“**Our Journey Through Time and Existence” –**  A modern “De Rerum Natura”

– this Website’s Contribution – the Author’s Legacy

Origin, human mind, meaning-direction, guidance, support, practical advice, age-death, the future

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**Chapter 9**

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**The Future:**

**Global Concerns and Opportunities to Concentrate On**

The main challenges for our future: concerns and opportunities

What should be the most essential concerns of our world at this time?

**Content:**

1. Overview
2. Nature-Caused Concerns
3. Human-Caused Concerns and Opportunities

3.1. A Brief List of Human-Caused Concerns

3.2. Detailed Discussions of Human-Caused Concerns:

3.2.1. Terrorist Attacks with “dirty” bombs, spreading dangerous materials

3.2.2. Poverty, Global Economy/Employment, Social Balance, Prosperity

3.2.3. Governance; Political or Religious Governance

3.2.4. Global Structure; Dominance by Some or Cooperation, Veto Rights

3.2.5. Unchecked Population Growth

3.2.6. Scarcity of Resources, Including Usable Water

3.2.7. Migrations, Immigration

3.2.8. Drugs and Drug Trafficking

3.2.9. Education, for Usable Knowledge and Values

3.2.10. Imbalance of the Capitalist System:

Bubbles/Depressions, Social Imbalance

3.3. Some Other Concerns

3.4. Opportunities

1. Priority-Setting and Actions
2. The Essence of the Vision

**1. Overview**:

The attention of the political leaders of our world is absorbed by an endless sequence of daily emergencies. They must direct all their energies toward the immediate need for ever-changing, fast responses. Little time or energy remains to discuss and possibly ***define the basic direction that our human society pursues or, actually, should pursue – where our essential problems and our essential opportunities are – and then to act upon it.***

Political leaders concentrate most of their effort on reelection and maintaining their power.

Any effort to arrive at global coordination fails with the veto power of merely a single member of the UN Security Council.

A special problem with the human concerns is ***the fact that many who cause damage don’t have to pay for it and many who benefit don’t have to pay either*** (the so-called “externalities”, in the language of professional economists). In general, government regulations are needed to control those “externalities”. How should that work internationally, globally?

There is a ***need for better global coordination in setting strategic priorities, in defining and prioritizing essential risks and opportunities, and then for taking appropriate action.***

***What actually are the essential global concerns or opportunities?***

***Which ones should one concentrate on?***

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**2. Nature-Caused Concerns**:

“Global Warming”, as increasingly confirmed in the severity of its consequences, must be seen as the most essential global concern at this time – especially as caused not only by natural cyclic warming causes, but aggravated by environmental damage caused by business interests and population growth. The consequences of further global warming would be not only damage to nature, but ***much higher cost or unavailability of food and, consequently, hunger, suffering, and larger migrations, combined with significant social turmoil.***

The generation of gases or particles leading to global warming by various countries is similar to the problem of overfishing. Each fisherman claims that he is merely taking a very small percentage of the total. What he does not take, another fisherman will. Saving fish for the next generation is difficult as long as each fisherman must provide for his own family and the education of his children now.

The only solution, stronger international cohesion or governance, appears unlikely.

***But we must act – now!!***

Ocean acidification, mostly caused by man-made pollution, threatens to destroy ocean plankton and coral reefs, thereby destroying the lowest level of the food chain. Destructive consequences must be expected on all higher levels of the food chain. This would deprive humanity of an important food source and lead to widespread poverty along the shores of all oceans among the populations living from fishing and seafood.

As in the case of global warming, the only solution, stronger international cohesion or governance, appears unlikely. ***But we must act – now!!***

Ozone layer depletion in the atmosphere became a somewhat lesser environmental concern as some international countermeasures became effective. Others, however, were circumvented by corruption and surreptitious international business schemes, leading to a still dangerous continuation and increase of the resulting damage.

Again, the only solution, stronger international cohesion or governance, appears unlikely.

A deadly pandemic should be seen as yet another serious, and not unlikely, concern for mankind. The frequency of new diseases appearing, the speed of global disease transmission, and the time needed to develop countermeasures were demonstrated by HIV/AIDS and, more recently, by the H1N1 (Swine) Flu, as well as the newly discovered importance of the NDM-1 gene – or newly discovered, laboratory-produced variations of a deadly flu – or new “synthetic” bacteria.

Effective countermeasures usually begin as the developed countries are threatened. Will they always work in the future?

A very large asteroid cannot be excluded at some future time – of the size, which some scientists see as the cause for the extinction of most life on Earth 65 million years ago.

Several asteroids capable of potentially causing large damage were reported upon their fly-by in Earth’s vicinity during the last few years as observations became more accurate.

Actually, a somewhat larger asteroid is expected several times near Earth within the next 30 to 50 years and a bigger one (but possibly still divertible) in 2182. Examples from the past: the Arizona Crater and the Noerdlinger Ries Crater, Germany, where the ejecta reached 70 km distance.

NASA is proceeding slowly with technology for early dangerous asteroid discovery and diversion. Will solutions be available soon enough as such a danger approaches?

A supernova explosion closer than 100 light years, would have negative effects on Earth. A supernova closer than 33 light years could terminate much of life on Earth.

Our galaxy, the Milky Way, has two main spiral branches, one being called the “Perseus”, with a side branch called the “Local Branch”. Earth, participating in the rotation of our solar system around the center of our galaxy, is presently thought to be in the Local Branch, and will need millions of years to traverse it. This is one region of frequent supernova occurrences.

Even before entering this region, supernova occurred every 240 million years in a vicinity of 33 light years to Earth. Such events bring intensive gamma-ray radiation and have a destructive effect on the ozone layer. The resulting high level of ultraviolet light reaching the surface of Earth could first destroy the coral reefs and plankton in the oceans, the lowest level of our food chain – with catastrophic effects for the higher levels.

The next supernova event close to Earth is not precisely predictable, and nothing can be done to protect us against its effects – but such an event will certainly occur at some time in the future.

A volcanic upwelling from deep within Earth, when occurring with such extreme volume and intensity as the one that caused the formation of the Daccan Traps in India during the same time period as the general extinctions of 65 million years ago – and in northern Siberia 200 million years earlier (and at four other times since the origin of higher forms of life 600 million years ago), always resulting in extensive extinctions of life on Earth. (See the excellent book *Evolutionary Catastrophes* by Vincent Courtillot.)

A gigantic volcanic collapse, such as the one that occurred upon the formation of Lake Toba in northern Sumatra, at Krakatau, and on Bali, or the gigantic caldera in the Yellowstone area (an area that has lately shown slow buckling again), or the volcanic explosion and implosion at Thera (at Santorini in the Greek islands) in early historic times – all threatening the survival of many people in their respective geographic area or even of all mankind. Just imagine a similar collapse of a volcano in northern California, Oregon, or Washington State – or of one of the European volcanoes (near Naples or on Sicily) – or of Mt. Fuji!

An unstable island may slide back into the ocean, such as the island of La Palma in the Canaries. A sliding back into the ocean of a large part of that island would trigger a gigantic tsunami that would ravage the American East Coast with such extreme violence that the city of New York and quite a few other cities could be destroyed.

Preoccupation with the above natural concerns would be that much more valid, as their appearance could be accurately predicted a short time before their occurrence and some complex and costly countermeasures devised – or as limited survival appeared possible but only in certain specific areas of Earth. The competition to be among the survivors would heat up – where to have property on Earth, where to be a citizen, and how to be protected against others attempting to stream in? All are horrible visions!

**3. Human Concerns and Opportunities:**

***3.1. List of Human Concerns:***

Main Concerns:

1. Extremist or Terrorist Attacks with “dirty” bombs spreading dangerous materials
2. Pervasive Poverty in too many places on Earth
3. Governance, serious problems with political or religious guidance or governance
4. Global Structure, Dominance by some or general cooperation, the UN Veto Rights
5. Unchecked Population Growth, overpopulation of parts or of all of Earth
6. Increasing Scarcity of Resources, including usable water
7. Migration, Immigration
8. Drugs and Drug Trafficking
9. Education, for Usable Knowledge and Values
10. Imbalance of the Capitalist System: Bubbles, Depressions, Social Imbalance

Other Concerns

1. Aging of Some Populations, mainly in Europe, Russia, and China
2. Leading the Underdeveloped Countries into the Future
3. Information Control
4. Formation of a new international “World Culture”, possibly an opportunity
5. Morals, Ethical Values; are “health/happiness/family/faith” enough?
6. Commercialization of everything
7. Unhealthy Lifestyles, smoking, obesity, drug usage
8. Other concerns; genetic modification, subminiature structures, more

Opportunities:

* Global Modernization leading to Less Suffering, More Freedom, Less Corruption
* Restraint of ever-growing consumption – yet, viable economies
* Cheap and clean energy – resolving many resource problems: water and others
* Reaching of another historic period of mental progress and well-being

***3.2. Detailed Discussion of the Main Human Concerns*.**

3.2.1. A terrorist attack with a “dirty” bomb: atomic, biologic, with nano-materials or -robots.

A dirty bomb would spread dangerous material in an area of high population density or of commercial or political importance (or upstream or upwind of those). The material could be highly radioactive, plague-causing bacteria, invasive nano-materials (of atomic particle size), or invasive miniature robots.

The most dangerous situations in our time may possibly result from a combination of religious Muslim extremism (also of immigrants and converts within Western countries) and a country with rogue governance that uses terrorist violence (presently Iran, Pakistan if under Taliban rule, some unstable North African countries, North Korea, soon Afghanistan, and others) – or, to a lesser degree, from drug-trafficking organizations combined with corruption and violence – or from historic tribal search for independence (for example, the Kurds, Syrian groups, and various Arab tribes), leading to regional warfare and igniting a larger conflict. This is an unpleasantly large list!

Religion- or ideology-based intolerance, combined with imperialism and a preference for violence, has already existed in both historical and recent times – from the Spanish conquest of the Americas, to the Nazis, to China’s conquest of Tibet, and the establishment of Israel by way of not-compensated violent expulsions, then settlements and roads in Palestine. Historical tribal search for independence using warfare can be seen in the Basque’s or Kurd’s violent struggle for freedom and its suppression – now also in parts of the “Arab Spring”, Syria, and in other conflicts.

Preventing extremists from dangerous violence – even if these extremists amount only to small minorities – has proven to be an almost impossible task for military forces – for instance, the war in Afghanistan (see the excellent book *Managing the World Towards Peace* by Angelica Kohlmann Kuepper). The struggle by the police against “Anarchists” prior to the First World War was already futile; the Anarchists disappeared only when the Communists absorbed them.

Historically, the first potent terrorists were ***the Assassins of Persia and Syria***, established as a Shia Ismaeli sect by Hassan-i-Sabbah. Religiously radicalized young men were secretly sent out to commit spectacular suicide-murders of political enemies, believing to thereby gain instant access to Paradise. They committed their first spectacular assassination in 1192 and many more thereafter. Only as the invading Mongols conquered the sect’s headquarters, the fortress Alamut, in 1256, and killed the then leading Imam, did the killings stop (except for lesser contract killings by remaining followers – until the Inquisition stopped that). First, Osama bin Laden, then the still very active Haqqanis (and lesser Taliban leaders), and recently Gubuddin Hekmatyar copied exactly this approach from bases in North Waziristan or northern Afghanistan! More attention should be paid to this phenomenon!

The only viable approach against Muslim violence would require a change of thought, preaching, and behavior by all Muslim religious leaders, including all the owners of radical Islamist Madrasa schools (many financed by Saudi Arabia!). They are the key leaders who would have to provide strong counter-violent guidance in the Muslim world. Our global community and each Islamic country should strongly and clearly challenge Muslim religious leaders to provide nonviolent guidance! ***Any Muslim leader preaching violence should be demanded to personally accompany violent missions, especially to personally go along with suicidal ones – or be punished in accordance with the damage caused.***

A special situation of persistent “terrorism” is presented by the above-mentioned Haqqani clan, the father Mawlawi Salaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, copied by lesser Taliban leaders. They prosper through ***highly profitable drug smuggling from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe***. This business ***requires dominance of the poppy culture in Afghanistan and the commercial path of the drugs out of Afghanistan to markets, presently via Pakistan***. Therefore, the Haqqanis established their headquarters in the unruly tribal areas of North Waziristan in Pakistan (whether they actually live there or not). They use the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan under the cover of radical religious motivations merely for their own business and political dominance in the areas of interest to them: imitating the *Assassins*. Would a conquest of Waziristan and the killing of the Haqqanis be a simulation of the Mongol-accomplished end of the Assassins? The Mongols would not have hesitated!

The recent increase in abductions for ransom in Pakistan (now about 450 per year), preferably of rich businessmen and foreign aid workers, is another example, and it is also based in North Waziristan!

UN pressure on various nations to stop violence has proven inadequate. A better global mechanism for the preservation of peace and the prevention of violence for whatever reason, religious or political (with the suffering of so many innocents), must be found.

An interesting theological approach within the Muslim world would point out that Muhammad was a modern innovator in his own time, and many Qur’an verses are quoted and abused totally out of context with their intent when pronounced by Muhammad. Muhammad, as a first action in taking control of Medina, stopped all clan infighting and violence. Then he limited the number of wives the rich could hoard, leaving the less wealthy without women, to a maximum of four. Then he gave women equal rights to divorce and to inherit wealth (which had not been possible in Europe prior to the 19th century either). The demand for veils may have referred to merely covering the rich jewelry wealthy women wore arrogantly all around their heads when walking around town – or for his own wives to protect themselves from being recognized while he was still personally persecuted by some adversaries in his early days at Medina. His demand to kill apostates referred to combatants in the war against Mecca, corresponding in our own time to capital punishment for deserters from Western armies.

3.2.2. Pervasive Poverty in too many places on Earth:

When traveling around the world, a prevalent impression is the pervasive poverty and fruitless search for gainful employment by large portions of mankind – while, often in the same geographic areas or nations, small elites enjoy comfortable lives. Some inner cities or slum districts in the wealthy Developed World look exactly like that, too. During recessions, Western developed countries look the same (see, lately, Greece).

Social imbalance must definitely be considered when the now famous (or the now infamous) “1 percent” of the population has everything and the “99 percent” suffer. There are too many countries where there actually is some national income, but where only the rulers and the elite get rich, while the majority lives in abject poverty (example: North Korea, Nigeria with its oil wealth, Zimbabwe with its diamonds, and now, increasingly, Afghanistan). The early history of feudal Europe looked similar.

***Hunger, lack of water, inadequate medical care, and education are all aggravated, if not caused, by bad governance, corruption, and the lack of law and order.***

Further analysis shows that the problem of unemployment is related to at least three factors: lack of economic growth, inadequate basic qualification of the population in global competition, and deficit in culture (as inadequate education, occasionally lethargy, mostly hopelessness in spite of great effort, and out-of-control or irresponsible propagation – as supported by misguided, irresponsible religious and political leadership). In some areas, these problems are exacerbated by excessive immigration from surrounding areas hit by their own problems, natural or man-made. Too often, poor governance is found at the bottom of most of those problems.

Is there actually enough work for all people on Earth? How can large numbers of jobs be found or created and maintained? Even if jobs are found initially, our economic system is geared to increase productivity by means of automation or rationalization, thereby eliminating jobs in order to achieve higher profits or stock value for the few (see such private equity companies as Bain Capital).

By now, there is worldwide competition for employment opportunities! Employment opportunities can be distorted internationally by currency manipulations, as by China. Global commerce and communication, as well as the low cost of transportation, put everybody in competition with everybody else. Since efficiency counts – ***often being a matter of culture and, most importantly, also of law and order*** – too many countries are unable to compete with China and other Asian cultures. How can the recent “Arab Spring”, or other revolutions, suddenly bring well-paid jobs to their people in global competition and not actually cause the economy to be disturbed further? But China faces almost insurmountable problems itself, (aging population, inadequate health care for all, lack of natural resources, environmental deterioration, an increasingly unbalanced social structure, corruption, and more). These problems threaten internal social harmony and political harmony with the world!

Economic growth cannot continue forever. Will human society learn to live with only limited economic growth in the future?

Politicians may have to find and agree on suitable approaches for socially responsible economic growth – with benefits for all the deserving ones (which count among the deserving, and which do not?) and protection of the innocently needy. Is there adequate and secure Social Security and affordable medical care – as is being emotionally discussed within the United States and in other countries with their presently overextended financial conditions?

Global trade and charitable organizations (NGOs) are expected to help. The excellent Gates Foundation, supported by Warren Buffet, can do only so much (their chosen area is the elimination of killer diseases, which would bring further population expansion if not combined with birth control). Other foundations have done good things in the past (see, for example, the Rockefeller and Ford foundations). But in other cases, the liberal help provided by charitable organizations through the supply of food and consumer products has contributed to economic weakness in the receiving countries – by ruining local agriculture and local manufacturing.

China’s international investments in underdeveloped countries are guided by business interests and are leading to the exploitation of limited natural resources in those countries. Since qualified, dependable local help often cannot be found in developing countries, China sends with the investment also their own more efficient (and politically controllable) Chinese labor forces and supervisors, while paying off local political elites, thereby reducing job opportunities and potential well-being for the local populations – and exhausting the wealth reserves of those countries.

Is there enough basic qualification among all poor populations for global competition to attract business investments? It is “politically incorrect” to assume ethnic differences in qualification, only differences in education. One could assume, however, that there are ethnic differences (as among individuals in general) which would provide different, selectively optimal suitability for some ethnic groups for different gainful occupations.

Where can one search for solutions to local or national unemployment? In historical times, the nascent United States used steep import duties (up to 45 percent) to start a local manufacturing economy in competition with Great Britain. More recently, after World War II, Spain tried this approach. China still relies on substantial preferential benefits for the local economy (including artificial exchange rates) to drive the growth of its own economy.

In general terms, each economic unit must export as much as it wants to import – whether nations, families, or individuals. For individuals, the most common “export” is labor. There are more options, though. There could be the export of ideas (bringing patent royalties), of innovation leading to top jobs being retained even if manufacturing is outsourced, of art, of resources (when living on an oil patch – or being the owner of a business or the feudal lord of an estate), or touristic exploitation of scenery – and more.

For too many people on Earth, none of these options apply – whether for some Indios in remote parts of the Andes, for some Africans in remote areas of that continent, for too many good people living in corrupt countries, or for some socially maladjusted families in large cities. Can good governance and better education help in either case? What else is needed, or possible? What shall we do with the poverty that remains?

Furthermore, the ***economic rising of entire layers of a population is never fully balanced: Some always get richer more quickly.*** Many then hold everyone else in bondage. Social excessive instability should be inhibited or resolved – by progressive taxation and other regulations or by social programs. Even in today’s “democratic” United States, ***large industries and the super rich use lobbyists to prevent fair taxation on income and inheritance and to limit competition.*** The U.S. form of democracy must urgently be repaired, too!

Economic developments have the additional problem of being inherently unbalanced, resulting in oscillations and ***“bubbles” with subsequent crashes;*** see the later discussion. Is there a vision of a healthy world without excessive oscillations?

The recent ***social and ideological upheavals*** in the Arab world (and, in the future, in other parts of the world) will add significantly to the problem of poverty in those countries!

A special problem arose in economic theory on account of the great indebtedness of many suffering and also of many developed countries (including the United States and most of Europe). Should preference be given to financial soundness and budgetary discipline or should, at first, more be spent to decrease unemployment? It is disappointing to see how many prizes and awards were given to economists, how the field of “economy” was considered a sound intellectual discipline – and how, at this time, the economists cannot agree on the proper course to be taken in various suffering countries!

***Progress and agreement in economic theory (not ideology) is most desirable and necessary!***

3.2.3. Governance: Political and Religious Governance, “Rogue” Governments

Bad governance is definitely the key problem of poverty in many parts of the world. In underdeveloped countries, corruption and the absence of law and order hinder business development and prevent investments. In too many cases, money earned by the needy is channeled back into the pockets of the elite. Heads of state and their support groups plunder the revenue from natural resources and the work of others. In some countries, drug-trading groups willfully destroy governance. Even in the developed countries of the West, the failure of governance can lead to catastrophic problems with underfunded Social Security and social health care for all citizens in an aging population (also in China), especially when national financial conditions go through a crisis.

“Rogue governments”, evil dictators or dangerous religious leaders (as presently exist in North Korea, Iran and, historically, in various countries, also the West) and their support groups present a special problem as a threat and burden to humanity. The definition of *rogue* is unclear; but, generally, it indicates governments that have become a danger or burden to their own people, to their neighbors, and to the world. This burden is often combined with violence, as in the cases of North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Syria, and, as seen by the neighbors of such countries as Israel and, possibly, also Pakistan (which is increasingly coming under Taliban influence). Does Iran actually have a rogue government? Not in the opinion of most Iranians – and possibly not in the opinion of most Muslims, especially not in the opinion of the Shia!

So far, the world community has found no way to control the risk to regional or world peace or merely to their own populations presented by dangerous governments. Ultimately, the UN fails in the Security Council. The United States always protects Israel. Since China and Russia (with their internal suppression of minorities) are members of the UN Security Council, intervention by the UN with rogue governments is systematically blocked by their veto.

Then there are the violent splinter groups that seek recognition or independence or autonomy – from Northern Ireland to the Basque provinces of Spain, the Tamil in Sri Lanka, and the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran – more so, the Tibetans or Uigur of China, the Chechnians in Russia, and others. Should they not receive support in their search for freedom? But at what cost to international stability? Were the Confederate States at the beginning of the U.S. Civil War justified in seeking independence?

Unfortunately, religious governance was found to be as often inadequate as political governance – and democracy most problematic or open to abuse, too.

There is ***a typical pattern for the appearance and continuity of dangerous dictatorial governments.*** Many result from a generally unstable situation in a population (similar to the occurring of the formation of astronomical structures out of unstable clouds of dust in the universe). One individual may, by circumstance, charisma, or skill, attract a core following. This core group sees its own benefit in further supporting that central individual in order to attract more followers. Once in power, this core group ruthlessly eliminates its adversaries – while the chosen central figure, possibly of insignificant background, learns to play the role of dictator. A secret police and similar terror keeps the population under control. Occasionally, segments of the population (often the military or some tribe of the dictator) obtain special favors in order to maintain their special support of the dictator and core group. Personality cult, sometimes with religious undertones, and skillful propaganda cements this situation – as does fear by the central group to be held accountable for their misdeeds should their system collapse. The rise of Cromwell, Calvin, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Gaddafi of Libya, North Korea’s leaders, Mobutu in Zimbabwe, and Assad in Syria may be compared to this description. Often, the death or elimination of the central individual may be the only solution to getting rid of a rogue government.

Danger arises for the whole world when such rogue governments obtain great power – or worst, nuclear capability (North Korea, a future Taliban-Pakistan, Iran). Interestingly, the highly skilled middle-class in those countries – scientists and engineers – keep diligently working for rogue governments (see, for instance, Nazi Germany, North Korea, or Iran – either out of political fear or from instilled nationalism – or simply for their own benefit).

***Religious governance by certain religious hierarchies can be equally dangerous and can become a global concern.*** This was the case with the Catholic Church during the time of the Inquisition and continues with ***the church’s teachings against all practical forms of birth control and all abortions.*** The efforts of those religious hierarchies should, ***instead, be applied to reduce drug usage and drug trade,*** which is so prevalent, especially in the Catholic countries of South America. The effort of the church should ***also be applied to the improvement of governance and against prevalent corruption.***

Especially dangerous in our time is the religion of Islam, which has provided the justification for terrorism – where so many of the innocent suffer. Reform of Islam is urgently needed but is inhibited by its own teaching of being above any reform; but such reform could be open to the above-mentioned theological reform (see also the essay “Islam: The Muslim World and the West” on the website [www.schwab-writings.com](http://www.schwab-writings.com)).

Governance in the leading Western nations is not adequate, either. The United States suffers from the increasing amount of money available to lobbyists – and from the unwillingness of almost ideologically opposed political parties to arrive at solutions for the benefit of the population at large – rather using the “filibuster” option to block all votes!

Ultimately, ***the constitutions of those countries should be reviewed and improved!***

***What can be done that politicians are not primarily interested in their reelection – and the money to conduct expensive reelection campaigns – but in the best for their country or the world?***

Even in our time, the ***danger of “demagogues”*** capable of whipping up the emotions of crowds, so feared already by ancient Athenians (Cleon) and also by the writers of the American constitution, still remains (see McCarthy and more ***modern politicians***).

3.2.4. Global Structure, Global Dominance by Some or Cooperation by All, the UN Veto Rights:

The weakness of the United Nations is evident. The question of a more desirable future “global” structure of humanity should be considered, one derived from an overview of a longer evolutionary timescale and on a wider historical-sociological horizon, and with varying different degrees of realistic manageability.

The evolutionary voyage of mankind through historical time appears to approach a new level of organization in our time: In their ever-progressing “natural” evolution, large parts of nature actually remained at or close to their original level. Bacteria, fungi, simple plants, and some insects still form by far the major part of the Earth’s biomass. Merely a select few organisms have been able to evolve into higher forms of complexity and organization – with “emerging” new characteristics – commensurate with larger brains. Not only do organisms gain in complexity, but also the structure of human society, which continues to grow toward greater coherence, from family units to clans, tribes, nations, and, now, the United Nations.

Following the example of “uniting” the inhabitants of various Alpine valleys into the Suisse Federation in 1291 and, much later, the unification of 13 small British colonies into the United States of America in 1776, the European nations proceeded step by step with some increasing unification within the “European Union” (1946 to 1967), still being further developed.

Besides these voluntary unifications, history shows a number of forced unifications accomplished by the empire-building ambitions of great leaders or nations. Examples were the historical Mongols, Rome, Byzantium, Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Russia, and now China (with its vast “colonies” formed by the subjugated Tibetans, Uigurs, and other people), and, in a minor way, some modern, composite nations resulting from colonial borders of former African and Asian colonies, including Pakistan and Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the instability and continued internal unrest of larger political units has led to breakups (Rome, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, recently the Soviet Union). China cannot totally suppress the Tibetans and Uigur. Spain still struggles with the Basques and Catalans.

At this time, it appears impossible that the nations of the world will accept the directive or corrective power of a superior, united-world government, such as the United Nations.

In our time, the exhaustion of certain globally distributed resources – such as water, clean air, or food from the oceans, as well as, mainly, faster and cheaper communication (via the internet) and the lower costs of fast transportation – has led to global interconnectivity of all nations on Earth. Consequently, not only have global opportunities appeared for business, but global problems as well. This is most clearly demonstrated by the threat of global warming, the global appearance of infectious diseases and, more intensely so, by the recent interconnected, economic recession in all parts of the world – and by the international trade in drugs – all requiring global action.

Global interconnection is further demonstrated by the fads and fashions of modern life – in music and dress, but also in moral standards, especially among the young.

The need arises for another evolutionary step of society – toward a global coherence under beneficial coordination or some guidance and, if necessary, with the restraining power of central governance. Actually, all governments on Earth should be subject to an approval process – which would be revocable upon an unfavorable local development – if a global judiciary existed!

Such an organizational step requires a certain commonly shared vision – as the Ten Commandments were in their time. This could include mutual security against violence or unfair extortion, mutual assistance in the reduction of suffering and against unfair exploitation, the protection of personal and communal property, and the increase of opportunities or freedom fairly for all – still leaving open many other questions, as migration and preferential treatment of local groups or interests, and more.

Occasional international, intergovernmental coordination meetings may lead to a common vision in certain areas or, at best, to the definition of regulations. These however, are not enough – especially if not followed up with responsible action by all, as in the cases of nuclear proliferation, air pollution, or whale hunting – including the problem of ongoing monitoring/detection and the general enforcement of existing regulations.

For example, the UN passed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was either not signed or neglected by several nations, such as Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran.

In the case of air pollution, there are free riders – sitting on the sideline, possibly profiting from the present status, and waiting for other nations to do their part. Some examples are the oil producers (Saudi Arabia and Venezuela) which do not chip in to cover the cost of pollution reduction in poor countries – or the expansion of rural slash-and-burn agricultural production in Indonesia, Brazil, and Paraguay – producing enormous amounts of air-polluting smoke.

Will transnational governance ever be accepted by all? No subgroup of mankind wants to give up its culture, resources, or territory and be told by others what to do or not to do; nor to lose its competitive advantage. No politician ever wants to give up any power. All resources in all nations are always allocated by short-term national political considerations – in contrast to possible general guidance by a long-distance vision for mankind.

Is there still an obligation to mitigate social imbalance between nations through wealth transfer when there is no right for interference to influence the causes of poverty in any one of them?

An additional question arises among nations: what obligation should be assumed when actually facing large-scale corruption, as is so prevalent among poor nations or which is due to organized crime (or the drug trade) in the government of a needy nation?

In the case of social caring within a group of people or a nation, the question arises, what to do with the lazy, the undisciplined, or the willfully abusing ones.

Do all minorities within existing nations have the right to self-determination – at least autonomy if not independence? Could there be a world governance to which they could appeal – and which could interfere with the suppressing nations? How about the Basques, Kurds (now in three countries), subdivisions of Asian and African nations, and more?

3.2.5. Unchecked population growth:

Humans are the most devastating species of nature, considering every other species as prey and changing natural balances at will and to their own advantage. When we humans find another species becoming too devastating in nature, we merely eliminate it, by hunting or poisoning. A few members of that species may be kept in natural parks or zoos. We humans, however, consider our own lives as sacred. Carried to the extreme, we consider the lives of human embryos shortly after conception as already sacred. In the most extreme position, contraception is itself forbidden. With this religious position, there is no end to human population growth in sight. The increasing demand for food, water, and energy leads firstly to deforestation, then to increasing climate change, and, ultimately, to unbearable conditions first for all other organisms on Earth, then for us humans, too.

What can the world do about unlimited human propagation – mostly among the poorest and least educated? What to do about the diminishing propagation of the intelligent and educated (see the attempts in Singapore to induce those groups to have more children)? What should be done about the propagation of genetically and inheritably diseased or inheritably handicapped people? Physical handicap is not related to human value. Is the producing of any number of children an unlimited privilege for all? Do we want the government to interfere with our intimate life and family-building? Is unlimited family-building a basic human right? How about the Chinese one-child policy?

As a matter of fact, some see the basic mechanism of all natural evolution – unsustainable propagation, struggle, and subsequent survival or success of the fittest – as an irresolvable natural problem for mankind in general – one implying permanent poverty in the fringe areas of humanity forever.

The question of population increase, poverty, and destruction of nature arises specifically in rapidly growing, poor countries – several of them in Africa (or Asia, India, and other places on Earth). The problem of undesired population increase also exists in the poorest sections of cities in the developed world.

Charitable help for the underdeveloped world, mainly in the form of medical assistance and food supply, invariably leads to population growth. – through longer life for the older people and less mortality among the children or middle-aged ones.

Education often leads to lower population growth, through increasing knowledge of birth control and often secret availability of contraceptives – through the little discussed effects of secret contraception and abortions. This should be brought into the open and made available in a humane and healthy way to all.

Should all charitable help for the poor areas of the world or for the poor segments of the population in the developed world be always tied to the offer of birth control – and safe abortions?

Christian fundamentalists, as well as some Muslim religious leaders and certain political parties, attempt to interdict all reasonable family planning. Some others see this as a totally irrational and irresponsible (if not criminal) weakness of religious teaching and politics!

Population contraction, on the other hand, brings the severe problem of caring for the consequently, proportionally increasing group of the oldest, as is now happening in China.

3.2.6. Increasing scarcity of resources:

Limits on energy and water availability, careless exploitation of the world’s resources, and consequences for the environment (for air, water, and food resources – if not also protection of nature) are all essential global concerns, urgently requiring analysis and action.

3.2.7. Migration, Immigration:

Immigration from one underdeveloped area into another (recent examples: from Sudan to Darfur, from Somalia to Kenya, or to South Africa) – as ***caused by tribal territorial or religious conflict or increasingly by climate variation*** – raises very serious problems, since the receiving areas are not equipped to handle the influx of numerous poor people. Additionally, there is the migration out of turmoil and ***warfare-plagued areas, now out of Syria,*** at other times out of other areas. As a stopgap, large camps are set up by international charity organizations, to be supported indefinitely.

No better approach has been found! There are no areas on Earth left open for additional populations!

Immigration (especially illegal immigration) to more developed parts of the world raises other complex questions. Obviously, fairness is demanded by and within the countries which the migrants reach (***granting of at least temporary asylum*** – which turns out to become permanent, especially for the children born and raised in the new countries). ***Immigration ultimately demands assimilation – or leads to cultural conflict.***

Some immigrants reject assimilation for religious reasons (the Muslims?).

With ever higher border fences, the benefit for migration goes primarily to those who can still jump over (or be smuggled around) those fences (or shipped at great danger and cost to distant shores), neglecting possibly needier ones – and neglecting all the immigration-causing and often severe problems faced by those left behind.

If the fences were lowered or eliminated, a hundred million people from South America, and several hundred million people each from China, India, and Africa would quickly arrive in the United States and Europe, some in Canada and Australia, outnumbering the natives (as the whites did with Native American Indians).

Not only would the poor come, but ***also the young and college-trained ones*** who cannot find jobs in their own countries. But the already jobless or underemployed young ones and their parents in the respective native, local populations of the developed countries would not accept such immigration without resistance. Even recently arrived Hispanic groups in the United States have turned against unlimited immigration from their own countries of origin.

Financial support or contributions, not to the immigrants but for the alleviation of poverty in the immigration-causing countries, would bring much greater benefit. But what if such financial support disappears in some corrupt pockets?

An illegal immigrant, once allowed to become a legal citizen, may bring in a spouse and parents. The parents, after some time, may be allowed to bring in their other children and their spouses, and so on. It was calculated that the planned acceptance of 10 million illegal immigrants to the United States will lead to actually 40 million immigrants, mainly from South America but also from China, India, and other parts of the world – where too many people are still anxious to improve their chances in life by moving to a society of law and order.

The U.S. population, only 50 years ago almost totally of European origin, is now close to only 50 percent of European origin. What could happen to Canada, Australia, and all of Europe with similar developments? The fact is, those countries become increasingly immigration-averse – allowing only the rich and well educated to come in – then enjoying a large influx of Chinese and Indians – until other segments of their population complain.

What is fair, and what is practical? What can, or will, be done?

3.2.8. Drugs and Drug Trafficking:

The pervasive consumption of drugs has brought significant secondary problems: the drug trade with its consequent violence, corruption, and loss of law and order (with the establishment of their own command structure in the invaded areas), as can be observed in an increasing number of countries. This should be seen as an “essential global concern” for the world, now and, unfortunately, indefinitely into the future – for as long as drug consumption continues!

Should one not first reduce drug usage? What shall one do about the addicted, disorganized, undisciplined, or lethargic drug users or largely unconcerned people or governments around them – while respecting democratic personal freedom?

How can one counter the enormous temptation presented by large law and order corrupting amounts of drug money, corrupting the defenses against drug production and trafficking?

The three principal drug-producing areas must all be considered – South America, Afghanistan, and the “Golden Triangle” in upper Myanmar and Laos, close to China.

Here are some practical proposals to fight drug usage within a country:

Consider the similarity to the drift of the Boston bombers into fundamentalism: many young people feel the need to be at home in groups or cultures. These can be ideological/religious groups or street gangs – or also drug-using groups of “friends” (or sexually oriented groups, being one reason for the fast rise of homosexuality). These young people find significance in life by entering and excelling in that world.

The answer: specialized and skilled social services and the building of positive youth groups. One should reward or pay gang leaders for leading to positive gang content! Consider that drugs are a business with their own business model: whoever brings a new customer is rewarded financially by free drugs or rank in the dealer organization – thereby being freed from the need to constantly steal and lie to finance their own addiction. The answer: To initiate another person’s drug usage must be criminalized – leading to severe punishment and financial liability – also more teaching in schools as to how the slippery slope works and how to get out of it – and generous rewards for dealers who turn themselves in.

Research: The introduction of modified, possibly synthetic drugs which lead to vomiting may lead to natural self-rejection of drugs (this could also work for tobacco).

The strong stimulation of ***dopamine replacement*** in the brain may free from addiction.

In sum: research, innovation and forceful initiative, even some investment, is needed in the war on drugs for the benefit of our young citizen.

3.2.9. Education, for Usable Knowledge and Values:

In a free society, there is freedom to pursue the education one wants and can afford.

Too often, people search for education in fields with limited opportunities – seduced by the fact that in those areas a few get very rich and famous – while the majority cannot earn enough for a decent living – as is so prevalent in the arts (in acting, dance, and music), also in some other fields of the Liberal Arts and in sports.

Are all countries doing enough to provide and improve education of their populations for global competition? Specifically, not enough is done for education to qualify the population simply for competitive work performance and for the rise to better-paid employment.

In education, the ethical “values” of nations should not be overlooked – public service, charitable work, and volunteering – with the utilization of financial resources and time.

In many countries, as well as large parts of the “developed” countries, education should not only relate to gaining knowledge, it should also imply useful performance values, such as job dedication and work performance (for instance, to always be at work on time, to be dedicated to job performance, to learn on the job for promotion, mainly also to be inventive). Such work performance is unfortunately occasionally lacking among the permanently unemployed.

3.2.10. Imbalance of the Capitalist System: Bubbles, Depressions, Social Imbalance

***The Capitalist System is inherently unstable, resulting in oscillations with bubbles and crashes. This inherent instability also leads to possibly unlimited social imbalance.***

In phases of a positive trend, this economic instability of the capitalist system leads to investment bubbles (several in the 19th century, the one in 1929, then in the “dot.com bubble”, and in the most recent mortgage bubble).

The explanation? Successful periods have the tendency to lead to excessive risk-taking by investors and also to underperformance of the “spoiled” younger generation (which for too long drifted toward the fast money on Wall Street or to “self-expression” in joyful art, music, and dance).

Bubbles can occur in any business area, as in the recent dot.com bubble in high-tech investments or the recent bubble in real-estate mortgages. The collapse of a bubble leads to sometimes severe depressions (see 1929 and 2008, lately after the mortgage bubble), hurting not only the wealthy (who may have enough reserves and “golden parachutes”), but largely and mostly those who are least at fault and have few reserves, the low-income segment of the population.

The onset of a recession brings everybody back to reality and to the need to work and to provide true value – even to excel in practical, useful performance – in order to obtain a share of shrinking opportunities. Painful cutbacks must take place – some of which are exaggerated in their own way. Recessions clean out the weak areas of industry – often with cruel consequences for older employees and investors – and correction of the “weak” distractions of the young generation (see 1968 and the subsequent recession).

Those who caused such catastrophes are seldom punished.

Regulations are expected to counter such excessive economic oscillations in the future.

Equally damaging is the development of excessive divergence or social imbalance of wealth as inherent in the capitalist democratic economy. Historic Athens already had this problem and had to call in the philosopher Solon to help establish a new constitution to rebalance the social structure – in order to retain true democracy, their highest political goal after times of tyrants. In the Middle Ages, Europe developed the discrepancy between the nobility living high in castles and the peons below. Louis XIV of France led to the bubble of ever more grandiose chateaux residences, copied all over Europe, until social revolutions set in.

In the United States, swift industrialization and great projects of railroads, canals, oil usage, and appearance of major banks led to great social imbalance after 1900 (e.g., the rise of Vanderbilt, Huntington, Rockefeller, Morgan, Mellon, O. H. Kahn, Oppenheimer, and Belmont). This led to the introduction of rebalancing progressive income and inheritance taxes (transfer payments) – now skillfully circumvented through taxation loopholes by the upper “1 percent”.

Additionally, social security, or social insurance (first introduced by Bismarck during the industrial revolution in Prussia in 1889), then Medicare and Medicaid were added in the United States. Now, the USA is in a new crisis of social imbalance (as are China, Russia, India, and several other countries).

On the opposite side of the social divide, a special problem in some parts of the world and in some areas of inner cities in developed countries is a culture of low work performance and lack of financial responsibility. This problem arises already among some of the young of school age (gangs) and among adults within certain groups, which, thereby, form mini-cultures of low performance. Alcohol and drug addiction add to the problem. When criminal behavior sets in, future employment is further limited. Hopelessness about future economic gain contributes to this problem.

But one should not overlook the hardworking and struggling ones in the low-income group, where one medical emergency may lead to job absence and, consequently, to job loss – where one car repair bill could mean going without food or heating – where an unpaid rent bill could threaten eviction – where only one family member in jail means endless burdensome and demoralizing jail visits and the need to support that individual when released from jail and unemployable.

Socioeconomic, psychological polarization occurs when social status is derived from financial success, even when it is merely inherited or is stolen (money creates heroes). Too many of the best young people go to Wall Street instead of going into engineering, medical professions, agriculture, the sciences, or social services in order to improve the world. It is partially for this reason that lately the United States has not developed as it should have.

There is political, cultural, economic, even religious inertia that must be overcome in order to resolve social problems.

Does democratic freedom necessarily allow the development of such social imbalance? Is it in the interest of the people and democracy (our values) to retain balance? Do the modern developed countries, and also modern Russia, China, India, and Brazil, urgently need a new Solon now?

What remains is the fact that some of human happiness results from the increment in wealth or benefits over time, not from their static level. But unlimited increase of wealth is impossible. Do oscillations/imbalances necessarily result therefrom? How could they be managed?

***3.3. Other Essential Concerns***

3.3.1. Aging of some populations, mainly in Europe, Russia, and China:

Presently, unbalanced age distribution of their population presents a special concern for the young in too many underdeveloped countries, where families often have many children. Those will look for jobs and will bring the desire for consumption as they grow up, but on limited land and with limited job opportunities in business and industry.

More important, and in an opposite way, a high-percentage increase of old people must be expected in the developed countries of the West. These people must be taken care ultimately by a proportionally smaller young population, as is now occurring in Russia, China, and several European countries.

All social safety nets for retirement income and medical care are at risk! All national budgets are threatened by the cost of caring for the old, with their ever-increasing life expectancy.

This problem may be further augmented by progress in the medical sciences and pharmaceuticals – where progress leads not only to longer life expectancy but to higher cost in newly developed, advanced treatments.

3.3.2. Leading the underdeveloped countries into the future:

How can one lead the underdeveloped countries into the future? Often, their social structures appear frozen (Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Korea, much of Africa, Saudi Arabia); see Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy*. Many are not interested in the American model; see Max Weber’s ideas (1904) about the Protestant work ethic.) Their governance is unsuitable.

True democracy is generally recommended.

The start of true democracy in countries without such a history has always proven difficult – but external interference is rejected. The building of a sound middle class is preferable!

3.3.3. Information control

How much control of information flow and the internet should there be, and by whom? Will there be dangers for the world from the ever-increasing, difficult-to-control flow of communication, information, and technological controls, e.g., via the internet (see such an indication recently by a German politician, by a Chinese college teaching “hacking”, and another one issuing a thesis investigating the vulnerability of the U.S. power grid – and see the recent events in the Arab world)?

Not only benevolent groups or activists but also violent “terrorists” use the internet to propagate their objectives and to ***direct violent action!*** Should instigation of violence or blatantly offensive information be restrained, by whom and to what extent?

Historically, first the Communists in Russia, then the Nazis, and now various rogue governments have succeeded in presenting only selective political information (“propaganda”), to keep their masses in a trance and under their control.

The recent struggle of the Chinese government to suppress the freedom of Google in China indicates the importance for the stability of society that is seen in free communication.

Free communication can instigate unrest and revolution (see the recent Arab uprisings), even the destruction of law and order.

The counterargument presents the astounding progress resulting from modern worldwide communication – possibly preventing destructive behavior by some governments and facilitating life’s improvement for all.

Therefore, the future development of information flows and communication should be seen as a global concern. Vision and guidance will be needed.

Directed and controlled communication for proselytizing and control was already being used in historical times in establishing the Christian faith and church in Europe 2,000 years ago – more so in the following religious wars, as well as in expanding the world of Islam (see the recent attempt to build minaret towers on the many mosques in Switzerland).

Propaganda became an almost scientific art in modern totalitarian political movements, such as those of the Nazis (Goebbels) and the Communists (Lenin and Stalin, Mao, and more).

All the more do the Western democracies cherish freedom of speech and of the media.

On the other hand, from the times of democracy in ancient Athens (see Cleon), it became known that groups of people, tribes, and entire nations are sensitive to **the persuasive power of *“demagogues” – which can lead to dangerous consequences.*** The restraint of dangerous demagogues is and always will be a major, essential concern for mankind – including the developed countries of the West! Demagoguery is an inherent problem of Western democracy, especially when demagogues are generously supported by vast amounts of unregulated money via lobbyists and nontransparent support groups.

Should information propagation for instigation of violence, intolerance, or illegal acts be totally free?

What if the instigation to violence is meant to fight for freedom and justice?

3.3.4. Formation of a new international “World Structure” and “World Culture”

Some Essential Global Concerns arise from the international social imbalance between rich and poor nations. Some fair balance should be reached in the availability of food, health care, and education, as well as for energy, water, clean air, and other resources.

The internet brings all people on Earth closer together – leading to the formation of a “World Culture”, beginning with the ideas and aspirations of the young – seeking freedom and opportunities for self-development beyond the historic norms of their culture (for example, women in the Muslim world). If these goals are not at least somewhat approached, social unrest will increasingly occur, at a high cost to all.

3.3.5. Morals, Ethical Values – “Health-Happiness-Family-Faith” are not enough

As indicated earlier, there is a difference in word usage between *morals* and *ethics*, even though both words have the same meaning in the languages of their origin, being more closely related to “what is customary”. In our time, “morals” more often refer to sexual behavior. “Ethics” refer to acceptable interhuman behavior in society, politics, and business (see the specific essays on the website [www.schwab-writings.com](http://www.schwab-writings.com)).

“Ethics” (ethical behavior) actually developed early in the course of natural evolution of life on Earth, to facilitate bringing up the young and to form effectively functioning groups of individuals as among animals living in groups or “packs” (e.g., wolves) – to accomplish larger tasks than an individual alone could accomplish – territorial defense against other groups or hunting of large animals. (The dedicated behavior of certain insects like bees and ants cannot be compared to the emotion-based ethics of mammals – though providing similar benefits – but not based on personal decisions or restraint of longing for more opportunities in freedom.)

In human history, important group success occurred when large-scale irrigation was facilitated, as in “Old Europe” 8,000 years ago along the Danube, in Mesopotamia and in ancient Peru. Groups with such internal efficiency as provided by certain forms of ethical behavior had a better chance for survival and expansion. (It should be noted, however, that the personality and behavior of an individual depend on both naturally given ethical behavior and the formative influence of a surrounding culture.)

Such ethical behavior was neurologically supported, not so much by thought as by evolving emotions – friendship, caring love (*agape*), empathy, sympathy, and feelings of satisfaction in self-sacrifice. Also in our time, the coherence and functioning of modern societies depend largely upon the ethics prevalent in those communities!

Ethics, though of natural evolutionary origin, too often became tied to religions – by seeing and projecting ethical standards as the “will of God” – which, consequently, too often came under the control of priests and their hierarchies. (It is surprising that often religions and their priests took further unchallenged control of hygienic laws and dress codes, also in the name of God.)

Throughout history, some horrible atrocities have been committed under the guidance of religions – whether by the Aztecs in ceremonial slaughtering of thousands, or during the endless wars between the Christian Byzantine empire and the Muslim world, or by the Christian church in the time of the Inquisition in many countries, and today by Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and some individuals in the name of Islam.

The religious prohibition of birth control and all abortions can be seen in a very negative light.

Equally dubious were, and still are, the codes of honor and pride in many civilizations. Actually, there are two different meanings to each of those words. “Honor” can mean the laudable preservation of one’s own standards and ethical behavior. It can also imply that, when your behavior or values are questioned, you feel offended and you must ask for “satisfaction”, possibly by way of a duel. “Pride” can imply laudable, loyal dedication to one’s family or country. Pride can also become offended, which then requires revenge. Both are possibly by-products of the natural striving for rank in society – and can lead to cruelty and killing – see the duels among men in former times and now the many horrible honor-killings of women in Islamic societies. There is some indication that pride and shame even exist among higher animals.

In our time, religious and ethical fundamentalists or extremists on all sides have presented a substantial challenge and danger to the security and balanced functioning of governance.

As the acceptance of religions diminishes in our intellectual time, the acceptance of ethics depends on leading individuals serving as role models (the “Obama effect”) and the formation of common opinions – cultures – as expressed in a nation’s constitution and in modern, now strictly secular, legal systems!

In contrast to religions and faith, the so-called “scientific” thought of communism developed by Marx and Engels, once viewed with great hope, actually brought enormous suffering to Russia, China, and other societies, where it first conquered society and then degenerated into mass killings and general suppression.

At this time, Europe and North America seem to have found a benevolent direction in ethics – one between extremes – basically formed by Christian values and expanded by democracy and science-based, secular thought and expressed in benevolent secular laws.

How will we form a balance between the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and Darwin’s theory of evolution?

In international relations, there are occasional risks of over-aggressiveness – see George W. Bush’s starting of the Iraq war. Sometimes, however, there is the risk of idealistic weakness – leading to dangers in lacking self-defense.

Where ethics are no longer defined and controlled by religion, the natural valuation of ethics results in the formulation of civic laws corresponding to, and enforcing, basic ethics.

Should there be an equivalent in international relations – a stronger United Nations?

As said before, the natural evolution that brought forth positive ethics also brought some negative variants of ethics – as in the emotion of seeking revenge – which can lead to counter-revenge – and continuing on in a destructive chain. When an individual in a pair (friendship) or group connected by “ethical” cooperation feels offended by another individual or group, too often the need for retribution (revenge) is felt (as in “an eye for an eye”). In more advanced cultures, the violent retribution is replaced by compensation.

Where “law and order” reign, legal punishment is demanded – interestingly, also an “apology” – a symbolic form of positive retribution.

Actually, modern knowledge and analysis indicate that punishment is an emotional reaction of very limited value, except for abhorrence. More useful is reeducation of the failing individual – but necessarily combined with a change to a different, surrounding “culture”! In pathological situations, confinement is necessary for the protection of society.

In politics, there is an increasing need to find a way back to “values” after accomplishing, first, the elimination of corruption and bad governments, the rule of drug lords, the cruelties of wars, and restraint in excessive indulgence in the still wealthy part of society. In doing this, though, too often the poor are neglected or overlooked.

The prevalence of violence and sex in the Western media must be restrained.

Historically, there always were concerns of weakening ethics in society, from ancient times to our time. After liberating developments, there was always a return to fundamental religiosity with the intent to save ethical behavior or law and order in society (this being one reason for the tenacity of some right-wing political groups in the West and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Muslim world). Times of general wealth were always leading to less morality and lower ethics. The return to difficult times often cured that. Bringing up children in luxury leads to weaker performance in life than restraint and early obligations or striving for practical excellence in the upbringing of children.

3.3.6. Commercialization of everything, the commercialization of all cultures

The practical ease of our life is derived from the progress of the sciences and technology and the political functioning of our societies. The “value” we attribute to our life, however, is assessed by emotions, including those of ethics and art.

We notice an increasing amount of financial profit being derived from some participation in ethical or artistic ventures. This is an invitation to further bend our emotions toward such exploitation or corruption. Even some “churches”, as Scientology and the Unification Church, have been able to amass enormous fortunes. Lately, institutions of higher education and hospitals increasingly have become money-making ventures – a deplorable development!

We should stop and think what could be done to keep our values truly based on our ethical and artistic foundation – for the benefit of our remaining “human” considerations and for keeping our ethical and artistic ventures culturally effective – free of solely commercial considerations!

3.3.7. Unhealthy lifestyles – Drug Usage, Smoking, and Obesity

Several of our modern “unhealthy” lifestyles are based on addictions. Addictions can be understood in neurophysiological ways. Their treatment requires not only medical but also psychological initiatives which must be supported by the immediate environment of those who are addicted. In a country of personal freedom, there are narrow limits to interference. Addictions may increase as our wealth and general freedom in the world improve.

Unfortunately, strong commercial interests want the unhealthy lifestyles to continue, even expand – including drug production and trade. The tobacco industry is now concentrating on the developing countries, and some food or drink producers or merchants on the less educated.

We should stop and think what could be done to keep ourselves and our children healthy.

3.3.8. Other Concerns: Genetic Modification, Subminiature Nano-Structures, more

The unknown potential of these areas present attractive business possibilities, driving their progress but also creating unknown risks. Better healing, greater food supplies, and ease of life may be promised. But what will one be able to do against resistant synthetic bacteria or programmed robots the size of large molecules entering our bodies?

Finally, there is always the ***“law of unintended consequences”***, which will bring all of us surprises in the future – bad ones and good ones – as did at one time the steam engine and now the internet.

***3.4. Opportunities:***

This section should be the most important one in discussing the future of mankind.

In spite of all those horrible historic deviations – wars, suppressions, misguided religions, cruelty, deprived freedom, and exploitations – the path of mankind through history has led to positive progress, after all.

Emphasis on opportunities can often compensate for the suffering from problems. It is, however, always easier to analyze and to be more specific about the present and the past than to predict the future. Invariably, one takes refuge in pointing out opportunities of the past and look for repeatable situations in the future. The art of life, however, requires the ability to spot new opportunities and the initiative to grab them. Therefore, a political and cultural structure is needed capable of such alertness and adaptation. Old structures or overly rigid structures, possibly anchored in fundamentalist worldviews, are a dangerous impediment!

Following are some thoughts that might be helpful.

3.4.1. Global connection leads to more freedom and less corruption:

The most important “opportunity” arises from the fact that ***global communication flow and modernization lead to a “modern” world.*** Openness of information (the internet) and the consequently more available view of successful nations or cultures lead to the desire of all people around the world, ***mainly the young and digitally connected generation, for more freedom, opportunities for idealistic development, and less corruption.*** This could ***lead to better governance, fair laws, administered by a non-corrupt and, mainly, freely and safely accessible judiciary and police*** – if actually implemented.

3.4.2. Greater well-being from less demand:

Can global well-being occur without an ever-increasing per capita consumption? Answers to this riddle, to be solved by academia in the field of Economics, should lead to the next Nobel Prize!

Much of our middle- and upper-class expenditures go for items that did not even exist 150 years ago and which still are ***not needed by groups dedicated to modest living*** *(e.g., the Amish and the Mennonites)*: cars, vacation travel, some appliances, all electronic devices.

The interest of business in commerce and industry could be very much opposed to such development.

3.4.3. Replacement of scarce resources:

Specific material scarcities threaten our future – but the finding of ***substitutes or alternatives*** to technical problem-solving may solve these problems. Even the scarcity of water can be solved by desalination – with the ***future availability of cheap, clean energy*** (for example, nuclear fusion energy)***.***

3.4.4. Another historical period of general progress:

Material and mental progress, combined with balanced well-being, is attainable. There have been ***several past periods of mental and economic progress in the Western world (and in China)***. These periods occurred preferably when there was no religious or political restraint against such progress, yet, excess developments were restrained. A precondition was the appreciation of innovation and progress, providing encouragement, recognition, and practical rewards for both – ***combined with a remaining sense for values in social balance*** – or a structure of society allowing for such balance (example: the trades and their organizations in medieval cities).

The first known of these periods in the West occurred in ***ancient Greece*** after Thales of Miletus offered a new explanation of earthquakes based not on divine action but on natural causes. Free and creative thought became an indication of both mental and artistic excellence, leading to fame and wealth. This golden period reached beyond the conquest of Athens by Rome and, afterwards, continued, though somewhat reduced, in the Roman culture (e.g., aqueducts and roads of the period of “Augustan Peace”) – until the imperial governance crumbled, the barbarian invasions set in, and a new political and religious-clerical order arose.

***The Renaissance*** in Italy brought wealth and well-being to diverse Italian city-states – and to those cities in Europe located along trade routes – based on new thought in all endeavors (including banking, discoveries by Galileo and Columbus, and the Reformation) and the beginning of a new worldview, rewarding exploration and international trade.

Based on the earlier ***“Enlightenment”***, the relatively peaceful time in ***Europe between 1815 and 1914*** (excluding some regional wars and the 1842/48 revolutions in France, Germany, and Italy) – most importantly, with limited religious or ideological suppression of mental freedom or progress, but ***with continued general law and order*** – produced a period of rapid economic growth, learning, understanding of our existence, and health improvement in the history of Europe and the world. In future times, the period 1815 - 1914 may be seen as more important than the earlier period of “Enlightenment”.

This favorable period lasted until the all-too-avoidable World War I – by actual criminal misjudgment and emotions by European leaders on all sides!

Should that not lead to an essential concern regarding the need for, and opportunities resulting from, better global guidance, for the benefit of our global stability, for our security, mental freedom and progress, for all mankind when given the opportunity to live within a system of law and order (***if the laws are good ones and the order isn’t corrupt or suppressive***)?

The period following World War II can be seen as another area of beneficial growth for mankind, this time bringing the novel dimension of global coherence in low-cost transportation and electronic communication!

Therefore, a most essential opportunity for humanity can be found in establishing and continuing new beneficial periods of social and cultural development.

Lately, the Muslim world did not have such periods of mental and practical progress (as existed when the Arab universities in Spain attained significance due to their tolerance). Thus, the Muslim world presently appears as the main hindrance, or adversary, in developing a new period of benevolent mental and material progress for mankind.

***Switzerland,*** synthesizing four cultures and languages, and north European countries appear ***as role models!*** The world must wish that the United States and China could solve their internal problems and develop toward becoming role models for a better world to come (and that neither asteroids nor violence from North Korea or Iran will hurt mankind).

***Let the politicians of the world concentrate on this vision!***

1. **Setting Priorities and Taking Action:**

A possible approach to forming global guidance and governance could be ***the formation of a global “Guidance Committee” adjunct to the United Nations,*** consisting of recognized world leaders – for example, as were, in their better times, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Jimmy Carter of the United States, Helmut Schmidt of Germany, the Dalai Lama, and, possibly, including Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell (why is there no Pope or Muslim leader on this list?). Their task could be ***to prioritize the treatment of risks and opportunities*** according to their imminence or to their significance – to ***define broad goals and specific targets*** – and to ***propose action programs for each*** – distinguishing between the realistically doable and the nice but unrealistic dream.

How will the committee be formed to avoid the failings of the Security Council, where each major power wants to have a representative who can block decisions? Should the members of such a committee be appointed by the head of the United Nations?

Would such a committee be able to look after, and care for, such independence-seeking splinter groups as the Basques, Tamils, Tibetans, Uigurs, Ossetians, Berbers, and more? Could the possible split of some countries be considered (Bolivia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, and several others)? Mainly, how will we approach our vision? What will the incentives for cooperation be if many problems actually are zero-sum games between nations? Many national social balance problems are finally solved in the way as are personal inheritance problems where family harmony is ultimately valued higher than disruption, leading to a certain degree of give-and-take.

Consensus on problem definition and mainly on problem priorities may be the precondition for finding solutions to problems and for taking action.

This essay seeks mainly to define problems – specifically since priorities are viewed quite differently among different regions and different groups of people in the world.

Possibilities for action to reach solutions may ***primarily depend upon governance,*** reduction of corruption, introduction of law and order, education, and more – in many parts of the world presenting a multiplicity of problems.

Does the world really become more secure when many previously weak countries become stronger and, consequently, the United States and Europe become relatively weaker?

Who should, and will, pay for problem solutions? See the arguments by developing countries regarding climate stabilization at international meetings meant to provide solutions. Will there be support for solutions? Primarily, however, will ways be found to cover their cost from the average citizen? Very few people anywhere have money to spare – most people have unmet needs!

One must notice that humans and human societies are not always effective in assessing risk (for example, the mistakes of judgment made leading to World War I) or opportunity (see the surprising and unanticipated economic benefits resulting from equally unanticipated electronic innovations) – especially if such risks or opportunities are of a novel nature or are distant in space or time.

“Economics”, an academic field well suited for such complex considerations, has developed a number of concepts to treat these concerns: the “cost/benefit” consideration or “net present value”, or “discount rate” in time assessments – since costs usually occur sooner and benefits later – and the concept of “trade-offs”, the evaluation of various alternatives relative to each other. Children have very steep discount rates for the future; politicians have them specifically up to the next election. Only older people think of long-term benefits for their offspring. Usually, people are more concerned with those kinds of events that have occurred most recently.

There may occasionally be some obsessed people with extreme concerns for specifically their own “cause” – who, at worst, form activist “vocal minorities” with political impact.

Equally, there is a discount rate in geographic space: what happens to your neighbor is less important than what happens to you; what happens on the other side of the world is even less important.

In sum, in spite of all the Essential Concerns of human society, the future of mankind on Earth may very well bring further progress toward a better world, with further mental progress and greater well-being – as demonstrated by history – hopefully with less suffering!

1. **Concluding comments and the Basic Vision**

What would be the basic concept for our future world if all goes well? New political units, especially those formed recently and in freedom, occasionally have the desire to formulate their basic commitment in a few words as a vision of their future society. Could there be a basic motto to guide us? What could be the motto for a desired future world?

Starting with the motto of the French revolution of 1789, “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*”, the motto of the United States of America became “*Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*”. The validity of each term can be discussed – “life” is questioned in the case of self-defense or wars deemed to be or presented as being defensive – “liberty” must be limited within moral and neighborly constraints – and “happiness”, a very individual matter, is the least defined term of all. Still, this vision of a future America was established and is still pursued today!

The motto of the British Empire became “Law, Order, and Good Government” – much appreciated by most middle-class citizens, but also used to suppress disruptive, revolutionary activities.

In China, the priorities for the Secretaries of the Communist Party conducting the actual administration of the country are (as explained to me by one such Secretary) “Social Stability, Improvement of Basic Services, and Economic Development” – the first one forming the foundation of suppression of unplanned developments and mental freedom.

Should a future world order use a motto such as “Reduce Suffering, Improve Opportunities Fairly for All”?!

Could one speak of a motto of “Rights with Obligations, and Aesthetics”?

Or “Sustainability, Fairness, and Respect”?

Beyond the securing of an improved level of well-being for all, progress should occur in the building of a culture of mental growth and personality improvement, service to fellow men or society, combined with stewardship of nature, and the joyful appreciation of the arts and all the beauty in this world.

Could there be a motto such as ***“Growth, Service, and Culture”***?!

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