

# **Learning the A, B, C & Ds of the Human Condition**

**An Education often Misplaced,  
Misinterpreted or Misinformed**

**T. Dave Matsuo**

**©2024 TDM All rights reserved**

**No part of this manuscript may be reprinted without permission from the author**

**Contact:**

**[www.4X12.org](http://www.4X12.org)**

**[tdavematsuo@4X12.org](mailto:tdavematsuo@4X12.org)**



## Contents

### **Introduction.....1**

<b>Heuristic Purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The A, B, C &amp; Ds...</b>	<b>3</b>
Advocating and Arguable	4
Building and Blocking	4
Collateral and Conflating	4
Default but Deniable	5

### **Ch 1 A - Advocating and Arguable.....7**

<b>The Nature of Advocating</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Arguable Nature</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Recycling, Reforming or <i>Renewing</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Road to Wholeness</b>	<b>17</b>

### **Ch 2 B - Building and Blocking.....19**

<b>The Nature of Building</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Blocking Nature</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The Heart of the Human Condition and Humanity</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Hearts at Peace</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Imaginations of Peace</b>	<b>29</b>

### **Ch 3 C - Collateral and Conflating.....31**

<b>Collateral's Purpose</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Conflating's Purpose</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Illusions of Light</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Our Perceptual-Interpretive Framework</b>	<b>38</b>

**Ch 4 D - Default but Deniable.....41**

<b>By Default</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Virtually Deniable</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Heartfelt Vulnerably</b>	<b>52</b>

**Ch 5 Convicting Conclusion.....55**

<b>Distinguishing the Uncommon from the Common</b>	<b>55</b>
First Integral Issue:	58
Second Integral Issue:	59
<b>Uncommon Conclusions</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>The Triage Purpose of Healing</b>	<b>63</b>

**Additional Study Resources.....67**

# Introduction

“Where are you?”

Genesis 3:9

When was the last time you attended the school of humanity and learned directly from its teaching about the human condition?

The human species has evolved since its origin in ways that are immeasurable by the limits of biological evolution. While its condition has some explanation from the evolutionary dynamic of “survival of the fittest,” its condition teaches us far more about *how* humanity has evolved and *what* the human person has become. If we pay close attention to this interrelated how and what, we can learn about the existing human condition to understand that the “fittest” of humanity (and its component human collectives) and the human person have devolved in order to survive.

As persons who are parts of human collectives, we all live in the human condition and are inescapably affected by it in one way or another. The urgent question in our everyday life is: To what extent does the human condition influence our persons and collectives? That is, how does any aspect of its **A,B,C&Ds** define who and what we are and determine how we function? Since no one is immune from its influence, understanding where, when and how we may be infected by it is a critical lesson to learn. Without learning its shaping influence on our persons and collectives, we unintentionally can fall into not only reflecting the human condition but also reinforcing and even sustaining it in our persons and collectives, and thus in the situations and circumstances of global humanity.

The subtle dynamics of this pervasive condition escape the mindset of persons and collectives whenever its teaching is rendered unimportant or simply ignored as the top priority for humanity. The consequence is that this education gets misplaced, misinterpreted or misinformed. With its weight bearing down on the sum of humanity, however, the human condition will continue to diminish, reduce and fragment the who, what and how of humanity. It will continue, that is, until intervened and its weight unloaded by viable change.

All the situations and circumstances of the human condition provide teaching examples of how persons and collectives are affected. Yet, these effects become

teachable only when we give them our close attention and listen carefully to the persons and collectives affected without imposing our presumed bias on their condition. In other words, we need to give them the opportunity to speak for themselves without making assumptions that speak for them. That means we are the students in these situations and circumstances, even though we may be affected by some of these situations and circumstances thereby qualifying also as teachers. The reflexive nature of this educational process is intrinsic to the human condition, which must be engaged for its heuristic outcome.

Christians notably have been susceptible to reflecting, reinforcing and even sustaining the human condition. This is the consequence evident when the Christian view of the human condition lacks depth perception because of having a weak view of sin. This lens evolves to form biases of the human condition, which have not been learned fully from the terms of God's Rule of Law—the basic relational process that is essential for humanity to live (not just exist) to the fullness of its created design and purpose. This consequence has evolved subtly and is easily obscured by a biased lens paying attention to less essential matters both for humanity in general and their own persons in particular.

Therefore, whenever Christians have not learned the fundamental roots of life from the heuristic process of God's relational terms (Gal 3:19; Rom 5:20; 7:7), they will explicitly participate in and implicitly be complicit with the **A,B,C&Ds** of the human condition. In spite of a faith in Christ and any claim of the gospel, this is the existential reality for Christians lacking the education from the human condition surrounding them, as well as *in* them by default. Thus, sadly but not surprisingly, they function tethered to the human condition along with the rest of humanity.

“Where are **you**?”

## **Heuristic Purpose**

This study extends the session at the school of humanity by focusing on the interrelated *A,B,C&Ds of the Human Condition*:

1. In order to amplify its teaching for us to learn from the existential heart of humanity and the human person.
2. So that those who learn will know what they are faced with and must deal with both (a) to not reflect, reinforce and sustain the human condition, and (b) to help change its prevailing influence and control on human collectives and persons.

This education is essential for humans:

3. In order not to keep repeating its history, and thereby
4. For transposing its future with turn-around changes at the root of its condition.

This ongoing session, however, will not unfold at the mere intellectual level of our engagement—no matter how much assent is given. Nor will it advance simply by rehearsing the **A,B,C&Ds** in our belief systems. Unlike how much of education is conducted (even in theological studies), we will be challenged at the root level to get to the heart of our humanity and our persons. Otherwise, education readily gets misinterpreted or misinformed.

Without compromise or apology, the learning process ahead will require engaging issues that are pervading and prevailing, subtle and ironic, any and all of which could be personally confronting and threatening. Therefore, the extent of the education received in this process cannot be assumed, because this learning process is contingent on being vulnerably open to its existential content, and thus is dependent on our vulnerable level of involvement with these issues in order for their teaching to have the significant outcome of life-changing learning.

### **The A, B, C & Ds...**

The following issues are not comprehensive of the human condition. But, along with clearly blatant acts against humanity, what these further issues teach us encompasses the condition of all humanity; and they take us to the roots necessary to provide the perceptual depth and insight for understanding the existential condition of human collectives and persons composing humanity.

Each category overlaps with the others, and ongoingly interacts with the others to form an interdependent process that embeds the human condition in human collectives and persons. Their integral sum, however, does not serve as an app to take us through the learning process. Such apps typically assist its users through a facilitated but diminished level of education that does not involve the depths of our hearts. Moreover, the purpose of this learning process is not with the goal of gaining more information. Rather, it directs us to a deeper qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness of our existential condition, and the changes necessary to meet the heart-level needs of humanity. These needs underlie the spectrum of the human condition at any level—needs which will continue to be unmet until transforming changes are made.

## **A – Advocating and Arguable**

From the beginning, the human condition emerged explicitly or implicitly advocating alternatives for human life. These alternatives have evolved with the advocate's assumption of advancing humanity or having some beneficial value. This assumption is applied not only to positive activity but also to negative activity, thus rendering the difference between them to relative determination by advocates. What is then advocated, however, has always raised questions; such inquiry became the source of argument and dispute for humanity that created a competitive system between the diversity of human collectives and persons. The results keep evolving in a comparative process that render some collectives and persons better and others less, some good and some bad. On the other hand, even without any purpose to survive as the fittest, the human condition in and of itself is counter-productive in contentious ways. Thus, in spite of its usefulness challenging advocates, the human condition ongoingly has a negative presence.

Therefore, whatever is advocated (even implied) by the human condition is always arguable down to its roots and needs accountability, which includes holding the human condition accountable for its argumentative nature.

## **B – Building and Blocking**

Who advocates what and what is advocated for whom are both arguable. The former can claim to build humanity's progression, while the latter can be disputed for blocking the growth of the humanity of persons. The former assumes to build on a comparative basis, while the latter ends up blocking in a comparative process. Even with good intentions, efforts to build often result in constructing walls that block the welfare of humanity; this results in the majority of persons bearing the cost for the benefits of a select few.

Therefore, building and blocking are critically interrelated in the human condition, and the distinction between them is often indistinguishable in their existential function.

## **C – Collateral and Conflating**

The human condition evolves subtly yet unmistakably in what it advocates for building humanity. This process embeds human collectives and persons in a devolving condition, which eludes their sensitivity and awareness. Moreover, beside the obvious consequences witnessed throughout human history, there are other consequences experienced that must be accounted for. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, what is



constructed for human collectives and persons inevitably has collateral consequences locally, regionally and globally. These consequences often are undetected, ignored or simply accepted as part of the cost for building. Furthermore, these consequences can have the appearance of being good or a moral imperative when the human condition is conflated with beliefs and practices that are held to be important for human life.

Therefore, conflating interacts with the collateral to create inflection points, which serve to affirm and justify the means of the human condition used to achieve the end advocating to build for human life.

## **D – Default but Deniable**

The sum of the **A, B, Cs** that compose the human condition in all its variations inescapably adds up to the limits and constraints encompassing what is the default condition of humanity in all its collectives and persons. They emerge unavoidably by default in the absence of alternatives of viable alternatives of wholeness, which are not mere advocated alternatives. Whether consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously, all of humanity falls along the spectrum of the human condition by default—that is, by default until changed at its source. All of this condition existing, pervading and prevailing in everyday life, however, is subject to denial; and denial is enacted directly or indirectly, explicitly or covertly, intentionally or unintentionally.

Therefore, our existential human condition by default is always deniable by any of us in one way or another, thereby making radical change unattainable and further entrenching us in the devolving human condition.

It's time for us to learn at the heart level!



# Chapter 1            A – Advocating and Arguable

**“You will not be *reduced, fragmented or die.*”**

Genesis 3:4

The year 2024 is projected to be the biggest voting year in the history of humanity. Over half of the global population living in 76 countries are scheduled to have elections. How fair and free these elections will be is always a question, which will not only test the integrity of democracy but will also be a testament to its significance for humanity.

Every election, no matter how fair or free, will have candidates who advocate views, plans and actions for voters to respond to. Whether voter response has the freedom and opportunity to express their opinion on what is advocated is an open question that an election by itself does not guarantee. In other words, advocacy is always subjected to arguable positions, but how much such advocacy is actually subject to disagreement or opposition is directly dependent on the freedom and will of human collectives and persons to enact positions—notably when in conflict with authoritarian advocates.

Election results in this coming year will reveal the existing condition of humanity. And human collectives and persons will incur the outcomes that inevitably should raise more questions.

The human condition will unfold in 2024 just as it has evolved since its beginning. At all levels of human life we will witness and experience the workings of the human condition notably by human collectives and persons advocating arguable activity in everyday life. Understanding the nature of this advocacy is essential to understanding the human condition—learning that it’s *our* human condition. This education will make evident the existential reality of its ongoing presence in the daily life and lives surrounding us and in us.

## **The Nature of Advocating**

The best lesson to teach us the human condition’s A is taken from the pervasive context of the internet. The internet prevails globally to provide platforms for all of humanity to advocate views, plans and actions for human life. The diversity of this

advocacy (even by implication) has no common ground except for the human condition underlying all that is posted on the internet. What has emerged, therefore, and keeps evolving is an argumentative context that allows persons to expose their contentious condition in an ongoing process devolving 24/7. The consequences include misplacing, misinterpreting and misinforming the education available from this condition.

How many opinions have you heard advocated lately that you agree or disagree with? On what basis do you think that you and others have those views? Who advocates what and what is advocated for whom both need to be scrutinized and understood—a basic education for humanity.

Advocating is a common practice that many participate in. For example, in elections not only candidates advocate but voters also do by casting their votes favoring or opposing particular advocates. Advocating is also an elusive practice engaged immeasurably by those using the internet. Such advocating is elusive because of the following:

1. It is often a reactionary reflex stirred up by “likes” or “dislikes” without much if any thoughtful consideration given to the matter.
2. Thus, what’s advocated is usually implied in what is explicitly posted, which makes rational exchange an impractical priority in the face of the urgency to exchange posts.
3. Accordingly, whatever is advocated explicitly or implicitly often has no basis in the facts to counter misinformation, which renders advocacy a mystery that cannot be composed by an inconvenient truth.
4. Much of this advocating dynamic is engaged with little if any awareness both of actually advocating and what is being advocated, including how it is influenced and shaped by the surrounding context.

Moreover, this has only amplified the human condition existing from the beginning, which is reinforced by illusions of optimism and sustained by pessimism. Thus,

5. Though the negative presence of the underlying human condition in any explicit and aggressive expression may be apparent to the naked eye, the implicit and passive-aggressive expressions are only evident to a discerning heart, which eludes those who don’t function vulnerably with their heart.
6. Therefore, the human condition keeps devolving elusively as long as humanity maintains a function focused on the outer-in quantitative aspects of life in contrast to and in conflict with the primary inner-out qualities intrinsic to the identity and function constituting humanity at its origin.

How optimistic or pessimistic have you been about whatever is being advocated? If the nature of advocating is ambiguous, how do you determine whether to be optimistic or pessimistic about what is advocated? Also, how do you assess who advocates what and what is advocated for whom when the consequences for humanity remain uncertain?

Throughout its history, humanity has been baffled by the optimism advocated by the human condition. This is not surprising since the human condition emerged in the beginning with a suspicious claim of optimism, which should have been argued by those receiving it instead of captivated by it. That claim of “you will not *be reduced, fragmented or die*” initiated the human condition with a falsehood, which then became the basis composing its nature. When this basis is not challenged, the nature of the human condition becomes not only elusive but intentionally evasive. And its evasive nature has evolved to prevail over humanity and dominate the workings of human collectives and persons—the sum of those captivated by its false claims of optimism devolving into the pessimistic nature of its negative presence.

Humanity survives to the extent of its optimism. Advocating assumes this optimism explicitly or implicitly, thus what is advocated has to provide some hope for advancing humanity. Who advocates and who is advocated for each embrace this hope consciously or unconsciously in order to counter pessimism and not fall into despair. What becomes elusive and/or evasive in this optimistic process is the basis for hope.

In evolutionary biology, the basis for advancing is to be the “fittest,” which cultivates the advancement of “the selfish gene.”<sup>1</sup> This basis of so-called advancement is certainly arguable, but it continues to prevail overtly and covertly throughout humanity to make evident the underlying nature of the human condition. Less evident in human history are two current bases of hope that have shrouded human progress in an ambiguous optimism.

From the beginning, the human condition evolved on the implication that the individual is free to decide what they want and to determine the way to fulfill that desire: “When you exercise your freedom of choice, your eyes will be opened to benefits beyond your existing limits” (Gen 3:5). This opened the door to self-determination and the priority of individualism given to one’s self-interests and self-concerns over others. It is on this basis of freedom that democracy evolved as the hope for advancing individuals together in some collective form. This optimism has persisted in spite of the trials, tribulations and recurring consequences experienced throughout the development of democracy. The elections of 2024 will further witness to this ambiguous optimism and expose the false hope of individualistic freedom to advance humanity.

Democracy legitimizes individuals pursuing not only their self-interests and concerns but also engaging in advancing the selfish gene. This is the freedom of the individual that formed the nature of the human condition in advocating for one’s advancement. It’s this nature that underlies the optimism of democracy. Yet, for this

---

<sup>1</sup> Discussed by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

democratic process to work in human contexts, individuals have to be willing to compromise in their decisions in order to have the cooperation needed to advance together. The current U.S. Congress is a prime example of the consequences that keep evolving from the lack of cooperative compromise and its subversive nature at work; and this influential collective shows no signs of learning about their condition, instead amplifying it notably by misinterpretation and misinformation.

Accordingly, this elusive and evasive nature keeps revealing its negative presence to undermine cooperation and thereby render democracy a false hope. Locally or globally, many individuals have become pessimistic in democratic contexts, becoming even disillusioned by its false hope, since even in the U.S. (the epitome of democracy) humanity has not advanced but in reality has regressed. For example, how does the U.S. explain a major portion of its population struggling in poverty and its growing homelessness? Is it the freedom of choice for these constituents? They are not the exception but the rule of freedom in democracy; and the fragmented, if not broken condition of humanity is indeed epitomized in U.S. democracy, with little hope for positive turn-around change in the forecast.

Locally or globally, the struggles of democracy to embody hope has accelerated another false hope for humanity: authoritarianism, the logical alternative. This scenario will play out in coming elections, which will enact the democratic playbook deeper into the human condition with evasive measures that will subvert humanity's advancement and even reduce the integrity intrinsic to humanity in all its persons. The latter reduction is a dehumanizing process that is also experienced in democracies as the inevitable consequence of the human condition underlying humanity in general and all human activity in particular.

This is the unavoidable result, which should be expected, whenever who advocates what and what is advocated for whom are based on the false hope composed by the reductionist nature of the human condition. Therefore, any optimism that qualifies this nature of the human condition will be disqualified when challenged at its basis, and thereby getting to its basic roots to expose the evasive negative presence of the human condition inescapably underlying all of humanity and its collectives and persons.

This leads us to the second current basis of hope that subtly generates an even more ambiguous optimism today—the equivocal advocacy of which clouds the future. Elections today are subjected to so-called *deepfakes*: realistic audio, video and photographs created by AI software. Political deepfakes are biased content that misinform and mislead the public, further undermining democracy and threatening the integrity of humanity. What is evolving generated by the multiple functions of AI has

stirred a growing ocean of optimism over a widening area of life; like the origin of the human condition, what's advocated will result in "you will become like God, knowing everything right and wrong" (Gen 3:5). On the other hand, AI is also stirring up a wave of pessimism due to its elusive and evasive workings that are subject to the nature of the human condition.

Who will advocate AI and for whom AI will be advocated both are critical issues facing humanity today. The use of AI is mainly under the control and determination of human collectives and persons, who need to understand the implications of what AI generates. Furthermore, as AI develops sentience, will AI elude the control and evade the determination of humans? This uncertainty renders any optimism for advancing humanity a false hope; this then is ongoingly subject to the negative presence of the human condition, whose nature easily evades and eludes accountability when not exposed at its roots.

In other words, technology is the prevailing basis of hope that has not only captivated humanity but also holds it captive for the dominant hope of human progress. Technology has certainly made the world more efficient and life more convenient. This has evolved at a high cost for humanity, because the use of technology has efficiently avoided the inconvenient truth of consequences advocated by the human condition underlying its use. Who and what progresses are not only ambiguous but also evolve in falsehood, and thereby devolve in the negative nature of the human condition's unavoidable and inescapable presence.

The subtle nature of advocating keeps evolving in its tenuous and equivocal workings. As long as its nature remains ambiguous, what underlies it will continue to be elusive and evasive. Humanity will always incur the consequences in this process, which is the inconvenient truth facing all human collectives and persons. Until they/we meet this challenge, the human condition will ongoingly prevail in their/our lives. Without learning and understanding how they/we reflect, reinforce and sustain the human condition, they/we will not realize how they/we are reduced, fragmented and broken. This reality is unavoidable and inescapable, but its inevitability for humanity is binary. The human condition exists in an either-or process, which human collectives and persons have the choice to maintain or change at its roots. This change, however, requires the turn-around of redemptive change. In spite of the struggle for collectives and persons to be free to make the choice to change, this redemptive change is accessible for their turn-around.

Embracing this inconvenient truth involves engaging in the arguable process that counters the ambiguous optimism and false hope advocated by the human condition. This counter-reality is also unavoidable, which then makes it irreplaceable with anything less and any substitutes.

## Arguable Nature

The nature of advocating can be argued philosophically with any worldview—not to mention argued emotionally with any feeling—but that debate never gets to the roots of the existential problem pervading humanity. Throughout human history, collectives and persons have discussed the pros and cons of who advocates what and what’s advocated for whom but have been unable to arrive at a consensus of the cause of humanity’s struggles. Even the good intentions of the United Nations have produced at best only remedial solutions to solve humanity’s global problems. This makes evident that not only is the nature of advocating elusive and evasive, but so also is the arguable nature needed to turn conditions around and open the door to resolute change.

The nature of being arguable operates on a dual track. This binary process either engages the nature of the human condition to give pushback to the optimism of advocating, which becomes contentious and even violent. Or it enacts a posture for change that counters the ambiguous optimism and false hope of who is advocating and what is advocated. The former track could be useful to undermine the nature of advocating, but it also exposes its own nature that is empowered by the nature of the human condition. In other words, all these natures converge to operate inseparably on the first track—with the second track an exception rarely taken.

The latter track for the nature of being arguable is more complex, on the one hand, while on the other it is a single-minded enactment. The nature of being arguable is complex because it operates as follows:

1. It does not assume optimism or embrace hope just because it offers more and has many benefits.
2. It does assume the negative presence of the human condition and makes itself vulnerable to its workings.
3. It willfully engages in exposing the human condition’s presence and negating its influence.
4. It is committed for the long haul of this process and pays the cost necessary for the wholeness of humanity to be restored.

The latter track unfolds in everyday life as its arguable nature is enacted rigorously with a single-mindedness ongoingly guided by the big picture for humanity growing in its collectives and persons. The integrity of this single-mindedness is constituted only when anything less and any substitutes do not compose its basis and



operation. Sadly, but not surprisingly, this single-mindedness becomes an inconvenient truth that can readily be eluded or evaded to set it off track. That's why the nature of being arguable necessitates its complex track to work synergistically for the wholeness needed in being arguable without the influence of the human condition. In our current advocating-arguable state, we are faced ongoingly with the crossroad of these two tracks, with the latter always an inconvenient truth.

Therefore, being arguable has a unique nature that sets itself apart in human contexts. When its nature is distinguished existentially, it exposes the competing natures of advocating and the human condition at their roots. This then makes accessible the binary choice, whereby the true hope for humanity is made available to turn around, change and restore it to its created wholeness.

## **Recycling, Reforming or *Renewing***

Since the beginning, all the advocating through human history has produced systems of inequality. This inequity keeps evolving in a competitive process that has stratified humanity in comparative distinctions of more or less, good or bad, and better or worse. Human collectives and persons become entrenched in these systems, constrained in this structure, and thus are enslaved to their distinctions without recourse to be redeemed. This is the unavoidable and inescapable consequence when the human person (collectively and individually) is defined in identity and determined in function by this outer-in process—a process that fails to get to the inner-out integrity of the constituting roots for humanity.

When this now devolving condition is not perceived and vulnerably learned from by the constituents of humanity, the nature of this process keeps recycling. In spite of any optimism and hope with good intentions, this recurring condition will elude and evade the change needed to turn it around. In principle, the competitive process devolving mirrors the evolving survival of the fittest, except for the fact that the self-promoting of the latter is overtly explicit in its operation. In contrast, the former operates insidiously to mask the nature of its condition and the consequences for humanity devolving from what amounts to its own selfish gene—the self-designation as the most popular, if not the fittest. Since the scope of its influence exerts widespread pressure and subtle force on human collectives and persons to agree with its optimism and submit to its hope, any dissension and all contention are always subject to deferring to the so-called more, better, best defining what is good. That's the nature of the system prevailing in humanity, and its collectives and persons must bear the cost for their limited participation and constrained belonging.

One insidious example that masked its own selfish gene evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which “the best” in the U.S. advocated for eugenics. This scientific selective procedure was used to weed out and eliminate “the worst” in the U.S. population, in order to purify its citizenry and preserve its human race—that is, a race of its own human construction. While some of those deemed less were tolerated, the limits and constraints imposed on them would not allow climbing the social ladder to achieve any sense of equality. Even with having comparable resources, the distinction of less created a genetic marker etched indelibly in their resume. The face of such a distinction could not be altered with remedial measures, thus the structural inequality would never be equalized.

The dynamic that engulfs humanity in an ocean of optimism churned up by waves of pessimism is a recurring cycle in all human contexts, where its tides are predictable. The advocating-arguable dynamic makes evident that the human condition keeps recycling no matter the context, and regardless of measures taken to limit or constrain its consequences. Perhaps the global issue that best makes this evident is climate change. Climate change is subjected to the tide of advocating. The global community has experienced its high and low tides ongoingly cycling. Since this tide is also subject to the advocating-arguable dynamic, its cycle variably reinforces and sustains the human condition with the unintentional result of recycling its consequences. Whatever reforms have been advocated and even implemented have neither changed the tide of recycling nor turned around its pervasive and prevailing condition. Given the fact that 2023 was the hottest year on record for the Earth, what will the future unfold?

What this teaches us is essential for humanity and all its collectives and persons. No matter how strong the optimism in what’s advocated, there is no guaranteed hope for humanity. No matter how far the good intentions go in advocating, this does not mean that humanity will benefit. No matter how extensive the support for what’s advocated, this does not insure that change will become a reality. And no matter how inclusive what’s advocated embraces humanity, it does not mean that the human condition is addressed at its roots to deal with its nature.

Change has been advocated throughout human history. What direction these changes have gone and where they have taken humanity are always arguable. What we need to learn from this terrain is that the human GPS is not reliable. Nor does it guide to a valid destination that can be counted on to bring humanity to the place necessary for its *renewal*. It’s as if this GPS has no true sense of direction; and that it can’t discern the terrain to get humanity to where it needs to go. So, human collectives and persons get lost in unrecognized surroundings with no valid alternative route to take that doesn’t keep circling back.

These teaching moments occur in the spectrum of changes observed in human contexts. What is learned from these changes is that no amount of reforms has prevented the recycling of the consequences directly or indirectly tied to the human condition. This tether of humanity simply has not been severed by any and all of these changes, thereby

keeping humanity tied to the elusive and evasive nature of the human condition. Even with the best of intentions to bring change, recycling prevails to rule over any apparent exceptions to this reality.

Causes advocated by activists is another lesson to learn from. What it teaches us is that causes come and go but what remains is the condition targeted, however rigorously, to change. A glaring yet misinformed example of this is the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. Notably since the 1960s, these activists have paraded their optimism in hope of change. Their platform was and still is misinformed, because it hoped to change the racist basis for defining the structures and institutions of the U.S. and for determining its policies and everyday life. Widespread optimism was amplified by the Voting Right Act of 1965, whose reforms were expected to equalize all persons (especially black Americans) in the political process. While some changes were made to improve some situations and circumstances, racism has not been eliminated or even hindered; thus it continues to recycle, for example, in current voter requirements laws and the gerrymandering of voter districts, to reinforce and sustain the racist nature of the human condition.

One misguided solution to racism is to become colorblind. The problem with racism, however, is not that it sees color. Color is a natural characteristic of humanity, but race is a human construction that evolved from the survival of the fittest to control the human order. The underlying problem is rooted in human identity being defined and human function determined by the outer-in characteristics at the expense of seeing, knowing and responding to their whole person from inner out—with color and all other outer-in distinctions secondary and thus subordinate to persons from inner out. This inner-out perceptual lens is always subjected to the outer-in lens prevailing in human life; and it is susceptible to submitting to the latter's prevailing influence. When the inner-out lens becomes subject to the outer-in lens, as it currently does, the consequences of the human condition's reductionist outer-in modus operandi recycles and becomes the default mode informing what it advocates and guiding what it changes.

This unavoidable default mode operated in leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr. In spite of their rigorous advocating against injustice and inequality of race and class, their failure to include gender thereby reinforced and sustained the unjust inequality of females.<sup>2</sup>

We can also learn from our default mode that as long as our perceptual lens is focused primarily on the outer in, our everyday lens will have distinctions biases such as race, class, gender, age, ableism, and so forth that reduce persons of their whole integrity. Such biases reflect our human condition, which is sustained by our default mode until our biases are changed from inner out.

---

<sup>2</sup> This shortcoming is discussed by Jennifer Holliday in "Sexism in the Civil Rights Movement: A Discussion Guide: A closer examination of heroes in our culture" July 9, 2009, online at [tolerance.org/magazine](http://tolerance.org/magazine); also discussed by bell hooks in *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990).

Recycling the most and longest in human history is the contentious nature of the human condition. This has been evident in global and personal contexts where the cause for peace has been generated. Historically, however, advocacy from the peace movement has been an endless call for a limited peace defined by the absence of conflict. While Ukraine and Gaza would certainly benefit from such peace, such conflicts keep recurring because as merely reforming the condition, such peace doesn't get to the root constitution of peace as humanity's well-being of **wholeness**. Nothing less will bring peace. Yet, peace advocates and activists have not learned from this lesson, and thus lack understanding the true meaning of peace.

Where does this all bring us? Have we been educated to know the true difference between right and wrong? Have we learned why and how the human condition recycles? Also, do we understand what changes don't change but effectively reinforce and sustain the underlying human condition of humanity? Or is this education being misplaced, misinterpreted or misinformed?

The hope for humanity has been advocated tenuously as well as falsely. This teaches us how elusively and evasively the nature of the human condition can operate, even among the best of intentions. Without knowing of its negative presence and understanding its covert workings, whatever is addressed doesn't get to the root of the problem that needs to be changed for existing conditions reducing humanity to be turned around. This change must include the reduction of our own condition by default.

The hope for this turn-around change is constituted only by the essential process of *renewal*, which will restore humanity's reduction to the wholeness of its original integrity. It is insufficient to advocate merely for the dignity of humanity in all persons. *New* is not a concept but an existential reality. For the rise of this *new*, however, the *old* currently existing in its place must effectively die. Dying, for example, to our optimism and the false hopes of exercising our freedom of choice can be confronting for our worldview or threatening to our way of life and its basis. For the *new* to emerge, the *old* at the core of our existence must be transformed from outer in to inner out. In other words, our hope for humanity and expectations for change need to be reeducated at the heart level, so that we will learn to advocate **nothing less** and will understand its basis needing to be composed with **no substitutes**.

'Nothing less and no substitutes' is the inconvenient paradigm that is imperative to validate the process of *renewal*; and this ongoingly serves to expose illusions and confront simulations of the new. Otherwise, anything less advocated and any substitutes hoped for will continue to recycle the human condition in any of its consequences, whereby human collectives and persons will continue to be relegated to and will ongoingly be entrenched in its pervading and prevailing negative presence. 'Anything

less and any substitutes' is the contrary paradigm used by the human condition to subtly counter the wholeness integral to humanity with any reductions of humanity's constitutional integrity. The ongoing tension between wholeness and reductionism becomes a battle, which many try to appease with compromise—only to learn they've used the 'anything less and any substitutes' paradigm because the 'nothing less and no substitutes' is inconvenient.

Humanity's journey to wholeness is a road less travelled. In our specific journeys, we need to understand the road necessary to take in order to reach wholeness.

## **The Road to Wholeness**

A journey to wholeness often starts out on roads full of potholes, barriers and detours. Such roads readily prevent this sojourn from reaching its hopeful destination. When collectives and persons rely on the human GPS, they will be led to the most convenient road that obscures such potholes, barriers and detours. What is thought to be facilitated is a bad but typical assumption made when pursuing wholeness evolves by the anything-less-and-any-substitutes paradigm.

Many presume, therefore, that because of the advocacy voiced by humanity's diversity, the entrance to the road to wholeness is wide and opens to many lanes for this road. The reality, however, is that human collectives and persons are misguided or misled when the road taken to wholeness is wide, perhaps like a freeway with many exits to get distracted by other secondary interests or concerns, and thereby get off track from the primary matter essential for their well-being. They make the false assumption that the easier road is the simplest way to achieve wholeness for any of humanity's reduction, fragmentation and brokenness. Recycling and existing conditions make evident that this is a false hope.

What lesson do you receive from this evolving reality pervading your surrounding contexts?

Some go away from all this with the thinking that wholeness is unachievable, and that we all need to just make the best out of our situations and circumstances. Others will argue that we need to keep trying and can't give up on reaching this important destination. Still others will advocate for different ways to achieve this goal. But who will truly learn what this lesson is teaching us?

Many try to fix inequities in human collectives and persons. These problems pervading their situations and circumstances are not easy or simple to fix. What's reduced, fragmented and broken are never restored nor *renewed* by patchwork solutions. Restoring and *renewing* these parts of collectives and persons require putting these parts together for their wholeness. The outcome of wholeness, however, unfolds only on a narrow road that is not easy yet it is a straight forward. Journeying on this narrow road to wholeness necessitates humility (both epistemic and ontological) in an ongoing process of being vulnerable from inner out. Because of what it necessitates, the narrow road to wholeness is a road less travelled, rendered too difficult or demanding and thus too inconvenient by the advocating-arguable dynamic prevailing among collectives and persons. Therefore, this results in an elusive and evasive process prevailing to recycle the human condition on a wide and winding road, which is travelled on by the diversity of humanity.

As long as the above lesson is not taken to heart and wholeness is perceived with bias as an inconvenient truth, human collectives and persons will be unable to make whole their reduced, fragmented and broken conditions that reflect, reinforce and sustain their underlying human condition. When will this existential lesson teach us to turn around from outer in to inner out, so that we will change at the roots of our humanity?

Until it does, the class continues with more lessons to learn. For the sake of humanity, this class will not be dismissed, and the attendance of each and every collective and person will always be monitored for cutting class. Also, progress reports are forthcoming, whether convenient or not, notably to identify misinterpretation and misinformation. Meanwhile, a new normal will keep evolving to simulate hopeful construction for humanity. Such ambiguous optimism will promote building measures for humanity that will result in elusive and evasive results generated by the nature of the human condition underpinning its construction.

## Chapter 2

## B – Building and Blocking

“...instead, your eyes will be opened to *creative measures*,  
and you will then become like God.”

Genesis 3:5

In a governed context, what construction businesses build must follow regulations, have permits and pass inspections. The business of building, however, is not limited to the construction industry and is undertaken by many sectors of a surrounding context, including by individuals. The problem this creates is not the quantity of what’s built but the quality. This condition evolves because the process of building does not include following regulations, having permits and passing inspections. Without having basic guidelines, whatever is built in surrounding contexts, even with good intentions for humanity’s progress, also become walls that block the welfare of humanity—the dissonant reality of *business as usual*.

Does this point to the need for more oversight? That depends on the source of the oversight. Political conservatives have argued against more government oversight, but the issue before us goes deeper. When the guiding principle is based on quantity over quality, the building overseen inevitably invokes a competitive system that builds walls in a comparative process. The economy, for example, has a quantitative basis, and its globalization has evolved in systems that block the welfare of multiple sectors of the global community. Any oversight of what the global economy is building has reinforced and sustained this evolution reflecting the self-interests of the survival of the fittest.<sup>1</sup> This elusive and evasive condition points to the lesson making accessible the existential reality that human building reflects, reinforces and sustains the human condition, which then unavoidably ends with us building walls.

The fact that who advocates building and the building advocated for whom are both arguable converges with the **B** of the human condition. This lesson teaches us:

1. The nature of building and blocking can be observed in human collectives and persons,
2. in order to learn what has evolved from this prevailing process,
3. so that we can understand the forecast for the future and what will change that condition.

---

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion about this, see Vinoth Ramachandra in *Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

Failing this lesson will unequivocally continue to allow the building axis to subject humanity to the consequences constructed from, by and for the human condition. Can human collectives and persons afford to fail this lesson at the cost of their humanity's well-being?

## **The Nature of Building**

What is most palpable among rulers (past and present) is their assumption that their actions work for the benefit of humanity's progress. These rulers (democratic, authoritarian and fascist) will be on display in the 2024 elections throughout the world. Whatever results evolve from this elective process raises two issues that all rulers and any other builders are accountable for.

First of all, the ambiguity of what benefits and progresses humanity not only makes them arguable but also elusive or evasive for oversight. Many rulers have evaded oversight, but builders at all levels have also eluded being held accountable. In the absence of regulations and restrictions, this then opens the door to the means used to build for their end goal. Currently, for example, Israel is in the midst of this process in their building efforts in Gaza and the West Bank. This door widely opens to the working rule of using whatever means necessary to achieve such human goals earmarked for humanity. That is to say, the guideline to follow and enforce becomes 'the end justifying the use of any means'—whether stated explicitly or operating implicitly.

As this door remains open, what also enters is the underlying nature of building that is the driving force for whatever is constructed. Even though this work may be done in the name of humanity, it needs to be inspected for the nature of its integrity. That is the lesson before us.

Regardless who the builder is on the spectrum of globalization, nations, tribes, businesses, public enterprises, families and persons, all of their function is unavoidably subjected to underlying issues. When these issues are not resolved, they become inescapably subject to the nature underlying these issues. From its inception as a nation-state, Israel's strategic plan has been to build its independence on a quantitative basis by its claim on the Holy Lands. Their claim has certainly been arguable, resisted and rigorously opposed. Israel's subsequent tactical plans to build their nation make evident the source of their identity and the nature of their function. Historically from its ancient origin, Israel has been critiqued by the uncommon constituting Source of its religious identity and its function as a people, whose qualitative-relational oversight has disciplined their building efforts—all of which has been documented by the Hebrew



prophets. This feedback (and pushback) continues to be relevant today not just directly to Israel but for all other builders, though it usually represents an inconvenient truth.

A quantitative model is the prevailing basis for any and all builders. A quantitative nature of building teaches us that the process of building gives priority to quantity over quality. This may not mean that quality is not important, but that it is always secondary to the primacy of quantity. Thus, where and when necessary in building, achieving the goal of quantity will likely come at the expense of quality. This is to be expected, because the rule for such an operating framework emerges from a perspective (including a worldview and philosophy) using a biased lens focused merely on the outer in of life.

The outer-in perspective focuses on the outer distinctions of things, people and persons, such as the outward appearance of others. This lens is critical to inspect because its underlying nature compromises the integrity of what is built. For example, in spite of the solid appearance of a building structure, many such buildings around the world (including the U.S.) don't have the infrastructure to withstand earthquakes. Their integrity lacks the quality necessary for these buildings to benefit humanity.

The quantity of an outer-in approach to building composes the prevailing nature for whoever builds and whatever is built. This pervasive condition keeps being reinforced and sustained in spite of the consequences making evident the nature of its underlying condition. What nature becomes apparent in any outer-in approach is that it may advocate, want and build more, more and more; but that outer-in quantity never goes deeper for the quality constituted only from inner out. *More* is disconnected from *deeper* as long as its condition remains composed by the outer in. For example, building a musical sound with more of everything may reverberate in the ears and brains of those hearing it. But that sound will not resonate in their hearts until it goes deeper. Moreover, science and medicine have been discovering that depth of sound has a quality that has healing penetration, making more quantitative measures less effective or even unnecessary.

This all brings us back to the affective reality: The *more* from outer in is the indelible condition that keeps teaching anyone willing to be vulnerable enough to learn what's really going on with the building around us, maybe by us, and perhaps in us.

The lesson emerges most convincingly in the ubiquitous building of family that is engaged diversely by all nations, tribes, peoples, and persons. The dominant model for building family has evolved from diverse forms of an extended family to variable forms of a nuclear family. Extended families generally followed a racial or ethnic composition, which included cultural guidelines providing oversight. Their racial-ethnic distinctions reflected an outer-in building process that was reinforced and sustained by their related culture and its traditions. These diverse cultures and traditions composed family life at different levels of depth, but building the more of the extended family still remained

primary for its survival. The extended family today has not become extinct but it barely survives globally and struggles to exist in most cultures and traditions. What brought about this change?

The extended family was rocked and thereby shocked by the industrial revolution. The Industrial Age evolved from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to alter how families are built. The extended family model was transposed to the nuclear family model, initially evolving by necessity for fathers to find more work, have more pay and thus provide more security for their wives and children. To have more they had to migrate from their extended families, and in most cases also separate from the oversight of their cultures and traditions—though not necessarily from their origin. As the nuclear family evolved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building of family eluded guidelines, evaded oversight and became increasingly ambiguous in its development.

There are major differences between extended and nuclear families, but they are tied together by mutual issues affecting them similarly. A critical issue that emerged in the extended family is directly related to not how far their extended family reaches, but rather how connected they are to one another. Obviously, family connections vary and they evolve over time. Extended family members could be clearly connected to their identity and still leave unanswered the question of how deep their connections function in everyday life to make their family life viable. The viability of an extended family is neither based nor dependent on the number of connections they have with each other, or on the amount of time they spend together. Viable life is not constituted by this quantity occupying one's way of life, no matter how productive and enjoyable family gatherings may be.

Viable physical life from outer in could benefit from quantitative measures, as observed in medicine. Viable family life, however, emerges only from inner out on a qualitative basis to determine its relational involvement. Therefore, family connections must by their viable nature be quality relational connections that involve persons functioning from inner out, thereby connecting to each other with their whole persons heart to heart. Sadly, this family education gets misplaced, is easily misinterpreted on the basis of the now (mis)Information Age.

In spite of the more built in most extended families, family life is actually reduced when not based on this viable nature. This reduction first evolves in the family members themselves, whose persons are reduced to their outer-in distinctions that thereby determine how they function in family life without their whole persons. Reduced persons don't and can't engage in relationships having depth. The results are what extended families build—working under the limits and constraints of *business as usual*. This existing reality of family life affecting the extended family has been duplicated in the evolution of the nuclear family, with the latter having intensified the consequences of its building with relational walls and struggling to be viable.

Perhaps you have experienced this family life in your own family, or see it in your friends and among those around you. The above lesson teaches that family life and its development in extended and nuclear families struggles to build their members and relationships to make a qualitative difference in their lives. This condition keeps evolving to essentially block the growth of persons and relationships with the integrity of their wholeness, not their reduction.

The inconvenient truth is that blocking evolves in any and all building when its underlying condition is composed by the human condition prevailing in all human contexts. This is the inescapable reality of *business as usual*. Therefore, the nature of building brings to the surface the blocking nature pervading what's built and who builds.

## **Blocking Nature**

When human life is built with an outer-in priority, it invokes the paradigm of anything less and any substitutes. Such building effectively blocks the growth of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness, the lack of which creates barriers to making relational connections within human collectives and between persons. Aside from the obvious barriers blocking connections in human life, the subtle barriers pervading collectives (including churches) and persons elude their level of sensitivity and evade their level of awareness. The results have ongoingly blocked physical and emotional connections, which are consequential for reducing, fragmenting and breaking apart their life both together and individually.

Currently, the most pervasive blocking evolves with smartphones, which even children use to wall themselves off at school and even in their own families. This blocking is ubiquitous and the social norm, which is evident as persons are walking around, sitting together or driving. A recent cartoon illustrates this condition: Aliens from another planet return from their expedition to explore intelligent life on earth to give this report. "Well, the supposedly advanced species we studied was truly frightening. Their worship of a deity who demands constant attention has put a stop to critical thinking, and their belief in the holy scriptures is unquestioning, no matter how nonsensical it is." When asked if they were able to bring back any artifacts of this primitive culture, they replied, "Yes, we snuck off with one of their sacred altars." As they go to retrieve it, the urgent question was raised, "Whoa, hold on... Are we safe from being infected by its toxicity?" The answer, "Yes, as long as its kept uncharged," referring to the smartphone that pops out of the spaceship.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> "Non Sequitur" by Wiley, Los Angeles Times, 11/12/23.

Whenever and wherever any part of humanity is reduced from their inner-out integrity of origin to the outer in, their persons are separated from their qualitative nature; and they become distant in their contacts with others, whereby they are disconnected in their relationships, overtly or subtly. In spite of how elusive and evasive the detection of this condition can be in the building process, it emerges to make evident its blocking nature.

Having more connections are not the same as relational connections; and relational connections are not built from outer in by its operating paradigm of anything less and any substitutes. What many think of as building connections is simply having associations with others. Furthermore, relational connections are not unilateral but reciprocal, requiring the relational involvement of both persons. The blocking nature substitutes relational connections with connections of anything less; and it advocates these alternatives without having sensitivity to and awareness of their consequences for persons and their relationships. Currently, this evolving condition prevails more among men than women, but it certainly pervades all of humanity to dominate its nature with blocking connections that shape humanity with blocked connections.

This lesson is palpable in recent surveys making evident how much loneliness prevails among men. For example, a recent 2023 State of American Men report from Equimundo found two-thirds of men between ages 18 and 23 feel alone and say “no one really knows me.” Since 1990, studies such as by the Survey Center on American Life have learned that men at various stages of life have evolved with no close friends, leaving them increasingly lonely. How would you interpret these findings?

The lesson made evident in the lives of these men teaches how they become distant both from others and also from their own selves. They then are disconnected by the blocking nature in a life alone, even in the midst of and the company of others. The latter are the associations commonly advocated and increasingly built within families and on the internet. Without relational connections it should not be surprising how loneliness pervades humanity. This teaches us

1. The blocking nature prevails in human contexts.
2. How consequential this condition is for persons and relationships.
3. This will continue until turn-around change addresses this human condition.

When we understand the nature of the building-blocking dynamic and its related advocating-arguable process, what is evident is the human condition composing their human elements, workings and results. This expands the lesson to teach us the human condition underlying human life and its nature encompassing humanity. We can learn that the natures of blocking and the human condition converge in a cyclic interaction that prevents persons from finding, knowing and living in the primacy of their whole persons

from inner out. Thus, these persons are unable to connect with others person-to-person, because they do not make their hearts vulnerable and thereby are not able to experience the depth of relationships together—namely the heart-to-heart connections of intimate relationships.

The blocked hearts of some of these persons create various feelings that try to bring to the surface their condition. But the persons have become too insensitive to be aware of such feelings, because they live by an outer-in mode. This entrenches them in an optimistic-pessimistic symbiosis that holds captive their hearts. The outer-in mode is the default mode of the human condition, which prevails over humanity until change gets to the core of humanity from inner out. This lesson teaches what is at the heart of both the human condition and humanity.

## **The Hearts of the Human Condition and Humanity**

Learning what's at the heart of the human condition and humanity is not an easy task that persons readily engage or complete simply. Two major causes intervene to complicate this learning process: (1) the human condition's heart is evasive by intentional design, and humanity's heart is elusive due to surrounding issues; and (2) getting down to their hearts necessitates the vulnerable transition from the outer in to the inner out—a vulnerability that is threatening to most if not all human collectives and persons.

The heart of the human condition is well-conditioned in its prevailing rhythms for its pulse to evade detection and measurement. Aside from its precipitating event(s), heartache is a notable example that is readily blocked, with the hypertension of anxiety and fear easily disguised; this evasive process then distorts the heart's condition. The human condition's heart always spikes when engaged in advocating-arguable and building-blocking dynamics, and is intensified by their optimism-pessimism symbiosis. This heart activity commonly causes fibrillation that goes undetected in the outer-in mode. The pulse of this activity is immersed in a competitive system that blocks the heart and builds relational walls in a comparative process. The majority of persons bear the weight of this human condition. The resulting inequity builds inequality to reinforce and sustain their human condition.

This heartbeat, however, is able to be detected and measured when examined beneath its outer-in mode and monitored beyond its default mode. The nature of this heart then emerges to learn its condition from inner out. Examining deeper and monitoring further are essential to bypass the human condition's heart evasiveness—

analogous to bypass surgery. But, an important lesson to learn about this discerning process is that mere observation is insufficient to detect the heart's condition, no matter the extent of observing. Accordingly, it teaches that examining deeper and monitoring further are of necessity and irreplaceable, in order to discover the human heart's true condition by bypassing the bias of its false readings in a pretentious life that pervade human contexts to evade even those observing. The above examples keep teaching this inconvenient truth.

Understanding the various walls that persons as well as collectives build to block off the heart of their human condition will not only expose the roots of their condition but also reveal the heart of their humanity. This humanity has eluded much of human life from the heart of its integrity constituted from inner out. As long as the default mode defines the primary human identity and determines its function, the heart of humanity will remain elusive and its integrity will continue to lack wholeness. That is the inescapable consequence for this heart condition when its teaching is misinterpreted or misinformed.

The basic understanding of humanity's heart emerges from how it has evolved. The roots of humanity were essentially invaded by the weeds of the human condition. The subtlety of these weeds choked humanity from outer in, thereby reducing humanity's fundamental anthropology down to the secondary parts of (1) what a person does and accomplishes, and (2) what a person has in resources and achievements—the sum of which never adds up to wholeness, regardless of its quantity. It is critical to understand this reduction process.

This invasive reduction not only transposed the heart of humanity from inner out to outer in. As reductionism pervaded humanity, the human person was fragmented into one's secondary parts, the outer-in nature of which blocked being or becoming whole. For example, when human identity revolves on race/ethnicity, class, gender, ableness and other sociocultural distinctions, this limits, constrains or prevents persons from knowing their full humanity. Directly correlated to such identity is the lack of depth in human function, which then is capable of building a quantitative human life but unable to go deeper to meet the requirement for building the quality of human life. Reductionism has no such building permits, because it lacks qualitative sensitivity and can only function, at best, in some pretentious way to simulate having it.

Furthermore, the innate nature of reductionism is counter-relational, therefore its counter-relational workings fragment human relationships by building walls and breaking down their connections. As commonly experienced, this relational condition evades those lacking relational awareness. This lack becomes humanity's default mode that gets naturalized in surrounding contexts, cultures and families. This then builds new normals, whose reductionist nature evades assessment at the heart level. The results are witnessed in existential situations within collectives and among persons.

Currently, the work force in some contexts is returning to the office after working from home since the COVID pandemic. But employers are finding that those employees need to be resocialized for more respectful and peaceful interactions at the office. Also, in Japan persons wearing masks during the pandemic have to learn to put on a smile again after removing the mask. What does this teach you about the nature of these persons? No doubt you surely have examples in your surrounding context that you can learn from.

Once reductionism controls the roots of humanity, this condition is irremediable. Humanity's collectives and persons become entrenched with entangled roots in a reduced, fragmented and broken life, which is resistant to attempts to turn it around. Humanity's heart is rendered to life-support in an inescapable condition. The only recourse humanity has is to find a redeeming source that will free its roots in order to raise up a new heart. In contrast to reforms, this involves the transformation analogous to a heart transplant. Here again, the nothing-less-and-no-substitutes paradigm emerges to prevail by its irreplaceable nature over the persistent nature of the anything-less-and-any-substitutes paradigm—the paradigm which reductionism tenaciously conducts at the heart of the human condition to capture the heart of humanity.

## **Hearts at Peace**

Hearts struggling for peace is a prevailing condition at all levels of human life. Yet, in the never-ending search for peace, the heart is a lonely hunter, wandering through an optimistic-pessimistic landscape with the hope of fulfilling an insatiable hunger. The unexamined heart may feel at times OK, dissettled, or that something is missing. But its condition remains a mystery until what underlies such feelings is understood. Many retreat from searching further and deeper, in spite of their feelings recurring. Others may pursue the matter further but don't go deeper. What do we need to learn from all this?

In many human contexts the search for peace has become a lost cause. This has not stopped some from striving for peace regardless of situations and circumstances. On the one hand, a waning and fading search is a realistic conclusion when peace is not attained. The hope for peace becomes unrealistic to sustain in such a condition. On the other hand, striving when peace is not achieved is an arguable optimism that may not be realistic. In such a condition peace becomes a false hope. What is essential to understand in these dynamics is twofold:

1. There is a critical distinction between searching and striving.
2. The meaning of peace is not universal for human collectives and persons.

Those searching for peace generally do not have in mind what they specifically search for. They just want their current condition to stop or at least change in some positive way, though that change is not defined to fulfill the peace they need. In other words, their search is ambiguous and becomes misguided, which leads them on a path with tenuous hope or to a dead-end. Searching prevails in the heart of humanity, because peace is a pervasive need to neutralize the negative presence of their human condition. As long as its presence remains, the search for peace will be in the heart of humanity.

Those striving for peace differ from their counterparts in a key distinction. In contrast to searchers not being able to define the object of their search, strivers have specific things in mind that assumes to know the peace they pursue. Peace movements evolve on this assumption, and their activists strive for achieving this goal of peace. For example, peace activists in the 1960s movement were tenacious in ending the war in Vietnam. Their peace, however, was variable, thus leaving the door open to promote violence in order to end violence. Others advocating for human rights strive for peace integrated with justice—“No justice, no peace”—and appear to be motivated by a moral imperative that is also variable. Whether explicit or implicit in their assumption for knowing peace, those striving for peace have a specific condition in mind that brings peace.

Aside from this distinction, however, strivers and searchers have an important characteristic in common: What each desires and wants for peace is not the peace that they both need at the heart level. The ambiguity of searchers and the variableness of strivers teach us about their lack of understanding integrally what peace really means and the nature of its roots for humanity.

There are those who assume to have clarity about peace by going below the surface with the use of meditative techniques. Gaining peace for them is a more spiritual process for the serenity they seek, but who are engaged with a limited mental scope that doesn't get to the heart level. Thus, this mentality is always searching for more peace. This search overlaps with striving in what is an invariable basis for peace.

In much of human history, the basis of peace is rooted in the classical Greek perspective. This view defined peace as the opposite of war, thus basically the absence of conflict, unrest, tension, and related conditions. This absence is foundational for the culture of peace, whose traditions evolve in cycles. Even though human collectives and persons need such peace, it is insufficient to encompass the heart of their humanity. The absence of these conditions and feelings is incomplete for the peace humanity needs.

Turning from a classical Greek view, the complete definition of peace is found in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew *shalom* is used in different ways and times to connote peace, similar to the two-finger peace sign. What is essential for peace, however, is what *shalom* denotes:



The opposite of *shalom* is any disturbance to the well-being of humankind—a well-being having both an individual dimension and a collective dimension. This well-being constitutes the condition of being complete and thus to be whole. This wholeness encompasses the heart of humanity in all aspects of daily life. Therefore, *shalom* penetrates deeply beyond the mere absence of negative activity to stipulate integrally what is necessary to be present for peace and what belongs to peace only can be nothing less and no substitutes.

Wholeness cannot be reduced in any way or time and still be whole. The prevailing paradigm of anything less and any substitutes can never bring peace *as wholeness*; at most, it only brings the absence of something, which does not preclude the presence of the human condition. The lesson needing to be learned from all this human activity is that the heart is at peace when, and only when, its condition is made whole by the well-being of wholeness.

Peace remains ambiguous and variable with anything less and any substitutes, and the hearts of its searchers and strivers remain lonely hunters, even in the company of other hunters. This challenges any peace supposedly being built in its elusive image, and exposes the evasive blocking subtly shaping such peace. Accordingly, we can learn the imagination of peace that human collectives and persons use in their advocating and building, which all converge to form their peace culture.

## **Imaginations of Peace**

Searchers and strivers of peace have imaginations about what they desire or want. That is, they form mental images in their minds about the peace that is not an existential reality in their life. What they imagine is informative for both what eludes their daily life and what they expect from the presence of peace. Consider your own imagination of peace in order to bring that image to the forefront of your mind.

Of course, some lose their imagination of peace as they fall into despair, and thus can only imagine the worst. Others' imagination becomes influential for strivers and a source of optimism, if not hope, in a time of trials and tribulations. One such imagination was composed by John Lennon (the former Beatle), who released the song "Imagine" in 1971. The song has been a popular image of peace for many strivers. What does Lennon's imagination teach you about this image of peace that has become the basis for peace in a large portion of the human population:

## Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us, only sky

Imagine all the people  
Livin' for today  
Ah

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too

Imagine all the people  
Livin' life in peace  
You

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed  
or hunger  
A brotherhood of men

Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world  
You

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will live as one

Lennon had an altruistic imagination that projected images of nirvana. His karma touches nerves in the brain that trigger the hope of many. What is the basis for his imagination of peace? As musically creative as Lennon was, his imagination of peace was limited to imagining a sweeping list of “no” this and that. His basis for peace is simply the absence of all those barriers to peace. What he assumes in this image is threefold: (1) this absence will negate the presence of the human condition, and thus (2) this absence will add up to a new condition for the whole of humanity, which therefore (3) will reconcile all “as one.” In spite of such a pipedream, Lennon knew that “I’m not the only one” with this imagination of peace, thereby hoping their numbers will add up to peace.

The existential reality of human life is a wake-up call to such imaginations of peace. Namely, reconciliation shakes the imagination at its core. Challenging images of becoming, living and being as one, reconciliation is the intentionally vulnerable relational work that penetrates to the heart level for persons, in order to (1) deconstruct the counter-relational barriers created by the human condition, so that (2) hearts can come together in relational connections bonded from inner out—not in shallow associations from outer in composed by the absence of secondary issues (even if important). For this relational outcome to become and be a relational reality, not a mere image, there is a critical process that must, by the nature of reconciliation, be engaged. Reconciliation is not only building relationships but it necessitates the transforming (not reforming) of relationship.

*Transformation* only happens at the heart level when, first, the *old* composed from the outer in is put to death—which includes deconstructing the counter-relational barriers. This will result in not simply the absence of the old, as observed in a culture of peace. When the old truly dies, this condition opens the door for the *new* to emerge as the existential reality that transforms persons' hearts, so that their relationships can be reconciled in relational connections bonded from inner out—not merely cycling back and forth, up and down from outer in.

This transformation is the inconvenient truth for the peace needed that restores humanity to wholeness and raises up human collectives and persons in this new condition. Without this transforming change, humanity and its collectives and persons continue to evolved in the human condition—a condition whose presence is never negated by the mere absence of its symptoms. Therefore, their wholeness cannot be constituted by reformed images of “becoming...living...being one.” Peace activists notably must learn by necessity that reconciliation invariably is *the* radical relational work of peace essential to change the roots of the human condition; and that anything less and any substitutes will not have the radical depth to address these roots, much less change them, even if inclusive of the grassroots.

The hope of advocates and builders is arguable ongoingly. The blocking that results from their efforts, in spite of good intentions, renders their optimism a false hope. This lesson persists in teaching emphatically that the human condition always underlies the scope of human life; and that its negative presence should not be surprising even in the absence of negative situations and circumstances. The genius of reductionism is its subtle form of pretension to mask what indeed exists above and below the surface. The consequences are collateral in every dimension of human life, which keep masquerading in a conflating process.



## Chapter 3

## C – Collateral and Conflating

**“Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good,  
your whole body also is full of light.  
But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.”**

Luke 11:34

Social media platforms provide a pervasive context for advocates and builders to promote their optimism and hope. The lack of accountability in the absence of regulatory guidelines allows for this technological context to be ambiguous in its purpose, influence and results in human life. Therefore, social media has become a prevailing tool used by human collectives and persons to serve their own goals, regardless of how self-oriented and centered their goals. Even with good intentions, this serving process is consequential for humanity, because in one way or another it inflicts collateral harm and damages on surrounding contexts—as deepfakes were noted earlier.

A growing collateral consequence of social media is observed in adolescents’ interactions with social media. The issues revolve around their brain development and mental health. Trends have indicated a large increase in youth citing feelings of loneliness, isolation and lack of purpose. The collateral impact is that young heavy social media users are twice as likely to be depressed—a consuming condition resistant to any optimism and hope for a better future, which becomes readily redacted by social media. Their human condition evolves subtly yet unmistakably in what technology advocates for building humanity.

Perceiving collateral consequences, whether local, regional or global, often eludes detection by many human eyes. Even when detected, the bias of human lenses readily ignores these consequences or simply accepts them as part of the cost for building. Consider, for example, how many collectives and persons ignore or accept the collateral damage of the current war in Gaza? What compounds human perception is when these consequences have the appearance of being good or a moral imperative. This is the subtle bias evolving when the underlying human condition is conflated with beliefs and practices that are upheld as important for human life. Consider further the contradiction this creates that evade human eyes, perhaps your own eyes.

The lesson before us teaches how conflating interacts with the collateral to create inflection points. This is critical to learn, because those inflection points serve to affirm and justify the *means* of the human condition that are used to achieve the end advocated to build for human life.

## Collateral's Purpose

The fact that war and similar conflicts have consequences is a given. To the extent that these consequences are fact-checked will make evident how far and deep the collateral consequences have gone. What is also painfully revealed is the purpose behind all this, which may or may not be agreeable depending on who or what advocates this purpose. Less obvious are the collateral consequences that evolve from what would be considered normal for situations and circumstances in human life.

Think about the purpose of human progress that has evolved since the invention of the wheel. The lesson plan for this purpose centers on technology. The purpose of technology has been to help us be more productive in our work by facilitating it and helping become experts about it. In this purpose, advances in technology have made life more convenient and efficient. The by-product of this progress has evolved with either an intended or unintended purpose:

Technology has replaced workers on the job—for example, robotic substitutes for assembly line workers—as well as rendered the remaining workers less creative. Technological development, notably with AI, has resulted in less human thinking—now considered unnecessary or inadequate compared to AI. Beside replacing jobs, creativity, and thinking, the sum of technology simply replaces humans in their qualitative nature.

The purpose of technology has evolved and keeps evolving with these collateral consequences. With the development of AI still an open question, how far these collateral consequences will evolve is also unknown. This has been an arguable issue peppered with an optimistic-pessimistic dynamic, which we still need to learn from to qualify any advocacy and building on a technological basis. What rarely enters into this lesson is a deeper discussion of what underlies the purpose resulting in collateral consequences; this requires a sensitivity and awareness that few possess in a tech culture, which speaks to its limits and constraints.

The problem is not technology in and of itself. Behind technology are the human creators, producers and users of technology, whose underlying nature is programmed into technology by and with their human condition. As useful and well-intended as technology could be, it inevitably bears the image and shaping of its human progenitors.

Their human condition is inescapable, even when the purpose of technology is misinformed and thus used unintentionally to produce collateral consequences. Therefore, for example, what generates AI will always be under the negative presence of the human condition and its reductionist nature, whereby technology labors in reductionism's counter-relational purpose. This ubiquitous condition of the modern cyberworld teaches those with open eyes about the need for qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness in order to address this human condition. Even AI with sentience is unable to generate this sensitivity and awareness to make a difference about collateral consequences evolving from its purpose.

Eyes vulnerably open then bring to light that the most consequential collateral impact on human life encompasses relationships. This consuming consequence has evolved through human history from political, economic and sociocultural activities, which have blocked relational connections and broken relationships even among those having close associations. Along with the loneliness many feel in the midst of all their contacts on social media, many hearts feel alone in churches and in their family. Yet, the distance experienced in relationships eludes the eyes of those lacking relational awareness. In addition, eyes without qualitative sensitivity remain in the dark about the defining presence of the human condition, whose determining counter-relational work evades humanity at all levels of human life. Simply stated, the quantity of associations has become the pretentious state for the quality of relationships.

The darkness of collateral's purpose prevails as long as its consequences are not illuminated at the heart level. Getting to this depth, however, is no simple process, notably when human life operates shrouded from the outer in with the paradigm of anything less and any substitutes to mask the existing condition in an explicit or implicit masquerading process. In the darkness, human collectives and persons are initially misled by masks of pretension, then are duped with deception, which the human condition subtly propagates at their core, even by default. This compounds the problem and makes any resolution a pessimistic journey in the darkness.

A critical lesson to learn from this unfolds in pervasive human dynamics:

How the nature of collateral outcomes is perceived is relative to the eye of the beholder. What that eye beholds is always subject to bias that distorts its existential condition. That bias is ongoingly subjected to conflating, which subtly renders collateral consequences in a favorable perception to misinform, mislead and effectively blind the eye of the beholder.

Indeed, beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

## Conflating's Purpose

Have you experienced extreme weather conditions where you live? In 2023, the global community experienced the hottest year ever recorded. What's your opinion of global warming? My wife and I live in Southern California, which has the strictest air pollution rules in the U.S.; yet, we suffer from pollution levels that have never complied with federal health standards for ozone—the darkening conditions of smog. Given the collateral harm and damage from existing environmental conditions, how arguable do you think climate change is?

For many, the environment has become an ethical or moral problem that affects all human collectives and persons, as well as the planet. Related collateral consequences are tethered to the globalization of the economy. Companies and businesses build positive images by conflating with these issues to appear eco-friendly and ethical. For this purpose, certificates are awarded by a collective known as B Corps (short for “benefit corporations”) to businesses that pay to be regularly evaluated on standards of environmental and social responsibility set by B Lab. Certified companies pledge to B Lab that they will become “forces for good” and “consider people and the planet alongside profit.” This process, however, has been arguable about how the standards are monitored; and a large number of celebrity-backed and luxury brands have embraced the cause to wear this badge of honor.<sup>1</sup>

Good intentions notwithstanding, this business policy conflates their business activity with perspectives of good and bad/evil, right and wrong, in order to validate their standing (or image) in the surrounding context. For what purpose? And who are the primary beneficiaries of this force for good and the consideration of what's right?

The beginning of the human condition was enacted by conflating the knowledge of good and evil, under the assumption that their human eyes would be opened and become like God. The purpose of conflating evolving from this beginning has never changed; and it continues to be the means of deception that is subtly used to pursue one's self-interests and concerns—even when it contradicts one's well-being and reduces the welfare of others. This human narrative counters humanity at its core with collateral consequences that keep devolving from an intractable human condition, which could be wearing a badge of honor or even appear to be like God.

The lesson to learn is that conflating's purpose is to generate a virtual reality, which distorts the truth by blurring the line between good and evil, right and wrong, in order to deceive the eye of the beholder with darkness to simulate light. This lesson continues to teach how the eye become captive by what it beholds.

---

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Jie Jenny Zou in “Inside the battle over BCorp certification, the business world's do-good badge of honor”, the *Los Angeles Times*, 12/27/23, A1.



## Illusions of Light

At the onset of the human condition, persons were captivated by what they saw. What they beheld appeared good and thus a beneficial resource to make them better. When “good” and “better” come into focus for the eyes, who would refuse it? The issue, however, is that what their eyes perceived as good and better were in existential reality merely illusions. That is, what was advocated and built were illusions of light that held captive the eyes of these beholders, which in reality composed their human condition with darkness.

Consider what the eyes of eminent scientist Carl Sagan beheld: “Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.” And he goes on: “The significance of our lives and our fragile planet is then determined only by our own wisdom and courage. We are the custodians of life’s meaning. We long for a Parent to care for us, to forgive us our errors, to save us from our childish mistakes. But knowledge is preferable to ignorance. Better by far to embrace the hard truth than a reassuring fable.”<sup>2</sup>

The harm or damage of collateral consequences evade the eye of the beholder when the lens is distorted by illusions of light. Sagan spoke to some of these illusions. They result in a perceptual bias that is unable to distinguish the darkness from the light, or good from bad, right from wrong. This binary perception no longer functions in the eye of the beholder when the negative is conflated with the positive to neutralize the negative presence of the human condition as if it were not consequential to human life.

Learning the playbook of the human condition is a life-long education. Present life has a nexus to the past that leads to the future. The human condition playbook has a diversely conflated history with evolving chapters of collateral consequences that users are unaware of, ignore or accept as part of the path to the future. This human past, our human past, becomes disconnected with our present and future when unjustified assumptions are made about our roots. This includes widely presuming that our branches in life have the right roots to keep growing in the future. The conclusion reached presumptively justifies the use of the human condition’s playbook, which unavoidably recycles the nexus of its past with the future that rotates in the present.

Basic for the human condition is how it transposes humanity to define identity and determine human function based on an outer-in process. Scientists typically also are engaged in this process to guide their thinking. This condition then evolves without knowing and understanding the depth of humanity at its roots from inner out. The lesson

---

<sup>2</sup> Carl Sagan in *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* (New York: Random House, 1994).

from the human condition is that when something is not understood, human collectives and persons turn to their assumptions about it. This opens the door to a darkened life, which relegates the present to instability and renders the future in uncertainty. In this condition, what evolves causes confusion and deception to blur or even blind the perception of the qualitative-relational nature of humanity's roots. What this eye beholds doesn't go deeper, even if it acutely perceives conditions from outer in. This perception generalizes to what the eye beholds in surrounding contexts and condition, even in the universe. This has evolved to make ambiguous the most elemental condition for human life: light.

It would seem obvious that light is apparent when present. Yet, this is based on just the quantitative characteristics of light, which are assumed to have clear distinction from darkness. The problem with this perspective is learned from the underlying human condition's conflated history. In the past, when the light has been embodied in its qualitative fullness, the existential reality was that the light was not recognized and understood. Even though the light clearly shined in the darkness, it eluded those in the darkness. How so?

First of all, the problem should not be confused with the function of the human brain. As long as the brain receives sensory connection from the eye that is not impaired, the brain's sensory function will record the light. The deeper issue revolves on how the eye of the beholder interprets what it perceives. In this process, the brain essentially becomes rewired by the beholder's perceptual-interpretive lens, the framework of which defines and determines how and what one sees.

Is Carl Sagan's perceptual-interpretive framework apparent to you in the following: "What do we really want from philosophy and religion? Palliatives? Therapy? Comfort? Do we want reassuring fables or an understanding of our actual circumstances? Dismay that the Universe does not conform to our preferences seems childish. You might think that grown-ups would be ashamed to put such thoughts into print. The fashionable way of doing this is not to blame the Universe—which seems truly pointless—but rather to blame the means by which we know the Universe, namely science."

## **Our Perceptual-Interpretive Framework**

Right now as I'm writing this, we in Southern California are deluged by an atmospheric river that dropped double-digit rainfall in just two days for one of the worst storms ever experienced locally. The total amount of rain is the equivalent of half a full year's normal rain total. Climatologists attribute this extreme weather condition in part to

climate change. Certainly, everyone in Southern California perceives this storm, but equally certain is that not everyone interprets this extreme weather as a result of climate change. In other words, what the eye beholds about the weather is subject to interpretation by the defining perceptual-interpretive framework used to determine what's seen—just as with the perception of light.

Interpretation is the overshadowing inflection point created by the interaction between conflating and the collateral. What the eye perceives is no longer adequate to define what the eye sees. Under a new normal for human contexts, the eye of the beholder is determined by one's interpretation. On the one hand, as subjects with free will, humans are always interpreting, contrary to an object operating as a robot. On the other hand, human interpretation is not the basis for human life, though an interpretive consensus could produce a culture, a perceptual-interpretive culture. When this culture becomes the norm in a human collective, its interpretation is formalized as the perceptual-interpretive framework for that context. Consider now your specific interpretation of any issue. Can you identify a cultural source for your interpretation? Then, can you define a particular framework that your interpretation belongs to?

For example, in these divisive times of partisan politics, our views (interpretations) of related issues should bring to the forefront their cultural source and the framework where they belong. Shift over to social media. Would you say that social media has a distinct culture on how to interpret what's seen on its platforms? Do you think there is a common framework for these interpretations? An interpretive culture and framework can be explicit or implicit, but nevertheless they readily create a system and structure for the eye of the beholder to be joined in a like-minded collective.

Another compelling global inflection point is experienced in the globalization of the economy. Its collateral consequences are widespread, yet persons, peoples, tribes and nations are directed not to interpret these consequences from their place of origin—which would certainly expose their inequity—but from an economic culture under the framework of the expansion of resources earmarked for the general population. This interpretation causes confusion and deception, because the globalization playbook (similar to the human condition playbook) blurs and even blinds the perception of the unequal results and inequitable consequences of this global economy. Overlooked, ignored or reinterpreted is the cost that the majority of the global population has incurred for the benefit of a minority to accumulate, which never shows up in the balance sheets of an economic culture.

The hermeneutic dynamics evolving from all this imposes colored glasses on the eye that darkens its perception of what's beheld. Any interpretation by the eye results from the bias of the colored glasses tinted by a specific issue such as the above. Bias is the rule in human contexts and not the exception. Under its prevailing norm, bias is the ruling reality of what human collectives and persons perceive, for example, as good-bad, right-wrong. This prevailing condition is the perceptual-interpretive framework that

keeps evolving in a diversely composed perceptual-interpretive culture. No one is immune from this culture, thus its influence shapes the framework of any and all unknowing and unsuspecting human collectives and persons.

Therefore, collateral consequences are amplified with a darkened view of everyday life. In this fog, critical thinking incurs major collateral, which also blocks the human heart from understanding the roots of the human condition underlying the issue or problem conflated by bias.

The rule of bias has been a major issue recently on college campuses. The war in Gaza has precipitated waves of protest biased by antisemitism and Islamophobia. This has created a hostile climate and made campuses a threatening context. Biases are conflated with free speech to justify infringing on others' civil rights, no matter how collateral the consequences. So far, no significant solution has emerged to bring factions to cooperate in order to overrule the rule of bias. Appeasing such biases is not the solution, nor will the rule of law superseding the rule of bias be resolute. Yet, if any context operates with critical thinking, what context would more than higher education, so why is it absent?

The absence, or at least the suspension, of critical thinking on college campuses is a prime lesson on the collateral consequences of a darkened perspective. With this interpretive framework, even the darkness can be misinterpreted as the light. Such illusions are the source of misinformation evolving from convoluted thinking that pervade the eye of beholders, in order to define the so-called light and determine its function in human life such that contexts like college campuses become the platform for the human condition playbook—challenging educators to be reeducated by its lessons.

Once again, a darkened perspective blocks not only the knowledge of elementary critical thinking but also the essential function of the human heart from understanding the underlying roots of biases planted by the human condition. Given this existential reality, it should not be surprising that a definitive solution has yet to be found in higher education; and it will continue to elude the perception, evade the interpretations, and thus escape the grasp of these contexts until a hermeneutical critique suspends their bias to take them deeper into the nature of the human condition and learn its **A,B,C &Ds**.

That's the recurring scenario to be expected from the human condition's playbook; and this is the inevitable default condition of humanity in the absence of a transforming change.

## Chapter 4

## D – Default but Deniable

**If you see the *disadvantaged or marginalized* oppressed in a context,  
and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things.**

Ecclesiastes 5:8

**As water reflects a face, so a person’s heart reflects the person.**

Proverbs 27:19

Notably but not solely in the U.S., the norm for daily life is the existential reality that life is a contradiction. Actions contradict beliefs, conditions contradict defining characteristics. Why, for example, does the wealthiest nation have the largest (and growing) population of the homeless—not to mention having the widest income disparity between the haves and have-nots?

In the lessons throughout this study, contradictions prevail among human collectives and persons. The examples noted are just the tip of the iceberg teaching that this is the rule rather than the exception. One of the most contradictory examples pervading human life exists among Christians. The issue is not about the diversity in the global church, nor is the disparity about theological views. The contradiction centers on the everyday practice of Christians that witnesses to what and how they believe, as well as where their priorities and loyalties are. No doubt you have witnessed their contradiction; and perhaps you (as a Christian) also bear such a witness subtly, for example, by silently being complicit with the contradiction rather than speaking inconvenient truth to the illusions of light. As declared by someone who learned from the contradictions in his own life, “do not be surprised at such things” (Eccl 5:8).

### **By Default**

Becoming a Christian is not like a vaccine that makes one immune to infection from the human condition. On the contrary, a Christian should be more sensitive to and aware of being infected by the human condition both within oneself and surrounding them. Yet, this sensitivity and awareness are not automatic to Christian perception and

are compromised by colored glasses darkening the eye. Blind spots start appearing, as if the eye has cataracts. The dynamics underlying all that's taking place is the direct workings of reductionism intrinsic to the human condition.

Many aspects of reductionism's counter-relational workings elude Christians whose faith is in a theological fog. Consequently, the negative presence of reductionism in Christian practice escapes the understanding of those who haven't learned from its lessons. These teachable moments clarify the subtlety of reductionism that operates in Christian lives by default. The default condition automatically operates when a viable alternative is not implemented to negate reductionism—operating even under the guise of Christian faith. In his very own life, the apostle Peter witnessed to this default condition operating in his faith following Jesus—which confounded Jesus numerous times.

Aside from the obvious negative presence of the human condition observed in human life, it operates mainly under the radar of human collectives and persons, not just Christians. Humanity in general still needs to learn about the prevailing reality of reductionism's counter workings and how it subtly infects all of human life. This subtlety evolves to teach an inconvenient truth:

Many think that the human condition also includes a neutral condition that does not have a negative presence. Accordingly, much of human life is enacted under this neutrality assumption. What escapes this optimistic thinking is the lack of understanding the reductionist nature of the human condition, which has only a negative valence in the absence of the positivity of wholeness. Therefore, whenever and wherever wholeness is not a viable alternative to any aspect of reductionism, then the human condition operates by default in any and all human collectives and persons. Critical thinking notwithstanding, this is an inconvenient truth that a majority (including Christians) would rather avoid rather than face, because facing the truth of reality threatens one's thinking and way of life.

Part of the thinking behind a human condition neutrality is the baseless assumption that the human condition can be dormant in its consequences in spite of its presence in human life. What is thought to be dormant is in reality the implicit workings of reductionism that shroud the activity of the human condition. Dormancy may not assume a neutral element in the human condition, but it interacts with it to render the human condition as less encompassing of and threatening to humanity. Without critical thinking, this perception evolves from an interpretive framework that stirs the imagination with illusions of light. With this bias the eye of the beholder does not see collateral consequences, for example, and it assumes to avoid the human condition. Such a result is exactly what the subtlety of reductionism generates to blur the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong. This resulting condition relegates the beholder to think of oneself as wise—even to be like God.

An important lesson to learn from this thinking is how it redacts the human condition's playbook by collating the negative with an assumed positive—including neutrality and dormancy. These redactions compose misinformation that generates virtual alternatives of reality to represent the real and true condition of something or someone. A prime source of misinformation today evolves from AI, which generates the deepfakes noted earlier. What AI generates, however, is degenerating, as witnessed recently in early educational institutions, where students have been creating nude photos with the face of other students to bully them. Is this neutral, dormant, and just kids being kids?

Contrary to pervasive virtual realities captivating human life in multiple ways beside AI, the existential reality facing all human collectives and persons is the inescapable presence of the human condition in its monovalent nature. The sum of the **A,B,Cs** that compose the human condition in all its variations inescapably adds up to the limits and constraints encompassing what is the default condition of humanity in all its collectives and persons. These limits and constraints may seem normal or simply natural, and readily exist throughout life, so the thinking is to adapt and be resilient. Whether consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously, all of humanity falls into a reduced, fragmented or broken condition along the negative spectrum of the human condition by default. What is inescapable, however, can also be redacted by the human mind thinking virtually to make it deniable.

The human condition reducing, fragmenting and breaking down the persons and relationships integral to humanity is neither evasive nor dormant whenever sparks start flying. However, when this reduction seems to be dormant or even neutral, what is illuminated about the human condition is the glow of its slow burning down of the qualitative-relational wholeness innate to humanity's origin. Moreover, not only is its slow burn deniable, but even more so the glow of its slow burn is obscured by the dominating use of human masks and masquerades to shield the existential reality of reductionism with the camouflaging of virtual realities prevailing in everyday life. In other words, what appears to be real or fact for others to observe is not the reality fully existing beneath its appearance. These are teachable conditions that highlight a critical lesson for humanity.

The genius of reductionism is to generate images of its workings to be neutral, as well as to cultivate the appearance of being dormant, when what underlies the neutral and dormant is actually fueling reductionism's slow burn. This propagates a *neutralized culture* with a captivating influence from outer in that infects collectives and persons from inner out with its reductionist workings—as observed in popular cultures today.

Consider, for example, the political culture in the U.S. with an increasingly divisive climate. Participants would not consider themselves reduced, though they likely would impose this label on their adversaries as the heat increases. Yet, these cultural participants would neither recognize nor acknowledge the human condition prevailing

until the sparks start flying, or at least when there is unmistakable collateral damage. By then, the political culture will have become a way of life that participants may not like but accept, or may affirm and submit to—all while washing their hands of the human condition. Would you consider this a neutralizing culture?

In recent years, it has come to the attention of the Christian community that contemporary Christian music (CCM) is in the grips of the secular music industry. Popular Christian worship artists have acceded to this culture and effectively surrendered their playbooks to its control—no doubt, under the assumption of the neutrality of the culture. Consequently, these artists have yet to learn, and thus fail to understand, how their identity and function are shaped by this neutralized culture. By default, therefore, these Christians reinforce and sustain the human condition subtly underlying a so-called neutralized culture. Notably in contrast, some secular artists have argued against the music industry's negative dynamics. If the Christian community remains silent and does not act for redemptive changes to this compromising practice, its complicity will also by default reflect, reinforce and sustain the human condition. Christians need to face up to this default condition and to remove any masks necessary for their reckoning.

Such prevailing conditions are teachable moments to bring to the forefront reductionism's workings. Its most significant lesson centers on the genius of reductionism's process. The existential reality is that its genius relegates humanity to a skewed knowledge (epistemic field) and a conflated understanding of what's going on in human life. This imposes limits on the epistemic field in the human context, which then precludes or biases conclusive knowledge and understanding of human life. These dynamics are critical to understand.

When the prevailing human condition is factored into the human context—a condition commonly ignored or even denied—not only are there limits imposed but also constraints. The dynamic interaction between limits and constraints evolved from reductionism's origin. Consequently, not only was the accessible epistemic field (source of knowledge) limited to only the surrounding human context, but this epistemic field was further narrowed down and constrained in interpretation and meaning to reductionism's bias. Even scientists have worked under these limiting constraints to render science variable based on the probability of facts. With deeper understanding of the workings of reductionism, what becomes apparent is that even in the presence of critical thinking the constraints of the human condition are always imposed to fulfill a reductionist purpose, and therefore quite naturally and very conveniently converge with the limits of the human context for this result. This is further demonstrated by the assumption “You will not surely be reduced” evolving from reductionism's origin (Gen 3:4). Their convergence makes constraints less distinguishable and limits more reasonable, despite the pervasive existence of this defining interaction between them, and thereby render us to a default human condition.



What exists in and among us, however, is ongoingly contextualized in a neutralizing culture, which subtly limits and constrains human collectives and persons by snaring them in a darkening process of reductionism. The constraints, now inseparable from the human context, explicitly or implicitly diminish, minimalize or distort our knowledge and understanding of human life, such that without epistemological clarification and hermeneutic correction human life is rendered to epistemological illusions (e.g. “not be reduced”) and ontological simulations (e.g. “covered” and “hidden”). That is, not rendered necessarily to fictions—though many essentially live a lie or believe in lies about themselves—but to various facts of life that in actuality do not adequately or truly represent reality in human life, only the limits and constraints of the human context. Any view of the human person (anthropology) is subjected to these same limits and constraints, but whether a discourse on being human is subject to them or not depends directly on the presence or absence of epistemological clarification and hermeneutic correction from a larger epistemic field.

This prompts questions about our knowledge and understanding, their level and their basis in fact or reality. There is no doubt that fact and reality certainly overlap at various points. A fact may reliably observe and represent what exists, but whether it observes the extent of reality and represents its depth involve the further issue of validity. Validity statements on the extent and depth of reality cannot be based on a limited epistemic field that is also narrowed down by the constraints of a biased interpretive framework. A reliable fact does not necessarily mean it has validity for reality, but only reliable on the basis of its limits and constraints. Therefore, fact and reality should not be considered synonymous or confused as the other.

There is a critical distinction between fact and reality that needs to be maintained:

Facts are established from the limited epistemic field of the human context, which are observed and interpreted from a framework and lens influenced by the constraints of the human context—and thereby raising issues of how valid the facts represent what truly exists (what *is*). Reality is subjected to these limits and constraints, and to some extent is shaped by them but not defined and determined by them as facts are; and reality also can go beyond these limits and constraints, and does so when constituted in an epistemic field beyond the human context. However, facts are unable to go beyond these limits and constraints by the nature of their probability framework that inescapably limits and constrains them to the human context and the reductionist bias of the human condition.

The parameters of anthropology, for example, are defined by the human context. Understandably, anthropology depends on the facts from this narrow and biased epistemic field to compose its discourse on the human person. Given these limits and constraints, whenever human being and being human cannot be distinguished in the wholeness of their humanity from reductionism, then they are relegated to the human condition by default.

Our knowledge and understanding of reductionism need to advance to the depth level of its counter-relational work. The primary means for this heuristic epistemic process is contingent on ‘the existential presence of the whole’ for the integral function to expose reductionism and illuminate the whole. Indeed, the reality of reductionism also needs the definitive presence of the whole, since reductionism’s sole purpose for existence is to counter the whole—the whole of creation, the whole person and the whole of God. The reality interacting here that we need to embrace is the presence of the whole with its subsequent reduction—an inconvenient truth that is threatening to many, including Christians.

The qualitative relational presence of the whole emerged in the human context from the beginning prior to reductionism’s intrusion and unfolding, which is why those persons knew what was “good and not good (apart from the whole)” before experiencing reductionism. Ever since, however, there has been an ongoing difficulty, struggle and even confusion distinguishing the reality of the whole and its distinction from reductionism. This reflects in part the genius of reductionism to confuse fact (and related assumptions) and reality and blur their distinction, hereby obscuring the primary focus on what is whole from inner out with a secondary focus on fragmentary parts from outer in.

## **Virtually Denied**

Being embedded in the human condition is not an admission commonly heard. Aside from being snared by reductionism, most human collectives and persons don’t realize their condition of being entangled in the wide net of reductionism’s slow-burn workings. Its wide net casts virtual realities around humanity, which becomes the basis for denying its presence in human life.

Virtual realities create the illusions that dispel the reality of humanity being reduced and fragmented from its original integrity of wholeness. These virtual realities substitute for the existential reality of the human condition in order to propagate illusions of wholeness. As noted, this has evolved with technology to generate the virtual realities of AI captivating life today, which have become more and more difficult to distinguish from real life. Since many would consider this a helpful tool, the implications of the virtual for humanity cannot be underestimated and thus overstated.

In everyday life, the virtual net of reductionism casts illusions that simulate life. This becomes the basis to virtually deny any underlying condition of human life composed and conducted with the paradigm of anything less and any substitutes. Thus, anything less and any substitutes of the whole, particularly the whole ontology and function of the person, can be found along a wide spectrum of expression. We tend to

look at human fragmentation and reduction at one end of this spectrum, located in more extreme forms of expression. The genius of reductionism even promotes this perception so that our interpretive lens either does not pay attention to or even tends to essentially deny the wider range of the spectrum, thus making it difficult to locate anything less and any substitutes of the whole. The consequence is that most of the spectrum engages the human condition by default.

In its subtlety, reductionism composes neutralizing cultures that darken the human lens to perceive “that *that resource* was good for *daily life* and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for advancing one’s life” (Gen 3:6). Guided by this culture, advocates and builders evolved to promote the survival of the fittest, thereby reflecting, reinforcing and sustaining the underlying self-centered nature of the human condition. The consequences remain deniable but are inescapable. Under reductionism’s evasive influence, even Christians are entangled to practice their faith in a theological fog, and thus mired in the secondary things of life from outer in at the expense of the primary from inner out—without having the qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness to know the difference and understand the consequences (as noted about CCM). In the absence of this essential sensitivity and awareness, Christians fail to fulfill their defining covenant with God: “be relationally involved ongoingly with me and be whole in your person and relationships” (Gen 17:1).

Reductionism’s contrary dynamic is ongoingly consequential most significantly for the person and relationships, and this immeasurable influence has shaped our theology and practice. The accumulation of knowledge (“desired to make one wise”), for example, emerged from the beginning to define many human identities and status today, which are clearly enhanced and embellished by reductionism’s limiting referential knowledge (as evident in the academy). How much has this shaped the identity and function of Jesus’ followers today? The redefinition of the person based on the parts of what they possess and can do in referential terms becomes the defining basis by which relationships with other persons so defined are engaged according to these reduced terms—evidencing the inescapable issues for human ontology and function.

Consequently, it is further indispensable to recognize and understand:

Basic to reductionism counteracting the design of God’s wholeness is its ongoing counter-relational work that transposes the primacy of reciprocal relationships together. This reduction shapes relationships with others (including God) on one’s own limited terms, which is its most subtle practice located on the full spectrum of anything less and any substitutes. The relational consequence is converting complex (vulnerable) relationships into simple associations with a minimum of involvement measured according to one’s own self-definition from outer in. One’s own terms are composed at the loss of both the qualitative of the whole person from inner out and the relational of persons together in wholeness in their innermost.

If we do not acknowledge and understand the loss of the qualitative and the primacy of relationship together that emerged from the beginning, we certainly have no significant basis to recognize their loss in our midst, including in our own person and relationships.

The emergence of reductionism is not a human construction, for example, by selfish genes in natural selection, though such thinking does emerge from reductionism. The initial appearance of reductionism is often insufficient to understand the scope of this contrary dynamic in both its breadth and depth, and thus its ongoing implications and collateral consequences. We, therefore, also need to recognize unmistakably and to understand entirely:

Reductionism by its nature routinely imposes a narrowed perceptual-interpretive framework that reduces, clouds and darkens our lens with the following unavoidable consequences:

1. limits the epistemic field (source of knowledge) to fragment our epistemology,
2. diminishes the ontology of all persons,
3. minimalizes any and all relationships.

Referentialization of our epistemic source—which includes the creation narrative and the Word from God—is the most significant and least understood consequence emerging from the dynamic of reductionism: “Did God really say that?...you will not surely be reduced.” Moreover, this dynamic has evolved, been long established and continues to extend itself in human contexts, even as the norm for the common notion of ‘the common good’. This notion may in fact seek for wholeness but in reality reflects, reinforces or even sustains reductionism by default. This addresses us both to the globalization of reductionism and the matter of globalization as a social phenomenon of growing fact today that is a mere illusion and simulation of the whole and what wholeness is in reality.

If it is not apparent in your daily life, the influence of modernism as a worldview and its primacy of rationalizing in search of knowledge and truth have prevailed in determining the quality of life in most human contexts. We are all ongoingly influenced and shaped by the outcome of the modern enterprise of progress—whether from the physical and natural sciences or from related applied technologies, and even from theology. As noted earlier, a most far-reaching result of this human project impacting humanity in its innermost is the globalization of the economy; and we are only beginning to grasp the impact of media technology on persons and relationships. Positive or negative, further development of globalization can be expected—and needs to be anticipated by those in the theological context—since, as sociologist Anthony Giddens states, “Modernity is inherently globalizing.”<sup>1</sup> Both how globalization is evolving and

---

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 63.

why it has emerged are equally important to recognize and understand. Understanding this age we live in necessitates understanding the scope of reductionism.

Along with the economic impact globalization has on peoples of the world, there is a dual phenomenon somewhat paradoxically characterizing globalization. On the one hand, the process is distinctly reductionist, for example, reducing the whole of persons and people to cheap labor, disposable goods or market pawns. On the other hand, globalization is breaking down national boundaries and provincialism to give us a glimpse of the interrelated whole of humanity, albeit in a convoluted sense.

Systems theory (for example, in ecology and family process) has provided further understanding of a whole as a working system of interrelated parts. There is a general tendency to perceive the sum of these parts as determining the whole, without the need for further understanding; yet in a process of synergism the whole functioning together is greater than the sum effects from the function of its individual parts. Inherent to the whole, however, is not merely a quantitative effect greater than the sum of its parts but more importantly a qualitative effect. Systems theory is a quantitative framework, the use of which tends not to account for qualitative aspects. Thus its value is limited though nonetheless useful to help us understand the whole.

While philosophical postmodernism insightfully has exposed the reductionism in modernity and perhaps points to a holistic direction, postmodernity is neither instrumental in fully grasping reductionism nor significant in understanding the whole. Since the main voices of postmodernism do not speak of a definitive whole—only the need for it—a part (e.g. a person) cannot truly know the importance of *who* one is and is a part of, nor understand the primacy of *what* one is apart from, therefore never really understanding the full significance of *how* being apart from the whole reduces that part(s) to something qualitatively less (or as God said, “not good,” Gen 2:18). In other words, we need a definitive whole in order to fully understand reductionism, so that we unequivocally both acknowledge the presence of the whole emerging from the beginning and affirm the whole’s trajectory in the human context.

Without the ongoing presence and trajectory of the whole, we have no epistemological, hermeneutical, ontological and relational means to recognize, expose, confront and make whole the fragmentation of persons and relationships together to reduced ontology and function in our midst. Moreover, we need the presence and involvement of the Whole to provide the epistemological clarification and hermeneutic correction needed for our own theology and practice that prevail according to this human condition by default.

It is evident today that there is a critical gap in our understanding of the human condition, and perhaps a failure to take the human condition seriously. Directly interrelated, and most likely its determinant, a reduced theological anthropology not only fails to address the depth of the human condition but in reality obscures its depth, reinforces its breadth, or even conforms to this inescapable and unavoidable condition by

default. The repercussions for us, of course, are that we do not account for our own practice of reductionism, and, interrelated, that we do not address our own function in the human condition; and this could subtly exist even if we are advocating change of the status quo.

Our function manifests in three notable areas, which are three interrelated issues of ongoing major importance for ontology and function:

1. How we define the person from outer in based more on the quantitative parts of what we do and have, and thereby function in our own person.
2. On this defining basis, this is how our person engages in relationships with other persons, whom we define in the same outer-in terms, to reduce the depth level of involvement in relationship together.
3. These reduced persons in reduced relationships together then become the defining and determining basis for how we practice our beliefs and consequently how relationships together function as the church and in the related academy.

These ongoing issues are the three inescapable issues for our ontology and function needing accountability. The pivotal shift from “embodied whole from inner out and not confused, disappointed in relationship together” (as in Gen 2:25) to “embodied parts from outer in and reduced to relational distance” (as in Gen 3:7,10) has ongoing consequences. The inconvenient truth of their implications directly challenge our theological anthropology and hold us accountable for its assumptions of ontology and function.

This shift to reductionism expressed in these inescapable issues for our ontology and function further expresses itself in direct interaction with three unavoidable issues for all practice, which are necessary to account for in all moments:

1. The presentation of the person: the outer-in parts of our person presented to others that define and determine our primary identity, thereby conveying to others who and what we are based on these facts, not reality—that is, an ongoing presentation of self (e.g. “naked from outer in...”) that is limited by covering up and masks.
2. The integrity and quality of our communication: our communication becomes shallow, ambiguous or misleading in the presentation process with others and how this communication compromises the integrity of relationship together (e.g. “the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate,” Gen 3:12).
3. The depth level of involvement in relationship: the involvement level engaged in this relationship is shaped by our identity presented and its related communication, and thus determined by levels of relational distance, not depth (e.g. “...they covered up,” “I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself,” Gen 3:10).

Regardless of who we are and what our place is in the human context, we all must account ongoingly for the type of person presented, the nature of our communication and the level of involvement engaged in our relationships. These are unavoidable issues that interact with the three inescapable issues, which together influence and shape our lives and need accountability even in the commonest expressions along the full width of the spectrum locating anything less and any substitutes of the whole.

The qualitative and relational aspects in human life necessary for whole ontology and function are neither sufficiently addressed nor deeply accounted for in theological anthropology discourse—including with the prominence of dualism, the emergence of supervenience and the focus on relationality. In spite of recent focus on the latter, there appears to be a status quo in theology and function above which we rarely rise—perhaps evident of a lack of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness—and from which likely indicates our need for a critical and pivotal shift from reductionism back to the whole. This juncture prompts a related question for theological anthropology: On what basis is the human condition defined and its resolution determined? The answer is either good news in relational terms or so-so news in referential terms, or perhaps disappointing news because it lacks qualitative and relational significance.

The surrounding human context (namely culture) commonly establishes the priorities of importance for life and practice. In the current global context, this larger context is having a further effect in reducing the priorities of local contexts by increasingly shifting, embedding and enslaving persons in secondary priorities and away from the primary qualitative and relational priorities. As neuroscience would confirm, this development is taking its toll on the minds and bodies of those affected.

The shift to the primacy of the secondary must further be understood in the underlying quest for certainty and/or the search for identity. This process engages a narrowing of the epistemic field to better grasp, explain and have certainty, for example, about what holds the person and world together in their innermost. Functionally, the process also necessitates reducing the qualitative-relational field of expectations from inner out (too demanding, vulnerable with uncertain results) to outer in for quantitative-referential terms that are easier to measure, perform and quantify the results of, for example, in the search for identity and finding one's place in human contexts (including church and academy). In other words, the shift to the primacy of the secondary and its preoccupation in a neutralized culture are not without specific purpose that motivates persons even in the theological task and the practice of faith. Yet whatever certainty and identity result in secondary terms can only be incomplete, ambiguous or shallow.

To whatever the extent the human condition is denied virtually, the existential reality is that in the absence of a viable alternative constituted in wholeness, reductionism rules by default—with AI generating its evasive kingdom.

## Heartfelt Vulnerably

This lesson begs the question for each and every one of us: At what level of depth is our person present, and also does that person engage in daily life at that level, whereby our person is involved in our relationships, both with others and with God?

Psychology and neuroscience have worked with human persons in their emotions and related brain activity in order to take them to a deeper level of understanding.<sup>2</sup> As helpful as this is, persons need to go even deeper to understand their condition. The above proverb directs us to that depth: As water reflects the face, so the person's heart reflects the person (Prov 27:19).

The whole person from inner out signified by the qualitative function of the heart needs renewed focus for understanding the human condition, and needs to be restored in Christian theology and function; yet, merely discussing spirituality is inadequate (e.g. see Prov 4:23; 14:30; 27:19). We cannot avoid addressing the human heart (our own to start) and the feelings associated with it, because the whole of human identity is rooted in it, and the depths of the human condition is tied to it.

If neuroscience can talk about feelings as integral to the human function—as Damasio reveals about the consciousness of self<sup>3</sup>—why doesn't the theological academy discuss feelings as at the core of the human person? A major part of the answer relates to our theological anthropology having redefined the person without the primacy of the qualitative and relational. But interrelated, the main reason involves the human condition, that is, our intentional, unintentional or inadvertent engagement by default in the reductionism composing the human condition. The subtlety of this engagement is notably in the self-determination (or survival) preoccupied in the secondary and in the shaping of relationships. Consciousness as a person necessarily involves feelings—even for the whole of God (e.g. Gen 6:6; Jn 11:33,35; Eph 4:30)<sup>4</sup>—which Damasio defines as essential for the self but locates feelings only in brain function to integrate mind and body.

The teaching about the person in theological anthropology, however, can and needs to go deeper to the inner out in order to get to the qualitative function of heart to distinguish the whole person. Yet, this is not about dualism, which goes 'inner' for an

---

<sup>2</sup> Of related interest, Charan Ranganath, a professor of psychology and neuroscience, has discovered that frequent short testing of students better opens their eyes to their mistakes and weaknesses. This has humbled them to work on these and not hide or avoid that reality, which students are prone to do. As a result, their brains have been wired to learn better and remember more. *Los Angeles Times*, OpEd, 2/19/24.

<sup>3</sup> Discussed by Antonio Damasio in *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> For a further account of Jesus's feelings, see my study *The Feelings of Jesus' Heart: His Whole Person's Affective Narrative*. Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.



elusive soul but not ‘out’ adequately to embody the whole person without fragmenting into parts (soul and body); and nonreductive physicality has ‘outer’ but not sufficiently ‘in’ to constitute the depth of the whole person in ontology and function. The whole person is pointed to but is either fragmentary or not distinguished.

The qualitative inner out signified by heart function is more definitive to distinguish the whole person, with its integral function irreplaceable for both the body to be whole and relationships together to be whole. Therefore, a turn away from the heart in any context or function has an unavoidable consequence of devolving into the human condition by default. The qualitative loss signified in the human condition reduces our identity and function when we become distant from our heart, constrained or detached from feelings, thereby insensitive or hardened—just as Jesus exposed (Mk 7:6; Jn 5:42) and Paul critiqued (Eph 4:17-19). This increasingly embeds human function in the outer in and reduces human ontology to ontological simulation.

This elusive condition is evidenced in the function of “hypocrites” (*hypokrites*, Mk 7:6). In referential terms, *hypokrites* and *hypokrisis* (hypocrisy, cf. Lk 12:1) are limited to pretension or falsehood, in acts to dissemble or deceive. In relational terms, the dynamic involves the person presented to others, who presents only from outer in and thus different from the whole person distinguished from inner out. Just as ancient Greek actors put on masks in a play, *hypokrites* engages in ontological simulation, not necessarily with the intent to deceive but from what emerges by the nature of function from outer in. In other words, whatever the person presents to others, it is not whole and consequently cannot be counted on to be who and what the person is, which is not about the outer-in issue of deception but the inner-out issue of one’s whole integrity (who, what and how the person truly is).

This masking dynamic engages the pivotal issue involving the ontology of the person and its effect on relationships. The consequence of such function in relational terms is always a qualitative relational consequence that may not be apparent at the quantitative level from outer in. The outer-in simulation masking its qualitative relational consequence is exposed by Jesus notably in the relational act of worship: “This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me” (Mk 7:6). Paul also later confronted Peter and exposed his outer-in simulation (*hypokrisis*) by the role-playing he engaged in focused on secondary matters, which even influenced Barnabas and others to function outer in (Gal 2:11-14). All this magnifies the three unavoidable issues for all practice that must be accounted for ongoingly.

The prevalence of human masks worn by persons in everyday life—notably in a neutralizing culture—functions not only to distance persons from their heart but more consequentially to deny the condition of their heart. Reductionism works to dull the sensitivity and awareness of persons’ hearts. Consequently, getting down into one’s heart requires removing its shrouds. That is to say paradigmatically:

- To find one's person requires knowing one's heart;
- To know one's heart requires finding one's heart;
- To find one's heart necessitates to be vulnerable from inner out;
- To be vulnerable necessitates to be humble about what one finds in their heart, including one's mistakes and shortcomings.

To be vulnerable from inner out unlocks the door to a person's heart, and that person's epistemic and ontological humility opens the door to the person's heartfelt condition, which is no longer denied. Thus, the specter of reductionism prevailing by default is brought to light for persons to change from inner out. Until then, the human condition, our human condition, continues to be evasive in the daily composition of persons and their relationships; and they populate the collectives whose structures, institutions and cultures are reduced, fragmented and broken in likeness.

Learning the **A,B,C & Ds** of humanity's human condition is an education challenging all persons and collectives with inconvenient truths. Therefore, it should not be surprising to have this education misplaced, misinterpreted or misinformed.

“Where are you?”

As Christians, there is a convicting conclusions necessary for this education, so that we will be clearly distinguished in the uncommon identity and function from their prevailing counterparts in the common human condition surrounding us.

## Chapter 5

## Convicting Conclusion

**I applied my heart to what *is revealed* and learned to understand  
the reality of the inconvenient truth.**

Proverbs 24:32

**Like cold water to a weary person is good news from a distant land.**

Proverbs 25:25

What is revealed in the **A,B,C& Ds** of our human condition now calls for our conviction. We are challenged ongoingly by reductionism's algorithm determining human life to clearly do the math about what this algorithm assumes to solve for humanity. If we don't keep calculating the results from this algorithm, we are susceptible to assuming these results in our own life by default. Furthermore, if we lack the conviction to act in order to change this reductionist condition, then we are complicit with it in its nature. Therefore, we are accountable to define "Where are you?" in our person and our relationships, as well as to determine "What are you doing here?"—for which God holds us accountable in reciprocal relationship together.

### Distinguishing the Uncommon from the Common

Reductionism's algorithm has generated equations that appear to simplify human life in ways embraced by human collectives and persons, to compose their common way of life. What is **common** becomes their culture, which directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly becomes the defining and determining basis for their everyday life. When the math is not calculated for this algorithm, the common prevails in its reductionist nature simply by default, whereby even Christian identity becomes defined and function is determined. Thus, doing the math is not optional but essential to give account of the common surrounding us and in us.

The importance of mathematics is irreducible for the theories composed by science and for their outcomes to be valid and reliable. When scientists don't adequately do the math, they face the dilemma of how to support their work for others to accept and

even agree with to build on. Christians face a similar dilemma of how to support their way of life for others to accept, that is, agree with as belonging to what they all have in common. The dilemma for Christians, however, goes much deeper than the common to distinguish **the uncommon**. The human condition is differentiated in and by the common. That which distinguishes the uncommon from the common emerges from the math properly done.

What and who distinguish the uncommon are not easy calculations to make in the presence of the common's influence and shaping; even scientists have struggled with this influence in order to remain objective. The math must include not only what's revealed in the **A,B,C&Ds** of our human condition, but also needs to incorporate what God reveals in the human context.

Early in human life, God revealed his nature as holy (i.e. uncommon, Lev 10:3), therefore God's people are to "be uncommon because I am uncommon" (Lev 11:44-45). To be holy/uncommon necessitates being set apart from the nature of the common, in order to be unequivocally distinguished in the uncommon nature of God's image and likeness. This makes it imperative: "You must distinguish between the uncommon and the common" (Lev 10:10).

In order to unequivocally be uncommon and be clearly distinguished from the common, the uncommon God revealed the math necessary for this inconvenient distinction to be the experiential truth and relational reality. The calculations of what God revealed are basic for the education essential to be unequivocally distinguished as uncommon from the common (Eze 44:23). Without doing this math, the uncommon gets polluted by the common to render it indistinguishable (Eze 22:26). Thus, this education must not be misplaced, misinterpreted or misinformed.

Math is a critical process for God's revealed Word in order to understand how the composition of God's Word in relational language needs to be calculated for theology and practice. The most basic calculation of God's relational terms is simply stated by the words *from* God: "You must diligently *be involved in all the terms* that I *communicate* to you; do not add to it or *subtract* from it" (Dt 12:32). The invariable measure of the Word's calculation was established earlier (Dt 4:2) and here reinforced to directly counter and neutralize the normative calculation from the common: "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever they *calculate* is right [*yashar*, level, straight] in his own eyes" (Dt 12:8, ESV, cf. Jdg 17:6; 21:25). The common's norm could calculate God's terms not only with addition or subtraction but also with division and multiplication—the math of God's Word calculated by variable and relative intervening qualifiers that reduce the wholeness of God's terms and/or paraphrase or conflate God's terms without their relational significance. The reductionist product of this math contradicts God's irreducible and nonnegotiable terms and thereby widen the path "to the right or to the left" (Dt 5:32-33; 28:14; Josh 1:7, cf. 2 Kgs 22:2).

This math of God's Word is critical to understand. In mathematics, the accuracy of any calculations depends on accounting for intervening variables by the calculus of variations and finite differences, which determine their effect on the dependent variable being calculated. The resulting dependent variable then is inseparable from the independent variable in the equation, but it is not necessarily determined by it. The independent variable of God's Word is the invariable state of God's uncommon terms. The dependent variable in this equation is our calculation of God's terms. Our calculation is always subject to intervening variables from the influence in our surrounding contexts. Since such intervening variables subject God's uncommon terms to our common terms, they must always be accounted for in our calculations or else God's terms become relative in a wider path of our common terms.

In the calculus of God's terms for covenant relationship together, two sub-issues are inescapable to calculate: (1) clarifying what holy is, and (2) correctly accounting for the difference between the holy and the common, which is essential to calculate to distinguish God's terms from anything less and any substitutes calculated by our terms (as Eze corrected in 44:23).

Given the calculations needed in the math for God's Word, consider your own calculations of what God revealed for this pedagogical process. Do you consider the Book of Deuteronomy to be the Book of Law required to obey, or to be in its primacy the Book of Love essential to respond to in reciprocal relationship? Likewise, in what framework do your calculations put Leviticus? Contrary to common calculations, the book of Leviticus is not a detailed enumeration of a behavioral code, but rather it communicates in relational language the following: the consummate contextual process that distinguishes the whole-ly (whole and uncommon) God from the common in the human context, in order to define the identity and determine the function of God's whole-ly people in covenant relationship together (Lev 10:10, cf. Eze 44:23). This widens our math challenge today to examine the existing calculations for what is uncommon or holy, because many past calculations "have made no distinction between the holy and the common" (Eze 22:26).

The education of what God revealed for covenant relationship together cannot be overemphasized. Two integral issues need to be correctly calculated: (1) unequivocal clarity of what holy/uncommon is, and on this basis (2) fully accounting for the difference between the uncommon and the common. These are imperative to calculate in order to distinguish the qualitative-relational terms of God's language from anything less and any substitutes calculated by our common terms (as Eze corrected in 44:23).

## First Integral Issue:

The first calculation of *what* is holy is clarified by *who* is holy (as noted in Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26). Most thoughts about holy center on being clean, pure, which usually don't include being clearly set apart from what is the common surrounding being clean, pure. Holy (*qadesh*) is to be clean, pure and thus set apart from what is the common constituting the human context to distinguish the independent variable *who*. Therefore, holy equates to what is the uncommon, which is distinguished only by who is uncommon (as the Lord revealed, Lev 10:3). Calculating holy is incomplete as purity or perfection and must incorporate *who* is uncommon to embody *what* is holy that is clearly distinguished as uncommon by being distinctly set apart from the common. A calculation of anything less results from intervening variables.

God declared, not to inform us but to clarify, correct and challenge us: "You thought that I was one just like yourself" (Ps 50:21). God exposed this alternative reality intervening among his people, which continues to exist today, not typically explicit in our theology but implicitly in our practice. The essential reality is that "I am holy" (*qāḏōsh*, Lev 11:44), who is independently separate from what is common and thus distinctly set apart from the common. Therefore, God is vulnerably present only as uncommon and is relationally involved only by God's wholeness, which are both nonnegotiable and irreducible by common terms. Anything less and any substitutes from human shaping intervene to make the whole-ly (contraction of whole & holy) God's presence and involvement indistinguishable. Forming God's identity in our common images has unavoidable relational consequences, notably forming a barrier to experience the relational reality and outcome of God's definitive blessing for only God's covenant family (Num 6:24-26).

The whole profile of God's holy face is distinguished by nothing less and no substitutes to constitute the independence of *who*. The advocated alternative reality reconstructs this essential reality with what is common, thereby reversing the basis for the reality of God and his people, in effect, with intervening alternative facts (as in Ps 50:9-13). That is, the issue in this effort is not necessarily to "be like God" (as in the primordial garden, Gen 3:5) but rather this two-fold dynamic: (1) Shape God and relationship together subtly on our terms (perhaps in our image), and (2) determine our person as Jesus' disciples and our life in discipleship indirectly through the bias of our terms. The insurmountable difference that God independently magnifies is that God is whole and uncommon (whole-ly) in ontology and function, while the terms of our ontology and function are fragmentary and common—reduced terms that also are projected back on "God composed in our likeness."

## Second Integral Issue:

When holy is clarified unequivocally by the uncommon, then the second integral issue challenges us to fully account for the difference between the uncommon and the common. God unmistakably distinguished the uncommon as incompatible with the common and thus as incongruent in the common's lens. On this basis, it is imperative that we "be *uncommon* for I am *uncommon*" (Lev 11:44)—set apart from the common by being distinguished directly with-in the Uncommon as the relational outcome of reciprocal relationship together. This clarification and fullness critically composes the distinguishing teaching *with* and *in* the Uncommon, who challenges the identity of who, what and how we *are* in order to be incompatible *with* the common and incongruent *in* the common—rather than an identity "**just like yourself.**"

To be integrally compatible *with* the Uncommon and congruent *in* the uncommon of God is determined only by the whole relational terms of God's relational process. This means that to be uncommon (or holy) is not about *perfection*—as in spiritually, morally, ethically, and thereby to misunderstand sanctification—but *connection*, that is, relational connection that is integrally compatible with the Uncommon because it is congruent in the uncommon of God. When perfection is integrated with being sanctified (as Jesus embodied and prayed, Jn 17:19), it then has a place in our practice to be holy and also whole inseparably, thus integrally whole-ly. But its theology must not be composed with a commonized bias of idealized notions that intervene to conflate this critical calculation.

The book of Hebrews discipleship manifesto clarifies that the relational progression of Jesus' relational work has sanctified us in the uncommon (Heb 10:10); and the relational outcome of this relational progression is to "make perfect" (*teleioo*) "those who are being made *uncommon*" (Heb 10:14, NIV). *Teleioo* means to complete the relational purpose of Jesus' relational work, which is fulfilled by only *wholeness* in relationship together (as God's blessing initiated, Num 6:26, and the Word embodied, Jn 14:27). The whole-ly relational process is the only way, truth and means to this relational outcome of *teleioo*, which for many became the inconvenient truth for their way of life.

In his manifesto for discipleship (the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5-7), Jesus made imperative for our practice the relational work to "be *complete, mature [teleios]*" in likeness of how our whole-ly Father is present and involved in uncommon love (Mt 5:45-48). His relational imperative, then, for all his disciples is to be whole and uncommon in our relational involvement of family love just as our Father is, in order to distinguish our identity as his daughters and sons in family together. Therefore, perfection is always secondary to the primacy of relational connection with the Uncommon. Yet, this relational connection only happens with-in the Uncommon, whose independent constitution composes the primacy of relationship together distinguished only by the integral relational terms, language, context and process of the whole-ly God—all of which we must account for to have relational connection.

The calculations for our Christian way of life will define and determine whether our faith is shaped by the common or distinguished from its intervention by the uncommon's independence.. Since holy for most Christians is not directly calculated from *who* is holy, there is a wide conclusion of Christian practice assumed to be holy and thus pleasing to God. This dependent variable reflects the optimism many Christians have about their views and practices prevailing in surrounding contexts. Perhaps this is demonstrated emphatically by Christians advocating and building for Christian nationalism, whose calculations persist to make them (in their eyes) effectively the fittest to rule over this nation—even with good intentions in the name of God. The critical questions for them are: What part of Christian nationalism is holy; and on what basis is it holy; thus, how is it distinguished from the common to constitute its nature in contrast to the human condition?

The existential reality facing all Christians is that the true meaning of holy is an inconvenient truth, which those influenced by the common would rather avoid than face. What's common is always more convenient, which is subtle to calculate in the virtual reality masking the existential reality.

Therefore, for any and all of our calculations, it is imperative to learn and thereby understand if God's feedback for our education centers on the heart of "you thought that I was one just like yourself" (Ps 50:21). For the Christians and churches who calculate the convicting conclusion, "they applied their heart to what is revealed and learned to understand the relational reality of the inconvenient truth" (Prov 24:32). Only such educated Christians and churches can extend the convicting conclusion in the uncommon qualitative-relational process, "Like cold water to a weary person is good news from a distant land" (Prov 25:25).

## **Uncommon Conclusions**

A typical Christian response to the human condition is to proclaim the gospel, which becomes a complacent proclamation in the face of collateral consequences. Jesus embodied, however, "good news from a distant land," that is, from the uncommon source constituting his gospel. His uncommon gospel is the good news distinguished from the common's bad news, which brings new life to a weary person like cold water. For calculating his gospel, Jesus makes it imperative to integrate the bad news into the good news, so that the bad news is transposed into the good news. As he declared unequivocally when challenged about his involvement with the bad news: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. Go and learn what this means" (Mt 9:12-13).



The uncommon good news of Jesus' gospel integrally acts on the common's bad news with uncommon conclusions—that is, when we “learn what this means.” Jesus' pedagogical process makes imperative the uncommon conclusions necessary to transpose the bad news into the good news.

Contrary to prevailing perceptual-interpretive lenses, the *commonization* of human collectives and persons is neither a neutral condition nor a dormant period of the human condition. As its **A,B,C&Ds** have been contextualized in the common, this encompassing context is the playground for reductionism's subtle counter-balancing exercises that reduce, fragment and break down collectives, persons and their relationships. Thus, the consequences of being common necessitates nothing less than uncommon conclusions enacting no substitutes for Jesus' uncommon gospel.

Jesus' gospel becomes an inconvenient truth for Christians and churches whose good news is not integrated with the common's bad news, thereby rendering their good news common as well. Jesus established interrelated imperatives for his followers that integrally (1) counter any of their default condition in the common, and (2) distinguish their identity and function from the common.

First, he declared:

“Just as I have vulnerably loved you from inner out in the primacy of relationship, so you in relational likeness need to vulnerably love one another. By the quality of your relational involvement of uncommon love in my likeness, all others in the common will know that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:34-35).

The key to this imperative is how “I have loved you.” The common perception and interpretation of love centers on doing something for others, notably in a sacrificial way like Jesus. But, Jesus' love first and foremost is not about his sacrifice, as important as that was; rather it is constituted by the vulnerable relational involvement of his whole person that he shares from inner out for intimate connection heart to heart. It is only in his qualitative and relational likeness that the relational involvement of our whole person will distinguish the uncommon presence of his disciples in the common—not in taking up our cross. Therefore, Jesus makes this relational imperative essential for the uncommon conclusion of Christians to belong to him while living in the common's context. Anything less, even with good intentions in his name, in essence belongs to the common.

On the imperative basis of the primacy of the whole person vulnerably involved in the relational connection of love, Jesus declares a related imperative for a further uncommon conclusion. In unmistakably distinguishing his uncommon person from the common's context (Lk 11:17-20), he declares:

“The person who does not gather with me, scatters” (Lk 11:23).

His either-or declaration limits the options available for Christians, options which clearly distinguish the uncommon from the common in their respective conclusions.

The calculation for “gather” (*synago*) is a critical issue, because this term is commonly reduced by Christians, for example, to the limited and constrained gatherings witnessed in many churches. These gatherings include coming together in official membership and frequent fellowship. Jesus didn’t declare to merely gather but distinctly to “gather with me.” This goes beyond merely gathering in his name and connects to the depth of being vulnerably involved with Jesus’ whole person in reciprocal relationship together just as he loved us. Only on this uncommon basis, and thus in his relational likeness, does gathering become the uncommon conclusion of bringing persons together for the relational connections that Jesus embodied, enacted and fulfilled with his whole person in the relational involvement of uncommon love. Therefore, the imperative of gathering **with** Jesus necessitates his relational process of bringing persons together to be reconciled in the uncommon relationships distinguished from what’s common—even from what commonly gathers in churches.

Reconciliation, however, is not a simple education. Paul educated Christians and churches on the basis of what Jesus revealed to him in direct relational connection, which turned his life around and reconciled him with Jesus (2 Cor 5:16-18). From his own relational experience, Paul taught that reconciliation is not merely coming together but necessarily involves **redemptive reconciliation**: that is, the old (or common) in us dying so that the new (uncommon) can rise to constitute the new creation person from inner out. Only the experiential truth and relational reality of redeemed persons reconciled with Jesus can fulfill the relational work of reconciliation. In his calculation, reconciling brings persons together without assuming that the old is neutral or dormant and thus doesn’t need to be redeemed first before reconciliation can be the relational outcome. In inconvenient words, gathering persons together to be reconciled can only become a relational reality as the uncommon conclusion. Anything less and any substitutes, therefore, “scatters” unavoidably in Jesus’ imperative.

Scatter is usually not adequately calculated by Christians to clearly define it as the only option available to “gather with me.” Jesus is definitive about his uncommon conclusion of gathering, which he then unmistakably constitutes as the only viable alternative for the human condition. The existential reality of the human condition is its common conclusion of scattering. That is, the human condition, which determines the common’s composition and context, enacts the counter-relational workings of reductionism to scatter as follows:

1. It reduces persons and their relationships from inner out to outer in, with the consequence of lacking the qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness to know what is invariably important in life.
2. Whereby these persons and relationships are fragmented into secondary parts at the expense of the primacy of their wholeness, which results in breaking down the integrity of persons and the qualitative connections in relationships.

The reducing, fragmenting and breaking converge together in the scattering normative of the human condition. That's the nature of reductionism composing what's common for human collectives and persons to define their identity and determine their function. And Christians and church who don't enact the only viable alternative integral to "gather with me, then by default inescapably scatter."

Because the common conclusion scatters, it is imperative for the uncommon conclusion to heal, not just mend or repair. What is your conviction at this juncture?

## **The Triage Purpose of Healing**

Learning the **A,B,C&Ds** of the human condition is an incomplete education until it is intensified by the irreplaceable conviction to resolve the human condition. Resolving humanity's underlying condition includes its situations and circumstances, but the most significant resolution involves its persons and their relationships composing its collectives—the resolve that goes further than just empathy for their condition. This resolution remains incomplete when the conviction concludes merely with mending and repairing humanity's intractable condition. Like cancer, the human condition may even seem to be in a period of remission after treatment, but it always recurs to sustain a terminal prognosis until healed completely from inner out. Therefore, this irremediable purpose of healing becomes the life purpose for those who "gather with me," which subordinates all other life purposes for Christians to a secondary function.

The conviction of this life purpose differs from the persistence of activists seeking change, just as the uncommon is distinguished from the common. This conviction is made definitive by **the triage purpose of healing**:

The life-giving purpose Christians embody and enact with their whole person in reciprocal relationship with Jesus in order to heal those gathered, so that all the scattering is redeemed and reconciled.

Christians can fulfill their triage purpose as a full-time life's work, or fulfill it while at other secondary work, at school, at home, or even at play—wherever in the human context.

Integral to Jesus' function of gathering is his ongoing involvement of healing. In the heart of his purpose, Jesus embodied God's triage of healing, not as a supplement to his salvific work but as the heart of why he came, how he came and what he came for (as he noted in Mt 9:12-13). As we witness Jesus healing wherever he went, it is critical not to miscalculate the why, how and what, which many in his earthly time did.

Jesus didn't engage merely in repairing people's body parts, nor was he just mending their needs from outer in. Embodying healing as God's triage, Jesus came for the sole purpose to restore persons and their relationships (both with God and others) to wholeness—the wholeness in which God created humanity according to the qualitative image and relational likeness of the whole and uncommon God.

God's wholeness is not a concept or merely a characteristic of God's attributes, but rather it constitutes the heart of God's integral being and function. On this irreducible basis, humanity was created to constitute the heart of human being and being human; but subsequently persons became reduced, fragmented and broken from wholeness to inescapably encompass the human condition. Regardless of the tension, conflict and consequences this brought to human collectives and persons, God acted in loving response to vulnerably bring the healing necessary to be restored to wholeness—restored with no illusions or simulations of anything less and any substitutes. As just discussed, the process to wholeness involves the irreplaceable change of redemptive reconciliation; and for his followers who have and continue to die to the old and thereby rise to the new, Jesus has transferred his triage of healing to them in order to embody as their life purpose.

These disciples and their collective gathering as his church family are now responsible to extend his healing with nothing less and no substitutes, so that “by this everyone will know that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:35). The triage of healing, therefore, is a function that cannot be fulfilled with anything less and any substitutes for the wholeness Jesus integrally embodied and raised new in his true followers. Even with good intentions, Christians and churches will not become triages of healing simply by performing first-aid services for their surrounding contexts, by providing merely comforting ministries in their church gatherings.

God's triage of healing was enacted by the who, what and how of Jesus' whole person, in order that those directly touched by Jesus' wholeness vulnerably involved with them will then experience the relational outcome of their whole person raised new in wholeness. The healing outcome emphatically illuminates the either-or juncture to wholeness, which is neither the idea nor even hope of wholeness but totally its relational reality in the very likeness of whole-ly God (as Paul made definitive in 2 Cor 3:18).

In Jesus' pedagogical process:

Learning to become God's triage of healing involves the ongoing relational process of gathering with Jesus in likeness of his wholeness, whereby the primary life purpose of his true followers and church family becomes a vulnerably ongoing relational reality for the uncommon conclusion of restoring persons, collectives and humanity to the wholeness transforming their human condition.

Because of this triage's uncommon nature and radical function, its conviction becomes an inconvenient truth for Christians and churches to embrace, submit to and partake in.

Therefore, belonging to God's triage of healing, not some imitation or simulation of it, is not a status, privilege or resource to highlight or boast about. That would simply reflect and only reinforce the human condition by default rather than heal it.

Furthermore, as rigorous as triage work may seem to be, the depth of one's conviction to *be* whole and thus to *make* whole is the quality that will distinguish one's uncommon nature from the common. The relational outcome will unfold ongoingly for one's whole person to be vulnerably present and relationally accountable to fulfill God's triage of healing both personally and together as Jesus' church family.

The heart of humanity waits impatiently on the triage of healing, because all of its collectives and persons have been reduced by the human condition and, therefore, necessitate ASAP the experiential truth and relational reality of the new creation to make it whole. Nothing less and no substitutes will constitute God's triage and fulfill its healing purpose for the uncommon conclusion that all Christians and churches are accountable for unavoidably, yet still arguable, conflatable and deniable.

Our education will determine how long humanity's wait will be, and it also will constitute the conviction of who will enact God's triage of healing to "gather with me" and therefore not scatter by default.



## Additional Study Resources

Acolatse, Esther E., *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: 2018).

Balmer, Randall, *Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

Barna Group, *The State of Discipleship* (The Navigators, 2015).

Beck, Richard, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016).

Bishop, Bryan, *Boundless: What Global Expressions of Faith Teach Us about Following Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015).

Brauch, Manfred T., *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

Brueggemann, Walter and John Brueggemann, *Rebuilding the Foundations: Social Relationships in Ancient Scripture and Contemporary Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).

Cacioppo, John T. and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

Charles, Mark and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019).

Crouch, Andy, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* (Grand Rapids; Baker Books, 2017).

Curtice, Kaitlin B., *Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020).

De La Torre, Miguel A., *Decolonizing Christianity: Becoming Badass Believers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

Detweiler, Craig, *Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018).

Dickson, John, *Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021).

Edgar, William, *Created & Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

Ellis, Bruce and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds., *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).

Grenz, Stanley J., *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

Grindheim, Sigurd, *Living in the Kingdom of God: A Biblical Theology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

Hellerman, Joseph H., *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

Hiebert, Paul G., *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

Johnson, Todd M. and Cindy M. Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

Kambara, Kary A., *A Theology of Worship: 'Singing' a New Song to the Lord* (2011). Online at <http://4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Gender Equation in Human Identity and Function: Examining Our Theology and Practice, and Their Essential Equation* (Gender Study, 2018). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Hermeneutic of Worship Language: Understanding Communion with the Whole of God* (Worship Language Study, 2013). Online at <http://4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Worshiping God in Likeness of the Trinity: Not Determined 'in Their Way'* (Uncommon Worship Study, 2016). Online at <http://4X12.org>.

Keith, Chris and Larry W. Hurtado, eds., *Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

Lanier, Jaren, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

Lennox, John C., *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020).

Matsuo, T. Dave, *"Did God Really Say That?" Theology in the Age of Reductionism* (Theology Study, 2013). Online at <http://4X12.org>.



\_\_\_\_\_, *The Disciples of Whole Theology and Practice: Following the Diversity of Reformation or the Wholeness of Transformation* (Discipleship Study: 2017). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Diversity of the Integral Gospel: Repurposing Diversity to Re-image the Global Church* (Diversity Study, 2022). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Feelings of Jesus' Heart: His Whole Person's Affective Narrative* (Narrative Study, 2023). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Essential Dimension & Quality for Theology & Practice: Discovering the Function of Music as Basic to Significance in Life* (Study on Music-like Theology: 2019). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Following Jesus, Knowing Christ: Engaging the Intimate Relational Process* (Spirituality Study, 2003). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Face of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Essential for the Whole of God & Life* (Trinity Study, 2016). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Feelings of Jesus' Heart: His Whole Person's Affective Narrative* (Narrative Study, 2023). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Global Church Engaging the Nature of Sin & the Human Condition: Reflecting, Reinforcing, Sustaining or Transforming* (Global Church Study, 2016). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Gospel of Transformation: Distinguishing the Discipleship and Ecclesiology Integral to Salvation* (Transformation Study, 2015). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Human Order of Creation & Its Political Theology for the New Creation: Distinguishing God's Integral Way of Life* (Political Theology Study: 2021). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Interpretation Integrated in 'the Whole-ly Way': The Integral Education and Learning of Knowing and Understanding God* (Bible Hermeneutics Study: 2019). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Jesus' Gospel of Essential Justice: The Human Order from Creation through Complete Salvation* (Justice Study: 2018). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Jesus into Paul: Embodying the Theology and Hermeneutic of the Whole Gospel* (Integration Study, 2012). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Person in Complete Context: The Whole of Theological Anthropology Distinguished* (Theological Anthropology Study, 2014). Online: <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Person, the Trinity, the Church: The Call to Be Whole and the Lure of Reductionism* (Wholeness Study, 2006). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Relational Progression: A Relational Theology of Discipleship* (Discipleship Study, 2004). Online: <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Sanctified Christology: A Theological & Functional Study of the Whole of Jesus* (Christology Study, 2008). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *What's Next? A New Future or Repeating the Past* (Essay for Tomorrow: 2020). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Whole of Paul and the Whole in His Theology: Theological Interpretation in Relational Epistemic Process* (Paul Study, 2010). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

McGilchrist, Iain, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

McKnight, Scot, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014).

McKnight, Scot, and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called TOV: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2020).

Middleton, J. Richard, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

Millar, J. Gary, *Changed Into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos/IVP Academic, 2021).

Rasmussen, Joshua, *Who Are You, Really?: A Philosopher's Inquiry into the Nature & Origin of Person* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023).

Thacker, Jason, *The Age of AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Thrive, 2020).

Turkle, Sherry, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

Volf, Miroslav and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019).

Welker, Michael, *In God's Image: An Anthropology of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).