



PROMOTING LEADERSHIP IN THOUGHT  
THAT LEADS TO ACTION

*THE WEALTH OF NATIONS REVISITED*

# CADMUS

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## *SEED IDEAS*

Organization Abolishes Scarcity

Organizing International Food Security

Boundless Frontiers of Untold Wealth

Mediterranean-EU Community for a New Era of Mankind

## *ARTICLES*

The World in 2052

– *Ian Johnson*

Rethinking Growth: The Need for a New Economics

– *Roberto Peccei*

The Evolution of Wealth & Human Security: The Paradox  
of Value and Uncertainty

– *Orio Giarini and Garry Jacobs*

Real Economies and the Illusions of Abstraction

– *Hazel Henderson*

The Moral Arc of History

– *Robert W. Fuller*

Mediation of Conflicts by Civil Society

– *Melanie Greenberg, Robert J. Berg and Cora Lacatus*

Rising Expectations, Social Unrest & Development

– *Ashok Natarajan*

Brief History of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the USA

– *Michael McManus and Brianna Silverstein*

Turn Towards Unity: Converting Crises into Opportunities

– *Garry Jacobs*

In Search of Failure's Silver Lining

– *Bengt-Arne Vedin*

## *BOOKS*

Towards Green Growth

Taming Global Governance Idea Chaos: A "Frontier  
Frame" for Recent Books

– *Michael Marien*

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*The acronym of the South-East European Division of The World Academy of Art and Science – SEED – prompted us to initiate a journal devoted to seed ideas - to leadership in thought that leads to action. Cadmus (or Kadmos in Greek and Phoenician mythology) was a son of King Agenor and Queen Telephassa of Tyre, and brother of Cilix, Phoenix and Europa. Cadmus is credited with introducing the original alphabet – the Phoenician alphabet, with “the invention” of agriculture, and with founding the city of Thebes. His marriage with Harmonia represents the symbolic coupling of Eastern learning and Western love of beauty. The youngest son of Cadmus and Harmonia is Illyrius. The city of Zagreb, which is the formal seat of SEED, was once a part of Illyria, a region including what is today referred to as the Western Balkans and even more. Cadmus will be a journal for fresh thinking and new perspectives that integrate knowledge from all fields of science, art and humanities to address real-life issues, inform policy and decision-making, and enhance our collective response to the challenges and opportunities facing the world today.*

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**E-mail:**

[editor@cadmusjournal.org](mailto:editor@cadmusjournal.org)

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## The Moral Arc of History

**Robert W. Fuller**

Fellow of WAAS and Former President, Oberlin College

*The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.*

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

### 1. One Tribe Becomes Many

Between fifty and one hundred thousand years ago, a small group of *homo sapiens* made its way out of Africa and established settlements in what we now call the Middle East. Over the millennia, we multiplied and spread across the whole earth. In response to variations in climate, one race became many.

As earlier hominids had done, we gathered and we hunted, preying on whatever and whomever we could. We also sought power and used our language and model-building skills to turn nature's power to our purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Our forebears domesticated plants and animals, steadily improved their tools and weapons, and honed their fighting skills. By the time different tribes ran into one another, they no longer recognized they were all of one family. Other humans looked strange, sounded stranger, and made us afraid.

When facing enslavement or death, we used our martial skills to defend ourselves, or, if we had the advantage, to prey on others. All it took was one predatory tribe to drag others into the fight. Among the models we built, those pertaining to social organization and governance were especially important to the power we could mobilize. The nature of relationships within a group can either facilitate or undercut alignment around a common political purpose. Prosperity and solidarity, both so powerfully affected by institutions of governance, determine a group's capability to defend itself against other groups or to dominate them.

### 2. Power Rules

The "olden days" often seem rosier in hindsight than they did to people at the time. So, it's not hard to understand why, in the thick of the struggle for survival, the authors of Genesis conjured an Edenic paradise. We've been comforting ourselves with stories of bountiful origins ever since.

Archeologists tell a different story. In place of noble savages living in abundance and harmony, they give us a picture of "constant battles" driven by scarcity of food and resources.<sup>2</sup> Humans multiply quickly; our numbers can soon outstrip the food supply. The causes of conflict likely ranged from competition to survival in the face of dwindling resources to

dreams of empire. Life presented an endless series of choices that turned on kinship. Friend or foe? To embrace or exploit?

One choice sees strangers as lost relatives, the other as potential aggressors, or as prey. In the struggle for survival, “we” have just what “they” need—food, water, tools, territory, animals, child-bearers, manpower—and vice versa. If resources are scarce, appropriating those of other humans may be the only chance for survival, or it may simply recommend itself as a get-rich-quick scheme.

Once the choice is made to regard others as prey, the aim, if not to kill, is to subordinate and enslave. Far from being an aberration, slavery has been commonplace in history. Only in the nineteenth century was its legitimacy seriously questioned. Slavery continues to this day in overt forms (child-slavery and human trafficking), and in the indirect form of subsistence wages. As Reverend Jim Wallis has put it, “Poverty is the new slavery.”<sup>3</sup>

Of course, modern humans didn’t invent the predatory option. We absorbed it imitatively from our hominid ancestors, and before that, from apes whose internecine battles have been well documented.

To limit injury to self, we, like other predators, opportunistically target the weak. None of us would be here if our own ancestors had not been either relatively successful predators (or relatively good evaders of others’ predations).

Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al Quds University in Jerusalem and a descendant of an aristocratic Palestinian family, quotes his father as telling him, “All family dynasties can trace their histories back to some act of brigandage.” I have heard similar rueful admissions from the heirs of several American fortunes.

### 3. Hierarchy and Rank

We tend to think of rank as sanctioning abuse and exploitation, but, in its conception, rank served as a device for *regulating* predation within the group. By concentrating power in a “top dog” or a “king” and a ruling class, rank served to replace anarchic predation with regulated predation. Despite the privileges taken for itself by the aristocracy, this represented progress at the time.

Every human society, of any size and complexity, has employed hierarchical control. Not to do so was to fall victim to groups that did avail themselves of the superior organization afforded by the tools of rank and hierarchy. Law and order trump anarchy. In return for providing order, the ruler and the ruling class take a share of the fruits of the labor of those they protect from domestic and foreign predators. No wonder we’re wary of rank—it’s the linchpin of the archetypal protection racket. With a few notable, game-changing exceptions, benevolent lordship degenerates into malevolent dictatorship.

But, rank itself is not inherently evil, as evidenced by the occasional benign ruler: we admire, we even love, just, fair-minded authorities who serve the group and eschew personal gain.

When rulers violate the terms of the tacit contract they have with their subjects—by unduly exploiting them, self-aggrandizement, or by failing to protect them against external predators—indignities multiply, fester, and may lead to mutiny, rebellion, and revolution.

Over the long-term, the result is incrementally to reign in the powers of the governing class. Reforms that hold rulers accountable diminish rank's prerogatives and represent an extension of human dignity and human rights.

This paper does not go into the practical, tactical politics of how to secure dignity and rights, but rather tries to account for the long-term trend, heralded by Martin Luther King, Jr., towards greater justice. Detailed models of *dignitarian* organizations, as well as tips on how to win political support for them, are discussed elsewhere.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

*dignitarian* (dig-ni-TĀR-e-an)

1. *Adjective. a condition in which dignity is protected, honored, and secure. In a dignitarian society, there are no nobodies, no degradation of others, directly or indirectly. Dignity is everyone's birthright, and is affirmed regardless of role or rank.*

2. *Noun. someone who regards dignity as an inalienable right of personhood, and conducts him or herself so as not to cause others indignity.*

Think of the examples that follow as milestones towards a world in which the opportunity for abusing the power entrusted to officials is reduced. In listing a few key figures and landmark events in the expansion of the circle of dignity, no attempt is made at completeness. This is merely a "starter" list, the purpose of which is to provoke readers to come up with their own nominations to the Dignitarian Hall of Fame.

## 4. Milestones on the Road to Universal Dignity

### 4.1 Monotheism

*I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and actions of human beings.<sup>7</sup>*

– Albert Einstein

In contrast to polytheism, where the various gods may be at odds with one another, a single god is presumed to have a comprehensive, unitary consciousness.

Monotheism is the theological counterpart of the scientist's belief in the ultimate reconcilability of apparently contradictory observations into one consistent framework. If God is of one mind, we cannot expect to know that mind until, at the very least, we have eliminated inconsistencies in our data and contradictions in our partial visions. This democratizes the search for truth by undermining the notion that the imprimatur of authority (e.g., the Church) is what makes a proposition true.

Monotheism is therefore a powerful constraint on the models we build. Our explanations must be free of both internal and external contradictions; they must not depend on the vantage point or status of the observer. This is a stringent condition for models to satisfy, and few do.

Theistic religions proclaim the existence of a personal, caring God. Given the supreme importance of dignity and human beings' spotty record when it comes to providing it to one

another, it's the rare person who, when worldly options are exhausted, has not imagined acceptance from a supra-human source. As the "dignifier of last resort," a supreme being, whose judgment trumps that of our community, can validate our strivings when our fellow humans reject us.

If and when we discover life elsewhere in the universe, the question of monotheism will arise again: if extra-terrestrials worship a god, is their god our God, or are we back to polytheism?

The same laws of nature that obtain on Earth hold as far as we can peer into the Universe. If there is a Creator, it would appear that He doesn't reinvent the wheel. If the same physical laws hold throughout the universe, then it's plausible that aliens will covet dignity as we do. This will be a good thing for us, if, as is statistically likely, we are not the most advanced life-forms in the Cosmos, because then more advanced beings will watch over us, much as we protect endangered species.

#### 4.2 *The Golden Rule*

Just as good parents do not play favorites among their children, so God, conceived of as a single idealized father figure, would presumably accord equal dignity to *all* his "children". The Golden Rule is a symmetry condition—equal dignity for all, regardless of rank or role—that, with slight variations, is found in virtually every religion or ethical code.\*

*Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.*

– Hinduism

*Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.*

– Buddhism

*What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.*

– Confucianism

*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.*

– Judaism

*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

– Christianity

*Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.*

– Islam

*We should behave to our friends, as we would wish our friends to behave to us.*

– Aristotle

*Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*

– Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative

*Neminem laedere*<sup>8</sup>

– Legal codification of the Golden Rule, which translates as "general rule of care," or "hurt no one".

\* See <http://www.loyno.edu/twomey/blueprint/GoldenRule.jpg> and <http://religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm>

Contrariwise, a deviation from equal dignity is a broken symmetry and, as in physics, a deviation from symmetry signals the existence of a force that breaks it. Among humans, asymmetries take the form of inequitable or preferential treatment of persons or groups and, as in the physical world, these deviations from the symmetry implicit in the Golden Rule reveal the existence of coercion. For example, slavery requires force or the threat of force.

#### 4.3 *Hammurabi's Legal Code (18th century BCE)*<sup>9</sup>

I had an ah-ha experience as a boy when I heard about King Hammurabi's practice of posting not only a list of crimes, but right alongside them, the specific punishments that would be meted out for committing them. By having the code carved in stone, the Babylonian ruler was signaling that the laws were immutable, universal, and not even subject to the whim of the king himself. Hammurabi's Code is one of the first to establish the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. I urged my parents to emulate Hammurabi.

#### 4.4 *The Ten Commandments of Moses (15th-13th century B.C.E.)*<sup>\*,10</sup>

The notion of a commandment raises the question of the authority of the command-giver. Although most of the Ten Commandments sounded reasonable in Sunday School, I wondered about their origin. How could anyone be sure they came from God? Moreover, not everyone believed in the existence of God. I thought it would be important to non-believers to demonstrate that these rules could be justified in terms of their contribution to social wellbeing. And, if they could not be so justified, to drop them. Among other things, the Commandments give expression to the idea of monotheism and its corollary of a single Fatherhood within which we are all brothers and sisters deserving of equal dignity.

#### 4.5 *Confucius (551 B.C.E.– 479 B.C.E.)*<sup>11</sup>

Confucius emphasized personal and governmental morality and justice. Like the biblical prophets and their Kingdom of Heaven, Confucius imagined a Mandate of Heaven in which rulers chosen on the basis of merit, not birth, would bring peace and prosperity to the people through the power of exemplary moral behavior. Again, the idea is that the governing class is not above the law but rather is honor bound to serve others, not self.

#### 4.6 *Mo Tzu's Family of Man and Doctrine of Universal Love (5th century B.C.E.)*<sup>12, 13</sup>

Mo Tzu is less well known in the West than other Eastern prophets, but no less visionary. He may have been first to see the world as a village of kinsfolk, and from this insight he deduced that aggressive war is never justified. His doctrine of universal love and his argument that it is "supremely practical" were prescient and original. Mo Tzu's place in the Dignitarian Hall of Fame is unassailable, despite his diatribes against music and dance. Even in antiquity, futurists had their foibles.

#### 4.7 *Jesus (6 B.C.E. – 30 C.E.)*

An advocate of universal love and teacher of dignitarian values, Jesus instructed: "You all love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>†</sup> This goes beyond assurances of equal dignity, but a world in which no one fears for his or her dignity will likely be one in which brotherly love will feel much nearer at hand than it does to most today. Absent threats to dignity, love might just possibly "bust out all over".

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\* See Exodus 19:23 and Deuteronomy 5:2

† Matthew 22:39

#### 4.8 *Magna Carta (England, 1215)*<sup>14</sup>

When King John yielded to the demands of the barons at Runnymede—that he spell out his powers and guarantee their privileges—he was starting down a road that would lead to constitutional democracy. The “Great Charter” he was forced to sign famously includes the writ of habeas corpus, enshrining the right to appeal against unlawful imprisonment. I suspect there were voices at Runnymede who resisted taking those first baby steps towards democracy on the grounds that many animals didn’t do so and therefore it was contrary to nature to devolve power. That kind of thinking, still heard today, fails to appreciate the extent to which human intelligence and communication skills make possible complex organizations that, by tapping the power of numbers, can trump brute force. Contemporary manifestations of this dynamic are the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East known collectively as the Arab Spring of 2011.

#### 4.9 *Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation (Germany, 1517)*<sup>15</sup>

The Protestant Reformation began as a protest against systemic corruption within the church hierarchy, extending even to the Pope. In his magisterial account of political revolutions, Eugen Rosenstock-Heussy argues that states that are relatively free of corruption owe this happy circumstance to the Protestant Revolution.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.10 *Oliver Cromwell, Charles I, and the “Divine Right of Kings” (Britain, 1649)*

Putting the king on trial and chopping off his head unambiguously made a point (reiterated by the execution of France’s King Louis XVI) that indeed there was no *right* to rule, divine or otherwise. Once the Divine Right of Kings had been nullified, people were free to ask, “Who *does* have the right to rule?” and to imagine that governing is no right at all; that our governors should serve us, not vice versa. The shift from monarchy to democracy prefigures the shift from faith-based to evidence-based truth: trust your own eyes over authority.

#### 4.11 *The Glorious Revolution (Britain, 1688–89)*<sup>17</sup>

The Glorious Revolution marked the end of absolute monarchical power in Britain and the beginning of modern parliamentary democracy there. The monarch could no longer suspend laws, levy taxes, make royal appointments, or maintain a standing army during peacetime without Parliament’s permission, a first step towards civilian control of the military. The Bill of Rights it produced is a major milestone in the history of liberty, justice, and human dignity.

#### 4.12 *Frederick the Great (King of Prussia, 1744–97)*<sup>18</sup>

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Frederick did not believe in the Divine Right of Kings. He saw himself as the “first servant of the state” and joked that the crown was “a hat that let the rain in.” To attract a more skilled citizenry, he generally supported religious tolerance, proclaiming, “All religions are equal and good and as long as those practicing are an honest people and wish to populate our land...we will build them mosques and churches.” Yes, mosques.

#### 4.13 *American Independence and the U.S. Constitution (1776–1787)*

The American Revolution can be seen as the beginning of the end of Imperialism—a liberation from colonial rule that would spread worldwide over the next two centuries. Having rid themselves of foreign rule, the genius of the Founding Fathers was to assume the worst of



their own governors and design a constitutional system of checks and balances to minimize corruption and maximize the accountability of office holders.

The Constitution's most egregious moral flaw was the creation of two kinds of exclusions: women and people of color were held in abusive, exploitative second-class citizenships.<sup>19,20,21,22,23</sup> It took the Suffragette movement of the nineteenth century to win women the vote and the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement to establish the principle of equal rights for racial minorities. Despite its shortcomings, the amended U.S. Constitution is a milestone in imposing constraints on the power of government and establishing what Abraham Lincoln described as "government of the people, by the people, for the people."<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.14 "*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*" (France, 1789)

France's tri-partite revolutionary slogan has inspired reformers for two centuries. Omitted is **Dignité**, which requires generous measures of both Liberty and Equality. That is, no society qualifies as dignitarian that does not also offer constitutional protections of liberty and place limits on economic inequality so as to ensure equal opportunity. The overlap and interdependence of these four cardinal values is a subject warranting separate treatment.\*

#### 4.15 *Latin American Independence (Latin America, 19th century)*

The second European colony to expel its imperial rulers was Haiti, born in the Slave Revolt of 1791 and achieving permanent independence from France as a new nation in 1804. The Haitian Revolution is a milestone in the history of Africans in the New World. Other blows against (Spanish) colonialism are personified by Simon Bolivar in Venezuela; José de San Martín in Argentina; and José Martí in Cuba. The decolonization of the Western Hemisphere prefigures the worldwide spread of anti-colonialism in the twentieth century.

#### 4.16 *The Abolition of Slavery (Britain, 1833; Russia, 1861; and the United States, 1863)*

Slavery was regarded as business as usual until the eighteenth century when Enlightenment thinkers criticized it for violating the Rights of Man and Quakers condemned it as a violation of Christian ethics.<sup>25</sup> Czar Alexander II freed the serfs in Russia in 1861 and Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves held in the Confederate States in 1863. Two years later, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution prohibited slavery throughout the United States.

#### 4.17 *Labor Unionization (19th – 20th century)*

A landmark in the struggle between Nobodies and Somebodies (in the respective roles of Labor and Management) was the adoption of legislation guaranteeing the right of employees to unionize and bargain collectively.

#### 4.18 *Defeat of Nazism and Fascism, Death Knell for Imperialism (20th century)*

Attempts by Germany, Italy, and Japan to establish empires of their own met with catastrophic defeat. In the half-century following World War II, national liberation movements spread across Asia and Africa, and, by the end of the twentieth century, colonialism was widely condemned like slavery with a paternalistic face.† Colonialism went from a proud and

\* See, for example, the work of Jeremy Waldron who spoke on "Dignity and Rights" in The Tanner Lectures on Human Values at the University of California at Berkeley in 2009: <http://grad.berkeley.edu/tanner/0809.shtml>

† For purposes of illustration, a list of states and national independence leaders, would include, India (Gandhi, Nehru), Africa (Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Senghor, Nyerere, Mondlane, Mandela, et al), South East Asia (Ho Chi Minh), the Soviet Union (Gorbachev, Yeltsin) and its East European Satellites (Walesa, Havel).

profitable enterprise to shameful and indefensible exploitation in about two centuries, a mere six to eight generations.

4.19 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (1948) and International Courts and Tribunals in The Hague (1945, 1993, 2002)* <sup>26,27,28,29</sup>

The United Nations Charter elevates dignity to the status of a human right and charges governments with protecting it. The Declaration set in motion a gradual acceptance (in law, if not always in practice) of many post-World War II conventions on human rights, and has led to a view of the person, not merely the citizen, as the carrier of human rights. Some have heralded this trend as the emergence of “global law” as distinct from “international law”.

The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, and the International Criminal Court—which all have a historical antecedent in the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg—have a variety of jurisdictions and purposes, but among them are the prosecution of individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.

4.20 *The Civil Rights, Women’s, and Other Identity Movements (late 20th c.)*

Exploited subgroups have learned how to organize so as to resist predation by fellow citizens. Much as slavery lost its sanction in the nineteenth century, the residue of slavery—segregation and racism—lost legitimacy in the twentieth. Other ignoble “isms” (anti-Semitism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia) have joined racism in disrepute.

But identity politics can take us only so far because it’s predicated on an “us” versus “them” distinction. In contrast, dignitarian politics is all-inclusive. Most of us are both victims and perpetrators of *rankism*.<sup>30</sup>

*rankism (RANK-iz-m) noun*

1. *abuse, discrimination, or exploitation based on the power signified by social or organizational rank*

2. *degrading assertions of rank*

In every struggle to overcome an ism there are some non-victims who nevertheless ally themselves with the ism’s principal targets and attempt to overturn the prevailing consensus. For such liberal forerunners, there’s an element of altruism at work. Empathy blurs the line between altruism and self-interest.

With the realization that one’s dignity is only as secure as the next person’s, one may support the dignity movement against rankism in order to secure one’s *own* dignity.<sup>31</sup> As self-interest and altruism align, the Golden Rule becomes self-enforcing and the transition from a predatory to a dignitarian world gains momentum.

#### 4.21 *The Human Potential Movement (1960–present).*

*Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture.*

– Iris Murdoch

In its insistence that *everyone* has untapped mental, physical, and spiritual faculties, the Human Potential Movement goes beyond identity politics. Heralds of the universality of unrealized abilities include William James, John Dewey, A.S. Neill, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Michael Murphy, et al. The Human Potential Movement presents us with a new picture of ourselves—“We are as gods and might as well get good at it”—and we are gradually coming to resemble the picture.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.22 *The Arab Spring (2011)*

After decades of suffering authoritarian rule, mass protests spread across North Africa to the Middle East demanding an end to paternalism and autocracy. Beginning in Tunisia with the so-called “Jasmine Revolution,” the common goal of these non-violent uprisings is not so much freedom or bread, but elemental human dignity.

Each of the milestones mentioned above marks a curtailment of the potential for rank-based abuse, and so a strengthening of individual human rights. Establishing a human right doesn’t guarantee it, but it does shift the burden of proof from victim to perpetrator, and that makes officialdom more accountable and therefore less likely to engage in rankism.\*

These milestones provide *empirical* evidence for Martin Luther King, Jr.’s claim that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice. The arc’s curvature, however, is still indecipherable to many. Indeed, no one who witnessed the horrors of the twentieth century can be faulted for thinking that the moral arc is bending *away* from justice.

To make out the curvature in spite of the ambiguous and arguable historical record, we need a theory.

### **5. From Predation to Dignity: The Paradox of Force**

*Without a theory the facts are silent.*

– Friedrich Hayek

Since World War II there have been scores of wars, millions of casualties, tens of millions of refugees; fighting continues today in many parts of the world.

Since the Holocaust, and despite the world’s determination that it not happen again, genocides have occurred in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, and elsewhere. Persistent poverty enshrouds one-third of the world’s seven billion people and many warn that population pressure and/or climate change will pit us against each other in a struggle for scarce resources.

In this light, it’s not unreasonable to argue that man’s predatory practices continue unabated, and many so insist. But, an analysis of the social dynamics of power provides grounds

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\*As defined in the text, rankism is not the mere use of rank, but rather abuse of the power attached to rank. I use “abuse” to signify the persistent misuse of power, that is, its continued use not to serve the group but to advance the personal interests of its high-ranking members. Dictators and monopolists go to great lengths to avoid competition because they sense their own vulnerability to it. By the time rivals win a chance to challenge their monopoly, the institutions presided over by dictatorial rulers are usually far weaker than the alternatives they’ve been suppressing. Transitions to more dignitarian governance, once they begin, often occur almost overnight, as in Romania, the Soviet Union, Indonesia, and Serbia.

for hope. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not prophesy quick or easy passage to justice, only that over the long haul the moral arc was bending *toward* justice.

Successful predation depends on a power advantage. Humans have an edge over the other animals and, from time to time, often as a result of a technical or organizational breakthrough, they may gain an edge over other humans as well. To the extent that we can put people down and keep them there, we can take what's theirs and force them to do our bidding. To the extent that we can't credibly do so, we become vulnerable to *their* predations.

One reading of the human story emphasizes war, domination, rapine, pillage, slavery, colonization, and exploitation. Wealth and leisure for the few and a subsistence living for the many.

Another telling of history, as suggested by the milestones cited above, highlights overthrowing tyrants, expelling colonizers, and, by marshaling the strength of numbers, progressively emancipating ourselves from domination, slavery, and exploitation.

A “paradox of force” lies in the fact that a group’s competitive success vis à vis other groups depends on limiting the use of coercive force *within* the group. Why?

If a ruler is regarded as unjust or self-aggrandizing by his subjects, morale will deteriorate to the point that group solidarity is weakened and the will to fight impaired. Unjust leaders neither deserve nor elicit loyalty and, when push comes to shove, their people may turn on them.

This means that governance that promotes loyalty and solidarity has survival value. Even societies that adopt a *predatory* stance looking outwards, are unwise to disregard *dignitarian* values looking inwards. Over the course of history, not to complement outward-directed predatory capability with a modicum of dignity for those within the group has been to lose out to groups whose stronger social bond enabled them to marshal and project superior force.

For this reason, the principle of equal dignity is more than an admonition to be “nice.” A policy of relatively equal dignity enhances the strength of groups that practice it. None do so consistently, of course, but some do so more than others and this gives them a competitive advantage stemming from group cohesiveness. This suggests that, on a millennial time scale, the Golden Rule is self-enforcing. We were too quick to judge it toothless. Rather, it simply took a few thousand years to grow teeth.

As we realize that dignitarian societies have, over the long haul, a competitive advantage, and as less dignitarian groups are absorbed by more dignitarian ones, we operationalize the Golden Rule and extend its purview.

Within a group, it's not just “top dogs” who abuse power. Power abuse is a tempting strategy at any rank because everybody is a somebody to someone and a nobody to someone else. Accordingly, a predatory posture can be assumed towards underlings no matter where one stands in the hierarchy.\*

Because societies predicated on equal dignity are generally more productive and creative, and are more strongly committed to their common cause—be it aggressive or defensive—

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\* Unless, of course, you are at the very bottom. But even then, you can resort to kicking the dog. Much cruelty to animals is a result of indignation that humans feel towards other humans who have humiliated them, but whom they dare not confront because the abusers are shielded by rank.

they are, on average, fitter. This does not mean that dignitarian groups win every contest with more predatory groups. Factors other than social cohesion also figure in the outcome. But it does mean that, with starts and fits, organizations that tolerate power abuses effectively de-select themselves.\* Over a long enough time period, the circle of dignity expands.

The paradox of force is that, statistically, dignitarian societies gradually absorb more predacious ones until finally there is no longer a significant likelihood of inter-group predation. Indignant, disgruntled outliers may resort to terrorism, but they will not be viable unless they are serving as proxies for a group large enough to harbor and support them.

A selection process governed by the same dynamic unfolds among organizations. For example, more dignitarian companies will, on average, serve their customers and employees better, and will outperform less dignitarian ones. Over the long haul, equal dignity slowly gains ground.

While such an evolutionary trend may sound Pollyannaish, it is revealed as a logical consequence of the free play of power within and between competing groups. The paradox of force—that in the long run, right makes might, not vice versa—provides causal underpinning for Martin Luther King, Jr.’s observation regarding the curvature of the moral universe. Despite the relentless drumbeat of bad news, and barring a major catastrophe (such as one resulting from nuclear or cyber war, pandemic, famine, climate change, or a colliding asteroid) denizens of the twenty-first century could find themselves witnessing a phasing out of our age-old predatory strategy and its replacement by a dignitarian one. Even if there are major setbacks—and we must expect at least a few—universal dignity seems to be the state of social equilibrium toward which we are tending.

## 6. Predation, No; Competition, Yes

The majority of our human ancestors have suffered lives that, as seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously put it, were “nasty, brutish, and short.” A great many still do. But we’re at a critical juncture beyond which lies the possibility of an epochal shift to a post-predatory era. Predation has taken us this far, and for that we must give it its due. But as a survival strategy it can take us no further without undermining what any strategy is meant to do—ensure our survival. We can take heart from the fact that we’ve already disallowed several broad categories of predatory behavior (e.g., those referenced in “Milestones”), and go on from there to *disallow predation itself*.

First, however, there’s one more make-or-break issue that must be addressed. Removing the traces of predation from our treatment of others is analogous to that of changing attitudes about race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. It’s not a quick or easy process, but a start has been made and there’s no going back. For those of us who grew up within a social consensus that condoned the familiar “isms,” we can change our overt behaviors, but not

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\* Whenever a “survival of the fittest” argument is invoked, a question of circularity arises: Can “fittest” be defined independently of “what survives”? In this case, the question takes the form: Can “dignitarian” be defined independently of “what prevails”? If not, the argument is circular, a mere tautology and it can tell us nothing about the curvature of the moral universe.

Indeed, Darwin’s theory was initially attacked as circular. Critics maintained that the only way we could gauge fitness was to look and see what survived. Fortunately for the theory of natural selection, it is possible to state independent conditions that give organisms an advantage, or handicap them, in the struggle to survive and reproduce. Similarly, there is by now a long list of practices that are known to undermine dignity. The de-selection of rankist organizations that tolerate rankism is analogous to the de-selection of relatively unfit organisms in the struggle for reproductive survival. Darwin’s principle is not circular (fitness criteria *can* be delineated independently of survivability), and since it can be foreseen that the inefficiencies attendant to rankism handicap organizations burdened by them, the notion that rankist values are recessive—and dignitarian values dominant—is not circular either.

entirely eradicate attitudes to which we were exposed as children. What can change, what in fact does change, are the attitudes that one generation models for the next. For the most part, baby boomers did not pass the prejudices of their parents on to their own children. With each successive generation, bigotry attenuates. Over the course of several generations, prejudice and discrimination may diminish to the point where the young wonder what all the fuss was about.

But, in addition to overcoming temptations to put others down and advantage ourselves at their expense, there's a conceptual barrier to putting our predatory past behind us. Disallowing predation sounds impossible because we haven't figured out how to forego it without inhibiting competition. Although it's natural to see competition as the culprit (because it is so very often unfair, and because many competitors interpret winning a particular competition as an excuse for demeaning and exploiting those who lost), no society that has curtailed competition has long endured. As libertarian ideology confuses predation with competition and may find itself an apologist for the former, so egalitarian ideology confuses competition with predation and may advocate killing the goose—competition—that lays the golden egg. To this dilemma—how to allow competition and disallow predation—dignitarian governance provides a possible solution.

Competition is an integral part of our past and fair competition is indispensable to a robust future. To delegitimize gradations of power is not only impossible, it's a recipe for dysfunction and anarchy.

From the natural selection that drives the differentiation of species to the marketplace that refines products and ideas, competition determines fitness and protects us from abuses of power by economic and political monopolies. To abolish competition is to invite economic and political stagnation, and eventually to fall behind societies that hone their competitive edge.

The difference between predation and competition is that predation knows no rules. In contrast, competition can be made fair. Making sure that it is—by disallowing rankism in all its guises — a proper function of government.

At every point in our social evolution, power rules. Power is neither good nor bad, it just is, and objecting to the existence of power differences is like complaining that the sun is brighter than the moon. Abuses of power persist until the individuals or institutions perpetrating them find themselves confronted with greater power. This would be grounds for cynicism were it not that when power is abused there eventually surfaces a less abusive and therefore still more powerful alternative. Groups that harbor indignity, burden themselves with the corrosive effects of suppressed indignation. The long-term trend of this evolutionary process is the discovery of ever more effective forms of cooperation, successively out-producing, out-performing, and finally replacing more rankist organizations, institutions, societies, and states.

## **7. The Dawning of a Dignitarian Era**

As Mo Tzu tried to tell us, we are one big extended family. The simultaneous advent of globalization and dignitarian values is no coincidence. Predation isn't working as well as it used to. In addition to the reasons given above, greater exposure to "foreigners" is making their demonization untenable.

Another factor in the demise of the predatory strategy is that victims of rankism have gained access to powerful modern weapons and can exact a high price for humiliations inflicted on them. Thus, the victims themselves are increasingly in a position to make the cost of predation exceed the value of the spoils. Weapons of mass destruction seize the imagination, but even if we do manage to keep them out of the hands of terrorists, non-violent “weapons” of mass *disruption*, employed by aggrieved groups, can bring modern, highly interdependent societies to a standstill. This represents a fundamental shift in the balance of power in favor of the disregarded, disenfranchised, and dispossessed.

Given that predation has been a fixture throughout human history, it’s not surprising that when one form of predation ceased to work, we devised alternative, subtler forms to accomplish the same thing. Although slavery itself is no longer defended, poverty functions in much the same way—by institutionalizing the domination and exploitation of the poorer by the richer.

In the twenty-first century, the largest group of people that can still be taken advantage of is the poor. We should not be surprised if, using techniques of mass disruption (tactics of non-violent civil disobedience), they acquire the organizational skills to make their ongoing exploitation untenable.

Something new is afoot, and it marks a change fundamental enough to define an era. Opportunistic predation—the survival strategy that we’ve long taken for human nature—has reached its “sell-by” date. Even wars by superpowers against much weaker states are proving unwinnable. Military domination is no longer the profitable business it once was.

Rankism is the residue of predation. As predatory uses of power are revealed as counter-productive, we are leaving predation behind, like the toy soldiers of childhood, and creating a world in which the uses of power are limited to those that extend and enhance dignity.

Humanity’s next step is to build dignitarian societies in a post-predatory world. Knowing that the moral arc of history does indeed bend towards justice gives reason to hope that this may be possible.

#### *Author Contact Information*

*Email: [bfuller@igc.org](mailto:bfuller@igc.org)*

*Website: <http://www.breakingranks.net>*

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Rising expectations release enormous amount of social energy that spills over into social unrest when no suitable positive channels are available to utilize it for social advancement. Harnessing that energy for constructive purposes requires appropriate social organizations and productive skills.

*Ashok Natarajan, Rising Expectations, Social Unrest & Development*

I would suggest searching for a more appropriate word for failure, one not tainted with negative connotations. Because failure is the high road to innovation, because failure is the inevitable investment in the future, because failure is – the road to success.

*Bengt-Arne Vedin, In Search of Failure's Silver Lining*

First, we must recognize the crises we face are not black swans, fat tails or perfect storms, but symptoms of our limited perception, fragmentary reductionist mindsets, models, research methods and academic curricula, particularly in economics and business schools. Second, we must move beyond economics to capture all their "externalities" in multi-disciplinary frameworks, systems models, multiple metrics and pluralistic research.

*Hazel Henderson, Real Economies and the Illusions of Abstraction*

The wide range of innovative mechanisms commonly employed to settle disputes outside the courtroom is illustrative of the larger potential for organizational innovation in other fields designed to enhance governance nationally and globally.

*Michael McManus and Brianna Silverstein,  
Brief History of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the United States*

Today humanity has acquired the conscious self-awareness and the organizational capacity for self-expression and coordinated action. Organizing the consciousness of the global power of citizenry is the natural step to transcend the nation state. It needs only the right pioneering leadership with the right ideas and the right values to sound the call.

*Garry Jacobs, The Turn Towards Unity: Converting Crises into Opportunities*

Global governance is clearly taking shape in complex and chaotic ways, with widespread dissatisfaction of present arrangements and numerous proposals for betterment — all at a time when many national governments are also being questioned, arguably due, at least in part, to deficiencies in global governance and international accords.

*Michael Marien,  
Taming Global Governance Idea Chaos: A "Frontier Frame" for Recent Books*

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# CADMUS

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## *Inside This Issue*

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The world needs a paradigm shift in economics similar to the one physics experienced at the dawn of the last century, when quantum mechanics and the special and general theories of relativity were invented to address new phenomena not explainable by Newtonian mechanics or Maxwell's electrodynamics.

*Roberto Peccei,*

Rethinking Growth: The Need for a New Economics

Society is evolving. Understanding the present in the light of the past, we see only the problems resulting in gloom. Understanding the present in the light of the future compels us to evolve, we see the opportunities it points to.

*Ian Johnson, The World in 2052*

We have organized production to perfection, but left out the most crucial ingredient – humanity. We have raised the value of GDP phenomenally, but overlooked the value of human security. The process of society's past evolution offers hope and assurance that there is a better way and a better life for all humanity waiting to emerge. Human-centered economic theory and measures of wealth, welfare and human security can help us realize it now.

*Orio Giarini & Garry Jacobs,*

The Evolution of Wealth & Human Security

Working for peace is part of the heritage WAAS fellows have been given by Academy founders who, after helping develop the theories and technology for nuclear weapons, were amongst the first to recognize that they should be banned. Two of the seven founders of WAAS (Robert Oppenheimer and Bertrand Russell) became global figures in proposing nuclear disarmament.

*Melanie Greenberg, Robert J. Berg & Cora Lacatus,*

Mediation of Conflicts by Civil Society

The difference between predation and competition is that predation knows no rules. In contrast, competition can be made fair. Making sure that it is—by disallowing rankism in all its guises—a proper function of government.

*Robert W. Fuller, Moral Arc of History*

*Continued . . .*