



laetus in praesens

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Preparing for the Emergence of Collective Awareness

Emergency preparedness understood otherwise with AI assistance

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Introduction

There is currently an unusual degree of global focus on [emergency preparedness](#). This extends beyond the long-standing concerns with national security as exemplified by the recent declaration of Donald Trump as US President-elect (*Trump says NATO members should raise defense spending to 5% of GDP*, *France24*, 7 January 2025). Following the disastrous management of the COVID-19 pandemic, such concerns are being framed urgently and controversially by the World Health Organization (*Governments progress on negotiations for a pandemic agreement to boost global preparedness for future emergencies*, WHO, 20 September 2024; *Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response*, WHO, 27 May 2024; *The Pandemic Treaty: shameful and unjust*, *The Lancet*, 403, 2024, 10429). Many other foreseen catastrophic challenges to governance now call for new measures of emergency preparedness.

Understood more generally, the challenges foreseen have long been a focus of resolutions of intergovernmental organizations, most notably the United Nations. Unfortunately, as with "[New Years Resolutions](#)", little account is taken of indications that serious effort to implement such resolutions tends to be only of token form. As noted decades ago by [Chadwick F. Alger](#), with the exception of some specialized

technical agencies, intergovernmental assemblies have become an arena in which developing countries are placated and contained by encouraging them to spend endless hours in formulating toothless resolutions with little hope of implementation. The analysis has shown that only 53 of some 2000 (less than 3%) decisions in the assemblies and executive bodies of the UN, ILO and WHO created new activities in the years 1955, 1960 and 1965 (*Decision-Making in the United Nations, International Associations*, 1972. p. 461-464).

Denial and negligence in the face of warning signals enables disasters of different kinds. Curiously this is despite rational arguments in the light of evidence-based research, exemplified by those of climate scientists with respect to the challenges of global warming. Reactive responses, if implemented, tend to be undermined in the light of management adages such as: *Every complex problem has a solution which is simple, direct, plausible -- and wrong* or *Having lost sight of our objectives, we redoubled our efforts*. As a consequence, and even more curiously, collective learning tends primarily to result from the disasters themselves rather than from studious consideration of their probability. As noted by C. S. Lewis:

Out of all human events, it is tragedy alone that brings people out of their own petty desires and into awareness of other humans' suffering. Tragedy occurs in human lives so that we will learn to reach out and comfort others.

Tragedy merits recognition as a systemic remedy as a consequence of neglect (*Systemic Crises as Keys to Systemic Remedies*, 2008; *Variety of System Failures Engendered by Negligent Distinctions*, 2016).

There is no lack of calls for "change" and the "need for change" -- especially with respect to the policy and behaviour of others. As with [reform of the United Nations](#), failures have long been framed by "lack of political will" -- as in the health domain (F. Baum, et al, *Creating Political Will for Action on Health Equity: practical lessons for public health policy actors*, 2020). The question can be considered more generally (*Indicators of Political Will, Remedial and Coping Capacity?* 2019; *International Organizations and the Generation of the Will to Change*, 1970). Far more subtle has been the advice of Mohandas Gandhi ("*Be the change you wish to see in the world*") -- but with little sense of how to enable that collectively.

Reference to "emergency" necessarily implies a matter of urgency with the need to be prepared for potentially disastrous disruption. This is readily confused with any form of "emergence" offering new forms of beneficial coherence for humanity -- such as an emergence of awareness. That sense is implied by recognition of the possibility of a New Renaissance (Ian Goldin and Chris Kutarna, *Are We Living in a New Renaissance?* *Scientific American*, 24 May 2016; David Lorimer and Oliver Robinson, *A New Renaissance: transforming science, spirit and society*, 2023).

Some *end times scenarios* envisaged by religions foresee forms of beneficial emergence. These may well be conflated with other [varieties of singularity](#) which may indeed have a memetic dimension -- as an unforeseen emergence of collective awareness (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009). Religions may see their role as preparing for such an "emergence". *Techo-optimists* now frame the process in relation to artificial intelligence. [Transhumanists](#) might even imagine a "mergence" of humanity with AI -- perhaps to be appropriately termed "e-mergence"

Such considerations call into question the current problematic institutional focus on emergency preparedness. Is this necessarily able to adapt appropriately to the quality of insight potentially associated with the emergence of collective awareness -- an "emergency" understood otherwise? Science fiction has explored the manner in which conventional logic may be quite unable to distinguish the benefits of such emergence from the threats to which their logic is programmed to react as emergencies.

Much has been made of the conspiracies evoked by the COVID pandemic and the responses to it (*WHO pandemic treaty: "Torrent of fake news" has put negotiations at risk, says WHO chief*, *BMJ*, 2024, 384). The situation can be framed as a crisis of misinformation and confidence in authority -- a crisis of collective trust. So understood the collective realization is one of being lied to -- namely the emergence of one form of

collective awareness. Legislative and regulatory remedies envisaged effectively define, through exceptions, what may then be perceived as a "licence to lie" by certain "authorised" sectors of society -- especially government agencies (who may defensively claim the need to do so for reasons of "national security"). The remedies necessarily fail to address the misinformation systematically purveyed through advertising (under the protective banner of "puffery") or through the "unfact-checked" claims of religions (*Comparability of "Vaxxing Saves" with "Jesus Saves" as Misinformation?* 2021).

The argument which follows explores the possible future emergence of collective awareness capable of transcending the problematic dilemmas and dynamics increasingly evident.

As in the previous experiments with AI assistance, the responses of [ChatGPT 4o](#) are distinctively presented below in grayed areas, with those of [Claude 3.5](#) (in some cases). **Given the length of the document to which the exchange gives rise, the form of presentation has itself been treated as an experiment** -- in anticipation of the future implication of AI into research documents. Web technology now enables the whole document to be held as a single "page" with only the "questions" to AI rendered immediately visible -- a facility developed in this case with the assistance of both ChatGPT and Claude 3 (but not operational in PDF variants of the page, in contrast with the [original](#)). Reservations and commentary on the process of interaction with AI to that end have been discussed separately (*Methodological comment on experimental use of AI*, 2024). Readers may well be encouraged to pose the same questions (or others considered more appropriate) to AIs to which they may in future have access -- as artificial intelligence develops.

Show All AI Responses

Detection of psychosocial dimensions

The focus on legislative and regulatory remedies to foreseen crises -- as "emergency preparedness" -- avoids to a questionably high degree the associated psychosocial implications. This is especially evident through the despairing claims of experts whose rationally-argued and fact-based "truth" does not trigger the expected responses for which they call. This is especially evident in the case of climate change, as the [United Nations Climate Change Conferences](#) continue to demonstrate -- as but one example.

The current challenge for governance echoes the experience of religions over centuries past -- frequently despite the most vigorous efforts to suppress any criticism (as "heresy") of their inspired insights and injunctions. The "heresies" framed by religions in the past -- and the responses -- then bear careful comparison with the "misinformation" of today.

The focus here is on the detection of psychosocial claims made "in passing" from a natural science perspective -- claims deemed unworthy of any formal consideration in the proposal of any remedial action. Consequently they do not feature in the sophisticated modelling of the challenges of sustainability, pandemics, climate change, environmental degradation, and the like -- as argued separately (*Misleading Modelling of Global Crises*, 2021; *Climate change recognized as primarily a psychological challenge*, 2019; *Psychology of Sustainability*, 2002).

The difficulty of course is that the psychosocial sciences are far from remarkable in their ability to address their own schismatic discourse -- or the inadequacy of their own efforts, as highlighted by the past arguments of [James Hillman](#) and [Michael Ventura](#) (*We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy -- and the World's Getting Worse*, 1992). Their response to the Ukraine-Russia, Israel-Palestine conflicts has been especially noteworthy in that regard.

The potential value of AI in reframing the situation has been previously noted (*Perspectives of AI on Psychosocial Implications of Global Modelling*, 2024). The following exercise is one approach to the matter.

Question to AI : I have access to the transcript of an interchange between two academics regarding their

research on public health in relation to WHO/UN proposals for global pandemic preparedness. I am only minimally interested in the scientific references. I would like a summary of the allusions and arguments regarding the psychosocial dimensions of the challenge, made in passing, which are typically considered irrelevant to formal scientific presentations -- as is the case in climate change discourse. Could you provide a summary of the psychosocial dimension in the interchange, with suggestions as to how the arguments might be clustered

Show/Hide AI response

Question: The transcript is of an exchange hosted by [Jan Jekielek](#) (*How Disproportionate Focus on Pandemics Harms Global Public Health: David Bell and Garrett Brown* (*The Epoch Times*, 10 December 2024)). David Bell is Senior Scholar at Brownstone Institute, a former medical officer and scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO). Professor [Garrett Brown](#) is Chair in Political Theory and Global Health Policy at the University of Leeds. It was made available by [Nadia McLaren](#), Editor of the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*.

Show/Hide AI response

Lack of formal acknowledgement of psychosocial factors

Question: Whilst you have usefully identified the factors highlighted in the exchange, could you comment on the seeming lack of focus on how they are to be more formally acknowledged in an "evidence-based" system and what insight might enable the remedial processes deemed desirable

Show/Hide AI response

Question: The difficulty -- even evident in your response -- is that there is a considerable degree of "resistance" to such innovation. And yet such resistance is not factored into any systemic analysis. The resistance is a psychosocial factor which does not feature in "rational" discourse -- but undermines consideration of its outcome

Show/Hide AI response

Question: A curious feature of any resistance is a complex of factors which can only be inferred through rumour and anecdote as a pattern of siloed thinking -- exacerbated by what might be caricatured as "cognitive body odour" and tacit recognition of the "unsaid" (*Global Strategic Implications of the Unsaid*, 2003; *Epistemological Challenge of Cognitive Body Odour: exploring the underside of dialogue*, 2006). Is the emergence of collective awareness undermined by the extent to which people "stink" far more than they think -- in metaphorical terms. ***

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Equibrial readjustment as a systemic dismissal process

Question: Your responses recall the comment by the former chairman of cybernetics congress, [Stafford Beer](#) (on *Le Chatelier's Principle as applied to social systems*):

Reformers, critics of institutions, consultants in innovation, people in short who "want to get something done", often fail to see this point. They cannot understand why their strictures, advice or demands do not result in effective change. They expect either to achieve a measure of success in their own terms or to be flung off the premises. But an ultra-stable system (like a social institution)... has no need to react in either of these ways. It specializes in equibrial readjustment, which is to the observer a secret form of change requiring no actual alteration in the macro-systemic characteristics that he is trying to do something about." (*The Cybernetic Cytoblast - management itself*, Chairman's Address to the International Cybernetic Congress, September 1969)

The challenge of self-reflexivity indeed calls for a new methodology -- recognizing the resistance to its acceptance and the effort to prevent its implementation

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Integrative reframing of problematic systemic processes

Question: However, rather than framing resistance as "bad" (or even "evil" in contrast to the "good", how are both processes to be more fruitfully integrated

Show/Hide AI response

Question: An extensive array of [cognitive biases](#) is increasingly recognized. Could you comment on how various biases constrain the manner in which emergency preparedness is conceived and put into practice in response to crisis situations. How might these also constrain the emergence of more beneficial forms of collective awareness

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Comprehension of the dynamics of counteracting forces

Question: Your articulation suggests that an underlying challenge may be how to render comprehensible -- through metaphor or otherwise -- the dynamics between counteracting forces (each perceiving itself to be "good" and the other "evil"). How are such entangled dynamics to be rendered meaningful

Show/Hide AI response

Challenge of righteous resistance to change

Question: Again the constraint is that that possibility would be "resisted" -- and righteously so

Show/Hide AI response

Disaster as a the only viable systemic remedy?

Question: One unfortunate conclusion in the face of such dynamics is that collective learning -- if possible -- can only pass through disaster. The optimum strategy may be to allow the dynamics to play out. The emergency for which the exchange considers requisite preparedness may be the solution as much as the problem -- through the emergence of awareness (as after major global disasters)

Show/Hide AI response

Relevance to current crises?

Question: Could you comment further on the relevance of this argument to continuing challenges: reform of the United Nations, climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, inequality and inequity, overpopulation, and the like

Show/Hide AI response

Recognition of "new thinking" of relevance to a learning society

Question: Implicit in this exchange and your responses is the possibility of progressive collective learning. Do you have any trace of formal recognition of what has been learned as a consequence of any emergencies -- as was endeavoured by the [Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities before and after the Terrorist](#)

Attacks of September 11, 2001. Is any such approach evident in the case of a succession of floods, wildfires, landscapes, and the like -- or is the emphasis on defensive explanation from which little learning is sought, in the light of [root cause analysis](#) for example. The question is especially pertinent to the unprecedented succession of investments in military intervention in Afghanistan over decades (*List of military operations in the war in Afghanistan: 2001–2021*). Is there any effort to elicit insight from the optimism with which successive generals undertook these (*Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education*, 2009). With respect to climate change, and the periodic United Nations Climate Change Conferences from 1995 to 2025, is there any formal recognition of what has been significantly learned at each state -- of relevance to the following event and the emergency foreseen.

Show/Hide AI response

Question: An educational philosophy advocated by the OECD and UNESCO has been framed in terms of a [learning society](#). This positions education as the key to a nation's economic development, and holds that education should extend beyond formal learning (based in traditional educational institutions – schools, universities etc.) into informal learning centres to support a knowledge economy. The value of "new thinking" and innovation in that regard is widely acclaimed -- most obviously with respect to patentable developments of technology of economic significance. Could you comment further on the apparent absence of any framework within which "new thinking" is recognized and accumulated by global institutions -- especially with respect to psychosocial innovations of relevance to the challenges of any form of emergence. Given the many periodic reports of international institutions, how is it that none report systematically on the "new thinking" that has emerged.

Show/Hide AI response

Question: Whilst the focus on collective learning indeed suggests the possibility of emergence of collective awareness of a new form, this is however potentially and dangerously undermined by "[collective forgetting](#)" - - as is notably deplored regarding the factors that engender any major conflict. Could you comment on the nature of such a process -- the erosion of collective memory -- in a period noted for the reduction in reading and traditional forms of learning in favour of infotainment of any kind, despite the range of knowledge now accumulated and rendered widely accessible via the internet. As with the aging of individuals, is the erosion of collective memory to be recognized as a characteristic of aging societies. How might ensuring that the rate of emergence of collective awareness exceeds that of its erosion be achieved.

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The case for exploring the metaphor of alchemical transformation is made separately (*Eliciting a universe of meaning from nothing through alchemical processes*, 2013). There the multifaceted role of Isaac Newton -- upheld as an icon of science -- is noted as meriting careful attention in this respect. In addition to his major contributions to **science**, in the period of the emergence of the Royal Society, his very extensive involvement with "**alchemy**" has been repudiated by contrast to the "things" on which formalized science has subsequently focused -- successfully and fruitfully in conventional terms. Many records of his epoch have been lost -- perhaps deliberately -- or are only now receiving less biased attention, as within [The Newton Project](#).

Given the disasters it is held to enable, it is ironic to note that global finance currently makes extensive use of the alchemy metaphor -- partly in association with its desperate quest for the "Holy Grail" (*Confidence: Holy Grail of Finance?* 2011; Joergen Oerstroem Moeller (*The Holy Grail of Central Banking*, *The National Interest*, 6 June 2007). The psychosocial implications of any "new alchemy" tend to be neglected or disparaged (*New Alchemy*, New Alchemy Institute, 1971-1991; Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, *The Collected Works*, vol. 12, 2014; Steven M. Rosen. *Pauli's Dream: Jung, modern physics, and alchemy*, *Quadrant*, 44, 2014, 2).

Question: A degree of emergent collective awareness is recognized -- at least from an historical perspective -- in the "[golden eras](#)" of countries, cities and academies. These are characterized by the cross-cultivation of ideas, aesthetics and creativity, defying conventional tendencies to siloed thinking. [Liminality](#) is valued as a

subtle bridging process (*Global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011). Could you comment on how such emergence could be understood metaphorically through the **alchemy** of transformation of lead into gold -- especially given the irony of the seemingly unfruitful global focus on "leadership", in the absence of any understanding of global "goldership"

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Question: Inspired as it is by the conventional focus on preparedness for problematic emergencies, could you comment further on the contrasting capacity to recognize emergence of unforeseen forms of beneficial collective awareness -- whether sensitivity to it is more evident in the arts, the religions, the psychosocial sciences or technology. Of potential relevance is the extent to which insights and patterns in any particular domain are creatively adapted to that end by other domains, through metaphor or otherwise. In envisaging systematic reporting on "new thinking", this would then suggest that the framework for such reporting should be organized such as to highlight potential creative correspondences in other domains.

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