



QUEST TO RESCUE OUR FUTURE

Glenn Sankatsing



RESCUE OUR FUTURE FOUNDATION
AMSTERDAM, 2016

www.rescueourfuture.org

**BOOK DETAILS AND FIRST
CHAPTERS**

Title: Quest to Rescue Our Future
Author: Glenn Sankatsing
Publisher: Rescue Our Future Foundation, Amsterdam
Publication date: October, 2016

ISBN: 978-94-028-0317-4
Size: 23.0 x 15.5 x 3.5cm Length: 555 pages
Distribution & Sales: Caribbean Reality Studies Center
www.crscenter.com
Price US\$ 26, plus shipping to any country US\$ 11
Order at www.rescueourfuture.org

[BACK COVER]

Humanity has been tampering dangerously with the exceptional conditions that made life possible on Earth. We have disconnected recklessly from the life-enhancing force of evolution, targeted nature as a legitimate object of predation and turned war into the supreme arbiter to settle discords. Humanity has gone astray and is already hanging over the abyss of oblivion. Now, the planet is sounding severe warnings – some of them with the intonation of a final call – but the reigning system has turned off the thermostat of pain. The anomaly of selfishness, individualism and competition at the service of the triumvirate of greed, power and fame needs to make way for the warmth of solidarity, cosmopolitanism and communitarianism as the life-enhancing worldview. If we join together to take command of our destiny, humanity will have a powerful synergetic force to rescue its future. We simply need to make the right choice. If we do not learn to live together we will die together.

[FRONT FLAP]

Quest to Rescue Our Future chronicles the path of humanity, diagnoses our present misfortunes, identifies the dangerous trends and

maps the desirable and feasible futures. Most importantly, it locates the transformative social forces that are still intact – the moral reserves of humanity – and delves into the strategy and actions that can shape a different version of humanity. The quest identifies *Life looking for more life* as the underlying force of evolution, which reveals how culture, freedom and evolution merge in development, understood as the mobilization of inherent potentialities in interactive response to the challenges posed by nature, habitat and history to realize a sustainable project with an internal locus of command. This life-enhancing force of development offers humanity a powerful tool for the urgently required overhaul. We may well stand before the last opportunity to reconnect to the evolutionary process that gave us existence, before nature proceeds to remove us as an unreliable companion of life and an obstacle in evolution. Today, we are not running out of options but we are running out of time. We need to act quickly. Action is the best prediction. It is now or never, hence now.

[BACK FLAP]

Rescue Our Future Foundation

President, Cees J. Hamelink

www.rescueourfuture.org

The *Rescue Our Future Foundation* offers a global forum to bring together critical minds and concerned people for discussion and dialogue on rescuing humanity's future, at a time when we are facing existential threats. Inspired by the ideas and views in *Quest to Rescue Our Future* on humanity's current predicaments and responsibilities, the Foundation stimulates critical reflection and concrete action for mobilizing the countless moral reserves that the species still possesses. Awareness, alertness and liberation from mental enslavement take a central place in the Foundation's activities, with a special focus on the empowerment of those who are destined to populate the future, the youth on all continents. *Quest to Rescue Our Future* is the first of a series of publications that propose challenging points of view and reflections on our contemporary conditions and that can contribute to a better future for humanity.

CONTENTS

TEAMING UP FOR THE QUEST

CHAPTER 1 'THE TIME THAT WILL TELL' HAS ALREADY TOLD

1. Where are we standing now?
2. Where are we heading?
3. Where do we come from?
4. What future do we desire?
5. What actions do we take to rescue our future?
6. Now or never

CHAPTER 2 LIFE LOOKS FOR MORE LIFE

1. Development
2. Envelopment
3. Development–envelopment dynamics

CHAPTER 3 GLOBALIZATION OF A LOCAL EXPERIENCE

1. A village went global
2. Alienation matrix of global envelopment
 - 2.1 Appropriation of assets
 - 2.1.1 Habitat
 - 2.1.2 Fellow humans
 - 2.1.3 Resources
 - 2.2 Abolition of conditions
 - 2.2.1 Context
 - 2.2.2 Culture
 - 2.2.3 Language
 - 2.2.4 Social life
 - 2.2.5 Spiritual life
 - 2.2.6 History
 - 2.3 Abortion of processes
 - 2.3.1 Social evolution
 - 2.3.2 Internal social dynamism
 - 2.4 Alteration of landscapes
 - 2.4.1 Infrastructural landscape
 - 2.4.2 Cultural landscape
 - 2.4.3 Economic landscape
 - 2.4.4 Political landscape
 - 2.5 Annihilation of worldviews
 - 2.5.1 Cosmocentrism
 - 2.5.2 Communitarianism
 - 2.5.3 Ecological harmony
3. Domestication nicknamed civilization

4. Beyond the gates of Europe

CHAPTER 4 SURVIVAL OF THE FILTHIEST

1. Path of humanity
2. Domination of nature and eco-cataclysm
3. Domination of fellow humans and global envelopment
4. Domination of culture and fundamentalism
5. Domination of the mind and mental slavery
6. Wrong turn of our species

CHAPTER 5 ENVELOPMENT TALE IN DEVELOPMENT ATTIRE

1. Envelopment discourses and development hoaxes

- 1.1 Deterministic models
 - 1.1.1 Evolutionary determinism
 - 1.1.2 Ecological determinism
 - 1.1.3 Biological determinism
 - 1.1.4 Economic determinism
 - 1.1.5 Flaws of determinisms
 - 1.2 Economic envelopment models
 - 1.2.1 Economic growth
 - 1.2.2 Center–periphery and world system models
 - 1.3 Critical models
 - 1.3.1 Dependency model
 - 1.3.2 Post-development
 - 1.3.3 Sustainable development
 - 1.4 Fate of ‘development’ thought
- #### 2. Decolonization at crossroads
- 2.1 Decolonization as liberation
 - 2.2 Decolonization as recolonization
 - 2.3 Nation-state or state-nation?
 - 2.4 Postcolonial responses
 - 2.5 Dilemma of decolonization

CHAPTER 6 IS MODERN CIVILIZATION THE FUTURE OF ALL?

1. Eurocentrism as a vehicle of global envelopment

- 1.1 Greek ancestry and Christian heritage of the West
 - 1.2 Universality claim of science
 - 1.3 Social science as an agent of envelopment
 - 1.4 Extradisciplinarity
 - 1.5 Philosophy as ideology
 - 1.6 Philosophy of liberation
 - 1.7 Postmodernism’s absolution of global envelopment
- #### 2. Power to define others out of existence
- 2.1 Truth, power and history making
 - 2.2 Pseudoization and induced consent

- 2.3 Hegemony
 - 2.3.1 Legality, legitimacy and justice
 - 2.3.2 Marriage between legality and legitimacy
- 3. Modern civilization is not the future face of all**

CHAPTER 7 DID MODERN CIVILIZATION FAIL AS A PROJECT FOR HUMANITY?

1. System response to the fourfold agonies

- 1.1 Response to eco-cataclysm
- 1.2 Response to global envelopment
- 1.3 Response to fundamentalism
- 1.4 Response to mental slavery
- 1.5 System's response options

2. Lost battle of hegemony

- 2.1 Democratic deficit of capitalism and communism
- 2.2 Failure of communism
- 2.3 Unviability of capitalism
 - 2.3.1 Myth of the self-regulating market
 - 2.3.2 Capitalism has never been a dominant mode of production
 - 2.3.3 From need satisfaction to demand creation
 - 2.3.4 Support from the enveloped world

3. Failure of modern civilization

CHAPTER 8 REHUMANIZATION OF A DEHUMANIZED HUMANITY

1. Restoration of humanity's social fabric

- 1.1 Person stripped to individual
- 1.2 Destruction of the social response capacity
- 1.3 Truth claims and worldviews
 - 1.3.1 Sources for truth claims
 - 1.3.2 Changing worldviews to deal with truth claims
 - 1.3.3 Anatomy of science
 - 1.3.4 Transition to an ethical worldview

2. Development is freedom

- 2.1 Freedom was compatible with slavery
- 2.2 Individual freedom as the pillar of totalitarianism
- 2.3 Liberal totalitarianism as the new fundamentalism
- 2.4 Freedom as the preeminence of development

3. Contours of a different humanity

- 3.1 Concerted diversity
- 3.2 Communitarianism
- 3.3 Cosmopolitanism
- 3.4 Reclaiming outsourced democracy
 - 3.4.1 Electoral hijacking of power
 - 3.4.2 Ideology versus ethics

3.4.3 Nonviolence in the struggle for a better world

4. Rehumanization of humanity

CHAPTER 9 FELLOWSHIP TO RESCUE OUR FUTURE

1. Development as the key to life-enhancing action

1.1 Moral reserves of humanity

1.2 Extra-systemic response to global envelopment

1.3 Global ethics as the global arbiter

1.4 Emancipation from mental slavery

2. Metamorphosis of traditional institutions

2.1 Transcending the monopolistic state

2.2 Overcoming fundamentalism in religion

2.3 Science engaged with development

2.4 Civil society as a democratic force for transformation

2.5 Transcending traditional institutions

3. Development through survival sovereignties

3.1 Food, health and shelter sovereignty

3.2 Ecological and energy sovereignty

3.3 Educational and technological sovereignty

3.4 Communication and information sovereignty

3.5 Economic sovereignty

3.6 Political sovereignty

3.7 Development through sovereignties

4. Rescue Our Future Movement

5. It is now or never, hence now

GRATITUDE

[Excerpt: Introductory Chapter and Chapter 1]

TEAMING UP FOR THE QUEST

We live on a small planet that a boundless Universe privileged with the chemistry of life. Humanity has been tampering dangerously with the exceptional conditions that made life possible on Earth. With thoughtless acts, our species has antagonized nature to unbearable levels and has disconnected from evolution's logic of survival. We have broken cherished bonds of solidarity and compassion, opening ample space for selfish competition and ruthless rivalry among self-interested individuals and powerful elites. The main casualty of humanity's long and arduous voyage has been harmony with nature, with fellow humans, with other cultures, with other worldviews, and with other paths to the divine. War has become the supreme arbiter to settle discords.

Has humanity gone astray? Is our species already hanging over the abyss of oblivion? Can a species really disconnect from the evolutionary process of which it forms part? Are there still survival options? Is a peaceful world that offers a fair living space to all still possible? What can we do to avert the existential threats that are growing by the hour? Humanity urgently needs answers to so many difficult questions. We all admit it in silence. These dangerous times can decide the fate of our species.

The urge to dominate nature for selfish purposes has disrupted our embedment in our life-giving environment and our interconnection with Mother Earth. The solitude of egoism has undermined the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation and has destroyed the warmth of solidarity. Our historical record is worrisome, while bad omens augur worse to come. Ruthless competition has blocked roads to cooperative engagement for negotiated solutions, and war has become the guardian angel of peace. Today, what may well have been the most gifted species ever to appear on Earth is pointlessly roaming across treacherous meadows toward the point of no return without a clue how to turn the tide to secure its future.

Far from being complex, the choice before us is as simple as it

is dreadful. It is between a better world and a world without humans. It is the choice between survival and extinction. Evolution can deal with both; humanity can only live with one. Nature is accustomed to catering for survival, but evolution is not equipped for taking care of a species that opts for self-destruction.

There is a chance that in the end things will work out well. So far, the Universe and its life forms have proved immensely creative, with a remarkable ability of finding solutions at the right time. The capacity to self-adjust, to adapt, to innovate, to remedy and to cure showed up along the whole path of history. Sometimes, even a dose of natural disaster was required for readjustment, such as earthquakes that release tensions between tectonic plates or catastrophes like famines or pandemics that decimate species and restore ecological balance. Matters become different when a species ignores the imperatives of nature, the logic of evolution, the warnings of the environment, the pleas of the majority, and the lessons of history. No universal law guarantees that humanity is always bound to survive. Free will can end free will.

In reflections on restorative options, one should be neither a pessimist nor an optimist, for both optimism and pessimism are types of superstition. The fatalism of the pessimist is pointless. Yet, the worst remedy for an imminent disaster is the anesthesia of optimism. Pessimism and optimism are the staring twins of nightmare and dream that invite us to inactivity either by apathetically waiting for disaster or by passively longing for the magic wand. Trying to amend reality by desperate hope or hopeless despair has never opened any escape route. Maybe the appropriate answer in today's troublesome reality is to focus on creative action to remedy what has gone terribly wrong, following the thoughtful advice of Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano (1940–2015): “Let us leave pessimism for better days.”¹

Only by accurately diagnosing our current conditions can we successfully frame our endeavors. This should put us on our guard against dogmatic people who want others to believe and accept their version of the world and their reading of facts, as part of a strategy

¹ Rosa Miriam Elizalde, Galeano: Dejemos el pesimismo para mejores tiempos, *Cubadebate*, April 13, 2015 (reprint of an interview with Eduardo Galeano in 2001)

to keep their preferred system going with tales that do not match reality. On the other hand, we should resist from claiming any definitive truth, but rather present the outcome of our critical reflections and scrutiny in a candid way as well-argued proposals submitted for the perusal of others, in a pluralist dialogue and joint quest for valid answers.

Even more dangerous than siding with doom thinkers who amplify fear by exaggerating our unfortunate condition is joining the chorus of self-interested corporate capital and centralized government in swiftly downplaying the dimension of our misfortune. Without excluding any option beforehand, both those people who believe that things may work out well and those who are deeply concerned about an imminent disaster now face the urgency of coming together in assertive action beyond mere contemplation or carping. Now that we have gone so far in the wrong direction, apathy is tantamount to self-destruction. There is no safe sidewalk. Inactivity is also action. To do nothing is to do the wrong thing.

Dire current conditions and troublesome trends raise vexing questions. Our spaceship Earth is faltering. With strident ecological alarms, the planet is sounding severe warnings – some of them with the intonation of a final call – but an adequate response to species-threatening crises has yet to appear. This prompts us to raise a number of questions. Did today's dominant system, shaped over half a millennium, really stall? Has such a sophisticated model of society – based on rationality and modernity and erected upon a solid scientific, technological and military edifice with powerful global infrastructures still in place – truly exhausted its response capacity?

Any hasty rejection or uncritical endorsement in answering these questions is premature and reckless. While the writing is already on the wall, our conditions invite us to a thorough analysis with open minds to decrypt the omens of our time beyond pointless scientific and political polemics that may only add to our frustration. Yes, we know that things are complex. But 'complexity' should not be a smoke screen for plain answers that we are not getting from experts, politicians and self-proclaimed gurus, who are even afraid to pose the right question, out of fear for the answer.

Can humanity reconnect with the survival logic of evolutionary continuity? The first and foremost task before us to answer this

question is mapping our condition, starting with a diagnosis of our reality, which neither downplays the symptoms of distress nor exaggerates the scope of our misfortune. The magnitude of the challenge before us today requires a quest that reaches beyond prefabricated answers or circumlocutions amounting to ‘damage control’.

The purpose of the quest we are about to initiate is to address these existential matters of our species. This will take us through the passage of time and the incidents of history all the way back to the origins of humanity to decipher the historical path of a species, answering a singularly important question. When did humanity take the wrong turn in its social evolution, and what powers have been accountable for the derailment that brought us to today’s fateful times?

The answer to this question will be critical for the quest to rescue our future, which will require an alliance among diverse peoples almost as big as a species. We need to restore what handfuls of selfish elites – like the ones we endure today – have managed to tear asunder by millennia of ruinous domination of nature, fellow humans, culture and mind. We face a challenge that will demand an unbiased, unprejudiced and open solidarity, assembled across barriers of race, religion, worldviews, nationality, class, gender, tribe and ethnicity.

In all latitudes, we find concerned people who ask the same questions about our possible fate. Yet, there is no answer and no guidance. Academic, political, religious and economic leaders saturate the air but fail to offer any useful alternative to the destruction of nature and the tyranny of small elites over their fellow humans. Secluded in embarrassing silence, they have no message to deliver and no new project to announce to continents of disconcerted people.

From the five-star universities, which have quarantined wisdom with zero-star performance in countering our deteriorating conditions, to the much publicized pilgrimages to world summits, what stood out among political leaders, corporate managers, religious hierarchy and academic circles was a nervous concern about system maintenance rather than a commitment to remedial transformation. Earth summits on the environment and climate change were in fact business meetings of the powerful industrialized countries as the

trustees of state and corporate interests to safeguard the existing favorable conditions for profit and economic growth, with all their destructive ecological effects.

Mainstream science and technology too readily served the mammon of money, the totem of greed, the arrogance of power and the machinery of war. Triumphant ‘truths’ of religion, ideology and philosophy have failed to stop the derailment of the human race. Humanity has grown weary of religious, scientific, philosophical, ideological and ethnic narratives of futile futures that exude pride in defending polarizing sectarian principles and imperial designs with violence and war. Peace has been the main casualty of ethnocentric polemics and parochial appropriations of God, Reason and Body. A degree of violence has accompanied the historical path of humanity that is unprecedented in the evolution of life on Earth and probably beyond.

‘Modern civilization’ – shorthand for the model that originated in Europe and went global in many variants, local adaptations and mutations – has played a leading role in the core problems humanity is facing today. Its global ramifications and its successful overruling and marginalization of the projects of social evolution of other destinies make the deep existential crisis even worse for humanity. Fortunately, not even the stall of such a civilizational model needs to mark the end of history or the end of humanity. Other projects with promising springs can fill the void with a new continuity on a planet that may still host us for times to come. In human evolution, the breakdown of a dominant model has always closed a stagnant historical episode, but fortunately, it has never driven our species out of options. In history, civilizations have risen and fallen as epiphenomena in an ongoing social evolution.

Left with no other choice but to ‘step up to the plate’ and demand appropriate responses to perilous predicaments, humanity is resuscitating its deeply hidden morality, solidarity and respect for nature that Civilization, Religion, Party and State have disregarded. Unwilling to accept the fundamentalist fables of one-sided truths, a species has begun to take perpetrators of destruction to task, demanding restorative transformations to prevent collapse.

As we look for valid answers for today’s deep troubles, we cannot just follow a recent tendency of banning general explanations

by dismissing them as ‘grand narratives’, as has become fashionable in postmodernism’s rejection of what it contemptuously labels as ‘metanarratives’. Big problems need big answers instead of a fatalistic surrender to dangerous conditions, retreat into subjective ‘relativism’ or capitulation to ungraspable ‘complexity’. Today, humanity desperately needs a grand theory that is grand enough to deliver a strategy for securing its permanence on Earth. Evolution has always been a big narrative.

The historical failure of the false parochial narratives of an expansionist, civilizing mission that globalized its model is no proof of a universal breakdown of human endeavors. Such a failure will not stop others from continuing to search for alternative roads to a possible future that can reconnect with the survival logic of evolution. The end of a monopolizing project that succeeded in endangering humanity’s historical path rather triggers multiple alternative engines to propel us toward new horizons with more advantageous and life-fulfilling options, instead of death-dealing outcomes. This harbors the potential to bring better futures for all, for the endless rows of victims of historical injustice, but also for the brothers and sisters in countries that victimized other destinies on the planet.

In brief, we face the challenge to find a viable future without any narrow geographic, ideological, religious, ethnic or other sectarian entry ticket that excludes people. This turns our endeavor to rescue our future into a joint and open quest of a fellowship. There is one mandatory requirement, though, for joining the fellowship: color-blindness. Racism is a terrible, inexplicable and indefensible lie for a human species that was born in its entirety out of a single family of common ancestors who decided to roam the world. Humanity is a diverse quilt of the same silk. What humans should laud as a successful adaptation of the body to climatic and contextual circumstances to secure survival debases a species now into a source of polarization and war.

The abundance of resources, the beauty of lands and the pleasantness of environmental conditions invited migrant populations repeatedly to halt their journey and settle down. The voyage has given rise to a beautiful diversity in striving to adapt to climate, latitude, altitude, deep forest and ocean borders. In the trek, the sun tanned

some, gave others blue eyes, while some reduced their size and adjusted their posture to deal with mountainous slopes. It is among the darkest disappointments in human evolution that people who should be bursting with impatience for a rendezvous with their original kin to share exciting and rewarding adventures now resort to the humiliating practice of racism.

To have any chance of success, our search for corrective paths must eschew all prejudices, parochial creeds and universalizing wisdoms that have brought so much harm on our species. We need to listen more attentively to others who voice similar concerns. Options are as open as the joint commitment of our courage to turn hope into action. Rather than pre-established dogmatic truths, such a pluralist quest requires well-argued proposals submitted to constructive dialogue without excluding any audience. In the first place, it needs to mobilize the vast majority that has been bereft of control over their fate, forced to choose between two or more evils.

Critical scrutiny holds the key for the success of our quest. A critical stance is the commitment to accept the outcome of one's reflections, analysis and argumentation in an unadulterated way, regardless of whether in contradiction with one's self-interest, in line with cherished tenets, at variance with established wisdom or censorious of the dominant system. The bottom line is faithfulness to the results of our own inquiry and analysis.

A critical stance may pose a difficult tension between, on the one hand, presenting the outcome of reflections in a candid way and, on the other hand, toning down conclusions to subdued positions to gain endorsement by established views in the reigning system or to make findings more palatable for a wider public. Rather than nuancing or 'editing' the discourse to engage powerful political, economic and academic establishments, a candid and precise language should break through the monologue of powers that have been primarily accountable for our troubles.

Critical thought also requires fairness toward previous thinkers who dedicated their life in painstaking efforts to unravel the big unknowns of life. While taking their wisdom to heart, one needs to avoid the classical sin of intellectuals to let others do the thinking for them. Too often learned people inhabit the mental prison of mimicry by uncritical acceptance of ideas and by outsourcing their

reflective and creative capacity to established centers of excellence. This is a comfortable way to get to a truth without making the effort to find out whose truth it is.

While this quest will eschew the primitive delight to focus on small missteps, ambiguities and lacunae in the work of the big names and icons of philosophy and thought, it should not hesitate to be iconoclastic in its efforts to correct stubborn misconceptions that have had unacceptable consequences. We may well take US philosopher Richard Rorty's (1931–2007) advice to be “first-rate critics”, who “attack an optimal version of the philosopher’s position – one in which the holes in the arguments are plugged or politely ignored, and the unfortunate side-effects of his work, or the side-issues she discussed, are trimmed away”.²

The best solution seems to be a combination of faithfulness to the results of critical reflection, respect for others and openness to feedback. Nobody owns the truth in a quest driven by unanswered questions. This implies that statements need to take the form of well-thought ideas and proposals submitted for the perusal and scrutiny of others with an open and receptive mind, but by no means should they compromise one’s ethical commitment with the cause of humanity. Ethics, as the set of general principles required for a just, peaceful and harmonious world, reaches further than morality, which is subject to cultural differences, as illustrated by the sliding scale of acceptable dress in different locations, from bikini to burka.³

This distinction between ethics and morality clarifies how legal systems can impose a morality that violates ethical principles to the point of endangering life on Earth. How often has humanity not seen in its history how a stubborn belief in parochial moral positions that are indifferent to general ethical values has blocked our receptivity to warnings of nature and downplayed the admonitions of sages, who relentlessly urged us to step back and reconnect with creation, ethics, spirituality and the spirit of evolution? We printed

² Richard Rorty, Review of ‘Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen’ (text in German). *London Review of Books*, Vol. 9 No. 15 • 3 September 1987

³ Morality derives from the Latin word for custom, *mos*, which stands for customs and norms of a particular group, whereas ethics comes from the Greek word for distinctive character *ethos*, which stands for fundamental values.

their voices in sacred books and codified their parables in ritual tradition, without heeding the message of Krishna, Pachamama, Zoroaster, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Baha'i 'Ulla and other reincarnations of pleas to rectify. All through history, barbaric acts of violence by believers in pursuit of power, secular glory, dehumanizing privileges and wealth have misread, adulterated and betrayed their words and examples.

Some great figures of humanity stood up to guide us away from fateful routes, including three powerful icons of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), Martin Luther King (1929–1968) and Nelson Mandela (1918–2013). Their paths show how courageous decisions and transcendent actions can break with powerful systems that seized control with false tales that served the legitimization of injustice and appropriation of the common good.

The wisdom and warnings of all those spiritual and secular precursors have not prevented humanity from descending further on the dangerous downward slope toward the abyss. This exhorts us not to take too lightly the challenge of building a promising edifice on the ruins of the past. We should not underestimate the capacity of a powerful system to dominate by dictating dubious, universalizing truths that succeed in denying the most obvious facts. Yet, precisely therein lies the main paradox of domination, which opens the door wide for awareness processes that can transform the world, for one can dominate people only by controlling their minds. If we succeed in emancipating ourselves from mental slavery, the job is already half done.

The task in front of us is formidable. It will take a huge effort to make the required corrections, for no single mischief could have caused the extreme species-threatening dangers that we are witnessing today. While the road will be difficult and bumpy, it can be comforting at the same time, if we manage to join forces across existing lines of division in an unwavering search to rescue our future.

We will find no road to save our future unless we first analyze our current conditions in the context of a longstanding process of social evolution. Our quest will necessarily have to start with an elaborate inventory of the magnitude and urgency of our troubles.

Today, the dangers have become clear to the naked eye because *'The time that will tell' has already told* (Chapter 1). To gain a deeper

understanding of the route of humanity, we will have to reach beyond today's specific circumstances and identify the underlying forces that drive social processes and generate history. This will guide our attention to an evolutionary interplay conceived as development–envelopment dynamics, which place the core of development far beyond its confinement to economic growth or deterministic models, in the wider scope of what constitutes the core force of evolution, which is *Life looks for more life* (Chapter 2). Equipped with this powerful analytical tool of development–envelopment dynamics, we can examine how the *Globalization of a local experience* (Chapter 3) shaped our contemporary world in the last half millennium by a civilization, modernization and globalization mission. Yet, we will have to go even further back in time to identify the deeper underlying conditions that brought us to our present state. To do so, we will track the historical path of humanity from its origins, to find out where human social evolution took the wrong turn that drove our history over tortuous paths that became tantamount to the *Survival of the filthiest* (Chapter 4). Our attention can then focus on a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies used across the ages to secure domination by small elites, which culminated in *Envelopment tale in development attire* (Chapter 5), using hoaxes of development to disguise the alienation of others from their own context and social evolution.

A critical inquiry into whether the globally dominant trends, models and projects can generate a solution from within leads us to the vital question *Is modern civilization the future face of all?* (Chapter 6). The answer will determine whether the only meaningful option for all others is to follow the path set by those who claim to be the vanguard of humanity or whether it will be necessary for them to open a different, creative route.

To define the best road toward transformation, we first need to map the possible options that modern civilization can still offer to respond to the historical derailments that it helped to generate. *Did modern civilization fail as a project for humanity?* (Chapter 7). If it still possesses alternatives for repair, we should engage in correcting its errors, optimizing its potential, and creatively resort to its technological power and experience to set out an improved path to the future. But if the dominant system has failed beyond repair, we need

to explore extra-systemic avenues to create a different human project that is capable of rescuing the future of our species.

We can then turn our eyes to the future by exploring the options for the *Rehumanization of a dehumanized humanity* (Chapter 8) through concerted action by people across divides. Its success will depend on the power of coexistence in respectful diversity, as the way to deal with divergence and conflicts of interests, instead of surrendering to traditional responses of domination. That will prepare us to address the final and most important question of agency by exploring the possible roads for the moral reserves of humanity to join together in a broad *Fellowship to rescue our future* (Chapter 9).

In brief, this quest to rescue our future is the tale of the troublesome path in the evolution of a species that is so dear to us. At the same time, it is about our capacity to take action to rehumanize a dehumanized humanity that dared to oppose nature as an enemy and has now gone astray. This may well be the last opportunity to reconnect to the evolutionary process that gave us existence, before nature proceeds to remove us as an unreliable companion of life and an obstacle in evolution.

We need to realize from the outset that the task before us is not an easy one. But we have no other choice. It requires courage, perseverance, patience, compassion and commitment in a holistic enterprise that covers every realm of life. We need to overcome piecemeal, additive, fragmentary and disciplinary approaches, which are incapable of dealing with the single, interrelated problem that humanity is now facing. This quest across the ages and disciplinary boundaries, involving many spaces of life, is as necessary as it is difficult and rewarding. Cosmetic shifts within the framework of the dominant system, as proposed by many self-proclaimed gurus, will only mask the justifying tales that perpetuate domination and sink us further in dangerous quagmires.

Ours is a creative uphill task that can no longer build on the authority of the established 'wisdom' of the modern dominant system with its biased vocabulary and adulterated syntax. Something is wrong with the grammar and we need to spell out the alphabet anew for a different narrative that can outlive our children.

Fortunately, our creativity is not voiceless. In all corners of the Earth, people are rising up in pursuit of an exit strategy, to raise their

voice to awaken others for the tasks ahead. Nobody will be able to mute such a reverberating choir, because no force is capable of silencing the innate cry to live and survive. But even under the worst of circumstances that we may encounter in our quest, we will still be able to sing together with the Amerindian folk musician Atahualpa Yupanqui (1908–1992), chanting with his guitar half a millennium of denied history in one compressed verse: “I don’t need the voice. I can sing even in silence.”⁴

⁴ Atahualpa Yupanqui in the song “Ave que pasas cantando” (Bird that passes singing)

CHAPTER 1

'THE TIME THAT WILL TELL' HAS ALREADY TOLD

Start of the quest

A general diagnosis of our present state will map the key questions that we need to address in order to define the challenges and tasks ahead.

Humanity is part of life-giving evolution. Between responsibility and recklessness, the two extremes of human action, unfortunately, the historical path of our species derailed toward irresponsibility. Today, humanity has gone off-track, endangering our stay on Earth by uprooting our environment, while sacrificing peace by turning war into the supreme arbiter to settle disagreements.

With a sense of guilt, the United Nations has brought states together in many global ecological gatherings in the last decades. From the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment of Stockholm in 1972 to the 1992 Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro, from the gathering in Johannesburg (2002) to the climate change conference in Copenhagen (2009), from discussions on sustainable development in Cancun (2010) to gatherings in Durban (2011), from the return to Rio de Janeiro (2012) after twenty years of untiring efforts to the Climate Change Conference in Paris (2015), the huge pilgrimages to conference summits around the globe have still left us without a clue how to respond. Among the piles of paperwork pouring from these official summits, not one document has shown us how to get back on track toward a balanced relationship with our surroundings in respectful coexistence with each other. With all their summits, the dominating powers have been unable to offer an exit strategy.

Yes, we look for comfort zones where we try to live our lives as best as we can with our loved ones while business goes on as usual. Yet, somehow, a reality has come into place that leaves none of us alone. The shield of house, family, temple and country does not

seem to offer sufficient protection against dark shadows that are getting closer over rising seas and inundated lands.

We all know that, and we share it with our loved ones. Rulers invade the family, assault the individual, toss privacy on the public digital surveillance square, disturb the climate, militarize religion, and turn war into the grand jury. Nobody seems able to control the rattling of guns that disturbs the silence, even in remote valleys.

The survival of humanity does not top the agenda of the ruling elites of the planet who have hijacked the destiny of the species for dubious private interests. They do not listen to the pleas of the majority, and rather than care for what may happen to humanity and to its offspring, they manipulate people's desire for security to strip them of their freedom and abort their ability to respond. Unless the majority takes command of the destiny of humanity, the future of our species will remain in severe danger.

How long can life go on as usual, when one safe haven after another is falling prey to environmental crisis, growing moral degradation, ethnic clash, widespread hunger, economic catastrophe, fundamentalist war, and private and state terrorisms? Egoism has become the highest virtue in a mission marked by competition rather than solidarity. Totalitarianism, with mass surveillance and legalized assaults on freedom, has become the only option to safety that the dominant elites offer. All of this plays into the hands of the owners of an abusive system to safeguard their 'freedom' to expand their insatiable appropriation of wealth with impunity.

The planet warns us with unmistakable omens, such as global warming and extinction of species, but those who have taken hold of command positions have withdrawn in self-protective quarantine. Their monologues of power have become insensitive to the alerts of nature and unresponsive to rational arguments. They monopolize the news outlets to adulterate the message. They are deaf to the global outcries for peace of alarmed majorities and even blind to the collapse of their own support mechanisms. Human resilience has its limits, and now many fear the unthinkable.

If human extinction is already on the scroll of history, and there is no clear option to avoid disaster, one may wonder whether it is ethically right to spell out the horrors of tomorrow to the uninformed or misinformed of today. A simple rule of thumb in life

might be never to announce the terminal catastrophe if you do not have the magic to solve it. Never augur an evil that is impossible to remedy. Allow people, in the absence of a feasible rescue operation, the option to vanish in peace. Why herald children to a tomorrow that already may be gone, when their joyful cheers still rise over the fence? In the end, to refrain from fighting against fate is not evidence of cowardice, but a sign of wisdom.

There is a second possible rule of thumb. When the narrative of life is ongoing and we can still divert the oncoming crash with actions that can rescue our future, it is a moral obligation to toll the bells to awaken the crowds from lethargy and apathy, giving them the serene reminder that we can still avoid fatality.

Beyond the omens that beleaguer us, the message is already coming through. While low-lying islands and coastal areas already see the water of the ocean washing over their shores, a sigh of hope is whispering among its waves, telling us that there is still space for agency to revert the tale. Human-made problems can have human-made solutions. Nature is replete with evidence that organisms and species turn creative at the sight of death or extinction. In the end, no fatalistic tenet can suffocate the desire to live.

Today, we can sense a widespread public outcry in growing protests around the world, searching for a different route. More and more, people are speaking out to let the world know that a species is no longer willing to surrender and just walk off the cliff to its demise. This is all part of the cosmic urge to survive, which has kept evolution alive for billions of years. We are never mere spectators of our fate; we are always the architects of our future. This inspires people to raise a different voice that can bind them together across ideological and religious divides, an unambiguous token of hope that new gateways are in front of us. Today's blind alley is actually the trigger for dormant forces to awaken and open up yet unexplored paths.

What, then, can serve as guidelines for our quest? The life of human societies and the shaping of their reality revolve, at any point in time, around a series of interrogations that are crucial to the flow of history. Five questions that stand at the center of our concerns today will serve as the main thread of our quest: (1) Where do we

come from? (2) Where are we standing now? (3) Where are we heading? (4) What future do we desire? and (5) What actions do we take to rescue our future? Taken together, these questions make up a fusion of history (to understand and learn from our past), diagnosis (to know our current condition), trends (to identify what will happen, if we stick to the same course), vision (to map desirable and feasible futures), and, most importantly, agency (to take action to shape our future).

These questions will guide our endeavors to grasp history and gauge the untapped potentialities of humankind, from the promising start in pristine African lands all the way to the threshold of extinction, which we should refuse to cross over now. No shortcut or simple roadmap can bring an answer to such important interrogations of the social evolution of humanity. It is clear that today's existential challenges demand a holistic species-wide response that transcends the myopia of separate disciplines, fields of study, tribes, belief systems, states or other parochial vantage points. Ours will be a long quest, from the Indus valley to the Mediterranean, from the Bering Sea to Patagonia, from the clear waters of the Euphrates to the coastal areas inundated by global warming.

Before we proceed to answer the five key questions in the chronology of time, which will allow us to follow the vicissitudes of the human trajectory, let us glance briefly into their nature by following the different chronology of action, which needs to start with the diagnosis of the problem. If humanity is facing an existential problem, we might first want to assess its magnitude. If threats are unacceptably high and set worrying trends, we need to delve into the causes and routes that brought us here, to be able to define the outlines of the better world to which we aspire, and finally to proceed to a strategy and program for action to rescue our future.

1. Where are we standing now?

We can build a new world only on top of existing conditions. This makes a precise diagnosis of our current state the point of departure.

The record of humanity's wanderings on planet Earth looks bleak. We have failed in our best intentions and succeeded in our

worst ambitions. The scientist knows it, the Inuit sees it, and the polar bear feels it in the disturbed glacier. The writing is in the clouds, in the waters of the oceans and yellowish rivers, and on the trails of retreating forests. It reverberates in the despair of poverty-stricken people in the four corners of the Earth, in the faces of countless war refugees, as the nomads of modern civilization, and in the deep marks of anxiety around the eyes of ordinary people who seek to protect their loved ones against generalized terror. Everywhere we find anxiety and fear that end up with the same question. What world will we leave for our children?

Beyond differing assessments of the magnitude of our crisis, there is a general feeling that we have lost grip on our destiny and that we may be heading for some sort of unspeakable disaster. The many dangers and pitfalls that haunt humanity today point to four severe escalating hazards, which are taking the form of agonies that threaten to decimate or destroy our species. We need to map the precise nature, magnitude and impact of each of these existential dangers. The first is eco-cataclysm, an imminent environmental collapse provoked by humans' predatory actions against the support systems of life on the planet. The second existential danger is global envelopment, a longstanding form of domination that culminated in modern colonial subjugation through the imposition of alien, context-insensitive devices, which frustrates the mobilization of inherent potentialities. The third danger consists of polarizing fundamentalisms that swarm temples on a global scale to pray God to kill the gods of others. The fourth danger is paralyzing mental slavery, which prevents people from taking action that builds on their own context, perspective, aspirations and social evolution.

While each of these four agonies can kill, none of them stands by itself. It is this troublesome interconnection in what seems to be a fourfold agony that most threatens the continuity of humanity's evolutionary path of development. Today, the divorce from environment, the violation of development, the surge of belligerent fundamentalism, and the prison of mental slavery add up to a monumental challenge to human existence that leaves no space or time for the slightest hesitation to act.

2. Where are we heading?

Ours is one of the most illogical moments ever to occur on planet Earth. For the first time in known evolution, extinction threatens a species long before conditions in nature are generating its demise. The planet can still host us with its lavish resources. It can feed us and offer vital means to raise offspring. It sends fresh waters in the downpours of spring to irrigate fertile lands with the streams of the Amazon, the Nile, the Mississippi, the Yangtze and the Ganges, on their way back to their temporary retreats in oceans and seas.

A species that degrades its natural environment into an object of pillage and upgrades egoism into the highest of virtues can never be trusted to safeguard the long-term survival of creatures, not dolphins, not cockroaches, not bees, not humans. A minimum of cooperation is always required to secure survival. Singling out competition as the unique driving force of evolution, while worshipping extreme individualism at the expense of solidarity, is an invitation to collapse.

The longstanding fable of global transfer of progress and prosperity by conquest, colonialism, civilizing mission, westernization, modernization and globalization now lays shattered on three continents. There is hardly a landscape on the planet that does not display the staggering human and material costs of 'civilizing the barbarian' into social and cultural death. It happened in ancient times and recurred in magnified form in the colonial projects of the last half millennium, which mainstream historiography curiously depicts as the success story of modern civilization, notwithstanding its expansionism, conquest and violent subjugation of the majority of humanity.

We have failed to draw the right conclusions in time. Now, history is spelling them out for us through ecosystems' planetary warnings. Global warming is, in the first place, the global warning that opposing the powers of nature and the spirit of evolutionary continuity threatens the survival of humanity and can endanger many other life forms on the planet.

Today's trends are scary. Even when there is no unanimity among all about the severity of our troubles, there is a general feeling that we are on a downward slope, heading for some sort of disaster. We need to turn the steering wheel if we want to pilot our species

to safe ground. As our very survival is at stake, we might rather want to consider German philosopher Hans Jonas' (1903–1993) proposal of "*in dubio pro malo*" – when in doubt consider the worst prediction.⁵ Bearing in mind the looming global conflagrations, it seems wiser to look for common ground than to embark upon useless polemics.

3. Where do we come from?

One wonders how in heaven we could have gotten this far. At what point did humanity end up in a wrong turn, and what forces were accountable for that? To answer this question, we must travel all the way back to our origins and carefully map the genealogy of humanity.

The species that claims to be the most talented on Earth has made a caricature of progress and derailed its creativity into self-destructive growth at the service of the insatiable want of small elites competing for resources that do not belong to them. They simply have banned solidarity and cooperation as utopian inventions and dumped them into the dustbin of history. The model that produced centuries of global colonialism, genocide, slavery and the execution of freedom fighters in the name of civilization still claims to offer the best yardstick for our days. A road that provoked world wars and atomic blasts for the sake of 'peace', an Auschwitz in pursuit of a pure race, a Gulag for the purity of absolutist ideology, devastating fundamentalist wars to safeguard God, and an ecological disaster to serve economic growth still stands unabated as the presumed best model for progress and prosperity for all latitudes.

Reason brutally challenged the logic of cooperation, adaptation and continuity that thrusts evolution. The misuse of the magic of intellect, which many consider as the main trophy among the achievements of life forms, has turned a talented species into the gravedigger for its own kind. What we need to control now is not nature but the human being.

The merciless selfish pursuit of material wealth compromised

⁵ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1984 (orig. 1979)

science, adulterated philosophy, corrupted religion, and subdued technology. It turned many bright minds of Academia into insensitive robots for the war machinery or into salaried recruits for a rogue project of concentration of wealth that impoverished majorities and dehumanized elites. Humanity now vividly experiences how mishandling reason backfires. The pursuit of selfish projects and an aggressive imposition of one's dogmas have transformed planet Earth into an inhospitable, hostile and dangerous place.

Beyond severe polarization and rivalry, there is, fortunately, some good news. Humanity is a single species, a kinship with a common origin, a single lineage, one single extended family. Eventually, any search for roots will end up with the same forebears, blocking the reentry to the cave and reprimanding us with their clubs for the mess we have made of a promising species on a harmonious, lush planet.

While roaming the Earth for fertile lands and comfortable places, tanned by different habitats, climates and available diets, a rainbow human community populated the planet, without affecting the color of the heart. Culture, as a creative response to the challenges of nature, generated the diversity of the human family of our day, which did not come into being to separate, but rather to adjust to the specificities of habitat needed for the enhancement of survival options. Ethnicities were not born to polarize a species but to care of its stability and wellbeing by adequately adapting culturally to challenges encountered in the surrounding context. In our roots as one species, we may glimpse a better future for all.

4. What future do we desire?

Today's scary omens challenge those who are still in denial but can no longer brush aside the hints of nature. The moment has arrived to rescue our future by restoring our command of our destiny and getting back on track as a benign partner in a holistic enterprise, instead of the passive or active destroyer that many have made of themselves. The price tag for flouting the warnings of history is unacceptably high. Turning off the thermostat of pain has triggered the fall of more than one great empire.

The search for an escape route from imminent disaster should top the human agenda, not as a thoughtless, neurotic undertaking, but as a serene stand capable of posing the key existential question. Is there still a viable development alternative or is the disappearance of humanity already on the scrolls of evolution?

Can we dream of a future where peace is not delivered by destruction, where solidarity is not dissected by market fundamentalism, where health care is a human right instead of a commercial commodity, where happiness is not destroyed by money or its absence, and where development stands for the mobilization of potentialities rather than an adaptation to alien agendas and intrigues?

The vast majority of humanity is clear about the uncomplicated world we aspire as our life space, in a future that does not resemble the spiteful version of today. Human desire is for a peaceful world where there is work and leisure, security and opportunities to realize dreams to enjoy one's own small space, to start a family and to see how a new generation populates the horizon of tomorrow. Why should a whole species succumb to the mercy of irresponsible, reckless factions that drag all into disaster and endanger the collective fate and destiny for selfish agendas?

As the work of an inherent force in nature, a species facing imminent death becomes creative. Even when there is no guarantee for survival, the drive to explore escape routes always responds in innovative ways to adversities. Indeed, the urge to survive by responding to challenges and overcoming dangers is the most powerful driving force in evolution. As evolutionary biology demonstrates, when existence is in danger, hidden capacities and rudimentary traits can resuscitate from their latent state. The amazing phenomenon of thelytoky among the Cape bees comes to mind. When the virgin queen is not duly fertilized by the drones or does not come back to the hive, to secure survival, some female bees – though unable to mate – undergo ovarian changes that temporarily allow them to regenerate their lost capacity to lay eggs. In this way, they hatch female larvae, which the bees will feed with royal jelly to 're-queen' the hive.⁶

⁶ H.M.G. Lattorff, R.F.A. Moritz and S. Fuchs, A single locus determines thelytokous parthenogenesis of laying honeybee workers (*Apis mellifera capensis*). *Nature*, March, 2005

In the light of such creativity in evolution, human-made disasters can find human-made solutions. Reason can be destructive, but, at the same time, it is capable of constructive and reasonable action, building on lessons from the past and a deeper understanding of our historical path. This opens the road for an honest diagnosis of the present to provide analytical tools to remedy today's troubles with a new architecture of the future.

5. What actions do we take to rescue our future?

The four agonies herald, but fortunately do not definitively predict death. Therein lays the required margin of hope. The tremors of today are warnings of the imminent collapse of a failed model that took hold of human history. Maybe, in the end, they just constitute a cosmic intervention, foreshadowing the agony of the tyranny over our species itself, as the last convulsions of a longstanding system of dominance and exploitation that drove us to the edge of collapse.

Spelling out actions to put in place the desired future brings us to the troublesome question of where exactly to begin. Some are convinced that more efficient organization and management of the global market can solve the crises of growth. Experts without a clue erroneously believe that in the end huge creative technological innovation will succeed in addressing the ecological problem in a satisfactory way. Many think that proliferating nongovernmental organizations can press the dominant system to the required reform needed to bring about a better world. Others resort to consciousness-raising sessions and meditation in the belief that a qualitative shift through evolutionary spirituality is near. Some opt for the synchronization of differing holy scripts to trigger ecumenical action that can bring peace among rival religions. These are ostensibly constructive proposals that can alleviate our distress and strengthen positive forces. But, instead of just assuming their validity, we need to put these considerations about an efficient market, technological solutions, pressure from nongovernmental organizations, consciousness-raising and ecumenical projects to critical scrutiny.

The poor of the world do not seem to be the victims of market failure, but of market success. They are the casualties of the triumph

of civilization, while technology has been part of the problem. This raises a number of questions that we will need to address in a candid way. Is the environmental crisis a technological problem or rather the penalty for a predatory technology pursuing a caricature of development that delivers wealth to a few? Can there be a technological solution to today's ecological problem without curtailing the wasteful madness of an ever-expanding market?

While global social movements organize brave mobilizations for a better world with wonderful achievements that benefit the dispossessed and needy in the world, the agents of the destructive system continue to be their respectful partners in dialogue. Likewise, meditation, consciousness-raising and spirituality may awaken core values that are essential for a better human being, but at some point they need to proceed to translating enlightenment and awareness into social and political action that can bring about the desired change. One wonders what ecumenical encounters can contribute, if the rigid letters of holy scripts written in ancient stone suffocate the dynamic divine messages of love, compassion, peace and harmony, which permeate all religions.

Our actions need to address the core problem of our human-centered worldview (anthropocentrism), which locates the human being at the center of the Universe to the detriment of a cosmocentric worldview of all life forms looking for self-realization as part of a harmonious whole. The claim that humans are the sole emperors of the world and that the purpose of all other forms of life is to serve humanity has come at a terrible price.

Particularly, we need to address a question that traveled unsolved through millennia of diverging religious and ideological systems, which now stands high on the human agenda. Can there be a single, binding global ethics in a world that comprises a diversity of ethnicities, cultural expressions, religions and thought systems? Rather than hastening to give the obvious response, we need to take time for some critical reflection. In the absence of any binding ethical principle, all rival systems, including different brands of fundamentalism, can claim legitimacy. Fundamentalist confrontation, then, becomes an unsolvable problem, which makes war the only remaining arbiter.

We seem to be deaf to a history that teaches us repeatedly that

imposed peace, as the price of defeat, is an open invitation to war. When the winner unilaterally decrees peace, it always delivers the arena for smoldering retribution, until the defeated recover forces for the next round of destruction. This is the reason Martin Luther King warned that true peace is not the mere absence of tension; it is the presence of justice. Success in war produces the calm of capitulation but rarely the seed for a harmonious settlement of differences. In our actions, we therefore need to opt for a different brand of peace, not one produced by war or subjugation. We need a mutually shared ethics and goal setting, which constitutes the indispensable building block for global harmony that guarantees fair living spaces to all in a synergy of divergent interests.

Fortunately, not all of our condition is bad news. The planet has not yet lost its beauty; the sun never failed its pledge of a new dawn. Raindrops sprinkle the land, creating life, promise, hope. No longer can humanity permit itself to be a terrifying and untrustworthy companion of life.

Evolution is never merely an account of fatalities. Rather, history is always the outcome of possibilities and opportunities that one may seize or squander.⁷ Instead of wasting energies in predicting a future that might not come, we could better pool energies to create the future of our liking. The best glance at the future does not lie in statistical modeling and mathematical formulas, but in dedicated agency to shape the future we desire and deserve. Action is the best prediction.

We stand before a daunting exercise that invites us to unconventional avenues of thought and action. Definitely, we need doers, but in a world full of wrongdoing, we need committed, honest doers and critical, creative thinkers. Established wisdom, dogma, ideology and science have had their say and lie exhausted in this time of troubles. They are not bringing any solution nearer, not even with alarming texts that tell part of the tale but miss the clue. Humanity now needs to proceed to a new mindset with a critical stance, in a readiness to unlearn dubious recipes that failed to stand the test of time. We should abandon tortuous lines of thought that molded so many

⁷ Sergio Bagú, *Tiempo, realidad social y conocimiento. Propuesta de interpretación*. Mexico City, Siglo XXI Editores, 1970, p. 116

of us intellectually and shaped us socially into addicts of pointless ideologies.

Although individuals can contribute to understanding reality and triggering new ways of thinking, in the end, practical knowledge and insights are always the synergetic work of communities in constant response to changing demands and new challenges. Unraveling the complex history and problematic reality that we face needs joint action and can never be the work of one person. This is a time for a response at the level of the whole species. For that reason, the task before us to rescue our future will require the concerted agency of many across existing divides. It cannot be any other way. Given the legacy of language and ideas that birth offers to the newcomers, authorship of thought is highly communitarian, turning even an isolated monologue or personal meditation into a social dialogue with their ancestors. The quest of a species to find escape routes is always a 'we' quest and never an 'I' quest. It is always the work of a fellowship, never the feat of a lone conqueror.

6. Now or never

How much hope can we have for tomorrow when the hopes of yesterday were in vain? The tenet that hope gives life is not a fabrication of superstitious optimism but a principle of human evolution. This is not the case when evangelizing hope just sits and waits for solutions to arrive. Hope can only offer a perspective when it transcends a solace and translates into a command to act. In the dire contemporary situation of humanity, hope will be futile unless it constitutes a trigger for agency in order to shape history actively through escape routes from dead-end alleys.

The journey of evolution and the path of the Universe are never sequences with fixed beacons, but always fields of operation for creative agency to mobilize potentialities. What matters most today is not a paralyzing anxiety about the statistical probability of extinction, but the creative exploration of opportunities for life through the active mobilization of dormant forces into a critical mass that is capable of overcoming existential dangers. This is what the story of

survival is always about, more so now that we face threatening hurdles to our stay on Earth. No matter how dim the prospects may be, as long as there is breath there is room for action. Life always starts small and works its way from its tininess into enhanced life chances that culminate in maturity. In the same vein, participation and agency constitute the incubation stage of ownership of our destiny.

The key difficulties that humanity faces today derive from parochial bonds that allow blind allegiance to overwhelm justice, fairness, solidarity and love. When loyalty to the state, nationality, tribe, ethnicity, clan, kinship, skin color or faith evolve into a prevalent unpremeditated and choiceless identity, borders typically constitute the meeting place of polarizing banners and clashing swords. We need to think up a new format of harmonious coexistence for humanity that can stop the reigning madness of destructive social fragmentation, which overlooks the fact that we all come from the same lair. Our differences are wonderful adaptations in the spirit of evolution. They prepare a single, original race physically and culturally for the challenge to survive and thrive in diverging geographic, environmental, climatic and historical conditions. The color of the skin, the texture of the hair, the architecture of the home, the tools with which to hunt and the language that names what the surroundings offer, all of these have been instrumental adaptations to the deep aspiration to survive and thrive.

Freedom of religion, of thought system, of ideology and of life philosophy can fulfill the individual with powerful support to deal with challenges of life and death, but when they lead to disconnection, cleavages and insurmountable barriers they transform difference into a source of polarization that turns aggression into the best defense. Rather than being foot soldiers for parochial or fundamentalist projects, people will have to cut across differences in finding workable options for joint future-oriented global action under the banner of solidarity, cooperation and ethics, without need of resigning what is dear to them.

Humanity stands before species-threatening challenges that require a huge transformation with a forward-looking perspective that does not leave space for revenge, which is an offspring of hatred and the worst compass in life. Retribution typically bestows versatility in further destruction. But it is pointless to waste time trying to

settle accounts with a foregone past, when we fail to settle accounts with an endangered future. Rescuing our future is the only meaningful redemption of the past.

Anger is a virtue as the vociferous rejection of dishonesty, injustice, oppression and humiliation inflicted against the defenseless. But what comes after anger is what really matters. Selfishness turns anger into hatred and violence; solidarity tames anger into concern and compassion. Anger about past wrongdoing can generate conditions for constructive future-oriented corrections, but only if we succeed in translating it into a deep concern for our species and adopt a forward-looking perspective. We cannot change the chapters of history, but the future is an open book with blank pages. We can pardon people for evil deeds in the past but never for evil intentions that can compromise our future.

We will find no clue for an escape route out of grave existential dangers without a colorblind, meta-racial, tribe-free, and cosmocentric stance. It does not matter if we are the offspring of victims or the descendants of perpetrators, as long as we make the right choice with committed action. In a sense, an unwavering commitment to rescue our future absolves the misfortunes of the past. The power of a synergetic force is largest when people realize that both the innocent children of historical victims and of historical perpetrators qualify for the deepest love when they are committed to remedying the horrors of the past.

If we are unwilling to learn lessons from the past and flout the omens of today, we will learn hard lessons from the future, because history never waits. We have reached the point where no alternative can offer peace, unless we find some sort of global harmony that traverses the differences and parochial interests of a diverse species. The heat of that limbo takes us to a tautological revelation of this work: If all alternatives to global harmony look bleak, then global harmony is the solution.

Civilization and globalization delivered economic growth, a gigantic growth without development, without peace, without happiness and, if we do not turn the tide, without sufficient oxygen. The digitalization of culture through technological booms, the replacement of the sailing ship by the internet, the computerization of war, and the militarization of religion have reformatted life in its most

trivial details. Many planet-dwellers possess more digital devices than fingers. Yet, instead of global understanding, intensified communication has typically fueled dangerous polarization. The quality of life is deteriorating into despair, and the survival chances of our species are growing dimmer by the day. Famine that should have belonged by now to the archaeology of humanity is still a vivid component of its future. Global warming of yesterday has already upgraded into pathological global fever, while polarizing fundamentalisms are preparing the battlefield for a grand, scourging finale.

It is clear to the untrained ear that the tale of civilization now struggles with its own contradictions. With the current worrisome trends, we humans appear to be mathematically programmed for a final farewell, unless there is an 'unless'. It is that hope-generating 'unless' that keeps afloat these reflections on our ability to confront troubling questions in trying to turn the tide. But how will we translate hope into action, instead of making the mistake of lethargically waiting for things to work out well? What is the clue for a species that has surrendered much of its ability to find workable solutions?

Given the depth of our troubles, adding piecemeal answers to the multifarious threats to our stay on Earth will be to no avail. Rather than listing an inventory of symptoms, differently mapped by a variety of scientific disciplines, fields of study and rival ideologies, we should holistically chronicle the twists and turns of a species that was able to build academies, conquer seas, globalize the planet and penetrate nuclear secrets but could not succeed in providing peace, a meager food basket for all or the minimal conditions necessary for humanity's stay on Earth. Such a persistent malinvestment and erroneous prioritization demands a comprehensive historical reflection to understand what we have to do to put it right.

To discover the fossilized past of history in the sequence of historical facts is not our mission. Rather, the aim is to look through the cellophane of facts to find the forces that thrust history forward. We need a candid diagnosis of our present reality that unveils the historical driving forces that brought us here. Beyond the narrative of events, we should search for the deeper underlying factors that shape history, in order to enhance our future life chances. Our offspring – if there will be any – will judge us on our capacity to do just that.

Our efforts should be set on seeking the clues to shaping the future in harmony within the spirit of evolution. The mission of the voyage is neither retribution nor nostalgia for a foregone past. Unearthing the vital lessons of the past may contribute in finding the clues for how to get back on the rails, but the past will not provide the solution for shaping the future, which travels at its own pace.

The magnitude of our distress requires a global gathering of humanity to rescue our future. Part of the challenge is to reassess the solidly engraved hoaxes and failed tales that made us numb to global conflagration and injustice, as if these were the necessary price of progress. In the spirit of our quest, we need to be on high alert to stick to our determination to unreservedly reflect, analyze, conclude, speak out and act, free from intellectual enslavement by sophisticated system maintenance institutions.

Our unwavering pledge to honesty and justice will prevent the bastions of power and established wisdom from intimidating or co-opting us to sacrifice our common destiny on the altar of egoism. Our firm commitment to unmask false narratives should overcome any hesitation to take a critical iconoclast stance, but at the same time, we need to honor and endorse valuable insights regardless of their origins. Blending honesty with a critical stance in the formula for action is the best way to value positive contributions from past thinkers and to benefit from their wisdom.

We need to be on our guard, though, to tendencies to pigeon-hole positions in all sorts of pure 'isms' and categorical 'anti' movements to manipulate people into endorsing a dubious ideological project as the lesser evil. Feeling allergic to a horrendous rival 'ism' may end up as a defense of a system of similar or even worse atrocities. In that sense, criticism of capitalism should not drive us to the extreme of discarding as 'bourgeois' anything that bears even a slight relation with the capitalist system. How disappointing were some leftist critiques in the 1970s of Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014), discrediting him because his novels focused too much on the 'bourgeois' theme of love. At the other extreme, while critical of the overly deterministic proposals of Marxism and censorious of the horrors committed under its banner, we should free ourselves from a categorical rejection of its social and economic analysis. Such an outright dismissal would blind us to the valuable

contribution of one of Europe's brilliant thinkers, whose insights can help us to have a better understanding of some aspects of today's deep economic crisis.

Independent thought and a critical stance should keep the reminiscences of historical injustice alive, but at the same time it should free the victims of colonialism and modern global domination from the obsession of retribution against the offspring of historical victimizers. In our effort to unravel the anatomy of global domination to locate its driving forces, we need to be aware of the danger of simple geographical, ethnical or ideological dichotomies. The domination of people happened in East and West, North and South, and Left and Right. Anti-colonialism also had powerful fighters in the center, while subjugated societies have been replete with indigenous colonial minds. Humanity should be grateful to all its righteous daughters and sons who fought for a just cause. This includes not only the oppressed people who fought their way to freedom, but also those courageous Europeans whose remarkable commitment under exceptionally adverse conditions has offered thoughtful support of ideas for the just cause of human solidarity.

When black slaves have only seen white people upholding slavery under extreme apartheid conditions, retribution may be an understandable attitude against the white race, in a primitive black and white dichotomy. But at some point those victims need to transcend such a generalizing attitude; otherwise, it will spiral down into home-bred immorality, because deep down retribution builds on the desire of the oppressed to see the day when they become the new tyrant, who can bring the victimizer to justice with even wilder ferocity, if that is possible. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) captured such an eye for an eye well when discussing 'negritude', as proposed by Senegalese cultural theorist and politician Leopold Senghor (1906–2001) and Martinican poet and author Aimé Césaire (1913–2008), in calling attention to the danger of "antiracist racism".⁸ Not even in the appalling injustice and horrific violence of slavery can such a form of revenge constitute a constructive answer.

⁸ Antiracist racism is a qualification given to "negritude" by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Orphée Noir*, Preface to Leopold Senghor, *Nouvelle Poésie Nègre y Malgache de la Langue Française*, 1948

The choice is ours, either to be trapped in the horrors of the past and continue on a fatal route of polarization and killing, or to make the future a widely shared open project that can realize the desire of our species to thrive.

To prevent legitimate ire about historical injustice from escalating into vengeance, we need to burnish the fire of anger into a deep concern for humanity through joint actions that safeguard our common destiny. The icon of that shift is Nelson Mandela. He chose to shape a livable future, instead of avenging the past. Many people venerate him not because of his remarkable reconciliatory policy after being the longest-held political prisoner under Apartheid, but because they doubt whether they would be willing to do the same without a trace of racism.

In the contemporary blend of despair and hope that haunts us, nothing is written in stone. As our hands prepare for molding history, texts can serve as valuable companions, but hieroglyphs, discourses and blueprints do not provide the practical answers to our dire condition. Only the opus of our acts can write the chronicle of a different future. None of us is accountable for the unjust world we inherited at birth, but we lose our portion of innocence if we pass that burden to the next generations without any effort to do something about it.

The difficult problems we are facing today as a species transcend the separate realms of ideology, fundamentalism, religion, corporate policy, global policing and ethnic prejudice. This is not a time to be taken up with nasty quarrels, retribution, sectarian revolutions, counter-revolutions, or violence to sustain failed systems or replace them by potentially more dreadful ones. Ours is the historical vocation for concerted action across the divides of clans, castes, sects, classes, nations and states, as one family, now that our habitat, our life and our future are at stake.

The clue of history is history itself. We should give history the response, before history gives us the answer. It is now or never, for 'the time that will tell' has already told.