



Sanctuary

	Section	Subject Matter	People
Sanctuary	<i>i. The basis of assumption</i>	<p>The inevitability of civil collapse & the primary reason for our total inadequacies at tackling climate change & other global crises • The growing pressures on human civilisation & our likely descent into nuclear conflict</p> <p>✿</p> <p>The geopolitical centres of Western tradition & the fragility of modern civilisation: a look at potential flashpoints in the demise of globalisation • Europe: the plight of refugees & migrants (the economic & political strain on societies in recession) • Russian hostilities in Eastern Europe (from cyberattacks to gas supplies) • The populist erosion of liberal values & weakening of the <i>‘European Union’</i> • The effects of climate change & war on disadvantaged African nations • The pan-continental influence of Russia & its reactionary economic bloc • Growing instability in the Middle East & the rise of Islamic fundamentalism • The tribulations of Pakistan & its ongoing military stand-off with India in Kashmir • China, North Korea, & the growing militarisation of East Asia • <i>‘Trumpism’</i> & the faltering <i>‘American dream’</i>: from firearms to immigration (social cohesion & the likelihood of civil war) • The prospects for life in the northern latitudes of a post-apocalyptic world • The prospects for life in the Southern Hemisphere in a post-apocalyptic world</p> <p>✿</p> <p>The unappealing prospects for human existence in the Southern Hemisphere following a limited nuclear exchange</p>	<p>✿</p> <p>Vladimir Putin</p> <p>✿</p>





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(...continued)

ii. Essential philosophies and behaviours for a post-apocalyptic community

Habitable land & the likely prospects for a surviving community in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust • Painting a bleak picture of a new ‘dark ages’ • Caution & altruism: the basic attitudes required for a post-apocalyptic society • Losing the unshakable prejudices within all modern societies (liberal democracies or otherwise)



The concept of post-capitalist economics & the inability of modern society to eradicate greed & prejudice (a brief look at ideological models of ‘social anarchism’) • The severe pressures facing post-apocalyptic communities & the psychological impact of nuclear war • The innate equality of all human beings & the value of meritocratic guidance • Harmonious existence & the ‘human potential movement’: materialism & the irrelevance of money • Perceiving criminality as an illness & nurturing a mindset of ‘love’ & ‘mutual respect’



Acharya Rajneesh (Osho) | Susan Jeffers

iii. Conclusion

Foreseeing a new mindset for humanity & our prospects for the future • The superficial concepts of ‘nationality’ and ‘religion’ & the power of cultural indoctrination (from the ‘evils’ of Nazi Germany to the appreciation of music)



The logical existence of human beings & other biological systems • Intelligence & the ‘noosphere’ - a biospheric layer of human thought • Human intelligence as a destructive force: upsetting planetary homeostasis • The digital revolution & the prospect of ‘artificial general intelligence’ • The possible legacy of AI after human extinction & the likely continuance of life on Earth



Hermann von Helmholtz | Vladimir Vernadsky

Footnote

The evolution of planet Earth (from geosphere to cybersphere)



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“Epitaph: Homo sapiens sapiens - a species of great ape with delusions of grandeur”
~ The Writer ‘The Book’ (2015)

i.

(The basis of assumption)

The collapse of global civilisation is inevitable. Sooner or later the reign of humanity (*and our near complete dominance over Earthly life*) will invariably come to an end; and when our ‘uniquely human’ world eventually falls apart, it will no doubt bring about the extinction of countless other species. Moreover, our downfall is unlikely to happen gradually ~ rather the death of human society (*at least as we perceive it today*) would probably be somewhat abrupt. Alas, should there be any places of sanctuary from the devastation that will most likely befall Earth when humanity finally self-destructs, the long-term survival prospects for our species would be grim ~ but not impossible.

Governments around the world are presently stuck in what is ultimately a destructive mindset; one which places far greater importance upon protecting national interests (*such as economic health and military power*), than on the collective survival of our species from a global catastrophe of our own making (*namely the rapid climate change and irreversible environmental destruction that is clearly unraveling before us*). In a hugely competitive yet wholly distrusting world we strive to accumulate material wealth and, in doing so, strip the planet of valuable natural resources whilst simultaneously polluting land, sea, and air. And yet this happens despite us being completely reliant on a healthy biosphere to sustain our burgeoning numbers.

In every country (*whether it is governed by an open liberal democracy driven by short-term ‘re-electable’ policies, a closed autocracy that maintains power through the ruthless control of its people, or somewhere in between*) the corruption of power has brought about environmental neglect. When you consider the vast size of modern civilisation and its imprint on every continent, it is clear that our detrimental impact on the planet has reached global proportions; with every nation in the world guilty of selfish intent to some degree or other. Indeed the world’s most influential leaders are more concerned with promoting their own national ideals (*through generating material wealth and/or investing heavily in military might*) than with driving policies that benefit humanity as a whole.

With modern society built on a misguided mindset that has prevailed for centuries (*at the expense of our fragile planet and therefore our common future*), it is highly probable that we are already too late to curtail further global warming, and any concerted action that we may collectively take as a species in the coming years to counter climate change will be utterly ineffective. Therefore the most likely course of events precluding our eventual demise can be assumed with relative accuracy. By extension the most likely places of sanctuary from humanity’s downfall and the ensuing mayhem can also be accurately assumed.

In a world where dwindling resources and rising nationalism has put increasing strain on international relations, the number of deadly regional conflicts invariably continues to rise. In the dark future that we as a species appear to be heading, death and destruction compliment starvation and disease, and the ultimate expression of both human aggression and desperation is the hydrogen bomb. Whether the initial spark for self-destruction comes from our own hateful deeds or from a catastrophic natural event (*such as a massive volcanic eruption or a deadly global pandemic*), it will almost certainly end with the detonation of nuclear warheads. Unfortunately however, the chances of there being any survivable places on Earth in the aftermath of a global nuclear war are, at best, remote. Yet, in the unlikely event that any future nuclear conflict is limited to regional destruction, there would clearly be areas of the planet that would remain more habitable than others ~ where communities could potentially survive in moderate numbers.



Whilst modern human civilisation is a global phenomenon, culturally speaking it is predominantly '*Westernised*', with, for example, the social norms, ethical values and political systems (*amongst many other things*) in virtually every country in the world being greatly influenced by '*Western (or European) ideals*'. Indeed everything from international law to modern competitive sport is today mostly founded in Western tradition.

In continental terms, there are three geopolitical centres of '*Western civilisation*', with Europe, North America and Australasia considered to be the beating hearts of modern liberal democracy ~ although many other countries around the world that are founded in '*non-Western*' traditions have also adopted various Westernised systems which now lie at the heart of their own cultures.

Having grown from the rational philosophies of early Greek civilisation, and the technological aptitude of ancient Rome, Europe is of course the oldest seat of traditional Western thought. However, given the monumental international events that have unfolded in the early decades of the 21st century, it seems that the cradle of Western civilisation is coming under enormous pressure ~ as it faces ongoing threats to its stability both at its borders and from within.

Recent decades have seen a huge influx of migrants and refugees into Europe from Africa and the Middle East. Since the start of the '*European migrant crisis*' in 2013, hundreds of thousands of people have crossed into Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, or through south-eastern border countries in order to escape war, poverty and persecution. Indeed the (*often violent*) instability of many poorer African nations has driven countless people to seek a better life in Europe. With most attempting to enter illegally, every year thousands of economic migrants risk a perilous journey northwards; many of which pass through North African states including Morocco, Tunisia and Libya ~ adding to an increasingly volatile situation in the region. It even threatens to bring civil instability to several countries in Southern Europe; including Italy, Spain and Greece ~ where the very fabric of society has already suffered greatly from serious financial and political stress in the aftermath of a huge global recession.

Naturally this has helped to generate nationalist resentment and the rise of populist politics, both here and throughout much of Europe.

The Balkan states of South Eastern Europe, have also had to endure a tide of humanity in recent years, with the diaspora of Syrian refugees adding to an almost constant flow of migrants through Asia Minor. Whilst Germany and Sweden have taken in a vast majority of people who have sought refuge in Europe, poorer non-European countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon have borne the brunt of dealing with Syria's calamitous war. Indeed the humanitarian crisis brought about by violent unrest, famine and war has put enormous economic strain on a number of countries to the south of Europe ~ threatening to bring further turmoil to the region. Moreover, the growing culture of Islamic extremism throughout various parts of Africa and the Middle East not only threatens the security of Europe (*and the West as a whole*) but has put Israel (*the most Westernised state and only nuclear power in the region*) under extreme pressure. In fact, with the ongoing unrest blighting any chance of permanent peace in the Middle East, growing instability here can only increase the political and economic stresses on Europe.

Traditional European values are not only under attack from the south. Over the past few years, a number of countries at Europe's eastern frontier have been subjected to concerted cyberattacks and other coercive activities committed by clandestine Russian forces. Fearing the eastward spread of *NATO* after the Cold War, post-Soviet Russia under '**Vladimir Putin**' continues to distrust US intentions and, with former communist states in Eastern Europe having become increasingly 'Westernised', Ukraine, in particular, has endured protracted unrest. With thousands of ex-Soviet military personnel amongst the violent protagonists who sought to steer Ukraine politically away from Europe, there was huge potential for it to escalate into civil war. In the end, Putin's overconfidence and impatience (*along with an ill-prepared military force*) resulted in a full-blown invasion that was not only disastrous for both countries but would have serious consequences for the wider world (*some of which have yet to play out*). Meantime, various Russian agencies use social media with great effect to fan populist sentiment throughout Europe, and sow the seeds of civil unrest as a way to undermine Western ideals and assert their own influence. When you also consider that some of Europe's largest economies (*including Germany, Italy and Poland*) are still heavily reliant on Russian natural gas for their energy supplies, it is clear that Russia remains a serious player in shaping the political outlook of Europe.

An undeniable rise in nationalism throughout Europe has put a strain on certain international partnerships, causing the '**European Union**' to become increasingly fractious in recent years. Populist right-wing governments have taken power in countries such as Poland, Hungary and Italy for example, with the darker undercurrent of far-right political movements continuing to gain support in a number of countries across the continent. Ultimately self-destructive, the growth of right-wing populism in the '*free world*' has helped to undermine the European Union, which has no doubt contributed to peace and prosperity throughout much of the continent for several decades. With populist ideology gaining sentiment even within mainstream political parties of Western Europe, it has successfully infiltrated the political systems of even the most liberal nations within the EU (*including France, Germany and the*

Netherlands). Indeed 'Eurosceptic' political movements borne from the 'radical right' have brought about the undignified separation of the **UK**, which was once the bloc's second-largest economy. Should all of these pressures become sustained, given the current political world climate, it is highly probable that growing instability within Europe will eventually cause societies here to collapse.

Of course it is not just the stability of European society that has come under increasing pressure in recent decades. Of the other 'old world' continents, Africa is likely to be the first to endure the collapse of modern civilisation within its constituent countries. Not only are most ecosystems in Africa highly susceptible to the damaging effects of climate change, but various human pressures over the years have brought about the widespread misuse of natural resources and destroyed swathes of fertile land here. Indeed the foreign (*largely Western*) exploitation of Africa and its indigenous populations have historically disadvantaged numerous communities across the continent. For centuries the African continent has been the battleground for countless 'inhuman' (*and often genocidal*) conflicts, with religious, political and ethnic differences continuing to precipitate famine and disease ~ bringing misery to millions of vulnerable people. Succumbing to a multitude of coercive forces, the exposure of modern African nations to things such as Islamic fundamentalism, extreme poverty and a superfluity of horrific regional wars will most likely signify the beginning of the end of the current world order. Probably representing the last outpost of modern civilisation on the continent, even South Africa will eventually fall as humanity is overcome by its own worst impulses.

Throughout Asia meantime, a cascade of events are likely to play out as various international alliances come to blows. Over the past few years, some of the most militarily powerful Asian nations have been 'flexing their muscles'; often intimidating neighbouring countries. Indeed the festering military ambitions of several Asian powers has significantly hastened an ongoing arms race here. In addition to Russia's far-reaching sphere of influence (*which spans much of the continent*), the subsequent rise of various regional powers across Asia (*including China, India and Pakistan*) has added a new dimension to the dangers facing co-operative international relations here.

At the western edge of the continent however, Russia is by far the largest military (*and political*) player. Direct Russian involvement in conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine, for example, has had a profound effect on life in these countries, whilst its growing presence in the Middle East (*supporting authoritarian regimes in Syria and Iran for example*) has significantly strengthened its influence in the region. Besides military intervention in various conflicts outside its borders in Western Asia and Eastern Europe, Russia has also embarked on a program of covert interference in the affairs of practically every nation that it considers to be a threat. Indeed, despite the ever-widening gulf between rich and poor in Russia, its massive defence budget has enabled it to develop military technology which, in some areas, is even more advanced than the US equivalent. In addition to its intimidating military capabilities, Russia has also forged a new economic 'Eastern bloc' alliance of nations across Eurasia (*stretching from Belarus to Kazakhstan*). In the event of open hostilities with the West sometime in the future, Russia has the ability to hoard natural resources

(including vital oil and gas reserves) which it can (and has) readily cut off from Europe.

Yet the potential for catastrophic instability in Asia today is far more complex than simply being dependent on Russia's military, political and economic involvement in the affairs of foreign countries. Indeed, by far the most volatile regions in modern Asia have come about as the result of serious religious friction. For example, in Southern Asia (*as throughout much of the Middle East*) the growth of Islamic fundamentalism has given rise to extremist ideology and irrevocably changed the political outlook of several countries in the region. The social and economic stability of Pakistan, for example, is under enormous pressure from various Islamist movements despite spending well over \$100 billion in its so-called war on terrorism.

Islamic fundamentalism has become deeply entrenched in several countries to the west of Pakistan, with '**Twelver Shi'ism**', for example, well established in Iran and '**Deobandi Sunnism**' a prominent feature of Afghanistan's zealous '**Taliban**' government. A gradual deterioration in US-Pakistan relations since their 'anti-terrorism pact' at the start of the century has coincided with a discernible rise in illiberal, anti-Western sentiment within the country; enabling fundamentalist ideology to infiltrate the corridors of power and grow here too. As American links are further weakened over the coming years, it becomes increasingly likely that Pakistan will eventually relinquish all Western values and ultimately replace its system of governance. The suspicion of anything non-muslim (*kafir*) is already rising sharply within Pakistani society and the call for '**Sharia**' to be officially adopted grows louder every year.

Despite owning the world's sixth largest military force, Pakistan struggles to feed its population and cannot provide enough clean water for all of its people ~ particularly in rural areas. Here, strict Islamic law has a strong foothold in Pakistani society, and many of its basic values contravene the Westernised perception of 'human rights' ~ with the domestic persecution of women, for example, an anathema to Western values. Yet life in the predominantly Hindu nation of India (*Pakistan's geographical neighbour and bitterest military rival*) is no more comfortable for hundreds of millions of people. Throughout much of rural India a deeply entrenched caste system legitimises horrific crimes (*particularly against women*), and as pollution, overpopulation, climate change and human conflict become increasingly prevalent here, so disillusionment in Western values have put enormous pressure on modern Indian civilisation ~ with an increasing number of communities in the subcontinent being overrun by anarchic religious forces. When you also consider that India and Pakistan are permanently locked in a dangerous stand-off concerning the disputed region of Kashmir, the collapse of society within either country could bring catastrophic consequences. Indeed the escalation of any political or military conflict between these two nuclear adversaries is naturally of enormous international concern.

By number of personnel, eight of the world's ten largest armed forces are Asian, and by far the most dominant military force in Eastern Asia belongs to the People's Republic of China. Like Russia, China too has been stealthily re-enforcing its national interests over recent years, and its claims to several disputed territories in East and

Southeast Asia also threaten to seriously destabilised the region. Whilst the outright annexation of places such as Taiwan and Bhutan has no doubt been deterred by the threat of direct conflict (*with the **US** and **India** respectively*), China's forceful assertion of rule over various islands and exclusive economic zones in the South China and East China Seas have increasingly brought it into conflict with a number of neighbouring states ~ including the Philippines, Indonesia, and Japan. The South China Sea, in particular, is of huge geopolitical importance. Its strategic military significance, abundance of oil and natural gas fields, and lucrative fisheries is matched only by its role as a highly important (*yet fragile*) trade route; the maintenance of which is crucial for the food security of various countries in Southeast Asia.

With a nuclear arsenal third in size only to those of Russia and the **US**, China has invested many billions of dollars in its military capabilities over the past decade. Indeed, in some areas of military research and development, China is actually ahead of its two *superpower* rivals, and the '**People's Liberation Army**' has several advanced technologies at its disposal; including things such as hypersonic missile systems, fully automated drones (*and other 'AI-controlled' weapons systems*) and, of course, a range of offensive genetic weaponry. There is no doubt that, as natural resources continue to decline and tensions in the region continue to rise, the ruling Chinese Communist party will invariably countenance any dissent against it (*both domestically and on the international arena*) with increased severity.

The perceived success of Russia's foreign policies and China's economic ones in recent years, along with the undignified unraveling of various democracies in the West (*including the **US** and the **UK***), has increased the likelihood of future military coups in populous Asian countries such as Thailand and Malaysia. Indeed the appeal of democratic Western ideals has diminished considerably, with the permanent suspension of democracy in these and other Asian countries likely to give rise to autocratic governments whose resilience lies in their strong military ties. Moreover, as international relations deteriorate in the coming years, the Chinese stranglehold on maritime traffic in the region will become increasingly apparent and, with countries including Japan and South Korea ultimately deprived of essential resources, the last bastions of modern 'Westernised' civilisation in Eastern Asia will also eventually collapse.

As an increasingly belligerent power with a strong military presence, China is not the only dangerous force in the region. When you factor in North Korea (*an ally of both **Russia** and **China**, and perhaps the least stable of all nuclear powers*), the recipe for a potentially catastrophic military confrontation here is complete; particularly when you consider its open hostility towards South Korea, Japan and, of course the **US**.

With some 49 sovereign states spread across the continent, each pursuing political agendas that promote their own national interests, growing turmoil in Asia is inevitable. Yet despite there being only three distinct countries spanning 90% of the North American mainland, here too nationalistic ideology (*especially in the **USA***) has soured international relations, whilst 'faux' political concerns have divided society to the point that it may never recover. Indeed the United States is in the throws of a

protracted domestic crisis and, with many of its leaders no longer representing the traditional liberal values associated with humane governance, its attitude is reflected as a growing air of brutality within American society.

As the '*American dream*' begins to falter badly, man's inhumanity to man here is further enabled by the nation's anachronistic gun laws. The availability of guns in the US will no doubt hasten its downfall; a frightening prospect that has directly resulted from the persistent (*and often rabid*) defence by gun supporters of an archaic '*Second constitutional Amendment*' which flies in the face of modern day reasoning. This perverse mentality (*which is heavily ingrained on the American psyche*) is particularly highlighted today in areas of the country where Christian conservatism is rife. Despite the US parading as a liberal, open-minded nation, there are large regions of the country where, for example, mainstream movies or books are banned for their sexual or profane content, yet where the use of guns (*machines whose soul purpose is to kill*) has an incorrigible place in family life.

Alas internal political differences within America are only becoming more vicious as the clear falsehoods of '**Trumpism**' have become an acceptable part of mainstream political life ~ a development which has served to embolden those with far right beliefs. This includes a large assemblage of white supremacist movements which have benefited from a new political attitude in the US wherein morally abhorrent behaviours by public servants have opened a 'Pandora's box' of unfortunate precedents.

As the social coherence of American life begins to fall apart, it will have a profound effect on every other surviving nation; with the world's remaining capitalist-based democracies inevitably facing meltdown. Indeed, with the sociopolitical fabric of everyday American life effectively governed by market forces, the United States (*as the richest nation on Earth*) has a phenomenal influence on the global economy, and the fate of virtually every other country depends on its health.

Yet despite a profusion of events which have damaged its reputation abroad, to many millions of people around the world, the United States of America is still regarded as a land of 'promise'. As a result of its undeniable wealth (*which is nevertheless unevenly distributed*), the United States has, like Europe, had to withstand an influx of economic migrants ~ this time from Latin America (*and thus far on a smaller scale than in Europe*). Ironically US immigration policy in the late 2010's (*in particular at its border with Mexico*) only served to reaffirm the attraction, for many potential migrants, of life in a wealthier state. Having endured the horrendous poverty, persecution and lawlessness that is widely experienced in parts of South America, the idea that any country that would willingly spend billions of dollars to strengthen its southern border must afford its citizens comparative luxury.

The increasingly damaging effects of climate change and its catastrophic impact on the human population of South America will become a major driving force for future waves of migration to the northern continent. Over the coming decades, the amount of freshwater provided by the shrinking Andean glaciers, for example, will be vastly reduced, whilst the systematic destruction of the world's largest rainforest will

inevitably reach a tipping point that could bring about the immediate and irreversible collapse of vital ecosystems within the Amazon basin. The resulting northward migration of many thousands of suffering people will no doubt put enormous stress on Mexico and the southernmost US states, which are themselves not exempt from the ravages of climate change. An ongoing trend of lower annual rainfall and higher temperatures, for example, invariably causes drier conditions, and it is only a matter of time before the natural groundwater supplies of several southern US states are completely exhausted. The immense pressures placed on society here, along with an unfortunate rise of extreme social ideology (*which has led to growing political tensions across the United States*) threatens to bring about a state of anarchy and gun law ~ with the potential to culminate in what could effectively become a second 'American civil war'.

The collapse of modern civilisation will be inescapable; even in the far north of the American continent. Despite the wide open spaces and comparatively sparse population in northern Canada, for example, human life will struggle to survive even here in a post-apocalyptic world. In fact most 'higher species' throughout the whole of North America face the prospect of extinction, with an array of calamitous events likely to destroy different populations across the continent. Life in the remote regions of Canada and Alaska (*like that in the extensive tundra region of northern Siberia*) will not only have to endure the stark consequences of climate change, but also the direct impact of human conflict. In terms of climate change, rapid warming over the coming years is likely to melt vast areas of permafrost ~ resulting in extensive flooding, the escape of huge quantities of methane from subterranean deposits, and the inundation of local ecosystems with decaying matter (*as the melting of bacteria-rich tundra turns many vital bodies of water anoxic*). Yet besides this unstoppable threat of climatic destruction, even the remotest terrestrial lands of the Northern Hemisphere cannot escape the devastation should a regional war elsewhere spark a limited nuclear exchange. In reality there is nowhere in the Northern Hemisphere that would be free from the risk of radioactive fallout and other polluting agents should such a calamity occur. Indeed increased radiation levels and severe sunlight depletion would inevitably destroy even the largest land biome on the planet ~ the pan-continental '*taiga*' (or '*boreal forest*').

The destruction that we as a species are capable of wreaking upon our planet is simply staggering. Our exploitation of Earth's resources combined with reckless environmental neglect, for example, have irrevocably damaged the health of our planet and threatens the extinction of countless species over the coming century. Indeed we are heading towards a world where the worst impacts of climate change will eventually make survival for human beings (*and virtually every other extant species of advanced life*) an almost unbearable challenge. Yet it is through our anger towards one another that we can do the greatest damage to our living planet. With a decisive nuclear conflict very likely to both destroy modern civilisation and wipe out much of the natural world at a stroke, humans are by far the most destructive species to have ever evolved. Indeed the prospect of a global nuclear war is so frightening that few people willingly contemplate the horrors that would befall those unfortunate enough to survive. However, should any future nuclear conflict be limited, it is more

likely that parts of the Southern Hemisphere would remain habitable in the aftermath of such a calamity.

With some 81% of the Southern Hemisphere's surface covered by ocean waters, it would be possible that small enclaves of human habitation could continue to exist on a number of southern islands should today's global civilisation end in such an abrupt way. Although all but the most remote regions of South America and Southern Africa would likely become uninhabitable, some of the hemisphere's smaller land masses could remain hospitable to certain species of life. Should they not be completely overcome by consequential disasters (*such as tsunamis, rising water levels, or a nuclear winter*) it is entirely feasible that some (*non-militarised*) island communities could potentially escape man's ultimate atrocity thanks to their geographical isolation or perceived unimportance in the event of a global war. Indeed, whilst the largest cities in Australia and even New Zealand remain very much at risk, those lightly populated regions capable of a self-sustained existence (*particularly some of the smaller island populations that pepper Oceania*) have the greatest chance of survival.

Whatever the outcome regarding the demise of civilisation, with billions of human beings continuing to consume precious resources (*whilst irrevocably damaging the natural environment*), our Earth will eventually no longer be able to sustain our species in such numbers, and a global catastrophe is inevitable. Alas, to place hope in our collective wisdom is misguided, and the belief that human ingenuity will somehow overcome the gargantuan task of repairing the damage that we have done to the natural world is mere folly.



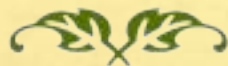
In all likelihood, after a global nuclear war, there will be no *sanctuary* for any human beings left alive; that is, perhaps, apart from a few surviving 'purpose-built' bunkers dotted across the continents. However, should any catastrophic future war end in a limited nuclear exchange, there is a small possibility that pockets of land around the world (*predominantly in the Southern Hemisphere*) could potentially remain habitable. This notion, of course, relies on the idea that any future nuclear attack wouldn't necessarily escalate into all-out destruction ~ where hostile forces resort to whatever weapons are available to them in their huge arsenals. Indeed, the chances of survival on any particular '*island sanctuary*' in the Southern Hemisphere would primarily depend on the severity of any preceding nuclear conflict. In all probability however, the deadly consequences of such a war would be far reaching; with irradiated land and a prolonged 'nuclear winter' preventing farming of any description for years, decades or even centuries. Furthermore it would no doubt be catastrophic for life in the world's oceans and seas; wiping out fish stocks across the planet. In fact, any future nuclear conflict would greatly intensify the present manmade mass extinction event ~ bringing widespread starvation to many initially surviving species.

Whilst the future has yet to be set, the eventual use of nuclear weapons in some future (*or present*) conflict is almost inevitable. Yet all of the bleak consequences resulting from a future nuclear war depend on its contagion. What is less certain is how extensive such a war could become ~ i.e.; at what point (*if any*) do all nuclear-

armed belligerents cease hostilities? It is generally agreed that the detonation of just one nuclear warhead in anger would make it easier for any adversary to justify a nuclear, chemical or biological response and commit their own atrocities (*should they have the means to do so*). Indeed even the use of a single bomb would almost certainly trigger a cascade of nuclear reprisals and counter reprisals. However there are also an array of scenarios that could potentially play out in which the use of nuclear weapons are limited; with different events resulting in various outposts of human habitation having to endure differing degrees of destruction.

When you take into account both geography and present population size, the locations that provide the best hope for human survival in a post-apocalyptic world are invariably to be found on certain islands within the southernmost regions of current human habitation. These include places such as Tasmania, parts of New Zealand's South Island, and possibly Grand Terre in New Caledonia. In fact, a number of islands in the South West Pacific could potentially provide shelter from a regional nuclear war elsewhere in the world, should it condemn modern civilisation without obliterating the entire living planet. Indeed there is the faint possibility that some larger communities in places such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji could temporarily escape the worst corollaries of human malevolence by moving to higher elevations and adapting to the harsher conditions that they would inevitably encounter. It is equally possible that some of the more isolated civilian communities in parts of Tierra del Fuego could survive. Yet even in these outposts of human perseverance, life after such a global disaster would inevitably be harsh ~ with mere survival most likely becoming a daily struggle.

In the unlikely (*but nevertheless possible*) event that any future global war does not completely destroy every habitable environment on Earth, there is always the possibility that we (*and various other 'advanced animal and plant species'*) could survive in pockets of habitation for millennia to come. Should this be the case, then it is imperative that those who take up the mantle of humanity learn quickly from our past mistakes; ending mutual distrust and conflict (*at all levels of society*) for good.





ii.

(Essential philosophies and behaviours for a post-apocalyptic community)

The extent of any future nuclear conflict will ultimately determine the fate of our species. All out global nuclear war would no doubt bring about destruction on a scale to rival Earth's greatest mass extinction events ~ likely wiping out virtually all human life within a matter of months. If, on the other hand, the horrors of a nuclear conflict are only realised through the limited exchange of a regional war that resists complete international contagion (*however unlikely that is*), our species could survive in a 'post-apocalyptic' world for centuries.

Should there be areas of land that, by chance, escape the most dire consequences of human self-destruction, our best hope for long-term survival lay in those who live in more isolated (*and least contaminated*) parts of the world. People who inhabit sparsely populated regions, located far from any major conurbation are, naturally, more likely to survive a catastrophic nuclear holocaust. Yet, in order to stand any chance of long-term survival, a successful post-apocalyptic community would need to be large enough to be self-sufficient, and yet not be regarded as a threat to potential adversaries that retain their military capabilities. Unfortunately this would effectively be a contradiction in terms.

As large and irrepressible as it may appear now, today's global civilisation is utterly vulnerable to irrational human behaviour and the mindless atrocities that can accompany feelings of hate, anger and vengeance. When such emotions are displayed at an international level, the destruction that we can wreak is limited only by our imagination and the size of our armies. Indeed every thread of modern society is ultimately at the mercy of the world's largest military forces, some of which are led by increasingly belligerent governments. Unfortunately those who command the greatest armies today are, broadly speaking, not concerned with the value of human life ~ and civilian populations around the world are completely at their mercy.

In any future conflict that may exceed the devastation of the 20th century's two world wars, the core infrastructures of modern civilisation (*that support everything from agriculture and industry to power generation and communications*) would inevitably be targeted, but ultimately it would be the most heavily populated regions that would take the full force of any weapon of mass destruction. In a full-scale war between the various nuclear powers and their allies, few (*if any*) cities and large towns are likely to survive undamaged. Even after suffering a first wave of nuclear attacks and counter-attacks, many urbanised areas would be prone to further strikes (*nuclear, chemical, and/or biological*) if they have not already been completely levelled by surviving enemy forces.

However, in the event of an irrepressible nuclear conflict that destroys modern civilisation (*but stops short of rendering the entire planet uninhabitable*), those places

where human survival is still possible would most likely be wholly unwelcoming oases of life in an otherwise barren, radioactive world. Indeed only in such places, where desperate people hold on to both life and sanity, could the full horrors of a nuclear war actually be perceived. When stunned incredulity is replaced by desperation and starvation, the collective human experience will have altered dramatically from that which occupies today's civilised existence. Indeed, even in remote areas that are still capable of sustaining human life, our species would no doubt continue in a hitherto unrecognised vein.

In the aftermath of a nuclear exchange, the mere act of survival for those fortunate enough to escape the slow agonising death of radiation sickness (*and yet not succumb to a suicidal loss of hope*) will be a Herculean task. Even in areas that may completely escape the immediate physical damage of a future nuclear war, day-to-day survival would become unbearably difficult. Faced with the same '*everyone for themselves*' philosophy, any remaining social cohesion would invariably collapse, turning any surviving rural communities and smaller urban populations into anarchic hubs of collective human suffering. Indeed desperation will drive most surviving populations to a return to the so-called '*dark ages*' where fitness and stealth determine the survival of individuals (*and their families*) in a bleak new world of 'cutthroat' competition.

In a 'best case' scenario however, where comparatively isolated areas of human habitation escape the worst ravages of an apocalyptic war (*and its ensuing nuclear winter*), the eventual rebuilding of new and established communities could potentially happen. Indeed there is the slightest possibility that, in the aftermath of a limited nuclear exchange, surviving residents of small towns or villages which had not been directly targeted by a **WMD** (*and are not in close proximity to somewhere that has*) could eventually rebuild fully functioning communities. There may be somewhere, for example, where farmland remains relatively uncontaminated and fertile enough to grow crops, or miraculously even support surviving livestock. Yet, although some isolated populations may largely escape the physical consequences of a limited nuclear conflict, all currently depend on modern civilisation in some way or other, so building a self-sustaining community in a post-apocalyptic world otherwise consumed with death and destruction would be a phenomenal achievement.

It stands to reason that any successful post-apocalyptic community would need to be extremely cautious for many years regarding its interaction with the outside world. Indeed, should any form of electronic communications remain intact and serviceable after an apocalyptic future war, it would be prudent for surviving operators not to announce their presence too far afield. Under such circumstances it is quite possible that any initial attempt to make contact with higher authorities elsewhere could prove to be a fatal mistake. When you consider that advanced weapons technologies in various fields (*including AI, genetic and hypersonic weaponry*) will, in all probability, still exist in a number of military installations around the world, it is not unreasonable to assume that many civilian sanctuaries would remain highly vulnerable to further attack. Whilst it may be impossible to avoid the gaze of military satellites, the continuing safety of some surviving communities may depend on having to maintain radio silence for years, or possibly even decades, to come.

Yet despite the initial need for quiet anonymity from the outside world, for humanity to have any hope of long term survival, any reasonably-sized community would need to adopt a completely different mindset from the pervasive attitudes that burden the societies of today. Should conditions ever improve to the point that people no longer face a daily struggle for individual survival (*albeit decades, or even centuries later*), any truly '*successful*' post-apocalyptic settlement could only be based on honest endeavour and mutual respect. Indeed our species can only hope to prosper again if we can fully cooperate with one another, and work together for the benefit of humanity as a whole. The idea that negative emotions such as 'greed' and 'mistrust' are minimised in altruistic societies based on 'honesty' and 'respect' may seem a little far-fetched now, but it would be essential for the future of our species (*should we be gifted with a second chance*).

The main priority for any 'cohesive' human settlement would be collective survival, but in order for a post-apocalyptic community to eventually prosper and grow, it clearly cannot ignore the dictates of conscience that have been so drastically failed by modern civilisation. In today's predominantly materialistic societies, where peoples of the world are divided by nations, moral principles are often forgone in pursuit of 'selfish desire'. This has enabled feelings of mistrust and prejudice to pervade even the most liberal modern societies, and at a national level it has been the progenitor of many devastating wars. Alas hateful violence towards other human beings is not the only destructive symptom of modern civilisation, with the quest for material wealth giving rise to unfettered competition at the expense of the natural world.

In peacetime, most countries show a persistent disregard for nature in their pursuit of economic wealth, despite regular assurances to the contrary. In times of war the planet's precious life-sustaining resources become little more than a commodity to be fought over. As citizens of different nations, we are all influenced by cultural bias (*subtly or otherwise*), limiting our ability to form a balanced insight into human coexistence. Indeed the concept of borders (*both physical and psychological*) has fostered prejudicial attitudes towards 'outsiders' and only when our species is emancipated from these self-imposed barriers could we ever hope to live harmoniously with one another and become a benign imposition on the natural world around us.

The progressive Westernised societies of today are amongst the most tolerant in human history. However, whilst the aspirations of modern liberal democracies are of noble intent, the concept of a free and fair society that respects human rights and stands up for individual liberties is, with the current mindset, an unachievable ideal. We perceive that most open democratic societies strive to provide a 'humane existence' for all their citizens, but each society brings with it its own prejudices. From the blatant racism that continues to undermine Western (*particularly American*) society, to the oblique privileges of wealth and class that blight every single nation in the world. Alas the culture of 'entitlement' amongst the ruling classes is a prominent feature of all modern societies. Only if cultural prejudices were completely eradicated could we ever hope to maintain a lasting peace. Whist the idea of human innovation enabling future generations to live a utopian existence or inhabit some sort of '*Earthly*

Nirvana’ is clearly delusional, the possibility of attaining a peaceful coexistence between the people of a nationless world is not. Such an ambition however would require a massive shift in our collective attitude, and it seems that only a catastrophic event (*such as a limited nuclear war*) could do this.



There have been numerous studies into the viability of so-called ‘*post-capitalist economies*’ over the past few decades, and some of these support the social ideals that any enduring community would need to adopt in the aftermath of a nuclear apocalypse. Deprived of the interconnecting networks that serve today’s global civilisation, any surviving human settlement in a future ‘post-apocalyptic’ world could only succeed in the longer term if it had both sustainable access to essential resources and the collective will to secure its future. The mindset of such communities would therefore need to radically depart from the failed social systems that define today’s modern world which is bound by trade and divided by statehood.

Whilst the concept of private ownership encourages a sense of personal ambition (*which, in turn, drives the economies of all ‘Westernised’ liberal democracies*), modern capitalism has promoted the reckless pursuit of wealth (*both corporate and individual*) to the ultimate detriment of everything else. Global concerns such as climate change and widespread pollution have become unwelcome distractions for governments obsessed with economic growth in a world where **GDP** is king. Yet equally abhorrent are the invasive policies of military dictatorships and religious regimes which greatly restrict individual freedoms (*largely in the names of communism or Islam*). In such countries, the need for hard-line state control ensures that power takes precedence over humanity. Indeed every modern nation, regardless of its constitutional ideology, has enabled a privileged minority of its citizens to accumulate ‘obscene’ levels of material wealth and, in the process, has played a significant role in degrading the ecological health of our planet ~ no doubt preluding the downfall of modern civilisation.

Should humanity actually survive the catastrophic consequences of a future nuclear war (*along with the rapid climate change and irreversible biospheric pollution that will inevitably follow*) it must depart from the deceitful culture of greed and power that will have brought us to that point. In the event that such a catastrophe is survivable, our species would most likely be represented by clusters of sparsely populated human settlements scattered across the southern hemisphere of a largely uninhabitable planet. So, in order to withstand the immense pressures of this dark ‘post-civilised’ world, human ingenuity would indeed be severely tested. Of the various types of post-capitalist economies that have been proposed as replacements for the current system, it is those based around the principles of ‘*social anarchism*’ that offer the most viable prospect for human coexistence under such conditions.

In recent years an array of radical ‘policy reform’, scenarios have been analysed and proposed, with the subject heavily investigated by academic and non-profit research institutions (*such as the ‘**Great Transition Initiative**’ and its predecessor the ‘**Global Scenario Group**’*). The notion has also been advanced by a number of independent

political and philosophical movements that promote societies based on various ideological models (*ranging from ‘Anarcho-Capitalism’ to ‘Eco-Communalism’*). In short, the best way forward for humanity in a post-capitalist world is to develop fully co-operative communities that strive to uphold mutual respect and individual freedoms whilst rejecting hierarchical governance and any sense of authoritarian control. The emplacement of a social system that recognises the need to collectively maintain a supportive community, yet enables the complete autonomy of individuals could provide the communal basis to sustain a successful post-apocalyptic settlement.

Primarily bound by the act of survival, most post-apocalyptic communities would no doubt have to endure conditions that would severely test their sense of social cohesion. As a collective, the safest philosophy for any local population to adopt would be one of general non-interference in outside affairs, but, as individuals, its people would also need to retain the spirit of community and work together to ensure their long-term survival prospects. Armed with a profane sense of morality, such a community could embark on projects that benefit everyone ~ including its most vulnerable inhabitants, thereby reclaiming humanity from the depraved depths of modern warfare (*and the only mass extinction event to have been driven by hate and greed*). Whilst it may be prudent for any post-apocalyptic settlement to be ‘low-key’, in order for it to support a culture based on mutual support and cooperation, it must be unreservedly inclusive. There can be no ‘outsiders’. Indeed its people should value all human life equally (*regardless of their place in the community*) and everybody should expect the right to be treated completely without prejudice. As such, the enforcement of ‘law and order’ becomes an unnecessary diversion from other collective endeavours, and the only rules to uphold should be those that directly seek to prevent people from causing physical or psychological harm to others (*intentionally or otherwise*).

To build a community where anyone is free to come and go as they wish, but where everyone is afforded equal rights and representation (*regardless of their origin and behaviour*) would require a significant shift in attitude from that which validates modern society. A majority of the world population today is perceptually bound by the profligate mentality of our predominantly Westernised civilisation. This has not only led to billions of people leading unsustainable lifestyles, but it has fed a mindset that enforces selfish concepts including ‘greed’ and ‘corruption’ as well as ‘resentment’ and ‘prejudice’. The fact that ‘charity’ plays such a vital role in the daily lives of so many people, yet billions of dollars of revenue is generated every day (*mostly for the benefit of a small minority*) is testament to the failures of the established hierarchical systems that shape global civilisation. In today’s pre-apocalyptic human world (*which is separated into over a hundred sovereign states laying claim to a myriad of territories around the globe*), so too is the continuous warring ~ mostly over resources or ideological power. It is only the fragile conviction of international law that prevents the further spread of inhumane atrocities (*such as the mass murder and state-sanctioned torture most commonly seen within war zones and dictatorships*) from becoming increasingly commonplace.

It stands to reason therefore that, for any successful post-apocalyptic community to survive in the longer term, most of the institutions that are today regarded as essential

would have to become completely redundant. Indeed, in order to avoid falling back into the '*Westernised norms*' that readily breed today's contemptuous attitudes, the collective mindset of surviving communities would need change radically ~ rejecting traditional prejudices and cultural attitudes that have formed over centuries. In a post-civilised world where the system of '*Westphalian sovereignty*' has finally collapsed and the power of the state has become irrelevant, our collective psyche could finally be able to set aside political institutions, let go of religious dogma, forget the concept of nationality, and end the pursuit of personal wealth.

We are all human and we are all equal, regardless of where we come from or what we look like. No 'race' is superior to any other, and all cultures enrich our diversity as a single species. Indeed, all people, regardless of ethnicity are equally evolved, and the value of human life is inestimable. Yet, despite phenomenal achievements of modern civilisation and the technological wonders that it has imbued, humanity has yet to shake off a 'primitive mentality' that evokes prejudicial distinction. Therefore, rather than being driven by advances in genetics, the next significant step in human evolution will more likely be a sudden psychological transformation resulting from a manmade global catastrophe. Indeed, the act of living through the almost incomprehensible horrors of a nuclear war will have an immense psychological impact upon survivors and their descendants, and its long term effect could be to alter our perceptual connection to one another ~ in a way that, once and for all, removes the restrictions of prejudice and hate.

If surviving communities are to succeed in the longer term, they would ultimately need to disconnect from the past institutions and ideologies that will have driven humanity beyond the brink of global annihilation. Clearly this will not happen straight away as people will inevitably turn to familiar religious or state organisations for guidance and support. In fact initially it is likely that any surviving institutions would even be empowered by the perceived reliance upon them by desperate survivors, but eventually old faiths and loyalties will invariably diminish ~ overtaken by feelings of shared commonality. Likewise hateful atrocities will no doubt continue to exacerbate human suffering long after the outbreak of a catastrophic future conflict, and negative attitudes could persist for many years. A distrust of 'outsiders', for example, is highly prevalent in modern society, and in the immediate aftermath of nuclear war or any other apocalyptic catastrophe, it is likely to be more prevalent than ever. However, over time, this too will diminish should mere survival once again give way to limited prosperity. Within an established post-apocalyptic community, it would be far more likely that survivors will see the people around them as fellow human beings rather than holding preconceptions about their nationality, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or social class.

With the current mindset, it is almost impossible to perceive of an anarchic, meritocracy-based community which is merely guided by an '*intelligentsia*' who themselves have no elevated sense of social status. This, however, would be the only logical step forward humanity could take if our species were to survive in the longer term, beyond an apocalyptic future war. The dissolution of religious, political and military organisations would be a natural progression for such a society, whilst the policing of individuals would become completely unnecessary. In fact, in a

community grounded in science and humane education (*rather than wealth and entitlement*), the only established institutions that would remain would be those concerned with the health and welfare of its people and the environment upon which they (*and others*) depend. Eventually a broader human collaborative may even re-emerge, which extends beyond solitary isolated communities, to create a limited and reconstituted collective without state borders. If so, it must form a common society where all neighbouring communities are interdependent without exclusivity, yet where individuals are free to act as they wish in any way (*provided that it is not wholly detrimental to the lives of others*).

It is clear that, in order for people live together in such harmonious co-existence, the whole mindset of our species must change dramatically but, if it does, there would be no need for things such as 'law enforcement' because mutual respect would be stronger than selfish endeavour. Perhaps one of the best exponents of alternative thinking during the 20th century was Indian spiritual leader '**Acharya Rajneesh**' (a.k.a. '**Osho**') whose teachings (*particularly during the 1970's and 80's*) echoed a number of post-capitalist ideals that could be adopted by surviving communities after the fall of modern civilisation. A charismatic, yet hugely controversial, figure, Osho's work greatly enhanced the '*human potential movement*' and highlighted the dangerous and unnecessary constraints of modern culture. He contended, for example, that there was ultimately no need for money. Should you create a community that enables the exchange of skills and services without the concept of financial gain, materialism disappears and a whole range of crimes cease to be relevant ~ in particular '*theft*'. Indeed, the desire to do things purely for financial gain would be greatly diminished and the act of gambling, for example, would be a pointless pursuit. When there is no pursuance of wealth, there is no concept of ownership beyond the guardianship of inanimate objects that have sentimental value. In such a community, you could therefore occupy a place of habitation and be entitled to the personal space that your home provides, but would have no need to accumulate 'material' wealth. There would be no such thing as 'trespassing on private land', no exclusive rights to 'property' and no desire to 'deceive', as no one would wilfully disadvantage or in any way cause harm to other people for selfish gain. Furthermore, in a society where individuals share the commonality of mutual respect for merely 'surviving', whether you personally like someone or not becomes completely irrelevant.

It is true that the notion of '*criminal activity*' is unique to our species, and can be found nowhere else in the animal kingdom. Considering the complexities of human thought, criminality would be better regarded as an illness of the mind, and society would benefit far more from the ability to cure dangerous or persistent offenders of their compulsions rather than simply imprisoning or executing them. Whilst the most serious crimes may indeed require enforced separation (*rather than incarceration*), the best way to protect the general public, would be to treat malefactors accordingly as opposed to punishing them for the sake of judicial revenge. Indeed we should be led by the discerning realisation that crime is a symptom of a sick society and, as individuals, people with a penchant for committing 'unlawful' acts should be helped to repair their psychological damage. Alas, for countless generations, human beings around the world, regardless of their nationality and culture, have had to endure a

repressive morality which has conceptualised the whole notion of ‘criminal behaviour’.

Most people today will regard the corrective punishment of ‘dangerous offenders’ to take precedence over their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Yet violent crime will never be eradicated so long as our contemporary hierarchical societies are shaped by material wealth and privilege. Capitalism, for example, breeds mistrust and selfish endeavour, whilst autocratic governance (*be it politically or religiously oppressive*) will invariably compromise the humanity of its people for the sake of power and ideological belief. Unfortunately modern civilisation is a long way from emancipating the human population from its own prejudices. For it to truly work, everybody would need to perceive all human life as equal ~ without exception.

Lose the current mindset, and morality ceases to be a duty ~ rather it becomes a natural occurrence. If society could adopt a more inclusive and more compassionate ‘*one world, one people*’ attitude, there would be no need of leaders ~ except perhaps to call upon for wisdom and guidance. In a community based around honesty, mutual respect, love, and compassion, (*and whose endeavours benefit life as a whole*) there would, of course, be no need to enforce rules. Without the concept of nationality, humanity exists as a single concern, with a one ‘world economy’ based on environmental health and our collective well-being.

With regards to the social behaviours of those living in just such a community, individuals would ultimately need to be completely open and honest with one another. Alas, to any shrewd and percipient person living in today’s highly competitive society, such an outlook on life would not only appear both naïve and dangerous, but would seem completely impossible to achieve given modern attitudes. However kindness is not a weakness, and should a post-apocalyptic humanity actually evolve beyond the limiting desires of personal greed and malicious intent, then we will cease to be a threat to one another (*and the rest of the natural world*).

This positive (*and rewarding*) mindset was perhaps best summed up by American psychologist ‘**Susan Jeffers**’ in her 1987 book ‘***Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway***’ which outlined a natural philosophy of ‘*choosing love and trust*’ ~ essential for the future prosperity of the human race. Indeed our species can only hope to advance when the pleasure of ‘*giving*’ far outweighs any desire to ‘*take*’. Imagine a society where things such as information, time, praise, appreciation, wealth and love are all freely given to one another without expectation or favour. If everyone within a community acted that way, negative emotions would be considerably diminished. There would be no sense of resentment, envy or mistrust, and people would feel genuinely privileged to be contributing to the collective human endeavour. In such a world, the only true sadness in life would be feeling the pain and suffering of others.





iii.

(Conclusion)

Should prosperity ever again override the quest for mere survival in the years, decades and centuries after an apocalyptic future war, then it is imperative that those who carry the mantle for humanity establish an entirely new mindset - both in terms of our relationship with the natural world as well as with one another.

As far as ecology is concerned, it may indeed be possible that some environments in a post-apocalyptic world could sustain moderately populated human settlements for many years to come ~ if, that is, we can demonstrate a new reverence for nature. As the most intelligent species on Earth capable of its destruction, we are the de facto guardians of nature, and if we treated other animal species, for example, with the same reverence that we treat human babies, then our planet would be immeasurably healthier. Alas today, the burgeoning global population of our own 'all-consuming' species is stripping the Earth of its many natural resources ~ polluting its entire surface and destroying the precious ecosystems which have sustained life for countless millennia.

Even without the finality of a future nuclear conflict it is clear that modern civilisation is nearing an uncomfortable end. Our collective disregard for nature, preoccupation with accumulating wealth, and continual warring with one another will inevitably be our undoing. This dark assessment of our likely future was eloquently echoed by English environmentalist and futurist '**James Lovelock**' when he looked '*beyond the terminus*' in his 2006 book '***The Revenge of Gaia***'. With such a dismal prospect in store for ourselves and most other living species, perhaps the most optimistic outlook was proposed by US biologist and secular humanist '**Edward O. Wilson**' in his 2002 book '***The Future of Life***' in which he laid out a '*solution*' for living morally at peace with the planet. Unfortunately, however, the conscience of a nation is rarely enacted by its political leaders when there is no clear prospect of economic benefit.

Alas, modern civilisation burdens our species with the ignorance of nationality ~ a wholly superficial concept which has created unnecessary barriers and an almost universal distrust of most 'non-aligned' *foreign* powers. National pride is a purely cultural 'bias' that reinforces our sense of identity and our belonging to a particular country. However the notion of national identity clearly discriminates against anyone who is not a fellow citizen, even though no one can predetermine their own birthright. Yet it has given rise to the belief that our country of residence and its values are amongst the most important aspects of our lives, and has enabled those in the highest positions of power to exploit many millions of people in order to further their own personal ambitions or ideological agendas. Indeed the present international system of state sovereignty perpetuates this foolish mindset, allowing powerful world leaders (*and the tyrannical military organisations that they oversee*) to determine the fate of our entire species. But the idea that one human life is worth more than another

(especially when the perceived value of someone's life is determined by their religion or nationality) is a ridiculously dangerous perception that legitimises the concept of war. It has created an 'us versus them' mentality which really should have no place in the mind of an intellectual being.

There is no god. We are little more than the products of our own consciousness, and no one culture is better or worse than any other. Indeed we are all equal, and our unique human qualities are spread across the world. Despite the often fanatical patriotism that is rooted in most national psyches, no country has a monopoly on moral fortitude, regardless of its cultural heritage. The concepts of 'good' and 'evil', for example, do not exist as physical entities ~ it is only cultural indoctrination that enables us to perceive the difference between what we construe as being morally 'right' or 'wrong'. At its extreme this reality is exposed, for example, as the appalling lack of empathy that can be shown by the general public towards 'undesirables' ~ most notably in Nazi Germany during the late 1930's. A vast majority of the civilian population here (and in countries such as Poland, Ukraine and Romania) at the time wouldn't have recognised the abhorrent Jewish pogroms as being 'evil', whereas today it is deemed an appropriate adjective to describe these horrific massacres.

Our personal convictions are heavily influenced by our social upbringing, and we are all a product of society to some degree or other. This affects us even regarding the most trivial matters surrounding our personal beliefs and desires. For instance, there is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad' art, music, or literature ~ it is all a matter of taste and opinion which is nurtured through our cultural development. Of course there is talent and levels of accomplishment with regards to artistry, musicianship, or literary skills, but any piece of music, for example, that is played as intended (*regardless of its composition*) is worthy of appreciation for its own sake. No other species can make even the most rudimentary music (*outside of inherent mating calls*), and human beings are the only form of life that can appreciate or dislike music for its distinct qualities. Our music, like our art and literature, is a uniquely human expression that should be treasured as an entity that has been brought into existence because we ourselves exist. In other words, regardless of our ethnicity and nationality, we are equally human, and all contribute to the human experience.



Although human beings are extremely complex organisms, we are not here by divine right and we are bound by exactly the same fundamental laws of nature as all other living and non-living systems. Whilst our actions (*either collectively or individually*) may sometimes appear irrational or counterproductive, they ultimately belie an underlying logic which, with enough computing power, could be predicted through mathematical calculation. Indeed even the most creative or spontaneous of human actions essentially manifest from a myriad of preceding logical steps. It may seem 'fatalist' but there is absolutely nothing that we can say or do that has not resulted from 'cause and effect' with the passing of time. Our lives are a metaphysical consequence of existence in a four dimensional world, and no human action can escape this universal 'chain of causation'.

As biological systems, we are physically bound by the principle of ‘conservation of energy’; a concept which was first laid out in 1847 by German physiologist and physicist **‘Herman von Helmholtz’**. In his treatise on the subject, Helmholtz established that living things possess no innate vital force, and that their life processes are driven by exactly the same principles as non-living systems. Today we recognise that the energy of life is derived entirely from the oxidation of food. This demonstrates that we are clearly connected to the Earth physically, chemically and biologically, and we are, in effect, an extension of it. The ongoing evolution of *Homo sapiens* is a natural process which has changed the face of the Earth, and if biological life is an extension of our dynamic planet, then human beings represent the pinnacle of living complexity. In turn, the sphere of human cognition (*or ‘noosphere’*) has further extended the physical reality that we all experience ~ an idea first described by Russian biogeochemist **‘Vladimir Vernadsky’** in 1911. Vernadsky defined the noosphere as a biospheric ‘layer’ ~ seeing the emergence and evolution of intelligence as a planetary development. Indeed it is human thought, rather than any omnipotent god, that is responsible for our present predicament.

Our intelligence has gifted us with the ability to reason, and to think abstractly ~ allowing us to shape future events and so prosper like no other species. Human beings are the culmination of billions of years of organic evolution, yet by enabling us to break free of physical constraints and exploit nature for our own ends, our gift of intelligence has become a destructive force that threatens the entire natural world. In accordance with the **‘Gaia hypothesis’**, a complex series of biogeochemical processes has driven the co-evolution of life and the environment on Earth for billions of years ~ maintaining (*whenever possible*) a state of planetary homeostasis. The advent of human intelligence, however, has brought great imbalance to our home planet, and today we (*and every other extant species*) stand at the precipice of a mass extinction event caused by our own misdeeds. Indeed, by interfering with so many natural phenomena around the world, we have inadvertently overpowered the processes that balance life on Earth, and our actions are likely to usher in a completely new geological era.

Perhaps the most revolutionary event to arise from human creativity over the past century was the advent of digital electronic computers. Since the 1940’s they have radically changed the face of civilisation in every conceivable way; advancing every field of science and technology. As our computing power grows, we continue to make advances in areas such as *‘machine learning’*, *‘neural networking’* and *‘artificial intelligence’* which has the potential to make our own biologically-based intelligence obsolete. Just as we are an extension of our physical Earth, so the actions of ‘fully automated’ machines are an extension of the human mind, and through **AI** we may just get a glimpse of a universal reality that is untainted by the human condition. Indeed the point at which **‘Moore’s Law’** eventually breaks down in the coming years is likely to herald the emergence of ‘artificial general intelligence’ (*and the prospect of conscious machines*). It is equally plausible, however, that an apocalyptic event of some description will deprive us of future advances in digital technology sometime before that point is reached.

As we move incessantly towards an increasingly chaotic existence, the age of humanity could well give way to an age of inanimate dominance, and artificial intelligence is at the forefront of this. Used in a growing number of military and civilian applications, **AI** has become intrinsic to research and development in virtually every field of scientific discovery and technological advance ~ reducing direct human involvement and improving upon it in numerous ways. However, the weaponisation of **AI** in the ongoing arms race between the world's largest military powers is a major concern that lies far beyond simply questioning the ethics of using fully automated weapons in battle. With complex algorithms having the potential to develop unforeseen biases, the use of **AI** in tactical decision making, for example, could bring about unintended consequences. Indeed, considering that recent years have seen a significant rise in both international and civil discord, **AI** could even threaten the '*Nash equilibrium*' that currently maintains a stable rationale between the world's various nuclear adversaries.

Modern civilisation may well be approaching its culminate years, but the digital revolution has ensured that a huge reservoir of human knowledge will most likely be preserved ~ even if we as a species are completely obliterated. In the context of geological time, modern humans have existed for no more than a few 'heartbeats' over the comparative lifetime of our 4½ billion year-old planet, yet we have made an enduring impression upon it. We may have garnered great knowledge during our short time in existence, but alas we can never hope to reverse the catastrophic impact that our ignorant destruction and wilful neglect has had on the Earth and its environment. Indeed we have seriously compromised our planet's ability to sustain a healthy biosphere, yet most people simply cannot comprehend a future without human life. Perhaps, however, we should practice greater philosophical pragmatism and not be so overly concerned for our future as a species ~ after all, we are effectively already doomed. Rather, we should be considering what the future may bring for our living planet beyond our own demise, and do whatever we can to reduce our destructive legacy. Maybe we could develop **AI** systems to protect the future biosphere from our own indulgences today. That would be a truly altruistic approach to earthly life.

...Every great extinction event throughout prehistory has been followed by a period of accelerated evolution. In another five to ten million years (*the approximate cycle of such events*) human beings, at least in our present form, will almost certainly be extinct. In all likelihood however, the biosphere will continue to exist to some degree. Earth may appear (*to a hypothetical space traveller*) almost identical to Venus, and life may evolve to survive extreme conditions that we could not imagine today. Nevertheless, until the biosphere eventually succumbs to the deadly reverberations of a dying Sun, our planet is likely to support life in some form or other for up to another two billion years. Within that great expanse of time there are likely to be further geological eras where earthly life may once again flourish across the surface as a rich and diverse variety of complex organisms, before being reduced to pockets of subterranean, bacterial extremophiles eking an existence on an otherwise inhospitable planet. Of course what eventually inherits the Earth in the distant future is anybody's guess.





Footnote

We are fast approaching a crucial moment in time for both our species and our living planet as a whole. Some 4.5 billion years ago the Earth was a geologically active, but lifeless planet, with the '**geosphere**' representing its primary stage of development. Around 3.8 billion years ago the combined (*and often violent*) reactions within its lithosphere (*land*), hydrosphere (*water*), and atmosphere (*surface gasses*). eventually gave birth to life, creating the '**biosphere**'. This secondary stage of development would radically change our Earth's geospheric state, fundamentally transforming the composition of the air, oceans and even its rock. Through the birth of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*, approximately 300,000 years ago, our planet evolved a new consciousness which began to glow ever brighter over the subsequent millennia as human cognition increased. This evolution of the mind amounted to a third stage in Earth's development ~ the '**noosphere**', which has also had a massive impact on our planet and the biosphere that it supports. Responsible for all human activity, this new planetary 'sphere of reason' is a consequence of human thought, and the noosphere represents the highest state of biospheric development. The cognitive evolution of our species is simply staggering, and the accumulation of human knowledge has continually accelerated the pace of invention and progress ~ not least in 'modern computing'. With rapid developments in the field of 'artificial intelligence', today we stand at the threshold of a fourth stage, the '**cybersphere**', ~ a computational-based evolution which has the potential to fundamentally alter our planet yet again ~ superseding biological evolution and returning our planet to an age of inanimate predominance.