience of “othering” or being “othered” that it provides a compelling counterpoint to hierarchical models of social power—a place from which to experience the world differently even when the social structures through which that experience is shaped have not yet changed. Somatic theory (Greene, 1997), as well as social theory (Foucault, 1990; Johnson, 2001), would understand this process as having profound implications for social structures, based on the premise that social structures are created and reproduced through a web of interpersonal relations. When those relationships change—body by body—so, eventually, do the structures.

Embodied arts praxis and sensory information are crucial and powerful aspects which have been left out of most efforts for social change and which hold much potential for healing, social transformation, social justice and systemic action everyday. These provide a key bio-social axis\* through which we can access humankind in a meaningful, powerful, and transformational way for systemic action on world issues.

### **3. Critical Cultural Action: How to Activate Systemic Action in the Everyday**

The unity of theory and practice begins in everyday experiences.<sup>1</sup> Praxis is an experiential form of learning by which one understands and generates knowledge through direct experience. By giving everyday people tools, resources and facilitators to develop a critical praxis we can unlock everyday experiences to generate social leadership and the broad-based social transformation required for achieving the SDGs.

#### **3.1. What is Critical Praxis and Critical Cultural Action?**

A critical praxis has a transformative agenda. The transformative agenda is not on the surface. It goes under the surface to the roots and causes that are embedded in society. According to Ledwith, “empowerment needs an analysis of power to be transformative, otherwise, it remains a personal, individual act of self-belief rather than political, liberating movement for change.”<sup>2</sup> A critical praxis involves critical reflection on direct experience in connection with strategic action.

Critical praxis enables us to question taken for granted aspects of everyday experiences in order to extraordinarily re-experience our life and embody movements of change. It enables people to see power in action, and therein act strategically on it as well as co-create new knowledge and new stories about our world. A critical praxis highlights assumptions hidden in the contradictions of everyday life. It engages A) the questioning of everyday experience

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\* Axis points act as key leverage points for systemic change. See: Julene Siddique and Peter Joseph, *The Social Architect: A New Framework for Effective Activism and Leadership* (To be Published in Cadmus Journal May 2021)

and B) making critical connections to the structures of society that discriminate so that each person can C) have an understanding of how to act systemically to change things for the better. A critical praxis practiced collectively becomes critical cultural action.

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*“Critical cultural action means the mutual development of individual autonomy alongside collective agency.”*

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### **3.2. Without Critical Cultural Action there is No Authentic Social Transformation.**

Stewart Hall warns: “Action will not result in change unless the analysis on which the action is based is critical.”<sup>3</sup> Efforts for social change must be critical in order to be effective. We are currently lacking both a critical focus and the ability to engage diverse populations outside the development sector. Critical cultural action is also crucial for development sector professionals. Shaw explains: “If you are uncritical you end up delivering top-down practices that end up increasing injustice.”<sup>4</sup> He argues that without critical praxis and cultural action we end up with “actionless thought and thoughtless action.” Critical cultural action is built on lived experience. Ideas are not capable of transformation without critical action.

An authentic critical praxis exposes the relations of domination and subordination. Gramsci writes on these forces of oppression and highlights coercion—through law, police, arms; and in parallel to this, ideological persuasion in order to gain the consent of the public. Gramsci argued that a transformative praxis needs to address both. He warns about negating it in attempts for social change saying that: 1. we have more of the same; 2. we have a transformed version of the same; 3. we achieve relations radically transformed based on social justice. Therefore, in order to achieve authentic social transformation a critical cultural praxis is essential.

We learn which human characteristics are valued and which are not—and we learn how to navigate our relationships with others informed by the power and privilege that are attached to those characteristics. Scholars of implicit bias<sup>5</sup> have shown that we may remain largely unconscious of our prejudice against those we are taught to consider ‘inferior’ or ‘other,’ even when our conscious beliefs affirm the equality of all human beings. This is where critical praxis comes in, as it allows us to become aware of our everyday assumptions. It changes how we understand things ourselves as well as how we relate to and engage with others. An individual critical praxis which is then expressed collectively as critical cultural action, enables a collective shift in consciousness in relation to power and control in society. It exposes the contradictions leading to privilege on one hand and inequalities and injustices on the other, and enables systemic action.

Critical cultural action means the mutual development of individual autonomy alongside collective agency. It develops a culture of questioning and learning and an empowering process which enables more people to believe in the possibility of genuine societal transformation. By developing critical praxis and critical cultural action, we activate the lifeblood of humankind, that is their everyday lived experience, their bodies, their feelings, their lives, and utilise it for the development of sustainability practiced as an art of systems change.

#### **4. Critical Community Development: Systemic Action on the ‘Axis of Culture’<sup>6</sup>**

Freire offers a complete process that starts with critical consciousness in local communities following through to transformative collective action for change on a global level. The process starts with the profound belief that everyone has the human right to dignity and respect, that there exists a pedagogy of love to counter the pedagogy of hatred and that all people are capable of the thought and action needed to change our world for the better.

A critical praxis is only transformative if situated in its social, political and economic context and utilises a collective approach. Therefore, on the axis of culture, through an approach which engages everyday experience, we can begin the process of transformation through humanising that which is dehumanising. Processes of dehumanisation can include:

- **Cultures of Silence** – oppression creates passive acceptance of unjust conditions because people blame themselves for the suffering. Critical community development enables a critical dialogue of thought—action—praxis which enables people to understand that their circumstances are not due to their own inadequacies but are a result of societal structures.
- **Structural Discrimination** – becoming aware of everyday lives as systemically structured societal relations of domination and subordination. A critical praxis cannot be passive in this process; through its critical dialogues and praxis it should expose contradictions, myths, pathologies and root causes of social injustice.
- **Dehumanising Stories** – stories which dehumanize marginal groups in the name of power, invading minds for consent to oppressive forces. These stories can filter into public consciousness as an unquestionable truth that becomes embedded into the structure of society. It is therefore crucial to create spaces for critical dialogue through which dehumanising stories can be questioned. In the process of questioning<sup>7</sup> the dehumanising story should engage the mapping of intersectionality, i.e. the process of mapping critical connections for how this dehumanising narrative connects to societal structures and institutions. The critical discussion and mapping of dehumanising narratives play a key role in the development of systemic action.

Critical Community Development is a form of critical cultural action based on Freire and Gramsci. It requires few resources other than a ‘Critical Educator’. The process proceeds as follows:<sup>8</sup>

- 1. Create a Context** or a space for people to question their everyday experiences.
- 2. The Critical Educator** listens from the heart, with empathy, mutual respect and believes in the people’s ability to engage critical change.
- 3. Generative Themes are Identified.** These are themes that generate passion because they are relevant to people’s lives and that release apathy of hopelessness and powerlessness of circumstance. Many local activists and community workers will be aware of the local generative themes. The critical educator may work with these people in advance to become aware of these themes. Ledwith explains: “People will act on issues which they have strong feelings about. There is a link between emotion and the motivation to act.”<sup>9</sup>

4. **Using a Problematising Method.** The generative themes are then decontextualised from their everyday 'taken for grantedness' and questioned in order to see the unacceptable contradictions and power relationships. People then map and make critical connections where they link cultural, political, social and economic issues with their everyday life experience.
5. **The Concerns of the People are Captured in Artistic Codifications.** These can be stories, photos, cartoons, drawings, poetry, music, drama etc. It should be simple and capture the familiar scene from everyday life that relates to the generative theme.
6. **These Artistic Codifications are then Decoded in a Mutual Horizontal Dialogue.** Simple questions like 'what's going on?', 'who is affected?' start the process of engaging critical thinking for the mapping of critical connections in their society. By, firstly, engaging content which is meaningful to their lives; then, secondly, questioning 'it's taken for granted' assumptions; and then, thirdly, mapping its intersectionality, i.e. how it relates to the structures in society, the participants gain the capacity for systemic action. It is important to note that this process that Freire calls 'conscientization' must be rooted in reciprocal relations—where the educator is the teacher/learner and the student is the learner/teacher. **Always questioning and not telling people how to think** creates the context for the development of individual autonomy and collective agency.

In these critical cultural spaces counter-narratives are created and new understandings are born which are powered by everyday life experience and hence have the ability to breed critical cultural action. **Only by understanding power can we transform it.** Through the development of critical cultural spaces, everyday people learn to understand power; how its structures are embedded in society; and, then, have the knowledge to take effective local action. Critical consciousness is exercised through practical projects. Working towards a world built on a value for the wellbeing of the human being and the planet. We build the capacity for the development of a politics of love to counter the politics of hatred, grounded in the lived experience of everyday people.

## 5. Engaging Embodied Praxis: The Body as a Key Axis for Systemic Action<sup>10</sup>

Critical cultural action can take on a higher level of transformative potential through engaging somatic arts for both healing and social justice. An embodied (somatic) praxis enables us to feel deeply into the effects of social issues and provides a sensory and means to transform our individual experience and navigate strategic pathways for powerful action in everyday scenarios. There is an increasing consensus from the scientific community<sup>11</sup> that the lived experience of the body, that is our bodily sensations, perceptions and behaviours, play an important role in how we experience the social world and, in particular, how we enact asymmetric power relations. Not only are our bodies a primary site for the reproduction of unjust social systems, our bodies also bear the impact of discrimination and oppression. Traumatologists are increasingly coming to understand the degree to which trauma (including the complex trauma of oppression) is experienced and held in the body<sup>12</sup>—particularly in the nervous system—and expressed in our relationships and interactions with others.

Although our bodies can be co-opted, hijacked, and colonized by the forces of domination and control, they are also crucial, and often untapped, sources of knowledge, creativity, and connection.<sup>13</sup> Activist and scholar Emma Goldman (1869-1940) famously stated: “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution.” She points to the central feature of an everyday, embodied activism—the emphasis and insistence on pleasure<sup>14</sup> and healing. If we are to access humankind and meet the challenges of a sustainable grassroots paradigm shift, it must be with what Rob Brezny calls a “**fierce, primal YES**”. Our creative and generative impulses must be enlisted and supported, not just our critical and destructive ones.

The benefit of engaging embodied praxis is it enables us to enter all levels of society in a meaningful and powerful way with greater potential for social transformation. Building social spaces of trust, we can enter any level of society and supply people with skills, literacies and capacities that enable them to take powerful systemic actions in their everyday lives. **Furthermore, to incentivise embodied praxis is to create an incentive for global participation in an agenda that demands all of us to explore all dimensions of our humanity. An emphasis on embodied praxis makes the entirety of the human being relevant and meaningful and enables a humanising global agenda.**

**Embodied Praxis.** Embodied Praxis is built on the notion that harnessing the lived experience of our bodies is a necessary component in creating sustainable and equitable social change. This framework introduces a form of embodied, everyday activism that proposes that 1) it is possible to identify and transform the harmful effects of oppression; and that 2) each of us are agents for positive social change in the context of our own lives. The method endorses the development of a somatic literacy that addresses both the personal and the political dimensions of bodily experience.

Embodied praxis brings us into a key area of systemic action—bio-social axis points.<sup>15</sup> Furthering the transformative potentials of culture, by incorporating the body and an embodied praxis we engage a bio-social interface of factors. Through bio-social axis points, we can engage and act on multiple aspects of a system, and, hence, locate key leverage points for changing that system. In this case we refer to bio-social leverage points to leverage change in ourselves, our culture, our social system and societal institutions. Three key bio-social axis points will be outlined below along with practices for taking effective action in the micro level, i.e. unlocking humankind for systemic action and global social change.

## **6. Bio-Social Axis 1: 7 Steps to Begin an Embodied Praxis**

Embodied praxis enables us to engage with new processes of social learning<sup>16</sup> which can enable and empower ordinary citizens to create meaningful social change in their own lives and affirms their capacity for leadership and activism. It enables them to become more aware of power dynamics and processes of exclusion in order to activate their capacities as everyday change agents. Everyday embodied praxis constitutes a form of micro-activism. It includes strategies and practices for enlisting our bodies toward enhanced moral courage and effective conflict resolution and the undoing, disarming, preventing, and resisting the harmful effects of microaggressions.<sup>17</sup>

We need to understand that systems of oppression are interlocking and mutually reinforcing, and to recognize that although systems of oppression are never about individuals



per se, individual effort can and does make a difference. While one may not have created the conditions of oppression that currently exist, one must accept the fact that failure to resist these systems of oppression effectively maintains the status quo. All the oppressive system needs to thrive is a person's willingness (conscious or not) to go along with it. Although not all oppression is enacted through the direct subjugation of the body, our bodies are always on the line. An embodied praxis is about incorporating this knowledge in everyday life. We outline 7 key strategies here to begin an embodied praxis:

- 1. Reflect.** Doing the difficult work of examining how oppressive social systems have affected you on a personal level is one of the foundations of effective embodied praxis. When you do not know how you have been wounded by patriarchy, racism, capitalism, heteronormativity, ableism, or other forms of discrimination, it is easy to be triggered and reactive when these issues surface in your interactions with others (even allies and fellow activists). On a somatic level, through an embodied praxis, this self-examination can be especially transformative.
- 2. Identify and Uncouple Trauma Patterns.** Oppression is a form of trauma, evidenced now by a considerable body of research. Discover how your body has responded to this ongoing traumatic event, and learn about some common somatic effects, including hypervigilance and chronic hyperarousal of the autonomic nervous system, somatic dissociation, and intrusive body memories. Work to uncouple environmental cues from unconscious reactive patterns so that you are better able to witness your body in the moment and support your ability to be resourced in difficult situations.
- 3. Reclaim your Body Image.** One of the most insidious ways that oppressive social systems maintain their power is by convincing the oppressed that there is something fundamentally wrong with our bodies. We are too fat, too flat-chested, too tall or too short; our skin is too dark and our hair is too curly; we use a wheelchair or a cane; our eyes are the wrong shape or colour. The list is endless, and the work of managing, correcting, and hiding what is "wrong" with us is exhausting and demoralizing. If we channelled all the time, energy, and resources devoted to making our bodies socially "acceptable" (to the degree that is even possible) and redirected it instead toward cultivating and celebrating the uniqueness of our body selves, the social world would be such a rich and vibrant place. We are not suggesting that we always find ourselves in a body that fits who we are, or that we should not make changes to our bodily appearance; what we are suggesting is that body shame is a tool of oppression, and finding ways to radicalize and reclaim our body image serves us all.
- 4. Cultivate your Senses.** Another key strategy of oppressive social systems is a tendency to promote a dissociative or disconnected relationship with the felt sense of the body. While we are encouraged to identify with the outside appearance of our body, we are discouraged from feeling ourselves from the inside. Sensuality is often misappropriated as sexuality, and the palpable enjoyment of our own bodily capacities and appetites may be judged as unseemly. The process of socialization in many cultures involves the cultivation of a master/servant attitude toward the body that renders our senses as little more than tools in the project of self-mastery, rather than as gifts to be celebrated and enjoyed in their own right.

- 5. Examine your Non-Verbal Communication.** Research into the interpersonal dynamics of body language suggests that oppressive social systems are reproduced and reinforced by the everyday nonverbal interactions with others whose social standing differs from ours. These asymmetrical interactions occur when a person with higher social rank is permitted to use movement, behaviours that are forbidden to the person with lower social rank—for example, the right to take up more space, to use forceful, direct movements, and to initiate touch. Learning how nonverbal communication informs your interactions with others can help you shift the patterns that reinforce harmful power dynamics.

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*“Engaging a process of healing themselves, deepening self-knowledge whilst acting critically in the everyday to carve new relationships for the new social architecture required to effectively achieve the SDGs.”*

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- 6. Liberate your Movement.** Once you have explored how body movement can be co-opted by oppressive social systems to reinforce inequitable power dynamics, continue the process of self-liberation by experimenting with movement expressions that are unique to your own body. Allow yourself to stretch into new shapes, rhythms, and movement qualities that express who you are and how you feel on the inside. Explore relational space in new ways. Claim the pleasure and authority of your own movement preferences.
- 7. Learn about your own body privilege and how it manifests.** In the same way that our bodies are shaped by experiences of oppression, so too are they shaped by experiences of privilege. The unearned benefits of having a body that meets the criteria for membership in a socially dominant group are considerable. Even if we do not choose or do not want these privileges, they attach to us and afford us access and ease in countless ways—being able to walk down a city street without being afraid of harassment or attack, being able to gain access to public buildings using the main entrance, using the restroom that fits your gender, not being seen as exotic, or dangerous, or feeble-minded just because of the way your body looks or moves.

Each of us holds a unique combination of body privilege along with bodily oppression, so unpacking the privilege your body affords you is as important a part of embodied activism as exploring the somatic implications of being oppressed. In particular, be attentive to social situations in which your body feels particularly comfortable or unremarkable—the luxury of inattentiveness is a hallmark of privilege. Notice also when your body reacts with vague apprehension or distaste to the bodies of others, and ask yourself if you hold more body privilege than they do.

**Embodied Praxis enables everyday people** to become engaged with their bodies and their humanity. It gives them the skills to read, understand and act systemically, altering the social fabric through their everyday interactions. Engaging a process of healing themselves,

deepening self-knowledge whilst acting critically in the everyday to carve new relationships for the new social architecture required to effectively achieve the SDGs. The importance of engaging embodied praxis in the everyday cannot be understated. We have so far only engaged the macro and meso levels of activism, this underutilised micro level underscores the majority of the population and, hence, gives us the ability for transformational embodied global social engagement.

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*“A global grassroots curriculum, implementable at all levels of society whose intention is to incentivise us all to better understand and develop our humanity is critical for genuine social transformation.”*

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**Training Up the Know How.** These critical skills, literacies and capacities outlined above as well as curriculum already evaluated and produced on the ‘embodied everyday activism’,\* can activate humankind for profound social transformation can be taught or trained online or offline in a range of formats. Outreach programs can also be created and modified to suit the needs of the participants and the skills of the particular instructor. This content can also be expanded to strengthen a global grassroots movement which can act in integral collaboration with Social Architects<sup>18</sup> for systems change.

**Scaling out Embodied Praxis.** Delivered within an educational context as a larger program, the curriculum could include

1. the cultivation of conscious embodiment as an essential element in the development of critical consciousness;
2. the development of somatic literacy (in addition to the other forms of literacy designed to help students become more aware of social conditions);
3. an emphasis on the engaged quality of the teacher-student relationship;
4. the use of narrative as approach to accessing the felt experience of the body;
5. the expansion of recognized sources of institutionalized oppression to include those whose impact on the body is particularly strategic (e.g., medicine); and
6. the cultivation of the teacher’s own embodied critical consciousness as a first step in teaching students how to unlearn oppression.

**A global grassroots curriculum,** implementable at all levels of society whose intention is to incentivise us all to better understand and develop our humanity is, in fact, critical for genuine social transformation. To heal social injustice, we have to know how to trace it, understand it, and remove it from our bodies. A focus on the social microcosm as the locus

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\* For the past 20 years Rae Johnson and her colleagues have been researching the embodied experience of oppression and have been developing a teaching curriculum predicated on the notion that harnessing the lived experience of our bodies is a key component of equitable sustainable social change. The modules have already been individually evaluated and could be combined into a larger curriculum.

of intervention stems precisely from the visceral immediacy of face-to-face interactions as the site of contested power and social change. Although frequently overlooked as a source of knowledge and understanding, our embodied selves are critically important in the navigation of social power relations and the creation of new possibilities for being with one another.

A global grassroots curriculum with a profound humanising incentive coupled with somatic competencies which enable us to cradle the traumatic wounds of our global crisis that keep populations divided, can set a solid foundation for transformative global healing and social change. It holds the key potential for transforming our current state of bio-social crisis into a platform for collective transformation and bio-social evolution. This change in awareness and consciousness which arises from incorporating embodied perspectives and critical engagement with everyday life experiences can become the lifeblood of meaningful, powerful engagement with all of humankind, and untapping global social leadership in everyday people.

## **7. Bio-Social Axis 2: Trauma Healing and Social Justice**

The next important bio-social axis for systemic action is trauma. Trauma models are increasingly focused on healing the embodied impact of oppression.<sup>19</sup> Trauma serves as a critical bio-social axis for engaging both healing and social justice and also holds great potential for exploring capacities for dynamic collective re-invention. Much evidence shows that human and social service providers, activists, community leaders as well as victims of trauma all deeply need training, support and resources in transforming the traumatic imprint of oppression.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the traumatic effects of oppression include:

- Hypervigilance and reactivity
- Dissociation
- Intrusive memories
- Movement constriction
- Body shame

Skills, capacities and literacies for engaging this important bio-social axis in the everyday for these multiple roles and sectors can include;

- Identifying and untangling trauma responses
- Examining nonverbal communication for unconscious patterns of dominance and submission
- Discovering the body's authentic knowledge
- Reclaiming body image and liberating movement constrictions.

As somatic literacy encompasses both personal and political dimensions of bodily experience, skills for systemic action on this bio-social axis could be developed, which could work integrally with key leadership models such as Social Architect leadership.<sup>21</sup>

Critical to a transformative agenda is the ability to engage with 'dark intelligence'. The acknowledgement and embrace of our suffering in a safe, meaningful and intentional way can

go hand in hand with the transformation of it. We have encouraging evidence from studies in post-traumatic growth,<sup>22</sup> which suggests that the transforming of trauma can go hand in hand with the development of more extraordinary human capacities. We have the possibility not only to engage ‘a fierce primal yes’ from global civil society but also a dynamically engaged, meaningful systemic global participation that enables us to explore human potential. Thus, we turn the ordinary into the extraordinary through our re-invention of it.

## 8. Bio-Social Axis 3: Community-Based Embodied Arts Praxis

Trauma-informed art therapy (<https://www.trauma-informedpractice.com/>), studies on music and the brain (<https://advancedbrain.com/>), use of rhythm for engaging the sensory-motor system<sup>23</sup> to repair degenerative disorders such as Parkinson’s<sup>24</sup> as well as the ethnographic evidence of healing/therapeutic arts-based practices around the world,<sup>25</sup> demonstrate much potential to be unlocked for the expression of embodied praxis through artistic modalities. Creative arts therapy approaches<sup>26</sup> are, in fact, already being developed that harness the healing power of the arts to address issues of power and social identity.

An embodied arts praxis in everyday life could also act in both a healing capacity as well as in a critical and political capacity. Here is the testimony of the intimate process of Johnson coming into her own embodied activism:

“Through these experiences of collective resistance through art, I have strengthened my understanding of my body as artful in itself [...] that is, I became more adept at accessing the felt experience of my body through art, better able to communicate that experience through language. [...] I learned that I was an agent of personal and social change, and that my body was the locus of those transformations. [...] Through my body, I generated new understandings and knowledge, and if I was willing to risk being fully present in my own body, the art I produced could serve as a catalyst for further transformation. [...] My capacity to be artful through my body both affirmed my status as ‘outsider’ (Wilson, 1956) and allowed me a way to ‘come inside at last’ (Johnson, 1997) – not to any kind of socially affirming status quo, but to a quality of engagement, aliveness, and presence in the body that was both radical and collectively relevant. In short, I understand being fully and artfully embodied as a form of political activism.”<sup>27</sup>

Exploring expressions of an embodied arts praxis, this bio-social axis of critical cultural action holds a key space for cultivating new social relationships which express, embody and breed the creation of transformative cultures. Many forms of embodied arts praxis already exist, but only recently have frameworks been created which enable us to correlate and scale them out.<sup>28</sup>

New performance modalities can be further developed through the creation of new social and/or artistic spaces. For example, creative director, Dorota Stanczyk (<https://www.dorotastanczyk.com/>) seeks to re-invent traditional performance spaces such as art exhibitions and concert halls to include music therapy, art therapy, and meditative practices into artistic

performances. Theatre director, Katerina Melenova, involves art therapy and aromatherapy ([www.archavuni.cz](http://www.archavuni.cz)) in her theatre productions. By changing our current social/artistic spaces and by creating new modalities of performance based on embodied arts praxis we can breed transformative cultures and dynamically accelerate critical cultural action.

An embodied arts praxis can engage creativity and performance in ways which shape new, more alive, more aware cultures working towards systems change. Art possesses an inherent capacity to create and transform culture—indeed, to see this as one of its primary functions. By linking the idea of art as an important tool in the creation of countercultures with the notion of art as an embodied experience, it is possible to examine a further set of linkages that understand the experience of ‘being in your body’ as inherently transgressive. The development of new modalities of art and embodied experience support the development of new cultures. Cultures imbued with a critical, embodied artistic praxis cultivate a deeper understanding of what it means to be human, of possibilities for human development, and new possibilities of ways to relate to ourselves as well as to each other—micro level sociological reinventions which act on systemic axis points and open important pathways for a new social architecture.<sup>29</sup>

## **9. Identifying and Correlating New Skills, Capacities, Literacies and Action Frameworks**

In essence, a critical praxis is about learning and reflecting on and through direct experience. Experience enables us the capacity to engage with multiple dimensions of ourselves and of our world. A critical praxis engaged collectively becomes critical cultural action. We propose that for a more powerful transformation, which acknowledges our shared, worldwide trauma and mental health issues, we also incorporate the body for an embodied praxis of everyday activism. Furthermore, as there already exists a body of theory, research, practice and movements for arts in health and social change, we suggest the further cultivation and development of embodied arts praxis to create transformative social arenas and the cultivation of new cultures.

Critical Community Development provides a method for the mobilising of local communities for systemic action. Moving from the axis of culture to an important bio-social axis of embodied praxis, we can locate a skill set to develop capacities in people around the world for healing as well as effective systemic action in their everyday lives. A global grassroots curriculum, acting at the micro sociological level, can carve the needed changes in relational fabric, which can work hand in hand with the structural and systemic changes needed to achieve the SDGs.

The second bio-social axis which enables us to act on system leverage points is trauma. We suggest that the skills and capacities in this paper be developed and scaled out not only to trauma victims but also to human and social service providers, activists and community leaders who also deeply need it. This final bio-social axis of Embodied Arts Praxis incorporates culture, the body and the arts. By acting on 3 system leverage points this becomes a powerful intersection for social transformation.

To access humankind for systemic impact we need to bring forward these new skills, capacities and literacies and act on the key system leverage points of culture, embodiment,

trauma and embodied arts praxis. By engaging, developing and cultivating practices on these key system axes, micro level activism can take on a powerful systemic agency, which, even until today remains to be an untapped potential.

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*“With an embodied arts praxis, we can access the untapped resource of humankind for authentic and powerful social transformation, and unveil the possibilities of our human potential.”*

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## 10. Prospects for Multiplying and Scaling out Efforts from Local to Global

Critical Cultural Action and Embodied Arts Praxis could move outwards from their localities with other communities, networks and alliances for a global movement for change through the 7-point Agenda<sup>30</sup> for critical cultural action and embodied arts praxis outlined here.

1. **Voicing Values** – Values are central to the process of change. As Monbiot states, “they are the bedrock of effective politics.”<sup>31</sup> The goal of optimising human development and environmental flourishing needs to be made explicit so we can really start to address the key things that are becoming detrimental to that. By engaging in embodied arts praxis, we can become more aware of ourselves and cultivate these new values through a critical embodied awareness.
2. **Making Critical Connections** – Presenting a provocation that points out societal contradictions to a group of people to whom they are relevant stirs dialogue and debate. Critical connections that the group makes in such a dialogue can, then, be mapped to power structures. Wilkinson and Pickett show how inequality increases anxiety levels, affecting the way we think and feel and relate to each other, causing ill health and social problems—inequality makes us sick. Through embodied arts praxis, we can become aware of the detrimental social forces affecting our bodies. By reclaiming our bodies engaging in critical cultural action, we not only make these critical connections theoretically but we also locate them in everyday situations and can act powerfully through an embodied deeply felt sense. Embodied arts praxis could also express itself through creative means, making the invisible visible and cultivating a collective awareness around critical systemic issues.
3. **Critiquing and Dissenting** – Critique is at the heart of deepening democracy. Creating contexts for critical questioning is vital to the practice of critical community development. All forms of critical cultural action engage this crucial practice of creating spaces for the development of critical dialogues. Through embodied arts praxis, we learn to critique the forces that disconnect us from ourselves and from our bodies. Through the process of decolonising our bodies, we gain critical awareness. Critical praxis develops the ability for critical reflection. Embodied arts praxis, if practiced through a community performance, has the potential to scale out the capacity for critique.



- 4. Imagining Alternatives** – We need to excite people’s imaginations to see that an alternative world is possible. We have to nurture thoughts, imaginings, visions and projects of an alternative world and creating alternative systems. Embodied arts praxis activates us to utilise our creative, healing and regenerative impulses. We can capture our personal transformations through art. As we break through barriers in ourselves and in our society, we can creatively imagine and even perform alternatives, embodying a vision of a different world.
- 5. Creating Counternarratives** – Till now, we have failed to create a compelling counternarrative. Ledwith maintains: The counternarrative needs to engage with intersectionality, identifying interconnected, overlapping oppressions.<sup>32</sup> The counternarrative also needs to have new stories about new possibilities. Embodied arts praxis is profoundly creative; it can incorporate a creative experience of the body itself as well as directing of creative impulses to reinvent ourselves. Through this process of embodied reinvention combined with societal critique, we can create everyday practices to change narratives in our local contexts as well as a more humanising global narrative about the rediscovering of our humanity.
- 6. Connecting and Acting** – When we change the way we see the world, we change how we act in the world. Moving out of symptomology, critical cultural action alters traditional forms of activism and charity to understand how to act more systematically on local and global issues. Embodied arts praxis is situated at the critical bio-social axes. Each bio-social axis can identify its system leverage points and act strategically.<sup>33</sup>
- 7. Cooperating for a Common Good** – Ledwith astutely points out: “An interconnected, rather than disconnected praxis addresses the interlinked crisis of climate change, violent conflict, forced migration, widening inequalities, rising xenophobia, and endemic financial instability.”<sup>34</sup> This deeper interconnected understanding sets the grounds for more meaningful collaborations between diverse initiatives and should incentivise integral systemic action across sectors. The beauty of embodied arts praxis is that it creates an incentive for the exploration of our humanity and the importance of healthy human development and planetary wellbeing. With these values understood and, then, practiced everyday through an embodied arts praxis, we can activate global social leadership, taking action from local to global through clear systemic steps indicated in the bio-social axes points.<sup>35</sup>

Out of the rhetoric of world issues and into the embodied ‘primal YES’. Out of the gap between theory and action into an embodied arts praxis which can unlock global participation in a powerful and systemic way—from our destruction into our dynamic reinvention. We challenge the dehumanising with the profoundly humanising. The sensorial intelligence, creative fire, the social inter-relational, nonverbal embodied brilliance of a whole system reinvention of ourselves and our society. Healing the scars of societal violence and re-creating our worlds personally, emotionally, biologically and socially so they are deeply felt, deeply known and profoundly lived. With an embodied arts praxis, we can access the untapped resource of humankind for authentic and powerful social transformation, and unveil the possibilities of our human potential.

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## The Heartbeat of our Global Responses

**Edy Korthals Altes**

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### Abstract

*The WAAS Interim report 2020 on Global leadership is an impressive document. Those who contributed have done a heroic job in systematically digesting a vast input from various sources. However, it falls short in a key area: the heart is missing. The pragmatic approach of the interim report, with its recommendations, is without any doubt of great importance, but it is not enough. The global challenges confronting us are mostly manmade. Human motivation is of crucial importance. Ignoring the vital contributions in particular of religions therefore seems to me a serious shortcoming. Think of the recent encyclical document Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home. Pope Francis directs an impressive appeal to all people of good will to respect planet earth. Religions could and should play a constructive role in bringing about a more responsible attitude towards man, matter and nature. See also the important contributions of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Council of Religious Leaders and Religions for Peace, among others.*

### 1. Spiritual Renewal

Looking at the way major challenges to humanity are handled, one cannot avoid the impression that our intellect is engaged in a process of self-destruction, instead of promoting human well-being. We are living in an insane world, indeed! Could it be that our deepest motivation is fundamentally flawed? We have lost awareness of the direct relation to the basic ground of human existence. Man is not an autonomous human being, but part of the Whole. To capture a spirit of renewal demands nothing less than recapturing a sense of the Transcendent.

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*“Man is not an autonomous human being, but part of the Whole.”*

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The essence of this notion is eloquently expressed by Albert Einstein:

“A human being is a part of the Whole, called by us ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. ***Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.***”

These words are of decisive significance in the actual confrontation with formidable challenges to our human existence. The guiding principle in life is indeed love for humankind and nature. When we grasp the full significance of these words, it will help us to overcome blatant individualism and narrow nationalism.

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*“Serious efforts should be made to adapt the UN structure to the current geopolitical realities. More emphasis should be given to the participation of multi-sectoral networks engaging a cross-section of stakeholders from government, business, academia and civil society.”*

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## 2. The Context

Humanity is caught between the devastation now being wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing existential threat of climate change.

Even more ominous is the serious risk of annihilation of mankind as a result of the unintended or deliberate use of nuclear arms. We seriously underestimate this problem, and the general public remains dangerously ignorant.

These are but the tail ends of a broad spectrum of multi-dimensional global political, economic, social, technological challenges mentioned in the WAAS interim report.

## 3. Some Additional Suggestions

- **UN Institutional and Cultural Reform:** serious efforts should be made to adapt the UN structure to the current geopolitical realities. More emphasis should be given to the participation of multi-sectoral networks engaging a cross-section of stakeholders from government, business, academia and civil society.
- **Building Trust in Multilateralism:** world religions can—and should—play a significant role in fostering a common global human identity and consciousness. They can help enhance public confidence and support for international organizations and multilateral initiatives.
- **Sustaining Peace, Human Security & Resilience:** needed first of all is a set of guiding principles in human motivation. Mutual respect and trust are here of crucial importance. A major paradigm shift is urgently needed to create a more inclusive, representative, participative, multi-stakeholder system of global security. In this religions too could and should offer inspiring perspectives.

It is imperative that we reach a substantive reduction in global military spending and put a stop to the ongoing (nuclear) arms race. Religions by the nature of their vocation are called to actively pursue the cause of peace and help shift resources to basic humanitarian needs such as emergency relief, food-security, immigration, refugees, including UNHCR, WFP, ILO, etc.

- **Anti-crisis Transition Economy:** a comprehensive anti-crisis economic strategy must focus on rapid transformation to a more stable, inclusive, equitable and sustainable economy. Rather than embracing unqualified economic growth as the central objective, the world should embrace an economic development strategy, which incorporates the objectives of ecological sustainability, inclusiveness and equity in distribution and access to resources. This requires a paradigm shift in economic thinking, looking for ways to direct and check economic processes so that they serve societal interests. This includes, but goes beyond, notions such as the internalization of externalities to reflect the true cost and benefit of economic activities and changing the metrics for the evaluation of economic progress. It calls for a redefinition of the proper blend of markets and governments, competition, cooperation and regulation; invisible barriers to equitable markets should be eliminated.
- **Mobilizing Civil Society:** religious organizations and social movements are all key stakeholders and players in global affairs.
- **Transformative Leadership—Unifying Multi-sectoral Social Movements:** a very important element of effective leadership in the near future is the power to inspire the younger generations. This calls for creative initiatives both from religious institutions and other social and cultural institutions.

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*“Without the positive inspiration of religion and other sources of humanitarian inspiration, without a basic change in our attitude—hence, our deepest motivation—we cannot hope to truly meet the challenges we face.”*

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#### 4. Religions: Part of the Problem or a Major Agent for the Better?

We can of course not close our eyes to the ambiguous reality of religion as inspiration for life and love and the abuse of religion by extremists to justify heinous crimes and terror. This reality however cannot detract from religion(s) as being an—essential—part of the solution of conflicts.

Humanity moreover has now reached a stage in which it is of paramount importance for religions to make a far greater effort to overcome above ambiguity, resolve old antagonisms and mobilize the latent forces for peace to be found in each one of them.

World religions share a common responsibility to help develop a moral framework by inspiring humanity towards a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

In conclusion, without the positive inspiration of religion and other sources of humanitarian inspiration, without a basic change in our attitude—hence, our deepest motivation—we cannot hope to truly meet the challenges we face.

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## Biology and Society: A Holistic View

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### Abstract

*Does biology influence society? Yes, but in a very complex and non-deterministic manner. As both biology and society are emergent systems, they must be constantly researched to understand how they are changing. Thus, the two inescapable biological requirements for survival and reproduction must be studied in a dialectical manner in order to understand how they are evolving. Consciousness has arisen to aid in survival, and consciousness has brought forth the need for cooperation which has resulted in the need for communication. Communication is aided by symbols, hence the evolution of language, both spoken and written, and also the appearance of other symbol systems as in art, theater, dance and, indeed, mathematics. Society is, therefore, socially constructed and not fully explainable in mechanistic terms. We are currently living in an ideological social setting that places great emphasis on competition, so that cooperation is necessarily accomplished through domination and control. If we wish to realize our biological need for survival in a more humane way, we must refer to the process of reproduction, which involves a good deal of love and nurture, something more familiar to the role of women than men. Is society evolving in this direction?*

Most, if not all biologists, agree that nature has endowed us human beings with two inescapable requirements: survival and reproduction. This is understandably true of all creatures. The different ways in which living creatures execute those two requirements are of interest to zoologists as well as anthropologists, given that human beings are a part of nature. Meanwhile, as creatures have evolved, their means of satisfying these needs, that is their means of doing so, have changed, while the needs themselves have remained the same. One effect of evolution is that recent creatures have involved more advanced forms of consciousness in this process, in other words their consciousness has evolved along with their physical nature.

Thus, for us human beings, our consciousness has allowed us to interpret our biological needs in different ways. For example, we, as have other species, of course, discovered that survival is aided enormously through cooperation. This is also true of the human body, itself, of course, where trillions of cells cooperate in order to survive. In fact,

We have around 10<sup>13</sup> of our eucaryotic cells, and about 10<sup>14</sup> procaryotic organisms (microbiota) living in harmony with us. They are housekeepers of the homeostasis, balance, with no control, one



over the other. They are all equally important in maintaining the hierarchy of priority, assuring food and oxygen to all structures. This is the definition of well-being. Constant cooperation is a MUST for the survival of an organism, as well as for society. (Personal communication from Donatella Verbanac. See also Verbanac, et al 2019).

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*“Social scientists, especially, could play a significant role in helping our socially constructed beliefs to adjust themselves to changes in our social and natural environment. But they are trapped in a competitive academic system which encourages those scientists to communicate in a language replete with technical terms that discourage any others, except those in their area of specialization, from even trying to understand what they are saying.”*

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A single human in conflict with the forces of nature, including natural predators, has a much lower chance of survival than those working together. However, human cooperation requires a degree of control in the form of agreement among the group members about how each member is supposed to behave at any given moment and in any given situation. All of this requires communication among members of the group. At the same time, communication is vastly improved through the use of symbols to represent features of our existence, including elements of our environment. Thus, language was born as our most sophisticated set of symbols, something which has vastly improved our ability to communicate with each other and, hence, cooperate. Chimpanzees also cooperate and communicate with each other, as many probably do, if not all of the elements in nature, but with a much more simplified form of consciousness.

Advanced consciousness, however, complicates the process of communication, especially as our symbol systems have become increasingly more abstract. In addition, our advanced form of consciousness requires that we appreciate the fact that our thoughts and behavior are now forever intimately connected. Even our instinctive behavior is now interceded by thoughts that interpret and communicate with others the understanding that governs this behavior.

Thus, we now have various ways of satisfying our needs for survival and reproduction. We know that survival requires cooperation, that cooperation requires communication, and that communication requires the use of symbols with which to communicate and, finally, that language is our most advanced form of symbol making. This is notwithstanding the enormous importance of mathematics as a symbol system to help us understand our natural environment especially. Nor does this mean that other symbols may not be used to communicate. Thus, we also have various forms of theater, music and dance, as well as graphic and pictorial

art, including architecture, sports and games generally, etc., that are very effective in communicating meanings, sometimes not even very easily translated into language.

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*“Philosophy served the purpose of relating the various pieces to the larger puzzle in ancient Greece where science was born. Today, however, philosophy is seen as but another specialization and not a particularly important one at that.”*

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Meanwhile, as stated above, in order to establish cooperation, we need order, which is necessary if these systems are to be effective. At the same time, for this order to last, we also need some way to allow it to perpetuate over time. Thus, we institutionalize it in the form of symbol-based expressions, not only in language but in the other symbolic forms as mentioned above, so that succeeding generations can incorporate this order in their consciousness (Berger and Luckmann 1966). These symbol systems include rules of behavior and descriptions of the various roles that the many and diverse individuals are to play in maintaining the social order, from parent to child, to hunter or gatherer, and to the many forms of specialized roles that have constituted any given society from ancient to modern. Thus, our behavior is to a large degree predictable to one another, as if we were involved in a form of social theater (Burke 1973, Duncan 1968).

Today, we have elaborate symbol-systems resulting from our thousands of years of social evolution. (Gutenschwager 1996). But what remains constant throughout this evolution of symbol systems, is the inescapable fact, as stated above, that our thoughts and behavior are closely intertwined, entangled, if you prefer the language of quantum physics. To further this analogy, our thoughts are not simply a reflection of the reality we observe, they are also instrumental in creating that reality. They are like the electronic microscope that changes the physical reality observed by the physicist. This is why in class based societies ruling classes will always need to control thoughts if they wish to control behavior, and they use various symbolic forms, ranging from special emotionally-charged language like mathematics, outright lies, uniform clothing, hair styles, etc., to accomplish this.

Thus, the problems of order we face in our present circumstance, as an increasingly world-wide society, are intimately tied to our thoughts about that order. Our theories and ideologies about that order are instrumental *in creating and changing that order*. In addition, we have moral judgements about the quality of that order, which are a product of our thoughts about how that order *should be* constituted. In other words, our beliefs, our intellectual constructions, are not simply reflections of our observations, they are important in creating that which is observed, and in judging whether what we have created is good or evil. All this was very well known by Cambridge Analytica when it mined data from Facebook to help influence the 2016 elections in the United States. It is also being used to influence and control human behavior generally in the new era of what Shoshana Zuboff (2019) calls “surveillance capitalism”.

This flies in the face of the widespread belief that science has resolved this dilemma, this dialectic between our thoughts and the reality we have created and are observing. Many

scientists, however, are now questioning whether this dilemma has been resolved by science (Frank, et al 2019), as have philosophers in the past, just as the deterministic beliefs of religious followers were questioned during the rise of science at the time of the Renaissance.

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*“A major characteristic of the individualistic system is our inability to observe the often-unintended consequences of our intentional actions.”*

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In fact, Keven Leland (2017) has documented in great detail the work of recent scientists who have helped develop our understanding of the dialectical process through which we have evolved not only biologically over the past millions of years but also how we have developed culturally in relation to our genetic evolution. This gene-culture evolution among human beings has been a product of our ability to copy and to teach succeeding generations the accumulated knowledge that makes culture possible.

Experimental studies support the hypothesis that a gene-culture co-evolutionary dynamic arose between socially transmitted skills, including tool use, and aspects of human anatomy and cognition. This interaction was ongoing in human evolution from at least 2.5 million years ago, and has continued to the present. Theoretical, anthropological, and genetic studies all attest to the importance of gene-culture coevolutionary feedback in recent human evolution, which has shaped both our anatomy and our cognition, and speeded up rates of change. . . . Just as biological evolution gave way to gene-culture evolution, cultural evolution then took over the reins of human adaptation, and the pace of change experienced by the members of our evolutionary lineage accelerated further. Culture provided our ancestors with food-procurement and survival tricks, and as each new invention arose, the population was able to exploit its environment more efficiently. This not only fueled brain expansion but population growth as well (Leland 2017, p. 318-19).

Leland then goes on to explain why the Darwinists and sociobiologists have been unable to explain fully the origins of “human cognition and intelligence”.

First, the origins of none [my emphasis] of the critical elements of human cognition (our cultural learning, intelligence, language, cooperation, or powers of computation) can be completely understood in isolation, because each shaped the others in a nexus of complex coevolutionary feedbacks. Second, the human mind did not evolve in a straightforward, linear manner, with changes in the external environment generating natural selection favoring cognitive adaptations. Rather, our mental abilities evolved through

a convoluted, reciprocally caused process, whereby our ancestors constantly constructed aspects of their physical and social environments that fed back to impose selection on their bodies and minds, in endless cycles. Third, to understand the intricate dynamic process through which the human mind evolved required the tools of modern genomics, population genetics, gene-culture evolution, anatomy, archeology, anthropology, and psychology in a concerted multidisciplinary effort (Leland 2017, pp. 320-21).

This interdisciplinary effort that Leland is describing is a brilliant example of innovation in the otherwise compartmentalized practice and linear causal explanation that has characterized much of science throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Indeed, social scientists, especially, could play a significant role in helping our socially constructed beliefs to adjust themselves to changes in our social and natural environment. But they are trapped in a competitive academic system which encourages those scientists to communicate in a language replete with technical terms that discourage any others, except those in their area of specialization, from even trying to understand what they are saying. While their status, indeed their “survival” in that system depends upon this obfuscation, the unintended consequence is that valuable information necessary to the social dialectic is essentially unavailable to everyday humans and fellow academicians alike.

It is in this sense that specialization is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because it allows us to examine specific aspects of reality in great depth and to understand that aspect as in no other way. It is a curse because it encourages specialists to think that that particular aspect of reality is unassociated with other aspects or is something that other specialists will deal with and not of their concern. It is a bit like taking a piece of a larger puzzle and examining it in great depth and then forgetting to put that piece back in its place in the larger puzzle. Philosophy served the purpose of relating the various pieces to the larger puzzle in ancient Greece where science was born. Today, however, philosophy is seen as yet another specialization and not a particularly important one at that, among scientists and engineers in any case.

In any case, the development of society witnessed over the past several thousand years appears to have grown out of a conscious belief that to satisfy our need for survival we need to control nature and our fellow humans, with war as a natural extension of this belief (Sahlins 2008). This is entirely consistent with our role as hunters in our previous evolutionary state as hunters and gatherers. Therefore, this has been primarily a male-dominated view of the world, as has also been our systems of thoughts and beliefs during the same period (Gutenschwager 2017). These systems have, of course, been greatly enhanced by the growth of science and technology over the most recent several hundred years. Science is the natural outcome of our curiosity about everything and has increased our knowledge of nature immeasurably. Using it to control nature and, where believed necessary, our fellow humans, to promote our material interests is, however, a choice we have made as human beings. This need, as Solomon et al (2015) have demonstrated, as well as Becker (1973) before them, is closely related to our human consciousness of our own death. We establish elaborate belief systems to help us cope with this awareness and when we are confronted with alternate belief systems,

we need to degrade them, leading to racism, tribalism, etc. and a willingness to destroy the perpetrators of those systems. At the same time science is an institution in the anthropological sense. As such it is more than the activities of any given scientist, or even the total of all scientists' activities: the total is more than the sum of the parts. As an institution it involves beliefs about the character of the world it examines, its ontology. It involves rules about how this world should be studied, its epistemology and its methodologies. These rules are passed on from generation to generation and constitute the essence of science as an institution. As in any cultural institution, individual scientists may follow these rules to a greater or lesser degree, as it suits their individual understanding of reality. Nor are these rules absolutely constant over time; they may change and evolve as the experience of scientists alters their understanding of the world they study.

The institution of science is currently greatly influenced by the atomistic philosophy of Democritus, implemented by Newton and expanded upon philosophically by Descartes, who believed that the mind and body are separate entities. Thus, science is divided among various specializations with little communication among them, much as society as a whole is divided into specialized activities, with little sense of the overall effect on the structure of this society. The science of economics has interpreted this atomism as individualism, with various mathematical formulations as to how a total society would be formed based upon individualist thinking and acting. In fact, this has become a prevailing, that is, institutionalized, ideology of life for all members of the current societies incorporated under the capitalist system, Marxist critiques notwithstanding.

A major characteristic of this individualistic system is our inability to observe the often-unintended consequences of our intentional actions. For example, science has vastly improved our ability to live healthy lives and increase our life expectancy. Through improvements in sanitation and medical care we have decreased infant mortality substantially. This has produced the population explosion observed by demographers and has vastly increased the population on the earth. This, in turn, has been aided by the encouragement of religious leaders for their congregations to have many children and thus increase their loyal followers. This also has then often led to wars to obtain the resources needed for this growing population to survive, something not observable in an individualistic or tribalistic worldview. Only a more holistic worldview would allow us to understand these connections.

We have not spoken about our need for reproduction. This has been and is largely, though not exclusively, a female responsibility in most species. Meanwhile, for more advanced forms of life, this process has entailed much more than simply giving birth. For humans, especially, it has also entailed not only giving birth and nursing of the new born, but a long period of nurturing them as well, if they are going to survive. Out of this process has grown our capability to relate to our fellow human beings emotionally and to care for them in more than just material ways. Thus, reproduction and survival constitute a complex interrelated process in human beings. How we deal with this process is a choice we make; our thoughts and beliefs determine to a large extent what we do and how we behave in response to these biological requirements. In short, as we have evolved socially and biologically, we have learned to interweave our two biological needs, the need for cooperation to satisfy our need for survival, on the one hand, and our need for love and nurture, to satisfy our need for reproduction, on the other.

Now we come to the current dialogue between the political right and left, between the belief in the right, that the benefits enjoyed by the Europeans, Americans and Japanese, and now some upper and even middle classes elsewhere, have been worth the costs to the environment and the millions of workers and peasants who were literally sacrificed under various forms of slavery throughout the world during this process, and to a surprising extent still prevalent today. The belief on the left, on the other hand, is that these sacrifices may have been to a large degree unnecessary, and that, in addition, while the material standards of living have improved, the consumerist society has not ultimately made people better off emotionally than they might have been with a different form of order. Finally, in addition, those on the left believe that the environmental damage has been enormous, now possibly threatening our very survival as a species.

This raises the question of whether and to what degree we are well off in today's system of thoughts and beliefs. Some people are clearly better off materially, and to the degree that material insecurity for the poor is also an emotional problem, many are also better off emotionally. To the extent that we are stressed out in our alienating, intense profit-oriented and machine-based system, both at work and as consumers, we are probably not better off, emotionally. At the same time the reoccurring financial crises brought on by our social scientific theories and beliefs in an individualistic competitive socio-economic system, are now increasing the number of people who are not so well off, materially, to say nothing of emotional factor. (Yates 2020, p.24).

We need to put this division between left and right into the framework of our need for survival and reproduction, as well as within the assumption that we, as humans have created this social order. We need to discard the belief that there is something "natural" or predetermined about this order. We need to understand that our thoughts and beliefs are not objectively true, but only insofar as they are imposed on our fellow human beings. We need to stop hiding behind God or science or mythology, as the source of our authority, and recognize that our seeking to fulfil our own psychological and emotional needs through these thoughts, beliefs and behavior. If we desire and believe in competitiveness, then we seek to impose this on our fellow humans. If we believe in love and friendship, we also seek to influence our fellow humans in this direction. Our social theories are merely symbolic representations of these beliefs, as we seek to legitimize them through whatever means we may find.

So, the question is: What is the best means for survival and reproduction? Should we dominate and, if necessary, destroy our competitors, as war and capitalism have done? Meanwhile, needless to say, current theoretical and ideological rhetoric rarely acknowledges this. Or should we reexamine our beliefs, our theories and ideologies, to see if there might be a better way to satisfy our needs for survival and reproduction?

At the same time, as we have *not* always been predators, but were prey for long periods of time, there is a lingering emotion of fear that imposes itself from time to time and from person to person (Hart & Sussman 2019). For those most affected by this, there is often an emotional need for power to offset this fear (McClelland 1975). In other words, the means to establish cooperation as necessary for survival will be seen by those people as best accomplished by the imposition of control through the exercise of power. This is not uncommon historically, as we have seen so often in the past. Thus, while every revolution in history has sought "Liberté, Égalité & Fraternité", they are soon replaced by a new set of bullies seeking to satisfy their

need for power usually through the accumulation of wealth, thus hoping to overcome their fear of death.

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*“Ancient Greece increased productivity, in part based upon slavery and the subordination of women, which then led to the leisure time among the aristocracy that allowed them to engage in philosophical speculations of all sorts. This included science, through which they sought freedom from the fear that accompanied superstition. This freedom also allowed them to discover new forms of social order in the “agora”, a meeting place that brought a new form of self-government necessary to establish a new order that would allow cooperation to take place on a larger scale.”*

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This need for power is irrespective of the particular sociopolitical and economic system and its attendant ideologies and theories at any given time, whether inspired by mythology, by religion, by science, or whatever. It is a troublesome factor lurking in the background of any social system. Nor should this “personal need for power” be confused with McClelland’s “need for achievement”, or even worse with Maslow’s need for “self-actualization”. This is something which few people attain, in any case, as, according to Maslow himself, they must generally first have fulfilled all of their lower order needs for “security”, “affiliation” and “esteem”, a fact which is often ignored in the application of his hierarchy by professionals involved in counselling.

What this implies is that any social system we hope to establish in order to satisfy our material and emotional needs must confront this problem of the need for power. As emotional issues are not much in vogue today with the materialistic systems of thought and belief that govern our behavior, many of us will probably have to begin to chart new waters. In other words, we must seek a socio-politico-economic system that not only works effectively in a rational sense, but also in an emotional sense. We must broaden the meanings we give to such terms as development, progress and evolution, modifying the strict disciplinary boundaries that have compartmentalized our thinking for so many years.

This compartmentalization may have been, and probably was, necessary to deal with the growing complexity of the social systems we have been creating since the rise of urbanization, but we now need to overcome the deficiencies of this trend, as Leland (2017) has done. As we extend beyond our areas of specialization this will most certainly increase the level of uncertainty and thus our fear, as it has done in the past. So, we must learn to live with uncertainty, and it will not be an easy task: we human beings like certainty. We like to believe that our beliefs and thoughts and, hence, our behavior, are the correct ones and that others are simply wrong. Furthermore, we generally use our supporting arguments based on science or religion or mythology or whatever, to prove this.



All of this is important because the emotional world in which we live today on most of the planet is dominated by the spirit of predatory individualism, the necessary accompaniment of the supposedly rational organization of society based upon a materialist-oriented search for economic development. One important factor in the birth of this spirit has been traced to the culture of the Anglo-Atlantic world in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, where

The children of notables had, for centuries, been sent away to be nursed, fostered, and schooled as wards of other notables. Their parents, though they loved them dearly [?], invested little time into rearing and nurturing their progeny. They spent their time in tending to... [their] complex patron-client systems... Consequently, long distance parenting was, in the eighteenth century, associated with wealth and influence. [and]... the weight of tradition made outdoor nursing a persistent institution among ladies in the ruling classes. (Rhodes 2019, p. 3, See also Macfarlane 1989 and 1991)

In other words, the emotional ties that would be necessary for a different kind of collective and cooperative living were undermined by the importance given to property. This includes the domination and control that were necessary to have attained and then to maintain this property in this type of culture. Following an intervening period given to the rise of mercantilism, capitalism was born. Adam Smith and David Ricardo merely formalized and legitimized this system by giving it a theoretical form to make it seem natural and inevitable. Not that the rise of capitalism can be reduced to this factor alone (Holton 1985, Turner 1992). Yet, to the extent that we are emotional, as much, if not more so than rational creatures, this surely must be seen as a dominant factor.

In the welfare states of Europe, the governments have sought to extend the satisfaction of material needs to all members of society. In other words, they have understood well the difference between public and private needs, so that health, education, transportation, etc. are well provided for by the state, unlike elsewhere where the private sector is sacred and is theoretically able to satisfy all human needs as a byproduct of the overwhelming search for profit.

In the “free” market system, it is accepted as natural that all discoveries and inventions will be converted into profit-making activities, including those related to health, education, etc., even if the products and services are then out of reach for a significant proportion of the population worldwide. The market, it is believed, will transcend all such inequalities, given sufficient time. We’re still waiting for this to happen for everyone, more than 200 hundred years on (See [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info) for information on the current state of the world in this respect).

The social welfare countries have made equality a formal part of their agenda, to the extent that they are able within their budgetary limits. But, as Marx said, no socialist system is possible as long as there is capitalism in the world. These societies must protect themselves from the constant interference posed by blockades, sanctions, military threats, assassinations, etc., to say nothing of the opposition presented by former privileged classes within their own societies. Thus, they must waste a great many resources on military and police expenses.

They must also try to defend themselves against the continuous propaganda of war in support of endless consumption of material goods as a means of attaining happiness. So, the emotion of fear and the accompanying excessive, even sometimes psychopathic, need for personal power is also not absent from these systems, in part because of the internal and external pressures just mentioned.

So, what is the solution to this problem of how to organize a society in order for there to be cooperation, which is obviously necessary for our survival, and to do this without the constant burden of the “excessive need for personal power”? There is no agreement on whether cooperation should be achieved through unlimited freedom for private monopoly corporations or through government planning, or some combination of both. Meanwhile, as a matter of fact, there is government planning present everywhere, but in capitalist countries it is directed to the preservation of private wealth. In the financial crisis of 2008, the governments “bailed out” the banks; they did not “bail out” the people, which would have accomplished the same goal in a much more humane way. But this would have undermined the discipline of the free market, that is, it would have destroyed the legitimization of the entire ideological belief system of the capitalist world order.

Going back to the origins of the term “free market”, we must confront the symbolic importance of this term. As urbanization got under way, many people were enchanted with the new found freedom to be found in the urban setting. They were happy to escape from the intellectually restrictive confines of the closed-in village society that had prevailed for so many generations. Ancient Greece increased productivity, in part based upon slavery and the subordination of women, which then led to the leisure time among the aristocracy that allowed them to engage in philosophical speculations of all sorts. This included science, through which they sought freedom from the fear that accompanied superstition. This freedom also allowed them to discover new forms of social order in the “agora”, a meeting place that brought a new form of self-government necessary to establish a new order that would allow cooperation to take place on a larger scale. Unfortunately, this was limited to the city-state (the polis), however, so that larger scale cooperation was still not possible. Thus, there were, unfortunately, in spite of the unifying efforts of Alexander and his father, many wars among the city-states that ultimately made it impossible for Greece to withstand the onslaught of imperial Rome, where cooperation was organized through domination and control.

None of this is to underestimate the complex difficulties of maintaining social cohesion while allowing a degree of personal freedom. Too much social cohesion can lead to a feeling of individual repression, while too much individual freedom can lead to a loss of order and a feeling of alienation. This dilemma is very much at the heart of the current conflict between the left and the right, between the capitalist and socialist ideologies and their resulting social systems. Thus, the challenge that humanity faces is to search for a happy medium between these two extremes. Furthermore, as Aristotle so wisely said, we are destined to find a happy medium (μέτρον ἄριστον) by first experiencing the extremes. And the means to find this medium will always involve education and communication, best accomplished without anger and fear, as we hopefully shall learn in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Flashing forward to the present time we can see the necessary distortion that is embodied in the current idea of freedom. It is, of course, true that progress involves the innovative

thought of individuals, but these individuals are always part of a larger whole that extends over time and space. They are never isolated individuals; they are always connected to others in a long history of effort to better understand our existence on this planet. Their research, their very material well-being is supported publicly by their fellow beings in society.

The belief that innovative individuals should improve their individual material well-being by turning every discovery into a profit-making enterprise is part of an elaborate belief system created over time by the human beings in our current society. These are NOT the laws of God or of nature, they are human thoughts and beliefs. There is a belief that if I improve my own material condition, at times even at the expense of other humans, this will somehow improve the lot of everyone, irrespective of whatever innovation I may be responsible for. It is part of a belief system, indeed, a moral judgement about how we can better cooperate and thus survive. It says that *we can best cooperate by not cooperating!* It is purely an emotional belief, parading as rationality. Yet it is somehow believed to be provable by mathematical means, even though not provable empirically, except by careful selection of self-serving statistics that mask more than they reveal (Zaman 2020).

Thus, we confront an existential dilemma. We are led to believe that competition is good and, furthermore, that it promotes individual freedom. In order to do this, we must ignore the fact that competition is an unstable circumstance; it always leads to winners and losers. The winners in sports competitions receive a trophy, a symbol of victory. The winners in society absorb the losers, hence the system of monopoly capitalism that we are experiencing in the world today (Baran and Sweezy 1966). These current winners meet every so often to agree on how they should behave individually, in order to maintain their power as a small class of extremely wealthy and powerful people in a largely undemocratic political system (Domhoff, et al 2018).

In other words, at the present time at least, cooperation at a global level is made possible by domination and control. A world culture is created with often deceptive thoughts and beliefs about how it should be organized, beliefs prompted by a moral sense that this is good. This sense is based upon an assumption that it is natural and that science provides the proof that it is so. This is an idea that a certain number of scientists, themselves, are now opposed to (Frank 2019). But the concept of science is used symbolically in the social world for purposes beyond its original intention, including by social scientists. This is especially true for economists, who seek to improve their social status and, hence, their survival, all based upon the belief that by doing so they would improve the well-being of everyone in society (Fullbrook 2004). Again, the belief that cooperation can be achieved by not cooperating!

Perhaps it is time to interrelate biological survival and reproduction, by contrasting domination and control with nurturing and love, as a means to achieve the cooperation necessary for our survival. Nor is this so difficult to accomplish:

We suggest that human beings are naturally cooperative when healthy and only resort to violence under abnormal conditions, as when stressed, abused, neglected or mentally ill (Sussman and Cloning 2011, p. ix)

More recent research also confirms this belief:

Our experiments indicate that creating inclusive societies that offer pathways to purpose and a sense of belonging to all its citizens has to be a priority in the fight against political violence. Radicalisation is a social phenomenon that must be socially combated with the help of inclusive governance, friends and families, and media... as the possibility of a purpose-driven life reemerge[s] it washe[s] out... [the] flirtation with extremist ideology (Hamid and Pretus, 2019)

We have seen that reproduction is best accomplished through nurturing and love. It has been primarily a female responsibility and has generally been ignored by males in the creation of our belief systems, our myths and theories governing the world up until now (Bhattacharya 2020). This is, of course, changing, thanks to the continuing struggle by women to attain a place of more material and ideological importance in today's society, a struggle that is a long way from completion in most parts of the world.

Meanwhile, the world spends hundreds of billions, if not trillions of public dollars every year on the design and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction whose purpose is to produce death, while spending practically nothing on the production of life, at least in the early years. This is women's work, not in the public sector, or even private sector, for that matter. It has been all but invisible in the male-dominated world of business and politics, to say nothing of the world of science. I, personally, have heard two male professors (fifty years ago, of course) in the social sciences proclaim that they do not award scholarships to women students because they just "go off and become pregnant"!

If we were to attempt to generate cooperation on the basis of love and nurture rather than domination and control, there would have to be a titanic shift in human consciousness. Reproduction of the species would have to enter the public consciousness and public monies would have to be invested in it. Reproduction would have to be supported economically from the moment of conception, given the psychological and physical importance to adult health created by the conditions in which the embryo matures (Longo 2013, Ch. 11).

A fraction of the monies spent on the manufacture of death, if given over to the manufacture of life, could in the long run vastly alter the world culture. This culture is currently dominated by the emotions of anger and fear, the byproducts of the competitive system that rules our thoughts and behavior today. A national (defense) industry devoted to the manufacture of life would require financial support for reproduction separate from dependence on and/or perhaps even shared by a marriage partner, quite different from the current system of support. *It would be a public expense well worth the investment if it could lead to emotionally secure males (and females) not burdened by the excessive need for power and, hence, a culture not oriented to perpetual war and death.*

Obviously, given the serious problem of over-population in the world today, this should not be seen as an incentive for women to have endless numbers of children. Indeed, as Malthus warned, our success in reproduction may now have, as an unintended consequence, threatened our ability to survive. Hopefully, as women find a place in society outside of reproduction, they would be less inclined to need reproduction as a means of self-fulfillment

in the modern urban setting. Hence, they must also be able to find fulfillment in work-based activities beyond their role in reproduction. Nor would they need to have many children as a form of social security, if human support, especially in old age, were part of a nurturing and love-based society.

So, to review, I am saying that our biology requires survival and reproduction. Both of these requirements also require cooperation: we are social animals. Cooperation in a competitive culture is accomplished via domination and control, and this is as true for reproduction as it is for survival, given the usual dependence of women on the economic support of men in order to carry out their reproduction activities. *This dependent condition inspires the emotions of anger and fear in the offspring, and often leads to the creation of insecure men (and women) with an overwhelming need for power. This then reproduces the systems of domination and control and a competitive society, often leading to war and death.*

In order to break this vicious cycle, we must first become aware of it and then seek ways to alter it through theoretical and ideological formulations that confront it. There is no scientific or deterministic manner in which this can be accomplished: there is no formula. This must be a collective effort, including education for both men and women in a democratic setting, another ideal which requires a cooperative effort, hard to accomplish in a competitive society. All this is up to us, a species with consciousness to assist in fulfilling its biological requirements.

None of this is new, of course: Epicurus, Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, and many other lesser known persons have been saying this for thousands of years. When Epicurus said, live simply (ΛάθηΒιώσας) and stay away from politics, he was merely saying that unfettered competition would be harmful to everyone involved. The Ancient Greeks instituted the Olympic Games as a possible substitute for war, with the prizes being medals, not the control of other peoples and their lands and resources. Since then thousands of “utopian” communities have also been established by both men and women over the years, including right now, as 200 million cultural creatives attempt to escape from this destructive system of thought and behavior in their neo Epicurean communities (Ray and Anderson 2000). Epicurus’ school lasted for 800 years around the Mediterranean, longer than any other school of philosophy then and now.

At the same time, there may already be under way an evolutionary process that could help to resolve this dilemma. The dog as a household pet is apparently a domesticated wolf. Wolves evolved into dogs through a process whereby female wolves selected mates who were less aggressive and predatory, thus reproducing male (and female) offspring who were gradually also less aggressive and predatory (Cafazzo, et al 2014). Also,

We did not domesticate dogs. Dogs domesticated themselves.  
In humans, genetic variation in DNA causes Williams-Beuren syndrome, a condition characterized by exceptionally trusting and friendly behavior (Handwerk 2018)

This effect of consciousness on mate selection could also, therefore, apply to human females. With the growing economic independence, women would be less likely to be forced into reproduction with predatory males and thus be able to reproduce less predatory offspring. The high divorce rates prevailing in the more developed countries, along with the delay in

having children, if ever, might suggest that women are now more liberated in selecting their mates. Could it be that in the future we will see more “domesticated” males and, therefore, societies based more upon love and nurture rather than domination and control? Could this already be happening amongst men in the developed countries, as well as among the “cultural creatives”, who are building communities separate from the predatory mentality of the modern world?

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## Can Lack of Leadership Become Transformative?

**Fadwa El Guindi**

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### Abstract

*Observers today assume that transformations in society are necessarily linked to leadership. However, anthropologists have dealt with human groups they labeled acephalous (from Greek, meaning headless), characterized by an absence of centralized or hierarchical leadership of any sort. In this 'idea' piece, the author observes that it is possible in some situations to delink societal transformations from leadership—centralized, hierarchical, charismatic or governing. Using two contemporary examples, the United States and Egypt, the author suggests that significant change and societal transformation might not always be directly guided by the charisma of a leader or the force of a governing entity, but rather would be growing over time and building as a response to collective discontent. The rising protests in the streets of Egypt in 2011 against former President Mubarak and his ruling elite raise these questions: who is their leader? Who is running these protests? The answer is: there is no leader—just the people. In other words, transformative processes are possible by a collective without specific central leaders, particularly in light of the public global social media popularly used to rapidly communicate today.*

Most observations about leadership focus on the transformative qualities of good leadership for a society or a nation. The effort would be for identifying qualities of good leadership. Two cases of governance, that of Egypt under the late former President Mubarak and that of the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, in which lack of (or bad) leadership to guide the nation through crises and into progress suggest that major, even revolutionary, actions led by the people can result in major transformative changes. In the case of Egypt, the 'passive' kind of leadership that Mubarak has shown while focusing on big business and capital for a small elite of people in the country left the country drifting along and getting deeper into a downward spiral. Egypt, which has a deep civilizational history and critical geopolitical position with implications for national security, survived only due to the sheer stamina of its people for several decades reaching a very low level of moral, societal, economic and developmental decay with deep consequences. In the meantime, the police force was encouraged to deal with the citizens using extreme brutality. Economic inequality grew and the divide between rich and poor became wider and wider. It was a boat without a rudder, drifting along the stream driven only by the sheer energy of its people's endurance and patience. Then one extreme case of police brutality was the straw that broke the camel's back. The people rose in anger and came out in exponential numbers to the streets, centering in the now iconic Midan al-Tahrir or Liberation Square.

The people of Egypt, Muslims, Copts and others, men, women and children would not leave the street despite police brutality until their demands were met. One clear demand was for the then President Mubarak to step down. This people's movement started on January 25, 2011. Former President Mubarak did step down. Chaos resulted from groups competing for power, which led the people to go out again in larger numbers on June 30, 2013, to complete their revolutionary process. A second President was removed. The people chose a new President and Egypt moved onto a road of transformative development which has been protecting Egypt's national security to this day.

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*"I am proposing a writing of a new declaration for the United States: A Declaration of Social Justice—a declaration that promises a fundamental change. The time is now ripe for such an act which would indeed illustrate that sometimes absence of leadership can lead to positive transformations."*

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In the United States, the people had to choose between two candidates for President during the previous election in 2016, both of whom were despised by large elements in the nation. This political situation itself merits attention. What happened to the democratic system in which real choice is absent, but election has to move forward because of tradition or inertia? Has the political system, even when in decay, become an object of worship?

But there were many more signs of a decaying system. There were a few very rich people, corporate power overwhelmed the economic and political system, racism grew and poverty widened. The presence of homeless people in the streets of the major cities of the United States was alarming. Racism against nonwhites was festering below a thin layer of apparent normalcy. Violence increased in dangerous ways.

An undercurrent of a decaying society was coming to a boil. President Trump was seen as divisive and as demonstrated by the major crisis that brutally struck the nation in late-2019, the COVID-19 pandemic, people were hungry for centralized leadership. This pandemic crisis was coupled with the case of police brutality in which a white policeman asphyxiated a black man who was pinned under his knee. Floyd died. His image desperately saying "I can't breathe" filled screens around the world. The world is so connected by globalized communication that in seconds the whole world can exchange communication and react. A global movement against racism arose.

Business as usual and strong comments by the former President, which sometimes worked to pacify or agitate before, led to louder and stronger protests in a nation that has almost reached an economic standstill from the pandemic. Protests filled the streets. It was a moment in which people, otherwise divided, ended up uniting. This racism has been going on for decades. Now serious discussions of social justice and racial equality are shaping national dialogue. Floyd's six-year old daughter is reported to have said, "Daddy changed the world". The absence of leadership in a nation 'screaming' for unitary guidance both during the pandemic and for white police brutality against blacks, united the people not only across

the divide but across borders at a time when COVID-19 put barriers between borders. In both cases, people used the technology of social media to rapidly spread the word with passion, communicating and crossing borders without masks.

It is difficult to predict the future of the movement as events are still in progress. But I am suggesting that in these two cases, Egypt under the late former President Mubarak and the United States under the former President Trump, it was a lack of charismatic or centralized leadership that has led to a road of transformations that might be assessed in the future to be significant. The reference in the case of the US is not simply, as some might imagine, voting for different people. This would be the least of significant transformations. I am proposing a writing of a new declaration for the United States: A Declaration of Social Justice—a declaration that promises a fundamental change. The time is now ripe for such an act which would indeed illustrate that sometimes absence of leadership can lead to positive transformations.

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# The Art and Science of Innovative Collaboration

## The Future of Democracy and Humanity

**Charles E. Smith**

Author; Senior Executive Coach; Leadership Consultant

### Abstract

*The moonshot in this article is to find allies for the radical transformation needed to assure senior leaders bring character and inquiry to governance. This is for the sake of Democracy and Humanity. The test is in honoring their word, competence, moral principles, honesty, courage, loyalty, fortitude, and doing the right thing. I have spent my life looking for one sentence that would explain everything, a picture frame, a Singularity to make sense of my experience of the world. For a long time, I have traveled with heroes, ideas, geniuses, women, men, countries, jobs, marriages, corporations, politics, religions, families, certainty and confusion. For 55 years, I have listened to coherent, organized presentations from intelligent leaders in business, academia and religions. I am usually left with ideas, language and hope for forward movement but little trust in the possibility of it really happening. What is needed is a concrete, physical, thorough, dramatic change in form or appearance. An example is, "The landscape has undergone a radical transformation." But what often happens is that many people do make a difference. But what always happens is that the people in power will stay in power. Innovative Collaboration calls for a dance between intention and flow. What most people want from business and government should be consistent with how people really are. And this will not come primarily from analysis, measurement, ideas, and rules shaped by existing and historical culture and belief. It can come from realizing that relationship is the foundation of accomplishment.*

### 1. Nine Frequencies

I first imagined that this room was full of information I did not see—languages from all over the world, libraries and science. But I did not have the equivalent of a radio with frequencies that provided this. The following insights are framed as Frequencies that stimulate thinking.

Frequency is the rate at which something occurs or is repeated over a particular period of time or in a given sample such as, 'Shops have closed with increasing frequency during the period.' Frequency is the rate at which a vibration occurs that constitutes a wave, either in a material (as in sound waves), or in an electromagnetic field (as in radio waves and light). It is usually measured per second. 'Different thicknesses of glass will absorb different frequencies of sound.' It also refers to the particular waveband at which a radio station or other system broadcasts or transmits signals, e.g., a radio station on a single AM radio frequency.

## 2. Frequency One: Systems with the most available Energy will Prevail

**Victor Sanchez**

Years ago, I met a Native American Indian medicine man, Lorin Smith, on the Pomo Reservation in Northern California. He had a very pleasant expression on his face and was soft-spoken. He said that life was all about maintaining, preserving, and increasing the energy you and others have. And that was what was most missing and most needed in the world—an improved relationship to one's own energy and to the energy of others. Lorin did not offer explanations for what he did, and I saw that he was close to the nature of reality. He said that this energy was everywhere and contained in all living and inanimate things. He and his people first paid attention to energy and from that life worked.

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*"The Toltec believed that the world does not consist of objects. Rather, they believed the world consists of interacting energy fields and that the "Systems with the most available energy will prevail.""*

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In my transition from a linear world to an energy-based reality, I met a brilliant Mexican teacher, Victor Sanchez, an author and Ph.D. Victor studied with Carlos Castaneda and became an expert in ancient Toltec Indians in Mexico. He created a conceptual framework based on the centrality of energy. Victor is a scholar and a teacher. He said that the Toltec believed that the world does not consist of objects. Rather, they believed the world consists of interacting energy fields and that the "Systems with the most available energy will prevail."

The world turned around and I began to see things that way.

Recently, driving through Houston, Texas with a close friend on the way to leading Cancer hospital M.D. Anderson, I saw a large advertising billboard: "WE ARE M.D. ANDERSON: WE ONLY DO CANCER." I was stunned by the singularity of the message, the power of knowing a fundamental purpose.

I had already met Zoe Morai, a master Human Energy Counselor who had worked at Harvard in science research. Zoe had a near-death experience, and then miraculously started trusting only what she experienced in the present moment. That is all she would trust. She became an amazing counselor for personal growth, energy, and helping make a better world. She described herself as a scientist who brings vibrational magic. She said that energy consciousness literally vibrates and goes to our core. You and I have it—we feel it.

Innovative Collaboration IS Vibrational Flow inside and between people. It is not  $1 + 1 = 2$ . From Vibrational Flow comes choice. It moves us with vibrational awareness to connect our individual and collective rising energy. When we talk straight, honestly and genuinely, to each other, energy goes up. Zoe said it comes from focusing on feeling, rather than thinking. Focusing on noticing, rather than distracting. Playing versus working. Attracting versus trying. Laughing out loud versus holding back. Choosing to flow without needing to cause discomfort outside ourselves, versus showing, punishing, explaining.

Most of the people I have known have been stuck with what they think. They are stuck with what they already believe. Stuck in the past with what they already know. In order to evolve without so much conflict, I/we need to shift the frame of our picture from linear and measured to energetic.

Once, I got stuck between what I was thinking and what I was simply aware of in the moment. Zoe said, “Charlie, you are stuck because you are using mental body (concepts) over sensory needs. You must sense the rise in inner energy so that you can “respond” to that sense with joy. When your inner energy of vibration expands, the outside world vibrates at a level that matches your inner expansion.” Zoe described herself as a scientist who believed in “vibrational magic”—moving beyond resistance and control to vibrational flow.

In an energetic paradigm, responsibility begins with our willingness to be cause-in-the-matter of energy across the entire system. Serge Kahili King’s<sup>5</sup> insight is that “Energy flows where the attention goes.” ***What’s needed is a paradigm shift to turn the way we see things on its head. I propose that “Energy” is the appropriate bottom line for business, government, and community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.***

Without awareness of vitality in oneself, others, and situations, we are trapped in limited, linear, object-based realities. Necessities of effectiveness and human mutuality required for Innovative Collaboration become impossible. Such Energy Awareness comes from sensing the patterns of energy present in relationships, teams, organizations, businesses, and communities. It reveals the underlying patterns that directly affect the success of any effort and help address what is real.

In physics, energy is a force field, acting on a particle at various positions in space. In the modern quantum theory of fields, an energy field occupies space. This led physicists to consider electromagnetic fields to be a physical entity, making the field concept a supporting paradigm. “The fact that the electromagnetic field can possess momentum and energy makes it very real. A particle makes a field, and a field acts on another particle. The field then, has such familiar properties as energy content and momentum, just as particles can have.” In practice, the strength of most fields has been found to diminish with distance to the point of being undetectable. (Wikipedia)

### ***2.1. In Business and Governance, Sustainable Energy comes from Character***

In an organization, the character of leaders is a significant source of energy. Dominic Barton, the head of McKinsey & Co.’s global consulting practice, said: “When we think about leadership, we focus too much on what leaders do. We do not spend enough time on who leaders are—the character of leaders.” Former Governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney said, “Employees need a sense of broader purpose, grounded in strong connections to their clients and their communities. Few among the hundreds of leaders and board directors with whom we have discussed this would disagree.”

Leaders readily agree that “character matters” but they also say they seldom refer to it or talk about it. Neither do they use it in recruiting, selecting, promoting or developing leaders. It does however surface more often when it comes to firing them. Based on our research, we

attribute the gap between the perceived importance and the actual use of character to three things:

- First, there is a great deal of ambiguity about what is meant by the word character.
- Second, leaders tell us that what they need is a contemporary, practice-focused vocabulary with which to address character. This vocabulary must be expressed in the language used today in their organizations.
- Third, there are few reliable and valid tools available for the systematic assessment of character. Leaders say they need that to be actually doing something about it. (*This author questions that assertion.*)

There is also evidence that 21 percent of CEOs, at least in the United States, are Psychopaths.

“The data has confirmed that one in five chief executives are psychopaths. At least, that’s what was found by a recent study of 261 senior corporate professionals in the United States. Webster’s Dictionary defines a psychopath as “a person who does not care about other people, and who is often dangerous or violent and affected with antisocial behavior.”

The assumption that a whole system can be made to work better through an assault on its rational elements betrays a dangerous ignorance. This has often been the approach of scientists and technologists. However, Frank Herbert states, “In all the universe there is only the insatiable appetite of matter..., that energy is the only true solid..., and energy learns.” Such learning is always the sum of intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual activity. We can get very smart cognitively yet remain uninformed emotionally, spiritually, or physically. In an energetic paradigm, we begin with willingness to be cause-in-the-matter of energy in the entire system.

## 2.2. DAGAZ: A New Way to Think



“Dagaz” is a Rune symbol used by Germanic peoples from about the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The left-hand side represents the past. The right-hand side represents the future. The center point is *emptiness*, zero gravity, the place where a new future can begin—Real Thinking, Escape Velocity, Innovative Collaboration. Dagaz engages energy from the past, present and future.

Dagaz: Rune of the hyper-consciousness.

- Energy: twilight/dawn polarity, non-dual reality, unity, synthesis.
- Paradoxical truth, incommunicable experience, conceptual realization, enlightenment.
- Invisibility as an organizing principle of Higher Consciousness.
- Synthesis of right-left brain dynamics.
- Transformation of one thing into its opposite.



### **3. Frequency Two: Curiosity**

In Innovative Collaboration, for me the main thing is Curiosity. Finding common ground, listening generously, asking questions, and for moments, finding a new freedom to choose.

My biggest barrier is my own sense of self-importance; what I think I already know. The only refuge I have found from self-importance is to know that there is no refuge. There is no escape, except to transform myself into the refuge of “us”, the power of being together.

I talk every week to my friend Tony Turnbull. I cannot tell where I stop and he begins. We connect and move on, go deep, never get stuck, and move to the next thing. There is no win-lose, dominate-avoid domination, self-importance. Fear or caution never stops us. His identity and my identity do not get in the way. Usually, when I am with people, it feels like “I am not you.” This never happens with Tony, even when our opinions are different.

Years ago, this was never true. I never felt safe enough, relaxed enough, to combine intention and flow. I was always pressing my goals, avoiding fears, and looking outside myself for the cause of things and the answers I did not have. The magic seems to come from being awake to what is happening in this exact moment. Just being there. No agenda. There had been bits and glimmers over the years. A program at the Gestalt Institute in Cleveland opened my eyes to new ideas and practices. These made sense of my life and work in a thrilling new way. This was not from a plan, but in a way I could not explain.

Curiosity is the urge to know more about something. Being Curious is interest in others’ concerns, wondering, ready to poke around and figure something out. In mathematics, a square is the result of multiplying a number by itself, e.g. two times two. Among individuals or groups, Curiosity is squaring the acceleration of wonder, a vibrational internal energy in my mind and body.

Albert Einstein said, *“I am not smarter than anyone else. I am just way more curious.”*

Richard Hill, my colleague in Australia, says that Curiosity consists of....

- Curiosity for information
- Curiosity for play
- Curiosity for possibility and meaning

Curiosity can be applied to any situation with three simple steps:

- Be interested: “That’s interesting.”
- Ask: “What is this really about?”
- Wonder: “What can I create with this?”

Curiosity is the Philosopher’s Stone that turns the base metal of fear and reaction into gold.

### **4. Frequency Three: Mutuality**

Mutuality is a high degree of respect for each other’s humanity.

Tania and I are in a mutual relationship. We met online in a project. When she was young her father would read to her from a book I had written, The Merlin Factor. When she found out I wrote that book, the love she felt with her father became a background for our continuing conversations. We have never met in person, yet our mutuality is powerful. Mutuality is the way people are connected, to themselves, to others, and to the physical and natural world. It is the way we are *being* with each other.

The density of the Space between people varies from completely clear/transparent/open/empty to completely dense/closed/ blocked/full. Mutuality is a continuous area that is relatively free, available, or unoccupied, with the quality or state of being mutual. Attitudes, values, principles, beliefs, thoughts, fears, emotions, ideas, preconceptions, orientations, cultures and identities can occupy the space. Mutuality reduces the density of the space between people.

Getting to Mutuality is:

- An experience, not an idea.
- Usually not the result of a process.
- Best considered part of the science of how you are being, treating others.
- The experience of just what it is like for me to be with you, you with me, and for each of us when we are with each other.
- “Mutuality” happens not just in me or in you, but in the space between us.
- If I want it to feel like “us” I need to be paying attention to the nature, the feeling of the space between us.
- To create the experience of “Mutuality” is to ask, “Are we in this together?”

I grew up in a ghetto in Dorchester, Massachusetts where there was little experience of mutuality. Everyone had the same religion and somehow knew they were better than other people. My grandfather taught me that men were better than women. America was better than other countries, no questions asked. Over time, it was clear in our family business that money was more important than people. Traveling outside our neighborhood was dangerous. My world was full of poisoned berries and if I did not avoid the electric fences, the Nazis were always at the door.

My colleague in Israel, Shlomo Yishai, introduced me to the importance of Human Mutuality. In conversations, his articles, and book he showed that until economic systems are rooted in human mutuality, there will be wars, injustice, unnecessary bureaucracy and racial discrimination. I also met and continue to learn from Alexander Berlonghi, a friend, leader, teacher, and consultant in the field of Ontology—the Art and Science of human relationships. His profound global practice has to do with how people are being with each other.

Over many years, my life became a search for people and places that were kind, not cruel, and more willing to be intimate without fear, and peace with justice was a noble purpose. Mutuality and experience of “Us” became a Singularity, a way to bring unity out of diversity, a place to belong and to create where I could. Relationship became the foundation of accomplishment.

### 4.1. *I am Not Giving Up My Shot*

“I am not giving up my shot” is a theme from Lin-Manuel Miranda’s amazing play, *Hamilton*, the story about how to live a life of significance and meaning. Alexander Hamilton (January 11, 1755 or 1757–July 12, 1804) was a Founding Father of the United States, a statesman, politician, legal scholar, military commander, lawyer, banker, and economist. He was an influential interpreter, first secretary of the treasury, created the nation’s financial system and the Federalist Party.

My shot is expanding human energy—my own and others. *It is All Energy and It is All You.*

## 5. Frequency Four: Fear is the Mind Killer

*“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”*

– **Helen Keller**

*“Cowards die many times before their death.*

*The valiant taste of death but once.*

*It seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end..., will come when it will come.”*

– **William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar**

*“I must not fear.*

*Fear is the mind-killer.*

*Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.*

*I will face my fear.*

*I will permit it to pass over me and through me.*

*And when it has gone past, I will turn the inner eye to see its path.*

*Where the fear has gone there will be nothing.*

*Only I will remain.”*

– **Frank Herbert, Dune**

In my life, I have learned to ask what I am afraid of in a situation or with a person, and then do it. This almost always turns out well.

## 6. Frequency Five: The Awful Truth

It is common wisdom that “the truth will set you free.” But it is less obvious in emotional issues such as what to do about climate, corporations, education, healthcare, race, and sex. In all these places, the time has come to realize that It is “The Awful Truth” that will set us free.

I learned this in a corporate sales program in England. Sales were low, there was a lack of support from hierarchy, unsupportive departments, and an internal sense of hopelessness. I asked them, “What’s the Truth?” They spoke and I asked, “What’s the Awful Truth?” They spoke and I asked again with, “That’s not Awful enough” and they spoke again. Finally, I

said, “That’s not Awful Enough—What’s Really Real?” There came a point when they spoke both from their hearts and minds about their experience of abuse and hopelessness. In a single moment, they became powerful men and women instead of victims. The Awful Truth was somehow game changing, and they would no longer be part of it. Then came uncharacteristic ideas, conversations, concrete actions and experiments.

Since then, I have realized that the Awful Truth will or can set you free from where you are stuck and being a victim. This kind of speaking is the key to transformation. The Awful Truth is the unspoken truth.

The world is full of wonderful people of all beliefs, races, and talents. But most people avoid the Awful Truth like the plague, as if it will go away, which it usually will not.

Where do I/you pay attention?

- Most of us are captivated by the embedded rules of our professions.
- Politicians and controllers of the most valued organizational resources are shaped by the need to keep their power and position.
- Most parents insist on having their children become like them.
- Many religions require that force be brought to protect thoughts and practices that preserve their culture.
- Most education does not teach that “The whole is always greater than the sum of the parts.”
- Authoritarianism is sustained by Force, Transaction, Relational Identity, Noise, the Need for Certainty and True Belief.

All this makes the survival of Democracy and the Future of Humanity at best difficult.

## **7. Frequency Six: A Four-Step Path For Transformation—A Thorough or Dramatic Change in Form and Appearance**

### **Commitment:**

*“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.”*

– **William H. Murray**, Mount Everest Expedition, 1951

I never heard the word ‘commitment’ until I was 45 years old. Commitment is the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, or other people. It is a pledge, a promise, an obligation that restricts freedom of action. Commitment focuses attention; I came to see the world in a new way and was focused and energized as never before. Before that, in

school, with family and friends, it was just them and me talking, and what happened next just happened.

### 7.1. What's Missing?

*"What's missing anywhere is not there until you ask a question..., and suddenly it appears..., and seems like it was always there but unseen."*

At first, it is hard to talk to someone about what is missing because it is not there. We are trained to look for what is actually there, because we can then do something useful. The problem with talking about what is missing is that it is not visible. Looking for what is missing is an acquired taste, a practice. It is looking for what is not there, which if it were there would make a big difference.

A husband and wife did not care about what the other one cared about. They argued all the time. What was missing was that what she cared about, and what he cared about could be important contributions to each other, but they could not see it.

A counselor in a hospital was coaching an assistant in how to be more effective. She had no attention or consideration for what the employee felt or thought. She was concerned with improvements in behavior and attitude without actual conversations that would matter. All of what might have made a difference was missing, absent, not there.

We are hard-wired to see what is there, when the answer is often in what is missing and not visible. Noticing what is potentially important but not visible, is a skill and a practice that opens a world of opportunity.

### 7.2. What's Missing that Gets What's Missing to be Missing?

*"We shall not cease from exploration and at the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time...."*

– **T.S. Eliot**, Four Quartets

The Deep Dive is a "Never Ending Search for what is missing that gets what is missing to be missing." This reveals what lies beneath, the true context or basis that enables or that prevents can enable resolution of underlying problems. Consider that in business, government, much formal education, and in the absence of education we ignore and suppress the underlying context. This can come from commercial, religious, political, hierarchical control or self-important reasons. For example, in education, there are three possible realities:

- Context/Possibility: The circumstances that form the setting for an event.
- Action/Process: A series of actions taken in order to achieve a particular end.
- Result: A consequence, effect, or outcome of something.

The deepest truth is that "*Context is Decisive*." This determines the circumstances that determine the setting for an event, statement, idea, or terms from which it can be fully understood.

In the United States and elsewhere, where have we recognized benefits but not costs to democracy, many people, and social justice?

- We accepted money is too often more important than people.
- We accepted authoritarianism culturally as legitimate in leaders and governance.
- We organized what Jesus, the Hebrew prophets and Buddha taught us.
- We organized the Declaration of Independence to fit our religious beliefs.
- We accepted men's right to be in charge.
- We accepted corporations as having human rights.
- We accepted the primacy of linear thinking and speaking in language and culture.
- We accepted Sovereignty on Earth as God's word.
- We legitimized the right of uninformed people to vote.

Also, with particular respect to suppression of democracy, the following have become true:

- Concentration of wealth and power
- Free pursuit of self-interest in power and position power in hands of the wealthy
- Corporate and social systems set up to prevent democracy
- Reduce democracy so the poor will not take away property
- Limiting women's and minority rights
- Business control of society by using economic power
- Corporate business is considered the core national interest
- Shift society from production to financial and speculative activity—General Electric is 50 percent a financial organization
- Promotion that "Anti-American" is a totalitarian, authoritarian notion
- As the economy became global, the needs of the American public became of lesser consequence
- Tax burden of the wealthy and corporations reduced and increased for general public
- Attacks on social security are driven by the wealth
- Government bails out business but most wealthy want "too big to fail"
- Organized labor was turned into the enemy because it can be a force for democracy
- Trap people into being consumers making non-rational choices
- Public policy discussion is minimal and often unrelated to political party interests\*

### 7.3. *Committed Speaking*

*"Specific words used in conversations actively empower being responsible and able to honor your word."*

– **Fernando Flores:** Committed Action

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\* Source: Noam Chomsky, MIT Professor, Wisdom Keeper, and considered by many an enemy of commercial and political interests.

- Declaration: Speaking that is self-evident, needs no support or evidence, reasons why, explanations or proof. Authority comes from the legitimacy of the speaker.
- Request: Conversations to enlist the assistance of another in satisfying an underlying concern.
- Promise: Speaking to indicate an oath, often invoking a witness, regarding one's future action or behavior.
- Assessment: A value judgment, opinion or explanation in the interest of taking some action, for which you are willing to provide supportive evidence.

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*"The Merlin Factor is a way of living in the world, and the ability to think from the point of view of the future."*

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*"The thought manifests as the word;  
The word manifests as the deed;  
The deed develops into habit;  
And the habit hardens into character;  
So watch the thoughts and its ways with care;  
And let it spring from love  
Born out of concern for all beings.  
As the shadow follows the body,  
As we think, so we become."*

– The Buddha

## 8. Frequency Seven: The Merlin Factor

Legend has it that Merlin, the Magician, was the great King Arthur's mentor. As depicted in *The Once and Future King* by T.H. White, Merlin had an uncanny ability to know the future. White's legend provides an apt metaphor for a 'future-first' perspective that successfully instills strategic intent in organizations and its people. He would occasionally give Arthur some insight into just how he knew what was going to happen before it did:

"Ah yes," Merlin said. "How did I know to set breakfast for two?...Now ordinary people are born forwards in Time, if you understand what I mean, and nearly everything in the world goes forward too. This makes it quite easy for ordinary people to live...But unfortunately I was born at the wrong end of time, and I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forward from behind..."

*The Merlin Factor is a way of living in the world, and the ability to think from the point of view of the future. It is the ability to enlist people as Ambassadors who listen, speak, and act on behalf of that future, and become committed to performance breakthroughs that explode existing cultural limits on what's possible.*

The premise is that the principal impediment to changing an organization's strategic direction is its existing culture: that is, people's current beliefs about the limits of what is possible. Changing people's beliefs about the future can produce extraordinary improvements in relationships, quality management, technical innovation, customer service and profitability.



Exceptional leaders cultivate the Merlin-like habit of acting in the present moment as ambassadors of a radically different future, in order to imbue their organizations and people a breakthrough vision of what it is possible to achieve.

The Merlin Factor works because how you feel and your confidence usually comes from the future you anticipate. It may seem that how we feel comes from our past, but most times positivity comes from looking forward to an attractive future. Normally and often, we put our past into our future, which confounds the possibility.

In King Arthur's legend, Glastonbury symbolized a visible city and Avalon, an invisible one. Each, however, occupied the same physical territory. Only a few individuals like Merlin, the King's Counsel, knew how to find their way between the two. In fact, most people no longer even knew of Avalon's existence, let alone how to get there.

By analogy, each of today's corporations, government agencies, and communities includes these same two dimensions. In a corporation's visible Glastonbury are found familiar objects and events such as buildings, machines, materials, products, services, vendors, customers, and stock prices. Also there, unfortunately, often resides a host of problems. In the same companies' invisible Avalon are relational qualities such as mutual trust, honesty, compassionate listening, forgiveness and reconciliation, caring relationships, cooperation toward grand visions, confidence in the future, alignment among personnel, and commitment to others' success. Avalon too, harbors difficulties.

Both dimensions have their own cultures and structures, forms of energy, and outputs. Both Glastonbury and Avalon are essential to the vibrant health, genuine success, and continuous improvement of any organization. Glastonbury deals primarily with objective reality—things tangible and countable. Avalon is most concerned with relational realities—neither physical nor easily measurable. Without Glastonbury a corporation cannot offer products and services to its customers. Without Avalon it lacks heart and soul.

Proud examples include:

- **Campbell Soup of Canada** was sure to lose much of its Canadian manufacturing to the United States without radical cuts in cost. Leaders and workers feared one another. The culture was uncooperative. All but two manufacturing plants were saved and remained in Canada.
- **The Rouse Company** operated 70 shopping centers around the US and Canada. Many shopping center managements were dysfunctional. Communication was unreliable and dishonest between centers and headquarters. There was an industry-wide recession not seen in many years. The executive vice president said that he would no longer work in a place where people did not tell the truth, were not open and honest in their communication, and would not commit to breakthrough goals with each other and independently. He promised to take this on with commitment and vigor or leave. His division had the best few years in history and innovated many new ways of working.
- **The National Peace Academy Campaign** was the vision of a man named Bryant Wedge. The dream was to create a national academy at the level of West Point, Annapolis, and the U.S. Air Force which was devoted to research, practice and action

in the areas of nonviolent dispute resolution in the United States and around the world. The idea was to create a national ethic of waging peace with equal conviction to the capacity for violence and war. There were critical challenges in managing volunteers, relating to and negotiating with members of Congress, lack of money, and continuing resistance from the Defense Departments, Schools of Foreign Service, Arms Manufacturers, certain media, and many members of Congress. On one hand, it seemed like Don Quixote tilting at windmills and on the other hand a noble, worthwhile and committed purpose with leaders who really meant it.

The original mission was to have the U.S. Congress create a Commission to study the viability and merits of such an effort. The National Peace Academy Campaign was a low budget, largely volunteer effort to enable this. My role was to help Executive Director William Spencer build teams, coach and counsel leaders in breakthrough thinking and creative ways to engage in constructive conflict resolution. My deeper role was to act as a “conscience” for them to bring together the ethics of their values and the powerful politics and opposition that would naturally come from the Defense Department, schools of foreign service, media, and certain members of the Congress.

We did not accomplish the vision, yet it was a strong step in the right direction. In fact, the commission bill was passed with a \$500,000 grant and after a year of negotiation, forward movement and sacrifice of some of the original principles, Congress passed a bill to create the National Institute of Peace which is now housed in a beautiful building located on the Washington Mall, and offers extensive world conflict resolution, research and facilitation.

## 9. Frequency Eight: The Overview Effect

On breaking free of Earth’s gravity and going to space, many astronauts experienced a surprising change in their perspective of life on Earth. Author Frank White named this phenomenon “The Overview Effect”. Some astronauts also discovered a compelling drive within themselves to help make business, government, healthcare, and the world as we know it, a better place.

### 9.1. Wonder and Awe

In the American Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote that, “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights... Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This was a Declaration, not facts. Progress has been uneven and withheld from many people. Still, the possibility was enshrined and remains to this day.

With our ability to go to space and Author Frank White’s capturing the image and possibility of the “Overview Effect,” the time has come to add to the Declaration of Independence that *the Overview Effect is a Human Right, a self-evident, inalienable right, endowed by the Creator or the evolution of human consciousness.*

Edgar Mitchell: Sixth Man on The Moon said,

***In the end, the choice for each of us is between the Force for Good and the Dark Side.***

## 10. Frequency Nine: Einstein also said there is Nothing as Practical as a Good Theory

Consider, and test for yourself, that in business, politics, and human affairs.....

Energy equals Mutuality times the Speed of Curiosity Squared.

$$E=MC^2$$

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