

“Post-Civilized” Possibilities: The Quality Without a Name

J. Harmon Grahn

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1 Expanding Prior Perceptions

As mentioned in Item 10 on our *Agenda for a "Post-Civilized" Humanity*,¹ I have placed a significant emphasis in prior essays² upon the vital importance of the "secret ingredient" of love as a vital component of *patterns that work*; and have observed conversely, that love is conspicuously absent from *patterns that do not work*. While this emphasis may not be entirely misplaced, as with most positive statements that may be made about anything, it is probably "not the whole story."

Architect Christopher Alexander describes something he calls *the quality without a name*, in his book, *The Timeless Way of Building*.³

*There is a central quality [Alexander writes] which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and precise, but it cannot be named.*⁴

Perhaps in spite of appearances and conditions on contemporary planet Earth, there seems to be a "mechanism" (for want of a more appropriate term) in operation in Nature, and for as far as we can see or imagine in Cosmos at large, which has the effect of "selecting" elements that are characterized by the quality Alexander describes, and "deselecting" elements that lack this quality. One way I have approached this "selection process" is by noting that "things that work" have a tendency to persist; whereas "things that do not work" do not last, and eventually disappear. The cumulative effect of this tendency seems to be the gradual improvement, and eventual perfection, of everything.

If so, the process may provide the basis for an optimistic outlook, even under immediate local circumstances of apparent loss, or calamity. Yet it is an unhurried process that does not arrive in haste at its favorable outcomes. Also, it is not the only process operative in Nature, and there are countercurrents that have the opposite effect. That is, although such countercurrents are incapable of repairing the defects of "things that do not work," and enabling them to persist, they are capable of replacing "things that do not work," and do not last, by proliferating many more "things that don't work" either; and consequently seem to make matters generally worse, instead of better.

In contemporary human "civilization," innumerable such countercurrents leap instantly and involuntarily to mind, and it seems more than obvious that the world would

¹wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/jhg01pcp.html#agenda

²*The Writing on the Wall* #8 § 2 The "Secret Ingredient"
wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow08.html#si02.0; *The Writing on the Wall* #7 § 3.6 Love
wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow07.html#p-civ03.6.0.

³Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1979.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19, emphasis in the original.

be significantly improved, if only this or that countercurrent proliferating "things that don't work" were simply to cease. If only those nasty bio-tech corporations, for example, were to cease proliferating genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and turning them loose in the biosphere, this would be a kinder, gentler world for the rest of us. Or, if only the players in the nuclear power industry would cease proliferating nuclear power plants, decommission their existing plants, and safely dispose of their accumulated nuclear wastes, the rest of humanity could happily anticipate a brighter, safer future than is likely to materialize otherwise. And so on, and on, and on. . . .

However, among the innumerable "things that do not work" in the "civilized world," perhaps the most pernicious are all efforts, well intended or otherwise, to *govern the choices of others*. As mentioned in Item 2 on our *Agenda for a "Post-Civilized" Humanity*:

This arrangement does not work, . . . because no volitional being can possibly be governed by another volitional being—for the same reason that no driver can pilot any vehicle in traffic, other than the one whose steering wheel he holds.⁵ Volitional beings may be attacked, terrorized, slaughtered, or enslaved by other volitional beings more powerful than themselves. Yet no volitional being can be *governed* by anyone, or anything, other than itself: for that is what volition is.⁶

Therefore, in retrospect, it may be appropriate for those reading, or re-reading later editions of *The Writing on the Wall*, in which *love* was emphasized as a quality essential to "patterns that work," and without which "nothing works," to mentally substitute for *love* the more broadly applicable *quality without a name*. This has the collateral advantage of bypassing the many ambiguities associated with the word, *love*, which means many different things to many different people, in many different contexts.

2 The Quality Without a Name

Alexander's book, *The Timeless Way of Building*, is itself a package that exemplifies the quality without a name, as manifested in a single volume that you can hold in your hands, browse through, skim the text, look at the pictures; or read with riveted attention from cover to cover. It demonstrates with quiet eloquence that *anything*, created by anybody, or by anything, can have this quality—or not; and that only those things that have it are

⁵Thus it may truthfully be said that the most important part of any automobile is "the nut that holds the wheel." (Footnote included in the quotation.)

⁶wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/jhg01pcp.html#ag02

able to participate in the Timeless Way. It is a quality that gives even to perishable things, such as a sun-ripened peach on a summer day, a share in timeless immortality.

The quality without a name is something that anyone who so chooses can nurture within his own life, and in everything he creates, in every choice and move he makes, in every breath he takes. Or not. But no one can make this choice for anybody else. Therefore, for those who would nurture the quality without a name in our own lives: opposing the countercurrents created by the choices of others is an error that sabotages within ourselves the very quality we seek. It is as paradoxical and counterproductive as "battling for peace," and similarly can never achieve its objective.

Among the sequence of choices one makes in the conduct of one's daily life, one may at any moment decide (among many other choices as well) between nurturing the quality without a name; or opposing one or another of the many countercurrents that obstruct, subvert, or destroy this quality. Although it may seem self-evident that resisting the countercurrents that obstruct the quality without a name is the same as nurturing, or encouraging the proliferation of this quality, it is not so: for one of the factors woven into the rich and subtle fabric of the quality without a name is that it cannot be *made* to emerge; it emerges spontaneously only where it is *allowed* to do so. Thus those who would encourage the proliferation of the quality without a name may do so only in the way we conduct our individual lives, by how and what we ourselves create, in every fleeting moment—instead of interfering with what others create, in their swiftly fleeting moments.

Alexander illustrates why the quality he describes cannot be named, by approaching it with a few descriptive words which capture parts of it; yet fall short of describing it fully: words like *alive*; *whole*; *comfortable*; *free*; *exact*; *egoless*; *eternal*. Yet although these words approach it, in each instance Alexander finds that the proposed word falls short of adequately describing the quality without a name; as I also have found, with the word *love*. Additional words float into awareness, which might also be proposed as being descriptive of the quality without a name; and they are. Yet they also share the deficiencies of earlier proposals, of not quite hitting the target: such as *spontaneous*; *deliberate*; *uncontrived*; *intentional*; *exquisite*; *rugged*. . . . See what I mean?

Yet this quality without a name, however it may be imagined, is decisively recognizable, by its presence, or its absence, in any existing thing we may create, or encounter, anywhere; and it is possible to bring this quality into manifestation, or not, in anything we do, through the *choice of allowing* its emergence—or not.

2.1 Learning to Allow

Learning to allow is a significant challenge for all who share a "civilized" heritage: because the impulse driving the advance of "civilization" has never been *allowing*, but *compelling*. To the "civilized" mind, it is self-evidently obvious that anyone who wants something to happen must somehow "make it happen;" and desired conditions come about only for those who "make it so." Conversely, undesirable conditions are avoided only by *defeating* them: and so, "civilization" is perpetually involved in limitlessly escalating war: "War on Poverty;" "War on Drugs;" "War on Disease;" "War on Crime;" "War on Terrorism" . . . and on, and on . . . endlessly. Even those who perceive some of the contradictions and paradoxes in the policies of the "civilized" administrations, and the "power elites," can imagine no way of dealing with them that does not involve opposing them, protesting against them, obstructing them, or in short, in one way or another, waging war against them. It is a pattern that *does not work*; has never worked; cannot be made to work: because it decisively lacks, and aggressively prohibits *the quality without a name* from emerging.

And yet . . . this is "not the whole story:" for the quality without a name cannot be prohibited: because it is the quality common to *everything that works*, and without which *nothing works*. So the quality without a name laces itself subtly, even among and throughout the works of "civilization." Ironically, perhaps, it is because of this that "civilization" works as well as it does: for if this subtle, ubiquitous, tenaciously persistent quality were entirely eliminated, "civilization" would collapse utterly, and its scattered fragments would blow away, and would be as if they had never been.

Nevertheless, opposing the countercurrents that obstruct the quality without a name is an exercise in perpetual futility: for it is incapable of answering the question: "If not this, what?" It is impossible to build "not this." It is only possible to build "that" instead—and then only when "that" is clearly envisioned in at least some preliminary detail. The quality without a name itself, if allowed to, can guide the emergence of the details necessary for manifesting "that" which is intended to replace "not this," whatever it may be: the thing that stands for awhile, but like every historical "civilization," does not work well enough to stand for very long.

Mastery of the skill of *allowing* may begin for anyone by *allowing myself* to explore the implications of the observation, as suggested in "*Post-Civilized*" Possibilities: *Context is Everything*, that "even among the people you know, and with whom you associate

on a daily basis, perceptions of 'reality' vary widely, and are often to varying degrees contradictory."⁷

It is easy, and maybe even natural, to assume without question that everything and everybody we encounter in the course of our daily lives shares the same "reality" each of us experiences with flawless "realism," every moment of every day. After all, as one might say, "Anyone with a brain in their head can see the situation as well as I can." However, if you actually get down to "comparing notes" with someone on the particulars of your corresponding perceptions of "reality," before long you are virtually certain to encounter areas in which your perceptions are not the same, and may even on some points be irreconcilably contradictory. If one of you is "right," the other must be "wrong;" and vice-versa. What is to be done?

A few alternatives suggest themselves. You could *a*) go to war over your differences of perception, and duel to the death of one or the other of you, in order to reach a decision as to which of you is "right," and which of you is "wrong." Alternatively, *b*) one of you might persuade or coerce the other into changing his views, and adopting the other's views instead. Or, *c*) each of you might sustain your respective views, and each *allow* the other to do the same.

Because neither alternative *a* nor *b* may be relied upon to deliver universally satisfactory results, alternative *c* may invite further consideration. In a world in which perceptions of "reality" are manifestly so richly diverse, and vary so widely among people, cultures, and historical contexts; and given that *all* perceptions of "reality" are unavoidably partial: the possibility might be worth considering that the polarized difference between being "right" and being "wrong" may be far too narrow to accommodate the broad spectrum of human perceptions of "reality;" and that quite different criteria may be more appropriate for evaluating the merits of diverse perceptions.

As mentioned a bit further on in the passage quoted above:

People who adamantly disagree with one another about practically everything nevertheless conduct our daily lives, week to week, and year to year, as if "things really are" more or less as we imagine them to be—no matter how we imagine them to be. And those with whom we so strongly disagree "about everything" do the same. How is this even *possible*?⁸

⁷Grahm, "Post-Civilized" Possibilities: Context is Everything § 1 The Partiality of Perception. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-b.html#pop01.3

⁸Grahm, *loc. cit.*

Perhaps it is possible because the factual "rightness" or "wrongness" of our various views of "how things really are" are of far less practical importance to their performance in "reality" than are other qualities about them: in particular, *the quality without a name*.

2.2 Many Ways of Being "Right"

The mix of beings living within a primeval forest may provide a prototypical microcosm exemplifying the rich texture in which the quality without a name appears in endless variety. It is a microcosm in which no two trees, no two birds, or butterflies, or blossoms, or worms, are exactly alike; yet each is "just right" within the context of their richly various lives. Even the honeycomb that may be found here and there within the hollows of aged trees, heavy with wild honey, and the larva of a coming generation of bees: though fabricated of innumerable nearly identical hexagonal cells, is so perfectly united with its unique site, that no two wax cells either, are exactly alike; yet each is perfectly suited for its function.

The quality without a name runs like an infinitely convoluted thread throughout every part of every being in the forest, linking each to all, and all to each, in a web of functional commonality and continuity that bestows *perfection* upon the whole that is far more than the perfect sum of all its perfect parts.

Yet this is a perfection that is fluid and dynamic, not rigid or unyielding. In the flux of time, the hollow in the ancient tree that today shelters a thriving colony of bees, may be the scar of a calamity in another time: in which a devastatingly violent storm swept through the younger forest, and tore a major limb from the battered tree, leaving a gaping wound that became infected with rot. The tree gradually healed, and grew taller, and stronger; but the rot meanwhile, nourished perhaps by blowing dust, and standing rain, hollowed out the stem into a growing cavity: that eventually attracted the interest of a single scouting bee, seeking a suitable site to lodge its nearby migrating swarm.

The swarm found the cavity suitable, cleaned out most of the remaining rot, lined parts of the interior with propolis, aiding the healing of the tree, and set up housekeeping for many future bee generations—a vignette in a much larger story, without beginning, or end.

The larger story, without beginning or end, may eventually include drought, and consuming fire, started by lightning, or by negligent humans, that turns the forest into ash, and smoldering coals—including the healing tree, sheltering the thriving apiary, and all other forest life unable to flee the flames. Sun, Moon, and stars wheel above a scene of gray and smoky desolation; seasons pass, with snow, and frost, and healing rain; and seeds and nuts, buried by small, burrowing animals, germinate, and grow. The gray land-

scape turns green beneath the dynamic sky; and the story, without beginning or end, goes on, never and nowhere twice the same . . . forever.

Forever. In the flux of endless time, and boundless space, planets, stars, and galaxies have their birth, live their lives, expire, and are renewed, in the endless and perfect exchange⁹ that makes the incomprehensibly decisive difference between *something*, and "nothing:" between *existence*, and . . . *what?*

There is no such thing as "nothing." *Something—anything*, that exists, has no opposite: because it may be contrasted only with other things that share its quality of existing; and with *no thing* that does not share this quality. Even a thought is something with a palpable existence; and it may be so that thoughts are the only things that are real, and are the essence of every thing that exists, anywhere, ever.

Is that so? Is it "right?" Or is it "wrong?" Or does it matter very much at all which, if either, it "really" is? Existing things, such as people, forests, planets, stars, and galaxies, come, and go; tides and freshets ebb, and flow; breezes and storms are still, and blow; as scholars, by turns, doubt, and know.

And the winding thread of the quality without a name laces together into a single, indivisible whole every thing that shares the property of *existing*, for as long as it exists, and may be sustained. When existing things lose the quality without a name, they perish, cease to exist, or metamorphose into other things that do sustain the quality without a name; and are sustained in turn by its presence in them, for as long as they may last.

Thus *if you value your life*: seek, learn to recognize, and find, husband, nourish, and treasure the quality without a name: first within yourself, in your every thought and emotion, and in everything you see, and touch, and feel, and imagine, and create. For regardless of human opinions about what is "right," and what is "wrong:" it is the presence, or the absence, of the quality without a name that is the final arbiter, every moment, everywhere, between *what works*, and persists, and *what does not work*, and does not last. The quality without a name is manifest, in varying degrees, in everything that exists; and it too is dynamic, and alive, and ebbs, and flows; wanes, and waxes, under conditions that starve, or nourish it, in a Cosmos in constant motion.

The quality without a name, in its myriad manifestations throughout time, and space, is the signature of all the countless different things, every when, and everywhere, that are "right," in as many different ways; and that *work*, and persist, and are fruitful, and multiply, and eventually prevail, and ascend beyond every thing that is deficient in the quality without a name. Hence, the quality without a name is the most abundant, and

⁹*Ibid.* wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-b.html#aps03.10

prevalent quality throughout the universe of time and space; and if it is seemingly scarce among the works of Earth-humans . . . whose fault is that?

If in your life, you seek, learn to recognize, and find, husband, nourish, and treasure the quality without a name, in your every thought and emotion, and in everything you see, and touch, and feel, and imagine, and create, then you at least are participating actively in the processes that sustain all things that work, and persist, and thrive; and "blame" for the scarcity among humans of the quality without a name cannot be laid at your feet. Yet avoiding "blame" is an impoverished motive indeed for seeking the quality without a name.

Rather, the quality without a name supplies its own motive to its seeker: for the mere contemplation of what it is engenders an irresistible attraction to it; and in turn attracts it to its seeker. For the quality without a name is most naturally at home with every thing that exists, and is only scarce where it is not allowed its natural abundance. Allow it, and the quality without a name will never desert you; and will animate, and bring to life your every endeavor—liberating *you* to leave it to others to argue the nuances of what is "right," and what is "wrong."

3 The Quality of "Post-Civilization"

Now *why* should the conduct of my little life, or yours, have any more bearing upon the course of planetary evolution than does the life of a flea? After all, in the context of an *infinite universe*, we amount at most to "somewhat less than much, and only a little more than anything."¹⁰ To quantify that precisely, our individual part in the overall scheme of things comes to the unimaginably minute fraction of exactly $\frac{1}{\infty}$.¹¹

The number $\frac{1}{\infty}$ is not very large. Yet as mentioned in the citation, "it is greater than zero, and that's *something*. It may reasonably be evaluated as 'better than nothing.'" In fact, it must be *infinitely* "better than nothing:" because as mentioned above, there is no such thing as "nothing;" and I would say that being *something* instead, is pretty damned good! Wouldn't you?

Yet there is another reason why the conduct of *our individual lives* are of incalculable importance to the course of planetary evolution: because if we do not intentionally and persistently cultivate within our own lives the quality without a name . . . who will?

¹⁰James Thurber, *The 13 Clocks*.

¹¹Grahn, "Post-Civilized" Possibilities: *Context is Everything* § 3 A Paradigm Shift.
wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-b.html#aps03.18

It is becoming increasingly evident to increasing numbers of people that in countless different ways, what we have been calling "civilization" is coming unglued, and is falling to pieces like the proverbial "house of cards" it has always been. This is naturally the source of mounting alarm, and escalating clamor, in some circles, to hasten the collapse of what remains of the ruined structure. However, even if such clamor were rewarded by "success"—as sooner or later, it eventually shall be—the question asked earlier remains unanswered: "If not this, what?" Specifically, if "civilization," due to its many flaws, contradictions, and paradoxes, does collapse—*with what shall surviving Earth-humans (if any) replace it?*

On the basis of the discussion here, we may plausibly observe that the reason "civilization" seems to be under escalating stress at this time is that it suffers a severe deficiency in *the quality without a name*, and consequently *does not work*, and cannot last. This observation is confirmed in part by the historical fact that every "civilization" that has ever risen, and left traces in the annals of recorded history, has collapsed, and disappeared; the only exception being the current global "civilization:" which exhibits multiplying signs of promptly following the historical trend.

We have given the label, "post-civilization," to whatever (if anything) fills the vacuum left in the wake of collapsing "civilization." So what is "post-civilization?" We have at best only fragmentary imaginings of what "post-civilization" might be like; but its most salient feature *must be* that *it works*, in a way that "civilization" *has never worked*.

Now if it is so that the collapse-in-progress of "civilization" is due to a chronic deficiency of *the quality without a name*, then it follows that whatever else "post-civilization" may be or become, it must at all times be abundantly rich in the quality without a name. Yet we have also observed that the quality without a name cannot be *coerced*: it can only be *allowed*. This represents an obstacle for "civilized" folk, even if we actively desire "civilization's" replacement by some kind of *functional* "post-civilization:" because coercion, not allowance, is and always has been the "civilized" way—and *the only way* any of us know by experience. Some among us also know that the "civilized" way of coercion does not work; but our knowledge of what might work in its place is as yet, shall we say, rather sketchy. So here we stand: at the tail end of the final "civilization," with all our "civilized" habits and traditions well in place; and have not yet a clear picture of a "post-civilization" that works.

So we good "civilized" folk, who maybe can see some of the flaws, contradictions, and paradoxes of "civilization," and desire "something better" instead, are the obstacles standing in our own path to a "post-civilization" of some kind: because we cannot quite put our finger on just what that should be—beyond being able to agree, perhaps, that it should be "not this:" not "civilization." Yet if "civilization" were to collapse all around us, and

leave us standing, with the best will in the world we could not build "post-civilization" in its place. We could only build yet another "civilization:" because "civilization" is all we know. That is why every "civilization" that has collapsed and disappeared has been succeeded by other "civilizations," that have collapsed and disappeared in their turn—not because no alternative to "civilization" is possible, but because no alternative to "civilization" is imaginable to a "civilized" mind.

Yet we are not at a total loss: for we have at least glimpsed the element common to all things that work, which is also commonly absent, or deficient in things that do not work: *the quality without a name*. And we can find within ourselves, in our lives, and exemplified all around us in Nature, this quiet, gentle, ubiquitous quality that cannot be coerced, but manifests itself spontaneously, wherever it is allowed. Things could be worse.

If as we are, we could not build "post-civilization," because we are "civilized," not "post-civilized" people, then our first step toward "post-civilization" must be to *become* "post-civilized" ourselves. Having identified the crucial element that distinguishes "post-civilization" from "civilization," we may now understand that the quality without a name must become *our* defining quality as well.

This is something we can do—not for anybody else; nor can anybody else do it for us—but each of us can do it for ourselves. Each of us, who decides to, and persists, can cultivate within ourselves the quality without a name. It is a quality we already possess, in at least some measure; otherwise we could not live. Having it within ourselves, and being able to recognize it in Nature, or wherever else we may encounter it, we can, with practice and persistence, husband, nourish, treasure, and strengthen it within ourselves. We can, *without opposing anything, or anybody*, make of ourselves "post-civilized" people who, as "civilization" becomes increasingly impossible to sustain, will be qualified, available, and ready, to assist in the birthing of "post-civilization." Absent "post-civilized" humans, a "post-civilization" of any description is impossible. Yet *with* "post-civilized" humans, "post-civilization" becomes possible; and anyone who wants to may reshape himself into a "post-civilized" human. So how do we do that? Where do we begin?

3.1 Becoming "Post-Civilized"

There is no "one right way" to become "post-civilized," because there is no "one right way" to cultivate the quality without a name: the defining quality of a "post-civilized" human. As in a forest in which no two trees, no two birds, or butterflies, or blossoms, or worms, are exactly alike, yet each is "just right" within the context of their richly various lives: so each one of us is unique, and occupies a unique place within the vast scheme of things. No one can instruct anyone else in how to cultivate the quality without a name,

within the other's unique context. Yet each of us has access to this mysterious quality, within, and without, and can find with practice and persistence—and especially with *allowance*—the “winning ways” that attract to us, and attract ourselves, to the quality without a name; and mutually attract together others who, within themselves, are also nurturing the quality without a name.

It is a process that requires attention, and can begin anywhere, any time. The desired quality is present within even the most oblivious and confused among us; and if intentionally sought, may be recognized, observed, and husbanded. Even in the most chaotic life, in which “nothing is working,” may be found “something that works:” otherwise, that life would be impossible. What is that “something?” Even if it does not work very well, why does it work at all? It works, because it is imbued in some measure with the quality without a name. How can it be made to work better?

There is always a way to improve something that works at all, in such a way that it works better. As to something that does not work at all, often the best solution is to eliminate it altogether—for example, such as a self-destructive habit; or better yet, replace a self-destructive habit with a self-constructive habit. At the other end of the scale, there is nothing that works so perfectly that it cannot be improved: so cultivation of the quality without a name is unending, and its rewards are ceaseless.

In the process of cultivating the quality without a name, there comes a point at which some element that was not working very well is improved to the extent that, although short of perfection, it works well enough to allow attention to be directed to some other element in greater need of improvement. And so, the process unfolds uniquely for every individual doing the work, and deciding at every moment what needs to be done, how much effort to invest in pushing it forward, and when and how to move on to the next element in the process. It is a process *by, for, and of* the unique individual involved in it; is not subject to the approval or disapproval of anyone else; is in harmony and accord with all others involved in parallel processes—which ultimately includes everyone, and everything else, everywhere.

This is so because, with or without awareness, everyone, and everything, everywhere, are already involved in cultivation of the quality without a name. There are no exceptions. There are no exceptions, because the quality without a name is the quality that decides between *things that work*, and *things that do not work*; and things that do not work do not last. Therefore, the quality without a name is ultimately the deciding quality in the evolutionary process of everything and everybody that exist anywhere.

Thus even “the bad guys” who proliferate the countercurrents that obstruct, subvert, or destroy the quality without a name, are involved in its cultivation: for the countercurrents they create do not work, and cannot last. Yet how else can it be learned by those

who create them that this is so? It is a long lesson, and it has occupied the entire course of "civilized history," and was in progress for Earth-humans long before that; and it will continue, if and as, "post-civilization" emerges from the wreckage of "civilization."

It is not at all certain that the transition on Earth from "civilization" to "post-civilization" will reach completion. However, we are still here at present, and as long as that condition remains in effect, the emergence of a "post-civilization" that works remains a possibility. The factor that will decide upon this uncertainty may quite simply be a matter of how many "civilized" humans are able to transform ourselves into "post-civilized" humans instead. There are now seven thousand million humans resident upon this planet, and any one of us, in any circumstance, or "walk of life," is as qualified as any or all of the others to make this transition; and no one is qualified to make it for anybody else, or to prohibit anyone else from making it themselves.

Among seven thousand million humans, there may be a minimum number that in making this transition, if reached or surpassed, will enable the emergence of "post-civilization;" and if not reached, will render it stillborn. If so, that "critical number" may be surprisingly small. It was reported in July, 2011 that "For an opinion or belief, 10 percent is critical mass. If that proportion of the population emphatically embraces an idea, then it will spread rapidly to the majority of the population, scientists have found."¹² If so, then as few as 700,000,000 "post-civilized" people *could* insure the ascendancy of "post-civilization" on planet Earth.

Maybe. Or maybe not. The decision may not involve how many, who, or when; or even whether Earth survives or perishes as a habitable planet. It may instead be a matter exclusive to each individual human; and those who at any moment, anywhere, anyhow, reach some minimal threshold of *quality*, pass on into the domains of *patterns that work* among humans, or among beings; and those who do not, remain "in school," on Earth or elsewhere, until they do. For humans, it is evidently a long lesson, with no "time limit" for learning it, here, or hereafter. And it is a *required course*.

These are speculations, with no certainty as to their correspondence to "the real reality" (if there is such a thing). Nevertheless, it remains as certain as anything can be, that "post-civilization" *will not* emerge in the absence of a sufficient number (whatever that number may be) of "post-civilized" humans; and that only those who themselves choose to make the necessary persistent effort to do so, will complete the transition, if anyone does, from being "civilized" to being "post-civilized."

¹²Wynne Parry, LiveScience Senior Writer, *Key to Swaying Mass Opinion Found*.
www.livescience.com/15231-belief-opinion-shift-majority-minority-10-percent.html

3.2 Being "Post-Civilized"

The process of *becoming* "post-civilized" is simple, repetitive, and unending: *a)* Find something within yourself in need of improvement, and improve it. *b)* Repeat. *c)* You may establish your own priorities; the principle, "the squeaky wheel gets the oil," is recommended. The process of *being* "post-civilized" is: *more of the same*.

If this sounds to you like a "boring program," then perhaps you should think it through again. For one thing, it occurs within the context of contemporary times; which have often been described as "interesting." Although there seem to be many people at large who display symptoms of being "bored to out of their skulls," there is some probability that many of them are reacting with manifestations of "shock and awe," in response to the collapse-in-progress of "civilization." At present, there are many who would deny that "civilization" is in the process of collapse. A time is swiftly approaching when none will deny it. When that point on the current trajectory is reached, how many are likely to have a clear and effective idea as to "what to do about it"—either for themselves, or on behalf of anybody else?

Under such circumstances, you may find it to be an incalculable blessing to have a simple formula to follow within the solitude of your inner life, with a low probability of making matters worse, and at least a possibility of "doing some good," regardless of whatever turmoil may be going on "out there," where "civilization" is in the irreversible process of tumbling to its foundations: ***a)* Find something within yourself in need of improvement, and improve it. *b)* Repeat. *c)* "The squeaky wheel gets the oil."** Simple. Constructive. Doable. Within reach of anyone, under any circumstances, anywhere. If you can improve upon that, then by all means do!

So what happens in the lives of those who follow this simple formula? Some things discussed here rely upon speculation; but this is a matter in which I am able to draw upon direct experience: for I have "walked the talk," and confirmed it. One who elects to cease all efforts to "improve others," and focus instead upon improving himself, is soon rewarded by the unsurprising result that he tends to improve. This is always encouraging, and nourishes the motivation to continue the process—which is essential.

The formula does not trace a steady, smooth, and always-upward-trending curve; but one more resembling an uncertain, unsteady "drunkard's walk." One makes mistakes: for one is making "improvements" according to his own standards, and finding by experience that these too are probably not flawless, and may also be improved. Yet the trend, though unsteady and erratic, is nevertheless in the overall direction of *improvement*, as one's understanding of what that is, is itself gradually improved.

This is a process that naturally commences in solitude and isolation. It is internal, and invisible to all eyes, only excepting one's own inner vision. Yet by The Principle of Repeating Patterns,¹³ this is a temporary condition: for one is never really "alone:"

Where there is one, it may be relied upon that there are many others of the same kind, even if none other than the one have been discovered, or observed. This applies to snowflakes, atoms, newly discovered specimens of previously unknown species, Earth-like planets—and to beings who, like humans, are capable of purposeful action aimed at intended results.¹⁴

The simple fact that one undertakes this course provides assurance that he does not do so alone—even if he begins in total isolation, without bringing his quest to the attention of anyone. Unknown to himself, there are others who feel and act as he does; and it is only a matter of time before these begin to encounter one another. Why this is so is open to speculation; that it is so is confirmed by widespread human experience.

However, confirmation of one's effort through the emergence of others who share in it is only one of the most peripheral among the benefits of the piecemeal improvement of oneself. Its main benefit, to self and to all else besides, is that it engenders a deepening sense of *appreciation* of what an awesome and formidable gift it is, simply to be alive: to *exist*. One begins to realize that this is no small thing, even for one who occupies but 1/∞ of "All That."

The sustained effort to improve oneself, and fashion for oneself *a life that works*, swiftly discloses that this cannot be achieved casually, or without effort, and constant attention. Yet it can be achieved with persistent and unflagging effort, as exemplified by the countless living beings everywhere who have achieved it, and glow with the quality without a name. The experience of actively and intentionally participating in this universal process engenders a previously unknown and unimagined *self respect*, and a growing appreciation of the limitless possibilities that lie before the one actually taking these first tentative steps upon a path that has no end.

The natural corollary of this newly disclosed self respect is respect and appreciation for all things that share the property of *existence*; and conversely, that disrespect, and lack of appreciation for anything, is but a reflection of disrespect, and lack of appreciation for oneself. Such disrespect, and lack of appreciation of "All Things" is, one might say, the "mother countercurrent" opposing the quality without a name, and is the signature quality of "civilization;" and so is naturally the "root reason" that "civilization" does not

¹³Grahn, *The Writing on the Wall* #5 § 3.2.2 The Principle of Repeating Patterns. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/wow05.html#dawn03.2.2.0

¹⁴Grahn, *loc. cit.*

work, cannot last, and must be succeeded, if by anything, by a "post-civilization" whose signature quality is the quality without a name.

And so, as I see things, connecting the dots, and closing the circle, the entire weight of the question as to what, if anything, will replace currently collapsing, and soon vanished Earth-human "civilization," rests upon those who decide to, and sustain, our own self-improvement by the simple process described above.

4 "Objective Reality"

As discussed briefly above in § 2.1 Learning to Allow, although it is natural to assume that "reality" is essentially the same for everyone, "if you actually get down to 'comparing notes' with someone on the particulars of your corresponding perceptions of 'reality,' before long you are virtually certain to encounter areas in which your perceptions are not the same, and may even on some points be irreconcilably contradictory." And later on, in § 3.1 Becoming "Post-Civilized", we even questioned whether there is such a thing as "the real reality." The matter of "objective reality" has been skirted in prior essays as well, without coming to definite terms with the question as to whether there is, or is not, an "actual reality" that stands, regardless of various perceptions of it.

However, Dewey Larson's Reciprocal System of theory, discussed in "*Post-Civilized Possibilities: Context is Everything*,"¹⁵ suggests persuasively that indeed there is an "objective reality," and that it is possible for humans to extract reliable information about it. This is an assumption that underlies all scientific inquiry. Larson's method was to postulate the fundamental principles of an *imaginary universe*, analyze their implications, and verify within the accessible portions of the universe in which we actually live, the extent to which such postulated principles and their implications correspond with our experiments and observations.

Larson showed in extensive breadth and depth that the postulates underlying his imaginary universe, which he called the *universe of motion*, produce predictions that correspond very closely to observed conditions in the "real universe" in which we live; and that in no instance have observed conditions in the "real universe" been found contrary to conditions predicted by Larson's imaginary universe of motion. However, conditions predicted by Larson's universe of motion are richly and variously contrary to *theoretical* conditions predicted by "scientific orthodoxy" about the "real universe" in which we live—to the extent that, were Larson's Reciprocal System of theory embraced by "scien-

¹⁵Grahn, "*Post-Civilized Possibilities: Context is Everything*" § 2.2 The Significance of Scalar Motion, ff. wellspringpublishinggroup.com/wl/pcp-b.html#soc02.2.0

tific orthodoxy," there is practically no domain within "scientific orthodoxy" that would not have to be dismantled to its foundations, and rebuilt from the ground up. These are not trivial differences.

That is, correspondences between Larson's postulated universe of motion and the "real universe" have been repeatedly confirmed by experiments and observations, and have in no instance been contradicted by such experiments or observations. Yet "orthodox" theories collide irreconcilably at innumerable points with experiments and observations of steadily increasing sophistication, precision, and insight. Meanwhile, "scientific orthodoxy," in the throes of multiple mounting crises over the failure of "orthodox" theories to account for cascades of fresh observations and experimental discoveries, prevails essentially unchanged (though patched together by means of galloping *ad hoc* assumptions required to "save the theory" from the findings of proliferating experiments and observations)—while Larson has been completely ignored within "orthodox" circles.

One may lament and wring his hands over the chronic intransigence of all forms of "orthodoxy" in the face of fresh discoveries and insights into the nature of "objective reality." Yet it has always been so throughout human history, and is likely to change only with the emergence of a "new kind" of human nature; for consider:

Although "objective reality" may be a universal and unassailable fact, there is no way for any finite being ($\frac{1}{\infty}$) to be *objective* about it, or about any part of it. All views of "objective reality" are *subjective* views, and partial; and cannot be otherwise. This includes, but is not limited to the views of "scientific orthodoxy."

Indeed it is particularly applicable to "scientific orthodoxy," because the practice of science has moved far beyond its roots in the much more generalized "natural philosophy" of yesteryear, and has become a vast crazy-quilt of highly compartmentalized specializations which largely do not share even a common language. Each specialty communicates internally by means of its own specialized jargon, which effectively amounts to an impenetrable cypher to "outsiders"—and isolates every specialist within a tightly circumscribed cocoon in virtually complete ignorance of all things that lie beyond the margins of his specialty. Every specialist is an "outsider" in relation to all other specializations.

Larson threw this condition into stark relief by proposing his comprehensive Reciprocal System of theory—which is rigorously *unspecialized*, and bears upon practically all scientific specialties with shattering implications that are meticulously consistent with one another, and with observation and experiment; yet are radically inconsistent with the compartmentalized and often conflicting theories developed by "orthodox" specialists.

Prior to its appearance, no such comprehensive system of theory was anticipated, or imagined by any specialist even to be possible; and it was assumed with growing confidence that the only effective way to penetrate the domains of the "unknown," and

extend the frontiers of the "known," was to bore into the "unknown" with a barrage of increasingly specific specialized research. It is little wonder that Larson's approach was not given a warmer reception within "orthodox" circles.

It seems doubtful that this situation is likely to change anytime soon; yet there is a possibility, in response to the stimulus of the collapse-in-progress of "civilization," of the emergence of humans bearing what might amount—at least among "civilized" humans—to a "new kind" of human nature: the nature that glows with *the quality without a name*. Dewey Larson, in his sphere, was an exemplar of this type; yet by The Principle of Repeating Patterns, there will be others; and it is beginning to look as if there already are.

Another fellow, writing under the alias, "daniel," wrote (among others) a short piece on *The Uncommitted Investigator*.¹⁶ There is actually a circle of such Uncommitted Investigators that have been active in Larson's wake for the past two decades—which implies that there probably are others as well.

An Uncommitted Investigator is not a professional scientist on a corporate or academic payroll. For reasons we have just discussed, paradigm-shifting breakthroughs in any field seldom originate among professionals. They are most often the work of amateurs like Larson, who ask their own questions, conduct their own research, and reach their own conclusions.

As the dysfunction of "civilization" spreads, Uncommitted Investigators are likely to emerge in many different fields, asking questions that are never asked among the "orthodox," and finding answers that would otherwise never emerge. This is as natural as breathing: for when the well-trodden paths lead only to dead-ends, and to patterns that do not work, there is a natural impulse to break ranks in search of alternative patterns that do work. I believe Einstein defined *insanity* along the lines of "doing the same thing, and expecting a different result." Although things on Earth seem to be getting a little crazy now, not all Earth-humans are insane, or incapable of seeking alternatives to patterns that no longer work.

Thus the formula recommended above in § 3.2 may be adopted and applied in many different directions by silent and invisible swarms of Uncommitted Investigators who, *without opposing anything, or anybody*, simply by improving ourselves, our own understandings, and by nurturing the glow within us of *the quality without a name*, improve everything. What have any of us to lose, anymore, by making "post-civilized" humans of ourselves, making common cause with others who do likewise, and giving *allowance* to all: their own choices, and the consequences that follow from such choices?

¹⁶Phoenix III, Daniel, *The Uncommitted Investigator*, 3 pp., 131.3 kB. reciprocalssystem.org