

REPLACING OUR PATTERN OF UNIVERSAL DISCORD II

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The title of this conference, “Confronting the Challenges of Conflicting World Views”, from my perspective expresses several errors, including ignoring multiordinal terms and confusing “logical levels”. Within the **currently dominant world culture**, we hold “knowledge” as subdivided into many **isolated** (operationally speaking, non-communicating) “fields” or “disciplines”, each filled with competing **theories**. Within the field of ‘theology’, for example, self-proclaimed proponents of each of the various contemporary religions engage in mortal combat with those they perceive as proponents of other religions. Within the field of ‘exchanging’, proponents of each of the various theories of economics engage in mortal conflicts with proponents of other theories; and so on, within the realms of social behavior, of health-care, etc., etc.

Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950) offers guidance concerning how to make sense of such “doings” or “happenings”. In the section dealing with **multiordinal terms**, he partitions some logical terms so as to generate a series of “logical levels”: **proposition**, then **propositional function**; **doctrine**, and then **doctrinal function**; **system**, and then **system-function**. (Korzybski, 1933, p. 437) I suggest classifying the competing “theories” as variant *doctrines* which amount to special cases of the relevant *doctrinal function*; and further suggest that we collect the various doctrinal functions (e.g., ‘theology’, ‘exchanging’, etc.) together as more or less independent components of a *system*. Korzybski calls this **the Aristotelian system**; I usually designate it as **western Indo-European** (or WIE) **frames of reference**. Then it seems to me that the conference organizers used the term *World Views* as a rough synonym for the construct of *doctrines*.

By distinguishing between “logical levels” in this way, I intend to bring into focus that the variant doctrines over which proponents fight encode minor differences of opinion, within extensive areas of thoroughgoing agreement.

In my view, the fact that mortal conflict over minor differences of opinion occurs at all suffices to invalidate the assumptions underlying these various doctrines, and this shared *system*. But I cannot stop there — I have a more devastating criticism to offer: Nearly everything done by the currently dominant world culture (when viewed on certain levels of abstracting), and by the members of this mega-culture (when viewed on some others), degrades the “life-support systems” of Planet Earth. The currently dominant world culture does not and cannot lead to the long-term survival of the human race and of the biosphere of the planet — it can and does lead us with ever-increasing haste toward species suicide, extinction, and pan-biocide.

However, I freely admit that if I had had the job of naming this conference, I don’t know just what I would have called it.

Background:

I find that the grammatical structuring of the **western Indo-European** (WIE) family of languages, including English and the mathematical theory of sets, makes it painfully difficult for me to say what I want to say. Gypsies sometimes claim that “We don’t break the rules, we only bend them.” Perhaps, by a bit of creative bending of the grammar here, I can ease my task.

The fossil record shows that Planet Earth has harbored morphological humans for the last 3 million years or so. Over that interval, with the cumulative growth of the **time-binding heritage**, our ancestors **structured, ordered, relationed themselves-and-their-environings**, in the process creating and elaborating a new kind of environings—surroundings—which I sometimes call **symbolizing**. Today we use terms such as **language, culture, art, music, drama**, etc., to name some of the aspects of human symbolizing. At any rate, our ancestors created a great diversity of distinguishably different cultures, languages, etc. As best we can make out today, our ancestors have generated something on the order of 10,000 cultures. Of these, some 9,999 of them structured themselves on a general pattern which we call **tribal**. The ways of living tribal peoples elaborated differ from one another, but the world over, tribal peoples share a general approach to living, which I can perhaps express by means of a multiordinal term: **to connect**: They consider themselves **connected**—to the other members of their tribe, to the locales they inhabit and the other organisms that share it with them, to whatever they consider Larger Than Themselves, etc., etc. For a few million years, the general tribal pattern has worked well for humans. By and large, until the relatively recent past, tribal peoples not only survived, they prospered; and the biosphere prospered with them. (Diaries of Lewis & Clark, 1804-06; Atlantic article, “1491”)

It now appears that, some 11,000 years ago, one culture rejected the tribal pattern based on connecting, and replaced it with an approach to living which I can perhaps express by means of another multiordinal term: **to isolate**. As this culture grew and developed, its members isolated themselves-and-their-environings from one another, in many ways and on many levels—broke their felt-connections with themselves-and-each-other, with their locales, with the other organisms in their vicinity, etc. In a fixed location which they modified ruthlessly, they set up a harsh, fixed social hierarchy, with coercive institutions (including a standing army), a rigid division of labor, and a rhetoric which both persuaded and coerced the newly-created social ‘classes’—small numbers of “bosses” and multitudes of “slaves”—to ‘stay in their proper places’ in the social system. This altered culture appears transactionally to have arisen along with **totalitarian agriculture**. Only a culture which symbolically isolated itself from its environment could practice totalitarian agriculture, which not only binds most members of the culture into servitude, but also requires the farm laborers systematically to destroy every kind of living organism they encounter that does not provide human food, or food for human food, or food for the food of human food. In this hierarchically ordered culture, the “slaves” tended the crops and usually produced a **surplus** of food, while the “bosses” directed the workers to do the labor, enforced the restrictive social boundaries, “owned” the surpluses and lived in luxury.

Changes in languaging accompanied these isolating social and ecological changes, and served to enforce them. Rather than eliciting ideas — participation — from members of the lower castes, the “bosses” came to speak in “absolute” terms, to insist that they spoke absolute truth. At first, the “bosses” probably claimed that their “truths”, their demands, “came from the gods,” the marker of “complete and unarguable knowledge”. And they backed up their demands by threatening, and at times inflicting, death or dismemberment on any who dared oppose them. But gradually, this way of speaking became habitual — accepted as “standard operating procedure” by both the “slaves” and the “bosses”. Just about everyone in the culture became convinced of the “rightness” of social transacting of this kind. The “command mode” became part of the language, so embedded that, in effect, it disappeared from view.

A biological consequence of the altered approach to living enforced the further development of this isolating approach to living. Any population of biological organisms which obtains an increased food supply will increase in numbers. Having provided agricultural surpluses, and having disrupted the customs, practices and attitudes by which tribal peoples with at most enough food had maintained relatively stable populations, the members of this culture soon found that their population increased until it out-stripped the food supply. So they turned their standing army on their neighbors, from whom they felt isolated anyway: “Those ignorant savages ‘aren’t’ really human.” It didn’t matter too much whether the attacking armies annihilated the neighbors, or conquered and dominated them, or whether they allowed the survivors to become “assimilated”; the members of this non-tribal culture took over the land previously “misused” by their neighbors, and brought it under cultivation. And when the increasing population out-stripped the enlarged food supply, they repeated this process. Today we say this culture “grew”, but the pattern of growth it followed closely resembles the way a malignant tumor grows—at the expense of the whole organism. As the psychiatrist Harley C. Shands (1974) puts it, “We idealize cancer as a way of life.”

That non-tribal culture has spread and spread, until by now it has overrun most of the surface area of Planet Earth’s five habitable continents, and many of its islands. It has become what the novelist and visionary Daniel Quinn calls *the currently dominant world culture*. (Quinn, 1992) By now, about 98 to 99 percent of today’s population of more than six billion humans belongs to this dominant culture—including just about everyone in this room.

Please notice, however, that the members of this one mega-culture do not make up “all of mankind”. Earth still harbors a few more-or-less intact tribal cultures, along with surviving remnants of many of the others.

Korzybski’s so-called **non-aristotelian premises** provide perspective on the currently dominant world culture. In the process of writing a theory of human behaving-and-experiencing based on these premises, I have learned something about the most fundamental assumptions operating in cultures and in other aspects of human symbolizing. Today, I intend to focus on two main consequences of the assumptions of the currently dominant world culture. One has to do with the topics of conflict and discord, one aspect of which forms the focus of the title of this conference. The other has to do with the effects of the activities of the currently dominant world culture on the “doings” or “happenings” which support the survival of living organisms on Planet Earth.

Discord

By using the word *discord*, I mean to point to the kinds of human “doings” or “choosings” which we might conventionally designate with English terms such as *dissent*, *argument*, *quarrel*, *conflict*, *armed hostilities*, etc. In listing these terms in this way, I seek to order them to show increasing intensity and/or duration of the disharmony.

In our culture, we seem to expect discord. Our progenitors appear to have done so also, over periods of thousands of years. Not only do the literatures of each of the various branches of our mega-culture show pervasive discord, but so do the various ancient sacred texts. The various systems of writing originated more than five thousand years ago. Within each of those systems of writing, the stories told show varying combinations of *animosity*, *deceit*, *treachery*, *betrayal*,

enslavement, rape, murder, war, genocide, deicide, etc., as occurring between the gods, or between God and some of His Angels; between God and Humans; between one Society and another; between Humans and their Society; between one Human and others, including between Man and Woman and between Parents and Children; and within each human — the kind of relation between a person and her/himself that we sometimes call **self-hatred**. The antiquity of these observations and the numbers of the areas of conflict underscore the title of my paper: they suggest that we do indeed live within a pattern of universal discord. Indeed, the discord might have started very early in the development of the currently dominant world culture.

Within the currently dominant world culture, many sub-cultures, sub-groups exist. A human embroiled in self-hatred, a human who cannot sustain supportive relations with her/himself, therefore cannot maintain mutually-supportive relations with anyone else. From my perspective the “challenge of conflicting world-views” — variant, slightly different doctrines which function logically as special cases of a shared doctrinal function — forms only one aspect of the pattern of universal discord we have constructed for ourselves. To confront that challenge, we will have to reject and replace our pattern of universal discord.

An Alternative Frame of Reference: A Cosmos That Has Humans In It

Little of what I have said so far follows from the assumptions that underlie the currently dominant world culture. Instead, what I’ve said so far makes our “familiar” surroundings appear somewhat alien. And that seems to suggest that I speak from a standpoint somehow “external” to our usual received wisdom.

No one can see, or otherwise sense, anything at all — not a lion, nor a longing, nor a language — in the absence of a suitable contrast. In order clearly to show the WIE patterns which I criticize, I have to contrast them to some other patterns. That means, I must present at least a thumbnail sketch of the alternative frame of reference which I have generated — one which allows such constructs as **living organisms, human and non-human**. Korzybski’s postulates utilize the construct of ‘**maps**’ which supposedly ‘represent’ some ‘**territory**’ more or less accurately. I hold that ‘maps’ come from living organisms. To say that an organism lives means that it **abstracts** — by which I mean, it generates survival-oriented ‘maps’ of that ‘territory’ composed of “what goes on in and around the organism under scrutiny”. And these ‘maps’ occupy different “logical levels”.

Moreover, no one can see or otherwise sense any non-verbal “thing” at all in the absence of that “thing”. We can learn about it at a distance — by gossip, or television, etc.; but this, like “thinking about” it, or “remembering” it, etc., I regard as differing in kind from the kinds of behaving-and-experiencing that I call *non-verbal-organism-directly-contacting-non-verbal-environment*.

In contrast, WIE frames of reference do not explicitly distinguish between *non-verbal* and *verbal*. Instead, they posit a **dualistic** cosmos: an unbridgeable gulf or chasm, with, on one side, something fixed (non-living), which often gets called “matter” or “the body”, etc.; and on the other, something transient (“non-material”), which often gets called “spirit” or “mind”, etc. To “explain” the construct of *living [organism]* requires positing “magic” or “divine intervention”, which allows “spirit” or “mind” at least temporarily to cross the unbridgeable gulf, and “animate” the non-living “matter” which makes up “the body” of the living organism.

In order to summarize my alternative frame of reference. I’ll need to get you to **distinguish** or

discriminate — to “make some distinctions” of a kind that you may not have made before. I must manage to show-and-tell you some little-known aspects of how we humans **structure** our symbolizing. In so doing, I make explicit a kind of **expecting** which underlies virtually all human languaging. Without this kind of expecting, we humans would not have human languaging available to us. Several comments made by the anthropological linguist, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) point to this kind of expecting. In one of his late papers, Whorf writes

Languages differ not only in how they build their sentences but also in how they break down nature to secure the elements to put in those sentences (Whorf, 1956, p. 240).

Whorf also asserts that “We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (Whorf, 1956, p. 213).

Please notice the metaphors here: “break down”, “dissect”. In order to perform such actions, a human has to do something — make sequences of small bodily movements.

A word about small bodily movements: Heartbeat and pulse sometimes produce visible bodily movements. Breathing, and the concerted movements involved in speaking, consistently do. But besides these activities, we humans wiggle (we increase/decrease the tonus of our skeletal muscles, together or sequentially), producing just-barely-visible movements at our various joints, along with changes in facial expression, direction of gaze, etc.

Meanwhile, we live under conditions of **radical uncertainty** — no organism knows “for sure” just what will happen next. So we each have the continuous job of figuring out how to survive under the developing conditions — how to get what we really need, and how to avoid getting injured or killed. I couple these two classes of observations: I hold that the small bodily movements we make represent the outward and visible sign of the processes of abstracting we do, figuring out how best to go on from here-now (Hilgartner, 1965; Hilgartner & Randolph, 1969b). My neologism, **to language**, refers to what we do, using the biochemical-cellular-physiologic-anatomic-psycho-socio-cultural-linguistic-etc. resources we already have. *To language* does not make muster as some ‘mental’ (‘not-physical’) “thing” *sui generis*, in principle incapable of becoming manifest on the ‘physical’ plane.

When a person speaks, whatever bodily movements s/he makes follow the rhythmic patterning (syllabic structuring) of the locution s/he generates. As Condon & Ogston put it, “The body dances in time with speech.” And when one person listens to another person speak, the listener’s body dances in time with the syllabic structuring of the speaker’s speaking (Condon & Ogston, 1967, pp. 225-9).

Whorf’s comments concerning “break[ing] down nature to secure the elements to put in [our] sentences” suggest to me that prior to learning her/his first tongue, a child first learns how to “break down nature” in the ways her/his role-models do, so that the “elements” s/he creates will fit into the sentences s/he has begun to learn to understand, but does not yet quite know how to generate.

I have characterized the non-verbal patterning of expectations, non-verbal distinctions, and associated small bodily movements which underlie the languaging of WIE speakers-and-listeners, writers-and-readers, etc. I describe these below.

I also have generated a non-WIE frame of reference, based on Korzybski’s premises. I have derived a “grammar” from those premises, and have built up a notation on that derived grammar, which I usually refer to as “non-standard” or “alternative”. In this paper, I haven’t room adequately

to present the contrasting patterning of expectations, non-verbal distinctions, and small bodily movements required for this non-standard notation. But as a criterion: If your own view of languaging does not relate these observable small bodily movements to the processes of symbolizing, then by my standards you have generated another ‘mental’ theory of languaging, already disconfirmed by the observable evidence concerning small bodily movements that you left out of account.

These few comments suggest that my alternative frame of reference directly opposes, and perhaps rejects and replaces, the identity-based WIE dualism that has formed the backbone of the Western logics, mathematics, sciences, philosophies, jurisprudences, religions, etc., for several thousand years.

My approach does not need “magic” or “divine intervention” to allow the construct of *living organisms*, including humans, into my assumed Cosmos.

Outline of a Theory of Human Behaving-and-Experiencing, Based on Korzybski’s Premises

1. We live in a world of **ceaseless changing**. It has many “logical levels”; and the changing occurs at many rates, including rates in principle greater than any sensing (measuring) we do or could perform.

2. (a) I assume that humans **assume (abstract)** — indeed, we **cannot not-assume**. We can assume THIS, or that, or *something else entirely* — but we **cannot assume nothing at all**.

(b) I further assume that what we humans then do follows strictly from what we assume.

3. Transacting (general sense). (a) Any languaging comes from a definite point of view, that of a human, a person. By my version of Korzybski’s premises, that means a point of view intrinsically **inaccurate, incomplete, and self-referential**, and explicitly acknowledged as such.

(b) Non-living “things” (if any) may **interact** physically. Living organisms **transact** with their environments, which means that from their encounter, both organism and environment end up altered. An organism in contact with its environment changes — and so does the environment- in-contact-with-the-organism.

4. Observing (general sense). (a) To form a complete expressing (“sentence”) in the alternative frame of reference, and to generate the points of view which this requires, I posit — distinguish between — *a person doing the observing and reporting*, and *a person (or “thing”) under observation*.

(b) To make these distinctions (non-identities) clearer, I distinguish between two logical “roles”: To *the-person-observing-and-reporting*, I assign the role of **designated observer (“she”**, where I appropriate the pronoun without implying feminine gender), whose point of view — explicitly specified as that of someone adept in the alternative frame of reference — directs and orders the observing-and-reporting. To *the-person-observed-dealing-with-her/his-environment*, I assign the role of **specified organism (“he”**, pronoun again used without implying masculine gender).

- Then to report, our designated observer uses a term-cluster with five inter-defined members (colloquial synonyms of which I listed on pages 3-4) — namely, **organism, environment, abstracting, abstraction, and an ordering on abstracting**.

- By convention: we do not discuss the behaving-and-experiencing of the designated observer

— unless we first shift “logical levels” ‘up’ by one, in which case we posit a new, ‘higher-ordered’ designated observer, who observes-and-reports-on the new specified organism (who formerly occupied the role of “(lower-ordered) designated observer”).

5. Self-Correcting. Our specified organism (“he”) functions in ways analogous to the ways a “formal deductive system” works. (a) Since he does not know exactly what will happen next, he lives under conditions which I could characterize as *radical uncertainty*. (b) He uses his sensory receptors, proprioceptors, interoceptors, etc., to generate ‘maps’ of *what goes on in and around him* (namely, guesses concerning how to get what he needs, and how to avoid getting damaged or killed). (c) By acting on these guesses, he **puts them to test**. (d) At outcome: Our organism, if surviving, has opportunities to judge his starting-guesses against “how things turned out” (and classify them as disconfirmed ... not-disconfirmed). (e) At need, he has opportunities to reject-and-replace the guesses that “didn’t work”; and to guess again and try again.

I summarize these considerations by saying that the activities of our specified organism amount to **self-correcting**. And if I generalize so as to make it explicit that the term *to guess* includes non-verbal as well as verbal “doings” or “happenings”, I thereby extend — generalize — this model so that it spells out how any organism (non-human as well as human) manages to survive in the biosphere. Indeed, it gives a model for how the biosphere-as-a-whole works — manages to persist. In other words, my investigations generates a **general theory of biology**.

But the discussion of self-correcting tells only half the story of human behaving-and-experiencing. To bring out the other half of the story, I must show how I relation the logical construct of *assumings* or *presuppositions* to that of *the grammar of a (family of) language(s)*.

6. The Noun-Verb Distinction. Again, I find myself required to deal with Whorf’s notion of “break[ing] down nature to secure the elements to put in [our] sentences” — a matter of the non-verbal *expectings* of speakers/writers, etc., of WIE tongues, and manifested by the small bodily movements, including eye-movements, such speakers/writers, etc., make.

(a) Non-verbal component: As I pointed out above, every language, including notations, has its own version of this kind of expectings. Users of WIE languages non-verbally expect “*something fixed*” paired with “*something transient*”.

(b) Mainly verbal-level component: Users of WIE languages treat *nouns* as fixed and *verbs* as not-fixed (somehow transient). Any complete sentence in a WIE language requires at least one *noun* or *noun-phrase* or *noun-surrogate* or *operand* next to at least one *verb* or *verb-phrase* or *verb-surrogate* or *operator*. And we distinguish between the *nouns* (etc.) and the *verbs* (etc.) by considering the *nouns* identical with themselves, and the *verbs* not-self-identical.

The cat grinned.

The cat wagged his tail.

Then we feel perfectly comfortable saying “*The cat is the cat.*”—but we never say

* “*Grinned is grinned.*”, or

* “*Wagged his tail is wagged his tail.*”

The *noun-verb distinction*, of course, hinges on the untenable assumption—the invalid construct of *identity*.

this has nothing to do with whether, or what, you “believe”. The “terms [of the agreement] are absolutely obligatory.” (See endnote 4.) If you language in a WIE tongue or notation, you rely on

identity in this sense. To hold the construct of *noun* as identical with itself — $\text{Noun}_1 \equiv \text{Noun}_1$ — makes every noun static, distinct from any other noun, separate from its surroundings, existing independent of any observer: the primordial isolated system.

This tenet — a static Cosmos — contradicts our accumulated experience. Over the span of some 500 years of scientific investigating, workers have produced evidence only for dynamic non-verbal “doings” or “happenings”. We have not found evidence that any static non-verbal thing actually “exists” or “occurs”. Our verbal constructs, however, uniformly remain static.

Thus we represent (speak, write, sign, etc.) these dynamic “doings” by means of static constructs. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century logicians showed that not to make the distinctions of *Name* vs. *Thing Named*, or of the *use* vs. the *mention* of a term, or of ‘*map*’ vs. ‘*territory*’, or even *non-verbal* vs. *verbal*, leads to invalidating logical errors. But the WIE grammar provides no way to make these distinctions, at the level of grammar. Otherwise stated, the WIE grammar tacitly requires its users to treat the two members of each pair as indistinguishable (or at least, makes it inconvenient for them not to do so). We cannot adequately and accurately model a dynamic non-verbal universe in a language which not only provides no way(s) explicitly to make these key distinctions, but also requires its users (well, most of us) to posit a static non-verbal universe.

7. Self-defending. A human can go into a situation convinced that s/he makes no guesses, for s/he “knows how things really ‘are’.” Having “made” no guesses, s/he will judge no guesses — will not use the paired constructs of disconfirmed vs. not-disconfirmed — and so will fail or refuse to revise or reject-and-replace any guesses. Instead, no matter how unexpected or undesirable the outcome may seem, s/he will leave the situation still clinging to the tenets s/he entered it with (even though s/he now has evidence that those tenets do not work).

In order to emphasize the contrast between this kind of behavioral sequences and those I designate as *self-correcting*, I designate this kind as **self-defending** (Hilgartner, 1963/67; Hilgartner, et al, 1984). But please notice what does and does not get “defended”: Not the integrity of the organism’s integument or other aspects of anatomy, not the integrity of the interpersonal relations nor of the organism’s ‘feelings’—this pattern “protects” only the guesses. By following a self-defending pattern, the organism shields only her/his *tenets*.

How the Pattern of Universal Discord Works:

A self-defending organism believes, “I know how things really ‘are’.” Thus “he” fails to distinguish between ‘map’ and ‘territory’ (perhaps unawarely), thus pretending to “absolute certainty”, and so (unawarely) pretending to omnipotence and omniscience. As long as what you say to him matches his “what I already know,” relations between the two of you remain friendly. But if what you say does not match his “what I know”, then “he” has no choice but to defend “his” truths against your errors. Such “defending” can range from verbal put-downs, to fisticuffs, to using murder-weapons, to automatic weapons, to “weapons of mass destruction”, etc. It can entail genocide, species suicide and pan-biocide (Hilgartner, et al, 1984).

No one can sensibly evaluate assumptions they do not know that they hold. Self-defending puts self-correcting out of operation, and leads to, or perhaps even initiates, a pattern of universal discord.

Replacing Our Pattern of Universal Discord

To switch from behaving-and-experiencing as a member of the currently dominant world

culture to behaving-and-experiencing as a member of this alternative culture, learn how to make these key distinctions, and then do so.

- **On personal levels:** When transacting with yourself, with significant others, with family and friends, etc., begin learning how not to “Play God”, e.g. learn now to notice and exhibit a distinction in your speaking and writing between your opinion, guess or judgment and an *ex cathedra* assertion of “what’s really so”.
- Recognize the pattern of “absolute assurance” as denying radical uncertainty. Practice paying attention to “the way the universe works” — the ways it requires radical uncertainty — and learn to live with, rather than against, it.
- If you have the great good fortune to keep company with other humans who have begun learning now to make these key distinctions, begin learning how to hear them when they catch you “Playing God”, and tell you so. (I call this **support** — they support you. Finding yourself on the “receiving” end of someone’s support often seems an uncomfortable experience; but sometimes it proves useful.)
- **On professional levels:** The key distinctions needed on professional levels will probably appear somewhat different from those required on personal levels. As a competent professional, make, and apply, them in your field of study.
- Decline to put up with sub-languages that lead to further degradation of the planet’s life-support.
- Learn how to tell when your discipline (or notation, or whatever) leads (allows) you to “Play God”. Learn how to drop that pretense (make and apply the distinctions). Etc.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Grant, provisionally, that what I say does not look entirely wrong. Then we humans have built a lethal error, in the form of a hidden untenable assumption, into the grammar of the WIE languages in particular, and into the assumptions underlying the currently dominant world culture in general.

Therefore, even those who have noticed the current, self-generated survival-crisis incorporate into their diagnosis of the problem, into their proposed solutions for it, and into the ways they execute these solutions, the lethal error which led to the survival-crisis in the first place.

Given aim: To avert self-inflicted species-suicide, extinction, and possible pan-biocide.

Initial criterion of a satisfactory solution to the problem: That the current youngest generation of humans — today’s grandchildren — survive, as a generation, long enough to get to see, and hold, their own grandchildren; and that they do so in a rich, sustainable world.

Longer-term criterion: That that generation — today’s as yet unborn great-great-grandchildren — survive, as a generation, long enough to see, and hold, their grandchildren.

Our opportunity, here-now: We need for enough people — a quorum of humanity, which might mean a small group (6 to 25 persons) — to assimilate this work to date, thereby, to a first approximation, freeing ourselves of this lethal assumption. Then we need to put our heads together, and figure out what next step(s) to take to achieve our aims.

What We Still Need: Although I and my collaborators have developed a notational language that has aided us significantly in formulating many of the constructs and viewpoints I have stated here, we humans still lack a discursive language on a grammar derived from Korzybski’s premises.

To a non-trivial extent, I and my collaborators have already reworked WIE tools fundamental to the Western logics and mathematics, the non-newtonian physics and the biological and human psycho-social sciences, so as to eliminate the hidden untenable assumption and the errors it leads to. We need for workers outside our research group people already living, not the hypothetical members of some generation which will never get born at all if the currently-living generations fail or refuse to do this to devise critical experiments capable of selecting between WIE theories and our alternative ones, to perform these experiments, and publish the results. We also need humans to learn the discursive language(s) based on (a) grammar(s) derived from Korzybski's premises and to master our alternative frame of reference, to apply these resources in their own lives, and to report the consequences of so doing.

From such beginnings, we can perhaps then go on to build up viable, sustainable, life-affirming ways for humans to live.

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Endnotes