



My Academic Journey

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Abstract: My lifelong journey through the academic world yields insight into how we all can address our present-day double crisis of finding personal meaning in our lives and making progress on problems threatening the very existence of the human race. It was four different kinds of experiences which, joined together, were most influential in setting me on my present path of confronting those crises with incredibly powerful tools: (1) As a pre-med student at Columbia, prior to changing to sociology, my studies in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics gave me an understanding of the incredible power of science for effectively addressing fundamental problems. (2) It was C. Wright Mills' personality—a man who roared into Columbia on a motorcycle, with enormous emotional strength and charisma—that taught me to move away from my former timid self-image. (3) Two doctoral students at Boston University—Jack Levin and Andy Plotkin—helped me to build on my own understanding of powerful forces working for human development. (4) Joining forces with Tom Savage—a man who had journeyed from pulpit to patrol car—after our chance meeting, enabled me to build on my emotional and intellectual strengths with actions throughout my everyday life. It is all of us humans, the most interactive beings throughout the entire known universe, who can learn to fulfill our “heart,” “head” and “hand” potentials to solve the crises of achieving personal meaning and addressing effectively society's mammoth problems.

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INTRODUCTION

My academic journey began at the age of 9 when Mrs. Israel, my third grade teacher at Public School 61 in the East Bronx, appointed me Editor-in-Chief of The 3B4 News. The first and last issue, sold at 3 cents per copy, appeared in June, 1940, while Hitler was ravaging Europe, with this introduction and my take on current events:

WHY WE WROTE THIS NEWSPAPER

When we heard that a war was going on and thousands of innocent people were being killed, we decided to help them. We made a newspaper. When we finished the newspaper we had it typed. Then we would sell it to our friends. When we had all the money we needed, we would send it to the Red Cross with a letter telling how we raised the money.

LATEST NEWS

The Germans have just broken through the Maginot Line in France at several places. Paris was captured by the Germans without any street fighting inside the city. France has asked Germany for peace terms. Nobody knows what Hitler's reply will be. England says that she will fight alone if she has to.

Here are the initial sentences of the abstract of my article with colleagues, “Toward Personal and World Evolution: Addressing Our Double Crisis,” which appeared 84 years later in June, 2024:

Our focus is on the double crisis confronting contemporary societies: The first crisis asks us: “How can we hope to live a truly meaningful life before our deaths? Is it possible for us to experience a life full of understanding, joy and personal fulfillment?” The second crisis asks us: “How can the human race possibly survive? Are we all doomed to an actual death delivered by threatening yet unsolved problems?” Solving the first one yields the basis for solving the second one. It is the further development of the individual that is the basis for the continued evolution of society (Phillips, Savage, Plotkin, Sanseverino, Weiss, 2024: p. 1.).

This parallel between my initial and latest writing includes both the description of a problem (a war or a double crisis) and a direction toward a solution (contribution to the Red Cross or the further development of the individual). Indeed, we can see much the same double focus throughout the entire history of the human race, where our ancestors have continually struggled with extremely threatening problems such as war, and have repeatedly sought solutions. And they have repeatedly failed to solve those problems, granting their progress in other areas of life.

Our situation at this time in history is different. We now face problems so devastating that they may end our very existence on earth. This is exactly what my academic journey has been about: Can we humans finally succeed in solving problems we have been unable to solve throughout our entire

history? Do we have the potential to turn back the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists from its position at 90 seconds before Midnight?

The Bulletin was founded in 1945 by University of Chicago scientists who had helped develop the first nuclear weapons in the Manhattan Project. They created the Clock in 1947, using the imagery of Midnight as the apocalypse of a nuclear explosion threatening the very existence of humanity. The Clock is set each year by the 22 members of the Bulletin's Science and Security Board in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 11 Nobel Laureates.

For the year 2024, the Board claimed that leaders and citizens around the world should take their conclusion as a stark warning, as if today were the most dangerous moment in modern history, Because it may well be. They took into account the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas war, bio-threats, the continued climate crisis, and state-sponsored disinformation propelled by artificial intelligence.

I will now proceed to sketch how I moved from my early solution to world problems of offering pennies to the Red Cross to my present solution of empowering ever more individuals to fulfill their incredible potentials.

My experiences on the playground of P.S. 61 during recess were payback for my status with Mrs. Israel. As the child of immigrants from Eastern Europe, I was ill prepared for defending myself against those who saw me as "teacher's pet," and abused me daily, both verbally and physically. Instead of learning to defend myself and develop social skills, I escaped into the academic world. It was there that I learned to imagine myself as the world-saving hero I desperately wanted to be. Years later, I passed an entrance examination for the Bronx High School of Science, and subsequently I was awarded a scholarship to Columbia University.

Following the wishes of my mother, I focused on a pre-medical curriculum of biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. All that changed one day when a varsity tennis teammate suggested that I might be interested in auditing a course given by a new sociology professor, C. Wright Mills. (Phillips, Savage, Plotkin, Sanseverino, Weiss, 2024: p. 1.) Entering his classroom on the second floor of Hamilton Hall, I joined the students who were looking out the window, wondering about the loud noise I was hearing. It was Mills arriving on his motorcycle, with the tail of his coonskin cap waving in the breeze. That appearance suggested who Mills was: a free spirit who would bow down to no man as he moved toward his own vision of the future.

The contrast was huge between Mills' incredible breadth of knowledge, emotional conviction, and focus on society's central problems, on the one hand, and the narrow perspectives, emotional flatness, and avoidance of basic issues of my pre-med instructors. Here was a discipline, sociology, whose founder, Auguste Comte, actually pointed toward solving the range of problems linked to the industrial revolution of the 19th century, illustrated by children tied to their machines to fatten the riches of their employers. It was a no-brainer for me to shift from pre-med to sociology, even though my mother lamented that my moving toward a Ph.D. would abandon her goal of my becoming a "real doctor."

Mills delighted in his own irreverence, even when it stood in

the way of his gaining support from others. One story he told was about Dwight Eisenhower, who had become President of Columbia University immediately after World War II. Unannounced, Eisenhower appeared in Mills' classroom one day, seating himself in the back row. Mills immediately changed his plans for the session, describing what the class was supposedly planning: a violent revolution in the United States. Eisenhower's face gradually turned red, and he quickly departed from the classroom, never to be heard from again.

Following my graduation, my academic journey took me to Washington State University, where I explored the countryside on my Jawa Czech motorcycle while minoring in the philosophy of science and obtaining an M.A. in sociology. Although the cycle was run over by a 16-wheeler backing up over it during my planned cross-country trip to Cornell to study for a doctorate, I escaped unharmed, receiving a plane ticket to New York. Riding on my Jawa alongside Mills was no longer a vision I entertained.

My older brother, Jack, encouraged me to write poetry, and somehow I managed to publish this poem that revealed my own beliefs at the time:

When I begin the ancient game of chess

When I begin the ancient game of chess
Commanding knights and pawns in bitter strife,
I wonder at the thought that I possess:
How is it with the greater game of life?

Am I a wooden piece which someone moves,
A means to satisfy another's ends?
Do I advance, retreat, in patterned grooves,
A creature of commands another sends?

Perhaps I am a player in the game,
And force the moves of countless other souls
To seek my own fulfillment, fortune, fame,
Ignoring in my quest their secret goals.

The castle falls, the knights remain en pris [exposed],
Besiegers there are none the eye can see (*Different*, Summer 1954, 18).

Was I no more than the "wooden piece" which I had been much of my life, conforming to the wishes of others, like my mother? Or was I becoming an actual "player" in the game of life? That was indeed my goal, but, as we shall see, it was a very long time in coming.

When I wrote that poem, I did not realize the importance of the last line: "Besiegers there are none the eye can see." **It is the sociological idea that the major forces in society governing human behavior are in fact invisible.** This is a key to the enormous power of this discipline and the social sciences in general. For example, there is the sociological emphasis on the

concept of bureaucracy, with its focus on hierarchy, narrow specialization, and personal conformity to societal rules. This invisible concept achieves nothing less than controlling our entire way of life. And there are many other social science concepts describing invisible phenomena—like “culture,” “values” and “self-image”—that refer to extremely powerful phenomena.

At the time, neither did I understand the importance of my metaphor of **the game of life**. For example, imagine what people could achieve throughout their everyday lives if they approached their daily tasks in much the same way that the best tennis players acted on the tennis court? They see every movement, every forehand, every backhand, every volley, every movement of their opponents as crucial to their efforts to win the game. Imagine what we all might accomplish if we came to see our own everyday behavior not as beating some opponent but rather as winning the game of life.

It was only much later that the game of life coupled with the tool of **an interdisciplinary science of human behavior** made sense to me as a clear direction for personal and world development or evolution. Playing that game well, whether at tennis or any other endeavor, requires head, heart and hand. We can all become winners, for losing can be a learning experience. We might imagine, for example, a stairway wide enough for the entire human race. It does not narrow as it moves upward but retains that width. And we can also move laterally into much different experiences, pointing toward the ideal of becoming a renaissance man or woman.

Despite the enormous potential power of the ideas I was learning in graduate school and afterwards, they somehow failed to shape my own behavior. For example, I saw Mills in the back of the plane I was taking to Urbana, Illinois, to be interviewed for a position as Assistant Professor of Sociology. My first professional position, Research Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina, involved no teaching and lacked the status of membership in a Department of Sociology.

There I was, and there Mills was, coming to give a lecture on his just-published book, *The Causes of World War III*. Yet I thought, “Who am I, compared to this great man? Would he even remember me? Would he treat me as insignificant, and thus destroy the self-confidence I needed during my interview? I cannot take the chance of going up to him and introducing myself.” As a result, I missed out on an opportunity for self-development, and my fears continued to limit me.

Yet somehow, over the years, I did manage to gain self-esteem, granting that it was an extremely slow process. My doctoral dissertation at Cornell, “A Role Theory Approach to Predicting Adjustment of the Aged in Two Communities” (1956)—the basis for an article published in sociology’s leading journal (1957)—revealed the enormous power of self-image in shaping the lives of older individuals. Indeed, a self-image as “middle-aged” versus “old” or “elderly” proved to be more closely linked to one’s personal adjustment to life than whether or not one was employed, married, or chronologically younger. At the time, however, I failed to take seriously the implications of that study for my own development.

My own progress was illustrated by my reaction to the rejection of a paper I’d written, based on my research at the

University of North Carolina: “Expected Value Deprivation and Occupational Preference” (1964). That investigation, funded by the U.S. Public Health Service, involved lengthy questionnaires completed by thousands of medical students in an effort to discover why so few medical students chose public health as their career.

Initially, not only was I very disappointed but—can you believe it—I accepted my failure to publish the article. However, after several days I realized that the basis for the article’s rejection—that its simple mathematical model for integrating the data was most unusual—made no sense. I responded to the editors with a detailed argument for their reconsidering its publication, and they finally agreed with me.

I viewed the article as most important because I’d succeeded in developing extremely high correlations between the values of the students—such as wanting close relationships with patients along with a high income—and their failure to choose public health as a career. That achievement was based on nothing less than a hundred pieces of personal information from each of the 2,674 respondents in the study. This was quite unusual by comparison with the very low correlations achieved in almost all social science studies.

The journal where my article was published, *Sociometry*, is a leading journal for sociologists, and I fully expected to receive mail from sociological colleagues about my achievement. But the article fell on deaf ears, for not even a single letter was forthcoming. I was most disappointed, for I realized at the time the significance of my achieving those high correlations. I had gained them because of my depth of knowledge about the preferences of each medical student based on a mountain of information, perhaps unprecedented knowledge from such a large sample.

It was while I was teaching at the University of Illinois that Mills published his most well-known book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959/2000). At the end of the century it was voted by the members of the International Sociological Association as the 2nd most influential book for sociologists published during the entire century. It was preceded only by Max Weber’s *Economy and Society*, a book published early in the century by a key founder of sociology.

I had the privilege of speaking about the book’s importance at the Montreal meeting of the ISA in 1998. I did the best I could, but it was nowhere near what I could do now. For I missed out on discussing Mills’ Appendix: “On Intellectual Craftsmanship.” **It was there that he focused on the importance of linking one’s everyday life with the development of one’s sociological ideas:**

It is best to begin, I think, by reminding you, the beginning student, that the most admirable thinkers within the scholarly community you have chosen to join do not split their work from their lives. They seem to take both too seriously to allow such dissociation, and they want to use each from the enrichment of the other. Of course, such a split is the prevailing convention among men in general, deriving, I suppose, from the hollowness of the work which men in general now do. But you will have recognized that as. A scholar you have the exceptional opportunity of designing a way of living which will encourage the habits of good workmanship. Scholarship is a choice of how to live as well as a choice

of career; whether he knows it or not, the intellectual workman forms his own self as he works toward the perfection of his craft; to realize his own potentialities, and any opportunities that come his way, he constructs a character which has as its core the qualities of the good workman (195-196),

This idea of shaping one's own personality as the result of one's academic pursuits is nothing less than a central idea for actually solving world problems. Granting it leads to one's becoming "the good workman," it also leads to far more than that. It is exactly what my colleagues and I pointed toward in our just-published article: "It is the further development of the individual that is the basis for the continued evolution of society" (Phillips, B., Savage, T. J., Plotkin, A., Sanseverino, S. M., Weiss, N.S., 2(6), p. 1).

How can we learn to actually solve the first crisis and develop a meaningful life if we are all products of life-long conformity to a bureaucratic way of life? Following my poetic metaphors, we are all much the same as wooden pieces that are moved to satisfy the ends of others. We have been taught to be creatures following the commands of others. Although Mills was able to break such conformity, he also became a loner with no following throughout society, unable to teach the rest of us to follow his vision of our becoming "the good workman."

Joseph Conrad's novel, *Lord Jim* (2000), made into a film starring Peter O'Toole, illustrates where I was at the time.

Jim was a British seaman who signed on as first mate on the *Patna*, a ship transporting hundreds of Muslims on their holy pilgrimage to Mecca. But the *Patna* is caught in a hurricane, takes on water, and threatens to sink. The Captain and the other officers abandon the passengers, lowering themselves into a lifeboat, and call on Jim to join them. Jim is torn between duty and fear as the wind and rain batter him. In a moment of weakness he jumps into the lifeboat, succumbing to guilt that will eat at him for the rest of his life.

When the lifeboat reaches port, Jim and the other officers are shocked to see the *Patna* moored there, having been towed by a passing vessel. While the others quickly disappear, Jim decides to face a judicial court of inquiry, which strips him of his naval certificate for abandoning ship.

Jim, now a derelict among other derelicts, wanders the Indonesian archipelago, helping others whenever possible, and as a result he is given the title of "lord" by those he had helped. He continues to attempt to make up for his failure. But he remains unable to forgive himself, to remove deep feelings that he has betrayed his ideals, to free himself from the prison of his failure. He dies as the result of taking a bullet intended for a boy whom he was protecting.

We are all Lord Jim. We, too, fail to live up to the standards society has taught us. Following the ideas of Freud and modern psychotherapists, our repression of negative emotions enables them to continue to haunt us, just as Jim's feelings of guilt continued to plague him. Rather than raise those emotions to the surface so that we can work on them in one way or another, we fail to do so. I was still Lord Jim to a significant degree.

It was my efforts as a professor at Boston University, as well

as after my university career was over, that I was able to obtain the new insights that I needed to follow Mills' vision. What I lacked was not just academic knowledge, but the experience of applying that understanding throughout my own life, just as Mills envisioned. I had to not only gain increasing understanding of human behavior but also become that "good workman."

I was particularly fortunate in being able to work with two graduate students, Andy Plotkin (1977) and Jack Levin (1968), whose doctoral dissertations advanced my own ideas. Plotkin built on the ideas of the sociological theorist Alvin W. Gouldner, whose *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970) included a vision of a "reflexive sociology." Gouldner followed Mills' Appendix: "A Reflexive Sociology means that we sociologists must—at the very least—acquire the ingrained habit of viewing our own beliefs as we now view those held by others" (487).

Plotkin understood the necessity of developing a worldview with a new habit, such as an evolutionary versus a bureaucratic perspective. This involves movement far up language's "ladder" or levels of abstraction to a paradigmatic level so as to encompass the full range of human behavior. Thomas Kuhn's seminal book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), had clearly demonstrated the importance of that level of analysis in order to understand scientific revolutions. Mills himself had pointed in this direction when he wrote in his *The Sociological Imagination*: "The capacity to shuttle between levels of abstraction, with ease and with clarity, is a signal mark of the imaginative and systematic thinker" (34).

Levin succeeded in developing an alternative to the forces frustrating individuals that had yielded aggression and war throughout the entire history of the human race. Working with students in his classes in introductory sociology as his experimental subjects, he frustrated them severely by failing them in a phony aptitude test for graduate school. But at the beginning of the course, long prior to that event, he measured in a questionnaire whether they generally compared their grades to the grades of other students or to their own previous grades. And he also assessed in a paper and pencil test their degree of prejudice against a minority group.

Lo and behold, those students who compared their grades with those of others increased their degree of prejudice against that minority group after they were frustrated. Just like one's behavior on a see-saw that follows our bureaucratic way of life, they raised themselves up as the result of putting others down. Not so the students who compared their new grades with their own previous grades. For they were less likely to locate themselves on a bureaucratic see-saw.

Granting that this is no more than a single study, it nevertheless builds on the work of Mills and Gouldner with their focus on personal development as a cure for the ills of society. Yet a very large number of other studies pointing toward egalitarian interaction, and away from competitive or see-saw behavior, reinforce Levin's conclusion. An analysis of no less than 515 studies with more than 250,000 subjects has revealed that intergroup contact, which points away from the competitive comparisons of grades, typically reduces prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). I was particularly sensitive to their findings because my own doctoral advisor at Cornell, Robin M. Williams, had participated in World War II studies of morale that emerged with

the same finding.

My retirement from teaching at the end of the century did not signal retirement from continuing my academic journey. As a sociologist, my entire academic life was devoted to finding solutions for society's basic problems, and I was not about to end my search prematurely. Prior to retirement I'd published a book that carried forward my interest in the game of life, namely, *Worlds of the Future* (1972). There I contrasted "head" games like "truth-knowledge" with "heart" games like "scarcity-infinity" and "hand" games (like "seesaw-stairway"). For example, when we learn to believe that we are drastically limited intellectually, we are playing a hard game of scarcity.

My background in the hard sciences, gained as a pre-medical student, enabled me to become critical of the extremely narrow specialization throughout the social sciences. This was illustrated by the existence of 53 distinct Sections of the American Sociological Association which had little to do with one another. Such behavior contradicted the very nature of the scientific method, just as Newton claimed: "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

This ignorance of a key aspect of the scientific method throughout the social sciences has been carried much further by their near-universal ignoring of the phenomenon of "investigator effect," illustrated by the impact of the behavior of a given interviewer on an interviewee. Given our near-universal emphasis on conformity, those being interviewed generally will look for ways to please interviewers, who might easily betray their own convictions in one way or another. As a result of the ignorance of such effects in a vast number of social science studies, we may well wonder about the validity of their conclusions.

The first book I wrote upon retirement from Boston University was *Beyond Sociology's Tower of Babel* (2001), where a picture of Mills on his motorcycle appeared on the frontispiece. That book became the basis for an informal group I created with the help of a sociologist (Tom Scheff) and a philosopher of social science (Harold Kincaid): "The Sociological Imagination Group."

Over the next nine years we held research conferences joint with the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association. We were able to publish thirty articles in three volumes: Bernard Phillips, Harold Kincaid and Thomas J. Scheff (eds.), *Toward a Sociological Imagination*, (2002); Bernard Phillips (ed.), *Understanding Terrorism* (2007); and J. David Knotnerus and Bernard Phillips (eds.), *Bureaucratic Culture and Escalating World Problems*, (2009).

Initially I felt that we were doing something very important, namely, demonstrating the value of building on Mills' interdisciplinary orientation. Mills developed that broad approach in his *The Sociological Imagination*, as illustrated by this quote:

The sociological imagination . . . is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry (7).

It took me nine years to realize that our progress was quite

limited. Specifically, the articles in those volumes were not reaching a paradigmatic or extremely general level. As a result, they failed to point a direction for fundamental changes in society needed to counter our bureaucratic way of life, such as an evolutionary approach. They pointed outward rather than both inward and outward, centering on social structures rather than both personality and social structures.

I realize only now, and not at the time, that I'd failed to focus on what Mills had emphasized in his famous book: "becoming a good workman." I had neglected the overriding importance of people's everyday-life experiences, including my own. I had been co-opted by the outward orientation of our bureaucratic way of life. I'd failed to take seriously the results of the Levin experiment, which pointed to self-examination as a remedy for aggression.

However, during those years of emphasizing the work of the Sociological Imagination Group, somehow I'd managed to develop a book of my own with a colleague and personal friend, Louis C. Johnston: *The Invisible Crisis of Contemporary Society* (2007). It succeeded in illustrating a new approach I'd taken, granting I was not aware of the change. It was nothing less than a focus on personality structure, by contrast with the sociologist's emphasis on social structure.

Without understanding that my new approach to writing was quite different, I developed a series of books centered on the personal development of the individual. For example, my *Revolution in the Social Sciences* (2012) focused on the individual's intellectual, emotional and problem-solving development. I continued with *Manual for Personal Evolution* (2013), *Unlock Your Infinite Potential* (2014), and *Personal Evolution through Film* (2014).

At that time, a decade ago, Andy Plotkin called me with the idea that he'd like to start a school teaching our approach to knowledge. I answered that I would join him. We knew we had something important to say, but we were not sure of just what it was or how to communicate it. Yet my own focus was no longer on social structure, for I'd changed my emphasis to personality structure. Over the years our idea morphed into simply writing a book that would somehow pull together the ideas we'd developed over so many years. We continued to work on integrating our ideas in weekly telephone conferences, gradually making progress.

It was a chance meeting I had, with someone who joined me waiting for Barnes & Noble to open, that changed everything.

Tom Savage had obtained a Master of Divinity and a Master of Sacred Theology from the Boston University School of Theology at the same time that I had taught in the Department of Sociology, a stone's throw away in the College of Liberal Arts. He had been ordained as a Unitarian Minister in Belmont, Massachusetts in 1964. Tom would later go to the Frank Lloyd Wright Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin.

These were the turbulent 1960s. Students were protesting the Vietnam war, and marching for civil rights. As campus minister, Tom became engaged in these conflicts between students and the police. One officer at a melee pushed Tom through the crowd and up against a building wall as he began shouting in his face, "You are the dumbest son-of-a-bitch I've ever heard preach. You don't

know anything about the real world. If you want to learn what's really happening on city streets, try becoming a cop."

Thinking that this moment was just the product of high emotions, Tom forgot all about that experience. Ten years later he saw this ad in the Sarasota Herald Tribune: "The Sheriff is looking for a few good men." On a whim he found himself seated in the front row of the Police Academy. He would eventually become a Lieutenant and serve 23 years on the force in the Patrol Division. During that time he created the unique experiment of community policing, with over four thousand volunteers for a citizen patrol, recognized by the state as a unique crime-prevention program.

The program was so successful that, in the chain of command tradition, his Captain wrote it up and got his Master's Degree for Tom's program. Here was an example of the workings of bureaucracy at its finest!

If I saved Tom from retirement, he saved me from failing to take the next steps in my academic journey. After a few minutes we realized that we had a great deal in common: working toward solving the big problems of society. He had left the Ministry in search of a calling that dealt with society's concrete problems, by contrast with vague and general ideas about how to lead the good life or help others. Yet he came to understand police work, as well, as failing to address the big issues plaguing society.

As a sociologist I had focused on the head. It was Tom who came up with the idea of our double crisis, with an emphasis on the heart. Together, we both were able to center on the hand. We had developed a direction for solving the first one of a lack of personal development as yielding a solution for the second one, the increasing problems of society. Although at the time we did not see clearly just how to solve that first crisis, it was just a matter of time before we gained a better idea of what must be accomplished. The dynamic duo had been born.

We came to understand both the enormous problems that must be solved to yield that personal development as well as how to move toward solving them, based on our years of efforts, encouraging others to join us. Looking back at my earlier experiences, I can come to understand the importance of our progress with respect to the three fundamental components of individual behavior: heart, head, and hand.

As for heart, recall my poem, "When I Begin the Ancient Game of Chess." It was there that I envisioned the centrality of playing and winning "the game of life," a game that we can all learn to win without any losers. To have done so, I would have confronted effectively my abusers on the playground of PS 61, explained to my mother the importance of a doctorate in sociology, and reached out to Mills on that plane to Urbana.

Yet all of that would have been no more than a prelude to addressing the big problems of society, as I am doing at this time, for addressing the first crisis is indeed a direction for solving the second one. If I failed at an earlier age at that earlier solution, I succeeded at a later age. For it was Tom Savage who helped me learn the importance of emotional development, something generally foreign to the academic world.

When Tom joined me and my co-authors in developing a book that centered on solving our double crisis, *Creating Life Before Death*, now in its 2nd edition with the subtitle *Before*

Disaster Strikes the Ship of State, he enabled us to include stories such as this one:

Giuseppe Verdi was commissioned to compose *Aida*, an opera for the grand opening of the Suez Canal, to be performed at the recently dedicated new opera house in Cairo on Christmas Eve, 1871.

You probably know the story. Egypt is being invaded by an army from Ethiopia. The captain of the Egyptian guard is Radames, who is in love with *Aida*, an Ethiopian slave. Amneris, daughter of the Pharaoh, is in love with Radames, and fears *Aida* might be her rival. Radames' army defeats the Ethiopians, returning in triumph with treasure and slaves, one of whom is *Aida's* own father.

We turn now to our own story regarding the unanticipated performance of Charles "The Great." Charles Collins was physically a Greek god, and he knew it. But this was the early 60s with its biases and prejudices. And Charles was hampered by two inescapable realities: he was a black man and a rather effeminate gay male. Coupled with this were his rather theatrical delusions of grandeur, and, well, you get the picture.

When a traveling opera company came to present *Aida*, they needed extras, and Charles, of course, was the first to sign up. The painful yet hilarious episode that followed just has to be told. Student volunteers were to be paid ten dollars a performance for carrying a spear. And a poor student could have a pretty good meal for ten dollars in the early 60s.

In the *Triumphal March* scene, Charles could just see how magnificent he would look carrying his spear behind *Aida*. But, because of his race and color, he was cast as an Ethiopian slave. Charles was not just offended, he was outraged.

Once on stage, however, he took advantage of his big unscripted moment. He had been told to lay prostrate, depicting a slave's subjugation. Instead, Charles rose to his knees, and with hands tightly clasped, his whole upper body dramatically weaving back and forth, Charles began a silent pantomime of a Southern black slave, pleading with Master Jack not to whip him anymore.

The attention of the whole audience was now on Charles, despite the best efforts of the singers who were trying to keep the focus on their own major roles. Charles' antics became so disruptive that the stage manager sent in two Egyptian guards to grab Charles and drag his black ass, as any sixties white Southern sheriff would have called it, off the stage.

At the end of Act II, the lead singers, *Aida*, Radames and Amneris, came out to take their respective bows, and were greeted with polite applause. Suddenly, out from the side curtain of the stage, burst Charles, who began dancing and prancing about, taking huge and exaggerated bows while at the same time blowing kisses to an audience now on its feet, cheering "Bravo" and "Go, man, go!"

The three lead singers, trying to maintain smiles, exited, but backstage they became furious over the outrage. Who in the hell was this nobody black slave taking away from what should have been their due?

Charles, however, now in his glory, continued to milk the moment, teasing and pleasing his audience for a full five minutes. Charles had thrived in those minutes, and he certainly knew now what it meant to be...somebody.

Those cheers illustrate the idea that we are all very much like Charles. We crave the belief that our lives are genuinely meaningful, that we deserve praise for who we are and what we have done. Granting that we do not have the opportunity to milk an audience for applause, those cheers were meant not only for Charles but also for the selves that the audience would have liked to be had they not succumbed to conformity.

Days later, the opera had pretty much been forgotten. But Charles' performance will be remembered forever. Who among us would have, could have, dared to be so bold? Who has not sought to grasp the brass ring, or capture a moment in time to enjoy such celebrity? Who, except pop artist of Campbell's-soup-can fame, Andy Warhol, will challenge us to embrace our own much-deserved fifteen minutes of fame and glory? Thank you, Charles, for reminding us that when the world demands our obedience and conformity, instead of acting like lost sheep we can rise up to roar like lions.

As for the audience . . . For once, they defied the rules of being subservient to applauding only recognized artists. They began applauding an ordinary individual not unlike themselves (49-51)

What we all require if we are to move from solving the first crisis to solving the second one is far more than the emotional development that yields fifteen minutes of fame. That evolution must continue for a period long enough to take us even beyond the "head" and "hand" power that Mills illustrated on his motorcycle, in the classroom, and everywhere else. We must come to believe that we can continue that development throughout our lives. And that conviction must take us to the point of nothing less than reversing the movement of the Doomsday Clock.

It is exactly here that we must turn to a sociological and biological analysis, as outlined in Jonathan Turner's *On Human Nature: The Biology and Sociology of What Made Us Human* (2021). Turner takes us back to our very beginnings to understand why this has occurred, opening up the question of how we can change it. When our biological ancestors came down from the trees in Africa as a result of deforestation that destroyed their habitats, they were faced with extinction by four-legged predators far faster and stronger than they were.

They learned their only means of survival: banding together in groups which could work together and survive contests with enemies. Accomplishing this required nothing less than extraordinary emotional development and commitment by our individualistically oriented ancestors to reach out and join with others. Indeed, following Turner's analysis, we became the most emotionally developed organisms on the planet.

Human groups not only succeeded in surviving, but also in developing civilizations with the full range of achievements we've all come to admire. But the bill for those achievements is now coming due, based on the individuality lost by our primitive ancestors when they formed groups as a means of self-protection and survival.

It is the discipline of sociology that has been the basis for an analysis of what we have lost intellectually. Following Max Weber, who published the most influential book for sociologists throughout the 20th century, we achieved survival by developing a bureaucratic way of life emphasizing patterns of hierarchy and personal conformity.

This insight opens one up to a third element of our bureaucratic way of life along with a third alternative within an evolutionary way of life: narrowness versus breadth. We can recall here Mills' interdisciplinary orientation pointing to that breadth. By contrast, we had the 9/11 disaster at the World Trade Center and Pentagon, when the CIA, FBI, NSA and State Department failed to share their knowledge of its potential.

Granting that hierarchy, conformity and narrow specialization have been basic to the development of human civilization, they are the very antithesis of the image of Mills on his motorcycle. And they have promoted our present-day increasing and unsolved problems threatening to destroy us. Yet following the very nature of every single one of us, we have an intellectual alternative to our subservience within a bureaucratic way of life based on who we are biologically.

To understand why all this is possible, we must move to an examination of our intellectual potential, or head. We must pose the question to ourselves of just who we human beings are, by contrast with all other living things throughout the known universe. Given the nature of our complex languages, we are learning animals who can continue to gain knowledge throughout our lives. And that learning can foster our continuing emotional development.

Such continuing learning requires a focus on ourselves to a great extent. But there's the rub, for from the time of birth we've all learned to look outward and become largely invisible to ourselves. Our focus is on loving others as the answer to the world's biggest problems, on family and friends, on the rich, the famous and the powerful, on news of the latest disasters or accomplishments we learn from the media, on our villains and heroes, but not on ourselves.

Society's movement toward democracy builds on our biological nature and points toward the thesis of the overriding importance and potentials of every single one of us. This head orientation for each of us opens up to our potentials for continuing to develop emotionally and intellectually far enough to turn back the hands of the Doomsday Clock and points us toward the possibility of continuing personal evolution.

It is exactly here that we must ask what kinds of actions or hand procedures are required to turn potentials into actualities. We assume that every single one of us has the intellectual and emotional potentials for continuing personal evolution. What must we now do to solve our first crisis of the lack of self-development as a basis for solving the second crisis of the extinction of humanity?

“It is essential that we understand more clearly the problem we face of having spent a lifetime developing habits of conformity to an outward-oriented way of life where we see ourselves as relatively insignificant. David Knottnerus, who edited jointly with me one of the three volumes of the Sociological Imagination Group” has devoted a lifetime to research on the power of rituals in human affairs, illustrated in his *Ritual as a Missing Link* (2009). Rituals of the group are nothing less than habits of the individual. And it is the full power of those habits which must be addressed.

An ancient Japanese proverb can help us here: “Vision without action is a daydream; action without vision is a nightmare.” Following this proverb, we must somehow learn to unite our vision of the enormous power of our heart and head with the action of our hand. Our bureaucratic way of life teaches us quite the opposite, just as we’ve divided the academic world from the worlds of entertainment and technology, thus separating head, heart and hand.

My love of science fiction and, in particular, fascination with *Star Trek*, helped me to make full use of that proverb. In the episode “Catspaw” (Blish, 1976, 276-297), Captain Kirk, Spock and McCoy beam down to a planet issuing a call for help. They are greeted by a woman who appears to be all-powerful, even possessing the ability to destroy the *Starship Enterprise*. However, by destroying her wand containing her power, her appearance changes to that of a helpless worm.

We might proceed to reverse such perceptions. While presently seeing ourselves as relatively helpless beings, we can somehow learn to change that perception and view ourselves as powerful beings. The “wand” enabling us to accomplish this is nothing more than our ability to change the way in which we see ourselves. The result would be a changed vision of who we are and the nature of our powers.

As for the proverb’s focus on action, there is the *Star Trek* episode, “Where No Man Has Gone Before” (Blish, 1976, 298-321). As the *Enterprise* proceeds to move out of our galaxy, it experiences a violent electronic storm. Visiting Lieutenant Commander Gary Mitchell falls to the deck, shaking like a leaf, with his eyes turning silver. Then he is reborn as a being who continues, from one moment to the next, to develop intellectually, emotionally, and in his ability to solve problems. But instead of using his developing powers to advance the positive mission of the *Enterprise*, he follows the view of Lord Acton: “All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Although Captain Kirk somehow manages to deal with this problem, we might well envision a reversal of the quote from Lord Acton. Perhaps power corrupts within a world emphasizing a bureaucratic way of life, but it need not corrupt within a world focused on an evolutionary way of life. Gary Mitchell could be teaching the 430 crew members of the *Enterprise* to develop their own powers. And that could, in turn, be a prelude to their working toward doing the same for everyone else in the galaxy.

Four years after completing the first edition of *Creating Life Before Death: Discover Your Amazing Self*, my colleagues and I emerged with a second edition with the same title but a new subtitle: *Before Disaster Strikes the Ship of State* (2024). It had a new Chapter 7, “Beyond Bureaucracy,” which emphasized procedures for the individual to actually move

toward an evolutionary way of life.

During that four-year period. I was invited to publish two essays in *Contemporary Sociology*, sociology’s journal of book reviews (July, 2019, and May, 2020). It was there that I called on sociologists to include attention to personality structure along with their present focus on social structures. Once again I waited for some response from the sociological community after their publication, and once again I was disappointed. What I realized more fully is the difficulty of changing long-established habits, just as Knottnerus came to learn the power of rituals.

Yet that realization did not fully penetrate the direction I’d been taking all my academic life, with my procedures for publishing book after book and article after article. It took one more article published soon after that 2nd edition, “Toward Personal and World Evolution: Addressing Our Double Crisis” (June, 2024), for me to finally realize that my publications had only a limited impact on sociologists and others.

I was very proud of that article. It was there that I managed to develop more fully the “East-West strategy” for solving problems discussed in the 1st and 2nd editions of *Creating Life Before Death*. That was a focus on action or hand that built on the importance of both heart and head.

The Eastern strategy was developed by the Buddha some 2500 years ago. It requires that one let go of unrealistic aspirations, which in modern times are promoted by an ocean of advertising polluting the airway. For they result in unfulfilled desires, and those frustrations are in turn the basis for both unhappiness and aggression. If following the Eastern strategy was difficult in the Buddha’s time, it has become far more difficult at this time in history, given our increasing gap between aspirations and their fulfillment.

Yet if one does manage to succeed in taking the Buddha’s advice—which he saw as addressing the central problem of the human race—one frees oneself to tackle the problem of one’s own personal development with the Western strategy. It is here that one can carry forward the Buddha’s scientific realism with the aid of scientific knowledge of human behavior. That knowledge can, in turn, be advanced by the interdisciplinary approach developed in the 1st and 2nd editions of *Creating Life Before Death*.

The article went on to specify the key procedures involved in learning to play the game of life:

First, learn to have in mind both belief in our present double crisis and an understanding of your ability to continue to improve your behavior throughout your everyday life. This will yield your motivation (heart) to actually move in that evolutionary direction.

Second, for whatever you are presently engaged in accomplishing, apply that idea of belief in your general ability to improve to that particular task (head). For example, for ourselves in this moment it is our ability to communicate more effectively these ideas. But we can envision our improving any of our behaviors whatsoever.

Third, follow through on your motivation (heart) and understanding (head) with action that actually succeeds in that improvement (hand). Use the Eastern

strategy to eliminate time wasted on activities that take time away from the time you need for your own personal development. Use the Western strategy to achieve that development.

But we don't stop there, for our approach requires continuing improvement if we are to address successfully our double crisis. For our future behavior, we would apply this three-step approach to ever more of our behavior. Over time we would learn to no longer think of three distinct steps, but simply focus on makings improvements, without consciously being aware of our motivation and beliefs.

Granting the difficulty of using the East strategy in modern times, given our lifelong treatment of ourselves as largely invisible, the West strategy calls on us to employ an interdisciplinary science of human behavior that presently does not exist. Even if it did exist, it would have to be placed in the hands of individuals throughout the world, versus remaining a tool limited to academicians. At least, however, our two editions have begun to move in the direction of outlining the nature of such knowledge.

The article continues by seeing these ideas as the basis for a powerful social movement that can move us away from our bureaucratic way of life and toward an evolutionary way of life. This conclusion, based on an analysis by the Dutch futurist Fed Polak (pp. 7-8) and American sociologist Lawrence Busch (pp. 7-8) of the successful social movements throughout Western history, makes good sense. Yet we should understand, following the title of Polak's books, that this is an image of the future. Is it realistic as an immediate goal?

Given the enormous difficulty of moving in Polak's and Busch's direction, what choice do we have? Should we simply give up and wait for the bombs to fall? We are human beings, the most highly developed creatures on earth. Up to now we've neither taken seriously the dangers of our present situation nor the possibilities for changing it. Only now are we able to gain the awareness of where we stand, and only now are we in a position to do something about it.

As for myself and my colleagues, we're moving in two directions. On the one hand, we're taking our interdisciplinary science of human behavior into the academic world by introducing "Paradigmatic Sociology" as a new Section of the American Sociological Association. This will be accompanied by an outline of a new course: "Paradigmatic Sociology." On the other hand, I'm presenting a 14-week workshop in Sarasota, starting January 6th, 2025, which can be accessed worldwide through our website, sociologicalimaginationpublishing.com, and its link to YouTube. Its focus will be on learning an interdisciplinary science of human behavior as a basis for solving our double crisis.

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