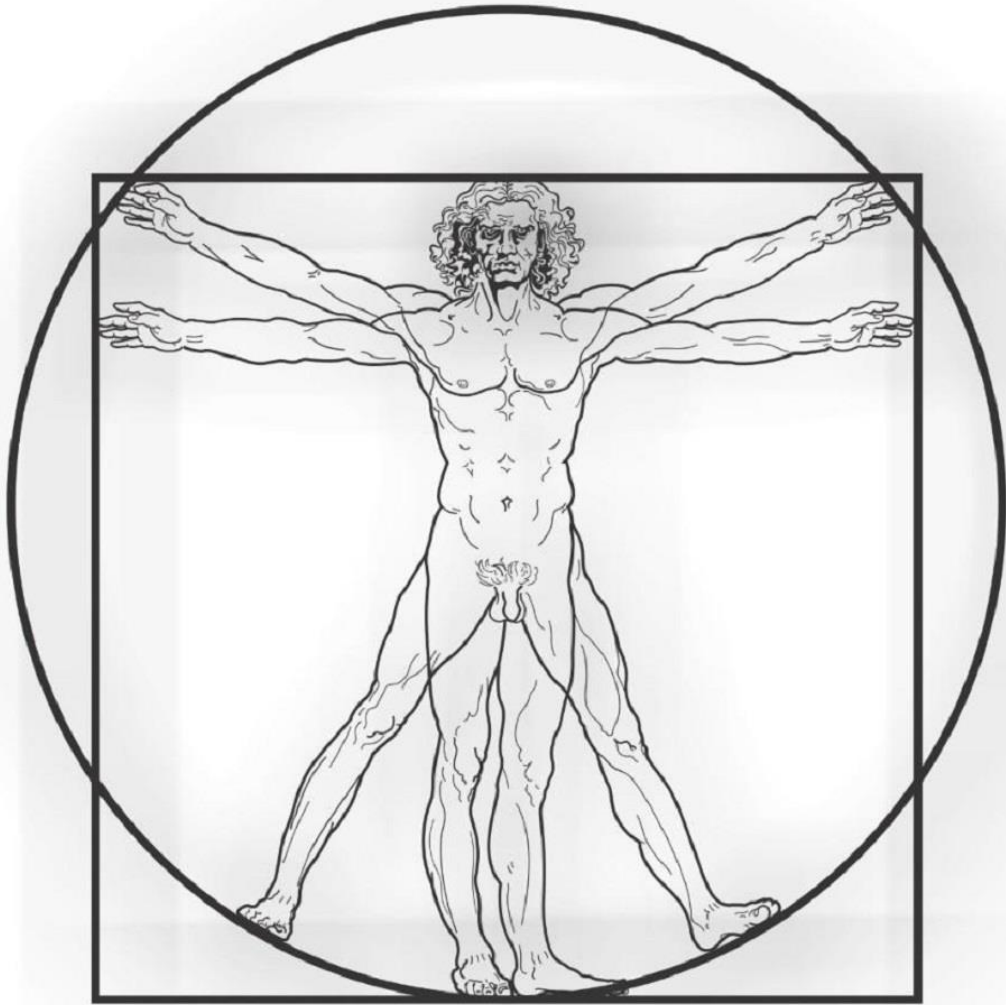


**Your Struggle:**  
**Humanity vs. Existential Opportunism**



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## 1) Environmental, Social and Civilizational Crisis

As much as it is part of human nature to try to push negative thoughts away or reject them outright, we are all facing an ever-expanding, general and global crisis of civilization. Although many see this as a fabrication or scaremongering by some, or propaganda by the powers that be to keep control of the people, all the scientific facts show that we are indeed in big trouble.

This crisis may be more serious than any before in human history, and none of our now highly interdependent societies can feel secure. For our globalized world today (still) operates according to principles that fundamentally exploit our natural environment and the masses of people, while the human population has essentially quadrupled in the last hundred years. Initially, at the dawn of civilization, population growth was made possible by the gradual spread of agriculture and settled lifestyles, and later by the explosion of science and technology and the rapid development of industry.

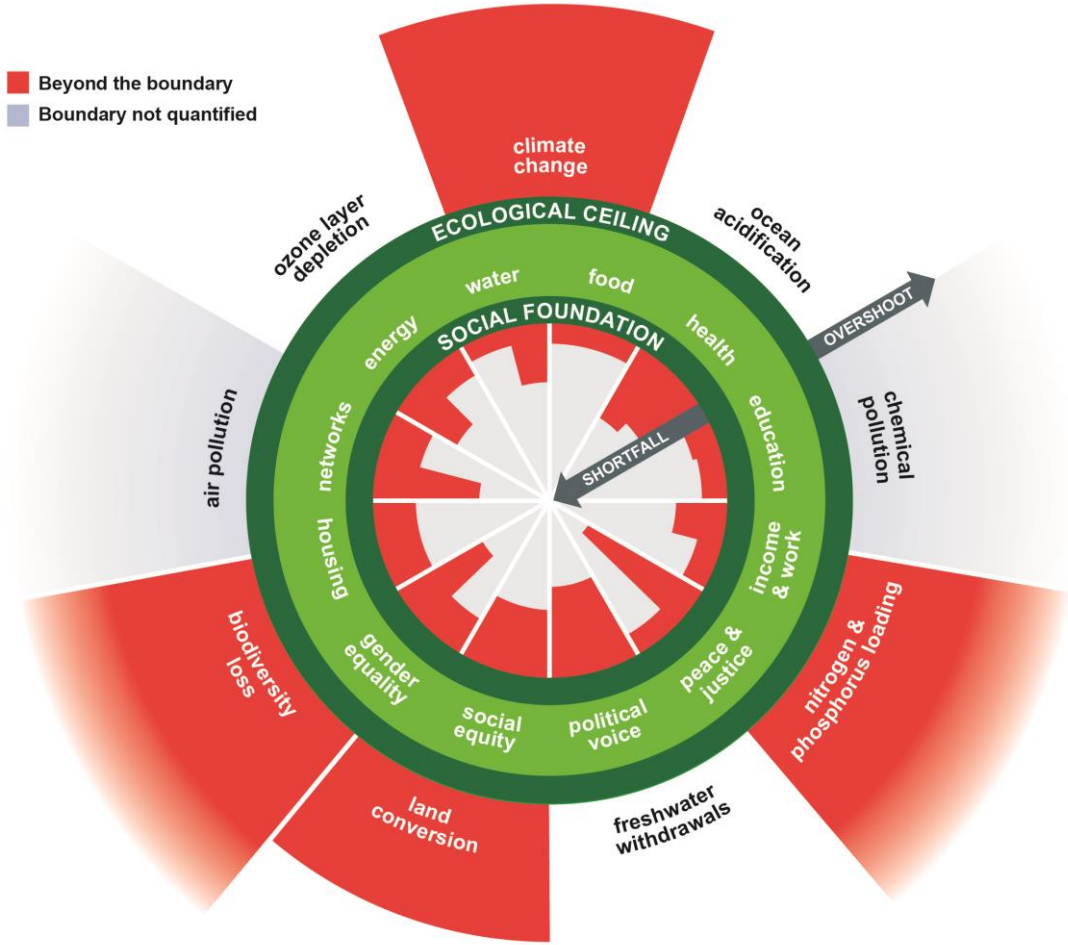
However, this has now led to overpopulation, which means that the Earth is becoming less and less able to support the masses of people. That's because many of our planet's resources are finite – even if some of them are capable of renewal over time. The problem is that we are currently consuming them at a faster rate than they are being replenished, while we are drastically destroying our natural environment, as well as its extremely rich but alarmingly dwindling flora and fauna. Because – despite all our technological achievements – as biological beings, we ourselves live off them: they provide us with food and various raw materials, medicines, etc. Yet we treat them as wastefully as we treat our freshwater resources, which are often contaminated by our industrial and other activities to the point where they are unfit for human consumption.

In addition, the continuous and consistent pollution of the environment, the extensive use of non-renewable fossil fuels and the massive emission of greenhouse gases are having an increasing impact on the Earth's climate, leading to a steady rise in global average temperatures. As a result, the climate around the world is becoming more extreme every year, with increasingly frequent and severe storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, landslides, sea-level rise and other natural disasters having a severe impact on our lives and future. Climate change can clearly be traced back to human activity, as before the industrial revolution and the era of large-scale agriculture and internal combustion engines, science had not seen similar trends clearly pointing towards increasing warming.

At the same time, climate change is closely linked not only to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, but also to environmental degradation. Intact ecosystems are generally able to maintain climate balance, but if we damage them too much, we greatly reduce this beneficial effect and accelerate the runaway nature of climate change. And as humans encroach on more and more natural habitats, we are also contributing to the emergence of newer and newer epidemics, often transmitted from wild animals to us and our livestock through constant mutation of pathogens.

In order to mitigate the damage and prevent even greater harm and drastic global warming, we must strive for environmental balance and reversal of current trends in all areas. This will require renewable energy sources and other alternatives to fossil fuels (see nuclear), reforming industry, agriculture, soil management and animal husbandry, changing our diets, actively protecting the environment, promoting the regeneration of natural habitats, expanding recycling and the widespread use of circular economy. But above all, we must break with the now dogmatic tenets of economics, the maximization of profit, consumption and the pursuit of constant growth. This can be achieved by shifting to a so-called doughnut economy approach, which looks at the economy and

society in relation to the natural environment, balancing the satisfaction of human needs with the opportunities provided by nature. (As depicted by the figure below.)



For this to happen on a global scale, however, we need to ensure that less developed peoples of the world also have a real chance of rising up, with strong support from richer states and compensation for climate inequalities. To this end, we must seek to treat them as equal partners and involve them in the global economy, and help them effectively to develop the knowledge and awareness needed to do so. But this also requires a completely different attitude on the part of the more developed countries compared to the past, when poorer peoples were at best seen as only good for exploitation or even total neglect.

However, economic and social inequalities are not only drastic from a geographical point of view, as there are huge differences between classes and social groups within countries, even in more developed ones. Academic research clearly shows that the gap between rich and poor has a major negative impact on people's health and well-being, human capital formation and social cohesion around the world. The problems range from reduced life expectancy and higher infant mortality, to low educational attainment, lower social mobility and increased levels of violence and mental illness. Moreover, inequalities tend to widen in times of crisis, which can cripple the economy in the longer term and contribute to increasing tensions within society.

And there is no shortage of tensions, as they are increasingly present in our more and more globalized societies. Cultural divisions, racism, chauvinism, nationalism and the like are everywhere making our lives miserable, also making it very difficult for people to co-exist peacefully and

cooperate for their common good. This is partly why disadvantaged countries need to catch up (to avoid potentially unmanageable mass or illegal migration), and on the other hand, to drastically reduce the existential gaps between different social groups and ethnicities. As well as giving everyone the opportunity to become a useful member of their community, they must also be given the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and perspective needed to do so, promoting tolerance and adaptation.

Unless we do all we can to minimize social inequalities, there is no reason to be confident about achieving environmental sustainability, either. This assumes a fundamental change in our attitudes and lifestyles, which will require the majority of us to reach a level of both existentially and in terms of awareness where we can maximize and enforce environmental concerns. We will need to ensure that the necessary changes take place on the economic and political stage, at the macro level, as well, because the world is still driven primarily by forces that are not in favor of long-term equilibrium and sustainable development.

Basically, the problem is the prevailing culture and values, which, thanks to globalization, is now dominated by existential opportunism and the systems based on it almost everywhere in the world. And these, along with the constant cultural tensions, local and international power struggles, and our overdeveloped technological means and potential for mass destruction, are as much a threat to human civilization as climate change and the destruction of the natural environment. This is also particularly dangerous for us, because essentially any kind of crisis can lead to a general economic and social crisis (and ultimately to collapse), if it is severe enough or if it goes on for a prolonged period of time. The eventual breakdown of social order, however, could unleash unprecedented death and suffering on an overpopulated humanity.

While we have the intelligence and ability to change this, it will require a conscious, active and well-organized approach. But for that to happen, existential opportunism must be replaced by collective consciousness.

## 2) Existential Opportunism and Collective Consciousness

What has not changed fundamentally throughout our history, ever since human communities settled down and left the hunter-gatherer lifestyle behind, is that existential opportunism is the dominant guiding principle in our societies. In essence, this means that one behaves opportunistically in the same way as mostly all living things in nature, in order to survive and thrive in life, and to acquire and secure the energy, things and conditions necessary for this. And where this type of guiding principle prevails, the community or society is generally characterized by fight and struggle at the expense of others, rather than mutual cooperation.

The problem is that while this is perfectly normal in nature, it is much less so in a civilized society. For in essence, it means that our societies are still governed by the law of the jungle, which is fundamentally at odds with the requirements of a truly civilized society. In the latter, basic livelihood and well-being cannot be the object of abrasiveness, ambition, unscrupulousness or even luck, as it must be everyone's due, otherwise their human dignity may be seriously compromised. In a socio-economic-political environment where this is not the case, there is constant insecurity, living from one day to the next, hopelessness, vulnerability and humiliation, as well as the stress and tension that this causes. Accordingly, it is no exaggeration to say that people can thank most of the pain, suffering and deprivation in the world today to each other, and therefore much of it is unnecessary and could be avoided.

The conditions prevailing today can be traced back to the fact that, after the settlement of human communities, the development of agriculture and our tools allowed for more production than what met our needs, which led to the emergence of different hierarchies and social classes as a result of inequalities in distribution. And in modern times, communities have become increasingly disintegrated and atomized, giving way to the rise of an individualistic culture that makes people essentially self-centered. And the division of people and the constant incentive to consume, driven by money, has led directly to the emergence of a consumer society, which makes us virtually dependent on material goods and services without them being truly indispensable. In the meantime, old communities and real human connections are increasingly being pushed into the background, in parallel with the proliferation of fake communities online.

In this unprecedented flood of information, the individual is less and less able to find his or her own identity and the true meaning of life, and therefore seeks support in a variety of ways, from religions through astrology to conspiracy theories. And along the lines of various views, beliefs, religions, ancestral relations and alliances driven by money, humanity is divided into millions of factions, which provide a permanent breeding ground for the collective manifestations of existential opportunism. The way it works at the collective level is essentially similar to the way it does at the individual level, whether it is the various tribal wars, corporate rivalries or political and power games. Its traces are clearly visible from the smallest communities to rivaling countries and international alliances, and one of its most complex representatives is nationalism. The latter differs from the individual version of existential opportunism only in that it puts the interests of a single people or nation before the interests of everyone else, rather than of a single person.

The biggest problem with existential opportunism, however, is that as intelligent beings we are now capable of effectively influencing our environment, and, at the same time, destroying it completely. In our case, then, existential opportunism cannot serve as a means of adaptation in the same way that it is common in nature and is essentially dictated by constant evolutionary competi-

tion. That is exactly why the most important and critical thing for humanity as an advanced civilization is to adapt to the circumstances and challenges of our time, and to find a balance with our environment.

To do this, however, we will need to stop being opportunists as individuals and start being opportunists collectively, looking for solutions and sustainable development together. And we can hardly have a realistic chance of this without the widespread presence and strengthening of collective consciousness, because in its absence, our selfish self is almost always concerned only with its own well-being and that of its immediate, real or perceived sphere of interest. However, the automatic cohesiveness of relatively homogeneous communities is no longer sufficient to overcome common problems, so the mechanical solidarity often referred to as herd mentality in everyday language must be replaced by organic solidarity. In other words, people must obey the rules of common sense, treat each other fairly, join forces and cooperate in their own well-understood interests, recognizing and accepting interdependence, always bearing in mind the principle of reciprocity.

### **3) Economic and Political Change, the Second Age of Enlightenment**

The advance of collective consciousness is crucial for the future of humanity, as it allows the transformation and eradication of consumer society. And this is inevitable if we want to create truly civilized societies, as opposed to the current system, which puts materialism above all else, where the most important aspects, humanity and sustainability, are at best secondary. It seems clear that we cannot hope for much in any of these areas as long as we follow a 'value system' that is hypocritical, dishonest and manipulative to the extreme.

Conscious consumer culture begins with the recognition that true freedom in a civilized society is not about everyone doing whatever they please, but about the benefits, security and opportunities guaranteed through compromise. Thus, virtually unlimited consumption and material accumulation is neither acceptable nor sustainable. Instead, we need to encourage frugality, conscious rather than impulsive buying, and community financing. We also need to end the constant pressure on the economy to sell, as well as the 'pushy' and manipulative consumer culture.

So being a conscious consumer is not really just about checking the ingredients of the products you buy, or giving preference to companies that promote decent working conditions and environmental protection. Rather, the members of a 'conscious consumers society' are people who do not allow profit-oriented organizations (with the support of biased and corrupt politicians) to dictate unilaterally what and how they consume – nor what working conditions and circumstances they work under, especially to maintain an otherwise unsustainable consumer society. Neither as a matter of principle nor with our common future in mind do they allow themselves to be manipulated, addicted and being pulled on a string, nor do they allow themselves to be taken advantage of. Their consumption and purchasing habits are essentially determined not by their instincts, but by their real needs and awareness, and their decisions and behavior are as much in the interests of the community as their own. In fact, they probably already suspect or even know that if the corporate sector and politics do not care enough about the problems of the unfolding crisis of civilization and environmental and social sustainability, society will have to act in a more conscious way to force the necessary changes.

In order to minimize social inequalities and achieve environmental sustainability, we must therefore radically transform both the way we live and the way the economy itself works. To achieve this, a well-regulated economic system with constant feedback and monitoring, with the active participation of consumers and civil society, is needed, based on knowledge and information, with the use of the tools of technology at already at our disposal. The new system would no longer focus on constant quantitative growth, but on qualitative accession and balance, while concentrating on meeting people's needs, taking maximum account of available resources, rather than on maximizing political goals and material gain (profit). (Which would essentially meet the requirements of the doughnut economy mentioned earlier.)

The controlled economy, optimized in such a way, differs from both liberal market economies and planned economies in its characteristics, and brings real demand and supply closer together. (See comparison table below.) In such a system, there is indeed a permanent feedback loop between consumers and manufacturers or service providers, and the necessary framework is ensured by the relevant authorities and the organizations that provide the technical infrastructure. The quality, environmentally and 'socially friendly' production and availability of various products and services at realistic and affordable prices can be guaranteed by the conscious attitude and coopera-

tion of consumers, and the civil operation and supervision of the corresponding interest organizations.

	<b>Planned Economy</b>	<b>Market Economy</b>	<b>Controlled (Optimized) Economy</b>
<b>Main objective</b>	Political	Material	Social
<b>Main tendency</b>	Survival	Growth	Balance
<b>Main driving force</b>	(Political) power	Competition (but money at least as much)	(Collective) consciousness
<b>Main approach</b>	Supply-oriented	Demand-oriented (in theory)	Real needs- and resource-oriented
<b>Main question</b>	What should we provide people with?	What can we sell on the market?	How can we meet needs with what we have?
<b>Feedback between parties</b>	Nonexistent or minimal	Limited in time and space	Immediate and constant feedback
<b>Main feature</b>	Shortage	Waste	Balance and sustainability (optimal operation)
<b>Main impact on society</b>	Hardship	(Existential) uncertainty	Stability, predictability

At the same time, we need to get rid of the factors that hamper and destabilize the real economy. Instead of an expectation-based economy, we need an economic approach that channels resources where they are needed most. Social utility should be considered and rewarded, rather than the promotion of financial speculation and individual profit. (The greater the social utility of a product or service, the longer it proves useful to the greater number of people.) As for decision-making power, it should be in the hands of stakeholders, not shareholders. On the whole, we need to eliminate or reduce all the factors in the system that leave people to speculate and gamble, to rely on luck and chance for their well-being, and we also need to abolish jobs and companies that are useless and harmful to society.

In the face of job losses due to optimization and mechanization, as well as to eradicate poverty, everyone must be guaranteed an unconditional basic income, or rather unconditional basic services. (Ideally, only those who carry out activities with real social utility would receive money they can spend freely.) Along with optimizing the division of labor, it is important to ensure that everyone has everyone has a real chance to give meaning and purpose to their lives, and the opportunity for self-fulfillment. It is also imperative that fundamental human and civil rights are guaranteed for all, but we must always bear in mind that the self-actualization of the individual must not take place at the expense of the interests of society. Ultimately, what we may consider our goal is to lay the foundations for a truly democratic, nurturing society, without people living in abject pov-



erty, homelessness, abandonment or desperation, which will require the strengthening of social safety nets everywhere, even in the most developed countries.

For this to happen, of course, it is essential that, in addition to reforming the economy, there is also a significant change in political attitudes, both in terms of policy and politicians, and in the attitudes of individuals and their groups. This can only be achieved in the long term if we ensure accountability and transparency in politics the same way as in the economy. But since people in general are not perfect, and so politicians and other leaders are not perfect, we cannot realistically expect them to always represent the interests of the majority. Continuous control by civil society is therefore as essential in this area as it is in the economy.

To ensure that everyone has the freedom they need while solving problems in the most effective way possible, people and their communities must be granted the possibility of self-government, rather than being dictated to unilaterally, while subsidiarity must apply at all of the different levels of power. Accordingly, we need to make sure that representatives truly represent those who appoint and elect them. As far as possible and reasonable, representative democracy should be combined with participatory democracy – just as in all hierarchical organizations and companies, there should be room for a bottom-up governance strategy alongside the top-down system.

In order to eliminate political bias and injustice, civil society also needs to bring other aspects to the forefront. One of those is that no one should be able to determine his or her own income and benefits, only the community, organization or society concerned. But perhaps even more importantly, professional governance must take the place of party politics. (Different views and ideologies could still be discussed on the appropriate forums.) To prevent the proliferation of technocracy, a conscious and organized civil society is necessary, just as it is needed to prevent the emergence of political, military or ecclesiastical dictatorships.

To promote collectively conscious civil societies and radical change, a new global movement is needed, which could be called the Second Age of Enlightenment. In this regard, we can partially rely on the growing populations of consciously living and thinking people, whom, while still more common in developed countries, are also increasingly found in developing parts of the world. All that is needed to initiate change is for a larger, and therefore indispensable or hard-to-replace part of society to stand up and declare that they don't want to live in the current world order, and is no longer willing to passively assist in its sustenance. But the first step, which is conscious economic and political action, requires as many people as possible to make their expectations of the future felt and to make them concrete and vocal. It would likely be in vain if a certain group or stratum tried to advocate for change, while the majority of civil society, or at least a significant part of it, did not support it in its efforts.

To further increase their numbers, we must strive to provide children and adults alike with the best and most impartial education and information possible everywhere on our planet, so that they can see the world and how it works in its reality. If we want to do well for ourselves, it is crucial for the peace and balance of our societies that we adopt a rational and consolidated values-based worldview, which is at the same time thoughtfully reflective and progressive, and which is in tune with the changes in the world and society, rather than going into extremes, whether conservative, liberal or any other.

In any case, successfully tackling the global crisis we face will clearly require a proactive approach and unprecedented cooperation at all levels. To ensure the necessary unity, humanity needs

a common purpose and identity. And while all this may seem unachievable in today's world of discord and chaos, humans as intelligent beings should never be underestimated.