



Personal Evolution: A Paradigmatic Solution for Personal and World Problems

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Article History

Received: 17.09.2024

Accepted: 12.10.2024

Published: 25.10.2024

Abstract: This paper builds on the key ideas advanced in two editions of *Creating Life Before Death* (2020 and 2024) as well as eight articles published during and since that period. Its focus is on answering two questions. Exactly how can anyone move away from a lifetime of personal conformity to a bureaucratic life with its focus on hierarchy so as to fulfill one's incredible intellectual, emotional and problem-solving potentials? And how is it possible for contemporary societies to avoid the worldwide catastrophes of nuclear war, climate disasters, or other worldwide problems, and proceed to reach for the stars? The paper begins with an **INTRODUCTION**, centering on the basic problem of the human race, as discussed by the Buddha 2500 years ago: the deep frustration linked to the gap between what people want and actually are able to get. Following the analysis of the senior author and a co-author in *The Invisible Crisis of Contemporary Society*, that gap is continuing to increase as the result of our continuing technological revolutions. Yet the good news is that each of us can develop a **Vision** of our own continuing development or evolution. That, in turn, can yield the basis for actions which will work, over time, toward addressing our double crisis. As for the first crisis, in a second section, **ACHIEVING PERSONAL EVOLUTION**, we center on ten procedures anyone can use to reward or reinforce oneself, thus moving toward an increasingly confident self-image. This achievement, **when coupled with an evolutionary vision**, yields the basis for continuing personal development. A third section, **SOLVING WORLD PROBLEMS**, addresses our second crisis. As personal evolution spreads throughout societies, it yields increasing productivity and greater ability to solve world problems. These solutions are possible because they move us away from the narrow specialization with little integration of knowledge with respect to human behavior that is characteristic of our bureaucratic way of life. Instead, they move us toward a powerful and interdisciplinary science of human behavior. **To our knowledge, these solutions to personal and world problems have never been advanced previously. We follow Confucius: "It is man that can make the Way great; and not the Way that can make man great."**

Keywords: Negative emotions, reinforcement, personal evolution, paradigm, world problems, invisible crisis, image of the future.

Cite this article:

Phillips, B., Savage, T. J., Plotkin, A., Weiss, N. S., Spitzer, M. O., Sanseverino, S. M. and Ray Porter, R., (2024). Personal Evolution: A Paradigmatic Solution for Personal and World Problems. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(10), 99-105.

INTRODUCTION

At this time in history, humanity is at the edge of an abyss, for we are experiencing nothing less than a double crisis, as stated on **page 1 of a book we published, *Creating Life Before Death: Before Disaster Strikes the Ship of State* (2nd edition, 2024):**

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? (Page 1)

Our first crisis is actually a tragedy of unbelievable proportions. We lament the death of a child who misses out on living a full life. Imagine now the death of all 8 billion of us who will die after fulfilling no more than a fraction of our potentials.

As for our second crisis, for the first time since we appeared on earth, we have developed nuclear and biological weapons so

powerful that they can destroy all of us, whether by design or accident, and we've already experienced a dozen documented near-catastrophes.

Following the scientific method, in order to solve a problem we must first understand its nature. Is our fundamental problem the threat of nuclear warfare or nuclear accidents? Climate change? Patterns of aggression like racism, sexism, ageism and ethnocentrism? The movement from democracy toward authoritarianism? Worldwide poverty? Disease? The failure of education? The nature of our economy? Threats from contemporary leaders or groups? **The additional problems stated on page 5 of *Creating Life Before Death*? All of the above?**

Most of these certainly are significant problems. However, just as the lack of water and sunshine can be the basic problem behind the withered leaves of a tree, so there is an absolutely fundamental problem in society at the root of all these issues.

Actually, there are two basic problems we shall address: one centering on the individual, which we shall take up initially under the heading, "Achieving Personal Evolution." The second problem, focused on society as a whole, is entitled "Solving World Problems."

One of the greatest social scientists who ever lived was born in India some twenty-five hundred years ago. He was the Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha Sakyamuni. He saw the central problem of the human race as *dukkha*, people's negative emotions linked to their unrealistically large gaps between what they want and are actually able to obtain. Such frustration in turn leads to aggression of all kinds.

After achieving this understanding, the Buddha traveled throughout India teaching people to be realistic about their goals. His approach was most scientific: by removing the cause of a problem, we solve the problem.

In 2007 Phillips published a book with a medical internist friend, Louis C. Johnston: *The Invisible Crisis of Contemporary Society* (2007/2016). They tested this hypothesis: "The gap between aspirations and their fulfillment is in fact increasing in contemporary society" (22). The resulting evidence, based on the work of 33 well-known social scientists, philosophers, political leaders, attorneys, linguists and authors, was crystal clear: the aspirations-fulfillment gap of individuals throughout the world is rapidly increasing, yielding increasing problems of both frustration and aggression of all kinds. **(Page 69).**

Their book analyzed the forces producing that increase. As the result of our continuing technological revolutions, ever more people throughout the world were experiencing what has been called "a revolution of rising expectations," desiring ever more of the products that were becoming available. **(Page 68).** For example, Emile Durkheim—a founder of the discipline of Sociology—wrote in his book, *Suicide* (1897): "From top to bottom of the ladder, greed is aroused without knowing where to find ultimate foothold. Nothing can calm it, for its goal is far beyond all it can attain" (255). **(Page 69)**

Manufacturers proceeded to advertise their new products to an increasing extent by means of newly available media, beginning with radio, and then followed by television, and later the internet. The psychoanalyst Karen Horney wrote this in her *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937): "For economic reasons, needs are

constantly being stimulated in our culture by such means as advertisements . . . For the great majority, however, the actual fulfillment of their needs is closely restricted. The psychic consequences for the individual is a constant discrepancy between his desires and their fulfillment" (288). **(Pages 70-71).**

The second invisible problem, which centers on society as a whole rather than the individual, was the focus of our second hypothesis: "To the degree that a worldview or metaphysical stance is stratified versus interactive, there will be a large gap between aspirations and their fulfillment" (Phillips and Johnston, 2007, 22).

Once again, there is substantial evidence in support of the hypothesis. More generally, this worldview implies both narrow specialization, and personal conformity. That is the way of life of all contemporary societies throughout the world, including democracies no less than dictatorships. **(Tom's story, Pages 3-4).**

It would have been impossible for Dr. Johnston and Phillips to emerge with these findings about the fundamental problems lying behind our double crisis without a paradigmatic approach to human behavior. Such an approach centers on the most general or fundamental characteristics of the individual and society by employing very abstract language. They built on Thomas Kuhn's approach in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), where he popularized the importance of paradigmatic analyses.

For example, he explained the change from Newton's to Einstein's explanation of the mechanics of phenomena as based not on Einstein's more accurate theory but rather on his fundamental or basic assumptions, which were more general or wide-ranging. Phillips' approach with Dr. Johnston carried forward that idea with an emphasis on the fundamental problems of the individual and society.

As a result of this paradigmatic analysis of the fundamental problems of the individual and society at this time in history, we claim that the present-day worldwide efforts to solve the basic problems of the individual and society, although they might well be helpful, are destined to failure. A narrow focus on this problem or that one, on nuclear warfare or climate change, on racism or sexism, on poverty or education, on the economy or ethnocentrism, simply will not do.

Now that we have focused on the fundamental relatively invisible paradigmatic problems underlying the wide range of visible problems the world presently faces, how do we proceed toward solutions? Now that we have followed the requirement of the scientific method of locating the basic problems we face, following our paradigmatic analysis, how do we proceed to solve those problems?

The good news is that not only is there a solution, but there is a solution that centers on the evolution of the individual. It follows the vision of Confucius, as expressed in his book, *Analects*: "It is man that can make the Way great; and not the Way that can make man great." In *Creating Life Before Death*, we focus on much the same idea: "It is the further development of the individual that is the basis for the continued evolution of society" **(Page 3).**

This focus on the individual differs markedly from almost all of the analyses of present-day world problems by social scientists. In a series of eight recent articles— (7/2019, 4/2020,

2021, 12/2021, 11/2023, 6/2024, 7/2024, and 8/2024)—we pleaded with sociologists to pay far more attention to the incredible potential powers of the individual. Yet as a result we received not a single response, either personally or in the journals where my articles appeared.

However, there have been a few sociologists who have, over the years, recognized the power of the individual, granting their lack of attention to our increasing aspirations-fulfillment gap and its link to widespread frustration and aggression. Most notable has been the work of C. Wright Mills, Phillips' mentor at Columbia. His book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959/2000), was rated by the members of the International Sociological Association as the 2nd most influential book for sociologists published during the entire 20th century. The first, *Economy and Society*, 1922/2013, was written by Max Weber, a founder of the discipline, who emphasized the negative impacts of bureaucratic organizations.

Mills saw sociologists as avoiding the problem-solving potentials of the individual's learning to develop what he called a "sociological imagination," which he described as follows:

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. (Pages 40-41).

Alvin W. Gouldner was another sociologist who understood the incredible potentials of the individual, yet who did not go so far as to recognize the impact of one's aspirations-fulfillment gap. Within his *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970), he introduced the idea of "a Reflexive Sociology":

The historical mission of a Reflexive Sociology as I conceive it, however, would be to transform the sociologist, to penetrate deeply into his daily life and work, enriching them with new sensitivities, and to raise the sociologist's self-awareness to a new historical level. . . . 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. (Page 44).

How, then, can any individual proceed to make full use of these insights within his or her own everyday life so as to move toward his or her own personal evolution? That personal evolution can provide the understanding and motivation—the vision—which will produce the actions required to change the world. This is the topic of the next section, "Achieving Personal Evolution."

We note that efforts to address society's problems can continue at the same time as this movement toward personal evolution. The two procedures can take place in tandem.

ACHIEVING PERSONAL EVOLUTION

The key to the individual's continuing development throughout life is learning to reinforce or reward oneself ever more frequently, despite the existence of our bureaucratic patterns of persisting hierarchy, narrow specialization and personal conformity.

Such bureaucratic behavior works to make one invisible to oneself and, thus, far from the levers of one's emotional powers.

By looking up to those above us, by focusing on no more than highly specific tasks, and by following the commands of others, we move far away from our own energy. We lose sight of the fact that we have our own engine which can take us to the stars.

Jonathan Turner, the sociological theorist who wrote the foreword to our first edition (2020) as well as *On Human Nature: The Biology and Sociology of What Made Us Human* (2021), centered on emotional development in his three laws of emotional energy:

The (Simplified) Law of Positive Emotional Energy: When individuals receive positive sanctions and/or realize their expectations in an encounter, they will experience positive emotions.

The (Simplified) Law of Negative Emotional Energy: When individuals receive negative sanctions and/or fail to realize their expectations in an encounter, they will experience negative emotions.

The (Simplified) Law of Repression and Activation of Defense Mechanisms: When individuals experience negative emotions, they become more likely to protect self through repression. (Page 93).

The existence of our bureaucratic way of life sharply limits our ability to experience positive emotions. And that general pattern of behavior works to exaggerate our experiences of negative emotions. This is accomplished by limiting our vision of what we can accomplish in life as well as the actions required to fulfill our vision. This idea was captured in an ancient Japanese proverb: "Vision without action is a daydream; action without vision is a nightmare."

The centrality of vision, which includes emotions no less than intellect, has been emphasized not only by a huge number of organizations, but also by these well-known individuals:

Helen Keller: "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

Dalai Lama: "In order to carry a positive action we must develop a positive vision."

George Washington Carver: "Where there is no vision, there is no hope."

Oprah Winfrey: "Create the highest grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe."

Creating Life Before Death captures the importance of emotions as a vehicle for personal evolution by centering on "heart" in Chapters 3 and 4. The book also emphasizes the importance of achieving interactions among "head," "heart" and "hand" as a basis for personal development. A basic set of metaphors employed was the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz* (L. Frank Baum, 1900/ MGM Film, 1939) (Page 11).

Here, then, are ten ways in which any individual on the planet can proceed to move in an evolutionary direction by learning to reward or reinforce oneself. Any one of them can prove to be most helpful, and one can choose to focus on a subset of them. These examples are certainly not the only possible ways in which others can achieve self-reinforcement. They are based on the idea that we live in an interactive universe, where no part of it can

be completely isolated from any other part, as indicated in *Creating Life Before Death* (Page 15). And we humans are the most interactive organisms throughout the entire known universe:

1. **Perception of inanimate phenomena:** By adopting an evolutionary perspective, we can look at the earth, the sun, the stars, and feel better about my own greater possibilities for interaction than any non-human entity.
2. **Perception of organisms other than humans:** Given our own usage of language and the scientific method, once again we can reinforce ourselves when observing, for example, the grass, insects or animals.
3. **Egalitarian perception of other human beings:** Looking at other people, even well-known entertainers, authors and heads of state, we can feel proud of ourselves— given the equality of our joint potentials at birth—as their equal.
4. **Perception of the products of the human race:** Perceiving the work of Rembrandt, Shakespeare and Einstein, as well as the most outstanding products of the human race throughout history, once again we can reinforce myself because of our essential equality, and we can take pride in those achievements.
5. **Perception of one's own body, thoughts, feelings or actions:** After seeing our own bodies or becoming aware of any aspect of our own behavior, we can feel good about the fact that we are the most interactive entity throughout the entire known universe. It is here that one can reflect on moving from one's past toward one's future. And it is here that one can integrate one's overall understanding of one's incredible potential by contrast with a hierarchical way of life.
6. **Expanding on positive sanctions from others:** We can recognize them as legitimate praise for what we've accomplished, instead of resisting positive feelings about our own successes. As a result, we can increase our ability to reward ourselves (Page 93).
7. **Acting more effectively in one's everyday-life behavior:** After World War II, Japan's rapid industrial recovery was based to a large extent on workers' emotional commitment to *kaizen*, continuous improvement, emphasized by managers (Page 13). We can apply that same idea to the full range of our own everyday behavior, and we can feel proud of our accomplishments.
8. **Reversing negative sanctions from others:** When others treat us negatively in uncalled for ways, not only can we understand that behavior as a result of their lifelong commitment to a way of life emphasizing hierarchy. We can also feel good about recognizing the power of that way of life over us no less than them, and also our potential for moving toward an evolutionary way of life. (Page 93).
9. **Reversing negative sanctions from oneself:** This is an extremely important ability, for we believe we are our own worst enemy as the result of our lifelong conformity to hierarchical patterns of behavior. Yet this very awareness can be the basis for rewarding ourselves because of achieving that awareness. (Page 93).
10. **Resisting repressive behavior:** Instead of burying negative experiences, we can learn to reinforce ourselves for bringing them to the surface where we can move away from self-blame. (Page 93).

IF INDEED WE ARE TO MAKE FULL USE OF THE BUDDHA'S INSIGHTS ON HOW TO SOLVE THE BASIC PROBLEM OF THE HUMAN RACE, THEN THESE ARE THE STEPS WE MUST LEARN TO TAKE. GIVEN OUR ENTIRE LIFE EXPERIENCES POINTING US IN ANOTHER DIRECTION, SUCH LEARNING WILL TAKE TIME. YET THIS IS A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR OUR ACHIEVING NOTHING LESS THAN SOLVING OUR DOUBLE CRISIS.

Metaphorically, we might see the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*, making full use of these steps after learning from the Wizard their own fundamental equality with the so-called movers and shakers of the world. There they are, leaving Emerald City and now proceeding to follow a continuation of the yellow brick road which moves them in the direction of continuing personal evolution. They can then be joined by the Munchkins who represent the rest of humanity. Not only will the Munchkins be learning from the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion, but these three characters will be learning from the Munchkins' efforts at personal development.

We might even see The Wicked Witch of the South, sister to the Wicked Witch of the North, tempting them with all kinds of rewards if they would only get off the yellow brick road. Yet their increasing awareness of the importance of fulfilling their potentials as a basis for helping to solve world problems enables them to ignore those temptations. Phillips described this scenario in his book, *Personal Evolution through Film: Wizard of Oz, Star Trek, Wild Strawberries, and Wizard of Oz 2* (2014).

As we continue to reinforce ourselves in the above ways, we can gain increasing self-confidence and move toward the self-image of individuals with ever greater intellectual, emotional and problem-solving powers. Phillips illustrated the enormous effectiveness and importance of one's self-image in his doctoral dissertation at Cornell and in his article based on it, "A Role Theory Approach to Adjustment in Old Age" (1957). Individuals over 60 who saw themselves as "middle-aged" proved to be far better adjusted than those with a self-image as "old," even if their personal circumstances were inferior to those who identified as "old."

What an individual proceeds to accomplish with an increasingly confident self-image can vary widely, depending on one's background and interests. A person who is severely handicapped physically may opt for increasing optimism about his or her situation despite those handicaps. Someone else may reach out to ever closer relationships to family and friends. Others may opt for initiating trips throughout the world.

Yet still others, who are concerned with threatening problems like nuclear war, climate change, and political movements toward authoritarianism, may choose to become increasingly effective in helping to solve those problems. This is the topic of our final section, which centers on action. However, let us not forget that Japanese proverb: "Vision without action is a daydream; action without vision is a nightmare." To solve world problems and avoid a nightmare, we must depart from our present bureaucratic vision and proceed with a new evolutionary vision.

SOLVING WORLD PROBLEMS

Fred Polak, a Dutch sociologist, reviewed the entire history of social movements throughout Western society in his two-

volume book, *The Image of the Future* (1961), later compressed into a single volume (1973). He concluded that the most important factor in determining whether a movement would become successful was the nature of its vision or image of the future. Lawrence Busch's "A Tentative Guide to Constructing the Future" (1976), based on his doctoral dissertation (1974), built on Fred Polak's mammoth research.

Given the potential of the individual for continuing development or evolution based on one's learning to employ the above ten categories of self-reinforcement, we can all learn to move toward an evolutionary versus a bureaucratic image of the future. Instead of our present focus on fixed places within hierarchies, we can envision personal evolution throughout society as a whole. In place of narrow specialization with limited integration of knowledge, we can conceive of ever more individuals embodying ever broader interdisciplinary understanding. And substituting for personal conformity or the invisibility of the individual, we can point toward continuing improvement of the problem-solving abilities of ever more individuals.

In sum, we can move from our present bureaucratic way of life emphasizing hierarchy, narrow specialization and personal conformity toward an evolutionary way of life stressing continuing personal development, ever broader and deeper interdisciplinary understanding, and continuing improvement of people's ability to solve personal and world problems. In sum, we might call this a movement from a bureaucratic way of life toward an evolutionary way of life.

Yet this movement should not imply that bureaucracies must be eliminated. Rather, they can become organizations that are ever more interactive so as to emphasize the continuing development of those working within them. In other words, bureaucracies can move in a democratic direction: from a top-down approach to a bottoms-up approach. Given the difficulties involved, this change will take time. Yet it can yield both greater productivity and increasing commitment by employees.

Polak and Busch saw the necessity of a precondition to exist in society if a new way of life is to take hold: a crisis must be widely perceived within the existing order. Given the wealth of problems societies throughout the world are presently experiencing, such as the threats to democracy, the possibility of nuclear devastation, climate change and numerous types of aggression, we are convinced that this precondition presently exists.

Based on the combination of Polak's and his own research, Busch has listed seven criteria for a successful image of the future. This gives us a basis for assessing the viability of our own image of an evolutionary way of life. We shall now proceed to take up each of those criteria (**Pages 40-41**).

1. An image of the future must be holistic if it is to achieve widespread acceptance.

The holism or interdisciplinary orientation of our vision of an evolutionary way of life is illustrated not only by the wide range of references in *Creating Life Before Death*, together with the eight articles that Phillips along with his co-authors have written just before and since that book's publication in 2024. And not only by that vision's focus on changing the behavior of the eight billion people inhabiting

our planet, but also by a presentation at the end of this paper about our usage of AI to fulfill our goals.

2. A successful image of the future must provide the promise of the resolution of the anomalies and contradictions of the existing order.

Our focus is not just on a few major problems of the individual and society, but rather on the full range of problems linked to our bureaucratic way of life. We are able to accomplish this because we are pointing away from that way of life toward an alternative way of life. As one major example, some knowledge of the potential for the 9/11 disaster at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was learned by CIA, NSA, FBI and State Department. But narrow specialization linked to bureaucracy prevented the sharing of information. (**Page 7**).

3. The future must be constructed in the present, not the future.

Because we understand the urgency of the world's present situation, given the potential for accidental or man-made nuclear and biological disasters, our plans call for immediate actions. These call for continuing our present efforts to integrate the knowledge throughout the academic social sciences into a general science of human behavior, to structure that knowledge in academia, and to develop a continuing workshop for non-academics that will be available worldwide on YouTube.

4. A successful image of the future must provide an escape from the existing order, but it must find that escape within the existing order itself. The existing order has moved societies in a democratic direction. We see the personal evolution of ever more individuals as moving further in that direction. This follows the vision of Jane Addams, a founder of the discipline of social work as well as The American Sociological Association. She wrote: "The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy" (1902). (**Page 11**). We are also following John Dewey's aim that all societal institutions should "educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility" (1920/1948). (**Page 11**).

5. A successful image of the future must provide an operationalizable methodology for the individual.

The above ten procedures that any individual can learn to employ constitute such a methodology. We might note that the first five emphasize one's vision, including both "head" and "heart," with the next five centered on action, thus including "hand." As a result, all three of the basic components of an individual's behavior are taken into account. These procedures will be taught in our planned workshop, and they are also basic to our vision of a powerful science of human behavior.

6. All successful images of the future are structured.

We are aware of the difficulty of changing bureaucratic habits of thinking, feeling and acting that have developed over a lifetime. Yet we believe that the combination of an awareness of present-day dangers to the very existence of the human race, joined by a continuing workshop led by individuals who have already moved into an evolutionary

way of life, will succeed in carrying forward that movement. **TO ACCESS SUCH A CONTINUING WORKSHOP, STARTING IN THE WEEK OF JANUARY 13, 2025, GO TO BEHAVIORAL-SCIENTISTS.COM AND THEN PROCEED TO YOUTUBE FOR A ONE-HOUR WEEKLY PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION BASED ON THE IDEAS IN THIS ARTICLE. PHILLIPS WILL RESPOND TO SELECTED COMMENTS SENT TO HIS E-MAIL ADDRESS, berniefips@aol.com.**

7. A meaningful image of the future must involve the mundane details of everyday life.

Referring once again to the above ten procedures, they cover the waterfront with respect to the full range of any individual's mundane or everyday behavior. For they include any and all of one's thoughts, feelings and actions. Nevertheless, we expect to learn from our experiences with the workshop as well as from our efforts to develop a science of human behavior to improve our procedures for helping people move their everyday behavior in an evolutionary direction.

In addition to these procedures, the importance of harnessing Artificial Intelligence, or AI, to help achieve nothing less than a change in our entire way of life cannot be overestimated. We see most present uses of AI, given our fealty to a bureaucratic way of life, as strengthening that pattern of behavior and, thus, moving us all toward disaster ever more rapidly.

One possible usage of AI has to do with the chatbot program *Replika*, which has over ten million users. Presently, the program enables a user to create an alter-ego, an artificial companion that can mimic human responses ever more realistically the more one interacts with it. One can use it simply to have company, just like having a pet. Or one can use it therapeutically, since it can be programmed to be non-judgmental, allowing one to confess one's failures. The program can simulate a person most realistically, for it can be painted to look like an actual individual, given a name, and a personal history.

The program's therapeutic potential can be enormously extended by programing an individual who has moved very far toward an evolutionary way of life. As a result, it can become an online teacher who can interact with people 24-hours a day, helping users move away from their bureaucratic way of life.

This is no more than one usage of Artificial Intelligence. Over time, I anticipate the development of many other applications of AI. What AI can be involved in are procedures for guiding the mass media as well as educators throughout the world, and at all levels of education, to move individuals and societies in an evolutionary direction.

This approach, based on our development of an understanding of the nature of an evolutionary way of life, can be much different from present-day usages of AI, where no such understanding exists. As a result, AI can now do little more than reinforce our present bureaucratic way of life.

In conclusion, let us not forget our double crisis centered on the individual and society, and the double tragedy it points us all toward if we fail to move away from our bureaucratic way of life.

Yet despite these imminent dangers, we have good reason for optimism about the future of humanity. For we humans, with the aid of language and the scientific method, are the most interactive beings throughout the entire known universe (Pages 15-16). Granting our many failures, such as our continuing wars and patterns of aggression, let us also pay attention to the incredible achievements of the human race.

THIS DOES NOT TAKE AWAY FROM THE IDEA EXPRESSED IN THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THIS ARTICLE: AT THIS TIME IN HISTORY, HUMANITY IS AT THE EDGE OF AN ABYSS. HOWEVER, THE INCREDIBLE PAST ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE HUMAN RACE SUGGEST THAT WE CAN LEARN TO TURN AWAY FROM DISASTER, FOR WE ARE LEARNING ANIMALS. JUST AS WE'VE LEARNED TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, SO CAN WE PROCEED TO DO SO ONCE AGAIN. WE ARE EIGHT BILLION STRONG, AND WE'VE ONLY BEGUN TO MAKE FULL USE OF OUR INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PROBLEM-SOLVING POWERS.

GIVEN WHAT WE NOW KNOW ABOUT OUR POSSIBILITIES, WE CAN PROCEED TO REACH FOR THE STARS.

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