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# The Emerging Individual

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## **Abstract:**

*Humanity is in the process of evolving from collective uniformity to increasing individual variation and diversity. This movement has gained impetus from the growing recognition that the overall strength and sustainability of the collective is proportionate to the value it accords to each individual human being and the active support it lends for full development of each individual's unique, creative potentials. The relationship between the individual and the collective, microcosm and macrocosm of one integrated whole which we call Society, is a crucial determinant of social development. The collective initiates social change through the actions of pioneering individuals – thinkers, artists, inventors, explorers, entrepreneurs, innovators – who give expression to its unrealized aspirations, unformed conceptions and unexpressed initiatives. Formed individuals seek to fulfill higher aspirations, express new conceptions and initiate new actions which are eventually accepted, imitated, organized and assimilated into the subconscious of the collective.*

*As humanity evolved from its animal ancestors in pre-history, Society emerged as an amorphous mass struggling to consolidate itself into a single viable, integrated entity. Once it succeeded in molding itself into a unified entity, it refused to tolerate divergent behavior among its members which threatened to jeopardize that integrity. Even harmless attempts at variation were prohibited. Thus, gradually the collective emerged with a unified identity. Beyond this stage of assured survival of the social collective, society has evolved subconsciously, that is, its development has occurred not by a conscious, concerted, organized and coordinated effort but by sporadic, spontaneous and uncontrolled variation. Once survival, the main objective, was assured, other activities were allowed to emerge and spread within strict limits but without conscious direction by the collective. During this latter phase, the accumulated subconscious experience of society leads to the acquisition of collective knowledge, but it remains unnoticed or unformulated and is not made conscious or explicit by the collective until it becomes conscious knowledge and is given conscious expression by one or a few members of the collective. The pioneer, leader, entrepreneur, genius and all its other versions are various expressions of a common principle, the Individual who consciously embodies in himself all that the society has developed subconsciously.*

*The evolution of individuality remains incomplete. At the level of society, convention and conformity stifle individual freedom and creativity. The need today is for individuality of social action with the creative capacity to fashion more positive human relationships. It can be aided by mental individuals who give voice to ideas that will guide social development in the future, such as global financial management, full employment, new economic theory, the abolition of nuclear weapons, the end of competitive security paradigms, democratization of the UN and global action on the environment.*

Science searches for universal laws and general principles governing finite phenomenon. It seeks for commonalities, categories of similarities and repeating patterns behind apparent differences. In recent decades, the science of complexity has revealed that even complex

variations and irregularities often conform to rules of their own. However, science has yet to evolve a methodology and framework for conceptualizing uniqueness. Infinity does not conform to universal laws. Uniqueness is an expression of infinity in the finite.

Physical phenomena lend themselves most readily to this search for inviolate universal laws, though quantum theory has discovered at its very base that even the physical world is founded on uncertainty. But when it comes to society, the challenge is far greater, for social phenomena are both more complex and more subtle. Apart from being subject to the same physical laws that govern all matter, they are subject to social, political, economic, cultural and psychological forces that are more difficult to measure and corresponding principles or laws that, if they exist at all, are more difficult to decipher. No wonder that social sciences today lack a consistent body of principles universally accepted as applicable to all fields.

How then are we to attempt a study or serious discussion about individuality, which by its very nature represents that most complex phenomenon, known to human beings – our own uniqueness? One tempting approach is to deny the very existence of the individual and conclude as Peter Watson did at the end of his monumental study *Ideas: a History from Fire to Freud*, “There is no inner self. Looking ‘in’, we have found nothing – nothing stable anyway, nothing enduring, nothing we can all agree upon, nothing conclusive – *because there is nothing to find.*”<sup>1</sup>

## **First Law of Individuality**

How then to proceed? Let us begin with what we do know with relative certainty about the phenomenon of individuality, for this itself is so astounding that it warrants serious contemplation. First of all, we know for a fact that throughout history, individuals have played a remarkable role in the development of civilization and the social evolution of the human race. However incomplete or distorted the historical record may be, however great our collective penchant or the tendency of biographers to glorify leaders and heroes, there is no question that the world would be a very different place today were it not for the fact that people like Buddha, Ashoka, Alexander, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Augustus, Jesus, Mohammed, Joan of Arc, Leonardo, Elizabeth I, Shakespeare, Luther, Newton, Washington, Jefferson, Catherine the Great, Napoleon, Darwin, Beethoven, Tesla, Marie Curie, Edison, Einstein, Ford, Susan B. Anthony, Jean Monet, Gandhi, Churchill, Mandela, Gorbachev, Aung San Suu Kyi, Ted Turner, Tim Berners Lee, Steve Jobs and countless others lived and acted when and as they did.

It is, for instance, difficult to imagine the course that the Indian independence movement would have taken had Mahatma Gandhi not returned to India and assumed leadership of the movement. India’s independence was followed in quick succession by the liberation of more than forty-five other former colonies around the world, all but a few by peaceful transfer of power that mimicked the remarkable and unprecedented Indian achievement. We cannot say for sure whether, when, or how the Cold War would have ended were it not for Gorbachev’s initiatives to dismantle the authoritarian state from the seat of its power or what would have been the fate of the 70,000 nuclear warheads, most of them armed and on active alert status at that time. No matter how limited the data or unreliable the facts, we are left with the irrefutable conclusion that a single man or woman – one single human being – has the power

to change the whole world. This constitutes the irrefutable fact or law number one in what we may very loosely term 'the science of individuality'.

And as a corollary to this principle, what is true on the macro scale of nations and the globe is also true at the micro level of the local community and at all the levels and fields in between. Thus, a century after the American Civil War abolished slavery in the USA, a middle-aged black woman named Rosa Parks launched without fanfare the American Civil Rights Movement in Montgomery, Alabama by refusing to move to the back of the bus. Her action stirred thousands of other blacks in the southern states to reject passive submission to unconstitutional discrimination and demand enforcement of rights that had been constitutionally guaranteed by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865. More remarkably, in doing so she was walking in the footsteps of another individual, Mahatma Gandhi, who had performed a similar feat decades before, 8000 miles away, who in turn credited for his inspiration a Jewish mystic in Palestine who lived 2000 years earlier.

The same story repeats at hundreds of levels in hundreds of fields. In another article in this issue, Olof Tandberg narrates the remarkable rise of Abdus Salam from an ancient Pakistani village to win the 1979 Nobel Prize in Physics.<sup>2</sup> Unsatisfied with such a modest achievement, he went on to found the International Center for Theoretical Physics and the Third World Academy of Science in Trieste, which have promoted the growth and development of science throughout the developing world. Those who ever saw the twinkling light of radiating goodness in Salam's eyes can only marvel at the mystery of individuality and its infinite human capacity for accomplishment.

This first law of individuality suggests a final consummation for humanity as a whole. Just imagine the wondrous creativity, superabundant prosperity, incessant marvels of discovery and endless delights of self-discovery in a world teeming with remarkable individuals. Emerging Individuality and highest human accomplishment proceed hand in hand.

## **Social Conformity**

One principle does not make a science. At the other end of the spectrum, we are forced to recognize that what we call individuality is more an exception than a rule in human affairs. While it may be true that every human being has a unique set of fingerprints, most human characteristics and behaviors readily lend themselves for analysis into recognizable types and categories. Like our animal ancestors, human beings seem to have much more in common than they do in difference. So much so that like most scientists before the birth of Complexity Science, we may be tempted to acknowledge only the similarities and disregard or explain away the differences as noisy or incomplete data. So, let us acknowledge as law number two that individuality is an exception, rather than a rule, even in those who appear to be most individualistic in their thought or behavior.

We need not rely solely on scanty anthropological evidence or even the historical written record in support of this principle, for even today we find that the similarities in thought, beliefs, values, manners, behaviors, skills, attitudes, opinion, sentiments, preference and even forms of creativity closely resemble one another. So too, when change occurs in any of these perceptible expressions of personality, it tends to occur over entire populations. We see that tendency today in the conflict between mental values of rationality and vital value of

conformity, which Lee Smolin describes in *The Trouble with Physics*, where he attributes the almost complete dominance of string theory in theoretical physics to a prevailing instinct for social conformity within the scientific community, rather than to rational choice. Similarly, the global contagion in financial markets that followed the subprime mortgage debacle in 2008, the shifting popularity of Republican US presidential nominees following each media report, the fact that the majority of Americans today actually believe that the USSR and USA fought against each other in World War II, and the current global consumer craze for the Apple i-Pad 3 are just a few indications of our strong penchant for collective conformity. Even Copernicus was at best an unwitting revolutionary who had no intention of challenging the authority of church or bible by putting forth his heliocentric theory of the universe. Martin Luther, who ranks among the most influential human beings of the past five centuries, blithely dismissed Copernicus as an “upstart astrologer”, which reinforces the argument that individuality in one field does not necessarily extend to others.

## The Birth of Society

As a sociological phenomenon, the tendency to conformity and uniformity among human beings is readily understood. The formation of human communities demands it. The creation of society is another wonder of evolution that rivals that of the individual. The complexity of uniqueness in the one is matched by the complexity of multiplicity in the other. Society arises from an amorphous mass of instinctive human energies directed by a common awareness, organized by social structures and expressed through acquired skills and shared attitudes to produce the endless progression of advances ranging from the stone axe to the internet.

By a remarkable process that is yet to be fully fathomed, the undefined social organism organizes the raw energies of its unformed members into capacities for individual and collective accomplishment. At one end we see the early outlines forming a unified human community. At the other, we find growing signs of the emerging individual sprouting like a seed in the heart of every human being. The growth of society and the development of the individual are two expressions of a single process.

If this is indeed humanity’s ultimate destiny, it has been far from apparent through the course of human history. Society is born by taming the raw energy of its individual members and subjecting it to rigorous constraints. The first necessity of every human collective is to secure itself from external threats, which necessitates compelling its members to fight and sacrifice themselves for the survival of the group. Second is the need to impose internal order by establishing a hierarchy of authority and compelling cooperation among its members through mechanisms that govern the distribution of decision-making and executive power. These structures need to be supported and extended to ensure conformity in every aspect of social life by means of common codes of conduct, customs, laws, shared beliefs and values. Failing these two conditions, no social group can achieve stability or long endure. No society tolerates dissent or variation in areas that may challenge the foundations of its authority or threaten its very survival.

The urge for social conformity extends beyond the necessities of survival. It arises from the native impulse for imitation within the subconscious collective desperately searching for greater knowledge and power. Conformity among members of early human communities was

inevitable in view of the dearth of knowledge, skill and technology that they possessed. Prior to the advent of agriculture about 10,000 years ago, the list of human inventions indicative of collective knowledge was indeed scanty – fire, pigments, spears, axes, glue, bow, flax cloth, flute, twisted rope, brick and pottery constitute a fairly comprehensive list. Study of the evolution of the stone axe over hundreds of thousands of years reveals very little variation and very slow development, suggesting that innovation was not a strong suit of early humanity. By comparison, we know that within fifty years of the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg, there were more than 2000 presses operating in 200 European cities and more than 20 million volumes had been published. By 1800, more than a billion books had been printed in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Something happened over the millennium to facilitate the rapid dissemination and proliferation of new ideas and new things. Society grows by imitating the new discoveries and fresh inventions of its most accomplished members. ‘Spreads like wildfire’ is a common phenomenon when it comes to new social innovations, especially those that have immediate and apparent practical utility, such as the steam engine, telegraph, light bulb, telephone, automobile, television, personal computer, Google’s search engine, Facebook’s social networking website, the iPod and iPhone.

Conformity and uniformity have been dominant characteristics of human communities throughout history. Thus, religious conversion may start slowly but once it commences it tends to continue until the new encompasses all or a large part of the entire society. The emergence of new beliefs based on the discoveries of science follows a similar pattern. Thus, we can almost count the number of people in the USA today who still reject the Darwinian theory of biological evolution – a larger number than one might expect, but well-defined by their conformity to an alternative belief system. Regardless of whether we examine the behavior of investors in the stock market, the confidence of the business community, attitudes toward deficit spending and tax cuts, scientific theories, social and cultural values, popular fashions or forms of entertainment, human beings still tend in most matters to move in groups and align themselves with the ideas and behaviors of their fellow members. If Individuality exists at all, it is certainly dwarfed in magnitude by commonality and conformity.

### **Individual as Pioneer**

If everyone imitates everyone else, how then can we account for the remarkable and unprecedented inventiveness of human society? Ironically, it is only through individual variation and rebellion against blind conformity that society advances. The very urge to impose uniform beliefs and behaviors on its members is a conservative tendency that stifles social vitality and progress. The rogue individual acts like a mutant gene to introduce new variations in human conduct, many of which are ultimately rejected as destructive or without value. But out of innumerable failures emerge the new ideas, inventions, discoveries and ways of life that drive social evolution.

The individual as pioneer, rebel, adventurer, discoverer, inventor, entrepreneur, social innovator, original thinker, creative artist, genius and saint continuously conceives and experiments afresh and spews forth on society an endless succession of new possibilities. The individual is the essential counterpart without whom no society can grow and develop. History recounts the thoughts and deeds of the most remarkable individuals whose impact becomes visible at the level of the nation or the world, but the same process occurs and

repeats itself at every level and in every field of society. Like the mountain peak which is supported by the entire mass of earth sitting beneath it, outstanding instances of individuality arise on the foundation of countless smaller and lesser expressions.

Warren Buffet displayed the characteristic American endowment for entrepreneurial individualism, when he began accumulating capital by delivering newspapers and selling used golf balls at the age of 10. Anna Hazare, a retired Indian soldier, revealed the enormous power of anonymous individuality in 2011 when he launched a nation-wide protest against corruption in India. India's Green Revolution was made possible by an individualistic spirit of innovation among peasant farmers who readily and rapidly adopted new hybrid varieties and cultivation methods for grain production.

Historically, the pioneer is usually confronted with condemnation, opposition or ridicule by a skeptical, suspicious or jealous social establishment reluctant to believe, accept or credit anyone with greater truth, knowledge or capacity. But, power attracts and the capacity for greater accomplishment is an irresistible attraction. Sooner or later, it leads others to imitate, reproduce and spread the pioneer's success throughout the community, until a time when the subconscious collective comes to recognize, admire and embrace the new, to organize and propagate it through public support or education, to convert innovation into established practice, to assimilate it as social institution and integrate it within its cultural values.

Historically, the individual and the collective are often juxtaposed as conflicting, contradictory forces engaged in perpetual battle – the individual's quest for freedom against the collective's imposition of social authority. This is a vast oversimplification. Most members of society crave for the security of conformity and thrive as anonymous members of the group. Every civilization that has survived and grown has done so by actively fostering and raising to leadership its most talented members.

The very nature of organization has an in-built tendency to become rigid, encrusted and resistant to change. There is indeed a recurring struggle of the collective to suppress and oppress, and of the individual to rebel, but these are best understood as imperfect tendencies of a still young, immature civilization struggling for the right formula. Wherever the collective succeeds too well in dominating its members, it declines and becomes decrepit. Wherever its members succeed too well in asserting their individual inclinations, society loses its strength and integrity, becomes weak and vulnerable to assimilation by more cohesive groups. Thus, the individual and the collective thrive best in a symbiotic relationship. The individual cannot survive without the support of the collective. The collective cannot grow, develop and evolve without the creative initiatives of its most conscious members. Orio Giarini explores the inherent tension between these apparently irreconcilable urges for certainty and freedom, conformity and individuality in his essay and dialogue "Secretariat of the Soul and Certainty".

## **The Evolution of Individuality**

Is individuality evolving? Historians denote several periods in the past that were characterized by an increasing tendency toward individualistic ideas and behaviors. Ancient Greece during the time of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates marked the emergence of mentality in the individual, when society came to accept and even actively encouraged differences of viewpoint and perspective as an essential ingredient for collective progress. This period



involved a turning inward, a shift from emphasis on the gods to emphasis on man himself, his own psychology, moral sense, conscience, intuition and individuality.<sup>4</sup> Within a very short period, principles of freedom, democratic governance, equality, the doctrine that any man can discover the truth for himself, the emphasis on individual character and ethical choice, the soul and individual salvation became predominant both in idea and practice. Oxford historian Isaiah Berlin denotes this birth of Greek individualism as one of the three great turning points in Western political theory.<sup>5</sup>

The Renaissance is a second obvious period in which the quest for individual expression rose to the fore, a topic explored by Augusto Forti in "*A History of the Individual in European Culture*". The revival of classical scholarship in the late middle ages after 1050 led to the rediscovery and extension of the principle of free mental inquiry so characteristic of Ancient Athens. Many factors supported this awakening – the spread of commerce and rise of a prosperous middle class, the growth of cities, the invention of the magnetic compass opening up oceanic navigation, the invention of the printing press which facilitated individual learning and the secularization of education, the impact of the Black Death which weakened feudalism and undermined the authority of the church, the shift from church dogma to individual faith and interpretations of the gospel, the idea of inner repentance, stress on individualized expression in various forms of art, the growing popularity of autobiography and notions of romantic love are among the prominent causes and characteristics of this period, which ranks among the most creative in human history. Here too, democracy bloomed among the small city-states of Italy, where aristocracy increasingly gave place to self-governing communities. Colin Morris ranks the discovery of the individual as one of the most important cultural developments of this period.<sup>6</sup>

The spread of education, democracy and scientific thought in subsequent centuries built on this creative out-flowering and established individuality as a more dominant, consistent theme. In "*A Study of Individuality and Social Evolution in Literature*", Janani Harish examines an early stage in the emergence of the modern individualized woman as depicted in English literature at the time of the French Revolution to illustrate the central role of the individual in the evolution of the society.

In *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo describes the Enlightenment as a quest to rediscover substantial truths of life, thought and action for both the individual and the collective, which had been obscured during the oppressive conventionalism of the early Middle Ages in Europe when literacy and education declined drastically, books were banned and burned, libraries shuttered and thoughtless adherence to established church dogma prevailed.<sup>7</sup> An age of Individualism, he argued, is a natural response to an age of deadening conventionalism in which social vitality is drained by rigid fixity of thought and behavior. A rationalistic, scientific, materialistic, utilitarian and individualistic age arose in an attempt to arrive at an objective and verifiable standard of truth and a quest for universal laws applicable to the governance of society.

What the European enlightenment achieved for the development of scientific thought among the elite, America achieved in the application of practical technology and social organization at all levels of society. The settling of America gave rise to new and unprecedented expressions of individuality and individualism. Millions fled to the New World in pursuit of freedom from poverty, the oppressive confinement of class and cultural

barriers, religious persecution and social discrimination. The pilgrims, founding fathers and pioneers that settled the American West left behind the security and stability of the Old World to discover and found a new one. They risked their lives in the quest for freedom. Abandoning the shelter of long established communities and cultural homogeneity, they explored, settled and developed a land in which even the most basic social support systems for protection, law and governance were lacking.

Independence of spirit and courage of self-reliance became essential for survival. Tolerance and respect for differences of thought, belief and behavior were imposed as a practical necessity. The vast open territory offered unprecedented opportunities for impoverished landless peasants to create prosperity for themselves and their descendants. Countless thousands arrived penniless and rose to middle class status in a matter of a few months. A sense of indomitable self-confidence and a can-do attitude were the natural product of their remarkable achievements. A scarcity of labor to farm a vast territory placed a premium value on the human being who often started off as a day laborer working on someone else's land or factory only to acquire his own farm or factory soon afterwards. Freedom became a fact of life first, a cherished constitutional right only afterwards. More than anything else, it is this characteristic faith and practical emphasis on the value, rights and potentials of the individual that have made America an icon and model which other peoples seek to emulate.

The psychological history of humanity recounts numerous periods in which individuality suddenly blossoms forth and then tends to recede from prominence. It also reveals a progressive trend. Each subsequent age of individualism has built on those that preceded it to establish firmer foundations in thought, principle, law and practice. Each has spread to encompass a wider geographic area and to spill over beyond finite boundaries in space and time. Intellectual and political freedom in Greece matured as economic, social and artistic freedom in Renaissance Europe did. Freedom of thought in Europe matured as freedom of religious tolerance, economic advancement, educational opportunity and social equality in America. Freedom and creativity for a small elite have gradually been extended until they permeate the entire society.

Winston Nagan's article "Individuality, Humanism and Human Rights" illustrates with reference to recent events in Tunisia the seminal role of the individual in making micro-level value demands on society that ultimately determine the social process, the formation of law and the recognition of human rights. Human rights are recognized because individuals demand them.

We live today in a period, which is in many ways a culmination and fulfillment of these earlier periods. For the first time the phenomenon of individuality is no longer confined to a nation or region. The aspiration for freedom and human rights has become universal in principle if not yet in practice. In recent decades, the principles and practice of democracy have spread around the world, education has moved toward universalization, human rights of every citizen are acknowledged, at least on paper. Never before has the single person possessed so much freedom of thought and action, equality of social status and treatment under law, protection and support from the community against various forms of discrimination and persecution.

## Social and Human Capital

The historical evolution of individuality offers essential insights into the process of social development. Society is an ocean of human energies in constant motion. The power of society for accomplishment depends on its capacity to direct and channel those energies to achieve its goals. Ideas, beliefs, values, aspirations and goals are the means it uses to give direction to those energies. In earlier times, the dominant direction may have been adherence to religious dogma, military conquest, expansion of empire or the discovery of new lands and untold wealth overseas. Usually, this urge was embodied in the thoughts and actions of a small ruling elite, such as the top three percent of European aristocracy that monopolized positions of political power, religious authority and military leadership in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, it is embodied in the quest of people everywhere at all levels of the population for more education, greater economic opportunity, better healthcare, longer life, access to modern comforts and conveniences, higher social status, and assured security during years of retirement. The unprecedented significance of this percolation of aspiration down through all levels of society is what Harlan Cleveland so perceptively termed “the revolution of rising expectations”. People everywhere are awake and aspiring. The first minimum condition for the emergence of individuality has become a near universal fact.

Social organization is the mechanism devised for conversion of this awakened energy into power for social accomplishment. In modern times that organization assumes myriad shapes and forms, as in the institutions of democracy, rule of law, codified human rights, universal education and professional training, scientific research and experimentation, industrial production, domestic and international markets, banking and financial markets, transport and tourism, communication, media, recreation, entertainment and countless others. Each new right granted or enforced, each additional member educated or skill imparted, each new inspiring idea, invention, discovery and social innovation generates greater confidence and releases fresh energy among members of the society. Each new organizational mechanism increases the speed, reach and efficiency of the social whole.

Markets and money have played a unique role in the development of social capital by awakening the aspirations and unleashing the energies of those who hitherto had little incentive to produce more than they could utilize for their own consumption. Market is a ubiquitous institution that enhances the productivity and opportunities available to every member of society. The opening of access to markets provided each producer with an incentive to maximize production so that it could be converted into a far wider range of products and services beyond his means to generate by self-production. In other words, *the market empowers and expands the opportunities of each member of society*. Each new entrant to the market multiplies the opportunities of other buyers and sellers, thereby exponentially enhancing the potential of the collective. Money acts as catalyst to vastly facilitate, accelerate and extend the reach of markets from the local to the global level. Each financial transaction increases trust, thereby multiplying the propensity to transact and generate wealth. So too, money facilitates the conversion of any form of social power into every other form, thereby increasing the strands of relationship and density of interactions that bind people and activities into a social whole.

Each new advance multiplies the social potential. Each new organizational link converts

more potential into usable social capital. Together, all these form the warp and weft of the social organization that constitutes the complex web of social relationships and interactions between people, places, activities, and institutions that account for the incredible productivity of contemporary life. The enormous size, scope and complexity of the Internet are only the most visible or easily conceivable forms in which this web manifests. Taken together in its totality and integrality, this constitutes an enormous source of power for accomplishment. It is the Social Capital on which all our collective activities are based. In “Economics of Dignity”, Saša Popović & Ljudmila Popović stress the vital linkage between interpersonal relations and the development of human capital and show how the internet is opening up unprecedented opportunities for wealth generation through closer relationships between people.

As our brief historical narrative makes evident, political freedom and social equality are essential conditions for the full emergence of the individual and social progress. Periods characterized by high levels of individualism have been those of the greatest intellectual creativity and rapid economic expansion, in which dynamic, talented people enjoy the freedom to explore and express new ideas, acquire wealth and social status unimpeded by religious, social or cultural barriers. These periods have also been ones in which access to education has been most widely prevalent. Those societies whose social institutions most actively support the development of its individual members – its Human Capital – tend to become the most productive and creative ones. Thus, social capital and human capital go together. Social capital develops by the contribution of pioneering individuals. Individuality spreads and flourishes in circumstances where social capital is designed and attuned to accord greatest support for the full development and freedom of expression for human capital. Individuality grows and emerges out of this creative caldron at the intersection where social capital and human capital meet, harmonize, integrate with one another for the mutual development of one another and for the further evolution of the whole humanity.

Education plays a unique role in the development of human capital and the full potential of the individual. It is a social system devised to pass on to future generations in a concentrated and abridged form the essence of human experience as organized and codified knowledge. Once regarded primarily as a luxury for aristocrats, churchmen and law-makers, education has come to be regarded as an essential possession for success in modern society. Yet, all too often, the mechanical methods of rote memorization and training applied based on discipline and compulsion resemble forms of religious indoctrination developed a millennium earlier. Important new ideas about education and upbringing of children gained prominence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but have yet to be adopted by the mainstream educational system.<sup>8</sup> The new movement was founded on the discovery that education should base itself on respect for the psychology of each individual child and have as its aim the free organic growth and fullest development of the child’s innate intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities. Replacing mechanical methods and external pressure administered by the instructor with efforts to awaken the curiosity and release the energy of each student, the new education seeks to discover and bring forth the latent potential of each child for creative individuality. At its best, *education becomes society’s most conscious and effective method for fostering the evolutionary emergence of individuality.*

## **Individuality vs. Individualism**

Before concluding, we need pause to more clearly define our terms. Every science depends on sound definitions; and a science of individuality, if it is to ever exist, is in desperate need of a sound linguistic basis. Thus, before the ambiguity of contemporary English completely obscures the intended meaning of this paper, let us try to arrive at some agreed upon terminology for further discussion.

We face a formidable linguistic hurdle in English because the word 'individual' is commonly applied to three quite distinct though related phenomenon. On one hand, the word 'individual' means single or separate, so it is employed with reference to a single member of any group as a synonym for one person. In earlier periods, the term 'man' was frequently used to denote any person, but this usage has declined with growing sensitivity regarding gender bias in language.

On the other hand, individuality is also used in a quite opposite sense to identify a single human being with striking or unique characteristics. The first use applies to all members of a group without discrimination, the second only to those who stand out as different. Therefore, to avoid confusion we propose to confine our usage of 'individual' to those who embody unusual or unique characteristics, and 'person' or 'human being' to a single member of the group.

But, our linguistic problems are not yet fully resolved, for we need also to contend with the ambiguity of the words 'individuality' and 'individualism', terms which are often confused or regarded as synonymous. 'Individualism' is used to denote a form of independence and self-reliance and a social theory that favors freedom of action for individuals over collective or state control. However, the term usually carries the connotation of self-centeredness of feeling or conduct, i.e. selfishness and egoism.

The term 'individuality' is used with reference to distinctive qualities or characteristics, a meaning much closer to what we apply to the term 'individual'; however, it also has overlapping connotations. This ambiguity is complicated by the fact that the process by which individuals differentiate themselves from the collective has been commonly associated in history with an increasing sense of separateness from others leading to exaggerated self-centeredness, selfishness and egoism.

Though language confuses, we maintain that a valid distinction does exist between the person capable of unique and original action and one who simply pursues his own self-interest without regard for its impact on the community. Indeed, nearly all the instances of individuality cited earlier are of persons who sublimated their own personal interests to make remarkable contributions to humanity as a whole, in most cases consciously and intentionally. Therefore, we need to apply both care and patience in examining the similarities and differences between these phenomena.

The essence and highest expression of individuality envisioned by this study are human expressions of creativity and uniqueness by which single human beings make an extraordinary contribution to the advancement of civilization. Our hypothesis is confirmed by eminent psychologists such as Jung, Maslow and Rogers who describe mature individuality as an advanced stage in the evolution of human personality, a development of consciousness

made possible in freedom by which an undifferentiated member of the collective develops a unique personality with distinguishing qualities and values and a marked sense of social responsibility as well as individual responsibility. It is a stage which few may reach but all possess in potential and can tend toward. This advanced stage in the development of individuality is variously referred to as self-realization, self-actualization or individuation, which is employed in the rest of this paper.

Our historical narrative has thus far failed to adequately distinguish between individuality as a subjective stage of psychological maturity and individualism as an objective stage of social evolution. Indeed, the two have been so inextricably interlinked that it may prove very difficult to do so. However, that does not mean the two are one and the same or inseparable. The essential core of individuality or individuation is the subjective psychological development of the person, which is greatly facilitated by supportive objective conditions of freedom and equality. The essence of Individualism is a social stage in which self-pursuit by each member takes precedence over conformity to the collective. Individuality is the meeting place between the objective and subjective dimensions, the social and the psychological, between inner growth and outer capacity for accomplishment. *Individuality is the point of self-expression of humanity's infinite spiritual potential in a finite world.*

Given that human social evolution has started off with a strong emphasis on the domination of the collective, it may well be that a strong assertion of the individual declaring his independence and even his utter disregard for the collective may well be regarded as a necessary and inevitable reaction, an immature stage in social evolution before a proper balance can be achieved between freedom for subjective individual development and expression and harmonious relationships between each and every member of a free society.

We may still be very far from achieving this balanced goal, but it is important to emphasize the difference in principle. Otherwise, there may be a tendency to decry and reject the development of individuality as inimical to social peace, justice and harmony. Indeed such a view point is markedly alive today. Self-aggrandizing egoism is not a new phenomenon, but it assumes more visible and vulgar manifestations today and the threat it poses to the future of humanity is more apparent and more serious than ever before. Yet, in rejecting the excesses of individualism, we must be careful not to reject the finest flower of human evolution, the mature individual. For the testimony of eminent psychologists suggests that a truly creative, harmonious society can only be achieved by encouraging and accelerating the process of individuation in all its members.

## **Infinite Complexity**

Benoît Mandelbrot discovered the complexity of finite forms (fractals) which demonstrate infinite repetitive patterns of self-similarity on any scale and can be described by complex quadratic polynomial equations. The human individual is an infinitesimal microcosm of society, which contains in potential all the acquired capacities of the society and displays repetitive patterns of self-similarity combined with expressions of uniqueness, which defy description and explanation. The individual is a finite form that conceals within itself infinite potential, which grows, develops and evolves along multiple dimensions without apparent end or limit. By will and aspiration, it develops in the quality and intensity of its

energy at the physical, vital-emotional, mental and spiritual levels. By ideas, ideals, values, opinions, attitudes and beliefs, it develops in the quality and intensity of the force with which it directs that energy toward different goals. By the organization of its external conduct, conscious opinions and beliefs, deeper values of character, expansive aspects of personality, it channels and converts the force of energy into mental, emotional and physical power for accomplishment. Through its skills and attitudes, it expresses that organized power in all its outer actions in relation to the world around it. In “Evolution of Individuality”, Ashok Natarajan explores a few of these deeper dimensions of individual complexity.

Society is that world and it contains within it all the same dimensions and levels, multiplied in its complexity by the myriad individuals who constitute its members. Thus, we have an infinitely complex instrument of human personality relating to an infinitely complex field of social opportunities through myriad forms of mental, social and physical action. Through the interaction of countless individuals with the social collective, the collective directs its energy for survival and preservation of what it has achieved in the past. It seeks also to expand and multiply those achievements in space and time, to encompass larger areas, more people and new activities, as in the way education is presently being propagated and extended at all levels in an effort to saturate all members of society with this rich social endowment.

Simultaneously, society has an incessant urge to develop its structures at higher levels, as commerce, education and countless other activities are now being extended globally through the internet. Thus, Stanford University professor Sebastian Thrun recently resigned his job teaching artificial intelligence to 200 university students in order to establish a free, internet-based course on search engine design in which more than 500,000 students have enrolled globally.<sup>9</sup> Finally, society also seeks to continuously evolve and manifest higher levels of consciousness, as evidenced by the shift from the near-animal existence of hunter gatherers into the sedentary agrarian civilization 10,000 years ago, or in the expansion of world view from the village to the city, the city to the nation and the nation to the global community, or in the sense of global consciousness and human unity gradually emerging through the internet.

Thus, as society evolves, individuality appears in multiple grades, as Ivo Šlaus and I explored in an article entitled “Human Capital and Sustainability”.<sup>10</sup> The physical individual is characterized by a pronounced capacity for self-reliance and physical independence of action, traits essential for survival of early immigrants to America and for their westward movement across the frontier. Vital-social attributes of individuality manifest as a sense of self-respect and a capacity to decide without reference to pressures for social conformity and a capacity to attempt in society what others have not hitherto attempted or succeeded in accomplishing, attributes common among inventors, entrepreneurs and social innovators who attempt what others have not so far dared to attempt. Mental characteristics of individuality emerge when scientists, artists and thinkers dare to depart from established ideas and beliefs, to espouse what others deny or ridicule. Spiritual attributes of individuality reveal in those who dare to imagine, aspire for, strive for and live by values and levels of perfection beyond those presently endorsed or admired by humanity.

## **Multiplying Uniqueness**

So far, the world knows of very few great individuals and countless anonymous followers.

There was a time in past centuries when anyone who could read or write was considered a scholar or even a genius. Knowledge was scarce, education was rare. In 1861, only a single PhD was awarded in the entire USA. A century later, some 30,000 new PhDs were awarded in a single year. Today, the number exceeds 50,000. Similarly, the number of talented musicians, painters, thinkers, jurists, scientists, and inventors was extremely limited in all countries in the past. Today, there are most talented and accomplished individuals in every major city than there were in entire countries a century ago. The demand for freedom and human rights, the universalization of education, the compelling attraction of urban life, the awakening of social aspirations globally, the rising spirit of entrepreneurship in all continents, the breaking down of class barriers, the increasing social mobility, the unprecedented spread of prosperity, the urgent quest for better health, the thirst of all for comforts and conveniences which until recently were considered the privilege of a few – are these not distant signs of a general awakening and the emergence of a greater human potential?

Could it be that through the cumulative development of social capital and cultural experience humanity is on its way to discovering the formula for an infinite multiplication of individual capacity and uniqueness? Perhaps that was what the French Utopian Socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837) had in mind when he envisioned a future in which there would be 37 million poets equal to Homer, 37 million mathematicians equal to Newton, and 37 million dramatists equal to Molière. Was he an inverted dreamer or did he really see the future?

An overarching objective of this investigation is to determine whether a strategy can be devised by which we can consciously increase the range, incidence, varieties and degrees of creative individuality and more effectively harness its untold creative power for the betterment of all humankind.

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# Evolution of Individuality

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## **Abstract:**

*The concept of Individuality takes its rightful place at the far or highest end of a progression that begins externally, superficially with social conformity of manners and proceeds through successive stages of behavior, character and personality to elevate and internalize itself as the basis for knowledge, decision and action. As it proceeds, the person outgrows the need to conform to society and develops his own internal standards, ultimately arriving at a unique, original center of creative individuality. Human beings consist of physical, vital-emotional, mental and spiritual centers of consciousness. Each of the stages of personality development from manners to individuality has its own version in each of these centers. For example, Individuality can be physical, vital, mental or spiritual. So also about the other four concepts. Individualism and individuation are terms that denote the person in varying relationship with the collective society of which he is a part. Individualism may have an egoistic version, while individuation is non-egoistic and personal.*

*Man in his evolution originally identified with the tribe or small group from which he sprang. Tribes are linked by language to a wide social unit termed nationality. Culture is a deeper binding force, as Indian culture binds together 17 nationalities and English culture unites the English, Welsh, and Scots. The tribe develops in two directions: inwardly to develop the person, the individual, the egoistic, selfish person; outwardly to develop the nationality bound by language and culture. The Individual has the potential to overcome the predominant power of the nation-state and play a great role in determining the course of the 21st century, which may even come to be called the century of the Individual, as the 20th is called the century of the Common Man.*

*Man develops powers at the level of manners, behaviour, character, personality and Individuality. Powers of manners have a social function in relation to other people, which can readily change since its power does not arise from inner convictions. Behaviour draws its power from one's beliefs, which also can be changed by the individual if he chooses. Social success is determined by manners, while personal accomplishment in less weighty matters is determined by behaviour. Character is deeper still, not under one's control. It is expressed by the intensity of a person's temperament, known as swabhava in Indian culture, which is not under the person's conscious control. The Powers of character ultimately determine one's lasting accomplishment. Manners, behaviour, character are universally seen in all. Personality is a higher endowment, a subtle extension of character developed by a few. Power acquired by personality is transferable from one profession to another, while that of character is effective only in the profession or field in which it is acquired.*

*Individuality is not acquired either from one's profession or field of engagement. It is influenced by characteristics such as selfishness, self-giving, impersonality, the effects of*

*education, society and religion, as well as local habits, influences, biological and social needs. For example, early pioneers from Europe to America were compelled to be entirely self-reliant, since there was no supportive social infrastructure to nurture and protect. In a country of vast land and an atmosphere free from class structure and inherited authority, physical individuality developed with its characteristic "can do" attitude that has produced great wealth and still distinguishes the Americans even today from the emotionally secure family structure prevalent in Asia which nurtures dependence and the more class conscious conformity prevalent in Europe.*

The history of human civilization is set forth in the archeological and historical record. It reveals an unending progression of increasing power for accomplishment. But the process which has generated this power remains a mystery. The natural tendency has been to attribute the advances in civilization to ingenious inventions and great discoveries, but these are themselves the results of the process, as much as the cause. It is human beings who invent, discover and create. The secret of social progress lies in understanding the process by which that creative capacity develops, organizes and expresses as social power. The progressive evolution of individuality lies at the heart of this process.

From the time mankind mastered the use of fire about a million years ago until the dawn of agricultural revolution, the pace of progress was so slow that we can count with our fingers the number of innovations made in the long intervening period. Though man is an intelligent and innovative species, he was apparently very poor at transmitting his discoveries to his descendants. As society has progressed, it has perfected the capacity for transmitting the fund of acquired knowledge and capacities to its members. With successive developments of language, writing and printing, the pace of social progress quickened considerably, abridging millennia into centuries. Education is the organization by which society transmits the accumulated knowledge of its past experience to future generations, so that the youth of today can start from where previous generations left off, without needing to repeat past experiences and discoveries over and over again. In the last 200 years, the spread of formal education has abridged the process from centuries to decades. Now the Internet has exponentially increased the speed of knowledge transmission, compressing decades into years, years into months.

The development of Social and Human Capital has been the primary means for the remarkable evolution of civilization. The individual human being is the catalyst that unleashes their remarkable power for collective progress.

## **Social and Human Capital**

Social capital develops by organization. Organization links, relates and coordinates previously separate and independent activities over space and time. It creates an invisible web of relationships that enhances the reach, scope, productivity and power of people, places and activities by integrating them effectively within the larger social whole.

Language, writing, roads, markets, cities, money, navigation, printing, education and the Internet are major landmarks in the evolution of social organization. Each has multiplied the effectiveness of various social activities and exponentially enhanced the overall power of society for accomplishment. Language enhanced the capacity of individuals to relate to one another for self-defense, food gathering, reproduction, and raising off-spring, a basic

requirement for the formation of the family, village, tribe and larger social units. Markets provided subsistence farmers an incentive to produce more than they could themselves consume and to exchange the surplus for other desirable products. Cities enabled the division and diversification of human activities into specialized functions, thereby enhancing productivity, efficiency, and skill development, vastly enriching the range of goods and services, and creating central hubs linking and coordinating the activities of outlying rural areas with distant trading centers.

With each such advance, the cumulative power of society for accomplishment expanded in geometric progression. Thus, the introduction of Hindu numerals, double-entry bookkeeping and bills of exchange in Italy between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries spurred a commercial revolution in trans-European trade and ushered in the Renaissance. An isolated 19<sup>th</sup> century French village of subsistence farmers was transformed into a prosperous community within a few years after a road was laid linking the village with regional towns and overseas export markets for its wine. These are isolated incidents of a process repeated countless ways and times in space and time to enhance the capacity for relationship which is the source of the productive power of society. The number and complexity of the interactions between functions, activities, systems, ideas, cultural values, customs, laws, skills, instruments and technologies defy enumeration and measurement. Together, they constitute the intricately woven threads of the organized fabric of society.

The inherent power of this social organization is unquestionable – it is infinite power for human accomplishment. In earlier times, it formed the basis for the formation of urban centers, city-states, kingdoms and vast empires. It made possible extraordinary achievements – the pyramids, Taj Mahal, trans-oceanic trade, universities, inter-continental railways, universal primary education, scientific societies, newspapers, democracy, the Industrial Revolution and the Internet. The magnitude of that power can be illustrated in a single event. Fifty years ago, US President Kennedy announced the objective of landing a man on the moon and bringing him back within a decade, and 55,000 scientific, commercial and governmental organizations coordinated their activities to achieve it a year ahead of schedule.

The evolution of social organization has its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human psychology giving rise to a complementary power in each member of society. This psychological organization constitutes the essence of Human Capital. The two forms of capital are mutually dependent. Social capital is the means and essential requirement for development of capabilities in society's individual members. Human capital is the means and essential requirement for the development of capabilities in the collective. Together, they constitute the warp and weft of the social evolutionary process.

As biological evolution occurs as the result of a complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors, so also, the evolution of each member of the collective involves a complex interaction between psychological and social factors. Social capital encompasses the cumulative experience, knowledge and accomplishments of the collective which constitute the social environment for the nurturing and development of individuality. Human capital is the source of the personal aspirations, values, characteristics, skills and other capacities latent as human potential. Through their interaction, what society has acquired socially, the individual acquires personally.

The progressive enhancement of the physical, social and mental capabilities of the individual is a landmark in the psychological history of humanity. As in society, each successive enhancement in knowledge, skill and values multiplies the overall effectiveness of the individual member and enhances the capacity of the collective. While the invention of writing and numeracy dates back millennia, the acquisition of these capacities by the average human being is a very recent attainment. While modern educational systems were established in most countries more than a century ago, until recent decades relatively few people felt the need to acquire more than a rudimentary education. Around 1950, only 5 percent of adults in economically advanced countries enrolled in higher educational programs.<sup>1</sup> When a hundred new high schools were opened in Tamil Nadu in the 1950s, most had to be converted into primary schools because there were too few parents willing to enroll their children.

The average citizen today knows far more about health and medicine than even a leading physician in 1800, which is one reason for the tremendous gains in life expectancy over the past two centuries. The knowledge, skill and managerial capabilities which are common endowments at all levels of society today far exceed what was prevalent among the ruling elite of European society in the past. Imagine trying to operate a modern factory with the staff employed by Henry Ford in 1910, to operate a nuclear submarine with the officers and men of a modern navy with the crews that sailed under Admiral Nelson in 1805, or conduct scientific research at a leading university today with the faculty of Cambridge at the time of Newton.

## **Human Aspiration**

While knowledge and skills are the most tangible, easily measurable components of human capital, the true source of its power lies in the aspirations, motives and values that govern human endeavor. It is humbling to realize that virtually everything we possess is a gift to us from society. Every idea, belief, value, invention, social organization – logic, language, numbers, ethics, all forms of art, systems, social institutions, culture, money, cell phones and computers – everything is part of the inheritance bequeathed to us by our collective ancestry and rightly belongs to us all. Everything, except perhaps, the human aspiration which is our very own. We are each born with it, grow by it and accomplish in the measure that spark of aspiration rises and seeks for accomplishment as knowledge, power, relationship, artistic creativity, enjoyment and in many other ways.

Aspiration is the essence of our humanity and our individuality. Aspiration generates the ever increasing demand for higher levels of comfort, convenience, knowledge, mastery and enjoyment. Two centuries ago, European women were regarded as the legal property of their husbands, considered unintelligent and incapable of a productive role in society or politics. Their attainment of equal rights and status in Western society has been driven by an aspiration and demand for self-development and self-expression suppressed through much of human history. While slavery was legally abolished in America in 1865, the movement that won for the blacks effective equality under law emerged only in the 1950s. Although the freedom movement in India was launched by Sri Aurobindo's call for complete independence in 1904, it took decades to awaken the demand for freedom in the hearts of the people. Once that aspiration had been released, no force on earth could contain it. Everywhere we find that the enormous progress of humanity of the past two centuries resulted from the awakening and assertion of this aspiration in people to whom it had been long denied.

Aspiration is the source of the *revolution of rising expectations* which Harlan Cleveland first perceived sixty years ago spreading through the newly liberated countries of Asia and releasing the surge of energy that has led to their resurgence over the past half century. It is also the source of what Jasjit Singh termed the *revolution in human affairs* – the growing tension between rising aspirations and rising levels of social inequality – which poses at once an increasing threat to social stability and an unparalleled opportunity for more rapid social progress. Human aspiration generates the ever increasing demand for greater freedom, rights, respect and equality; for higher levels of comfort, convenience, mastery and enjoyment. Society establishes the minimum standard to be acquired by all its members. The urge to excel comes from the awakened and aspiring individual.

## **The Individual**

The sheer power of human personality stands out in stark relief in its most developed form, the mature individual. Here we find almost baffling instances in which a single person has changed the course of history or led an evolutionary leap for humanity. The mental accomplishments of Socrates or Newton, the courageous leadership of Churchill and Gandhi, the inventiveness of Edison and Jobs, the inspired idealism of Jean Monet, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela give us a rare glimpse into the limitless power of psychological organization at its heights.

The individual is the pinnacle of this evolutionary psychological process. The individual represents the highest stage in the organization of human personality. The individual is also the catalyst for all the advances of the social collective. Creative pioneering individuals are the source of the new ideas, discoveries, inventions and organizations that enable society to enhance its power for defense, production, transport, communication, trade, education, governance, social welfare and entertainment.

The Internet is the most visible peak of the long evolutionary advance of civilization, visible at least in its expressions, though the structural foundations on which it is based include all the previous levels of language, mathematics, knowledge, organization and technology dating back millennia. The individual is the invisible peak of humanity's evolutionary advance – invisible because the psychological evolution of human consciousness is entirely a subtle, subjective process, visible only to the inward vision and manifest only in its most outward results. Countless research papers and books have been written tracing advances in technology and social organization through each minute stage of their development and charting their dissemination from their points of origin to the rest of humanity. Thus, evidence suggests the earliest written language dates back about 5000 years, paper was developed in China before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, the Hindu numerals and decimal point appeared in India during the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and spread to Europe via Arabia 300 years later, and so forth. But when it comes to the psychological evolution of humanity, we have neither fossil record nor artifact to delineate the path of our progress. We are compelled to rely on a more subjective and introspective form of evidence to discern its process, direction and future potential.

The development of Individuality is the key to human progress in the past, present and future. All the great discoveries and developments of the past have resulted from the creative, divergent, original inspirations and actions of individual members of the group who

dared to think and act differently than others, to discover, invent and innovate new ideas, tools, technologies, organizations and activities that have been subsequently adopted by the collective and incorporated into the mainstream of social existence.

The individual is the pioneer in humanity's evolutionary social advance. When society faces crisis and people don't know what to do, it looks to pioneering individuals for original ideas and innovative solutions. Yet, at the same time, the willingness and capacity of the social collective to respond positively and accept new ideas and ways of life depend ultimately on the extent to which the seeds of individuality have been born in each member of society. Thus, India's Green Revolution could never have been such a rapid and resounding success had it not been for the aspiration and self-confidence of millions of illiterate farmers who readily embraced new crops and new production methods to raise India's food production by 50% and achieve food self-sufficiency for the country within five years. The organization of society is the lock which must be opened for humanity to advance. The organization of personality is the key to that lock. The individual is the smith who must fashion that key.

Individuality is the seed from which human aspiration arises initially as a tiny spark, then evolves progressively in strength into a firm will for personal accomplishment and at its highest into a flame for the collective advancement of humanity. To comprehend the nature of that seed and the means by which it evolves, it is necessary to trace the process of its development from its most rudimentary origins in primitive man. Unlike trees which grow from inside out, adding layer upon layer to the core as years go by, human personality grows from outside in, from the most external and superficial physical capacities to the deepest and most profound psychological endowments. Manners and behavior are its most visible external expressions. Individuality represents its inmost core. The evolution of individuality is a complex social and psychological process that is as yet poorly understood. This paper examines one line of its development.

## **Conformity and Differentiation**

Historically, formation of the collective takes precedent over development of individuality. The survival and success of the group always mattered more than the success and happiness of any individual. Early human communities, like their animal ancestors, were characterized by a very high degree of conformity and imposed uniformity: conformity in terms of behavior, uniformity in terms of beliefs and values. There was a compelling necessity to impose authority and enforce obedience to ensure the survival and defense of the group against internal dissension and external threat. The imposition of authority limited the range of knowledge, skills, capacities and activities found in primitive communities; so also it constrained the specialization of knowledge and skill and individual variation in values, beliefs and behaviors. Sharing of a common language is essential for internal communications. Obedience to a chain of command is vital for coordinated action in the face of threats.

Over time, society begins to differentiate itself into specialized fields and functions, each requiring a specific set of knowledge and skills for its performance and providing greater latitude for individual variation and achievement. At the same time, it organizes the energies and movements of the community into well-defined acts, activities, systems, organizations,

and social institutions, which eventually mature into a distinguishing set of established beliefs and behaviors known as culture. Culture differentiates one group of human beings from another linguistically, religiously and socially as specialization of work differentiates one from another functionally and occupationally.

Differing environmental and social conditions lead to further variations between communities and the gradual emergence of larger social groupings – villages, townships, city states, kingdoms, nations and empires. Each stage of expansion increases the range of the collective pool of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, skills and behaviors, while imposing new standards of commonality and uniformity. Thus, today the entire world shares common standards for reckoning dates, time, measuring distance and facilitating exchange of currencies. We also maintain universally applicable measures for weight, temperature, pressure and voltage, and uniform protocols for cell phone and internet communications. Social capital consists of the rapidly growing body of infrastructure, technological and organizational capabilities, laws and regulation, knowledge and shared values which contribute to the progressive enhancement of society's power for communication, production, transportation, education, governance and so forth. Social capital generates *social power* for accomplishment.

As the social power of the collective develops, the capacity of each member of society develops in parallel. By a process of internalization, social capacities enhance the psychological capacities of the members of society. The interaction between them generates the dynamic field in which individuality is born. Several stages can be discerned in the psychological development of each person, which can be denoted as Manners, Behavior, Character, Personality and Individuality. In order to understand the significance of Individuality as a stage in human psychological development, it is necessary to first examine the earlier stages of which it is the ultimate result and the process governing transition from one stage to another.

## **Manners**

The first necessity for the formation of any social grouping is the development of authority to which all members of the group submit – the physical prowess of a military leader or feudal lord, the divine right of a monarch, the spiritual authority of a religious leader, or the administrative and political powers of an elected government. Social cohesion necessitates adherence by its members to a code of conduct. Members of society respond differently to the pressure for conformity. Some acquire only the minimum conduct demanded. Others seek to consciously mold their actions into a form that is acceptable and pleasing to others. Manners represent a superficial, stylized set of formal behaviors deemed appropriate among members of the society signifying their acceptance of a common social standard. Manners are a social arrangement that facilitates smooth interactions between different people, irrespective of what the person actually thinks or feels.

This most superficial form of social conduct so often taken for granted is laden with power, a power most evident in its absence when people refuse to display overt signs of their willingness to understand one another, cooperate and act in the common interests of all parties. The formal manners of diplomacy made possible an evolution of international

relations from the battle field to the conference table and ultimately the UN General Assembly. A breakdown in negotiations has often led to war. A breakdown in parliamentary protocol signals paralysis of the legislature. The absence of respect for lower classes was once the hallmark of European aristocracy. Intolerance with other religions and races was the basis for untouchability, anti-semitism, and apartheid. Modern school education is impossible in situations where students refuse to listen quietly to the instructor.

Imposition of standards of conduct by society is of limited power unless or until the members of society themselves come to endorse and internalize the standards of their own free will. The courtesy extended to listen to the views of one's opponent, no matter how far at variance with one's own, is the basis for parliamentary democratic proceedings. The willingness to listen quietly and patiently to new ideas and theories at variance with one's own was an essential condition for the founding of the Royal Society and the spread of scientific associations throughout Europe. The courtesy extended to customers is an essential characteristic of the modern marketplace. Sears rose from a regional mail order house into the largest retailer in the world after it introduced a policy that guaranteed customer satisfaction, regardless of the cost to the company. Respect for neighbors and fellow travellers irrespective of class, caste, religion and ethnic origin is a relatively recent characteristic essential for the harmonious functioning of modern society. Society no longer sanctions the physical abuse of wives by their husbands or children by parents or teachers. American whites can no longer demand that blacks ride in the back of the bus. Nor can upper caste Hindus refuse to work in establishments with other castes. Novelist Anthony Trollope depicts the cutthroat competition for patients between physicians, a conduct that would be deemed highly unprofessional and unrespectable by today's standards. In today's knowledge-based service economy where the human resource is prized as invaluable, the courtesy extended to employees has reversed the traditional atmosphere of confrontation with employers.

Modern society accomplishes so much today because average citizens follow the instructions of the police without compulsion, voluntarily obey the laws and rules established by government, declare their incomes and pay taxes, respect the rights of other citizens, drive in the correct lane, refrain from littering, dress appropriately, and so forth. Students listen quietly and do not disrupt the class. Scientists follow experimental procedures rigorously and report research findings factually. Shopkeepers are courteous and customers pay for what they carry from the store. There are, of course, ample exceptions to the norm, but wherever the exceptions are prevalent, the capacity of society for accomplishment is seriously impaired.

Manners are a superficial code of conduct without which even minimum transactions in society would be difficult, inefficient and far less frequent than otherwise. Imagine the chaos on modern city streets and highways without traffic rules or an international credit card system where few care to pay their bills on time. Though the attainment is rudimentary, it generates an enormous power for accomplishment by the collective. It may also provide an enormous advantage to individuals who acquire the expected manners in greater degree than others. Thus, members of parliament have become famed for their skills in oratory, even when they were otherwise known to be far from ideal in either their beliefs or their actions. Intellectuals have risen to international fame for their superior capacity to listen politely and respectfully to others. In some instances, actors have become popular political leaders simply because the public mistook their skill in impersonating famous leaders in film for their actual



real life personalities and achievements. We may take these stylized social capabilities as natural and normal, but one need only witness instances in their absence to realize how great a power they bestow on the collective.

The outer organization of society is made possible by a corresponding advancement in the psychological organization of its members. Whereas other animals are endowed with the full range of instinctive behaviors required for their survival, human beings are born helpless and need to learn virtually everything needed for their survival. Alertness, self-control, action according to set procedure, punctuality in time, orderliness of arrangement are endowments only acquired by long experience, intensive training or compulsion. Introduction of the first traffic signal in a small South Indian town 40 years ago necessitated deployment of a platoon of traffic policeman for more than a month to impose order on unruly motorists, pedestrians and cyclists until the discipline of obeying the sequence of lights was acquired by the public. Lack of adherence to traffic rules is still a major source of road accidents worldwide. While the USA has about 15 times more motor vehicles than India, total deaths on the road each year are twice as high in India.

## **Behavior**

Manners are viewed mainly in terms of the external compliance with established code of conduct and there is little interest in finding out whether the compliance is given willingly or out of coercion. A military general does not ask his soldiers whether they are willing to fight or agree with his battle plans. He simply demands their obedience. However, great military leaders know that winning the minds and hearts of their troops is a vital determinate of successful military campaigns. In his novel *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy attributes the success of the vastly outnumbered and ill-equipped Russian troops over Napoleon's 800,000 strong trained troops to the deep and passionate conviction that inspired the Russian troops.

Behavior denotes the stage of personality development in which a person's external conduct is fully in conformity with his or her conscious convictions and beliefs. The distinction between external conformity and genuine conscious belief and intention is of vital importance to human accomplishment. As every successful professional knows from personal experience, the effectiveness of action derives its power directly from the understanding and attitude with which it is carried out. Recruitment specialists look beyond academic or work qualifications to the energy, confidence and determination of the candidate to perform. A student of below average intelligence with real curiosity and interest can master any subject by serious application, whereas an above average student who lacks those characteristics may perform poorly.

Reliability is an essential value for the development of society. Therefore, the collective comes to value those who speak what they believe to be true, keep their promises, and maintain their commitments. In centuries before written contracts were common or enforceable, a businessman's most precious possession was his word and reputation. If he could not be relied upon to do as he says, his prospects for advancement were severely limited. Leaders look for reliable confidantes who will tell them only what they know to be true, a quality all too rare in the psychological history of humanity wherever false words may serve as a temporary expedient, convenient excuse or source of advantage.

Modern society relies more on education and social conditioning of behavior than on force to achieve conformity among its members. Most citizens share a wide range of convictions and beliefs that generate psychological power for accomplishment. Where high standards of behavior are lacking, the efficiency of modern institutions is undermined by corruption among government officials, cheating in educational institutions, fraudulent business practices, substandard products and materials, falsification of documents and perjury in court, violation of contracts and treaties. The institution of bank lending would be impossible were it not for the genuine intention of most borrowers to repay their loans. In developing countries such as India, where this commitment is lacking among many farmers, efforts to extend bank credit are severely retarded. The global credit card system includes tens of thousands of banks, several billion card holders and trillions of dollars of transactions annually, yet losses due to credit card fraud average less than one tenth of a percent in value terms because control systems and strict enforcement are supported by well-established norms of behavior among card holders determined to maintain their good credit ratings.

## **Character**

Still, behavior is largely conformity-based, outer-directed to meet social requirements, and outer-motivated to satisfy others. Character is a deeper level of personality formation in which values and beliefs become so firmly embedded as values that they are no longer under a person's conscious volition. A small community of Chettiars in South India has amassed enormous wealth because it is widely known that the younger generation will never rest until it has discharged any financial obligations left by their parents. Indian Sikhs and Nepalese Gurkhas earned a reputation as the best soldiers in the British Indian Army because of their unwavering courage under fire. The Protestant Ethic of hard work, American capacity for self-reliance and confidence in their ability to solve any problem, Japanese sense of honor, Indian deference to age, and German passion for physical perfection are deeply seated values that constitute the foundation for individual and national accomplishment. The English exhibited their character of stoical, courageous determination to resist the Nazi invasion after all the rest of Europe had surrendered. India's successful Green Revolution resulted from one politician's strong conviction in the ability of Indian farmers to achieve food self-sufficiency.

The internalization of social values gives rise to deeply seated character formation. Wherever people attain high levels of achievement, strong character formation is the basis. Character provides for stability, reliability and unwavering consistency.

## **Personality**

Until 500 years ago, large portions of land on this planet remained uncharted, but now the world's land surfaces have been mapped down to the smallest details. Still the depths of the oceans, which constitute seventy-one percent of the earth's surface, remain unexplored and beyond lies the infinite reaches of the universe. Manners, behavior and character can be likened to the known continents. Personality and Individuality are dimensions of limitless magnitude that defy measurement.

Character is the capacity for accomplishment in any field arising from deeply entrenched values and attitudes that express as consistency and persistence. Personality is the capacity

to extend accomplishment from one field to many. If character makes possible the efficient manager, specialist or skilled artisan, personality makes possible the dynamic entrepreneur, polymath and Renaissance man.

Who could have imagined fifty years ago or even thirty the vast new realm of cyberspace, the first truly global social organization that would emerge apparently out of nowhere in the mid-1990s and exponentially multiplying the total power of world society for collective action and accomplishment? Personality can be likened to the totality of social potential out of which all new ideas, discoveries and inventions emerge. Personality is such a creative dimension of human consciousness out of which ideas, artistic creations and new inventions emerge, like the i-Pod, i-Phone and i-Pad of recent times. While character is denoted by a structure with limits, personality is a borderless realm where human imagination combines afresh and recreates.

## **Individuality**

Still, there lies something beyond which is original, unique, and limitless. It is a vibrant source of human aspiration, unconditioned by social norms, expectations and established values. It is our true unique identity, yet at the same time fully in harmony with others and the world around us. Individuality surpasses education, training, family upbringing and social inheritance, etc. It has an impersonal and universal dimension which makes us conscious of our unity with other human beings. It is that which gives some people a spark of originality that emboldens them to face any difficult situation, and recognizes no ultimate boundaries or barriers to human accomplishment. The shift to individuality is like the shift from religion to spirituality, from many people following the inspiration of one saint to every member following his own unique inspiration.

Uniqueness shorn of ego and conditioning becomes universality. Acting from that center, Churchill confidently announced that Britain would never surrender to Nazi Germany after the whole rest of Europe had meekly succumbed. It was that which enabled President Roosevelt, who assumed office in 1932, during the worst banking panic in US history, to tell the American people “we have nothing to fear but fear itself” and then to request them to redeposit their lifelong savings in the banks, thereby stopping the panic by the strength of his spoken word. It was that which gave Gandhi the strength to confront the might of the British Empire with nothing but Satyagraha and non-violence as his weapons. It was that which reportedly made Napoleon exclaim on seeing Goethe enter the room for the first time, “At last, a man!”

Individuality is the essence of manners, behavior, character and personality; it is that which remains after everything else has been accounted for. As fallen leaves are converted into rich organic compost, compressed and concentrated to form coal and oil, then finally transformed into the sparkling crystal purity of diamonds under extreme pressure, individuality represents the distilled universal essence of human capacity shorn of the limitations of physicality, locality and specificity arising from the time, place and circumstances under which it was acquired.

Internet is the social counterpart of individuality which is psychological. The Internet offers an infinite playing field through which one individual can literally change the world.

Individuality is the infinite psychological endowment which alone is capable of tapping the unlimited creative potential of the Internet. If personality gives rise to the entrepreneur who can found an enterprise to tap social opportunities, the individual who relates to the world around him creates his own original field of work and constitutes a complete enterprise in himself.

“The more subtle an instrument, the more powerful” is a truism of life. Thus, the famous dictum that the word is more powerful than the sword. Ideas are a subtle formation with the power to change the world. Universal values, which are ideals of perfection, have literally transformed the world over the past few centuries, bringing a level of freedom, social equality and opportunity to the common man which is unprecedented in human history. As cultural values possess the concentrated power of society for accomplishment, Individuality represents the distilled essence of power in each human being for highest accomplishment both for himself and for humanity. Society is the infinite, the individual is the infinitesimal. With the right strategy the individual can tap at any point and release the infinite power of the society.

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# Study of Individuality & Social Evolution in Literature

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## **Abstract:**

*Science unravels the universe and empowers man. Technology has made life easier and is continuing to make the inconceivable possible. Social studies chart the evolution of society along various lines, and steer it towards greater progress. Apart from development and enjoyment of the aesthetic sensibilities, can the arts directly contribute to our understanding of life and our capacity to promote the progress of society?*

*Literature is a creative art, but it doesn't merely entertain. It reflects life. It portrays the values and aspirations of people and society, even the political atmosphere, economic situation, and social attitudes of the times. One good idea from a book can inspire individuals to acts of greatness. Powerful words can and do spark off revolutions. Inspiring stories can initiate progressive social movements or spur worldwide debate and reform. Fiction is often the forerunner of technological innovation, challenging man to actualize what he dreams of. Literature reflects history, elevates the present, and creates the future. Great literature is true to life. Great writers are seers of life who reveal through words subtle truths regarding human character and the character of life.*

*Literature provides unique insight into the process of evolution that governs the advance of society, civilization and culture. It offers greater depth of penetration than either historical narrative or biography because it can portray the subjective psychological and social consciousness of the characters and the times with far greater depth and realism. Therefore it can be a powerful complement to objective analysis of external institutions and events.*

This paper analyzes Jane Austen's famous novel *Pride & Prejudice* to derive insights into the relationship between the development of society, the development of human personality, and the role of the evolved individual in process of social advancement. Although often regarded as a comic romance, on examination we discover that it offers profound insights into the process of social development at the time of the French Revolution when dramatic changes in social values, attitudes and behaviors in England made possible peaceful evolutionary change through intermarriage between the classes in place of the violent revolution by mass exterminations that took place on the other side of the English Channel.

Ever since man began drawing on the walls of caves, he has been expressing himself in a myriad ways. His canvas has changed beyond recognition, from stone to parchment to today's liquid crystal display. The medium has evolved and diversified, from primitive line art to exquisite paintings, from crude hieroglyphs to flowing poetry and prose. Regardless of the form or the medium, man's need to express himself has produced treasures of great value, of which the world's literature is a precious part.

The aesthetic value of literature is long established and appreciated. This paper is an attempt to focus on another of its values – the profound and subtle knowledge of life, society and human nature which is embedded in great fiction. That knowledge is of immense relevance to humanity today as it gropes to consciously shape its own future. And most valuable of all is the insight literature offers into the most remarkable and powerful of all human creations, the individual, and the role of the individual in the evolution of society.

Literature is not just a reflection of an author's fertile imagination. It reflects life. It portrays the values and aspirations of people and society, even the political atmosphere, economic situation, and social attitudes of the times. It provides unique insight into the process of evolution that governs the advance of society, civilization and culture. It offers greater depth of penetration because it can portray the subjective psychological and social consciousness of the characters and the times with far greater depth and realism than history or biography. Therefore it can be a powerful complement to objective analysis of external institutions and events.

Victor Hugo's portrayal of the spirit of revolution among the common people in France during the 1830s in *Les Misérables* and Anthony Trollope's portrayal of 19<sup>th</sup> century English elections, corruption and parliamentary politics in his *Palliser Series* can be a powerful complement to objective analysis of external social institutions and historical events of the time. There are ideas we understand about slavery from Harriet Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its abolition from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* that are difficult for a research report to depict or explain. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, called the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse, that describes the travails of work horses, resulted in legislation protecting the animals and changed the mindset of people regarding traditional and fashionable practices that caused much suffering to animals. The lives of the factory workers at the time of the industrial revolution that changed the face of England and the world have been well researched and documented. But Charles Dickens' portrayal of *David Copperfield* adds realism, a personal perspective of the situation, insights which a mere historical or statistical description cannot provide. Apart from being a story of adventure and romance, Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* is a meticulous historical and social record that paints a vivid picture of the close ties between religion and politics in France, the concentration of political power accompanying the rise of absolute monarchy, the extreme detachment between the extravagance of the wealthy and the poverty of the common people that later turned to revolution, and the machinations in military governance and international relations in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dumas' description of the precarious war-like situation between countries precipitated simply by petty, personal reasons is a lesson for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. Coming to a book of recent times, American intellectual Gene Sharp's writings on democracy and nonviolent action have been the inspiration and guiding force for revolutions that have ushered in change in many countries, most recently in Tunisia and Egypt. If a man writing in Boston can influence people and initiate progressive changes in the far corners of Burma, Bosnia and Zimbabwe, the role of literature does deserve serious attention.

One good idea from a book can inspire individuals to acts of greatness. Powerful words can and do spark off revolutions. Inspiring stories can initiate progressive social movements or spur worldwide debate and reform. Fiction is often the forerunner of technological innovation. Literature reflects history, elevates the present, and creates the future.

This paper analyzes the famous novel *Pride & Prejudice* to derive insights into the relationship between the development of society, the development of human personality, and the role of the evolved individual in the process of social advancement. *Pride and Prejudice*, written by the eighteenth century English novelist Jane Austen, is a comic romance set in rural England at the time of the French Revolution. It is the story of the Bennet couple and their five young daughters, and their quest for love, marriage and fulfillment in life. As the story traces the falling and rising fortunes of the Bennet girls, we discern the emergence of individuality in society, and its impact on the larger movements in the land.

The Industrial revolution had begun at that time. Across the Channel, the French revolution was raging. America had recently won her independence. But in stark contrast to such epochal eventstaking place all around, Austen's novel is a meticulous description of the pleasant and fairly uneventful country life, with its balls, dinners, proposals and weddings, marriage being the undercurrent of the entire story.

Not just the story, the entire lives of women at that time revolved around marriage. It was every girl's aim. It was her family's wish. It was society's expectation of her. She was supposed to find fulfillment only through marriage. The 19<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher John Stuart Mill described the situation succinctly: "Women are so brought up, as not to be able to subsist in the mere physical sense, without a man to keep them... as not to be able to protect themselves... without some man... to protect them... as to have no vocation or useful office to fulfill in the world, remaining single; and what little they are taught deserving the name useful, is chiefly what... will not come into actual use, unless nor until they are married. A single woman therefore is felt both by herself and others as a kind of excrescence on the surface of society, having no use or function or office there... a married woman is presumed to be a useful member of society unless there is evidence to the contrary; a single woman must establish... an individual claim." So, no woman was single by choice.

The eldest of the Bennet girls is twenty three and feels all the pressure to find a husband. Her mother Mrs. Bennet is more anxious. An unmarried girl was left with little choice. She could take up employment as a governess, and resign herself to a life of hard work and relative deprivation. Or she could stay dependent on the charity of her wealthier relatives. In either case, she became an old maid, an object of pity and derision. So Mrs. Bennet spends her every waking moment planning, dreaming or talking about her daughters' marriages.

Into such a society and family comes Elizabeth, the second Bennet daughter. Elizabeth is an intelligent and strong twenty one year old girl. She is pleasant, good natured and naturally cheerful. Nothing worries her much, not even the thought of marriage. In fact, she is not thinking about it at all. Her elder sister has been waiting patiently for years for a marriage proposal. Her friend, not willing to wait, takes things into her hands and elicits an offer. Her younger sister turns her back on decorum and elopes with her lover. Elizabeth differs from everyone else. To her, marriage is an ideal union of two individuals who love and respect each other. It is not a ritual to be gone through to secure one's place in society. She will not marry because her sisters and friends do, everyone around expects her to, or because it is considered to be the woman's destiny. If she finds a man of strength and values, one she can love, and who reciprocates her feelings, she will marry him. If she does not meet such a man, she will cheerfully remain single, undeterred by any associated physical hardship or society's

unflattering comments. At a time when a woman derived her sense of self worth solely from being the wife of a man, Elizabeth does not need the prefix of Mrs. to her name for her psychological survival.

Her quiet village is stirred to life by the arrival of two wealthy young gentlemen. These gentlemen arouse interest among the villagers, their bachelor status combined with their substantial incomes largely contributing to the general interest. One of the young men, Fitzwilliam Darcy belongs to an old, wealthy family of considerable standing. He has had a privileged upbringing, and moves in the highest social circles in the land. In the midst of the villagers notches below him in the social scale, he looks upon them as savages. He is many times wealthier than they are; he owns an estate the likes of which they might never have set their eyes on. So he believes he is their superior. He is affronted when they talk to him. He vehemently rebuffs every attempt they make to socialize with him. When his friend Bingley falls in love with the eldest Bennet girl, he dissuades Bingley from the pursuit, finds fault with the girl and dismisses her younger sister, Elizabeth, as being just tolerable.

Almost all the neighborhood is in awe of Darcy's rank and wealth, even if his pride is repelling. The villagers are flattered by his presence. Elizabeth's friend justifies the pride, a young man with family and fortune has the right to think highly of himself, she argues. At a ball, Darcy makes disparaging comments about country balls to his host, who is pleased to be simply spoken to by Darcy. Darcy insults Elizabeth's cousin, who is gratified to be addressed by the gentleman. Ladies with titles and inheritances angle for him, swallowing their pride and often, even self respect. They anticipate his every move, flatter him, compete for his attention, and go to ridiculous lengths to secure him. But Elizabeth, the village girl with no elegance or sophistication, little dowry, inferior connections, and hence less than promising prospects in the marriage market is neither impressed by Darcy's position nor intimidated by his demeanor. When the most distinguished man in the assembly calls her tolerable to look at and refuses to dance with her, Elizabeth laughs. She is not crushed at being rejected by a man of such consequence. She is not disappointed to lose the opportunity. She is not offended by the insult, she is not angry. She just laughs. Great strength is required to simply hold an opinion opposed to all society's. But greater still is the strength that can laugh at an insult, especially one coming from a man everyone around worships. In neighboring France, proclamations were passed, prisons stormed, church abolished and a gruesome weapon made part of the popular culture by decimating the monarchy and aristocracy – all to question the superiority of the higher classes and to demand equality. Here, Elizabeth accomplishes the same by laughing. What an impassioned and determined populace struggles to accomplish seems to be possible even for a single clear, strong individual. Darcy, who is accustomed to being revered, desired and fawned on, suddenly finds himself shorn of that aura of superiority he had been swathed in.

Earlier, Darcy had summarily rejected the villagers, looked down on their manners and taste, and felt time spent in such society a punishment. But sometime during those weary balls and tedious dinners, Darcy notices a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty girl. Her manners lack sophistication, her spontaneity is disconcerting, her family is vulgar. She has relatives in trade, residing in localities Darcy will not set foot in, and she has no wealth or status. But Darcy is unable to take his eyes off the girl he recently wrote off as barely tolerable, Elizabeth Bennet. The thought of his own feelings is unpalatable to him, and he tries



to tear himself away from her. He argues with himself that he belongs to higher society, and cannot, should not stoop to Elizabeth's level. Her family connections will sully his name and pollute his hallowed estate. Deeply in conflict with himself, Darcy leaves Elizabeth and her village. But the spark of a feeling for a girl from a lower class is born in the heart of an aristocrat. This spark grows into a flame, now flickering, now steady, in the haughty landowner, and then in the lively village girl, and after many a confrontation and flare up, leaps outside and blazes all around, bringing down artificial social edifices without physical destruction and ushering in a new social order.

However, at present, alarmed at being drawn to a girl in an inferior situation, Darcy is in conflict with himself. He thinks he has subdued his shameful feelings by going away from her village, but the winds of change blowing in the land carry him to his aunt's estate, when Elizabeth is visiting her cousin in the same neighborhood.

Over tea and dinner, during walks in the park and at church, Darcy gets to admire those fine eyes again and again. She is no longer just tolerable. He sees there is more to her than just the fineness of her eyes. She may lack the elegance that often accompanies the high born, but her good nature more than makes up for her demeanor. Her values raise her higher than ladies of rank. Their fine silk and lace hardly embellish them like Elizabeth's cheerfulness does her. The strength of her character is more valuable to Darcy than wealth or property. The suavity of the city-bred, the sophistication of the wealthy, their knowledge of French and Latin and social etiquette pale in comparison with her keen intelligence and ready wit. Darcy makes up his mind. Her family is still odious to him, his friends will be shocked by the match, his family will disapprove. His fine name and estate are at risk of being sullied by contact with the lower ranks. But Darcy knows he wants to marry Elizabeth Bennet. Ladies whom he considered worthy of his attention, those of rank and wealth, now seem like empty shells or depthless shadows next to the girl he has chosen.

The French aristocrats swore by their superiority. They took their high birth as a license to assert themselves. They jealously guarded their rank, and prevented any contamination from the lower levels. Oblivious of the simmering discontent and resentment around, they maintained their haughty ways till everything was forcibly snatched from them. Lost in their self glory, they lost all their power, riches, chateaux and lives. Darcy, by choosing to recognize value in one socially below him, in learning to love a girl outside his rank, gives up his ego, and saves his head. Figuratively, this individual act saves the collective head of the aristocracy from the guillotine.

Darcy changes his mind and proposes to Elizabeth. Elizabeth's response makes him change his mind some more. Elizabeth has seen ladies indefatigably trying to secure Darcy. She has heard about the splendor of his estate. She sees the esteem in which he is held by friends and family, simply by virtue of his position. But she does not go, lemming-like, after Darcy. She sets her standards by a different scale. She is not a fortune hunter. Her ideas of fortune and misfortune differ. No sum of money can induce her to overlook his pride and rudeness. She cannot marry the man who, she incorrectly believes, has separated his friend from her sister, thus causing much grief to both sides. His detestable nature far outweighs the grandeur of his family and estate, in Elizabeth's eyes. Without pondering over his proposal for second, she turns him down, and never once looks back wistfully at the material and social advantages she has thrown away.

It was a time when a respectable lady could not make money. In some cases, she could not even inherit it from her father. With the notable exception of the queen of England, an English woman's property was turned over to her husband after marriage. She was not allowed to live alone, or be the head of a household. She could not have a career. "Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor", Jane Austen said. She would know, being unmarried and dependent on her brothers herself. Therefore marriage was very often the ambition of women, and the objective for their education and training. Girls were taught to sing, dance and play musical instruments, to catch the eye of eligible bachelors. Painting and sewing could embellish their accomplishments and improve their chances in the marriage market. "Work" for a woman today may mean a variety of tasks, but in Austen's time, it was short for 'needlework'. Academic knowledge in girls was frowned on. John Gregory, an eighteenth century Scottish moralist, in his famous publication, "Father's Legacy to his Daughters" in 1761 asks ladies to refrain from exposing any learning they might have, this would hurt their chances of attracting a husband. Lord Byron himself once said that women should read "nothing but books of piety and cookery". Some knowledge of language and arithmetic that would enable them to be efficient housekeepers was all the academic knowledge that was deemed necessary for the girl, since it was the future of every fortunate girl to marry and keep house. Elizabeth does sing, dance and play the piano very well, but not to snare a husband. Nor does she employ any artifice or ruse for the purpose. Not all her work involves needle and thread, she spends considerable time reading and improving her mind. Far from hiding her knowledge, she enjoys an intelligent conversation, seeks opportunities to practice her keen wit and loves challenges. She does not worry about putting off a man with her sense or lively impertinence. Not that she is irreverent or rebellious for the sake of being so, but she will not follow the herd instinct and conform to mindless conventions. Marriage, unlike for most other girls, is not the all in all for her. And if it requires any compromise of her values, is not worth bothering with. And hence her prompt rejection of the proposal from the man she believes to be arrogant and unethical.

Half a century later, when Charlotte Bronte wrote *Jane Eyre*, many considered it shocking that a woman, a governess, who is the protagonist in the book, should narrate the story in first person, in such a strong voice. The *Quarterly Review* wrote that *Jane Eyre* exemplified the „tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine.“ The divine code, man said, was that a woman, even a fictitious one, should be mild and meek. Seen alongside this, Elizabeth's tone of voice, and of thought was without doubt a very strong one. In a society that encourages young women to exercise gamesmanship instead of honesty, and trade off value against land and fortune to secure a marriage, Elizabeth valuing character higher than all social and material wealth is a statement of her individuality. This at a time when, according to Mary Poovey, an American cultural historian and literary critic, women were encouraged "to practice propriety instead of displaying their intelligence, to practice self-denial instead of cultivating self-assertion, and to think of themselves collectively, in terms of universals of the sex, instead of contemplating individual autonomy, talents, and capacities or rights".

Darcy who had been under the impression that Elizabeth, like all other girls, was waiting to receive attention from him, is more than stunned. He did not know a girl would have any grounds for rejecting a man of rank and fortune. Hearing her charges about his pride, which

he feels is natural, and behavior that seems only befitting, he learns for the first time that a man is more than his high birth, there are values higher than income, rank that he takes for a resplendent armor is turning out to be an illusion. For a man who from childhood had been encouraged to be proud and selfish, to be abused and rejected is a hard blow. But Darcy does not react summarily in anger. He does not give vent to his shock, humiliation and disappointment through bitter words or thoughts. Out of sheer sincerity and psychological strength, he gives his feelings a proper direction, using them to transform himself into a good human being valued for what he is independent of his family name.

Instead of reiterating his stance, surrounding himself with those who bow to him and fortifying his ego, Darcy sheds his negative traits. As his pride, arrogance and resentment leave him, better things occupy the space, he becomes humble, courteous, a real gentleman. He and Elizabeth part after the unsuccessful proposal, but providence brings them together again. Elizabeth is on a holiday with her aunt and uncle when they unexpectedly run into Darcy.

Darcy is now all that Elizabeth could ask for. Elizabeth has long since been Darcy's ideal wife. But unexpected news reaches them, Elizabeth's youngest sister has eloped with George Wickham, the son of Darcy's former employee, a thorough rogue who has tried more than once to betray his patron.

Darcy is at a crossroads now. He has declared his love for a girl from a social stratum much below his, and let go all his class consciousness and the pride stemming from it. He looks beyond the superficial and discerns higher values such as goodness and strength, both in himself and Elizabeth. But now her family has stooped to new depths, its name has been dragged through the mud. By any standards, the family has fallen, and related itself to his arch enemy. Should Darcy safeguard his family honor so carefully nurtured for years, maybe even for centuries by others before him, and disassociate himself with the Bennet family? Elizabeth can go nowhere, meet no one without her sister's infamy being whispered about behind her back. Did he not know that his aunt would disapprove in very strong language? Would not his friends snigger, and ladies stick up their noses at Elizabeth? Could he survive if that halo of propriety and superiority that had been hisis gone?

Darcy takes the way forward. He does not pause to worry about public opinion or conformity with societal norms. He loves Elizabeth, and sets off in search of her sister. He traces the runaway couple in an area in London he would not normally set foot in. Finding that Wickham does not intend to marry Elizabeth's sister, Darcy coaxes him to change his mind, offering to settle his debts, get him a job, and set up his house for him. Wickham is in dire straits, and decides to accept the lucrative bargain. Darcy arranges the wedding and personally takes care of every detail. He attends the wedding and makes sure that Wickham keeps his commitments. He saves Elizabeth's sister, and consequently, her family from ruin.

That Darcy saves the sister and the Bennets is plain enough. But in fact, in saving them and assisting his employee's son, Darcy has also saved himself. Anobility that is rigid and conceited, that refuses to budge an inch is eventually brought down from its pedestal rudely. The French nobleman who looked disdainfully at his tenant farmer eventually had to make way for the peasant, and pay for his disdain with his head. The English historian G M Trevelyan said that if the French nobility had been capable of playing cricket with their peasants, their chateaux would never have been burnt. It is on the record that on that July day in 1789

when the Bastille was stormed, some 300 miles away in Hampshire, the Earl of Winchelsea was playing cricket, and bowled out before he could score a single run, by an untitled man, William Bullen. Whether it was playing cricket with a commoner that saved the Earl's chateaux or not, it was definitely embracing his employee at some level that saved Darcy's future. Wickham had been trying to get at Darcy, but Darcy instead stoops to Wickham's level for a while. He sets Wickham free of his debts, takes care of his basic needs, and lends him some respectability. He takes on the task he is not obliged to do, and ensures that Wickham is permanently indebted to him. By assisting Wickham along his career and providing occasional monetary support, Darcy obliges Wickham to not burn bridges behind him. A potential threat has been blunted, and a foe converted into a harmless, though perhaps unwilling ally.

Some nobleman might have been willing to overlook difference in status earlier. An aristocrat had probably liked a commoner before. An earl might have wanted to marry a girl without title. A lord might have wished to be friendly with his dependents. But the unwritten rules of society forbade them. But when one strong, bold individual dares to break those invisible bonds and takes a step, others naturally follow. This movement, this inter class marriage, this mingling of the ranks, initiated by Darcy, and emulated by others, homogenized the highly stratified and class-conscious society. And that eventually saved the whole country the bloodbath that neighboring France experienced. One individual, acting out of his highest values, can and does play a pivotal role in making history. In England, a peaceful social evolution replaced violent revolution.

Unconscious of these undercurrents, Darcy comes back to Elizabeth's village. Elizabeth feels gratitude, respect and love for him now. Jealous ladies who would like to marry Darcy try to turn him against Elizabeth, but he remains strong in his resolve. Darcy's noble aunt, alarmed at the threat from the lower ranks, attempts to bully Elizabeth into submission. She asks Elizabeth to stay within her sphere. But Elizabeth does not give in, she is strong in her conviction that one's sphere is not defined by the land one owns. She has seen proof of Darcy's love for her, she has come to love him deeply, and no one else's sense of right and wrong can influence her thought. And so when Darcy renews his suit, she accepts him readily, bringing to a happy, harmonious conclusion the tale of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Darcy, the heir of a distinguished family in England marries Elizabeth, the girl from the lower gentry. In the process, he accepts links with the trading class in Elizabeth's aunt and uncle. He mollifies the conservative aristocracy that can still not come to terms with the changing scenario, by healing the breach with his aunt later. He accommodates the needs of the lower ranks that are aspiring to rise, by making Wickham his brother in law, and replacing the simmering hostility with a truce. By looking beyond class, title, wealth and rank, and truly loving Elizabeth, Darcy starts off a trend that is mirrored in numerous incidents throughout the country, and eventually ushers in a peaceful social evolution in England.

This cheerful love story depicts England's subtle response to the French Revolution, and the peaceful progressive evolution that was effectuated in England. More specifically, it depicts the role of formed individuals in bringing about radical social change. For the one thing Darcy and Elizabeth share is a willingness to transcend the prevailing values and behaviors of their time, to act out of deeper personal convictions which place them in conflict with the societies in which they live. Like her creator Jane Austen, Elizabeth Bennet is the

prototype of the modern woman, who has the courage, strength and individuality to reject the material and social security of a respectable marriage. Fitzwilliam Darcy is the pioneering aristocrat who breaks every established centuries old norm, voluntarily gives up his privileges even when it disturbs his sensitivities. Both are in search for something higher and truer, even at the risk of failure or ostracism. Elizabeth achieved that higher goal by social elevation through marriage. Darcy's psychological fulfillment matches Elizabeth's material rise. Their creator, Jane Austen accomplished two hundred years later, by gaining literary immortality.

To make a fire, all it takes is a spark. Not a steady flame, not even a shower of sparks, but just one single spark. Its size is of no consequence. The size of that which is to be lit is beside the point. One lone spark can grow to immense proportions and encompass all that it encounters. Similarly, one inspired individual, inspired by the right ideas and values, can set in motion and generate consequences that change a nation or reach around the world. Such an individual is a living center of the illimitable.

## Original Thinking

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### Abstract

*History that comes to us as a chronology of events is really a collective existence that is evolving through several stages to develop Individuality in all members of the society. The human community, nation states, linguistic groups, local castes and classes, and families are the intermediate stages in development of the Individual. The social process moves through phases of survival, growth, development and evolution. In the process it organizes the consciousness of its members at successive levels from social external manners, formed behavior, value-based character and personality to culminate in the development of Individuality. Through this process, society evolves from physicality to mentality. The power of accomplishment in society and its members develops progressively through stages of skill, capacity, talent, and ability. Original thinking is made possible by the prior development of thinking that organizes facts into information. The immediate result of the last world war was a shift in reliance from physical force and action to mental conception and mental activity on a global scale. At such times no problem need defy solution, if only humanity recognizes the occasion for thinking and Original Thinking. The apparently insoluble problems we confront are an opportunity to formulate a comprehensive theory of social evolution. The immediate possibility is to devise complete solutions to all existing problems, if only we use the right method of thought development.*

Although thinking is a general attribute of humanity, only a chosen few exhibit the capacity for original thinking. Many of these thinkers have lived their entire lives unnoticed by the people around them. Even when personal notice and appreciation eluded them, their ideas have had a profound and lasting impact on the rest of the world.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France, once complained about the paucity of original thinkers in the world. In the foreword to a book by Harlan Cleveland, former World Bank President Robert McNamara recommended the author to the French President as an original thinker whose writings were worth reading. Cleveland had served as the chief of the USAID program in Taiwan after the 2nd World War. During his tenure there, he noticed the power of people's rising aspirations and expectations speeding up the recovery and development of Taiwanese society. This prompted him to coin the phrase, "Revolution of Rising Expectations" to describe the phenomenon he observed of mental aspirations quickening the pace of physical development. What he perceived was the process of social evolution whereby a physical man transforms into a mental man through the mechanism of

*“Advancement in Organisation is accomplished by the growth of consciousness in the collective.”*

mental aspiration. This transformation has the power to cure all the ills that are currently afflicting society.

Long before the advent of the World Wide Web, Cleveland noticed a unique phenomenon which he termed “uncentralised organisation”. It is a form of organization where power is neither centralized nor widely distributed, but spread pervasively to give the impression that ‘nobody is in charge’. Visa International, which coordinates the largest proportion of international credit card transactions by connecting thousands of banks and hundreds of thousands of merchants across the world, is an example of an uncentralised organization that demonstrates the unrivalled power

of this conception. The concept of Organisation has not received so far the full attention it deserves. In fact, the power of organization itself is not fully appreciated. Organisation can achieve on an infinite scale compared to unorganized functioning. There is as much difference between organized and unorganized functioning as there is between air travel and walking. Advances in air travel have been achieved by scientific technology. Advancement in Organisation is accomplished by the growth of consciousness in the collective. The remarkable power of Organisation is only dimly understood. That is why its capital role in the success of India’s Green Revolution has never been fully recognized. Global food scarcity can be totally eliminated if the power of Organisation is fully applied to global food distribution. The Brandt Commission was alerted to the power of Organisation 30 years ago and showed some interest in applying its power to solve food shortages, but the idea was too radical for that time and did not get the full attention it deserved.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw many idealistic predictions about the future life awaiting humanity. None of these, however, survived the touch of reality. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been called the Information Age, due to the increasing flood of information it generated. Information is the basis upon which thinking develops. Yet, in spite of this flood of information, not much original thinking has resulted. Many global problems such as poverty, unemployment, terrorism, economic depression and environmental degradation persist to this day and still defy solution. Even after two decades after the end of the Cold War, elimination of nuclear weapons is nowhere in sight. Problems are usually known to be a very good fertile breeding ground for fresh and original ideas, yet none have emerged capable of abolishing this pernicious threat.

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*“Problems refusing to go away should compel us to rationally look at the same issues from a wider perspective.”*

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Problems refusing to go away should compel us to rationally look at the same issues from a wider perspective. If economic crises continue to repeat, it should motivate economists to reexamine the fundamental axioms of economics upon which the subject rests. Persistence of problems does not mean that they are insoluble. It only means that the theoretical premises upon which the foundations of economics have been built are not sound and sufficient.

When the practical man is confronted with problems, he looks for practical solutions, while the thinker looks for ideas to solve them. But when the Original thinker is confronted

with problems, he takes that as an opportunity to know himself in the wider measure. The Original thinker seeks not just ideas but original ideas which are called in Philosophy *Real-Ideas*. Cadmus Journal refers to them as *Seed-Ideas*. Ideas, sooner or later, lead to action. Because conceivable by mind in some way, they declare it can be done. Pregnant ideas have the dynamism to lead to action. Real-Ideas are capable of self-effectuation, as knowledge and will are integrated in them. When Club of Rome published *The Limits to Growth* in 1972, it awakened the awareness of the world to the need for change in thinking and in action, and the world now is a better place for that.

Mental understanding, which can generate clarity, is not the only type of understanding that we have. Apart from it there is also emotional comprehension. When the emotions understand, they inspire the person to act. At the next deeper level, our very body possesses an understanding of its own. When that understanding is reached, the body acts at once. That is why uneducated people respond better to a demonstration than to an explanation. When they see with their senses that something is achievable, they cannot wait to act to achieve it. Hence, when the body understands, it does not wait to act. Intellectual explanations carry clarity. *Clarity of thought is a contribution to accomplishment*. If one with that clarity chooses, he can commission actions to achieve it. Seed-Ideas lend themselves to action, as they release emotional energy which compels action in time. Real-Ideas inspire the physical consciousness, which moves into action at once.

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In Jules Verne’s novel, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the train in which the hero travels is stopped by a warning signal a little before a weak bridge. The passengers, guard, driver, and engineer all get down and explore the alternatives. The only idea suggested to them by the watchman on the spot is to cross the river on foot, reach the other side and board another train. That meant walking five miles up the river to cross it at a ford. The engineer comes up with an original idea. He says that if the train moves across the bridge at a very high speed, it might be possible to cross the bridge without the wheels actually touching the rails, thereby safely reaching the other side. Although the idea appears quite radical to the hero’s French attendant, the American passengers, driver and guard all enthusiastically agree to the attempt. So the train backs up for some distance, gathers a speed of 100 miles per hour, and seems to almost fly across the bridge. As soon as it reaches the other side, the bridge comes down with a deafening sound. Perhaps this was the spirit of innovation that tamed the new continent and made America the most prosperous nation on earth. The combination of idea and determination generates the power of Real-Idea in action.

During World War II, India grew restive with clamor for independence. Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, voiced his demand for a separate Muslim nation called Pakistan. President Roosevelt began pressing Churchill to disband the British Colonies in return for American support during the war. Churchill could not implement that idea. To oblige the American pressure, he sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a friend of India, to India with a mission. Gandhi flatly refused the British offer, though he announced no boycott. The mission failed. Later the Indian army showed signs of patriotic intransigence. By that time, Churchill had been replaced with



*“Americans expanded the horizons of human enquiry and affirmed the conviction, ‘If there is a problem, there must be a solution.’ It is a perception of Infinity in practical life.”*

Attlee. The very next day Attlee sent A. V. Alexander to India as the head of the Cabinet Mission, but the talks dragged on and no solution was arrived at for the vexing problem of Pakistan. In an atmosphere of rising violence, Attlee then looked around in desperation for the right man for the job. He found the man in Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia during the war, who took charge as the last Viceroy of India in March 1947 with the proclaimed intention of declaring India’s independence by June 1948. Once he arrived in Delhi, he found the situation far more explosive than it had been described and realized it would be impossible to postpone independence for another 14 months. He set to work immediately and by the end

of June, he was able to announce that freedom would be granted by August 15, 1947. He succeeded in completing the task a year in advance. Reading the fascinating narrative in *Freedom at Midnight* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, one gets the impression that a Real-Idea was fulfilling itself almost instantaneously. Whether it is a Real-Idea that fetches instant results or a Seed-idea that produces results over some years, surely humanity can rid itself of all its problems with the power of such ideas.

It is desirable to find a solution, at least in thought, to the problems of the world. Arriving at the right solutions needs the support of correct information pertaining to that problem. Surely in this age of information there is no dearth of information and data. Any amount of information can be gathered through the Internet. Computers are only mechanical devices but have shown an amazing capacity for seeing connections between what appear to be unconnected matters. Walmart used computers to note the connection between sales of baby diapers and beer, which occurred when young fathers were sent by their wives to the store to purchase diapers. Rightly used, computers can expose the relationship between the recurring financial crises, the growth of speculative investment, rising levels of unemployment and income inequality. Such an approach may even give rise to original thinking in economics.

Newton and Socrates fully qualify as Original Thinkers. Original ideas have the power to completely free humanity from long-standing problems. Epidemic diseases like plague and cholera were once commonplace even in Europe. Now the world has almost forgotten them. Increasing population, once regarded as a curse, is now viewed from a fresh perspective as the power of human capital. While India was for long oppressed by the ancient idea of karma and Europe resigned to fixed limits on what can be accomplished, Americans expanded the horizons of human enquiry and affirmed the conviction, ‘If there is a problem, there must be a solution.’ *It is a perception of Infinity in practical life.*

“...even now the entire world is governed by some 15 or 20 original ideas.”

Since the dawn of civilization, humanity has been fascinated by the power of Ideas and ruled by them, Original Ideas, whose origin remains unknown. When the Englishman arrived in South India in the 17th century, apart from his trading and colonizing activities he also

took some interest in the cultural and literary aspects of the Indian civilization. He came upon the Tirukkural which is an ancient Tamil literary work made up of 1330 short couplets. It was translated into English, acquired international fame and has been translated into nearly 40 languages. Studying the Tirukkural, one can see that it is essentially made up of 13 original and major ideas. Perhaps even now the entire world is governed by some 15 or 20 original ideas. It would be a fascinating task to find out if we can add some more original ideas to the existing list. The flood of information that is available now tempts us to undertake such a task. It may not be a very difficult task to come up with solutions for problems that have been bothering humanity for the last 2000 years, if we freely exercise our minds in an original manner on these problems unconfined by conventional wisdom and established practices.

Thirty years ago, a decade after the triumphant release of *The Limits to Growth*, Orio Giarini submitted to the Club of Rome a report entitled *Dialogue on Wealth and Welfare*. In it he called for a re-examination of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in the present day context and challenged essential premises of modern economics, including the law of equilibrium between supply and demand. Smith was a moral philosopher. His studies were world-shaking. When his famous book was originally published, the Viceroy of India read it and was struck by its vision. The book organised thoughts that were not previously even observed with interest. Since then it has remained a fundamental basis for thinking in economics. Smith saw that Trade creates wealth and that division of labour is a creative strategy in a productive process. He did not fail to perceive a single social phenomenon of that period which had an impact on human welfare. This was a period in which what we now term service sector was very rudimentary. Smith considered most services insignificant economically. Now, Service Economy is a greater field of human productivity than industry and the market. The market brings human individuals together and creates a plane of social productivity, even as land in the previous period became a field that produced food grains. It is market that created and sustained Money.

Money is a vibrant social power. An economist in Brussels recently declared that economists do not have the mental capacity to understand Money. Money is not only a thing in itself. It is a great Power. In his second report to the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Certainty*, Orio Giarini focused attention on the increasingly significant role of Service Economy, challenging traditional monetary notions of value, cost and price and stressing the importance of utilization time and utilization value. He has thus revolutionized economic thinking. Economics is no mere academic subject confined to the factory or market, but an infinite field of human welfare and well-being. It is true that the world is usually indifferent to original philosophers. How many could really appreciate the original contributions of Socrates, Aristotle and Newton at the time they conceived their original ideas? Rather it is those who command power and great wealth that readily catch the attention of the public. Original thinkers may be known only to their immediate circle of friends and followers, not to the world at large. When original thinkers such as Giarini present perspectives that can solve acute problems, we cannot afford to neglect their consideration. His thought warrants such serious examination by economists today.

Nuclear weaponry is another field in which the problem persists. Initial progress has been made by decommissioning and dismantling tens of thousands of weapons, but weapons technology continues to proliferate and the threat of accidental or intentional use remains very

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*“An unambiguous declaration by the World Court that nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humanity can lead rapidly to total and complete global abolition of this pernicious threat to human dignity.”*

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real. So too, the American Civil War was fought to abolish slavery. The war was won. Slavery was abolished in law, yet it persisted in practice for another hundred years. India won freedom, but the Indian administration, her official language, her entire way of life for 60 years remained British. She grows now with dynamism in another direction towards the lifestyle of the USA. That is the idea of Freedom! It raises a question. Whether it is India or America, is it desirable to activate the attitudes you have fought against for so long, fought against with vehemence? The masses may behave that way. Can the elite espouse the same attitude? In that case, can we not hope to abolish weapons? The presiding powers are not final. There is always a higher authority.

Political and social reform movements gather strength gradually. In the initial period, those who lead the movement are only aware of the hurdles and opposition that they face, not the strength gathering imperceptibly in the background. Like the Arab Spring in Egypt, new political movements or parties are sometimes surprised by the wide support they garner. This is because the support was growing subconsciously. Segregation that survived a hundred years after the Civil War was suddenly swept away in half a dozen years after a black woman in Alabama named Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus. Her simple act of protest had the power to launch the Civil Rights Movement because she represented a wide public opinion that was not yet perceived. It was the right time and her move, though unconscious, was a right one. A handful of salt set in motion Indian Freedom when Gandhi launched the Salt Satyagraha in 1930. In an unprecedented vote of total public support, the entire nation rose as one Man. The present movement in India to rid the nation of corruption is an example of a movement that developed very gradually and then suddenly sprung to life with formidable intensity.

The world is ripe for a similar dramatic breakthrough in the evolution of global governance. It awaits an awakening call for unity to transform the life of humanity from nationalistic competition to truly global cooperation. Old conceptions of national sovereignty are waning. The hypocrisy of national self-interest pursued and national power asserted in the name of international democracy are exposed. The preparedness for unity is gathering strength beneath the surface unconsciously. It expresses most vividly in the universal endorsement of human rights and rapid advances in international law. In this altered environment, an unambiguous declaration by the World Court that nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humanity can lead rapidly to total and complete global abolition of this pernicious threat to human dignity.

We see many progressive developments in society, such as growth of knowledge, growing humanitarian sympathy and collective organized efforts to extend protection for people in need. In the United States a lot of attention is given to the rights of women and children and for the safety and welfare of the disabled. Europe has excelled in universalizing access to health care and support for the aged. The idea of Insurance is a brilliant concept that gave rise to a remarkable social invention. Two centuries after insurance was born, it became increasingly common for an Englishman to insure his life as soon as he got married as protection for his

wife and children in the event of his premature demise. Those were times in which the public was largely insensitive to the suffering of others, imprisoning debtors, ill-treating the disabled, and compelling orphaned children to forced labor. It was a period when strength was respected, weakness frowned upon. Yet in the very midst of such insensitivity, the new institution of insurance arose to provide protection to the vulnerable. It is a form of institutionalized collective self-giving. Viewed thus, insurance is a civilizing force without comparison. Five percent of global GDP is now generated by the insurance industry. In some countries, it even touches 7%.

*“The unwillingness to fully shed what is destructive or obsolete is at the root of all problems. Sri Aurobindo called it “the taste of Ignorance.””*

Everywhere we look, we find great wisdom mixed with persistent folly. Today we see the phenomenon of internet services offered free of charge. This tendency is a confirmation of the principle that the knowledge gathered by individuals in the society belongs to the society as a whole and therefore the benefits of that knowledge should also go to every member of the society. Indeed, this only reflects the underlying reality that every new achievement is an achievement of the collective based on the cumulative achievements of all humanity in the past. At the same time, we see a direct repudiation of this principle in the mindless adoption of every new technology leading to the growing problem of unemployment. The dynamism of capitalism is based on selfish efficiency and selfish greed. Speculation, its great ‘achievement’, is ruining the economy.

While we observe so many advances in thought, we have also seen the ‘wisdom’ that led to the production of 70,000 nuclear warheads. In retrospect, it is blatantly and almost inconceivably irrational. At a time when global governance is so essential, we find the UN hampered and stifled by the relic of veto power. In 1945, the veto was necessary to keep the balance in the UN, not after the demise of the Cold War. A wrong system destroyed from inside is the height of human wisdom. More than two millennia ago Emperor Ashoka found it right to eschew violence. In 1990 Gorbachev did it in the USSR, opened up apertures of self-destruction from inside the monolithic police state. So too, we see common sense thrown to the winds in the pollution of the environment. It was the Club of Rome that alerted the world in 1972 and slowed the pace of ruin. Everywhere we find this strange combination of progressive idealism and atavistic anachronism. The unwillingness to fully shed what is destructive or obsolete is at the root of all problems. Sri Aurobindo called it “the taste of Ignorance.”

In a normal and rational social climate we would expect knowledge to keep on growing and wisdom to be more and more in evidence. Giarini submitted several reports to the Club of Rome which had the immediate capacity to eliminate financial crises, and carried the long term potential of organizing economics on a wider basis for human security and welfare. His thought has not received the attention it deserves. Complementary currency was successfully introduced in Wörgl, Austria during the Great Depression with dramatic results. It eliminated 25% unemployment and revived economic growth in a few months. *Its underlying principle is a creative social dynamism.* Not only was the experiment stopped, but, in spite of more than 2000 other successful experiments around the world, its basis has not been fully recognized till now.

We also find another strange expression of remarkable progress existing side by side with persistent ignorance. In one Indian village, land value rose sky high to reach \$30,000 per acre. A farmer who had just sold his land came to the post office to enquire about making a cash deposit. The post master asked him what rate he had sold it for. Bang came the reply, "\$500 per acre". How do we understand this phenomenon? In another Indian village a reporter heard that five people in the same house were blind. At the house he learnt that they had not even heard about the possibility of cataract operation. In that part of the state, there was an eye hospital conducting free operations. The founder of the hospital had been awarded the Magsaysay Award for completing a million operations, yet the blind family was not even aware of the possibility of cure.

Such incidents exhibit the continued prevalence of appalling ignorance and sense of helplessness in the midst of abundant knowledge and unprecedented social power. Thousands of instances can be found in every country all over the world, not just in India. American researchers in the 1980s were surprised to discover through surveys that more than half of the respondents believed that the U.S.A fought against the Soviet Union in the 2nd World War. Noted British historian Paul Johnson was surprised to discover that British Air Force officers in the 1990s had never heard of the Blitz, Germany's strategic bombing of London in 1940! Those who want to expedite nuclear disarmament and end financial crisis in the world cannot afford the luxury of such an attitude. Solutions are not wanting, but openness to new ideas is. When the FAO gave a grim warning about impending food crisis in India in the 1960s, the then central agricultural minister resolved to make the country self-sufficient in food production within five years and India achieved it by launching the Green Revolution. When people bravely and resolutely confront a danger, they see that the danger retreats as quickly as it came. When England chose to resist the invading Nazi invasion to the last man, it was Germany that was forced to abandon the attack within a matter of months, compelling Hitler to turn his attention eastward. Hitler had badly underestimated the determination of the English to fight vigorously to preserve their freedom. Churchill made a similar error when he expected Soviet Russia to collapse in a few weeks under the German onslaught. It was Lord Mountbatten who insisted that the Russians would prevail because they were fighting for their freedom.

*“Few have the wisdom to speak only what they know for sure.”*

Foolish behavior can be expected among the truly ignorant. There is an old story about ten men who crossed a river and then stopped to ensure they had all crossed safely. Each man counted the group and found only nine members were present, forgetting to include himself in the count. We naturally expect better sense from educated informed experts, but few have the wisdom to speak only what they know for sure. Martin Luther called Copernicus a fool and an upstart astrologer for positing his theory of the heliocentric universe. Thomas Watson of IBM saw no future for computers. Keynes was a problem-solving genius, but focused attention on secondary causes rather than fundamental principles, an error that prolonged the 1929 crisis and distracts attention from underlying economic premises even today. Yet Russell did not hesitate to venture outside his field of accomplishment as a philosopher to strongly recommend Keynes to all governments.

When those who are responsible for solving the world's problems are not able to do so, it is better to consult history as to how similar problems were solved earlier, and how grievous

errors were committed which complicated situations. When we do so, we find a wide range of creative attitudes have spurred progress and eradicated problems in the past:

1. Pioneers in every field chose to do what no one had previously dared to attempt.
2. Great poets and thinkers fearlessly expressed their own inspirations unmindful of rewards or social recognition.
3. Dynamic individuals applied their minds to create new activities based on new conceptions and new types of organisation.
4. Society created symbolic instruments such as money, which summarise the whole of human experience in one field.
5. People established new types of settlements and communities, real and virtual.
6. Courageous venturers went beyond the fold of existing society physically, vitally, mentally, spiritually to create anew.
7. Creative individuals rose to higher levels of thought to fashion new ideals, values, and avenues of knowledge.
8. Keen observers studied natural phenomena to understand them and, if possible, master them.
9. Leaders gave up valuable possessions such as Power in favour of higher human endeavour.
10. Educators organised their experience to be passed on to future generations to abridge the time and effort required for learning.
11. Radical idealists resorted to violent Revolution to destroy the existing society.
12. Intelligentsia replaced aristocracy as a more informed and progressive system of government.
13. Social innovators founded new types of institutions such as Grameen Bank.
14. Explorers crossed the seas in quest of land or trade.
15. Free thinkers abandoned age-old beliefs, such as conventional religious dogma about the age of the world or position of the earth in the universe.
16. Seers directly discovered God to found new religions.

Though original thinkers and creative innovators have played such a useful role in social development and evolution, society has not been kind to them and more often has been alarmed by their activities than gladdened by them. History also illustrates the usual reception given by conventional society to progressive ideas and initiatives.

1. Pioneers have been mercilessly persecuted.
2. Though Shakespeare is hailed as a genius nowadays, in his own days he was largely ignored by his own countrymen until a Frenchman, Victor Hugo, proclaimed him a genius some 200 years later.
3. Many progressive new activities were ferociously opposed, as Andrew Jackson, the US President, vigorously opposed and closed America's first central bank.
4. Paper currency, the greatest creation, was regarded with deep suspicion and was refused the status of legal tender.

5. Education was heckled as a luxury for the elite. Even reading was frowned upon by the church during the early Middle Ages.
6. Children knowing more than their parents were regarded as an affront.
7. The rise of achievers in society was opposed tooth and nail.
8. When London was emerging as a great metropolis, it was still looked down upon by the country gentry.
9. The French aristocracy allowed itself to be guillotined in the Revolution rather than willingly change.
10. For centuries the founding of new institutions was opposed.
11. Innovations such as the steam engine were ignored for centuries and then vigorously opposed.
12. The telescope was called the devil's instrument.
13. Men killed their father or brother for the throne.
14. Crossing the sea once attracted excommunication. Trade was scoffed at.
15. Religion, even when it was blindly superstitious and dogmatically reactionary, was cherished.
16. Venerated saints were unpopular in their hometowns while they lived, and faced various forms of social ostracism.
17. Education was regarded as something unnecessary by land-owning aristocrats and even members of royalty.

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*“One immediate option is to move the World Court to re-examine their 1996 judgment and declare the use or possession of nuclear weapons as a criminal offence. If the world court was indecisive in the past, it need not be so now.”*

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The question before us now is whether it is wise and permissible for the current generation to exhibit the same negative and opposing tendencies to new ideas and values, as our forefathers have done in the past. The institution of slavery lived in spirit for a hundred years after the Civil War and law had abolished it. Society in America waited that long to overcome it. Now the same thing is happening with nuclear weapons. Though these weapons have no known use but pose a real and present threat to the security of countless millions, we are unable to act. If governments are not acting then it is only proper that the public at large should act in this matter without waiting anymore.

A global referendum calling for abolition of nuclear weapons can lead to the complete elimination of this threat now. Are there not other powers in the international community for us to evoke? One immediate option is to move the World Court to re-examine their 1996 judgment and declare the use or possession of nuclear weapons as a criminal offence. Compliance with Law in the shape of acts, contracts, especially international treaties, is

*“Speculation is greed, selfish greed which should have been outlawed a hundred years ago.”*

steadily growing. Treaties banning the use of chemical weapons are honored. Even corrupt politicians are known to obey court orders. The ICJ must be approached. If the world court was indecisive in the past, it need not be so now. The world has a right to expect and demand judicial activism from that august body. We see that religious mantras when repeated over and over do bring about some positive effects. In a similar way, if the ICJ unconditionally affirms the illegality of these weapons, it can compel compliance from governments that have until now been obstinate.

Over the past three decades, about 250 financial and banking crises have occurred around the world, moving with predictable regularity from one country to another. At the same time the world's financial assets have grown from \$12 trillion in 1980 to \$216 trillion, while income inequality has soared to the highest last seen centuries ago when less than three percent of the elite in Europe controlled all the wealth and power and occupied all positions of authority in government, church, military and universities. Obviously, there must be a relationship between the two phenomena. How do economists understand it and propose to deal with it? When the market crashed in 1929, the US economy was in the midst of its greatest boom. Every time a crisis or recession rears its head, it comes at a time when the stock market and the economy have been rising rapidly. In each case we find soaring levels of financial speculation preceding a sudden collapse. The irresistible lure of greater wealth during boom times brings a greater urge to risk, thereby fueling the speculative boom and setting the stage for a crash. Every country regulates activities it knows are detrimental to public health, human welfare and national security, but not speculation. Speculation is greed, selfish greed which should have been outlawed a hundred years ago. The political influence of financial powers backed by the naivety of the public permit it to endure. What prevents the world from banning speculation? The source of financial crises is not unknown or insoluble, if only the public demands immediate effective action. How is this attitude any different than that of the population that allowed millions to die because it refused to be vaccinated against the plague?

A youngster or a madman enters a classroom or meeting room and shoots a number of people. This is done in the name of freedom to bear arms! At a time when a pistol or musket could fire just one or two bullets with very limited accuracy, before it had to be reloaded by hand, surely America's founding fathers did not intend that every citizen has the right to possess an automatic weapon capable of firing hundreds of bullets in seconds with absolute precision – equivalent in power to that of a small army in those days. If the American people are ever fully educated about the dangers of hand guns and then consulted in a real public referendum, they will demand abolition of the right to bear arms which now threatens the security of every American. Simple common sense is more desirable than dying of the plague, getting shot in the classroom or being crushed by a financial crisis.

It is a privilege to be born as a human being, rather than as a member of a lower species. Knowledge is the most priceless possession of human beings, not power, not money, not convenience and comforts. Knowledge is the source of all the others. To value money or comforts more than knowledge is not the height of human wisdom. The Greek treasures were lost, but preserved by the Arabs. Europe went to a great length to recover them from



the Arabs. Now the whole of Europe, the whole world, is ruled by Greek thought. That is the right spirit of humanity. Copernicus' thought was suppressed for 70 years after the theological implications of his discovery were recognized. In those times it is understandable, not now. Can the world afford to wait even a year to consider new thoughts, original thoughts, a New Theory of Creation after they have been pronounced? It does not speak well for the poetic sensibilities of the world to have ignored an epic poem of unparalleled beauty and wisdom for more than a half-century.

Mahatma Gandhi was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times yet never received it. In 2006, the Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee acknowledged this as "the greatest omission in our 106 year history." It does not speak highly of the objectivity and rationality of its evaluation process. Knowledge seeks greater knowledge. Prejudice is to be condemned wherever it is found, especially in the field of knowledge. The word 'scientific' is not always used in its original sense. It has become a misnomer indiscriminately applied in the context of measurements and scales. Measurement is part of a scientific approach, but does not grant the status of science to any field. Even in serious academic gatherings, fresh and creative ideas are not welcome on their own merit. Rather they are judged based on the social standing of the speaker who is presenting them. Ideas must be evaluated on their own merit, not according to the status of the source.

*In the 18th and 19th centuries, Europe was the world.* Europe became the dominant power in the world because she had cultivated the power of Mind and functioned with the help of mental planning. Martin Luther symbolized the spirit of the questioning mind. Greek thought in the classical era was mainly the achievement of a few prominent thinkers. But when Mind awakened in Renaissance Europe it awakened in the common man and hence had a far more widespread impact on society. In Renaissance Europe, life prospered because it was energized and organized by Mind as never before.

“*One rule of Life is never give up in the middle.*”

Life vastly prospered in Europe because it was Mind that guided Life. Till today, the question why Hamlet delayed has not been answered, yet *Hamlet* is still regarded for its greatness. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicts the birth of mind in the European individual. The reason Hamlet hesitates to seek revenge against his uncle Claudius, who murdered Hamlet's father, remains an enigma even today. Hamlet was a young dynamic prince itching to kill his unfaithful mother, which his father forbade. He was ordered to kill Claudius instead. Enraged by his mother's incest, his vital urge was to punish her, not Claudius. His mind tried to compel him to the task unsuccessfully, even writing notes to remind him of his duty. His birth denotes the emergence of incipient Mind, which was indeed out of joint with the vital superstition of those times. He cursed himself that he was born to set it right. The instant his mother dies accidentally of drinking the poison intended for him, Hamlet kills his uncle

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*“The word ‘scientific’ is not always used in its original sense. It has become a misnomer indiscriminately applied in the context of measurements and scales.”*

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without hesitation. The strong vital went into action when the vacillating Mind was relieved of its duty. Mind enriched the life of Europe. Science, the basic scientific discoveries, came from Europe.

One rule of Life is never give up in the middle. Europe was unwilling to share power and riches with all. That stopped her progress from reaching its climax and life moved its center of action to the New World where everything was accessible to everybody. There European science transformed itself into scientific technology and brought an abundance of prosperity, comforts and convenience never before seen in the old world. Today, America is accepted as the leader of the world for her economic, political and military power. But that is not the whole truth. She possessed these endowments even before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. They did not bring her the recognition then. Two main factors have brought her the current preeminence: the first is the recognition and importance she gives to individuality and

the second factor is the freedom everybody enjoys to progress and advance. But, lately, even America seems to be losing her expansive spirit and is showing signs of a contracting and shrinking culture. She is unwilling to give up nuclear weapons, delays gun control domestically and thrives on overseas arms trade, refuses to ban or even tax financial speculation, neglects the environment, and disregards measures to guaranteed employment and human security. Out of tune with the need of the world at this hour and clinging to retrograde mentality, she may be left behind and forgotten as Greece, Egypt and Rome have been, as leadership moves to those who are more truly willing to lead. India has shown remarkable awareness of the evolutionary needs of our time by legislating guaranteed employment. The world no longer needs Revolutions, but demands Evolution. It is social evolution. Any nation that adamantly holds onto nuclear weapons, refuses gun control and encourages speculation cannot retain her premier position for long.

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*“India has shown remarkable awareness of the evolutionary needs of our time by legislating guaranteed employment.”*

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*“Problems such as we know are not real problems. They are of our own making and will disappear if we acquire the right attitude to new ideas and take the right initiatives.”*

Like the adults in Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale, economists continue to admire the emperor’s clothes. Mistaking money for economics, market for society, they refuse to examine a great thinker’s great insights about future prosperity. Very soon, the world will march ahead, weapons will be eradicated, full employment will be recognized as a fundamental human right, equality will be established, world currency will be instituted, the UN will abolish the veto, undemocratic nations and undemocratic global practices will become a thing of the past. Problems such as we know are not real problems. They are of our own making and will disappear if we acquire the right attitude to new ideas and take the right initiatives.

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## Creative Consciousness

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### Abstract

*Consciousness is creative. Creativity expresses in myriad ways – as moments in time in which decades of progress can be achieved overnight, as organizational innovations of immense power for social accomplishment; as creative social values that further influence the evolution of organizations and society; as the creativity of individuality in the leader, genius, artist and inventor; as social creativity that converts raw human experience into civilization; as cultural creativity that transforms human relationships into sources of rich emotional capacity; and as value-based educational creativity that can awaken and nurture young minds to develop and discover their own inherent capacity for knowledge in freedom. Through such moments do society and humanity evolve. Education is society's most advanced institution for conscious social evolution. Values are the essence of society's knowledge for highest accomplishment. Education that imparts values is an evolutionary social organization that can hasten the emergence of that creative consciousness.*

Moments are creative. New ideas are conceived, great works inspired, new nations founded, momentous results achieved in creative moments. Sri Aurobindo described moments of creative consciousness as virginally creative moments. At such moments, one feels vividly alive and expansively cheerful, a sure index of success, as evidenced by the lively disposition of the heroine Elizabeth in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Everyone values the creative disposition, but enjoys it only when it is active. Educating the mind eliminates the uncertainties from one's life. Educating the Spirit lifts it out of the non-creative frame of mind into one of ever-living creative consciousness.

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*“Consciousness  
is self-aware  
energy.”*

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Consciousness is self-aware energy. When it falls into a routine it becomes very efficient. When it breaks new ground, it becomes creative. When a man acts creatively, the public takes note. When a public speaker delivers a creatively inspired speech, he can hold the audience spell-bound or send them into raptures. A moving music performance can raise the audience to great heights of inner appreciation. Even a cook who succeeds in bringing out the subtle rasa (essential taste) of food can inspire deep appreciation. A reader's creative understanding can evoke an inspiring vision that approaches the borders of genius.

### 1. Organizational Creativity

Organizations also experience creative moments. Organizations are forged by centuries

of social experience. They emerge from creative activities that organize social existence into creative systems. The act is the unit of life, even as thought is the unit of mental life. Act-activities-systems-organization form a progressive chain. When an organization becomes creative, it can transform the social life of a nation, as the Green Revolution rapidly transformed the national life of India by helping the nation attain self-sufficiency in food production. Based on a creative impulse of inspired individuality, it became a movement of national spiritual renaissance. One of its many consequences was to launch a revolution in rural banking that awakened India's rural population to the attractions of urbanization.

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*“To examine history in terms of the development and evolution of organizations will be a rewarding endeavor for sociologists, philosophers and even politicians.”*

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Harlan Cleveland, a past President of the Academy, was creative with ideas related to organization. He conceived the idea of uncentralized organization. The Visa International credit card system captured his imagination as a dramatic example of the creative power of organization to spread worldwide in the field of consumer finance. The birth of the Internet is a more recent, broad and powerful instance of the same organizational principle which has permeated and transformed all aspects of global society. History has evolved from the history of kings into the history of peoples, nations, cultures, ideas, etc. To examine history in terms of the development and evolution of organizations will be a rewarding endeavor for sociologists, philosophers and even politicians. Cleveland understood the International Standards Organization (ISO) as another striking example of the role of uncentralized organization in the evolution of society. Ideas are a powerful basis for organization. Green Revolution was based on the idea of achieving food self-sufficiency, a seemingly impossible goal at that time, which India actually attained within five years. ISO is based on the idea that establishment of uniform technical standards will improve efficiency and quality of products and work and facilitate trade, which it has certainly done.

## 2. Values are Creative

Values are an even more powerful basis for organizations. Values are a form of subtle organization that guides understanding and decisions. Novels such as *Pride and Prejudice* and Trollope's *Dr. Thorne* bear witness to the enormous power of values for human accomplishment. The emerging values of individual freedom and social unity, which inspired Lincoln and galvanized America to abolish slavery and found a strong federal government after the Civil War, launched the USA on an evolutionary course that enabled it to emerge as the world's leading nation a century later. The emergence of values in society is a moment of creative organizational evolution. Society grows in many ways; commitment to high values is one. Moments in which society embraces a high value are creative moments.

*“Society grows in many ways; commitment to high values is one.”*

### 3. Creativity and Social Evolution

Obstructive anachronisms in the society acquire formidable force of resistance to progress. Only the physical destruction of war is capable of destroying them. Post war periods are known for their infectious social creativity. WWI was hailed as the war to end all wars. But the social psychology of Europe at that time thrilled with the intensity that war offered as an outlet for its pugnacious energies. An Englishman commented that forty years of peace was intolerable to the national psyche. So, the first war half-consciously prepared for the second war. It was assumed that this horrendous war would mark the end of all wars. The end of the second war offered abundant opportunities to end wars forever, but the subconscious urge to prolong the spirit of war was too pronounced. Hence, it was followed by the intense tension of the Cold War for another 45 years.

True to this theory, the great post-war periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were expansive social creativity. World War II was followed by the founding of the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the European Economic Community. The end of the Cold War was followed by the birth of the European Union and the WTO, and most especially the creation of the World Wide Web as the first truly global social organization. The full value of the Internet has not yet become apparent. It is a field of complex organizational growth in cyberspace, without which the advances of the last two decades would have taken centuries. Imagine the creative moment of such a field. The emerging revolution in online education is another creative evolutionary moment waiting to unfold.

Life is entirely creative. All her moments are creative moments. Each man has a different vision. For Steve Jobs, the founding of Apple Computers and launching of the iPod were such moments and their impact spread to reach the whole world. Trade is creative, creative of wealth. Money is the power created by trade. Coins, currency, checks, credit cards are its higher creative accomplishments. It was for trade that the English came to India. But they soon discovered an opportunity to found an empire. At a time of political confrontation in the early 1970s, the monetary benefits of trade motivated Nixon to make a trip to China, with momentous consequences which remain largely invisible, for it effectively eliminated the possibility of war between USA and China.

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*“Thirty years ago, a report submitted to the Club of Rome spoke about the essential role played by the service economy, the unorganized sector, and the non-monetarized sector. The author’s thought has not yet received the recognition it deserves. It is a work of a genius.”*

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Montessori, Summerhill and Glenn Doman mark creative moments in early childhood education. They all made education creative. For the child who is memorizing, a moment of original understanding is creative. Similarly, it is a creative moment for the teacher also when he shifts from addressing the memory of the students to addressing their creative minds.

Certain periods in history have been known as creative periods, such as the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in England. People living during such remarkable times will be creative in one way or another. Shakespeare is the most outstanding of many examples. Fashion marks a transient form of creativity at a shallow, superficial level. In many families and institutions there will be a highly creative person whose aura spreads through the whole family and institution. When that person leaves, the creative atmosphere also departs with him. The place loses its luster. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, Nehru went on the radio declaring that the light had been lost over India.

A creative leader or a creative ideal can now give to the world such an inspiring atmosphere. This is a period in which the entire world population can inwardly expand towards higher values of light and felicity. Even the negative indications are indicative of the opportunity. Half-way through Obama's first presidential term, there was a marked change of attitude towards nuclear weapons. After 20 years, the Palestinians revived their efforts for economic planning. The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy was founded in Germany and seeks a solution for the issues that affect the countries of the Levant. The Arab Spring is a negative movement, but a positive symptom of the Spirit of the times.

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*“When we aspire for what is already there, it can be described as ambition. When we aspire for what is as yet unrealized, it is creative aspiration.”*

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Fields like music and Market are wholly creative, each in its own way. Music has a creative effect when sound turns melodious. The market is creative of profits when it functions creatively. Traffic systems are quite ordinary and routine. But when we compare traffic systems in organized and unorganized countries, the creative role traffic regulation plays in promoting the welfare of a nation becomes apparent. Studying levels of corruption, implementation of human rights, implementation of law and levels of education reveal the complementary impact of each one on the others. Social Development is a creative field of study which is still in its formative stages.

#### 4. Individual Creativity

A foundation named after Croatian physicist Nicola Tesla is trying to identify young people with the potential for genius. The traditional belief is that geniuses are born and not made. Creative consciousness when cultivated can form the bedrock on which genius flowers. Thirty years ago, a report submitted to the Club of Rome spoke about the essential role played by the service economy, the unorganized sector, and the non-monetarized sector. The author's thought has not yet received the recognition it deserves. It is a work of a genius.

*“Evolution is not confined to biological species; it occurs in societies as well.”*

Creativity expresses through enormous energy. To organize that energy into consciousness is further greater work. Energy comes from aspiration. Aspiration for what? When we aspire for what is already there, it can be described as ambition. When we aspire for what is as yet unrealized, it is creative aspiration. Evolution is not confined to biological species; it occurs in societies as well. Evolution is organizing itself under the surface in every sector of society. The shift from memorization to understanding in education is a significant evolution in that field. It can go one step further from conscious understanding to subconscious or subtle understanding, intensifying the evolutionary process. It is not unknown in the world.

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*“The creativity of society accumulated as the achievements of a succession of creative moments over millennia is civilization. The distilled essence of civilization is culture.”*

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In business and politics astute leaders possess a subtle form of understanding capable of sensing the pulse of the market or the people. Such leaders become very popular. Steve Jobs says he acquired intuitive perception during six months of his stay in India and relied on it for crucial successes in his life, such as invention of the Macintosh computer, Pixar’s Toy Story, the iPod, iPhone, iPad and the highly successful Apple Stores. Lincoln possessed the uncanny intuitive sense to know just how much the public would support and tolerate and how far he could push the Northern states to abolish slavery without precipitating an open revolt. Food rationing introduced during the Second World War continued in South India until 1952 out of belief that removing it would lead to hoarding and sky-rocketing prices. The then Chief Minister of Madras Presidency, C. Rajagopalachari, intuitively perceived that rationing could be abolished without any ill-effects. People feared that prices would soar immediately. He was proved right when instead of rising, prices declined slightly. When people wondered how he managed to do it, he said that he did it relying on intuition. If the world’s knowledge of intuition is brought into the field of education, it would revolutionize the field and transform teaching into a creative process.

Science has immensely benefitted the world through the discovery of phenomena such as electricity and magnetism, etc. Equally momentous consequences will issue from the discovery of creative consciousness, rather the process that can result in creative consciousness. Even a momentary spark of creativity is highly productive. Sustained creative expression will benefit mankind in unimaginable ways.

## 5. Social Creativity

Society is creative and is characterized by periodic moments of momentous creativity. The creativity of society accumulated as the achievements of a succession of creative moments over millennia is civilization. That civilization is the essence of history which is itself the essence of social existence. The distilled essence of civilization is culture. Family is the creative social organization that nurtures the biological child to form the psychological citizen. The mother’s loyalty enriched by the father’s sense of responsibility form the flower-bed on which culture flourishes. The head of a family accepting responsibility for the whole

of the family can be called consciousness responsibility. The constitutional responsibility of a cabinet minister for all the actions of those in his department is the national symbol of it. The unwritten constitution places responsibility for whatever happens in the country in the hands of the Prime Minister.

The process of converting raw energy into creative energy for growth, development and evolution is common to all aspects of life. Our bodies convert the food that is consumed into physical energy for growth and transforms it into energy for healthy living and well-being at the physical level. Society converts raw social energy into organized productive energy and transforms it into cultural values such as honor and hospitality. The most advanced enlightened expression of this process is the conversion into cultural essence of life through education. What families, especially affluent aristocratic families, give to their children through private, personal education by tutors can now be made available to all the children of the world with the same flavor of human solicitude and affectionate responsibility. The World University Consortium can provide it to all who seek it. It can devise new courses that can bring to its process of learning by a process of teaching the higher value of learning for the child's consciousness.

## 6. Cultural Creativity

The mother is the main source of affection for the child. The wife who enters a man's life later on is a higher version of the same social emotion, whose highest expression is the sacred emotion of Love. Its birth is commonly vitiated by the social institution of marriage in which property is given central importance. If mercenary motives are not present and the child is raised with full affection, the human relationship formed around the child's psychological blossoming becomes the human efflorescence in old age. So great is its power that, according to ancient Tamil literature, it can prevent the graying on man's hair even in advanced age. This is its merest outer expression. Its inner cultural richness expresses as tolerance for the lapses of the younger generation. It is tolerance born out of the soul's inner freedom. That freedom can express as a playful cheerfulness which we find in the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, whose creative energies raise her whole family to a higher level of social life. Shakespeare's creativity is rich with subtle truths of life rising to the highest poetic expression, but mostly reflecting darker intensities of life. "Age does not wither" and "Whoever loved that loved not at first sight" are positive expressions of that creativity.

## 7. Creative Education

Great literature enriches ordinary daily life in many ways possible, but it mainly enriches the subconscious through its subtle faculty. The mind of the child is brilliantly receptive to the accumulated wisdom of the collective. However, formal education often buries this emerging wisdom. Fortunately modern technology can be commissioned to counter these ill-effects, as the iPod has done for music, capturing the world's imagination. When backed by proper technology, such courses can cater to the spirit of aspiring young humanity and awaken their imaginative faculties to develop inwardly and eventually blossom in full creative freedom.



Online courses for college students can be designed more easily than for lower level students. The lower one descends, the more intricate it becomes for various reasons. First, great care is needed not to spoil the innocence of young minds with organized social superstition. Children's minds are fresh and therefore can be easily contaminated. Moreover, no course can match the speed of a child's receptivity. Adult minds cannot appreciate the purity of a child's innocence of truth in goodness. Like a relay runner, the teacher must readily hand over the baton to the child to run further on its own.

*"Values are the organized capacities of the cultural forces of society imparted to the next generation as an individual possession."*

Society evolves by education. Sri Aurobindo called yoga an organized influence designed to take life to its maximum height by the shortest route. 'All life is yoga' is his mantra. Education is the next best. Values are the organized capacities of the cultural forces of society imparted to the next generation as an individual possession. Education that imparts values is an evolutionary social organization seeking to be born. The World University Consortium can be the vehicle for that accomplishment.

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## **Towards a New Paradigm in Education: Role of the World University Consortium\***

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### **Abstract**

*A new paradigm in human development must be founded upon a new paradigm in education. A human-centered educational system is needed whose aim is the fullest development of the capacities of each individual. Today humanity is on the cusp of a major transition in education, our most powerful instrument for conscious social evolution. Quality education can now be made universally accessible and affordable. Equally important, future education must be made relevant to the rapidly changing needs of society, the increasingly sophisticated demands of the labor market, the growing shortage of attitudes and skills need to promote entrepreneurship and full employment, the values needed for social harmony and problem solving, and the individuality needed for leadership, independent thinking and creativity. The coming revolution in education spurred by the breakthrough in online learning has made all of these goals achievable. New technology can facilitate a shift from the drudgery of passive knowledge transfer and memorization to the exhilaration of active learning that fosters curiosity, discovery and original thinking. It can also help break down the intellectual boundaries between disciplines, making possible a more comprehensive, transdisciplinary, integrated approach to knowledge. A revolution in higher education is upon us.*

Education is the most sophisticated instrument yet fashioned by society for its own conscious social evolution. Yet, ironically, evolution of the instrument itself lags far behind the evolution of the society it strives to promote. This lag is a natural result of the fact that human progress is largely a subconscious process occurring by trial and error. Conscious knowledge of the process usually dawns only after many repetitions of the actual accomplishment, just as great athletes acquire skills for proficiency long before they acquire the capacity to consciously transfer their knowledge to others. However, social change has now become so rapid that it is imposing severe pressure which the existing social fabric is unable to effectively absorb and assimilate, leading to fissures and fractures that retard smooth social transitions and threaten to undermine the stability of the existing structure. The multiple crises now confronting humanity during a period of rapid globalization are symptomatic of this widening gap. Therefore, there is greater need than ever before for conscious evolution of the instruments of education required to support the general evolution of society as a whole.

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\* Discussion paper prepared for the first meeting of the charter members of the World University Consortium at Library of Alexandria, February 12-14, 2014.

Analogies are inadequate, but it may not be inappropriate to say that the current system of higher education is akin to driving 1914 Model T Fords down modern superhighways. The Model T was the first mass produced automobile in the world. Until then cars were assembled one at a time in workshops the same way horse-drawn coaches were made in earlier centuries. Ford was the first to automate the process on moving assembly lines to produce a million a year instead of a few thousand produced by the old method. But the capabilities and quality of the Model T remained largely the same as its hand-crafted, custom-assembled predecessors.

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*“The movement of rapid change in global higher education is already underway and it is unstoppable.”*

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The massification of education like the mass production of automobiles a century ago will transform global society in ways that are difficult to even conceive today. The democratization of motorized transport activated and energized all aspects of society, ushering in the rise of the Middle Class and the century of the common man. The democratization of education is having equally dramatic impact now. As the right to vote became the symbol of democratic freedom in earlier times, the right to education has become a symbol of the right of all to a life of opportunity and prosperity.

Since 1914 the dirt and gravel roads for which the Model T was designed have been gradually replaced by four and eight lane motorways connecting major cities and production centers around the world. In parallel, the automobile has gradually been transformed from a functional horse carriage driven by an internal combustion engine into a highly sophisticated, computerized, electronic vehicle providing a range of capabilities and a level of quality inconceivable during the early days of the automobile. In contrast, both the methodology and content of higher education remain largely unchanged since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Granted that the range of specialized subjects has increased enormously and the range of information available to instructors and students has grown exponentially, the basic conception of education and pedagogy still closely resembles what it was in the universities of old. Today we have lightning fast superhighways for transmission of information and dissemination of knowledge, but we are plying these highways of cyberspace with pedagogical methods and concepts suited to a bygone age. Open access to lecture notes, audio and video on the web, and the production of highly fragmented, capsulized Massive Open Online Courses represent the Model Ts of future education. They are welcome pioneering initiatives and an indication of the vast opportunity that has emerged, but they are only rudimentary first steps in the remarkable journey of education that we have yet to clearly envision and have only just begun to traverse.

## **1. Challenge to Higher Education**

Scientific knowledge and the technology for processing and transmitting information are not the only things that have changed during the last hundred years. Radical changes have occurred in all aspects of human life – the aspirations, knowledge, values, skills and the practical organization of society for production, commerce, finance, employment, healthcare,

governance, law, entertainment and recreation have evolved commensurately in range, variety, quality, interconnectedness, richness and depth. Each of these changes imposes new demands on higher education, if it is to continue to serve as an effective instrument for rapid, harmonious evolution of global society.

While it is relatively easy to imagine the next incremental steps that can be immediately taken to improve on what prevails today, envisioning the future of higher education is itself a great challenge and a great adventure with limitless boundaries and potentials. Indeed, the pace and range of innovation based on existing models are so rapid and varied that it is very difficult to even monitor all that is happening and likely to unfold in the coming days. It is easy to forget that the first really successful MOOCs are just two years old, and since then the number of universities offering online education as well as the number of courses available and students enrolled have grown exponentially. Disseminating information on these initiatives and facilitating multiplication of institutions, courses and students involved are valuable services to the field of global higher education. This was one of the objectives with which the World University Consortium's website ([www.wunicon.org](http://www.wunicon.org)) was conceived.

But this is not the only challenge that needs to be addressed, nor perhaps the most vital and important for the World University Consortium (WUC). Regardless of what organizations such as WUC may do to support it, the movement of rapid change in global higher education is already underway and it is unstoppable. A more fundamental question concerns whether the present direction of the movement is the very best course for the future development of this field or whether present circumstances present both the need and the opportunity for a more radical change based on a new, wider and more insightful perspective regarding the potential contribution of education to the future evolution of human society.

For this reason, it is worthwhile pausing to reflect on the essential nature of education as a human activity and the fundamental role it plays in human development. A discussion of first principles may appear to be an unnecessary distraction or indulgence in intellectual speculation at a time when there are so many practical steps that can be taken to improve on the status quo. However, it may turn out that pausing to reflect on more fundamental issues at this stage may reveal the potential for catalytic actions that can radically accelerate and alter the trajectory of future progress to arrive in a few years at a point which may otherwise be reached only after many decades. Such critical tipping points are all too familiar. In retrospect it is evident that the end of the Second World War provided an opportunity for founding institutions for global governance of a more far-sighted nature than the UN system that emerged, which lacks the power needed to further the evolution of global society. Another great missed opportunity occurred in the early 1940s when US President Franklin D. Roosevelt laid plans to introduce immediately after the war a second Bill of Economic Rights in America, which included the right of every American citizen to remunerative employment; but he died before he could realize that goal. So too, at the time of the founding of the Bretton Woods institutions in 1945, a proposal was tabled by Keynes and seriously considered by both the USA and UK, before being eventually rejected, for introduction of a world currency as a common reserve fund for global development. Farsighted action then could have saved decades of global financial instability and dramatically accelerated world economic progress. Similarly,

we can now look back a quarter century and see that a great opportunity was missed at the end of the Cold War to completely eradicate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. Instead, we have seen the proliferation of nuclear powers and the extension of nuclear doctrines to re-legitimize possession and possible use of these weapons for the foreseeable future. Therefore, in our eagerness to focus on the imminently doable, let us not overlook the possibilities of a quantum leap forward for a new paradigm in global education.

## 2. Motives for Education

Obviously our conception of education varies with the purpose for which it is intended. That purpose has changed radically since the time when only a handful of clerics and aristocrats enjoyed the luxury of more than a rudimentary education. After the Reformation, Protestant religious leaders in Europe recognized, as their Hindu and Jewish predecessors had many centuries earlier, that education is a powerful instrument for acquisition and dissemination of religious teachings. Therefore, many Protestant nations spurred the spread of primary education to impart reading and writing skills to every member of the community and encouraged the development of universities to train members of the clergy. The rise of commerce in Europe stimulated the spread of numeracy for accounting and literacy for entering into commercial contracts. The growth of scientific knowledge during and following the Enlightenment fostered development of new scientific disciplines. The explosive growth of technology during the Industrial Revolution gave rise to applied technical education in agriculture and various fields of engineering as well as technical training to impart vocational skills. The development of modern corporations and sophisticated markets drove the need for those with specialized knowledge in business and finance as well as for many more people with a broad general education needed to fill positions in government and business administration. Rising levels of prosperity stimulated demand for an ever expanding range of professional services. The increasing formalization and technological sophistication of modern economies have further increased the demand for educated and trained personnel, effectively converting the college degree from a symbol of social status into a passport for employment and higher income.

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*“Education is the process by which society consciously passes on the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the past to future generations in a concentrated and abridged form.”*

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All these motives continue to drive the spread of education today. But beyond the obvious utility which higher education serves, it also serves two more fundamental purposes. First, the political, economic and social success of modern society depends to a very large extent on the education of its citizenry. The type, level and quality of education have become important determinants of the quality of the citizenry and its capacity to function in increasingly democratic social environments, where external authority and pressure for social conformity are replaced by greater freedom for individual freedom, choice and initiative. Second, the

capacity for individual achievement, welfare and well-being in modern society depends to a very great extent on education as well. The type, level and quality of education have also become important determinants of individual accomplishment – of the capacity to compete and cooperate with others economically, adapt to technological advances, and adjust mentally and socially to the challenges and opportunities of rapid social change.

### 3. First Principles

Education is ubiquitous in modern society – at home, in schools, in the workplace and in the media. It is one of the highest priorities and most prevalent activities of individuals, families, organizations and countries. Yet the essential nature of education, its rightful role in human life, the process by which it occurs, the most appropriate goals, methods, content, duration and applications are far from self-evident. Like the artists' conception of beauty, it is easier to recognize than define or explain. Like the proverbial six blind men who touched different parts of the same elephant and described very different discoveries, we each tend to see a part of what education is rather than the potential of the whole of what it can and should become. Therefore, it may be appropriate to start with the most fundamental of all questions on the subject: What is Education? What is its purpose? Who is to be educated? What is its process? These questions readily evoke a wide range of valid answers, appropriate to different applications and contexts.

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*“The essence of education is the capacity to learn and the fundamental process of education is the process by which human beings acquire knowledge.”*

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At the most fundamental level, we may say that education is the process by which society consciously passes on the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the past to future generations in a concentrated and abridged form, so that the youth of today can start off at the furthest point that earlier generations have attained, rather than having to rediscover the same knowledge over and over again in each generation. In this sense, education is the social institution that most clearly distinguishes human societies from those of other species, whose acquisition of knowledge is confined to the experience of a single lifetime or passed on subconsciously through heredity rather than consciously through an ever increasing breadth and depth of organized knowledge.

The life of society evolves by increasing consciousness of the challenges and opportunities presented by individual and collective life and increasing organization of its activities to effectively channel its energies and capacities to meet those challenges and opportunities. Education fosters the awakening of consciousness in the individual and the internal organization of each individual's personality as capacity for accomplishment. Society provides the external organization needed to catalyze the spread of that awakening until it saturates the whole society and to organize all its activities to support higher accomplishment by the collective. The individual and the collective are two poles, two inseparable, mutually interacting and interdependent components of the process of social development. Education is a principal means for the integration of individual capacity with social needs and opportunities.

This definition describes the social role of education, but not the process of education itself. All too commonly we confine our conception of education to that which takes place within the walls of university classrooms and results in the awarding of a certificate of achievement. But education is not an activity confined to the classroom and the textbook. Nor does it depend on whether knowledge is delivered by a live lecturer, obtained from a textbook, acquired from an on-line course or newspaper or life experience. In its widest sense, all life is a field for education and every human activity provides opportunities to learn. *The essence of education is the capacity to learn and the fundamental process of education is the process by which human beings acquire knowledge.*

#### 4. Dimensions of Higher Education

As there are many purposes and social applications for education, so too education can take place at multiple levels that are not directly dependent on the number of years spent in formal learning. There was a time when the basic skills for reading and writing were considered clear evidence of education, or even of genius. One principal aim of education is to develop a wide range of skills – physical skills for reading, writing and mentation; social skills for instruction, communication, relationship, teamwork and leadership; and psychological skills for understanding, judging and managing oneself, other people and social situations.

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*“True rationality only commences when we are able to set aside the prevailing beliefs and accepted wisdom, be it scientific or religious, to see and think freshly from first principles and new perspectives.”*

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The capacity to recall a wide range of memorized *facts* or to recite long passages from literature was a prominent attribute of the educated in previous centuries when both learning and scholarship were largely associated with the capacity for memorization. Memorization still remains a major component of education at all levels. The exponential growth of information combined with the exponential expansion of capacities for storage and retrieval have progressively shifted the emphasis from the capacity to memorize to the capacity to understand what one can recite. Understanding is a higher order faculty than memorization. It arises by coordinating two or more facts and relating them to one another as *thought*. At a more abstract level, the coordination and relating of two or more thoughts give rise to *ideas* that are several steps removed from observable fact. Most education today stops with analysis and evaluation of facts and ideas at the level of understanding. The development of other mental faculties such as observation, discrimination, comparison, and judgment is given less emphasis.

Beyond these, education can serve a still more profound purpose. It is the principal means for fostering the development of three characteristics that are essential for the future development of both society and its members – independent thinking, creativity and individuality. Although we may flatter ourselves that we are thinking all the time, most of what we are

doing is observing and coordinating facts or ideas and organizing them within the perceptive mass of previously accepted understanding. Real thinking is far more rare and rarefied. It arises from a fresh perception and inquiry into the validity of facts, concepts and perspectives that form part of humanity's commonly accepted body of knowledge. True rationality only commences when we are able to set aside the prevailing beliefs and accepted wisdom, be it scientific or religious, to see and think freshly from first principles and new perspectives, as Einstein did in challenging the reality of absolute space and time and Darwin did with respect to biological evolution. The capacity to question originally is a far more powerful form of mentation than to recite or understand with facility, a more difficult faculty to acquire but one that can still be prepared and consciously fostered through education.

The grades of purely mental education from memorization to understanding to independent thinking can be extended to include other capacities which are normally attributed only to genius, but which also can be actively fostered through education. The inordinate preoccupation of modern education with specialization, classification and analysis neglects development of higher mental capacities essential for effectively addressing the challenges and opportunities confronting individuals and societies today, including the capacity to view things as aspects of a greater totality, to perceive the complexities of interrelatedness, to synthesize and reconcile apparent contradictions and to integrate disparate aspects of reality within a greater whole.<sup>1</sup>

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*"A truer measure of education is the awakening of the student's capacity to actively seek and acquire knowledge on one's own, to question and think independently, creatively and even originally."*

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The conscious development of individuality and creativity is also largely neglected by current educational systems. In practice we tend to regard education in a manner similar to mass production of goods, as a process of gathering together raw materials (people and knowledge), applying energy (physical and mental effort) and fabricating finished products (knowledgeable people). We tend to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of this process in terms of the quantity and quality of information transmitted from instructors to students, rather than in terms of enhancement in the capacity of students to learn. For most people education is synonymous with a degree, irrespective of what has been learned. But the acquisition of a degree may be a poor measure of the true quantum and quality of knowledge acquired. A truer measure of education is the awakening of the student's capacity to actively seek and acquire knowledge on one's own, to question and think independently, creatively and even originally.

The transmission of values has always been one of the central aims of education. Values relate to all levels and aspects of life – physical, social, mental, psychological, ethical and spiritual. They represent the quintessence of cultural knowledge for survival, accomplishment and harmonious living, which society has acquired over centuries. Family life, religious training, formal education, work and life experience all present opportunities for the trans-



mission and acquisition of values. The advent of modern secular, scientific education has increasingly restricted the conscious transmission of values to mental, organizational and work values, leaving the transmission of core human values to informal social learning. The effort to be purely objective has stripped education of its most valuable essence.

Education legitimately encompasses this full range of objectives – training of physical, social and psychological skills; absorption of factual information; understanding of subject-related knowledge; development of higher mental faculties for thinking and creativity; and acquisition of values for social accomplishment and personal fulfillment. Beyond them all lies the more fundamental objective of awakening and fostering the latent capacity of each person to fully develop his or her own unique individuality.

## 5. Person-centered Education

Education as it is conceived and practiced today focuses on the transmission of information, knowledge and skills from one generation and one person to another. Yet the century that is emerging is one in which information is ubiquitous and available at our fingertips (or eyelids). Technology is rapidly eliminating the demand for many physical and mental skills that were once deemed essential for survival. The compartmentalized, fragmentary knowledge of the past is increasingly inadequate to meet the needs of a society that is rapidly changing and multiplying in complexity. The essential knowledge, skills and facts needed for survival in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century are insufficient for the 21<sup>st</sup>. The capacity to adapt has become far more important than the capacity to repeat what has already been learned. The capacity to innovate, invent and imagine is of greater practical utility than the capacity to retain and recall. The capacity to relate socially and organizationally to an ever-expanding physical and virtual network of others requires a shift in values from acquisition and competition to cooperation and sharing, from hierarchy and authority to freedom and equality. How far does the present and emerging system of global higher education answer the needs of humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Far less than is needed, far less than is desirable, far less than is possible.

The need for a new paradigm in education calls for a shift similar to that which is required in every other dimension of modern society, a shift from quantity to quality, from impersonal massification to personalized customization, from mechanism to live interactivity, from things to people, from collective conformity to individual innovation, from conventional wisdom to independent thinking. Fortunately, recent developments are creating opportunities to freshly conceive, design and orchestrate a radical shift to a new person-centered paradigm. The shift to a new paradigm in education involves a change in focus, emphasis and methodology in at least five dimensions:

1. **Development of capacities:** There needs to be a shift in objective and emphasis from the transfer or transplantation of information and understanding to the awakening and development of the capacity to inquire, search, learn and think for oneself.
2. **Active Learning:** As every good teacher knows, we learn most by sharing our knowledge with others. It is time to extend that privilege and opportunity to everyone.

There needs to be a shift in reliance from passive learning by listening and receiving to active learning that comes from sharing, communicating and teaching others. As Wikipedia shifted responsibility for encyclopedic knowledge from a few specialized experts to the reservoir of knowledge and experience possessed by millions of people, education should enlist the interest, release the energy and actively engage the faculties of each student to learn for oneself and also help others learn.

3. **Life-Centered Knowledge:** There should be a shift from the emphasis on narrow fields of specialized knowledge related to a specific career to a more inclusive knowledge that encompasses major dimensions of human life, including the social skills and psychological attitudes needed for adjustment and achievement in a networked society, knowledge of the increasingly complex organization which modern society has become, values that promote cooperation with others and harmony with the world around us.
4. **Integration:** There needs to be a shift in emphasis from classification and analysis to synthesis and integration, from studying the parts to discovering the interrelationships and interdependences between them, from contrasting apparent opposites to reconciling contradictions within a wider perspective and conceptual framework.
5. **Individuality:** The greatest, most important type of integration needed is to relate and integrate education and its accumulated knowledge with the real needs of society and the individual, to impart to each person capacities for wider adaptation, initiative, self-reliance, leadership, cooperation, innovation, independent thinking, imagination, creativity and harmony.

## 6. Conclusion

Society does not advance in a homogenous manner. New paradigms do not emerge in a day or supplant existing paradigms overnight. The new emerges under cover of the old and gradually grows in prevalence until it becomes dominant. The old persists long after it has lost its supremacy and may long continue to serve a functional purpose. Today we have arrived at a critical juncture where perpetuation and extension of the existing paradigm in education and other fields are grossly inadequate to meet the needs of humanity. Emerging technology has created the opportunity for a rapid extension of the existing paradigm in education to many who, until now, lacked sufficient access. That quantitative extension is both essential and inevitable.

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*“There is also a pressing need to move beyond existing concepts and models to conceive and implement a system more capable of tapping the rich human potential that remains largely undeveloped and neglected by the existing system.”*

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New paradigms build on the old, as Einstein built on Newtonian thought. Saturation of achievement at the previous level is a condition for evolution to a new level, as agricultural

revolution is an essential precondition for industrialization. Universalization of the existing system of education is a necessary basis for elevating the quality, content and nature of education, and can be of immense practical benefit. But at the same time, there is also a pressing need to move beyond existing concepts and models to conceive and implement a system more capable of tapping the rich human potential that remains largely undeveloped and neglected by the existing system. The World University Consortium can play an important role in promoting advances in both spheres, facilitating more rapid extension of the old paradigm while creatively catalyzing the emergence of a new one.

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## **Notes**

1. Ivo Šlaus and Garry Jacobs, "Recognizing Unrecognized Genius", [Cadmus](#) 1, no.5 (2012): 1-5.