



Where are we in History?

Reflections on the New Core Work of the 21st Century

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I am deeply aware that I am indebted to dozens of exceptional persons, both mentors and friends – persons who saw in me more than I often saw in myself. With one exception, I cannot begin to name them here. If you see value in this piece, it is in large measure because so many invested time, energy, heart and mind in me and my development.

The exception is Heather Mae (Ross) Nelson. On September 22, 1960, when she committed her life to me, and I committed mine to her, neither of us understood what we were getting into. Over 63 years Hezzie has created the supportive space that enabled me to test and adventure beyond the limits of what it is to be a successful male in our Modern Techno-Industrial Canadian culture. Without her my work – exploring how history works, where we are in history and what we would do if we knew what we were doing – would have died decades ago. I cannot do more than begin to express my wonder than she loves me and how thankful I am that she chose to travel and stick with me.

Preface

A Preface is meant to prepare you for the experience of working through the material that is to come. This is done by explaining the intention and structure of the work.

To begin, what follows is an essay, not a book. It is a limited inquiry into a particular question. I am aware that this focus means that a host of interesting, important, but ultimately ancillary, issues will only be touched on or acknowledged in a footnote, but not dealt with in a satisfying way. The benefit is found in the length of this piece. It is already long enough to demand stamina.

The core question of this essay has been central to my life and work for at least six decades. It can be asked in these words: *“In the early 21st Century, do we who are Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) peoples and cultures really know who we are and what we are doing?” “Is our grasp on reality as surefooted as we assume it is?” “Are the ways we identify the existential risks to our future, and to the future of so much we love about this planet, as reliable as we claim they are?” “Or, is there a serious chance that we are kidding ourselves; that we are simply wrong about the superiority of the routine ways we present ourselves to, grasp and respond to reality; that today we are in a kind of trouble that is both far deeper and far different from that which we now claim it is?”*

You will see that I have grave doubts about our confidence and our character. These doubts undercut what I see to be an inadequate understanding of where we are in history and an ill-founded confidence that our core work of the 21st Century is to double down on the only work we have known for centuries – to improve and extend our MTI cultures and consciousness world without end.

I shall lay out a road map of our journey. I use the Introduction to expand on the ideas in the above paragraph. I want it to be clear that in my own mind my critique of our MTI form of civilization is more than another all too vague cry of alarm and a call for a new tomorrow.

Section I lays out my response to the question, “Where do we who are MTI peoples and cultures think we are in history?” I do so by drawing on the experience of my home province of Alberta, Canada as an exemplary of our MTI cultures.

Section II explores the nature and psychology of two mental models – S Curves and Nested S Curves. Both are useful when it comes to understanding and exploring the above question.

Section III uses these two models to explore the question: “Where do we who are MTI peoples and cultures think we are in History?”

Section IV explores the question: “But what if we are wrong?” I fear we are.

Section V explores: “The Adventure of the Exodus that Awaits Us.”

Introduction

I can no longer avoid writing this essay.

I say this for many reasons: my age, my life's work, what I have come to see as the deep dynamics of the 21st Century, our congenital blindness as Modern Techno-Industrial¹ (MTI) peoples and cultures to our actual situation, and the promise of a future we refuse to know, love and pursue. As for my age, I am 83. For me, it is literally *"now or never."* As for my work, I have invested my life in exploring and seeking to understand how human history actually works, especially how particular futures emerge out of the wide range of possible futures which we as peoples and cultures have faced over some 300,000 years. I have also focussed on the roles we play and the agency we do and do not have in these dynamics as persons, communities and whole cultures. Finally, using whatever insights I have garnered, I have explored the question of who and where we are in history.

This latter issue is the focus of this essay.

The questions I shall explore are these: *"Are we who are Modern Techno-Industrial (hereafter MTI) peoples and cultures actually where we assume we are in history?" "If not, why not?" "Why can't we see this matter more clearly?" "What are we missing?" "What difference might it make if we are wrong?" "What price must we pay in order to know ourselves, our present predicaments and our future prospects with greater reliability?" "What promising futures will we not co-create because they lie beyond our present MTI imagination and aspirations?"*

My life-long work as a futures researcher and teacher/practitioner of strategic foresight has led me to conclusions which are heart-breaking; to anticipations of a future I now fear. If my sense of these things is at all adequate, then we who are MTI are in far more and far deeper trouble than we now understand or are prepared for. Worse, my conclusions are insights which we, as MTI persons, communities and whole cultures, have little inclination or capacity to even hear, much less respond to courageously. This is not good news for any child who is ten today.

¹ I use the phrase *'Modern Techno-Industrial'* as a technical term to denote the *form of civilization* which now dominates planet Earth, including Canada. Our MTI roots began to grow in North Western Europe about 1,000 years ago. The emergence of the MTI form of civilization was stimulated by the Renaissance and nurtured by the Reformation. It flowered with the rise of science in the 17th Century. It provided the foundation for the 1st Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century and several additional Industrial Revolutions since. It is the only way of construing and responding to reality that most of those who wield serious power have ever known. Most of them do not understand that as MTI persons living in MTI cultures they are wholly owned products of our MTI form of civilization. Worse, they do not think that their ignorance matter matters. In this piece, I beg to differ.

Put simply, I have concluded that we who are Modern Techno-Industrial peoples and cultures are not where we think we are in history. Therefore, we are preparing for, investing in and counting on a future that is not going to happen as we now anticipate it. Rather, as I shall explain, we face a future which will deepen our existing trauma. We and our descendants will know despair, both personal and societal.

As I see things, most MTI cultures², not only the North American versions, are already suffering from substantial degrees of post-traumatic stress. The trauma has been induced by our inability as MTI cultures to comprehend and respond with wisdom and a deep sanity to the increasing chaos caused by the mashing together of such things as the systemic superficiality of our MTI ways of knowing and being, the financialization of our hearts, minds and cultures, our tragically inappropriate responses to 9/11, the Global Credit Crisis, the shenanigans of OPEC, the unchecked power of those who first developed global virtual platforms, the opportunism of Russia, the revival of the ancient ambitions of China³, the exhaustion induced by the variants of COVID, and the slow disintegration of our own MTI ways of being and living as we slide towards more extreme forms of individualism. Obviously, this list is not exhaustive.

Worse, the scale of the stresses which await us in our actual future will further weaken our capacity to act coherently, both as persons and whole communities. We are caught in processes which, already, are deepening distrust. Already, there is a lively sense among us that many of those who lead our major institutions are out of their depth. The sense is out there that too many of our leaders appear to understand that learning how to succeed in an MTI culture is not at all the same as knowing how history actually works. In turn, their ignorance deepens our suspicion, our cynicism and our paranoia. *Many are asking themselves: "Why, then, do we listen to them?" "Why do we still allow them to command our lives?" "What possible justification is there for the wealth they extract from our culture; wealth which exacerbates an already outrageous inequality?" "Who, then, can we trust?"* To make matters worse, none of these dynamics will better equip us to make reliable sense of what is going on within and among us and respond to it courageously with a fresh imagination.⁴

I am saying that, as far as I can see, in this and the coming decades, personal, community and societal despair will deepen and be unavoidable. Unwittingly, by our past actions, deep despair is already baked into our future as MTI peoples and cultures. If this is the case, then you will understand why I have long sought a "*post-despair*" hope; a grounded hope that lies the other side of despair. I speak of a depth of hope that will enable us to face, explore, and work

² My focus on MTI cultures should not be taken to indicate that I lack either knowledge of or care for peoples and cultures which are not MTI cultures. However, given our power, if MTI cultures fail, the human project may also fail. We have the capacity to take down the rest of the world with us.

³ It is well known that China has long imagined itself to be the centre of its world, the "middle" or "central" kingdom to which all in their world must kowtow. Until recently, China's world was what we now see as East Asia. It is not unreasonable to see Premier Xi Jinping's Belt and Road initiative as a statement that China now sees its world as including all of Asia, Europe and Africa, with lessor but still significant aspirations for South America, the Arctic and Antarctic. As he imagines the future, must all these peoples come to kowtow to China?

⁴ In the 1960s, Professor Russell Ackoff, at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, used the concept of "messes" as a technical term to capture the situation we are in. Recently, the Cascade Institute revived the notion that we are in a [polycrisis](#). I find that both concept are useful.

through our responsibility for the mess of wicked living messes in which we now find ourselves; a depth of hope which overcomes denial and the projection of blame onto others. With such hope, cynicism becomes a tool to pierce the superficialities of our MTI cultures, but cynicism cannot be the last word about us. Rather, in the reality I know, grace, love, forgiveness, beauty and conscious co-creation have the last word.

On this foundation we can clean up, suit up and show up as prophetic warriors. We can recognize the impulses to hold on to our MTI identities for what they now are – temptations to be named and resisted. We can learn to face the reality that the processes of collapse of our MTI form of civilization have begun; that they are irrevocable. This will be hard; harder than war. We face an enemy whom we should learn to forgive and love. As Pogo Possum observed, *“The enemy, he is us.”*⁵

Over my life, I have developed mental models⁶ which have enabled me to see, explore and understand the collapse of our MTI cultures. I have seen enough that I now take it for granted that in my lifetime our MTI form of civilization has peaked. This means that today we are past *“Peak Modernity”* and into the ever-increasing incoherence of cultural and civilizational decline. Of course, as MTI peoples and cultures, the vast majority of us are not yet aware that this is our situation in history or what it portends about our future. For example, this means that *“progressives”* who are calling for an end to the MTI *“system”* are pushing on a door which already is inching open. Nor do the older white men – for they are mostly older white men – who are trying to nail shut the door to a truly new future know that the MTI order of things, the only world they have known, the world they hold on to with increasing desperation, is not long fit for life on this planet, regardless of what they do. In my view, there is not another century left in our MTI cultures as the way of life which dominates the Earth and its peoples. To continue to try to extend its life is both foolish and tragic.

I have also come to see the reality that truly new life, life beyond MTI, is already emerging within and among us. As I experience this moment of history there is a palpable, if still somewhat incoherent, hunger emerging within and among hundreds of millions of us for truly new ways of living. The desire is real for ways of living that are aligned with and able to meet the novel conditions and requirements of the 21st Century; for lives and communities that are wise, prophetic, visionary, courageous, respectful, self-limiting, secure, prosperous, playful, inclusive, innovative, sustainable, deeply humane and easily moved to both tears and laughter. Dr. William (Bill) Rees, sharpens this vision in this way: he sees as a *sine qua non* our continued human existence *“a way of being on Earth in which humans can live spiritually satisfying, economically secure lives more equitably within the means of nature.”*⁷

⁵ See Walt Kelly’s *“Pogo”* April 1, 1970. *The first Earth Day*.

⁶ Since this is an essay, not a book, these models will not be explored here. Should you be interested, I work with a four layer causal layered synthetic model, the deepest level of which contains the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the form of civilization which a given culture exemplifies. If you are interested you can see the development of this model [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

⁷ These words are on the final slide of Bill’s recent presentations. See [“Will Modern Civilization be the Death of us?”](#), [“Too clever by half, but not nearly smart enough: Why societal collapse is increasingly likely.”](#) I recommend them to you and [his recent interview with Nate Hagens](#).

In my view, Bill is quite right about what it is we need. But caution is advised. Needing a new form of civilization, even being hungry for it, is not at all the same as being on a secure path to achieving it. This is particularly true when, as I shall explain, we do not yet have reliable models of the kind of transformative evolution we require. In short, much of today's talk about "*new tomorrows*" is ungrounded and wrong-headed. Much of the talk about "*societal transformation*", unknowingly, is still promoting a future which, when you scratch under its surface, is mostly a vision of a better MTI world. By and large, our aspirations for the future are still caught up in a web of MTI presuppositions, myths, images, paradigms, logics, conclusions, aspirations and identities. Therefore, as yet, few of our imaginings of a future are deep and powerful enough to break the unseen bonds of MTI ways of being; of reaching what I call "*civilizational escape velocity*."

At this stage, the important point is that the hunger for a more human future is growing, as is our dissatisfaction with things as they now stand. This impulse offers the opportunity to begin new conversations, develop new understandings and embody new commitments to make the differences which are required to make the differences we need. But this road will be rocky and treacherous. Consider that, as the grip of MTI presuppositions, myths and storylines weakens on our MTI cultures, the resentment, anger and spite of many who have been unseen and voiceless will become part of the conversation for the first time. We must learn to hear their cry and engage them as casualties of our MTI cultures. Such people are not our enemies. Given that we have overlooked and neglected them, their inability to engage in well-schooled conversation should shame, rather than surprise, us. We who have succeeded in MTI cultures have participated in their formation. We are culpable at levels we have yet to see, much less own up to or make amends for.

Make no mistake, we face an extraordinary, even historically unprecedented, challenge. The collapse of our MTI cultures is now guaranteed. Escaping the grip of our MTI formation is now required. Nevertheless, even these events are not the end of the game. While vitally important steps, they are only a moment of personal and cultural evolution in a much longer story. The heart of the story is our willingness to learn to undertake work which is utterly new in human history – to *consciously and reflexively nurture into robust and resilient being persons, communities and whole cultures which transcend, out-grow, our MTI formation*. Those who embrace this work will have good reasons to get out of bed every morning. May there be many, since the emergence of the next form of human civilization depends very much on us.

As you can see, this piece is directed primarily to those of us who are reasonably successful Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) persons who live within reasonably successful MTI cultures. It is directed to us because we who are successful MTI persons in successful MTI cultures are the ones who, largely unwittingly, have created the conditions which have made post-despair hope an unavoidable requirement for living well in the 21st Century. We who are MTI peoples and cultures bear the primary responsibility for creating the life-threatening mess of complex living messes in which almost eight billion people on planet Earth now find themselves enmeshed. Since our MTI cultures dominate the planet with increasing thoroughness, the extraordinary challenges we face are largely our doing. By our past and present actions we have forced all others to share our fate with us. Because of us, the long-term future of all humanity and much else that we love about this Earth is now in question. Given our dominance, if we who are MTI

fail, the human experiment on this Earth may well fail.⁸ At the least, it will be so severely damaged that rebuilding flourishing MTI cultures will no longer be an option.

Of course, I too, am among those to whom my words are directed. I am a person who now knows I am a white, privileged, MTI male who was formed in and by a MTI culture. I, too, was taught to become and be what my culture wanted me to be. This is a game I willingly played, especially when I was younger.

That said, I am also aware that I have also been blessed and privileged beyond measure. I have been nurtured and loved by a host of extraordinary persons who have encouraged me not only to grow up and be a responsible MTI citizen, but to adventure beyond the boundaries and limits of my MTI formation and our MTI cultures. My conviction that post-despair hope is warranted; that the disintegration and collapse of our MTI form of civilization need not be the end of history, is grounded in the joy, damage and tragedy of my own adventuring. I owe my life to those who have encouraged my adventuring and adventured with me.

My first intention in writing this piece, then, is not to depress you. Rather it is to help you see that you too are, or can become, an adventurer in the service of not merely your own life, but of the personal-to-civilizational transcendence which must become the core work of the 21st Century. As I see things, the time is ripe for this new work. Many of us are warming up to it. Such persons are finding that they are more ready for it than they ever imagined.

My second intention is to help you see that personal-to-civilizational adventuring is now required of us as persons, families, communities, organizations and whole societies. The future of humanity hangs on our willingness and our efforts to out-grow, to transcend, the MTI apprehension of and response to reality. A better version of our MTI selves and cultures simply will no longer do. This point was made by *The Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Alberta* a generation ago, "It is no longer good enough merely to learn how to do better what Albertans already do well."⁹ Sadly, if typically, we in Alberta have proved to be resistant to this life-giving insight.

This piece has been written for you, if you are a person who is worried by much that you are noticing about your world. For example, that:

- Ours is a time that is deeply troubled and disturbing, more so in my view than any since the 1920s, '30s and early '40s.
- The somewhat boring, but far more stable, world of the second half of the 20th Century has morphed into one that is VUCA – **V**olatile, **U**ncertain, **C**haotic, and **A**mbiguous.
- Even absent COVID, the early decades of the 21st Century have already been traumatizing, disorienting and exhausting. No letup is in sight.

⁸ In saying this, no suggestion is implied that we who are MTI peoples and cultures can deal with the root challenges of the 21st Century all by ourselves. Such hubris must be our past, not our future. We must learn to partner with those whom we have oppressed and taken for granted. It is an illusion to think that either we or they can accomplish what needs to be done by working alone.

⁹ *The Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans*, Vol. 1. 1992.

- Those who still take it for granted that their children and grandchildren will have a better life than they knew are now a diminishing minority in most OECD countries.
- “Morning in America”¹⁰ and “sunny ways”¹¹ no longer capture the dominant mood of North American societies.

This has been written for you, if you are a person who, in spite of all the stress and turmoil, is still capable of experiencing grace, love, forgiveness, beauty and thankfulness as inherent and sacred features of this Earth and of human life on Earth. This is for you, if you aspire to co-creating a world fit to live in with fellow citizens who are truly fit to live with, on an Earth truly fit to live on – a world that does not merely improve and extend our MTI-dominated world, but in some meaningful sense transcends and transforms it. This is for you if, even when you are in despair, you seek and sometimes experience a quality of hope which overcomes your despair. This is for you, if you are open to truly new ways to make sense of this time in human history, especially when fresh insights offer new directions in which to move – directions which themselves offer more promising futures.

For my part, I have done my best to offer a fresh and reasonably coherent way of making reliable, big-picture sense of the increasing incoherence as well as the promise of the 21st Century. I have done so because over a lifetime devoted to exploring the need for and nature of personal-to-civilizational evolution, I have come to these conclusions:

- The primary obligation we have as human beings is to keep open the possibility of the emergence of a truly human future. Lest this obligation sound self-centred, you know as well as I do that we cannot survive, let alone be fully human, without the companionship not only of other persons, but of hundreds of millions of other species. They truly are “*our relations*.” Lest this obligation sound trivial, I expect that you already know that we are now extinguishing other species at a rate that is far beyond normal.¹² Ironically, the extinction of our own species in the foreseeable future is one of the possibilities now on the table.
- It is both futile and wrong-headed to continue to devote our primary passion, money and energy to intensifying, improving and extending our MTI ways of being and living.¹³
- While I am thankful for and build on much that others have written about the nature and root sources of our present condition, I am not completely satisfied with the big picture understandings that now dominate what I have come to call “*the conversation about civilizational crises and transformation*.” Therefore, I offer what appears to me to be a firmer foundation: first to understand and then take up the new core work for humanity in the 21st Century – *outgrowing our MTI selves at every scale as we nurture into robust and resilient being, cultures which exemplify the next form of civilization.*

¹⁰ A campaign slogan of Ronald Reagan who was elected President of the USA in 1980.

¹¹ A campaign slogan of Justin Trudeau who was elected Prime Minister of Canada in 2015.

¹² The World Wildlife Fund’s “Living Planet Report” for 2022, released October 12, 2022, notes that the Earth’s wildlife has declined by 69% since 1970.

¹³ You may want to re-read that sentence again and begin to digest what it implies for your and our future.

- If my line of thought is at all sound, then there are more adequate ways to make sense of the roughly 300,000 year-long human journey – ways which come to terms with the mess of complex living messes we are in; ways which understand and respond courageously to the unique, strategic, existential and still largely invisible challenge of the 21st Century; ways which support a post-despair hope that, as persons and whole cultures, we can learn to cooperate with our own evolution as we nurture a new future into being.
- Much hangs on the sense we make of ourselves and our situation. The chief reason is that *“our perspective on the world determines our behavior in the world.”*¹⁴ A corollary is that inappropriate behavior almost always follows from an inadequate understanding of ourselves and our situation. Best we seek understandings that are as reliable as possible.¹⁵ If such understandings mean that we must move beyond our MTI frames of reference, so be it. Only so will we have any hope of being effective, co-creative agents of truly transformative change; of acting in ways which, over time, actually enhance the prospects for a long and humane future in an Earth in which, in time, life flourishes again.

As you read you will see that in my view, as a species, we are way beyond, *“Houston, we have a problem.”* We are into *“Will Modern Civilization be the Death of Us?”*¹⁶ I also note that a small, but growing, percentage of those who appear to me to be the most knowledgeable are now openly saying that it is likely, for some almost certain, that MTI cultures are headed for collapse.¹⁷ No doubt you will have noticed that we are awash in books, lectures, webinars, newscasts, podcasts, blogs, movies, plays, lyrics, websites and reports which document our troubles and question the future of our climate, technology, democracy, mental health, and of capitalism, Modernity, humanity, and civilization. As water on a hot stove, our confidence in the future of our MTI cultures is evaporating. In every sector, doubt is now commonplace that those who lead us have the character, intelligence, insight and courage which is necessary to

¹⁴ Robert S Fouts and Mary Lee A. Jensvold, *“Armchair Delusions Versus Empirical Realities: A Neurological Model for the Continuity of Ape and Human Language,”* in *Probing Human Origins*, Ed. Morris Goodman and Mary Simon Moffat. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002.

¹⁵ This, of course, is the deep purpose of any education worthy of the name.

¹⁶ *For a non-trivial exploration of this question go to You Tube and watch the presentation by Bill Rees [here](#) followed by one by Ruben Nelson [here](#).*

¹⁷ The conversation about the real prospects of the collapse of our MTI way of life has become so intense and so common that “collapseology” has been deemed by many in the academy to be a new area for formal study. This field is so new that there is not yet agreement on how to spell it – with or without the “e”. Please note that the concept of collapse when used in relationship to whole cultures is a technical concept. The common image of a building collapsing is not at all what is meant. Rather, societal ‘collapse’ is a slow process of disintegration – that which was once tightly integrated, over time, becomes loosely knit together. As Yeats said, “things fall apart...” Coherence is lost. The root cause is that a society no longer has the energy, human and other, to maintain the degrees of complexity it had achieved. For complex systems the process of disintegration is a process of simplification, a process by which some of its complexity is lost. This process occurs because the complex system no longer has ready access to the increasing amounts of energy that it requires to maintain, let alone grow, its complex form. This process is characterized as a societal collapse by such persons as Joseph Tainter in his *“The Collapse of Complex Societies”*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988 and Nate Hagens’ in *“The Great Simplification”* [video series](#).

develop and act on the new mental maps these times require. That we need new mental maps and models for these times in my view is no longer a question. We also need a depth of character and courage that today is rare.

In what follows, I attempt to make clear my understanding of reliable responses to questions such as these, *“Just how much trouble we are in?”* (More than we who are MTI now know and can easily understand.) *“What kind of root challenge do we face?”* (One we, as MTI peoples and cultures, have not yet grasped because it is in an MTI blindspot.) *“Is a good deal of tragedy and despair already baked into the human future?”* (Sadly, yes.) *“Is there hope beyond despair?”* (Yes, there are grounds for post-despair hope if we are open to them.) *“What, then, is to be done?”* (Learn to cooperate with our own evolution at every scale from personal-to-civilizational. This, and only this, will enable us to outgrow our MTI formation, embrace the adventure of consciously participating in humanity’s first species-wide conscious and reflexive struggle to transcend its inherited cultures and forms of civilization in order to co-create personal-to-civilizational scale ways of being that are wise, inclusive, systematic, integral and meta-reflexive.)

By the end, it is my hope that you will understand the power of this perspective.

Section I

Where are we who are MTI in History?

“Where are we who are MTI peoples and cultures in history?”

A truly interesting question. The reason is this: as noted above, *as we apprehend reality, so we respond to it.* Our “takes” and our “mis-takes” on reality literally matter. (Pun intended.) Our preparations for tomorrow as persons, communities and cultures are a function of our anticipations of tomorrow; our “takes” on the future. Our “takes” on the future are a function of our reading of history – how it works, what agency we do, and do not, have and where we are in history. Consider, for example, that once we have a modicum of life experience, we expect to be stressed and excited the evening before a significant event – a final exam, our wedding, a major presentation or interview. In such situations we both expect and allow for the stress and the excitement. Our capacity to anticipate our future state helps us cope when that moment arrives. We know we are having a normal human experience and that we are prepared for it.

But when we are blind-sided by events, when the truly unexpected happens, we are startled. One of the things we learn even as an older child is that when startled, human beings, along with grizzly bears and rattlesnakes, tend to behave badly. The lesson is clear: it is wise to do what we can to avoid being startled and startling others. One of the ways of doing this is to explicitly test the reality of our anticipations. This way we can burst the balloons of our false anticipations before the fall occurs for which they set us up.

In this light, consider the pain Albertans have been suffering since 2014 when the price of oil dropped precipitously and for almost all Albertans, unexpectedly. We¹⁸ have been startled by how long the price remained so low – until 2021. The pain, even tragedy, has been real. Almost 100,000 real jobs were lost. Real businesses went under. Real marriages were broken. Nothing I say here is meant to take away from these facts.

However, we in Alberta set ourselves up for tragedy by being utterly unwilling to test the reality of our core assumption – *the risk of putting all of our eggs in the high carbon energy basket was well worth taking because high carbon energy would rule the world, would not be seriously challenged, until at least 2050, if not longer.* This defining belief meant that for decades we

¹⁸ I say, “we” because I was born and raised in Alberta, and am now again a resident of the place in which I was formed.

knew we could safely ignore a wide variety of folks who warned Albertans about what they saw as our foolishness. We hardened our hearts against them. We had ears but could not hear. We had eyes and would not see. Often, we rode those who challenged us out of the province and took pride in doing so. Willful blindness ruled.

Not once have we in Alberta seriously explored and checked the adequacy of our taken-for-granted anticipation that coal, oil and gas – the only energy sources we who are settlers¹⁹ in Alberta have ever known²⁰ – would continue to be the world’s dominant energy sources long into the future. Rather, we carried on pridefully with our mindless bet that they would. For example, consider the top line advice of the Premier’s Council for Economic Strategy – a \$7m effort from 2008 to 2011. Its 1st Theme was “Realizing the full potential of our energy resources.”²¹ The recommendation was to *“Take steps to ensure that Albertans and all Canadians benefit from development of our hydrocarbon energy resources as much as we can for as long as we can.”* When you consider how much had already been published by 2010 that challenged the wisdom of this advice, you begin to understand the depth of denial that is celebrated in Alberta. In our own minds we have the courage to be “mavericks.” The thought that we are out of touch with reality is not entertained.

It is not surprising then, that our initial response to the 2014 downturn was that “we’ve seen this rodeo before.” The implication is clear – “there is nothing for us to learn from this experience.” The collapse of the price of oil was then seen as just another normal hiccup on our endless road of milking the high carbon energy cow. By 2016, 43,000 jobs had been lost in the oil and gas industry alone. Almost half of the office space in downtown Calgary was empty. We were hurting and increasingly angry. And, we were still confident that yet another boom in high carbon energy would again save our necks and our future. Even the anomalous heat dome we experienced in late May and June 2021 was not enough to shake our commitment to high carbon energy. Most of our leaders in every sector have taken the resurgence of the price of oil in 2022 as a sign from heaven that we have been right all along. Oh my.

In Alberta, we are still trying to figure out ways to increase production and get back to normal. For example, we have chosen to become champions of carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS). The Alberta version of CCUS sets us up for continued success to mid-century. As we see it, we will continue to develop the oil industry. The only change is that we will capture and utilize the CO₂ we create. This will add new lines of profitable business. And the best part is that most of the capital costs for this new technology will be covered by the public purse. As I write this, the industry is lobbying for Canada to match the offer made by the Biden Administration to the industry in the USA, namely 66% of the capital costs. The Trudeau government has only offered 50%. As of today, the province has offered nothing in this regard. The profits, of course, will be kept by the industry. Socialized development of new technologies and privatized profits from

¹⁹ The recognition is slowly dawning on us that we who have long thought of ourselves as pioneers on an empty prairie are really settlers who moved in on our indigenous cousins without coming clean about our intentions. This new consciousness, while late in its development, is essential as we learn to walk the journey of reconciliation.

²⁰ The oil age was well under way in North America by the time European settler culture moved into Alberta in any significant numbers in the 1880s.

²¹ Slide 6, used by the Council to report its work to the public. Also its final report can be downloaded [here](#).

their use is a well-established pattern in the MTI world. So are “work arounds” which appear to deal with the troubling condition at hand, but do not really do so. We in Alberta are extraordinarily inventive engineers. However, we are not what you would call “*deep and thorough thinkers.*” No one comes to Alberta for insights into the deep dynamics of the 21st Century. Our overwhelming commitment is still to build a better version of yesterday in the hope that it will serve us well tomorrow.

Nevertheless, the reality of the threats of global warming are slowly sinking into the consciousness of a minority of citizens. Some are seeing a reality which up to now we in Alberta were incapable of seeing. The empty offices in downtown Calgary²² are real stranded assets. They bear witness to the foolishness of blindly believing what “everyone in your crowd apparently knows, even in the face of evidence to the contrary.” Yet even this is not enough to keep our provincial government and our “leaders in industry” from doubling down on its commitments to a high carbon neoliberal capitalist economy.

Unable to learn, we feel betrayed and are increasingly panicky. History is startling us. And we do not like the experience at all. We are grieving the loss of the only life most Albertans have ever known – Alberta as a high flyer with gushers of money. Few alive today are even aware that it has not always been like this; that in 1937 we had to declare bankruptcy. Worse, as was the case in the USA on 9/11, the leadership of the province is not up to the task of even recognizing our situation for what it is, much less helping us see it clearly and owning up to it with intellectual honesty, emotional maturity and spiritual depth. We are stuck in resentment and anger as we project blame onto others and deny our responsibility for the messes we are in. Our present and former Premiers²³ would have us circle the wagons; dig in for a long siege against “them.” We must go to war. The dominant mood in Alberta is to set ourselves up for a civil war in Canada in which we play the role played by the South in the American civil war.²⁴ As a result, “next year” country is in real danger of becoming “*yesterday’s country*” in less than a generation.

The wider and deeper question I am raising with this riff on Alberta’s all too human inability to read the signs of the times and alter its anticipations appropriately is this: *Is there any possibility, even a small one, that we who are MTI peoples and cultures have set ourselves up for an analogous fall? Are MTI cultures more like Albertans than we care to admit? Is there a real possibility that history is moving out from under our MTI feet and onto a new trajectory in a way that we can see is already happening to Alberta? Instead of being the future of humanity, could our MTI cultures already be past their peak and into a long and increasingly incoherent disintegration? Could the main storyline of the 21st Century be about the collapse of our MTI form of civilization, rather than the technology-driven triumphal expansion now widely taken for granted?*

²² As I write this almost 30% of Calgary’s office space is empty. More square feet of office space stand empty in Calgary than all of the office space in Vancouver.

²³ In 2022 The Hon. Jason Kenney has been replaced by The Hon. Danielle Smith as Alberta’s Premier.

²⁴ If you are interested I have spoken about this situation and its dangers. See the video [here](#).

If there is any serious possibility that the answer to these questions is “yes”, then we, and now the whole inhabited Earth, are in far more and deeper trouble than we now know, imagine, think or are in any way prepared for. As Charles Hall and John Daly, Jr. pointed out in 2009, *“The concept of the possibility of a huge, multifaceted failure of some substantial part of industrial civilization is so completely outside the understanding of our leaders that we are almost totally unprepared for it.”*²⁵

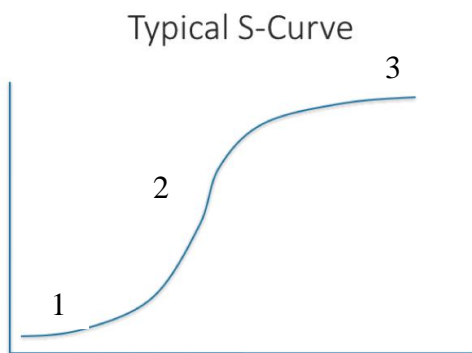
I want to explore these questions in this way: First, I will explore two mental models which I find to be useful – the “S curve” and “nested S curves.” The latter marks a phase transition. Then I will return to the question of whether the blind spots of our MTI form of civilization are leading us into a future which will startle us with a power that is beyond our present MTI imaginations.

²⁵ Charles A.S. Hall and John W. Daly, Jr., “Revisiting the Limits to Growth After Peak Oil”, *American Scientist*, May-June, 2009.

Section II

Two Useful Mental Models

“S” curves: S curves are useful because they capture the dynamics of many changes, human and non-human, which occur on this Earth. These dynamics have three basic phases in common. (See Figure 1.)



A Typical S Curve

Figure 1

At first the rate of change (the Y axis) is much less than the time taken to change (the X axis). Positive Feedback accelerates the pace of change. We call this learning when persons or other living species are involved. Each movement up a unit of the Y axis takes less time than the unit before it. In time, the rate of change “goes critical” as the pace speeds up around the bottom curve. This takes us into a second stage. In this stage for every unit of time there is far more progress on the Y axis than on the X axis. In some case the pace of change becomes exponential. Finally, as the constraints of negative feedback kick in,

the rate of change slows until development peaks. In the third phase, each degree of change takes longer than the one before it.

Now consider the human psychology of these three phases. At the beginning, there is a good deal of confusion, uncertainty and ambiguity. It is not at all clear which actions, if any, will result in the changes we seek. Uncertainty abounds. We know what we want to achieve, but at this stage we do not yet know how to secure it. We do not yet know which course of action will lead us to the future we desire. It can rightly be said that, at this stage we do not yet know what we are doing.

But, in time, as we begin to get our sea legs with the situation, we “go critical” and enter the Second Phase. At this stage, we find that we are able to dance with what had been new and strange music. Things begin to come together. Coherence increases. Familiarity and focus are found. And the pace of change speeds up. The experience is exhilarating. In time, we may be tempted to think that we know what we are doing. Now the question becomes, “How long will

this go on?” “Can we trust the experience enough to continue to plan on it?” If the second phase lasts long enough – years, decades, centuries or much, much longer – we may take it for granted that this “new normal” will go on forever.

However, the reality is that in this universe no accelerating trend goes on forever. Eventually, constraints of some kind always kick in. The pace of change begins to slow down as we enter the Third Phase. The coherence we have known begins to give way to increasing incoherence. That which has been solid ground under our feet begins to disintegrate. That which once was utterly taken-for-granted begins to become less trustworthy. Signals we once trusted no longer seem to mean what they once did. Uncertainty of a new kind emerges – self-doubt. *“If we are as experienced and knowledgeable as we think we are, as our record attests, why are things not working the way they used to?”* This is a truly uncomfortable experience.

But there is hope. Everything in our recent experience tells us that we have faced and conquered a host of difficulties in the past. Accordingly, we see today’s difficulties are just more challenges to be conquered. As we enter the Third Phase it simply does not occur to us that something so truly new is happening now that in order to cope with it we must unlearn much we have previously learned and now take for granted; that we must re-learn the nature, character and dynamics of reality.²⁶ Nothing in our long period of success prepares us for this shift. To the contrary, sustained success over long periods of time in Phase Two tends to set us up for failure in Phase Three. The mark of Phase Two is that the pace of change keeps accelerating. In order to cope with an accelerating pace of change we have to learn and respond faster and faster, to become increasingly focussed, efficient and agile.²⁷

Because deep learning takes time, and time we do not have in Phase Two, our success tends to preclude our development as deep learners. Deep learning takes quiet time, and lots of it. Phase Two does not provide much quiet time. Accordingly, as we enter Phase Three we have been thoroughly conditioned to trust our record; to ignore the signals that our situation is fundamentally changing. This thought may “niggle” at the back of a few minds, but it never makes it on to our agendas: *we must invest serious time and attention if we are to even understand our emerging situation, much less respond to it intelligently.* Rather, we double-down on what we already know how to do as we seek to stave off what we experience as

²⁶ At this point those who have come to understand complexity theory will be protesting that “relearning the character and dynamics of complex realities” is what complexity theory is all about; that complex realities are not what they used to be before we understood them as complex realities. I agree. This is quite right. However, I note that the number of persons in positions of influence in today’s MTI cultures who have developed a non-trivial understanding of complexity is well below a critical mass. Today, such persons make no practical differences to the longer-term future of their institutions, much less to their MTI cultures. In time, the number and percentage of such persons will grow. By that time it may be too late to matter. The race we are in is between societal collapse and deep learning at every scale from unique persons to whole cultures and their form of civilization. A major point of this essay is that as things stand today no major institution in any MTI culture, let alone a whole MTI culture, understands the nature and scale of this race. The fact that many claim such understanding is not comforting to those of us who see that they do not.

²⁷ You do not have to spend a lot of time in the C Suites of Canada or among the pricy consultants who claim to be visionaries of a tech-laden MTI future to realize that they are stuck in a fantasy that Phase Two can go on forever.

decline. Today, Alberta is a stellar example of this dynamic. But let us be clear, we in Alberta are not worse than others in this regard. But we are a clearer example of a common, yet crucial, human dynamic. If this is your story as well, you have my sympathy. It is not a story which ends well.

It is important to understand that, when facing unexpected novel decline the normal MTI response is to assume that whatever is happening can be seen, explored, understood and responded to by our well-established MTI ways of knowing and responding to reality. Our instinct is to trust and extend our past experience when it comes to mastering rapid and incoherent change. Since we know that we have seen this rodeo before, it is easy to believe that all we need in order to make reliable sense of our situation is more courage, commitment, money, technology and manpower. What is unimaginable, is that we are up against realities which our deeply ingrained ways of knowing and being cannot even see, much less understand. Therefore, we default to the comforting view that heroic²⁸ efforts will get us back to familiar patterns of success.

However, in the Third Phase, heroic efforts to get us back to familiar patterns of success are no longer helpful and will always fail. At this stage, continuing to trust well-established habits and indicators is foolish and contra-indicated. What is required to navigate the Third Phase is deep context-sensitive learning. Sadly, since MTI cultures are “context blind”, this is not a skill routinely taught or fostered.

Deep, context-sensitive learning requires non-trivial courage, extraordinary insight, profound humility and a radical openness to new patterns and dynamics of reality. These are required not only personally, but at every scale of the group involved in the transition. When whole cultures enter decline, if they are to have any hope of adapting profoundly enough to survive the experience, then society-wide processes supported by appropriate infrastructures which support *whole-of-society deep learning* are required. Sadly, as of today, no MTI culture has developed such processes and infrastructures. None has a developed capacity for whole-of-society deep learning. Economic development and personal development we know about and invest in. Whole-of-society deep learning is not even on our agendas. This means that as of today, no MTI culture is prepared to even recognize, let alone explore, understand and respond courageously to a personal-to-civilizational scale transition which transcends the form of civilization it has inherited. I repeat: this is not good news for a 10 year old.

I have noted that this pattern of trying to keep Phase Two going forever can be seen clearly in Alberta. It affects every sector of Alberta’s society, including, ironically, those who are masters of the language of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. There is a deep unspoken agreement that all our activity should continue to be directed towards the only goal we have ever known²⁹ – *extending our success as a model MTI culture*. No serious thought is given to,

²⁸ You will have noticed that in MTI cultures in the 21st Century, “heroic” efforts are cast in the language of “game changing innovation and transformation.” You may also have noticed that none of these efforts make any significant changes to the deep MTI game we are playing, namely improving and extending our MTI cultures.

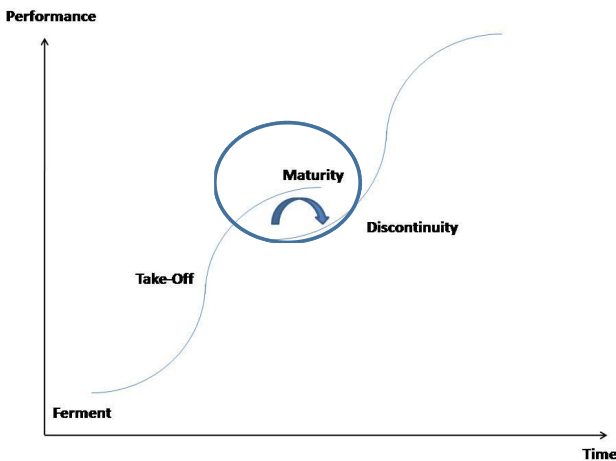
²⁹ This “we” is literally true for Alberta. The printing press had existed for 300 years before the first European set foot in what is now Alberta. It was roughly 1870 before settlers arrived in any number. By then London, UK was over 3 million. In Alberta the only aspiration of European settlers was to create a fine example of an MTI culture.

much less sustained investments made in, the possibility that history has called “*time, gentlemen, time*” on MTI cultures; that we need to be inventive regarding the fundamental frames of “Modernity;”³⁰ that being inventive within those frames now leads to failure.

This notion was expressed by William M. Birenbaum, in his 1969 book *Overlive*:³¹

Much of what passes for future-think is an imagination of what the world would look like if it “worked right” ... it is an imagination dominated by now, which aims to imprint the “best” of now upon the future. The trouble is that the “best” of now... is not very satisfactory.

Nested “S” Curves: Nested S curves (see Figure 2) are also important if we are to make reliable sense of the 21st Century. They capture what is called a “*phase transition.*” – the transformation of something from one state of affairs to another. For example, when ice melts into water or water boils into water vapor. I use the term here in an analogous sense – *when an established and dominant phenomenon weakens into incoherence and a truly new space-shaping phenomenon begin to emerge.* Getting a new job, becoming a parent, growing out of childhood into adolescence and becoming a widow or widower are all familiar human phase transitions, if at somewhat different scales.



A Typical Nested S Curve

Figure 2

In a phase transition we need to pay particular attention to the dynamics which occur where the two S curves overlap. This space is marked as a “*discontinuity*” on Figure 2. As noted above, those who have ridden the first phenomenon to maturity are thoroughly familiar with its reality. They are used to its quirks, rhythms, characteristics and challenges, and rewards. They are at home with it at every layer of their being, from the way they know reality to the way their body responds to it. It is what they know and are.

Consider in this light, MTI males in 1980.

Then, the only culture the overwhelming

majority of MTI males had known was a version of a somewhat misogynistic patriarchal liberal democracy. Therefore, “*Modern*” males knew that as sure as the sun would rise tomorrow, in any given setting someone had to be in charge. Further, they knew that that “*someone*” would always be a male. Finally, they knew that all this was “*right and good. The natural order of things.*” And, almost none of these insights into reality were explicitly taught. Rather, they

³⁰ “Modernity” in quotes is used as an alternative way of referring to our MTI form of civilization and the cultures which exemplify it.

³¹ William. M. Birenbaum, *Overlive: Power, Poverty and the University*, Delacorte Press, New York, 1969

were picked up by a normal human process of socialization that can be characterized as “cultural osmosis.” The implication is clear: few males in 1980 had much insight into themselves as being “male chauvinist pigs.”

In 1980, there were precious few serious signs in MTI cultures that this order would be seriously challenged; that it was already disintegrating; that the MTI male-dominated culture had less than one generation to live without sustained pushback. Back then there was no pressure on Wall Street or in the corporations which depend on it to get serious about learning to hear a feminine voice as distinctive, much less listen to it as an equally necessary perspective. There was no serious pressure from legislatures to “*listen up.*” With few exceptions, these demands for change would wait until the second and third decades of the 21st Century to manifest themselves.

Yet, even in 1980, there were clues that such pressures would build. For example, the United Church of Canada had been ordaining women since 1936, although few cared about its practices. Dr. Sylvia Ostry, as Canada’s Chief Statistician, had removed this question from the decennial census: “*Who is the head of the house?*” Few knew of this. Fewer cared. Still fewer thought it was significant. Back then the modern women’s movement was just becoming a critical mass. Yes, *MS Magazine* had been around for eight years. But its significance had yet to be recognized, much less honoured, in the official spaces of MTI culture, all of which were still male-dominated. Most medical research was carried out on males. It was just assumed that what worked for males would also work for females. This in spite of obvious biological differences. All this is evidence for the insight that context sensitivity is not a major feature of MTI cultures. As noted above, in effect, we who are MTI are context blind.³²

All this makes sense when you think about it. In order to succeed in official public spaces, MTI cultures require us to be logical, rational and empirical. The model of these virtues, as it had been for 300 years, was the literate and prosperous upper-class male. In 1980, women, particularly MTI conditioned women, did not fit this image. And economists had not yet discovered the importance of persons in the economy, much less female persons.

A general point I wish to make is that when a long-lived and well-established order dies, it is typically on death’s door well before those who rule the order catch on to the fact that their day is over.³³ Typically, the signals of an emerging order are not even seen by the old order as signals worth noting, much less as indicators that require them to change their fundamental understandings and behaviours. This story of habit-induced, culturally-embedded willful blindness³⁴ is the core of the story of the demise not only of corporations, marriages, fortunes and empires, but of whole cultures and today our MTI form of civilization. As the widely-read

³² In my view the “context blindness” of MTI cultures is the root of the “energy blindness,” the “biosphere blindness” and the blindness to us as “persons” that afflicts MTI cultures world-wide. These forms of blindness are now front and centre in the views of those whom I pay closest attention, e.g. [Charles A. S. Hall](#), [Nate Hagens](#), the late [Hazel Henderson](#), [Thomas Homer-Dixon](#), [Joanna Macy](#) and [William Rees](#), to name only a handful.

³³ Max Palnk’s infamous quip that “science advances one funeral at a time” maps onto this point.

³⁴ For an extraordinary exploration of this all-too-human characteristic see Margaret Heffernan’s [Willful Blindness: Why We Ignore the Obvious at Our Peril](#), Doubleday Canada, Toronto, 2011.

Canadian author Louise Penny put it in her 2018 book, *Kingdom of the Blind*, “Nothing good ever came out of a blind spot.”³⁵

A second point is that the slow pace of recognition by MTI cultures of women as distinctive and important in their own right is a fine example of the “thickness” of established human cultures. In thick cultures the pace at which deep whole-of-society cultural change occurs is painfully slow, and always multi-generational, over centuries. We would be wise to keep this reality in mind, especially when so many today talk loosely about the need for and even possibility of rapid whole-of-society systemic adaptation. I do not deny the desirability of rapid and systemic personal-to-societal change. I do caution that the expectations which are being created regarding the capacity of MTI cultures to adapt deeply and quickly are both ill-founded and dangerous. Such expectations will not be met because they cannot be met. If this is the case regarding our adaptation to climate change, police reform, the treatment of women within the armed services, the struggle against what we now characterize as racism, how much more does it apply to the work of loosening the grasp of our MTI formation on the habits of our minds, hearts, bodies and spirits?

The primary issue is not, as so many say, the lack of goodwill, money or effort. Rather, as of today, few persons in our MTI cultures have an adequate grasp on the actual dynamics and pace of the evolution of major well-established predispositions in human societies, particularly MTI cultures. As a result, most efforts intended to bring about serious systemic culture change are still far too superficial, un-systemic, and un-reflexive to result in non-trivial lasting differences. As a general rule, the “*culture change*” efforts we make are not nearly enough to achieve the outcomes we desire. This is to be expected, since, given our ignorance about personal-to-civilizational scale transitions, we grossly underestimate both the “gravitational pull” of our now well-established MTI cultures and the degree of effort it takes to reach “escape velocity” from the cultural/civilizational forces that have shaped us.

In the context of serious threats to the future of our species, this lack of understanding matters. One question we must face is this: *How does the adaptation time of whole cultures which are unprepared for profound transitions map on to the time requirements we must meet in order to avoid various types of disasters – requirements that are set for us by our historic context?* The formula for any given people in any given situation is this – the time the persons/culture in question actually require to make the transition is divided into the time the situation provides to make a successful transition. If the answer is 1 or more, the transition succeeds. Less than 1 means failure. (See Figure 3.)

$$\frac{\text{Time Have}}{\text{Time Required}} = > 1$$

A Formula for Success

Figure 3

For example, MTI cultures have set the somewhat arbitrary date of 2050 as the date by which we must be “*carbon-neutral*.” We have determined that it will take us until 2050 to become carbon-neutral. Roughly 30 years is the time we require. The trouble is we really do not know how much time we have before we reach a

major self-reinforcing tipping point. If we reach vital tipping points before 2050, we are

³⁵ Louise Penny, *Kingdom of the Blind*, Minotaur Books, New York, 2018.

hooped. Foolishly, we established the 2050 date by determining what we could see ourselves doing, not by trying to determine what the living systems of Earth will require of us. The presumption that the Earth must bend to accommodate our habits, wishes and aspirations is fundamental to MTI cultures. Sadly, it is not supported by evidence. It is dangerously wrong-headed. Given our extraordinary powers, we in MTI cultures have an especially difficult time coming to terms with the fact that reality has no obligation to meet our expectations and timelines. At least we know this much, when the time required for us to adapt takes longer than the time we have, disaster strikes.

Our difficulty in seeing and coming to terms with the inherent power of our MTI form of civilization is compounded by the fact that one of the great myths of MTI cultures is that *“each one of us is a separate and complete individual who, with some effort, can determine her/his/their own fate in ways that are quite exempt from the influences of the culture within which we were formed.”* In short, MTI cultures teach us that as individuals we do not need to pay attention to culture; that we can be independent of culture if we simply will it.

We who are MTI are also taught that we are independent of one another. That this myth is a fairy tale does not occur to us. It does not even occur to us that a person can only credibly make the claim that she/he/they is a separate and complete-in-oneseelf individual in a culture which accepts this view as rational, logical and empirically sound. Again, the culture context matters. We who are shaped by the habits of mind, heart and body of MTI cultures are not likely to notice that our most fundamental “takes” on reality are “mis-takes.”

This is a sobering thought when we realize that in MTI cultures our present planning for the future still deeply reflects the male arrogance that we (actually “we” who are males) can command and control the future which is so characteristic of MTI cultures. Put bluntly, we in MTI cultures are still playing superficially at culture change.³⁶ And, we do not yet know it. It is noteworthy that as of today, we do not have the widely-developed, reflexive, self-critical insight that is required if we are to imagine and work through just what it would take for a successful MTI culture to discover its need to engage in and sustain a personal-to-civilizational scale evolution – an evolution which would successfully enable it to transcend its MTI formation.³⁷

³⁶ Consider, for example, the fact that the Alberta Business Council undertook what they claim to be a strategic look at the future. They determined that they could [“Define the Decade”](#).

³⁷ I acknowledge that it may well be the case that the human brain/mind ultimately cannot fathom the complexity of the MTI world we have so unwittingly created. However, my life’s work and that of many others testifies to the fact that we can do far, far better than we are now doing. We will not know if it will be enough until routinely we do far, far better. Giving up before we have met this test feels cowardly to me.

Section III

Using these Two Models to Explore the Question:

“Where are we who are MTI in history?”

Let us begin by asking, *“What is what might be called the “official future” of today’s MTI cultures?” “Where do those who speak officially for the major institutions³⁸ of MTI cultures imagine MTI cultures are in history?” “What future are such officials – and to be truthful, most of the rest of us – anticipating, planning, counting on, investing in, committed to, and lobbying for?”*

Let us agree that we will find the evidence on the basis of which we will answer these questions in the public utterances of such opinion leaders as found in any of the following: newscasts, documentaries, interviews, public statements, webinars, public speeches, public writing, blogs and social media posts, open letters, advertisements, essays, position papers, political tracts, public policy, legislation and the justification for legislation.

On the basis of the above sources of information, it is quite clear that the major opinion leaders of MTI cultures are anticipating, investing in, committing to, arguing the value of and planning for a future which is essentially an improved continuation of our MTI form of civilization. No significant deviation in the trajectory of our MTI form of civilization is being given serious thought, much less anticipated. The deep commitment of the major institutions of MTI cultures is to extend and improve MTI cultures. An even better version of the world as we who are MTI peoples and cultures have come to know it is both promised and planned for. For example, it is widely agreed that the economy must grow, that there must be jobs for the bulk of those who seek them, that politics, business and religion are quite different spheres, that these three spheres should not interfere (too much) with the others, that STEM x M (science-technology-engineering and math multiplied by vast amounts of money) holds the key to our future, that the humanities can be safely neglected, that the nature of money should be respected, that it makes sense to measure and monetize environmental *“goods and services”*, that philanthropy is a good thing, that gross inequality is shameful and should at least be *“worked at,”* and that since we do not yet agree on what *“gross inequality”* includes we must not act too hastily to overcome it.

³⁸ I include in this group of institutions; (a) governments at every level from local to international, all their departments and agencies and all the quasi-governmental institutions which they control, including universities, schools, hospitals, research centres, technical institutions, and innovation centres; (b) major corporations, industry groups, and business associations; and (c) major think tanks, national newspapers, national not-for-profits and national churches. The bulk of the elites of any given society, those who are seen to have the legal and/or moral right to speak to and for the society, are found among the leaders of these institutions. For good and ill, the rest of us live in their wake.

Yes, there are many areas of disagreement. For example, the proper weight to give to the motivation to seek profit, the relative size and responsibility of governments, how much of our lives should be guided by the “invisible hand of the market,” whether women should have a right to an abortion at every stage of their pregnancy, whether citizens should have the right to refuse to inoculate their children and whether, as the US Supreme Court determined, money should be seen as “speech.”³⁹

But note, all of our disagreements are argued within the wider framework of our MTI form of civilization; a frame that assumes that MTI cultures should be extended and improved into and beyond the foreseeable future. Note that this wider framework is assumed by every political party in every MTI culture. Those on the Left may do battle with Right-wingers, communists may want to overthrow capitalists, some capitalists may want to reform capitalism, but all of these ambitions assume and depend on the MTI way of apprehending and responding to reality; of framing our lives and cultures. I call this way of framing human life on Earth the “MTI Mantra.” It captures the official version of the civilizational game we are playing, whether we are aware of it or not. The MYI Mantra runs something like this:

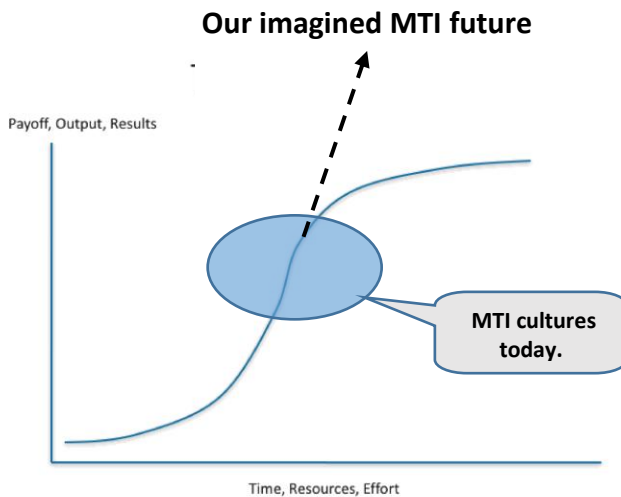
*As a species we who are Homo sapiens (wise humans) have faced many profound challenges, and a handful of existential threats over our 300,000 year-long journey. Before we became Modern, we were at great risk because we could not tease out the real objective truth about the Earth, other species and ourselves from our inherited cultural traditions, myths, superstitions and prejudices, from our theological suppositions, and from village gossip. Nor could we protect those we loved from the ravages of weather and disease. However, now that we have the science of the 1st Enlightenment we can wrestle truth to the ground and own it. With the technologies which that science enables, we can also own the Earth. Our success over the past 450 years makes this clear. Happily, today, we who are Modern Techno-Industrial peoples and cultures know what needs to be done and have (or will soon have) the capacities, human and technological, to do it. **Therefore, our core work in the 21st Century is to find the leadership, political will, science-based technologies and money which will enable us to extend our MTI ways of being and living to and even beyond the ends of the Earth; and as we do so to improve them enough to create a future which is not only truly global, but more equitable, humane and sustainable.***

I note especially that, by and large, the now-global, multi-faceted, multi-billion dollar sustainability industry rests on, reflects and reinforces this mantra. The *de facto* purpose of most sustainability work is to make some new version of our MTI world sustainable. Even the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presuppose the righteousness of the MTI mantra, as do virtually all responses to anthropogenic climate disruption, and the offerings of every MTI

³⁹ Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, case in which the U.S. Supreme Court on January 21, 2010, ruled (5–4) that laws that prevented corporations and unions from using their general treasury funds for independent “electioneering communications” (political advertising) violated the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech. Given this right, if money is speech then no limits can be placed on the money spent to influence elections or others matters of public opinion. In effect, Americans now have the unfettered right to try to buy the results of any federal election.

political party and business associations. All promise a new and improved, even transformed, version of life as MTI peoples and cultures.⁴⁰

Given the above, we can state clearly and unequivocally that, given our conduct within MTI cultures, it is assumed that MTI cultures are somewhere in the middle of the S curve – the path that has been and will be the trajectory of our MTI form of civilization. (See Figure 4.)



Where We MTIs Think We are in History
Figure 4

This positioning helps make sense of much that we have seen in the last 100 years. For example, both Churchill and Hitler spoke with confidence of the next 1,000 years of MTI cultures. Churchill of the British Empire. Hitler of the Third Reich. Virtually all of our planning today reflects the same confidence, if not to say arrogance. The view expressed so boldly by President George H. W. Bush, in 1982 in Brazil, at the UN Conference on the Environment and Development that “*The American way of life is not negotiable*” is still echoed in every MTI culture by its governments, business associations and universities, if in a somewhat more muted manner by the latter.

It is noteworthy that in official MTI circles no serious thought is being given to the possibility that our confidence in the Mantra of MTI cultures may be misplaced. Serious and sustained funding has yet to be assigned to pursue the insight that, in 2023 and beyond, our self-confidence in the efficacy of MTI ways of knowing and responding to reality may be unjustified and fundamentally wrong-headed; that our routine 1st Enlightenment ways of knowing reality are themselves the root source of our troubles.

Such gnawing doubt, at least as yet, is not securely on the agenda of any significant institution or sector world-wide. Yes, *The Limits to Growth*⁴¹ was published in 1972. It even became a best seller. Several studies since have basically confirmed the 1972 projection that obvious signs of societal collapse would become evident in the 2020s and the 2030s. But the actual

⁴⁰ My point is that this is the case even for the vast majority of those who use the language of transformation or transition to a new type of culture or civilization. Such people intuit the need to escape the gravitational pull of the MTI form of civilization. However, since they do not have a clear model of the MTI form of civilization they can offer no assurance that the actual picture they paint of the future is an alternative to, not merely another version of, an MTI culture. Worse, much of their advice about what is to be done to achieve such a transition presupposes the essential legitimacy of the MTI ways of presenting oneself to reality, knowing it and responding to it.

⁴¹ Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth*, Universe Books, New York, 1972.

behaviour of the leaders and major institutions of our MTI cultures show no hint that there is anything truly important to be learned from the work of those who have devoted their lives to the Limits to Growth studies. Given what I have written above, I trust you will see that this situation is what we should expect from MTI cultures which are so deeply and unconsciously enamored by the powers MTI cultures appear to confer on us.

The reason, of course, is that for those who live unreflexively⁴² within the MTI frame of reference, the notion that we who are MTI peoples really do not know what we are doing is preposterous. This insight has no “*prior probability*.” Thus it fails to meet an essential and well established MTI test for rationality. Therefore, we can safely conclude that this view simply is not worthy of further consideration. Given our self-confidence, we do not pursue the thought that we do not face a “*counter intuitive reality*”, but that we who are MTI have developed “*counter reality intuitions*.”

Further, we who are MTI think/feel that our resistance to corrosive self-doubt is justified. We who are MTI persons and cultures know deep down that we are the future. Our capacity for conceit is almost endless. Consider that the view that we who are MTI own the future so deeply that we are “*the end of history*” was blurted out by Francis Fukuyama in 1989.⁴³ At the time, the response to his essay was as revealing as the piece itself – Fukuyama was lionized as a man of great intellectual insight and moral courage.⁴⁴ Openly and explicitly, he backed our sense that while all cultures have their faults, there is nothing inherently wrong, in any sense of that word, with the MTI way of being and living. He bolstered our courage to believe in ourselves when we needed it. Yes, in 1989, a few on the sidelines muttered that Fukuyama’s thesis was ill-conceived, self-absorbed and silly, but their voices were not heard above the applause.

There is a great irony in this situation. On the one hand, we claim that at its heart MTI’s scientific ways of knowing are open to alternative understandings of the data at hand. This openness to endless revision and improvement, we tell ourselves, protects us from the sins of those who resist the claims of superiority of our MTI ways of knowing. On the other hand, in our own imagination, somewhat magically, we are exempt from the implications of Einstein’s famous quip, “*We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking we used to create them*.”

Today, those of us who are pursuing the line of thought that runs through this essay, namely that the root source of our troubles is our MTI way of apprehending and responding to the reality, are still at the margins of our cultures. No corporate or government strategic foresight think tank is rushing to understand and explore this way of making sense of the Earth, us, and our past, present and future. As peoples and cultures, we who are MTI are not yet desperate enough as ask ourselves deeply rude and challenging questions. This is a pity, because a

⁴² This is almost all of us. MTI cultures require us to be logical, rational and empirical. By the standards of MTI cultures we are not required to become reflexive, much less meta-reflexive.

⁴³ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, #16. Later, he developed the essay into a book.

⁴⁴ The Toronto Globe and Mail deemed Fukuyama’s essay to be so important that it ran the whole piece over a week.

corollary of the perspective I am offering is that our well-established MTI ways of knowing, imagining, thinking and doing cannot enable us to even understand, much less cope with our troubles. In short, we who are MTI peoples and cultures are so deeply “*culture-trapped*” inside our own way of making sense of reality, that it does not occur to us that if we are to have a future, we need to escape our MTI inheritance.

A recent remark made by Ben Ehrenreich makes this point,

“A strange sort of faith lies at the core of mainstream climate advocacy – a largely unexamined belief that the very system that got us into this mess is the one that will get us out of it. For a community putatively committed to scientific empiricism, this is an extraordinary conviction.”⁴⁵

Sadly, this “*strange faith*” is present far beyond mainstream climate advocacy. Virtually all of our MTI efforts to “*save the future*” use, trust and utterly depend on the fitness of the 1st Enlightenment ways of knowing and responding to reality. We have not noticed that this is the same way of knowing and responding that got us into the complex, living messes which now bedevil us and threaten our future.

This is truly ironic.⁴⁶

It is worth noting that, as of today, our MTI ways of apprehending and responding to reality are not on any of the growing number of lists of the “*Existential Threats*” to humanity. They are not even on the lists of the institutions whose explicit *raison d’etre* is to become experts in identifying and figuring out appropriate responses to the *full range* of the existential threats to humanity. As yet, we who are MTI peoples and cultures are simply not seeking to transcend and escape from the ontological and epistemic roots of our MTI form of civilization. Rather, we still rely on the deep presuppositions we have inherited. We continue to do what MTI cultures have always done – seek to improve and extend the life of MTI cultures by making them to be global, equitable and sustainable. We cannot abide the thought that in the 21st Century this project is doomed to fail.

⁴⁵ Ben Ehrenreich, “*We’re Hurling Toward Global Suicide: Why we must do everything differently to ensure the planet’s survival.*” *New Republic*, March 18, 2021.

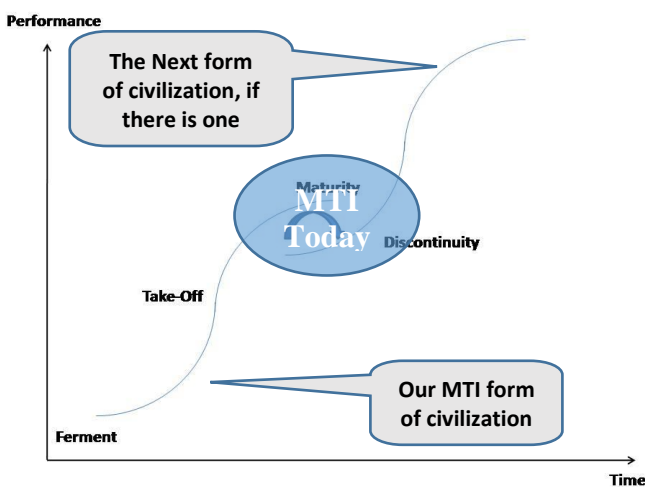
⁴⁶ A generalized point is that MTI peoples and cultures tend to not do irony well. Irony, by its nature, requires reflexivity. Irony hoists us on our own petard. With irony, we can learn to laugh at ourselves. We can puncture our own balloons, and thereby save ourselves from the embarrassment of having others burst them for us. We can learn a deep humility. We can develop the confidence to call into question our deepest presuppositions of reality, and, therefore, our own cultures and lives.

Section IV

But what if we are wrong?

What if we are not where we assume we are in history? What if our MTI cultures are moving towards the end of their tethers; that we who are MTI are already past “*Peak Modernity*”; that we are already irrevocably into a personal-to-civilizational scale collapse which leads, not to the 6th, 7th and 8th Industrial Revolutions, but to the end of the dominance of “*Modernity*” and then to the end of the MTI way of being, knowing and responding to reality? What if we are where the elites in Rome were in 50 CE – already in decline? What if we, like them, do not know it yet and, therefore, cannot govern ourselves accordingly. (See Figure 5.)

Allow me to recall the psychology of a culture which arrives at such a place on a nested S curve. Remember, it has learned to live in ways which are extraordinarily successful for centuries on the basis of its stated and unstated assumptions and presuppositions about reality, persons and the relationship of one to the other. And all of this without wide-spread reflexivity. While logical, rational and critical consciousness is widespread in MTI cultures, what we need is a



**Where I and a few others Think We MTI's are
In history.**
Figure 5

society-wide, self-critical, self-consciousness at every depth of human consciousness and culture and at every scale from unique persons to the civilizational. Sadly, no existing MTI society meets this standard.⁴⁷

It follows that we who are MTI peoples and cultures are as unprepared for truly new historical conditions and situations as is a newborn exposed to a Saskatchewan blizzard. Virtually all of our ingrained habits – intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual – lead us to assume and sustain our established ways of being and living. The trouble is that these ways now *mis-take* the actual condition we are in, the risks it presents

⁴⁷ I owe this insight to the Canadian historian of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith. See his *Towards a World Theology*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1981. The core chapters, “Objectivity in the Humane Sciences” were first delivered as a lecture in Ottawa in the mid 1970s in a series I organized which also included Sir Geoffrey Vickers, and Prof. Ervin Laszlo.

to us, the nature of effective strategies and our prospects for surviving the experience. For reasons that we can now understand and sympathize with, at almost every turn, our ingrained paradigmatic MTI habits will “fix/solve” many “problems” in the short term. But the long term we get it wrong and lead ourselves astray. As Pogo possum said, the enemy, “he is us.”

Before moving on, I want to note that there is a sense in which it is inappropriate to blame the elites of MTI cultures for the collapse of their and our MTI cultures. While we tend to see them, and they tend to see themselves, as independent actors, they are as much products of MTI cultures as are the rest of us. They have done what the culture asked of them. They have become what the culture taught them to become. They have done it in the terms set by the categories, logics, rationalities and standards of MTI cultures. It is not their fault as unique persons that they did not develop the capacities which are required to understand the phase transitions between two forms of civilization which occurred first with the emergence of indigenous ways of being, then with agriculture-based settlement and most recently with our MTI form of civilization. Nor is it their fault as unique persons that they have not developed the capacities to make reliable sense of our times as an analogous time; to see the promise implicit in the disintegration of our MTI form of civilization. Who would have taught them? Neither 1st Enlightenment science nor today’s STEM are about becoming wise, inclusive, systematic, integral and meta-reflexive in order to explore, understand and cope with a personal-to-civilizational scale phase transition. If by accident some were so taught and even nurtured, who would have believed them, promoted them and followed them? Certainly, not a plurality, much less a majority of us. Certainly, not the Boards of our Universities, corporations or constituency associations.

My point is that we and our leaders are facing a situation that is unique in history. Worse, we are facing a situation we do not yet understand. We are facing the need to explicitly understand and respond wisely to a personal-to-civilizational disintegration of our inherited MTI form of civilization. Such a situation is not just a case of personal or even cultural overshoot. Rather, it is what I call “civilizational overshoot.”⁴⁸

No people in human history have ever had to consciously face such a condition. To date in human history, there have only been three personal-to-civilizational-scale phase transitions – transitions during which a new form of civilization, including a new understanding of reality and human beings, emerged in human history. The first saw the emergence of small group hunter-gathering peoples and cultures. The second saw the emergence of regional agriculture-based

⁴⁸ I coined the concept of “*civilizational overshoot*” in the fall of 2018. It is not yet an idea in good currency. Civilizational overshoot is defined as a condition of a whole form of civilization. It occurs when *the key terms, logics and rationalities established by the core paradigms of a form of civilization no longer enable the cultures which exemplify that form of civilization to make reliable sense of, much less enable them to cope with, the existing and emerging realities/challenges which have come to characterize their time.* In short, *civilizational overshoot* occurs when the cultures of a given form of civilization have gotten themselves into a Wittgensteinian fly-bottle – a situation they can neither understand nor escape from. In such a situation a culture has only two choices: either it collapses due to increasing incoherence caused by irrevocable disintegration, or a critical mass of its citizens become meta-reflexively aware not only of the danger they are in but of the root cause of their plight, namely, the fact that the root paradigm of their own inherited form of civilization no longer “gets” reality well enough to cope with it. Note especially the requirement for the routine use of meta-reflexivity. Tragically, MTI cultures not only do not, but cannot, meet this standard while remaining as MTI cultures.

peoples and cultures. The third saw the emergence of MTI peoples and cultures. Each of these transitions was a process that was (a) extraordinarily slow, literally over multiple centuries, if not millennia in the first and second cases, (b) local/regional, (c) optional and (d) unconscious. There simply was no need for any of the dozens of generations which lived through any of these personal-to-civilizational scale phase transition to be conscious of the fact that they were unconsciously participating in the slow and incoherent process of giving birth to a novel form of human civilization. To date, such transitions were only recognized for what they were long after the fact of them.

Today, our situation is dramatically different.

Today, as MTI persons in MTI cultures, we are fully committed to improving and extending our MTI cultures. It is today's only truly global goal. We are not yet aware that this project will fail; that we are now required to engage consciously and cooperatively, even meta-reflexively, in a conscious personal-to-civilizational phase transition. We do not yet recognize the increasing disorder of our cultures and the tensions within us as signs that our MTI cultures are now disintegrating within us, among us and around us. We are not yet ready to face the need for personal-to-civilizational transcendence as a requirement; that it is not merely optional for those interested in this kind of thing. Nor do we know that our transition must be rapid by any historical standard⁴⁹ and ultimately scalable to the whole inhabitable Earth.

To make matters worse, we simply cannot bring ourselves to get serious about the truly strategic insight that by continuing to bet our future on the adequacy of MTI categories, logics, rationalities, standards and aspirations we are making a tragic *mis-take* which is already making matters worse than they need to be. In spite of the teachings and protestations of both the Christian Church and 1st Enlightenment science, such humility is not yet in us.

In short, as of today, we who are MTI peoples and cultures simply cannot hear the bad news about our situation and condition – that our MTI form of civilization has no long-term future – as the best bad news we will ever hear. Our first task is to learn to do so. Such an understanding opens doorways to a new human adventure; to a new Exodus.

⁴⁹ The emergence of a settled way of knowing, being and living out of hunter-gatherer cultures after the Holocene took millennia. The emergence of our MTI cultures out of settled agriculture-based cultures took centuries. The emergence of the next form of civilization out of what we have today must be consciously and securely underway by 2050. As of today, the new work of the 21st Century is not even on our agendas. Rather, we live with the somewhat comforting illusion that if we “carbon-neutral” by 2050, we will be good to go.

Section V

The Adventure of the Exodus that Awaits Us

I have said that the deep challenges we, as MTI peoples and cultures, face in the 21st Century are unprecedented in human history. It follows that there is no playbook or tradition to turn to which can offer step by step advice to guide us on our journey. To make matters worse, our journey's success requires us, consciously and explicitly, to learn to distrust, distance ourselves from, the very strategies, routines and advice which have led to our success as MTI persons, families, communities and cultures. We must give up the hope that our future can be secured by becoming a better version of that which we now are. The hard truth is that in the unique conditions of the 21st Century our MTI form of civilization has become lethal to life on Earth. As with Humpty Dumpty the conditions which buffered the worse of our MTI tendencies cannot be "put back together, again." If we value life above all else, we must grow up and move on and this at every scale for the deeply personal to the civilizational.

This is asking a lot. No culture raises its children with the core message that, "Mummy and Daddy, and all the grown-ups have come to realize that there is no future for you as long as we continue to be dedicated to improving and extending the ways of being and living that Mummy and Daddy and their mummies and daddies were raised in and formed by. Therefore, we have committed to a journey to discover a more promising future. We are determined to out-grow the MTI cultures which formed us as we seek to live into a new culture by means of which we shall become a new people. For good and ill, this journey shall be the context of your whole life and that of your children and grandchildren."

If we are where I see us to be in history, then making such an exodus-type journey successfully is the core challenge we who are MTI peoples and cultures face in the 21st Century.

At this point, it is to be expected that most readers who have been formed by, or even aspire to, the MTI ways of being and living, will resist the conclusions to which I have come. Such resistance does not make them "bad people." Rather, it indicates that they are perfectly normal citizens of planet Earth in the 21st Century. After all, there is a global advertising industry worth almost a trillion dollars whose sole purpose is to sing the praises of our Modern Techno-Industrial form of civilization so convincingly that we will stay committed to it regardless of its inconsistencies and inherent threats. Within MTI cultures the conviction is constantly repeated and reinforced that, "With so much that is good, even great, in MTI cultures, surely, there are ways we can fix the problems and find solutions to difficulties. There

is no need to out-grow and transcend our MTI formation. Saying such extreme things is simply not helpful.”

Given this, what can I say that might help you hear what I am struggling to have you hear?

Allow me to try.

I shall explore some of the parallels between our situation on this Earth in the early decades of the 21st Century and that of the ancient Hebrews in Egypt in the 13th Century BCE. Of course, the parallels are not exact, but some of them are tantalizing, even revealing.

Consider that:

- Initially, the move into a new culture and way of living was lifesaving. The ancient Hebrews had fled to Egypt in the 18th Century BCE as a way of saving their lives; of ensuring that they had a future. Our journey into the MTI form of civilization was slower, less dramatic, but seen to be equally life-giving. We not only invented the notion of ‘progress’, we lived it. Over time, life became better for us. Overwhelmingly, this was seen as a “Good Thing.” We gave Europeans, if not all of humankind, a future they could count on as being even better for their children.
- But, over time, things went sour. The ancient Hebrews, initially welcomed into Egypt as refugees, evolved over five centuries not as fellow citizens, but as slaves of the Egyptians. Staying in Egypt meant staying as slaves. Our MTI cultures have evolved over more than five centuries, but the pattern is similar. Almost all of our journey has been seen as progress. Even today, most persons in MTI cultures are committed to extending, not ending, the pursuit of a better life for the children within the MTI frames of reference. However, the bloom is coming off our rose. Today, in the face of incessant talk about heat domes, floods, droughts, war in Ukraine, inflation, biophysical overshoot, climate refugees, societal collapse, being on “a highway to climate hell”⁵⁰ and much else, our confidence that the future will be better for our children is dissipating.⁵¹ The unsettled turmoil that marks most societies can be read as a sign of a deep, deep restlessness; a loss of faith in the promises of the MTI gods.
- This recognition dawns: “We have no future if we stay here in this condition.” The story of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt dwells on how tone deaf the Egyptians were; how long it took them to get it that they should allow the Hebrews to leave in order to search for a more promising future. It is interesting that not a word is said about what the Hebrews learned as they watched Moses up the ante on the Egyptians. This is a part of the story that interests me. Being human it is never the case that 100% of any large group ever agree on anything that is truly important, much less arrive at the same conclusion all at once. We, as whole cultures, simply do not come to life-changing decisions quickly. I assume that the percentage of Hebrews who were willing to risk

⁵⁰ António Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations, Opening speech, COP 27, November 2022.

⁵¹ The [2023 Edelman Trust Survey](#) reveals that the citizens of only one of the 27 countries surveyed think that their family will be better off in 5 years. This country was China. The increase was 1%. In 24 of the 27 countries the level of confidence in the future reached a new all-time low.

leaving Egypt for an better, but unknown, future increased as the price paid by the Egyptians cut closer to the bone. This same phenomenon can be seen in MTI cultures today. It takes a lot to arouse us from our default view that the security of the MTI world we know is far, far better than the insecurity of a vague promise of a better future that lies beyond our MTI frames of reference. However, the price of remaining committed to an MTI future is rising. As noted, the recognition that things are no longer working as expected in MTI cultures is widespread. As of today, only a small percentage have reach the conclusion that we have no future if we stay committed to a MTI future. I invite you to watch that percentage grow over the next few years, let alone decades.

I will pause the story here. As I write this in early 2023, we in MTI cultures can be seen to be about where I imagine the Ancient Hebrews in Egypt were as they watched the second or third plague in Egypt – unsettled, but not yet ready to make a major move. Both Egyptians and the ancient Hebrews wanted more evidence before they were willing to act. In their case, Moses was willing to provide it. In our case, the Earth and our species will continue to oblige us.

If we cannot learn from subtle signals, the strength of the signals will be increased. The question is, “How much death, destruction and suffering will we have to experience before we are ready to move beyond the boundaries of our MTI cultures?” This is still an open question. Today, the answer appears to be, “A good deal more.” Sadly, it appears that, as with the Egyptians, we will not learn fast enough to avoid tragedies which move ever closer to every home.

I have written this in the hope that by reading and chewing on these reflections you may find some of the understanding and courage you and we will need to make reliable sense of our times and respond with a fresh imagination of where we are in history and the nature of the work that this moment calls for.

Allow me to close with this thought: I have learned that none of us is responsible for the length of our arms, or the time in history into which we are born. However, we are far more responsible than our MTI cultures teach us for what we take as real. What we allow ourselves to know as real is the key to seeing what needs to be done, thinking/feeling our way through it well enough to be able to get it done, all without having to be told what to know, see, think or do

Good hunting.