

INTRODUCTION

The human race is at a turning point in its history, a crossroads in social evolution. We are facing a crisis of planetary proportions, led by our environmental problems. We are confronted with immense dangers and exciting possibilities. On one hand, we are courting ecological disaster. On the other hand, we have the opportunity, as never before, to create a healthy global society, truly dedicated to human betterment. This crisis is not an aberration. Despite our grave danger, our situation can be understood as a natural outgrowth of our evolution. This means that there is a way to surmount the crisis which is also a natural continuation of our historical course.

We have a chance now to fundamentally advance along the path of social evolution, an opportunity to move to a new level of evolution. We have the capacity to take charge of history! In order to do this we need to understand our past and our trajectory. Who are we? Where are we headed? How have we managed to create, on the one hand, such great humanitarian and cultural accomplishments, and on the other, such massive human misery and ecological destruction. This book offers an answer to these questions and points the way toward a healthy future. When we understand ourselves and our history, we can take charge of our future. We can consciously direct our evolution. We can resolve the crisis and progress toward a world that will truly be dedicated to harmony and fulfillment—for all people, for our descendants, and for the natural world.

In this book I develop a theoretical model of social evolution. It explains how the present crisis emerged through the natural flow of historical trends, and how these trends can shape the transition to a healthier world. In nurturing this transition, if we understand these social forces, we can flow with them and use them to create the future. This will help us understand the personal changes we need to make and how to influence others. We can see how our institutions and social structures must change and how to tell real change from window dressing. This book

provides new perspective on today's situation by portraying it in a larger context.

SYNOPSIS

The following is a synopsis of this model of social evolution and its relationship to our current planetary crisis. I will state it very simply here and then provide reasons and evidence for the model and examples of its application throughout the rest of the book.

At the start of social evolution, human beings enjoyed certain qualities, which I call *ground qualities*:

1. connection with nature
2. sense of belonging and richness of experience
3. egalitarian community

As time went by, our population continually grew in a world of limited resources, and groups threatened each other with war. Therefore over the course of history we were forced to develop other qualities in order to survive. These *emergent qualities* gave us more conscious choice and power over our environment and ourselves:

1. technology
2. reflexive consciousness
3. social structure

These qualities helped free us from the vagaries of weather and climate and threats from predators. They allowed us to grow more food and harness more energy, to coordinate increasing numbers of people. They gave us the military power to protect ourselves. They gave us a way of understanding ourselves and the world and the advantages of civilization and higher culture. In time we had the opportunity for education and personal development.

The ground qualities are characterized by vitality and organic wholeness; the emergent qualities are characterized by power and differentiated organization. So far in social evolution the ground and emergent qualities have been opposed to each other, though it is possible to integrate them.

In today's crisis, the emergent qualities have come to dominate and the ground qualities have been suppressed, so we are paying the price of losing our original vitality and wholeness. We are alienated from the

natural world, from each other, and from ourselves. Our economic system emphasizes material growth at all costs. Our technical power and our population are so large that we are acting in ways that threaten our ecological well being and perhaps our very survival.

1. We have developed technology and destabilized our environment.
2. We have gained understanding and lost vitality, meaning, and empathy.
3. We have developed social structure and lost equality and community.

Now we are beginning to be aware enough to grasp this. We have an opportunity to consciously redevelop the original ground qualities in harmony with the established emergent qualities. This integration has already been forming for a few hundred years in the realm of power; it is called "democracy." It is just now beginning to transpire in other realms.

It is not enough to focus on regaining the ground qualities. We must recognize that the emergent qualities are also valuable for a healthy society. Our difficulties at this time are not because humanity has too much of the emergent qualities, but rather because we have suppressed the ground qualities. At this time in human history we need integration—integration of conscious power and organic vitality. We must have both sides of our nature now.

We are called on to practice this in our personal lives and to embody it in our institutions and our culture. Then we will have:

1. ecological technology
2. integrated mind and heart
3. social structure that promotes community and equality

As we integrate the ground qualities, the emergent qualities can safely develop even further, to give us greater clarity and consciousness, more intelligent technology, and a global society that is democratic, pluralistic, and dedicated to the good of the all human beings and the earth.

Our social evolution has been driven by the need for societies to survive in war and feed their increasing populations, and so it is not surprising that our achievements have been mixed. We have accomplished much that is admirable and much that is destructive. However, now is our moment! We have enough understanding and power that we

can consciously take charge of our evolution, and create a new global society that truly promotes the well-being of humanity and the biosphere.

Human social evolution is part of the larger story of the evolution of the physical world and of life. In all realms, evolution moves toward increasing levels of complexity and autonomy, but so far in social evolution this has happened at the expense of wholeness and therefore has brought us to our current crisis. *We must now consciously choose to regain our wholeness and vitality in conjunction with our complexity and autonomy, as individuals and communities, as organizations, as a world society, and as a living planet.* This will resolve the current crisis and advance us to an entirely new stage of evolution.

REVERSE SPLITTING

In psychotherapy terminology, *splitting* is a defense mechanism where people tend to see things in extreme good or bad terms. They may see one person as an all-loving angel and another person as totally dangerous and evil. Or they may see the same person as all-good at one time and all-bad at another. The most important aspect of splitting is that it prevents a person from seeing shades of gray or recognizing that a person can have both positive and negative characteristics. Prejudice is an example of splitting at the social level, where one cultural group (or religion or race) is seen as all-bad and one's own group is seen as all-good. A prejudiced person can't see that different people of one cultural group have a variety of personal characteristics, and that each cultural group has both positive and negative characteristics.

In this book, I want to broaden the concept of splitting so it can apply to human qualities as well as people. In other words, someone can see a certain human quality as all-good and another quality as all-bad. For example, our culture tends to see logical, analytical thinking as the best form of consciousness and intuition/emotion as inferior and mistaken. By my broadened definition, this can also be considered a form of splitting. There is no recognition that intuition and emotion have positive attributes or that an integration of emotion and intellect might be best, for example.

From this perspective, our Modern society has engaged in splitting the ground and emergent qualities. We believe in the wonderful benefits of technology and science (emergent), and until recently, we denigrated untamed nature and indigenous people (ground) as wild, primitive, and brutish. We have lauded the importance of large-scale social organization and nation-building (emergent) and viewed anything else as backward or dangerously anarchic.

On the other hand, socially conscious people who recognize the dangers of our current social arrangements tend to reverse this. In realizing our overreliance on the emergent qualities and our need for the ground qualities, they often view the ground qualities as all-good and the emergent qualities as all-bad. They praise the wonders of emotions, intuition, and spirituality (ground) and warn of the dangers of rational, linear thinking (emergent). They speak of the beauty of nature (ground) and the evils of technology (emergent), the joy of community (ground) and the dangers of the market and multinational corporations (emergent). While some of this is true, this kind of split thinking throws the baby out with the bath water. Although nature, emotion, and community *are* beautiful, technology can be enormously beneficial, rational thinking is essential for much that we value, and some form of large-scale social structure is necessary to coordinate a world of billions.

In analogy to the terms "reverse racism" and "reverse sexism," I will use the term *reverse splitting* to refer to the attitude of overvaluing the ground qualities and denigrating the emergent qualities. This is a major problem for progressive thinkers and social change agents. Even those who understand the value of both sides often subtly slip into a posture of devaluing the emergent qualities, sometimes without even realizing it. One of the important contributions of this book is to clarify this problem and restore balance and integration to our understanding of the human qualities needed for a healthy resolution of the current crisis.

THE PLANETARY CRISIS

It is becoming increasingly clear that humanity is facing a planetary crisis, so I will just discuss it briefly. Even though our current mode of operation has served us well for the past few centuries, it is no longer working, and we are plagued with one problem after another. We seem to have survived the immediate threat of nuclear war between the superpowers only to be faced with a major ecological crisis. In addition, we are struggling with economic problems, rising crime, drug abuse, homelessness, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, genocide, and many other seemingly unrelated issues.

It is not chance that we are simultaneously afflicted with these multiple crises. We are at one of those few times in human history when profound changes are happening in every aspect of life, and they are happening even faster than in previous crises. The modern worldview, which guided us for hundreds of years, is now outmoded. Based on science and rationality, it treats everything as a machine to be analyzed

and controlled. This has brought us tremendous gains in knowledge, freedom, and comfort. It has brought us an enormous expansion of our technical power, our population, and our capacity to control the natural world. But these abilities have created immense problems which cannot be adequately comprehended with our current mentality. When we attempt to solve these problems using approaches that are familiar to us, it only succeeds in making matters worse.

Similarly our current lifestyle is outmoded. Based on material consumption and personal ambition, it once benefited us by fueling our drive toward mastery. But now it, too, is contributing to the dangers at hand. Our desires and our powers have expanded terribly, while our natural vitality and sense of connection have diminished. This imbalance is the true source of our predicament.

Our Task. The stakes are high. We may do irreparable damage to our ecological life-support systems before we realize that we must alter our course. For example, we may cause enormous climatic disruptions or destroy much of our genetic diversity. However, the opportunities are exhilarating. Public awareness and concern about environmental issues are increasing. The ending of the cold war gives humanity an opportunity to cooperate internationally and to redirect resources from military uses to ecological and social betterment. For the first time in human history, we have the knowledge and power to choose our overall direction with foresight. We have the opportunity to construct a planetary society that will provide security, health, and prosperity for everyone, that will foster love, harmony, and creativity. However, we are not yet choosing this path. So far, we haven't developed the global consciousness that would foster cooperation and wisdom. This is our great task at this time in planetary history.

To promote a healthy transformation, we must proceed wisely. We need vision and compassion, strength and understanding. We need to understand how we arrived at such a crisis and the forces that are leading us toward wholeness. We must move quickly while recognizing that our fondest dreams will take some time. We must call for the deepest, most fundamental changes, and also understand the fears of those who are stuck in outmoded attitudes. We must believe passionately in our own visions for the world while realizing that we don't have all the answers. There must be profound changes in our consciousness and way of being, and also in our institutions and social structures. Everyone has a part to play. We need protesters and mainstream translators; we need visionaries and organizers; we need thinkers and doers; we need charismatic leaders and people who make practical changes in their lives.

My Frustration. One of my on-going frustrations is knowing what is happening to our world and not being able to change things right away. When I so clearly see our danger, I want to shout from the rooftops, "Stop! Don't you see what's happening! We have to change." Then I return to sanity and try to understand why change doesn't happen more quickly. Many of us know that change is needed. But few people realize how serious things are, and many don't believe they can do anything about it. Society needs to change in *fundamental* ways, and that level of change doesn't happen easily.

How does change happen? What can we, what can *I* do to encourage it to happen, with the least suffering and destruction. My frustration is knowing roughly where we need to go, but not knowing how to make it happen. But maybe my job isn't to "make it happen," but just to play my part in this transition. So instead of shouting from the rooftops, I wrote this book.

USEFULNESS OF THIS BOOK

The Model. Even though the environmental crisis is the most serious problem humanity is facing right now, it is only a symptom of a much broader social crisis. Therefore the model of social evolution I present in this book is also broad. It deals with material, social, and psychological processes. Even though my academic background is in psychology (and before that computer science), the theory I present is not restricted to the psychological area or even to individual change. It also deals with social, political, and economic issues; with technology and ecology; with science and religion. I draw on psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, archeology, and general systems theory. To understand the situation, we must consider events from as wide a perspective as possible; we must attempt to deal with the whole.

Other Studies. Most other treatments of this problem focus their attention on only one dimension. Some authors recognize that change is happening over many dimensions but believe that it is driven by only one. Some social critics focus on spiritual development (Ferguson 1980; Harman 1988), some on science and knowledge (Capra 1982), some on power (Bookchin 1982; Schmookler 1984; Eisler 1987), or the environment (Anderson 1987; Berry 1990), or community (Bellah et al. 1985; Peck 1987). Many social critics do not have a historical perspective, or they only look at the medieval and modern eras. Those theories that specifically deal with social evolution also tend to focus in one area only—technology (Harris 1978; Harris 1980; Sahllins and Service 1988) or

social structure (Parsons 1966; Johnson and Earle 1987) or consciousness (Jaynes 1976; Wilber 1983; Elgin 1993). Most works on social evolution also tend to be heavily academic and not explicitly oriented toward solving today's planetary crisis.

This book is broad in scope, covers the entire course of social evolution, and relates directly to the current crisis. Of course, this means that I can't go into as much detail as other authors. I must paint in broad strokes. I often have to cover in a paragraph or even a sentence a complex topic that talented scholars may have spent their lives studying. I run the risk of skimming over significant controversies, slighting important points of view, missing the depth of certain topics, and being just plain wrong. It isn't possible for me to be thoroughly knowledgeable about everything I discuss in this book. I hope that my overall perspective is valuable even if I am amiss in certain specifics.

Most studies of social evolution focus only on the emerging trends and not on what has been lost or suppressed in the process of evolution. A few take the opposite stance, focusing only on what has gone wrong and not on our advances. I believe that social evolution has produced both pluses and minuses, and that our problems today are because of dissociation and imbalance. Some recent authors are taking a similar perspective (Johnston 1984; Tarnas 1991).

Two excellent books, by Duane Elgin (1993) and Ken Wilber (1995), come closest to my approach. Their ideas were developed independently of mine, and I think, of each other, though both Elgin and I made use of Wilber's previous book on social evolution, *Up from Eden* (1983). I discuss and critique these approaches in chapter 18.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Biological and Social Evolution. There are two kinds of evolution that have led the human race from our original state as animals embedded in the world of nature to our current status as intelligent, sophisticated world conquerors. The first is biological evolution, in which our actual physical attributes changed and our minds grew and developed in power and scope. This took place over hundreds of thousands of years, even millions of years. As we became more intelligent, we developed the beginnings of language, art, and culture; we became capable of planning for the future and using abstract thought.

At some point, maybe thirty-five thousand years ago, we developed biological capacities that are very similar to those we have today. In that time, there haven't been many significant genetic changes in humanity.

This is not to say that biological evolution couldn't continue, but left to natural selection, it would go at such a slow rate that it couldn't affect the events that now concern our future. Furthermore, any biological changes in our future are likely to be chosen through biotechnology, not evolved naturally.

The other kind of evolution that has formed us is social evolution. This is the evolution of human culture and social systems, the ways we think, live, and organize ourselves. Social evolution includes the evolution of government, institutions, values, family structure, and worldview, everything except our biological underpinnings. We are so much the products of our culture that with little biological change, the human race has evolved from primitive hunter-gatherers with the most rudimentary language to world conquerors with the power to create masterworks of art and science and to destroy the entire planet. Figure 1.1 shows the relative time scales of biological and social evolution.

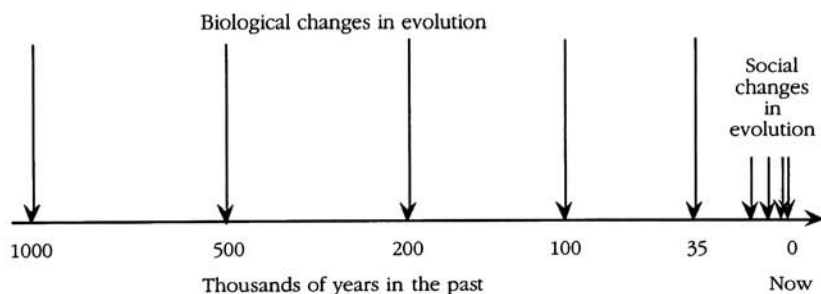


Figure 1.1 Time Scales of Biological and Social Evolution

The Question. All these changes have happened through social evolution, driven by our natural desire to survive and bring more comfort and pleasure into our lives. Let's look at this process from the broadest possible perspective. What has happened? Are we improving or progressing? If so, why are we in such a crisis now? On the other hand, maybe we have fallen from grace. Did we once live in a golden age of peace and harmony and abundance? Did we make a dreadful mistake when we developed technology, oppression, and war?

What is the overall direction and meaning of social evolution? This is a crucial question, because it strongly affects our view of ourselves as a species and our understanding of future directions. Let's consider three possible answers to this question.

1. *Progress*. From this perspective, history and social evolution have produced continual uphill progress toward human betterment. Some see this as coming through the gradually broadening civilization of the world and an improvement in civic virtues. Others see it as coming from our increasing understanding and control of the natural world and ourselves. They believe that in the long run, technology can solve any problem and science can answer any question. Humanity is moving toward a technological wonder world which will bring comfort, power, and happiness. Our current world view is the best possible, and all previous cultures were merely primitive versions of it.

This is the dominant view today in the industrialized world, but belief in it is being increasingly strained as the realities of the planetary crisis become more apparent. There is clearly some truth in this perspective, but it ignores not only the current crisis but also the many evils of civilization and technology—oppression, exploitation, war, environmental destruction.

2. *Wrong Turn*. Some radical social critics have a very different view of our evolution. They believe that at one time humans lived in harmony with the natural world and in relative harmony with one another. Then something happened to cause us to fall on evil ways, and we began to engage in domination and war and environmental destruction. They believe that social evolution took a wrong turn at some point in our history. Some believe this occurred when we left our primitive state as hunter-gatherers (Bookchin 1982). Some see it as happening with the introduction of widespread war (Schmookler 1984) or with the triumph of patriarchy in the Bronze Age (Eisler 1987). Others see it happening in the Ancient Era (Whyte 1948) or more recently with the Industrial Revolution, when we lost our sense of spirituality and accelerated our technological domination of the earth (Berman 1984; Harman 1988).

Whenever they believe we went wrong, these critics agree that we made a mistake in social evolution which must be righted. Our job now is to restore the original harmony that was lost. We must regain our spirituality, or our egalitarian social structure, or the partnership between the sexes, or our connection to the earth, or all of these. There is much truth in these points of view, but they don't provide an explanation for the substantial creative, spiritual, scientific, and humanitarian accomplishments that have occurred since the wrong turn.

3. *Marxism*. Marxism has a historical view that is different from both of these. It believes that history is driven solely by economic considerations, that societies move through a sequence of economic systems—from feudalism to capitalism, to communism. In this view, human society

is moving forward dialectically. That is, Marx believed that a social system would continue to develop until the contradictions or problems within it eventually caused it to change course. Then the new direction would also work for a while, until its internal problems led to another redirection of energy. Thus capitalism grew out of feudalism, and Marx's expectation was that the excesses of capitalism would cause a new system, communism, to grow out of it.

Though Marx was certainly right in many of his criticisms of capitalism, he failed to see its flexibility and potential for improvement. He also focused too narrowly on economic factors as being the only significant cause of historical movement.

My model is also dialectical. It understands our social evolution as a process in which certain qualities and ways of being have been emerging and the original ground qualities have been lost or suppressed. We are now at the point where the suppression is causing such serious consequences that we must reconnect with the abandoned qualities. Thus the model explains both the horrible suffering we have caused and the great beauty we have created.

THE ERAS

I will follow the journey of social evolution according to the major eras in human history, as summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Stages of Social Evolution

Stage	Era	Dates	Characterized by
1	Upper Paleolithic	35,000–7000 B.C.	Hunting & gathering, tribes, magic
2	Neolithic	7000–3000 B.C.	Horticulture, villages, mythology
3	Archaic	3000–500 B.C.	Agriculture, first cities, gods and heroes
4	Ancient/Medieval	500 B.C.–1500	Religion, philosophy, historic empires
5	Modern	1500–2000	Science, industry, democracy, individuality
6	Next	2000–	Next?

We will start in approximately 35,000 B.C. because that is when the human race reached its current status in biological evolution. A baby born today has roughly the same endowment as one born 35,000 years ago. All the changes since then have been the result of social evolution, not biological. The Upper Paleolithic era is popularly known as the Stone Age, when people lived in small bands, obtained their food by hunting

and gathering, shared freely with each other, and sensed spirit in everything. The Neolithic era was characterized by early agricultural villages and a mythological understanding of the world. Women often played a prominent role in society. The Archaic era introduced the first cities, the emergence of large-scale war, the triumph of male gods, and the beginnings of civilization. The Ancient era marked the beginning of religion, philosophy, and the more organized empires of historical record. (I have included the Medieval era together with the Ancient because the advances of the Medieval were not significant enough to warrant a separate era.) The Modern era of science, industry, and democracy includes roughly the last 500 years, and the next era is being created during the current period of transition.

Each of these eras has been identified by many scholars of history and social evolution, though few recognize them all. Each era marks the beginning of a new stage of social evolution.

Why So Far Back? You may wonder why I think it is valuable to look so far back. In studying historical trends, isn't a couple hundred years sufficient? What can today's crisis have to do with events that happened five or ten thousand years ago?

We certainly need to look back more than a few hundred years. The Modern era began four or five hundred years ago. At the very least we must understand the change from the Medieval to the Modern era. But this is not enough. Many of the social structures that are now in transition began long before the Medieval era. For example, social stratification and wars of conquest emerged for the first time five to seven thousand years ago. If we don't attend to their beginnings, we could mistakenly think they have always existed. Throughout history, social evolution has been driven by powerful historical forces, some of which had their beginnings in distant times, though they are still operating today. If we are to understand these processes, we need to study the full trajectory of social evolution.

The Paleolithic era is also relevant, because it lasted for such a long time and it contains our human roots. We evolved biologically as hunter-gatherers in the wilderness. That is the lifestyle and environment that fit us. We now live in an environment that is radically different from that which we're made for. This has profound implications for our social and psychological health (Glantz and Pearce 1989).

Organization of this Book. Chapter 2 describes the model of social evolution in detail. Part 1 that follows explores the story of social evolution, including a chapter for each era in human history, and further delineates the model. Those of you who aren't interested in history can skim

this part. Part 2 deals with the current crisis, devoting a chapter to each of the three primary realms—material, social, and consciousness—and one to the crucial issue of population. Part 3 explores ways to resolve the crisis through integrating the ground and emergent qualities. I look at politics and economics, gender and culture, the environment and population, consciousness, and community. The model is used to elucidate how any person, group, or movement could contribute to resolving the crisis. Part 4 places the model within an inclusive framework for general evolution and explores the possibility of the development of global consciousness.