

NEOHUMANIST Review

A Journal That Awakens

Issue 6 • March 2026

The Emergence of Enlightened Leadership

The Sadvipran Singular Perspective
Timeless Principles for Contemporary Challenges
Macrohistory at the Crossroads of Time

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"Children learn best
through fantasy, play
and ideals."

- P.R. Sarkar



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NEOHUMANIST Review

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NEOHUMANIST Review

Liberating human intellect from the shackles of dogmas that limit our evolution

MISSION STATEMENT

The Neohumanist Review journal is to explore a new paradigm on how the global human society can reorganize, from the local to the worldwide level, to promote the integral well-being and flourishing of all human and non-human beings. This journal invites multiple disciplines to address the most vexing planetary issues, such as social and economic inequality, ecological collapse, war and peace, mass migration, and technological transformations, from the joint perspective of art, science, philosophy, and spirituality.

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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Welcome to this edition of Neohumanist Review on the emergence of enlightened leadership. In this special issue, the selected authors take us on a journey beyond traditional political discourse to explore the concept of the Sadvipra. Through a diverse collection of essays, our contributors examine how this ancient ideal can be woven into the fabric of a technologically advanced, complex, and entangled 21st century.

We open the issue by initiating a dialogue on how the Sadvipra functions as a philosophical allegory within Neohumanist thought and invites readers to craft their own stories.

Aslı Şimşek guides us into the digital frontier by applying Causal Layered Analysis to the emerging structure of "Technofeudalism." She contends that current AI narratives privilege efficiency over embodied experience.

Sohail Inayatullah engages in a comparative dialogue between three civilizational thinkers: Sima Qian, Ibn Khaldun, and P.R. Sarkar. By analyzing their cycles of virtue and social cohesion, he suggests that alternative social movements and Sadvipras serve as metaphors to challenge the status quo.

Satya Tanner suggests that the shift from societal "teenagerhood" to "Gaian adulthood" requires leaders to engage in deep inner work, including emotional mastery and developing cooperative ecosystems. This demonstrates how leaders can foster cognitive flexibility and healthy boundaries to build trust-based cultures.

Stephanie Ezra invites us into the "philosophical laboratory" of foresight games through the lens of "speculative ethnography." She examines the tension between algorithmic governance and invites us to consider whether relying on a single Sadvipra might instead evolve into distributed ethical infrastructures.

We feature a core text from Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar himself, reminding us that political harangues cannot create true leaders. Instead, leadership belongs to those imbued with "Cosmic ideation" and a spirit of tireless service.

Marcus Bussey closes the guest authors section with a call for "Prophetic Leadership." Drawing on the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Cornel West, he combats the cynicism by urging us to reclaim our imagination.

- Ralph Mercer

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THERE WAS A time, not too long ago, when human beings and other ape-like creatures were on par and shared the same forest dwellings.

Since, humans have surpassed all other creatures in dominating the Earth. We have split the atom; gone beyond the stars; discovered the secrets of life and genes; developed nanotechnologies; enhanced their vocabularies, invented money as a medium of exchange; and built digital organizational networks that span the earth. The innumerable achievements of our minds are indeed awesome.

Yet, we remain fragile creatures who swing between life and death, still far from comprehending the hidden variables that work behind our body mechanics. We are far from fully aware of what other life forms and building blocks make up the living universe.

Even on our little planet, peace still eludes us, and abundance is not evenly distributed. Welfare and happiness remain distant for the bulk of humanity. Basic survival remains a real struggle for most citizens around the world.

Commercialization of war stares at us and makes us vulnerable to powerful elites who rule our world and dictate the future of human communities. As long as culture and civilization play second fiddle to technological advancement, there will be no contentment. As long as wide disparities persist, inter- and intra-species clashes will still prevail. As long as the existential value of every entity in the universe is not recognized and respected, there will be no harmony.

As long as leaders are guided by love for power rather than the power of love, there will be no genuine and sentient peace and no all-round progress. Through collaboration, cooperation, and negotiation, our world can be led towards a harmonious future.

Our main task is to raise the consciousness of the masses so that neohumanism becomes the dominant paradigm on this planet. To do all this requires enlightened leadership. We have chosen this theme for this edition so we may move further towards an equitable, harmonious, and compassionate future.

Neohumanism extends the love of the human heart to embrace all beings. It empowers us with universal love, morality, discipline, hard work, service, sacrifice, compassion, patience, and more. Enlightened leaders have a historic role to perform, sowing the seeds of an evolved human civilization.

- Ac. Shambhúshivánanda Avt.



The Sadvipra as a Neohumanist Archetype: A Singular Perspective

Ralph Mercer

Context: The use of a perspective piece provides the narrative flexibility to open a dialogue on how the Sadvipra functions as a philosophical allegory within Neohumanist thought, and why that positioning exposes a pathway for the Sadvipra to adapt to the accelerating entanglement of social, ecological, and technological systems that demand continuous reinterpretation. By walking with Sarkar's original texts, the essay aims to nudge the Sadvipra archetype down the path of contemporary debates on leadership, education, and the transformation of social structures.

The philosophical allegory in this piece prompts the reader to explore what path the metaphor of the sadvipra would take if they were able to adapt to a rapidly changing world while still maintaining the core seed of Sarkar's intent. At the same time, the prompt is not a whole story; it invites the reader to craft their own.

Introduction

For me, it began with a simple text from a friend that suggested, "You are on a sadvipra journey." My first reaction was to Google the term; my second was to smile and move on. That was three years ago. My thoughts have often returned to the text, and when the opportunity arose to be a guest editor for the Special Issue of the *Neohumanist Review*, I proposed a plan and thought, "How hard can it be?"

The journey began with a digital inquiry into Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's Neohumanist philosophy and the Sadvipra archetype, focusing on core principles and their relevance in contemporary philosophical contexts. Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990), the founder of the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) (Laxman Majhi 2025) and the broader philosophical current known as Neohumanism, offered a radical reimagining of

human society. Central to his vision is the figure of the Sadvipra, a term that fuses the Sanskrit sad ("good, true") with vipra ("learned, wise"). In Sarkar's writings (Sarkar 1987; Inayatullah 1999), the Sadvipra is not merely a historical or mythological character; it is an allegorical archetype that embodies the highest aspirations of moral imagination, epistemic wholeness, and temporal vigilance.

Sarkar's view that rationality and spirituality are complementary modalities within a larger ecology of consciousness becomes a waypoint pointing towards post-humanist thought: to evolve ethically is to evolve relationally, in resonance with all sentient and material agents. Within this evolving ideology, Neo-humanism offers a post-Cartesian (Derksen 1998; Rapoport 2011), post-anthropocentric



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synthesis. It reframes both spirituality and technics as interconnected expressions of consciousness, expanding ethical concern from humans to ecosystems, machines, and the cosmos itself.

The Sadvipra weaver, in this vision, is not a disrupter of social cycles but a facilitator of connections, one who understands that each advance in technics carries both promise and risk, and that the future is shaped not by dominance but through reciprocity among beings, systems, and intelligences. Neo-humanism, as I discovered, aligns with three core principles: the expansion of love through cosmic sentiment, the necessity of inner transformation for social liberation, and the dismantling of dogma and exploitation.

Social cycles are described as a recurring pattern of dominance among four social classes: Shudra (labourers), Kshatriya (warriors), Vipra (intellectuals), and Vaeshya (capitalists) (Bhowmik 2023). Sarkar believed each class tends to dominate the others in turn, creating a continuous cycle of exploitation and oppression. The Sadvipra is viewed as the disruptor in this cycle, a leader who embodies the virtues of all four classes, thus gaining the knowledge to disrupt the hierarchical forces that uphold class domination.

*The Technology of Signs
invites the Sadvipra to attend
to the signs, symbols and
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present moment.*

”

Sarkar positioned education as the pedagogical vehicle for producing Sadvipras. He argued that a Neohumanist pedagogy must develop relational consciousness, the capacity to perceive oneself as an integral part of a larger, interdependent whole. This consciousness, rooted in tantric spiritual experience, nurtures empathy, service-mindfulness, and a sense of responsibility toward all life forms. The Sadvipra thus becomes both a product and a process of neohumanist education.

The Triadic Structure of Knowledge

Moral imagination refers to the ability to envision alternative ethical possibilities and to act upon them. It involves seeing beyond entrenched norms, feeling the lived realities of others, and creating novel pathways for collective flourishing. In the Sadvipra narrative, moral imagination is manifested through the figure's capacity to arouse latent dignity, courage, idealism, and spirituality in the masses.

Rather than presenting the triangle as a system of constraints, this approach treats it as an affirmative architecture, a loom upon which new ethical, spiritual, and technological possibilities can be woven. The three forces of the triangle, the Pull of the Future, the Push of the Present, and the Weight of the Past, are not antagonistic pressures but generative conditions that enable Neohumanism to adapt and flourish (Inayatullah 2023). Seen through the aperture of the futures triangle (Mercer 2023), Neohumanism's renewal becomes not a defensive response to change, but a creative re-activation of its deepest possibilities.

The Pull of the Future is expressed through the expanding horizon of human–technology co-evolution. Emerging forms of AI, planetary computation, creative collaboration, augmented perception, and ecological sensing systems offer new spaces for consciousness to manifest relationally. Instead of imagining technological acceleration as a

force that displaces human agency, a Neohumanist orientation interprets these developments as invitations to co-constitute empathy, agency, and planetary awareness. This future pull encourages a shift from fixed identity to fluid becoming, from anthropocentric ethics to planetary sensitivity, and from isolated agency to co-creative engagement. The Sadvipra, in this framing, becomes a guide of consciousness, one who perceives emerging technological landscapes as new territories for ethical exploration rather than threats to spiritual depth.

The Push of the Present arises from the lived conditions of entanglement that define contemporary experience. Hybrid identities, distributed intelligences, ecological interdependence, and complex digital infrastructures shape the world (Mignolo 2012). These are not crises that undermine Neohumanism; they are signals of a relational ontology becoming visible. The pluralization of knowledge systems, digital animism in Japan (Kimura 2018), networked Ubuntu in Africa (Sarpong et al. 2016), and pluriverse technoscience in Latin America (Mignolo 2012), show that the present moment is fertile ground for ethical expansion. It encourages Neohumanism to evolve its epistemology, embracing participatory knowing,

experiential insight, and co-evolutionary learning (Glass 2001). Here, the Sadvipra thrives: as a mediator of complexity, a translator among worlds, and a figure capable of bridging spiritual intuition with technological agency.

The Weight of the Past, often framed as a constraint, becomes a stabilizing resource when interpreted through a positive lens. Sarkar's cosmology, tantric epistemology, and Neohumanist ethics form a resilient foundation that can absorb new concepts without losing coherence (Sarkar, n.d.). The past provides the ethical scaffolding, cosmic sentiment, anti-dogma, and universal love that support Neohumanism's evolution. It offers archetypal resources, like the Sadvipra, that can be reframed for technological contexts without betraying their intent. When treated as a reservoir rather than a burden, the past becomes a warp thread against which new patterns of thought, practice, and design can be woven.

Together, these three forces, pull, push, and weight, situate the Sadvipra as a weaver of futures. The Sadvipra listens to the pull of emerging possibilities, responds to the push of present entanglements, and draws upon the weight of inherited wisdom to compose meaningful trajectories. The triangle thus becomes more than an

TABLE 1: *NEOHUMANISM IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE*

TRIANGLE VERTEX	Description (Positive Framing)	Implications for Evolving Neohumanism	Role of the Sadvipra
Pull of the Future	Expanding consciousness through human–technology co-evolution; emerging techno-spiritual potentials; new capacities for global empathy and coordination.	Encouraging adaptive identity, planetary ethics, and relational consciousness opens new terrain for spiritual and moral growth.	Senses emerging patterns; guides society toward ethical integration with technological and ecological systems.
Push of the Present	Entanglement as opportunity: hybrid identities, distributed agency, plural knowledge traditions, and interconnected crises as signals of relational ontology.	Invites Sadvipra to evolve epistemologically, embracing participatory knowing, experiential learning, and co-evolutionary engagement.	Mediates complexity; translates between cultural, technological, and ethical domains; facilitates systemic awareness.
Weight of the Past	Foundations as living resources: Sarkar's cosmology, Tantric ethics, universalism, and the Sadvipra as adaptable archetype.	Provides ethical coherence, historical grounding, and resilience; supports reinterpretation without loss of integrity.	Draws on inherited wisdom to stabilize new trajectories; preserves ethical clarity while enabling transformation.

*To renew Neohumanism for the century ahead,
we must confront a difficult truth: philosophies
that remain unchanged become edicts, and
identities that remain fixed cease to grow.*

”

analytical tool; it becomes a method of attunement, enabling Neohumanism to evolve while maintaining its ethical center.

A Triangle That Weaves

When viewed through the aperture of the futures triangle (Inayatullah 2023; Mercer 2023), Neohumanism is revealed not as a rupture but as a continuity of becoming. Sarkar repeatedly emphasizes that humanity is never complete and exists at the edge of becoming. The Sadvipra, therefore, is perpetually unfinished, always open to growth, learning, and self-transcendence. This temporal vigilance prevents stagnation and guards against the ossification of power structures.

The present offers new futures possibilities for consciousness; the present provides fertile terrain for ethical experimentation; the past anchors these expansions with coherence and depth. The Sadvipra becomes the figure who moves through these three forces with fluidity, weaving them into a living tapestry of meaning. Neohumanism can step into the century ahead not as an inheritance to be preserved, but as a practice of weaving evolving futures for the sadvipra with care, insight, and relational awareness.

Epistemic wholeness equips the Sadvipra with cognitive flexibility: the ability to shift perspectives, weigh diverse forms of evidence, and reconcile apparent contradictions. In practice, this translates into policy decisions that balance economic development with ecological sustainability, or educational reforms that integrate moral instruction with scientific curricula. Such balanced judgment is a hallmark of Neohumanist leadership.

A Sadvipra must engage in self-critique, questioning motives, acknowledge biases, and adapt to emerging challenges. This aligns with Sarkar's critique of static hierarchies by disrupting the social evolutionary cycle. By refusing to settle into a fixed identity, the Sadvipra models a dynamic leadership that evolves alongside the societies it serves.

While Sadvipra's mythic aura can inspire, it also carries the risk of hero worship. Sarkar cautions that any leader, however enlightened, must remain subject to collective oversight. Temporal vigilance thus includes mechanisms for accountability, democratic deliberation, transparent decision-making, and community participation to ensure that the Sadvipra does not become a new form of authoritarian figurehead.

Educational Reforms

Neohumanist pedagogy emphasizes relational consciousness, the awareness that one's identity is co-constructed through relationships with others and the environment. Curricula, therefore, integrate:

1. Ethics and service-learning (community projects, environmental stewardship).
2. Physical education (yoga, martial arts) to develop bodily discipline.
3. Critical Thinking (philosophy, logic) to nurture intellectual rigour.
4. Economic literacy (cooperative economics, sustainable finance) to ensure material competence.

These components collectively nurture future Sadvipras, aligning with the view that "the sadvipra integrates both spaces by...puncturing the social evolutionary cycle".

Alternative Evolution of Educational Reform

Neohumanist schooling should focus on creating independent and confident state-persons, by encouraging relational consciousness, the understanding that each person's identity is formed through ongoing relationships with fellow humans, non-human life, and the wider environment (Ghosh et al. 2024). To achieve this, curricula can be organized around four interlocking strands:

1. Ethics & Service-Learning, Structured community projects and environmental-stewardship activities that turn

moral reflection into concrete, statecraft leadership action.

2. Physical Development, Regular practice of yoga, martial arts, or other movement disciplines that build bodily discipline, resilience, and respect for one's own health.
3. Critical Thinking, courses in philosophy, humanities, social and political sciences, and Technology-human relations that sharpen

intellectual rigour and equip learners to question assumptions.

4. Economic Literacy, Instruction in cooperative economics, sustainable finance, and resource-management principles that give citizens the material competence to participate responsibly in the economy.

When every learner engages with these four pillars, the education system produces state-people,

TABLE 2 FUTURES TRIANGLE

TRIANGLE VERTEX	What it Represents	Sadvipra Foucault nexus	Concrete Signals
Pull of the Future	The aspirational vision that draws us forward.	A society where leaders (or collectives) continuously self-care through disciplined practices (body, mind, spirit, economy) while embodying relational consciousness for all lifeforms. Governance models built on peeraudit circles, cooperative decisionmaking, and digital self-governance dashboards that fuse moral imagination with reflexive selftechnologies.	Growth of "holistic leadership" curricula in universities. Adoption of wellbeing tracking apps that integrate ethical reflection modules. Policy proposals for "community selfaudit" mandates in cooperatives.
Push of the Present	Existing trends that propel us away from the needed future.	Fragmented leadership that emphasizes only one of the four class qualities (e.g., technocratic elite without moral imagination). Dominant power structures that treat self-governance as a threat, limiting reflective practices (surveillance, algorithmic profiling). Education systems are still focused on rote knowledge rather than relational consciousness.	Rising public distrust of "expert" elites. Legislative pushes for increased data collection without safeguards for citizen self-reflection. Media narratives that glorify "singletrack" success (wealthonly, techonly).
Weight of the Past	Deep-seated legacies that anchor the system.	The historic socialcycle hierarchy (ShudraKshatriyaVipraVaeshya) that still informs castelike stratifications in many societies. Traditional disciplinary regimes (monastic, militaristic, bureaucratic) have long used technologies of the self for conformity rather than emancipation. Earlier Neohumanist texts present the Sadvipra as an ideal but were rarely operationalized.	Persistent socioeconomic mobility gaps aligned with classtype descriptors. Institutionalized self-discipline practices (e.g., mandatory corporate wellness programs) that lack ethical depth. Scholarly citations of Sarkar's work that treat the Sadvipra as a static myth rather than a practice-oriented model.

citizens who simultaneously embody compassion, physical vitality, intellectual clarity, and economic savvy. In this way, the "states-person" (Henriksen et al. 2022) bridges the personal and the collective, helping to "puncture" the old social-cycle patterns and usher in a more cooperative, humane, and sustainable society.

Nudging the Sadvipra

The Sadvipra archetype is anchored within a specific historical and metaphysical landscape, positioning the individual as an ethical sentinel who disrupts social cycles to restore balance and justice. As time, technologies, global cultures, and cosmologies shift, it is a natural expectation for the Sadvipra to evolve alongside society. A scan of the human-technology relationship reveals it was never a simple progression from primitive tools to artificial intelligence. A contemporary Sadvipra would recognize these forces not as obstacles, but as co-creators in the unfolding of a relational future. The essay uses Foucault's four technologies (Foucault 2005): Signs, production, power and self as a means to expand this thought. Each is an interconnected matrix of practical reason.

The Technology of Signs invites the Sadvipra to attend to the signs, symbols and discourses that constitute the present moment. New media vocabularies, climate alert icons, and data visualizations generate "future possibilities for consciousness" by making otherwise invisible relations visible. Neohumanist texts, oral histories and ritual symbols echo the weight of the past and allow us to examine the new signs for coherence and

depth. In this way, Neohumanism transitions from static inheritance to the ongoing practice of sign-making, continuously refreshed by careful observation, relational insight, and ethical imagination.

Through the Technology of Production, the Sadvipra learns to manufacture knowledge that is both plural and coherent. The "cognitive flexibility" described is a production process: gathering data from economics, ecology, sociology and philosophy; transforming those raw materials into policy drafts, curricula, or community plans; and finally outputting decisions that simultaneously advance growth and preserve the biosphere. This production line is deliberately heterogeneous; it does not privilege a single discipline but combines them, thereby achieving the epistemic wholeness that Neohumanist leadership demands.

The technology of the self provides concrete techniques for self-care, regular reflective journaling, peer mentoring, and decision review. By continuously interrogating motives, surfacing hidden biases and recalibrating goals, the Sadvipra enacts an inner-development practice that keeps the leader from hardening into an unyielding ideology. Each act of self-revision offers new paths to understanding the socialcycle pattern.

The technology of power is the repertoire of tools and strategies that societies use to organize, govern, and normalize human behaviour, turning individuals into subjects who can be directed and measured in accordance with the objectives of the governing authority. The mechanisms of control

Continued on page 51

TECHNOLOGY	What the nudge does for the Sadvipra	Concrete practice (example)
Sign Systems	Turns the present into a readable field of meaning; links past symbols to future imaginaries.	Daily "signscan" of media headlines, climate alerts, and archival texts; visual mapping of connections.
Production	Enables the creation of balanced, multidisciplinary knowledge for policy and education.	Interdisciplinary working groups that co-author policy briefs merging economics, ecology and ethics.
The Self	Instills a habit of ongoing self-fashioning and critique.	Weekly reflective journals + peerconfession circles that record motives, biases and corrective actions.
Power	Embeds democratic oversight and distributes authority to prevent heroworship.	Mechanisms of control often include disciplinary institutions such as schools, prisons, and hospitals, as well as bureaucratic regulations, hierarchical command structures, and surveillance systems that monitor and correct behaviour.



Sadvipra Leadership in a Technofeudal Age: A Neohumanist CLA of Artificial Intelligence

Aslı Şimşek

Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) remains at an early stage of integration into organizational life. Yet even in this formative period, it is already shaping imaginaries, influencing strategies, and amplifying emerging systemic dynamics. One of these is what scholars describe as technofeudalism (Durand, 2023) an evolving political-economic order where digital platforms consolidate control, extract data as rent, and enclose value creation. AI both depends on and reinforces this order, centralizing access to data, infrastructure, and cultural narratives of efficiency. This article employs Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 1998) to examine AI's role across litany, systemic causes, worldview, and myths/metaphors. The analysis shows how AI narratives privilege efficiency and disembodied knowledge while obscuring embodied experience, ethical imagination, and collective resilience. To address these challenges, the paper brings CLA into dialogue with Shrii P. R. Sarkar's concept of the sadvipra (Inayatullah, 2013) and the ethical vision of neohumanism (Sarkar, 2011), extending this lineage into the context of AI and technofeudalism. In doing so, it outlines a model of leadership that is layered, reflexive, and ethically engaged. The article argues that the future of organizations hinges not only on responding to technological disruption but also on interrogating the structural and cultural forces that frame AI within a broader technofeudal order, highlighting the dual risks of escalating dependence on platforms and the neglect of embodied human realities in organizational life.

Keywords: AI, Technofeudalism, Neohumanism, CLA, Organizational Futures.

Introduction: AI at the Threshold, Technofeudalism, and the Leadership Gap

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE is not yet fully embedded in organizational or social life. Its applications remain partial, experimental, and uneven across contexts. Yet its symbolic weight is outsized: AI dominates public discourse, generates waves of expectation and anxiety, and is increasingly positioned as a driver of

future economic and cultural arrangements. At this threshold stage, AI's influence is less about full-scale integration and more about the futures it prefigures.

One of the broader systemic shifts visible through AI is the rise of what has been described as technofeudalism (Durand, 2023; Varoufakis, 2023).



Asli is the founder of Higher Narrative and an interdisciplinary advisor working at the intersection of technology, culture, and human-AI futures. An industrial engineer with a master's in sociology, she brings 15+ years of experience, including co-leading a digital media agency from the ground up and delivering over 100 projects across sectors such as energy, tech, finance, and hospitality. Her work combines strategic thinking with data and operational experience to support clarity and adaptive decision-making. She translates complex contexts into practical roadmaps, workflows, and frameworks. She works with organizations at inflection points, helping align strategic direction with the realities of technological and cultural change.

This emerging order is not reducible to AI alone; rather, it reflects the consolidation of power by digital platforms that act as new landlords of the economy. By enclosing creativity, labor, and knowledge within proprietary infrastructures, they extract value as rent rather than exchange (Varoufakis, 2023). AI both draws on and amplifies this feudal logic: it relies on massive proprietary datasets and cloud infrastructures, and its value chains often return benefits to platforms rather than to users.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) offers a way to move beyond surface-level hype cycles or deterministic forecasts. By examining AI across the litany, systemic, worldview, and myth/metaphor layers, CLA makes visible how technofeudal structures intertwine with cultural imaginaries. At present, AI functions as much as a mythic construct as a technical system, alternately imagined as savior, threat, or mirror. These layered narratives shape organizational choices well before integration is complete.

But diagnosis is not enough. The question is what kind of leadership can navigate these dynamics with wisdom and ethical clarity before they harden into irreversible structures. Here, Sarkar's neohumanism (2011) and the archetype of the *sadvipra* provide

The question is what kind of leadership can navigate AI dynamics with wisdom and ethical clarity before they harden into irreversible structures.

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resources for reimagining futures. The *sadvipra* is envisioned as a leader who can perceive across layers, resist capture by systemic or ideological interests, and re-narrate myths toward collective well-being (Inayatullah, 2013). Neohumanism emphasizes interconnectedness (between inner and outer life, human and ecological systems, material progress and cultural depth) offering an ethical horizon against which technofeudal tendencies can be both understood and countered.

This paper therefore explores the intersection of CLA, technofeudalism, and neohumanism as complementary frames for analyzing AI futures. It argues that organizational futures cannot be understood through disruption narratives alone. While disruption highlights turbulence, it obscures the deeper systemic dependencies, cultural imaginaries, and embodied realities that shape how AI enters organizational life. Situated within technofeudal dynamics, organizations face a dual risk: growing dependence on platform infrastructures and the neglect of embodied knowledge and human grounding. By drawing on Sarkar's concepts of the *sadvipra* and neohumanism, the paper proposes a form of leadership that is layered, reflexive, and ethically engaged, capable of resisting inevitability narratives while navigating AI's uncertainties with greater autonomy and grounding.

Methodology: CLA and Layered Leadership

This paper employs Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) as both method and orientation. Rather than reiterating its structure, CLA is used to explore AI at a threshold moment: where public discourse (litany), emerging systemic dynamics such as technofeudalism, epistemic orientations, and cultural myths are beginning to consolidate. The emphasis is less on forecasting adoption curves and more on interrogating the imaginaries and narratives that shape organizational and societal responses before integration is complete.

The sadvipra is not tied to a single ideology or interest group but can balance competing pressures with ethical orientation and long-term vision. Applied to organizations, this becomes a form of layered literacy: engaging immediate disruptions, confronting structural dependencies, questioning cultural assumptions, and reshaping guiding narratives.

”

CLA itself was influenced by Sarkar's theory of the mind and the archetype of the sadvipra, which highlight the layered nature of change and the role of leadership in navigating it (Inayatullah, 1999). In this sense, CLA does not merely align with neohumanist thought; it is already situated within its intellectual lineage (Inayatullah, 2013). Bringing CLA into dialogue with neohumanism therefore makes visible the ethical and visionary dimensions of futures methods, demonstrating how they can diagnose structures of power while also inspiring imaginative reconstruction (Inayatullah, 1999).

Litany: AI as Disruption and Spectacle

At the litany level, artificial intelligence is framed largely as disruption and spectacle. Public discourse emphasizes predictions of mass job losses, exponential productivity gains, and existential risks posed by superintelligent systems. Headlines oscillate between utopian promises of efficiency and innovation, and dystopian fears of displacement and loss of control. This oscillation positions AI as both inevitable and beyond ordinary governance, reinforcing a sense of urgency without necessarily deepening understanding.

Much of this discourse is amplified through the narratives of major technology firms, which dominate the media space and strategically shape expectations. Press releases and keynote presentations present AI as a transformative solution, while simultaneously obscuring its partial and experimental integration into everyday organizational life. The gap between promise and practice contributes to a discourse environment saturated with hype, in which speculative futures often overshadow present realities.

Even at this surface layer, the outlines of a technofeudal order are discernible. The most prominent narratives around AI originate from a small set of platforms, which act as both developers

and landlords of the infrastructure on which AI depends. Their discourse constructs AI as a natural progression of technological advancement, while positioning themselves as indispensable mediators of that future. As a result, the litany of disruption not only reflects societal hopes and anxieties but also legitimizes the concentration of power in platforms that frame the horizon of possibility.

Systemic Causes: Platform Consolidation and Technofeudal Dynamics

Beneath the surface narratives of disruption, AI is embedded within the structural dynamics of a political-economic order increasingly described as technofeudalism. This term captures a shift in which digital platforms function less as competitive firms in a capitalist market and more as landlords of infrastructural estates (Varoufakis, 2023). Rather than generating value through exchange, they increasingly extract value as rent, by enclosing data, mediating access to digital infrastructures, and controlling the ecosystems within which organizations and individuals operate (Durand, 2023).

Artificial intelligence both relies on and reinforces this feudal logic. Large-scale AI systems are dependent on massive proprietary datasets, advanced computational resources, and cloud infrastructures that are concentrated in the hands of a few corporations. Access to these infrastructures determines who can meaningfully participate in AI development and deployment, creating a growing asymmetry between platform owners and dependent users. Organizations that wish to experiment with AI often find themselves as tenants of these infrastructures, locked into proprietary ecosystems that limit autonomy.

While many AI companies currently operate at a loss, burning capital to train and deploy frontier models, the structural logic is nonetheless feudal. By



"AI and its technofeudal systemics are legitimized by deeper cultural logics, the central one being the privileging of efficiency as a universal good."

consolidating proprietary datasets, compute infrastructures, and API access, platforms position themselves as indispensable intermediaries. Creative labor, organizational processes, and cultural knowledge are increasingly absorbed into these systems, establishing conditions for future rent extraction. Even if profitability remains elusive in the short term, the dynamic intensifies inequalities by consolidating control and narrowing the channels through which value can flow, positioning AI less as a democratizing force than as a mechanism of enclosure.

The systemic framing of AI within technofeudalism also highlights how governance and regulation struggle to keep pace. Most policies address AI at the level of ethics, safety, or risk, but rarely confront the deeper political-economic dynamics of enclosure and rent extraction. This leaves the technofeudal order largely unchecked, allowing platforms to consolidate control over infrastructures and narratives. As a result, organizational futures are increasingly shaped by dependencies that limit agency, restrict alternatives, and entrench asymmetries of power.

Worldview: Efficiency, Dataism, and Disembodied Knowledge

At the worldview level, AI and its systemic embedding within technofeudal structures are legitimized by deeper cultural logics. Central among these is the privileging of efficiency as a universal good. Within this frame, technological progress is equated with optimization: faster decisions, leaner organizations, predictive precision. Efficiency is not treated as one value among many, but as the central criterion by which systems are judged. This worldview narrows the horizon of organizational futures by subordinating questions of justice, resilience, or meaning to the imperatives of speed and productivity.

Closely aligned with this is what has been described as dataism (Harari, 2016, p. 428), the belief that data flows constitute the ultimate truth of social and organizational life. Within this epistemology, knowledge is reduced to quantifiable patterns, and decision-making is increasingly trusted to algorithmic systems that can detect correlations beyond human perception. While dataism presents

itself as objective, it obscures the embodied, contextual, and interpretive dimensions of knowledge. It also legitimizes the massive extraction and enclosure of data as both necessary and desirable.

This worldview is further shaped by a disembodied rationalism that separates cognition from experience and positions technological mediation as superior to human judgment, reflecting what Harnad (1990, p.335) called the “symbol grounding problem.” AI is celebrated as a more rational actor, capable of overcoming human bias and error, even as it encodes and amplifies existing inequities. The resulting epistemic orientation privileges abstraction over embodiment, efficiency over care, and prediction over participation.

This privileging of efficiency reflects not only a systemic preference for quantification but also a cultural logic that detaches knowledge from presence. As Benjamin (1969, p. 3) argued, mechanical reproduction diminishes the “aura” of art by severing it from its unique context in time and space. In parallel, AI reproduces knowledge in ways that strip it of situated, embodied resonance, flattening learning into data points that circulate with a different kind of grounding. This erosion of the aura of knowledge sets the stage for further abstraction, where Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) reminder of embodied perception becomes crucial for restoring depth to organizational futures.

These cultural logics not only sustain technofeudal dynamics but also restrict the kinds of futures that can be imagined. If efficiency, dataism, and disembodied knowledge remain unquestioned, then the consolidation of power by platforms appears not as a political choice but as a natural trajectory. It is at this layer that alternative worldviews must be articulated, ones that foreground interconnectedness, ethical responsibility, and the plural dimensions of human flourishing.

Myths and Metaphors: AI as God, Monster, and Mirror

At the deepest layer, artificial intelligence is carried by myths and metaphors that extend far beyond its technical capabilities. These narratives invest AI with archetypal significance, shaping imagination in ways that both reveal and obscure the dynamics of technofeudalism.

One powerful myth positions AI as a godlike force, a framing analyzed in Harari’s discussion of

Dataism (2016) and in Bostrom’s exploration of superintelligence (2014). It is imagined as omniscient, capable of answering any question, predicting any outcome, and guiding societies toward a higher order of efficiency and control. This recalls Baudrillard’s (1994) notion of the simulation, where signs take on a reality of their own and technological systems are endowed with transcendental authority. The god-metaphor legitimizes dependence on platforms that mediate access to this supposed divinity, naturalizing the concentration of infrastructural power.

A countervailing myth casts AI as a monster, echoing archetypal patterns identified by Jung (1969). Here AI becomes the shadow of human creativity: a hubristic construction that threatens to overwhelm its maker. Like Frankenstein or Prometheus unbound, the monster narrative dramatizes human fear of losing control. While critical in tone, this metaphor also magnifies AI’s symbolic power, positioning it as a singular threat and obscuring the more mundane realities of rent extraction and systemic dependency.

A third metaphor frames AI as a mirror, reflecting human biases, aspirations, and contradictions. This resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) emphasis on embodiment and perception: what the mirror reveals is not an objective truth but the cultural and bodily conditions of human experience inscribed into code. The mirror metaphor has critical potential, since it makes visible the encodings of inequality and exclusion. Yet it can also normalize technofeudal dynamics, suggesting that concentration of power is simply a reflection of society rather than a political choice.

Threaded through these myths is the narrative of inevitability, the idea that AI represents an unstoppable progression of technological destiny. This myth of inevitability forecloses alternative futures, positioning resistance as futile and reinforcing the authority of platforms as custodians of progress.

Taken together, these myths and metaphors construct AI as more than a tool: they render it sacred, monstrous, reflective, and inevitable. By doing so, they both dramatize and conceal the structural realities of technofeudalism, narrowing the space for critical engagement. Unpacking these cultural imaginaries, through the lenses of Baudrillard’s (1994) simulation, Jungian (1969) archetypes, and Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) phenomenology, is therefore essential to opening

Moving the sadvipra from a spiritual ideal to a functional leadership model capable of dismantling technofeudal logic operationalizes the sadvipra. By arming this ethical leader with Taoist tactics (humility against the "God" myth, balance against the "Monster," and clarity against the "Mirror") we move beyond abstract theory.

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pathways toward futures that resist enclosure and affirm more interconnected and humane possibilities.

Implications for the Future of Organizations

The layered analysis of AI within the context of technofeudalism carries direct implications for how organizations orient themselves toward the future. If AI is narrated primarily through myths of salvation, doom, and inevitability, then organizational strategy cannot remain a neutral exercise in efficiency metrics or scenario planning. The challenge is not only to anticipate technological disruption, but to interrogate the narratives and structures that make certain futures appear natural while foreclosing alternatives.

First, this calls for a shift from hype to layered understanding. Public discourse on AI tends to remain at the litany level, focused on surface crises or promises. Futures practice must engage across layers, examining how systemic dependencies, cultural worldviews, and deep metaphors shape both technological development and its imagination. As noted in *The Bodies of Emerging Futures* (Mozzini-Alister & Inayatullah, 2025), such practice must also re-center the role of the body and somatic knowledge in grounding foresight, countering the disembodied abstractions that dominate AI narratives. Causal Layered Analysis provides a method for this, but institutional uptake requires treating meaning-making as central to strategic work.

Second, organizations need to move from neutrality to ethical positioning. Narratives of inevitability naturalize the consolidation of power by platforms. If leaders remain agnostic, they risk reinforcing these enclosures. Organizational foresight must therefore function as an ethical intervention: clarifying where political choice is disguised as technological destiny and illuminating

alternative pathways that align with human and ecological well-being.

Third, the analysis highlights a transition from prediction to meaning reconstruction. AI's dominant myths are less about accuracy than about shaping imagination. For organizations, resilience and innovation do not come from adjudicating between utopia and dystopia but from cultivating new metaphors, symbols, and worldviews that expand the horizon of possibility. This includes designing processes that re-embodiment knowledge (Merleau-Ponty), surface shadow archetypes (Jung), and challenge simulations that detach signs from lived experience (Baudrillard).

Finally, organizations must grapple with their own systemic entanglement. Most rely on the very platforms that structure technofeudal power, embedding themselves in infrastructures they cannot fully control. Developing futures literacy in this environment requires reflexivity: an awareness of how tools, data, and narratives shape the imaginaries within which strategic choices are made.

Taken together, these implications suggest that organizations of the future must themselves become multi-layered and reflexive. They must function not only as instruments of efficiency or anticipation but as practices of cultural and systemic stewardship: confronting the myths of inevitability, resisting enclosure, and reconstructing meaning. This sets the stage for envisioning forms of leadership, such as Sarkar's sadvipra, that can hold these complexities and guide organizations toward more ethical, resilient, and humane futures.

Sadvipra and Neohumanism: Leadership Beyond the Layers

The layered analysis of AI highlights not only systemic dependencies but also the tendency toward abstraction, where decisions are driven by data and

Continued on page 53



Dynasties and Sages, Demons and Sadvipras: **Using Macrohistory to Navigate the Crossroads of Time**

Sohail Inayatullah

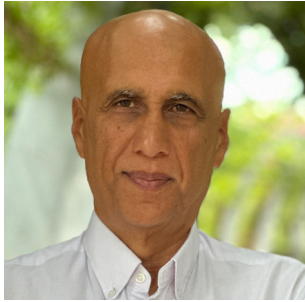
Abstract: This essay explores the transformative potential of macrohistory by engaging three Asia based civilizational thinkers—Sima Qian, Ibn Khaldun, and P.R. Sarkar—in a comparative dialogue on historical cycles and the role of leadership in creating significant change. Drawing from Chinese, Islamic, and Indic traditions, it examines how virtue (*te*), social cohesion (*asabiyya*), and psycho-spiritual evolution serve as drivers of civilizational rise and decline. The essay situates these frameworks within contemporary global crises—planetary ecological collapse, inequity, loss of meaning, and the failure of global governance—and proposes four alternative futures: No Change, Marginal Change, Adaptive Change, and Radical Change. Each scenario is analyzed through governance, energy, macrohistorical lens, and core metaphor, offering insights into possible trajectories. Ultimately, the essay argues that while structural forces shape history, agency—embodied in the sage, the cohesive collective, and the sadvipra—can redirect the future toward planetary consciousness, cooperative economics, and spiritual renewal. Macrohistory thus becomes not only a tool for diagnosis but an asset for transformation.

The essay is based on presentations at the 2025 Gurukul Conference in Sinaia, Romania and the 2025 Proutist Universal Conference, Vig, Denmark. Assistance to this article was used via. 1. Digital twin of Sohail Inayatullah. 2. Gemini. 3. ChatGPT

The Grand Sweep of Time

MACROHISTORY IS THE endeavor to find patterns in meaning in the grand sweep of time. Macrohistorians look to the past not merely for a record of events, the litany, but for the patterns, the rhythms, and the narratives that guide the future. Macrohistorians, then, are more than time chroniclers; they are pattern-finders, theorists of civilizational rise and fall, and often, moral philosophers (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997), asking not just the causes of change, but the factors to

realize a better future. In this essay, we bring three such macrohistorians into dialogue: the ancient Chinese grand historian Sima Qian, the Islamic thinker Ibn Khaldun, and the 20th-century world philosopher P.R. Sarkar. We use their work not just to understand the present but map alternative futures. We conclude that we need their perspectives to manage the multiple crisis the planet is facing, what has been called the time of demons and monsters (Gramsci, 1971; Sarkar, 1991).



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We need perspectives to manage the multiple crisis the planet is facing, what has been called the time of demons and monsters.

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Though separated by centuries and distinct civilizational streams, these thinkers all sought to understand the deep structures of history. They saw history as more than a chaotic sequence of events, believing instead that it was shaped by discernible forces and moral or social imperatives. Sima Qian was preoccupied with the cycle of dynasties and the nature of virtuous leadership. Ibn Khaldun focused on the power of social cohesion as the engine of state formation and decay. P.R. Sarkar proposed a universal theory of social evolution driven by collective psychology and the quest for spiritual liberation (Inayatullah, 2002). By comparing their frameworks, we can explore fundamental questions that every society must face: What is the engine of historical change? Who are the agents of transformation? How can we use the past to create alternative futures?

We choose these three grand thinkers deliberately, that, while the work stretches over two thousand years, they all present cyclical theories of change and argue seek to transform the future through virtuous leadership. Sarkar, is, of course, recent and goes further, asserting for changes in the design of economic and governance systems. As well all three are non-western in origin: Sinic, Islamic, and Indic. We eschew for the purposes of this essay, western macrohistorians such as Toynbee, Sorokin, Comte, Spencer, Marx, and Gramsci (Galtung and Inayatullah 1997). Finally, the purpose of this essay as well is not just comparative macrohistory but to glean insights from these thinkers to understand possible futures.

The Tao and the Mandate of Heaven: Sima Qian's Vision of Order

To understand Sima Qian, one must first grasp the philosophical currents of ancient China, particularly the concept of the *Tao*. As articulated by the

philosopher Chang-Hueh Chang (Watson, 1958), the Tao is not a deity that intervenes in human affairs, but the inherent potential within human nature for an ordered, civilized existence (Xie and Inayatullah, 1997). It is the formless principle that “began 'taking form' in human history with the first human family and continued as population increased and human society became more and more complex.” The Tao is the why behind events, an evolutionary process embedded in the moral order that must be intuitively and holistically understood.

The common person, in this view, participates in this process blindly, driven by immediate necessity. The sage, however, is different. By observing the ebb and flow of life—the yin and yang of events—the sage perceives the workings of the Tao and can create appropriate institutions and laws. The sage is a free agent who “takes the part of the Tao,” not its unwitting pawn. This is a crucial distinction from a Hegelian worldview, where the “cunning of Reason” uses great men to advance history behind their backs (Galtung and Inayatullah, 1997). For the Sima Qian, the sage is a conscious collaborator with the deep patterns of the universe. This differs from the Vedic concept of incarnation; the Tao does not incarnate in a sage, whose actions are limited by historical conditions. The Classics, then, are not books that expound the Tao, but the material embodiment (*ch'i*) that exhibits it, inseparable from the material world “than a shadow can be separated from the shape that casts it” (Xie and Inayatullah, 1997).

Sima Qian built his historical framework, the Shih Chi, upon this foundation. His aim was explicitly: to “examine the deeds and events of the past and investigate the principles behind their success and failure, their rise and decay” (Watson, 1958). The purpose was fundamentally moral—to censure evil and encourage good, preserving the

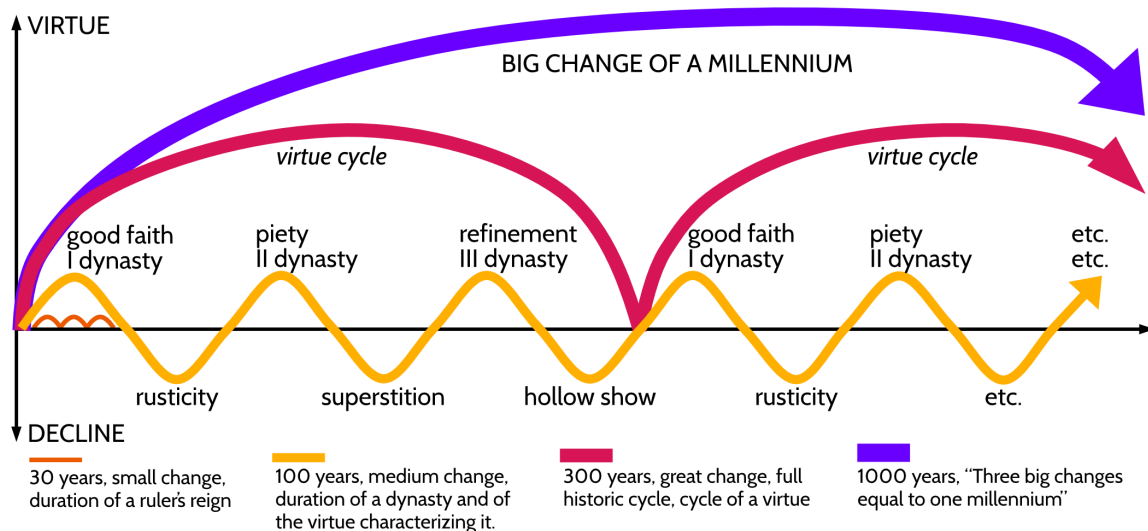


Chinese historian Sima Qian c. 145 BC – c. 86 BC.
Image from the Creative Commons.

record of virtue for posterity. This project was framed by a conception of time different from the West. Ancient Chinese and Indict thought saw time as astronomical and cyclical, a series of vast cycles based on the movements of the planets (Eliade, 1954). In contrast to Western or Islamic history, which begins from a dramatic, datable event like the birth of Christ or the Hegira, history based on the stars has no absolute beginning or end.

Within this cyclical view, Sima Qian identified the pattern of dynasties. Each dynasty begins with a sage-king of superlative wisdom, such as Yu of the Hsia, and ends with an evil and degenerate monarch, like Chou of the Yin (Watson, 1958). The engine of this cycle is *te*. As Watson (1958) writes, *te* is more than virtue; it is “a kind of mystical store of power set up by the sage ancestor of the family... But like all other things of creation, this ancient deposit of merit is subject to the law of decay” (p. 7). As generations pass, the power thins. A worthy ruler can still emerge to perform an act of “revival or restoration,” but if no leader replenishes the store of merit, the dynasty collapses and a new family with the “Mandate of Heaven” rises. Sima Qian added another layer to this theory of decay: the principle of alteration, where a dynasty's dominant characteristic becomes its opposite. The good faith of the Hsia became rustic; the piety of the Shang turned into superstition.

Crucially, however, Sima Qian was not a simple restorationist. He believed that “history... was a constant process of growth and it was impossible to think of returning to some static golden age of the past. What was possible, however, was the creation of a new golden age in the present by a wise application of moral values appropriate to the times” (Watson, 1958). The implications for the future are considerable but most significantly it is not technology – neither AI nor a race to Mars – that can solve today's problems of inequity, genocide, patriarchy, and extinction from climate change, but



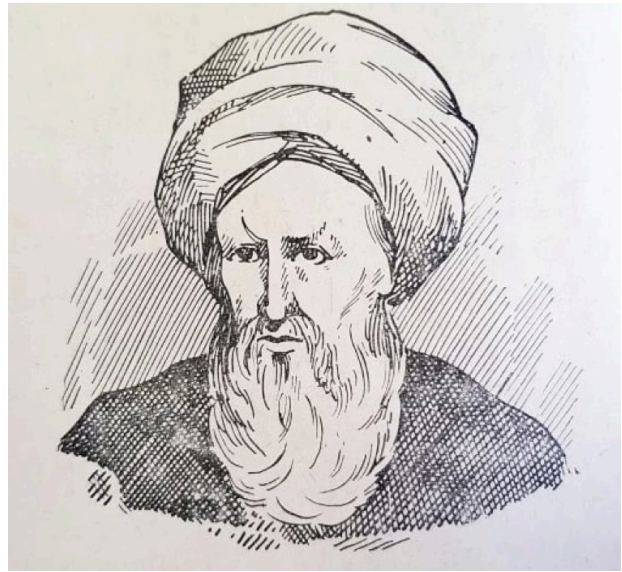
Qian's framework of civilizational cycles. Reproduction of image by Daniela Minerbi in Galtung and Inayatullah, 1997, p. 249.

virtuous leadership. The means do not justify the end. Where there is virtue civilization progresses, where virtue becomes “fake news” nations and civilization declines (ET Bureau, 2020), the tao disappears and nations war.

Asabiyya and the Desert's Edge: Ibn Khaldun's Sociological Cycle

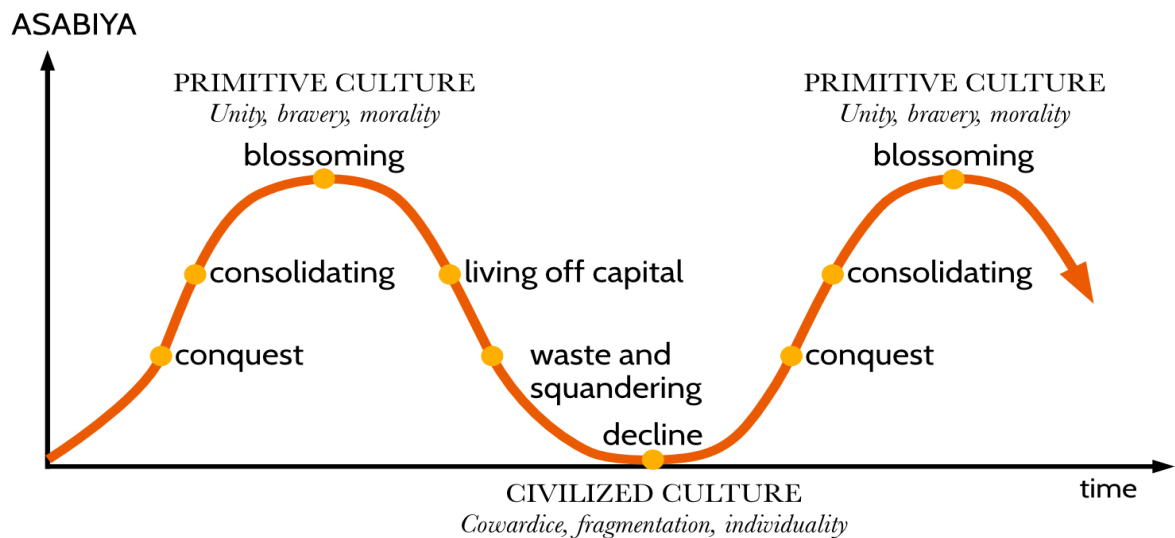
Ibn Khaldun, writing in the 14th century, considered to be the founder of Sociology, offered a strikingly different, materialist explanation for the rise and fall of dynasties. For him, the key variable was not mystical virtue but a tangible social force: *asabiyya*. As he outlines in *The Muqaddimah*, *asabiyya* can be understood as group solidarity or social cohesion (Khaldun, 1967). This force is strongest among groups living in harsh conditions, such as desert Bedouins.

This potent *asabiyya* gives a group the power to conquer more sedentary, civilized populations whose own social cohesion has weakened. The victorious group establishes a new dynasty, but this very success becomes the seed of its downfall. Over several generations, urban life erodes the harsh conditions that created *asabiyya*. The ruling class becomes soft and individualistic, their group solidarity dissolves, and they become vulnerable to a new group from the periphery with a fresh and powerful *asabiyya* (Khaldun, 1967). Each generation weakens, moving from innovation to imitation, and over four generations the dynasty is prey to the outside Bedouins, who have unified through adversity.



Ibn Khaldun. Image from the Creative Commons.

Group feeling also decreases with imperial expansion. More funds must be paid out to the soldiers and to the masses. With increased luxury, group feeling decreases. Thus, to deal with crises, rulers pay out more money, which hastens the decline. This is in sharp contrast to the beginning of the dynasty, when it had a desert attitude – with no extravagant expenditures, a sense of royal authority and with regular fasting and other spiritual practices by the leaders (Inayatullah, 1999, 60).



Khaldun's civilizational cycle. Reproduction of image by Daniela Minerbi in Galtung and Inayatullah, 1997, p. 250.

Of course, during the end of the dynasty (empire), there often appears to be rejuvenation, a new leader, for example, who attempts to bring back the past. Writes Khaldun:

"Group feeling has often disappeared (when the dynasty has grown senile) and pomp has taken the place it occupied in the souls of men. Now, when in addition to the weakening of group feeling, pomp, too, is discontinued, the subjects grow audacious vis à vis the dynasty. At the end of a dynasty, there often also appears some (show of) power that gives the impression that the senility of the dynasty has been made to disappear. It lights up brilliantly just before it is extinguished, like a burning wick the flame of which leaps up brilliantly a moment before it goes out, giving the impression it is just starting to burn, when in fact it is going out" (Khaldun 1967, 246).

The Social Cycle and the Spiral: P.R. Sarkar's Theory of Transformation

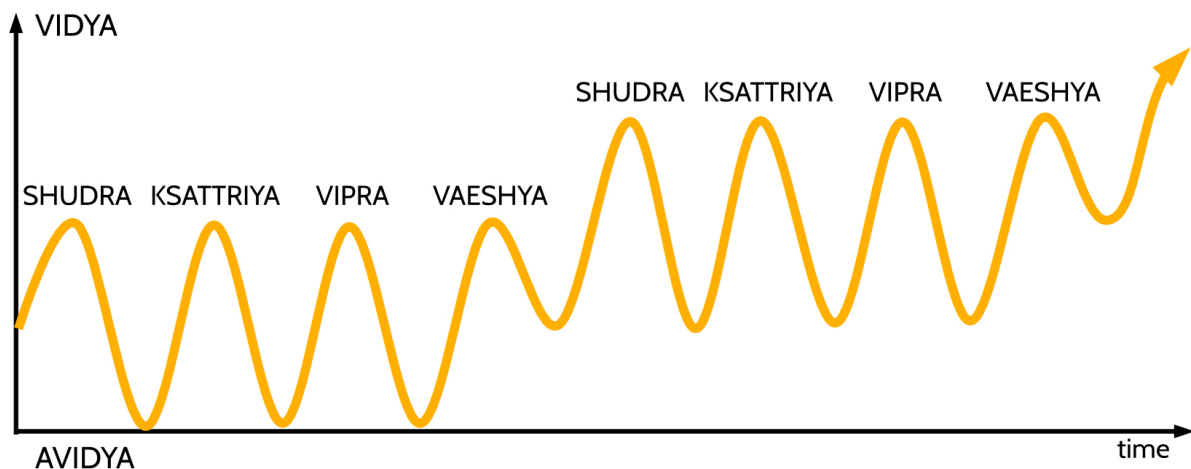
Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar offers a third model, rooted in collective psychology. His theory of the Social Cycle posits that every society moves through four eras, each dominated by a class with a specific mental makeup, episteme, or *varna*: the laborer (*Shudra*), the warrior (*Kshatriya*), the intellectual (*Vipra*), and the capitalist (*Vaeshya*) (Sarkar, 1967; Inayatullah, 2002). Each class rises to power, dominates, and then enters a phase of exploitation, creating the conditions for the next class to lead a revolution or evolution or in some case a counter-revolution, returning for a short period to the previous era. For Sarkar, *varna* is deeper than class, however, in late capitalism, when exploitation as its



Image of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

extreme, the other groups become "shudraized,"-they lose agency and have their wills bent by the power of interests and goals of capitalists for the endless accumulation of wealth, of "more."

For Sarkar, this cycle however can be transformed, progress is possible as the true driving force is the evolution of consciousness, a struggle between the materialist force of exploitation (*Avidya*) and the spiritual force of liberation (*Vidya*). This is framed in Tantric philosophy where the Divine exists both within the world (*Saguna Brahma*) and beyond it as formless potential (*Nirguna Brahma*). The agent of true progress in this model is the *Sadvipra* spiritually realized and courageously active individual who



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fighters exploitation at each age. Their role is to ensure the cycle "spirals" upward, creating a society with greater well-being and deeper spiritual awareness (Inayatullah, 1999, 2002, 2017). Sarkar's project is not to preserve an old order but to provide a roadmap for conscious evolution that challenges the cycle yet embraces the structure of different archetypes of power (the worker, the warrior, the intellectual, the accumulator of capital). The sadvipra is created through the dialectics of the social cycle where individuals find themselves unable to express their needs. They just challenge the current system and ensure progress. In today's era, this means, challenging the dominance of patriarchy, the nation-centric system (geo-politics), of economism and ensuring an alternative cooperative economics and culture where nature, technology, consciousness and human co-evolve.

A Dialogue Across the Ages

Placing these three frameworks side-by-side reveals a fascinating dialogue. All three thinkers see history as cyclical, a departure from linear models (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997). Yet their engines of change are distinct: for Sima Qian, it is the accumulation and decay of *te* (virtue-power), which is granted to those who follow the cosmic principle of the Tao; for Ibn Khaldun, it is the sociological force of *asabiyya*; and for Sarkar, it is the psycho-spiritual evolution of the collective mind.

Their agents of change are equally diverse. For Sima Qian, it is the sage-king, an insider who creates a new golden age. For Khaldun, it is the cohesive collective from the periphery, the Bedouins. For Sarkar, it is the Sadvipra, the spiritual revolutionary who is often an outsider, who can integrate the *vidya* aspects of the four *varnas* ie can serve, can protect,

can innovate, and can ensure money keeps on moving. This gives us three distinct pathways to power: through virtue, through solidarity, and through transformed consciousness.

Using Macrohistory to Shape the Future

What, then, can this ancient dialogue offer us today? We are witnessing the decay of old systems, the rise of new technologies, and a palpable sense of being at the end of one era and on the cusp of another. Virtue as our macrohistorians understood it is now challenged at its core. Misinformation, mal-information, dis-information not to mention the politics of obfuscation through the fake news and alternative facts narrative do not create a more pluralistic world, but rather a world where the Tao has disintegrated, and virtue is in accelerated decline. The basis for society is even questioned as nihilism dominates.

Sima Qian's framework reminds us of the importance of virtue in leadership. Ibn Khaldun's analysis provides a sobering, sociological perspective, reminding us of that social cohesion—*asabiyya*—is the bedrock of political power. However, while they focused on dynasties, Sarkar moves the unit of analysis not to civilizations (as Toynbee, Spengler, and to some extent Sorokin argued) but to humanity and Gaia as a whole. Sarkar's framework gives us a dynamic and empowering lens, suggesting our current challenges are characteristic of a late-stage capitalist era and that transformation is possible through conscious individual and collective action (Inayatullah, 2002). This means, bringing the Tao and *asabiyya* back by:

- Shifting from patriarchy to coordinated cooperation
- Shifting from the nation-state to neohumanism or planetary consciousness
- Shifting from capitalism to economic democracy
- Shifting from national governance to global and a world government
- Shifting from luddite view of technology to embracing new technologies while ensuring that they amplify equity and deep spiritual culture
- Shifting from an image of the future where the individual, materialism, and man are the centre to an image of the future where all humans, spirituality, and women-men-nature are the centre



Sarkar's social cycle

Continued on page 56



Becoming Better Leaders: *Applied Insights into Inner and Outer Transformation*

Satya Tanner

Abstract: This paper examines how leaders can become more masterful, capable, and ethically grounded by integrating inner development with systemic transformation. Drawing on behavioural science, developmental psychology, biopsychology, neohumanist philosophy, and real-world leadership stories, it argues that many leadership failures stem less from skill deficits than from unexamined habits, fear-based responses, and organisational structures that reward reactivity over reflection. The paper explores five core capacities—emotional mastery, shadow integration, cognitive flexibility, healthy boundaries, and the ability to work consciously with fear and trust—and demonstrates how these inner shifts directly influence team culture and performance. It then examines how system design, governance models, and organisational narratives can either reinforce ego-protective behaviour or support cooperation, participation, and shared stewardship. Through applied insights and practical examples, the paper shows how everyday choices by leaders can reshape both inner landscapes and outer systems, contributing to more humane, resilient, and future-ready organisations.

AI Assistance Disclosure: Parts of this essay were developed with the assistance of generative AI (ChatGPT). I used AI to help develop and refine structure, clarify ideas, summarise, check for coherence, and strengthen paraphrasing. All interpretations, arguments, and editorial decisions are my own.

1 - Introduction

Across the planet, people sense a need to shift how we lead and organise. Multiple global crises have ineffective leadership as contributory factors. It's not that we lack intelligence or resources. Rather, we are trying to navigate 21st-century complexity with mindsets and systems shaped by an earlier phase of human development. One built on competition, group loyalty, and a narrower sense of responsibility than today's demands require.

Futurist Sohail Inayatullah poses a powerful societal question:

"Can we make the transition from teenagerhood, with its clans and aggression, to adulthood: a Gaian system?"

The metaphor resonates because many people feel that our collective habits still echo that adolescent phase: reactive, tribal, status-driven.



Satya Tanner has a background in military aviation, aerospace, defence, and executive leadership in the energy sector. Her work explores the relationship between inner development, systems thinking, and organisational transformation, drawing on experience across VUCA environments and complex, multi-stakeholder settings. She has a Masters in Leadership, a Masters in Training & Development, a Bachelor of Engineering and is a certified leadership coach.

These behaviours once helped groups survive. They rewarded loyalty, identity, and protection. But as challenges become more interdependent and global, these earlier patterns no longer serve us well. We see these dynamics not only in geopolitics but also inside our workplaces and institutions.

Even committed leaders can find themselves pulled toward ego-centred decision-making: defending positions, protecting “their” team, proving their worth, or reacting from fear rather than trust and clarity. Not because they are selfish, but because the systems around them subtly reward these behaviours. They favour speed over reflection, certainty over curiosity, control over collaboration. As Sinclair (2007) notes, contemporary leadership cultures often exhaust or distort the people within them. And even if the world’s most destructive leaders disappeared tomorrow, the systems beneath them would still produce more like them.

In my work, I see how these collective patterns shape personal behaviour. A leader who sleeps only a few hours a night unintentionally normalises exhaustion. A founder holding tightly to their project unintentionally suppresses others’ growth. Leaders with generous intentions may set boundaries too softly and, without meaning to, enable toxic behaviour.

These are not flaws of character but signs of people doing their best within patterns, internal and external, shaped by earlier conditions. Today, those conditions have changed. As a result, leadership requires a **dual transformation**:

Can we make the transition from teenagerhood, with its clans and aggression, to adulthood: a Gaian system? ”

- **Inner transformation**: maturing beyond ego, developing emotional balance, integrating one’s dark side (shadow), cultivating healthy boundaries, and thinking in more systemic and flexible ways.

- **Outer transformation**: reshaping systems so they reward participation, cooperation, shared purpose, and planetary responsibility. What Inayatullah calls a “Gaian polity.”

P.R. Sarkar’s (1967) concept of the sadvipra speaks directly to this dual challenge. The sadvipra represents a leader who embodies emotional mastery, ethical clarity and the courage to reshape systems that no longer serve the collective good. Crucially, this leadership is not heroic or individualistic; it emerges from wholeness and is expressed through service.

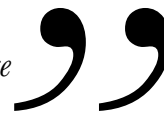
We are seeing early expressions of this shift. Cooperative governance models, community-owned energy projects, and decentralised networks that distribute power more fairly suggest that a more expansive sense of “we” is emerging.

This paper explores how we cultivate this kind of leadership in practical, grounded ways. Drawing on real stories, behavioural and cognitive theory, biopsychology, and neohumanist philosophy, it lays out a path for moving beyond old patterns - within ourselves and within our systems - so that we can respond to this moment with wisdom, capacity, and a deeper sense of shared humanity.

2 - Why Leaders Really Fail: Ego, Ego-Systems, And The Inner Landscape

When leaders fail, the surface explanations are familiar: poor strategy, weak communication, lack of skill, bad culture fit. Beneath these lies something more universal: leaders often lack support to examine the beliefs and habits that keep them stuck (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

*Emotional mastery begins by noticing
internal cues. The tight jaw, fast speech, urge
to interrupt - before they spill outward.*



Building on Goleman's (1998) work on emotional intelligence, we can understand leaders as arriving in their roles with long-established habits, coping mechanisms, and assumptions that were shaped well before they carried formal responsibility for others. These patterns once kept them safe but can become obstacles when leading diverse teams in fast-changing environments.

Tools like The Leadership Circle (Anderson & Adams, 2016), Safe2Great (Bowman, 2023), and the Human Synergetics circumplex (Cooke & Lafferty, 1987) give language to these patterns. They show how leaders oscillate between task and relational modes and how fear-based behaviours — control, perfectionism, appeasement, compliance — often overshadow trust-based ones. These instruments reveal not just behaviours but the beliefs behind them:

- A controlling leader may truly believe things will fall apart without constant oversight.
- A conflict-avoidant leader may fear losing relationships if they voice difficult truths.
- A critical leader may rely on judgement to shield themselves from vulnerability.

These are not marks of malice; they are expressions of biopsychology — the interplay between body, mind, and environment — well described by Siegel's (2010) work on interpersonal neurobiology. Under pressure, humans default to fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. Whilst useful for survival, these responses are poor leadership strategies in environments where clarity, trust, and collaboration are essential.

The surrounding system amplifies these tendencies. Building on Edmondson's (2019) work, many organisations reward visible effort over reflective practice, certainty over curiosity, and individual performance over collective intelligence. Fear-based behaviours often appear decisive and urgent, so those leaders rise quickly. More thoughtful approaches can seem slow within cultures that equate speed with strength. Bowman (2023) shows that pressure to act quickly in unsafe environments leads to reactivity disguised as productivity.

This creates what Scharmer & Kaufer (2013) call an ego-system: a culture shaped by self-protection, identity defence, and competition. Even leaders who value empathy and cooperation may find those qualities risky when the system rewards the opposite.

In practice:

- **Controlling leaders** over-function in cultures that admire heroic effort.
- **Protecting leaders** rely on criticism or distance in cultures that prize intellectual superiority.
- **Complying leaders** avoid conflict in cultures that reward harmony over honesty.

The individual's narrative and the system's expectations reinforce each other, producing predictable fear-based dynamics (Bowman, 2023).

When leaders shift from self-protection to growth, the effects are immediate. Understanding different behavioural “languages” reduces misinterpretation (Erikson, 2019). Emotional regulation clarifies communication (Goleman, 1998). Shadow integration reduces reactivity and increases integrity (Jung, 1959). Trust creates psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019). Safety enables learning and performance.

These shifts point to a deeper truth: enlightened leadership begins with the development of the inner leader.

3 - Developing The Inner Leader: The Skills And States That Shape Leadership

If inherited patterns shape the limits of leadership, the inner journey becomes essential. Leadership is not simply a set of competencies, it is a reflection of one's inner architecture; the emotional, psychological, and cognitive foundations that determine how a person responds under pressure, engages with others, and interprets complexity. When leaders learn to develop these deeper layers, they move from reactive habits to more grounded, creative, and service-oriented leadership (Anderson & Adams, 2016).



"In an increasingly complex world, leaders discover that willpower and experience are not enough; they also need the ability to think in more flexible, spacious ways."

The inner leader develops through interconnected capacities such as:

- emotional mastery,
- shadow integration,
- cognitive flexibility,
- conscious work with fear and trust, and
- developing healthy boundaries.

These show up in everyday conversations, decisions, conflicts, and stresses. They determine whether a leader contributes in a masterful way or unconsciously reproduces old patterns.

3.1 Emotional Mastery and Regulation: Staying Steady in a World Designed to Unsettle Us

Under pressure, leaders often revert to familiar safety strategies: overworking, taking control, avoiding conflict, smoothing things over, or pushing for premature closure. These are biopsychological reflexes; fight, flight, freeze or faint responses (Siegel, 2010). They help us cope but rarely help us lead.

Many leaders struggle not because they lack intelligence, but because they have never been taught how to regulate their nervous system, work with stress, or understand the emotional dynamics of the team they lead (Goleman, 1998; Siegel, 2010).

Unregulated emotional patterns in leadership often show up in everyday moments. A manager becomes defensive when a colleague offers feedback

in a team meeting, shutting down the conversation. A leader interprets a different point of view in a strategy session as a personal attack, digging in their heels on their original position. During periods of uncertainty, some leaders tighten their grip on every decision, burning themselves out by reviewing minor details late into the night. Others withdraw when conflict arises, skipping difficult one-to-one conversations and hoping issues will resolve themselves. In the short term, this can keep the peace; over time, it erodes trust and clarity.

These behaviours ripple outward. When a leader is anxious, the team becomes cautious. When a leader is trying to appease, conflict is suppressed. When a leader is volatile, collaboration collapses.

Emotional mastery begins by noticing internal cues. The tight jaw, fast speech, urge to interrupt - before they spill outward. Practices include:

- pausing before replying to a difficult message
- asking one clarifying question instead of reacting defensively
- saying "I need a moment to think"
- entering tense meetings with steadiness
- responding to disagreement with curiosity

This is the quiet work that underpins all other leadership skills. Without emotional steadiness, even the best strategies collapse into reactivity. With it, leaders become a calming force in the system, creating enough safety for others to think clearly,

take risks, and be honest. This reflects one dimension of the *sadvipra*: someone who can remain centred, compassionate, and principled even when circumstances are turbulent; not detached, but not swept away.

3.2 Shadow Integration: Turning Blind Spots into Strengths

Every leader carries a shadow. The aspects of themselves they deny, repress, or judge. These shadows often include the parts of ourselves we have been taught are unacceptable: anger, ambition, vulnerability, inadequacy, need for recognition. When unexamined, the shadow leaks out in distorted and defensive ways (Jung, 1959): micromanagement, cynicism, superiority, people-pleasing, perfectionism, or passive aggression.

Shadow work is not about pathology. It is about honesty. It asks leaders to confront the very human fears and insecurities that drive their behaviour: fear of failure, of being exposed, of losing relevance, of not belonging.

When leaders avoid their shadow, they:

- overreact to behaviour in others that mirrors their own fears
- justify harmful actions as “necessary”
- become attached to identity rather than purpose
- blame others for problems rooted in their own unexamined patterns

When they integrate it, they:

- become less reactive
- can hear feedback without collapsing or attacking
- show humility, which builds trust
- can access a broader range of emotional and behavioural responses

Sometimes this is as simple as a leader admitting they don’t know all the answers and discovering the team respects them more, not less. Or recognising their tendency to over-function because they fear being unneeded; once acknowledged with self-acceptance and self-compassion, the pattern softens.

Neohumanism echoes this by recognising the full spectrum of human expression. Not dividing the self into “good” and “bad,” but cultivating wholeness in service of the collective.

3.3 Cognitive Flexibility: Expanding the Mind’s Capacity for Complexity

As the world becomes more complex, leaders discover that willpower and experience are not enough. They also need the ability to think in more flexible, spacious ways. Developmental theorists such as Kegan (1994), Torbert and Rooke (2005), and Cook-Greuter (2000) have shown that adults can continue to develop deeper levels of meaning-making throughout life. This growth allows leaders to hold ambiguity, interpret patterns, and make decisions that consider wider circles of impact.

Theo Dawson’s work at Lectica makes this practical (Dawson, 2020–2021). Rather than treating cognitive development as abstract,

she identifies specific thinking skills that help people operate well in Volatile Uncertain Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environments: recognising assumptions, integrating multiple viewpoints, reasoning from principles, unpacking decision making, and constructing meaning in different contexts. These are learnable capacities that grow with deliberate practice.

In everyday leadership, cognitive flexibility shows up in small moments:

- In a project review, a leader recognises that two apparently opposing views may both hold part of the truth, and asks, “What else could be true here?”
- In a tense budget discussion, they slow the pace just enough to notice that the disagreement isn’t about money at all, but about status and recognition.
- In a community consultation, they consciously widen their frame to include voices they would not normally seek out, resisting the rush to a quick, tidy answer.

These moments may seem minor, but together they build a habit of thinking that can hold more than one perspective at a time.



SPOT THE LEADER

If all beings possess intrinsic value and our actions should reflect universal welfare, then we must shift from domination to partnership, from extraction to regeneration, from “power over” to “power with” through peer-based processes

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This ability to shift frames - from individual to systemic, from immediate to long-term, from problem to pattern, from narrow to wide - is at the heart of cognitive flexibility. Dawson’s work reinforces that leaders can strengthen these capacities by working with real dilemmas, making their reasoning explicit, and testing assumptions.

Cognitive flexibility creates the space to avoid reacting from fear. This aligns with the *sadvipra*’s ability to rise beyond group interests and consider long-term welfare for all.

3.4 Working With Fear and Trust: The Biopsychology of Cooperation

At the heart of many leadership challenges is a simple question:

Are we operating from fear or trust?

Human beings are wired for both. Fear sharpens our senses and keeps us alive. Trust allows us to collaborate, innovate, and build things bigger than ourselves. Fear narrows attention; trust broadens it (Fredrickson, 2001). Michael Towsey (2010) argues that cooperation is not just a moral ideal but a biopsychological state supported by safety and connection. Cooperative behaviour emerges when people feel safe, expansive, and connected, whereas fear-based environments trigger contraction, defensiveness, and domination. Systems that reward urgency and competition trigger fear; trust requires deliberate cultivation.

Systems that reward urgency, competition, and control tend to pull people into fear-based reactions, even when they value collaboration. Bowman’s Safe2Great model (2023) makes this visible by mapping how fear-based behaviours (controlling, skeptical, complying) create cultures that feel unsafe, even when no one intends them to.

Trust-based cultures don’t emerge simply because we prefer them. They require deliberate leadership. A leader who consistently reacts from fear makes fear contagious. A leader who responds from trust, with clear communication, boundaries, and transparency, makes trust contagious instead.

The shift often happens in small choices:

- sharing information rather than hoarding it
- asking for input instead of pretending to have all the answers
- naming a difficult truth with care, rather than avoiding it
- giving someone room to grow instead of stepping in to rescue
- letting go of control when control is not needed

In George Lakoff’s research on moral worldviews (Lakoff, 2002) he contrasts the “strict father” model — rooted in hierarchy, discipline, and obedience — with the “nurturant parent” model, which emphasises empathy, mutual care, and shared responsibility. Fear tends to pull people toward the strict-father mindset; trust supports the nurturant-parent orientation. In leadership, it is the nurturant (and bounded) model that consistently supports psychological safety, creativity, and cooperation.

We see this shift toward cooperation in governance experiments such as community energy projects, cooperatives, and decentralised networks, where leadership is distributed and participation is valued. These models rely on trust, shared purpose, and transparent decision-making. They show that when systems are designed for cooperation, people rise to meet them.

This is the outer expression of *sadvipra* leadership: structures that reduce fear, strengthen trust, and make it easier for people to act with integrity and courage.

3.5 Healthy Boundaries: Compassion With Backbone

If emotional mastery is about staying steady, and shadow work is about seeing ourselves clearly, then boundaries are where those inner capacities become visible to others. Boundaries are not walls, punishments, or rigid rules. They are clarity, about

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Dialogues Between Neohumanism and Emergent Philosophies

Stephanie Ezra

Abstract: This article investigates how participatory foresight methods, particularly scenario-based games, can surface, challenge, and reconfigure our assumptions about ethical leadership and moral systems in imagined futures. Drawing on a live online session of the Dreams and Disruptions game hosted by the Canadian Foresight Network in June 2025, the paper reconstructs a collaboratively developed scenario titled Philosopher Kings and Social Bankers. The scenario emerged over a 45-minute co-creative process facilitated by a volunteer foresight practitioner and guided by thematic prompt cards spanning ecological, spiritual, technological, and governance dimensions. The session brought together participants to imagine a post-fossil fuel society grappling with questions of equity, authority, and collective values.

Methodologically, the article employs speculative ethnography, a hybrid approach that combines immersive participation with critical, reflective analysis. Rather than treating the game's output as mere data, the author assumes a dual role: both as a scenario co-creator and as a critical interpreter of the narrative that unfolded. This lens allows for a nuanced exploration of how moral imaginaries are shaped through improvisation, symbolic association, and group dynamics within compressed temporal contexts.

Central to the paper is an interrogation of two contrasting models of moral leadership that emerged during the game: the algorithmically derived social credit system and the spiritually

enlightened figure of the Sadvipra. While the former suggests a systemic, data-driven approach to behavioral governance, the latter draws from Neohumanist philosophy, personifying ethical clarity in a single, charismatic leader. The article critically examines both paradigms, highlighting the risks of moral outsourcing, whether to algorithms or enlightened individuals, and questioning the long-term resilience of systems dependent on centralized ethical authority.

In contributing to the Enlightened Leadership special edition, this article offers a unique perspective on how futures literacy tools can be mobilized to engage with core Neohumanist themes: ethical universality, spiritual maturity, and collective upliftment. It raises vital questions about the viability of leader-centered moral systems in a time of accelerating uncertainty and complexity. Rather than rejecting Neohumanist ideals, the paper proposes a reframing, arguing for Sadvipric qualities to be distributed across institutions, relationships, and cultures, rather than embodied in singular figures.

Ultimately, the paper positions foresight games as philosophical laboratories, spaces where competing ethical frameworks can be playfully tested, symbolically enacted, and critically deconstructed. In doing so, it calls for a deeper integration of structural ethics into futures work, inviting readers to imagine governance and leadership not as personal attributes, but as shared societal capacities.



Stephanie Ezra is an interdisciplinary futures thinker exploring how cities, systems, and imaginaries shape human potential. Drawing on foundations in architecture and transportation planning, she studies the material, social, and ideological infrastructures that influence collective futures. She uses speculative ethnography and systems thinking to observe emergent dynamics and engages in futures dialogues through the Canadian Foresight Network.

1. Introduction: Imagining Ethics Beyond the Present

What kinds of leadership might guide humanity beyond capitalist collapse, ecological degradation, and epistemic fragmentation? While many visions of the future oscillate between techno-utopianism and dystopian crisis, there remains a quieter, more vital question: Who - or what - will embody ethics in futures yet to be born? This article explores that question through the lens of speculative ethnography and futures gaming, drawing on Neohumanist^A philosophy¹, systems theory, and personal experience inside a structured foresight exercise.

On June 18, 2025, the author participated in *Dreams and Disruptions*, a facilitated foresight game created by Shermon Cruz² and hosted virtually by the Canadian Foresight Network. Designed to provoke creative thinking about long-term societal change, the game assigns participants a time horizon, scenario archetype, drivers of change, and wildcard disruptors, all within a playful, time-constrained format. During one such game, the scenario organically evolved toward the emergence of a centralized moral figure known as the Sadvipra B, a Neohumanist archetype of enlightened leadership¹. This emergent dynamic, co-created by participants and catalyzed by game prompts, raised pressing philosophical questions about power, justice, and collective coordination in speculative futures.

Is ethical personification a shortcut - a kind of moral outsourcing that absolves society from grappling with the complexity of value negotiation?

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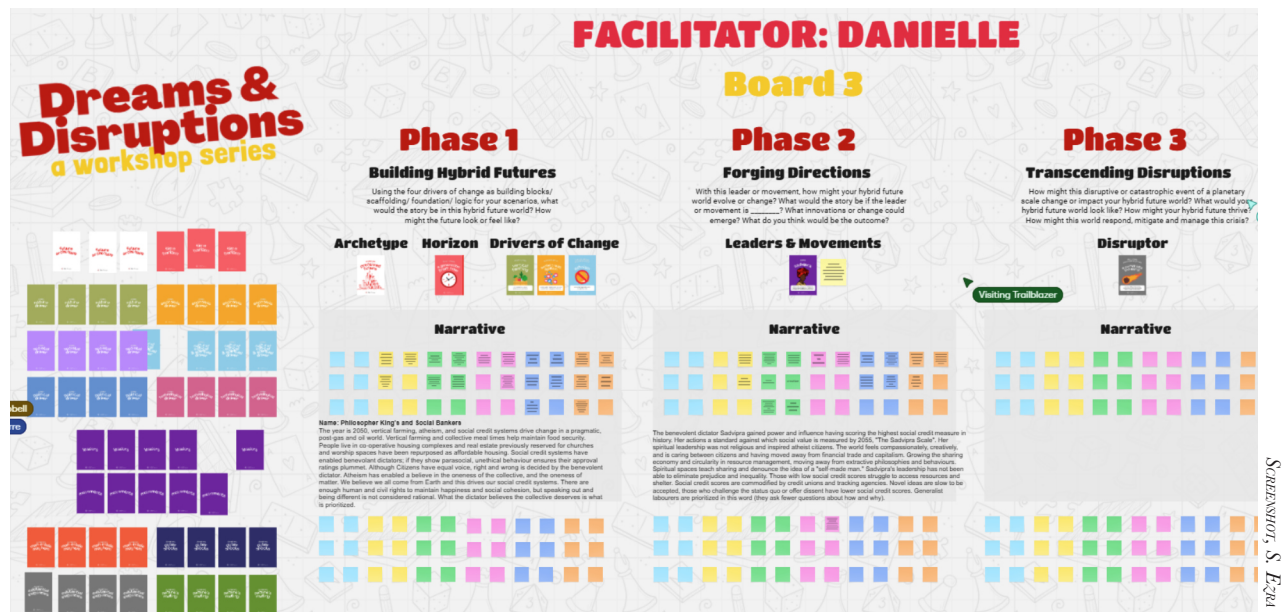
This paper uses the game session as a fieldsite for speculative ethnographic reflection, analyzing how ideas of ethics and leadership emerged not as abstract doctrines, but as embodied tensions negotiated in real time. Through this lens, the article examines the contrast between Neohumanist ethics and secular emergent systems (such as algorithmic governance and social credit structures), and probes whether the embodiment of ethical values in individuals, rather than systems, is a help or hindrance to futures literacy³.

In doing so, the paper contributes to broader conversations within post-capitalist and posthumanist thought about moral authority, participatory foresight, and the design of value-driven futures^{4 5}. Rather than propose answers, it seeks to map the terrain of open ethical questions, and test the utility of futures gameplay as a tool for philosophical inquiry.

2. Methodology: Speculative Ethnography Through Gameplay

This paper draws on a short-form, co-creative futures exercise as both its empirical grounding and methodological springboard. The scenario at the heart of the analysis was produced during a virtual session of *Dreams and Disruptions*.

The full virtual session lasted approximately one hour, with around 40 minutes dedicated to the breakout gameplay in groups of four to six participants. The remainder of the time was used for introductions, facilitator instructions, and a plenary restitution phase. Participants were randomly assigned to breakout rooms, while facilitators had volunteered ahead of time. All participants were members of, or adjacent to, the foresight community, which contributed to the quality and speed of immersion.



"The spiritual leadership of the benevolent dictator Sadvipra was not religious and inspired atheist citizens."

- From the Digital gameplay plan laid out for participants of the Dreams & Disruptions workshop series

The game structure is divided into three facilitated phases, supported by a shared Miro board. In phase one, players were assigned a future-oriented archetype (in this case, a “preferred future”), a temporal horizon of 2050, and three randomly drawn drivers of change: vertical farming, a social credit system, and atheism. In the second phase, a leadership archetype card was drawn, revealing the “Sadvipra”, an idealized moral leader based on Neohumanist philosophy. Finally, the third phase introduced a disruptive wildcard: a comet on a collision course with Earth. Each phase was punctuated by group dialogue and collaborative input via digital sticky notes, with the facilitator synthesizing a live narrative to maintain coherence and engagement.

The author's role was that of an active participant-observer. Contributions were made both through written input and verbal engagement. While no formal recordings were made and no identifying data was collected, a few screenshots of the Miro board were taken post-session to aid later reflection. The spontaneous, time-boxed nature of the process resulted in a rich, if partial, co-created scenario that now serves as the foundation for retrospective analysis using speculative ethnography.

Speculative ethnography—an emerging practice in futures and design studies—combines imagination, narrative construction, and reflexive critique. Rather than aiming to forecast or empirically map the future, this method treats co-created future scenarios as cultural artifacts that reveal present-world assumptions, values, and tensions. In this case, the gameplay allowed participants to briefly inhabit a possible future society with its own logic, power structures, and moral codes. By distancing the conversation from present-day reality, the game enabled participants to surface philosophical themes—such as authority, fairness, and social regulation—that might have been constrained in more conventional formats like interviews or focus groups.

Moments of conceptual friction emerged naturally during the game, especially around the topics of social credit systems and the benevolent dictator figure. These concepts prompted brief ethical discussions and comparisons to current systems of economic and moral judgment. Although the session was too short to explore these dynamics in depth, they sparked lines of questioning that the author pursued in greater depth during post-game reflection and writing.

Western credit systems scores create an algorithmic caste system. When applied to moral governance, they risk promoting performative ethics - where virtue becomes a gamified signal rather than an embedded practice.

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Ultimately, the *Dreams and Disruptions* session functioned not just as a playful prompt but as an exploratory ethnographic field site within a liminal, time-bound speculative frame. As a verbal thinker, the author found this format particularly conducive to emergent, conversational insight. While the scenario developed in the game was partial and provisional, it provided a meaningful lens through which to interrogate broader questions of enlightened leadership, social coordination, and post-capitalist futures.

3. The Scenario Narrative: Philosopher Kings and Social Bankers

The scenario co-developed during the *Dreams and Disruptions* foresight session was titled “Philosopher Kings and Social Bankers” an evocative synthesis of moral leadership and economic restructuring. Created in under 45 minutes, the game enabled us to create a scenario which unfolded over three structured phases. While rich in symbolic and systemic gestures, the narrative emerged under clear temporal constraints, and much of its philosophical depth was surfaced only in post-game reflection. What follows is a reconstruction of the imagined world, supplemented by critical interpretation.

Phase 1: The Pragmatic Collective (2050)

The first phase was shaped by three randomly drawn driver cards: *vertical farming*, *atheism*, and *social credit* systems. These set the stage for a future society structured around sustainability, secularism, and behavior-based governance. Group members added their own contributions - communal meals, co-operative housing, and the repurposing of religious buildings - which fleshed out the social fabric of this speculative world.

At the heart of this society was an emerging idea: a benevolent dictator empowered not by force, but by a high social credit score reflecting ethical behavior. The notion was introduced by one

participant (the author), drawing from personal reflections on post-capitalist transitions. While this idea was not deeply contested during the game, it was engaged with receptively and iteratively shaped by the group. In this imagined world, moral authority resided not in religious dogma or inherited power, but in an algorithmic system of social evaluation. Atheism, as represented in the scenario, did not suggest moral emptiness but rather a kind of material unity—a secular worldview in which ethical behavior emerged from collective rationality and shared survival imperatives.

Given the short timeframe, some philosophical tensions - such as the marginalization of dissent or the implications of moral centralization - remained unexplored in the session itself. However, these ambiguities surfaced upon later reflection. In retrospect, the group’s general enthusiasm for coherence and order might hint at a broader social tendency to accept ethical paternalism when framed as pro-social.

Phase 2: Rise of Sadvipra (2055)

The second phase of the game introduced the Sadvipra card - a reference to the Neohumanist concept of the spiritually enlightened, morally grounded leader¹. Within seconds, the group recognized how closely this archetype resonated with the benevolent figure imagined in Phase 1. The card was embraced not as a disruption but as symbolic validation, a narrative confirmation bias, reinforcing rather than challenging existing trajectories already underway.

From this emerged the figure of Sadvipra, a woman of color whose social credit score set a new standard for moral leadership. Her influence was imagined to extend beyond governance, shaping culture and values through what was dubbed *The Sadvipra Scale*. Does reducing moral worth to a score, even symbolically, undermine Neohumanist ethics? While not articulated in great detail during the session, this figure evoked a sense of elevated

A more productive reframing may lie in separating leadership from power, where leaders are catalysts, not commanders, spark conversation, model accountability, and nourish public imagination. Their role is not to impose direction but to create space for divergence, foster difficult conversations, and help communities become literate in their own ethical development.

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purpose, post-capitalist reasoning, and non-religious spirituality. Her presence reactivated former religious spaces as ethical and cultural commons, and catalyzed a shift toward a circular economy and sharing-based resource management.

Aspects of inequality and exclusion began to emerge tentatively in the group discussion. Participants noted that dissenters or non-conformists could find themselves with lower social credit scores, potentially losing access to shared resources. However, time limitations meant these concerns remained underdeveloped during the session. It was only in post-workshop reflection that the full implications of such a system - moral metrics, conformity bias, algorithmic virtue - became more apparent to the author.

Phase 3: Cosmic Disruption

The final phase introduced a dramatic plot twist: a planet-altering comet. Though drawn hastily due to time constraints, the card acted as a powerful narrative close. Its symbolism was clear, a reminder that even the most morally coherent or technologically sophisticated societies remain vulnerable to cosmic or existential disruption.

The group did not have time to fully process this disruption within the game framework. However, its timing and framing cast a retrospective light on the scenario: what happens when moral systems are centralized in a single leader or paradigm, and that paradigm is shaken? The comet became, in effect, a rupture that exposed the contingency of the entire imagined world.

In this sense, the scenario ends not with collapse, but with radical openness. While the game offered glimpses of utopian logic - sustainability, equality, ethical leadership, it also revealed through its final disruption the limits of foresight, control, and centralization. The figure of Sadvipra, however powerful, could not outwit cosmic entropy. What remains is the question: might more distributed,

adaptive systems of moral imagination prove more resilient than those anchored in charismatic leadership?

4. Analysis: Emergent Philosophies vs. Embodied Ethics

The scenario developed in the *Dreams and Disruptions* game workshop presents more than a fictional narrative - it acts as a microcosm of contemporary tensions between emergent philosophical systems and inherited models of moral leadership. On one side lie emergent secular models, including algorithmic governance, distributed decision-making, and non-spiritual ethical collectivism. On the other are traditional and Neohumanist paradigms that personify ethics through enlightened individuals - charismatic, spiritually evolved leaders tasked with embodying society's highest moral aspirations.

The scenario's arc - from communal atheistic collectivism to the emergence of a female Sadvipra and a morally infused comet-disrupted climax - provides a speculative playground to interrogate these contrasting frameworks. What emerges is not a binary of good vs. bad, but a need to critically evaluate the structures we imagine to carry our ethics forward.

Neohumanism: Ethical Universality or Spiritual Paternalism?

Neohumanism, as defined by P.R. Sarkar¹, centers on universal love, rational spirituality, and the ethical upliftment of society through enlightened leadership. The Sadvipra, the concept of a spiritually mature and fearless moral guide, stands at its core. Within the game, the card representing the Sadvipra functioned as a symbolic boon: a clarifying persona whose presence instantly stabilized the emerging world. In this sense, the scenario replicated a common cognitive move in futures thinking: personifying ethical certainty in the form of a leader or guardian figure.

While emotionally and narratively effective, this move raises troubling questions. Is ethical personification a shortcut - a kind of moral outsourcing that absolves society from grappling with the complexity of value negotiation? Can universal care be truly universal if it must be mediated through a singular moral voice?

From a critical standpoint, Neohumanist leadership risks replicating old religious patterns of spiritual hierarchy. Framing ethics through a spiritually evolved individual, no matter how benevolent, reintroduces a familiar dynamic: that of followers awaiting guidance, rather than citizens cultivating collective agency. This is particularly problematic in a world where centralized spiritual or moral leadership has historically led to power consolidation, institutional abuse, or dependency. The Sadvipra, as a concept, may be inspiring at an individual level, but in terms of systems change, it can inadvertently re-create hierarchical and paternalistic modes of governance.

Algorithmic Morality and the Limits of Systemic Substitutes

In contrast, the scenario's early implementation of social credit systems represents a secular, data-driven attempt to encode moral behavior. Algorithmic systems, whether fictional or observed in real-world cases, such as China's developing social credit system have begun to encode moral behavior in data-driven ways, often functioning as instruments of social control and exclusion⁶. Similarly, Western credit scoring mechanisms enact covert moral hierarchies that influence access and agency⁷. North America's entrenched credit score culture - tries to automate ethical judgment through measurable behavioral metrics. In theory, such systems could reward cooperation, discourage harmful behavior, and provide accountability. In practice, however, they often function as instruments of control, exclusion, and inequality.

As discussed during the game and further reflected upon afterward, Western credit systems already operate as covert moral hierarchies, quietly encoding assumptions about worthiness that disproportionately penalize non-conformity, punishing the economically precarious, and reinforcing consumption-based social belonging. Far from neutral, these scores create an algorithmic caste system. When applied to moral governance, they risk promoting performative ethics - where virtue

becomes a gamified signal rather than an embedded practice.

Thus, both the Sadvipra and the social credit system, despite their contrast, share a troubling feature: they outsource moral agency - one to a charismatic individual, the other to a data system. Both invite society to look up (to a leader) or outward (to an algorithm), rather than inward and collectively to define and enact values.

Futures Literacy Without Saints or Scoring Systems

This brings us to a critical reflection on futures literacy. As defined by UNESCO and foresight scholars, futures literacy involves the capacity to imagine and rehearse multiple futures, to hold space for uncertainty, and to resist determinism - be it technological, ideological, or charismatic. Yet, as the game demonstrated, even among futures-literate participants³, there remains a gravitational pull toward personified ethics. The Sadvipra card was not debated - it was embraced. In part, this reflects narrative convenience. But more deeply, it reveals a habitual yearning for certainty, for a wise adult to "take over" from a world perceived as out of control.

This is precisely where futures literacy must evolve. Rather than modeling moral clarity through fictional saviors, futures work could help people explore structures that decentralize ethics - including collective governance, consensus-based institutions, peer-based accountability systems, and deliberative decision-making. What if instead of imagining the next great leader, we explored what it takes for ethical behavior to become systemic, embedded in norms, protocols, and shared capacities?

Post-game reflection revealed this exact tension. The workshop participant-author, initially intrigued by the idea of a benevolent dictator as a transitional aid, began to recognize the limitations of moral centralization. What happens when the leader dies? Do we look for a successor? Do we freeze moral reasoning in their name? Such systems risk becoming heroic grief projects - where ethics is a relic of an imagined past, not a co-created present.

The Ethical Imagination as Collective Infrastructure

The challenge, then, is to construct futures where values are not embodied in individuals but distributed across systems - where no one person

Continued on page 68

THE EMERGENCE OF

ONLY PSYCHIC AND spiritual education can create sadvipras. Only those who are established in *Yama and Niyama* [moral code] – who are imbued with Cosmic ideation – I call sadvipras.

Political leaders cannot create sadvipras by haranguing people from public platforms – this demands righteousness and the practice of self-purification in personal life. Furthermore, what type of people come to deliver lectures from these platforms? Are they not the ones resorting to mud-slinging for the sake of party politics? Most of them are blinded by their obsession for power, so what can they teach others?

The success of democracy depends upon educated, sensible voters. Hence, in a democratic country, the spread of education is of the highest priority. For the convenience of the general public, the educational system must be free of cost. No overbearing government pressure should be exerted on the educational system, otherwise the party in power will continue to propagate its ideas through the medium of education. Frequent changes in the government will also result in frequent changes in the educational system, consequently the entire system of education will be jeopardized.

No ism except universalism can be allowed in the educational system. The thirst for

knowledge will have to be awakened among students, and reverence, devotion, orderliness and discipline will have to be taught as well. Along with this, a scientific outlook will have to be inculcated. If veneration for science is awakened, superstition will not find any room in the minds of students, nor will high-sounding isms bewilder them. Students will easily acquire the qualities to become sadvipras later in life.

The universe and the society belong to all. Every dust particle of the universe is the common patrimony of each and every one of us, so it is not at all proper to allow a particular social class to perpetuate its rule. The peripheric evolution of the social cycle will continue, and along with this the fight of the sadvipras against the supremacy of each social class will also have to continue.

Society belongs to all, but its leadership will be in the hands of sadvipras. The responsibility for leading society cannot be left in the hands of the *kṣatriyas*, because they will try to enforce *kṣatriya* rule. They will exploit the non-*kṣatriyas* and chew the bones and marrow of the weak. Nor can the responsibility for leading society be left in the hands of the *vipras*, because they will try to establish *vipra* rule. They will exploit the non-*vipras* and chew the bones and marrow of

Excerpted from *Problems of the Day*

Sadvipras or spiritual revolutionaries will inspire and mobilize the crusading human spirit against barbarity, injustice and rapacity and help accelerate the speed of antithetical social movement.

- "Dialectical Materialism and Democracy", *Prout in a Nutshell* 6

ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP

the non-intellectuals. Likewise, the responsibility for leading society cannot be left in the hands of the vaeshyas, because they will try to impose vaeshya rule. They will exploit the non-vaeshyas and chew the bones and marrow of the toiling mass. Shúdras cannot undertake the leadership of society. Hence the victory mark of the successful shúdra revolution indeed embellishes the forehead of the kśatriyas.

The responsibility for leading society can only be entrusted to the sadvipras because they are well established in Yama and Niyama – they are imbued with Cosmic ideation. The social cycle will surely rotate, and as a rule the dominance of the kśatriyas, vipras and vaeshyas will take place in succession. But if sadvipras control the nucleus of society, these social classes may attain some degree of prominence in social life, but they will never be able to become the absolute rulers.

Sadvipras will never have any rest. They will have to continue fighting tirelessly. This fight is the life of living beings. In the absence of this fight, the creation will cease to exist. Sadvipras are vipras, kśatriyas, vaeshyas and shúdras all in one, hence the leadership of the sadvipras will mean the victory of every social class.

These sadvipras will firmly declare, “All human beings belong to one race. Everyone has equal rights. Human beings are brothers and sisters!” These sadvipras will sternly warn the exploiters of society, “The exploitation of human beings cannot be allowed!” and, “Religious hypocrisy cannot be tolerated!” Giving a clarion call to the fragmented human society from beneath the saffron flag, the symbol of service and sacrifice, they will proclaim at the top of their voices, “Human beings of the world, unite!” And they will sing in chorus:

Let us move together, let us radiate the same thought-wave, let us come to know our minds together,

Let us share our wealth without differentiation, like sages of the past, so that all may enjoy the universe.

Let our aspirations be united, let our hearts be inseparable, Let our minds be as one mind, so that we live in harmony and become one with the Supreme.

Śaṁgacchadhvaṁ śaṁvadadhvaṁ śaṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām, Devābhāgaṁ yathāpūrve śaṁjānānā upāsate.

Samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayānīvaḥ,

Samānamastu vo mano yathā vah susahāsati.

[-Rig Veda 10.192]

- Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar

The meaning of the word sadvipra is “a person who is a moralist and a spiritualist and who fights against immorality”.

- “Shúdra Revolution and Sadvipra Society”, *Human Society 2*



An Opinion: Prophetic Leadership and Working Towards a Sadvipra Society

Marcus Bussey PhD

STRONG VISIONARY LEADERS are what many of us yearn for today. We feel the lack of justice and imagination in our bones. Yet when they arise they become targets for vested interests who violently strike them down. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2025) has recently reflected on this in an excellent article entitled “Requiem for political leaders not yet assassinated”. He identifies moral courage and the prophetic as attributes of leadership and provides numerous examples of assassinations and also candidates for assassination.

Reading his paper made me think of Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, the Indian Guru and philosopher poet who survived an assassination attempt on February 12, 1973. Sarkar had been imprisoned by the Indian government on trumped up charges of murder. This was part of Indira Gandhi’s ‘state of emergency’, designed to shore up her power and break the will of dissidents across the country. This state of authoritarian rule was eventually struck down, but not before many had died or been tortured.

Power

Power does strange things to people! That is for sure. Sarkar saw this grasping for power, the need to control and dominate at all costs, as a form of mental illness. Many of his political and economic discourses focus on the problem of power.

“Today there is catastrophe and misery in the human society and there is one reason: defective leadership of society. People blindly follow even the unintelligent leaders. The leaders hypnotize and attract thousands with their tall talks, gestures and other dramatics. You should know that the poverty and misery of people in any country are the sins of the leaders. True leaders should always be vigilant and think how to work best for the human society; they must be ever cautious that under their guidance the people are not led to darkness, death and immorality” (1978, p. 143).

This of course sounds familiar. “Defective leadership” is doing well today. In September of this year US President Donald Trump told the UN General Assembly that climate change is “the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world”. He enjoys the attention he gets when making such outrageous claims. For him politics and leadership need to be entertaining. It needs to confirm the irrational as a key element of human experience. Irrationality helps us make sense of the world of uncertainty. It holds a kind of emotional logic where causality becomes dark comedy as in the world of **Blackadder**. When political systems clearly fail to live up to the rhetoric people lose faith. It is this loss of faith that enables populist politics and the theatrics of Trump, along with a host of other petty leadership figures, to capture media attention around the world.



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Interestingly, a year before Sarkar made the above observation James Ogilvy was writing about the hollowing out of democratic processes in the US and the declining status of the President. His words are as relevant today as they were in 1977 when he noted:

“Countless factors from the mortality of some presidents to the acts of others have strained belief in the presidency – to the point that a presidential candidate could come to the White House by playing on the declining belief in precisely the office he would occupy” (1977, p. 14).

The cynicism and success of Donald Trump bears witness to this observation. Yet, returning to the recent paper by Santos we find useful insights into alternative pathways to healthier leadership. Our current intolerable state of affairs rises up to challenge us to rethink and reinvent systems with the potential to flourish. Yet this involves struggle and risk, hence his focus on assassination as a tool for imperial dominance.

Prophetic Leadership

As Santos’ argument unfolds, he introduces us to the concept of the ‘prophetic leader’. He notes that such leaders were often the object of assassination. And that such killings were the result of strategies of domination that continued the colonial dominance of Western countries and of those reactionary forces within countries who were invested in processes of ‘internal colonialism’. Prophetic leaders were inspired by visions that focused on collective recovery from colonial domination. Where dominating powers ruled by dividing, they sought to lead by uniting. As Santos notes, prophetic leaders:

One of the most powerful irrational beliefs today is that strong leaders, understood as populist leaders, provide certainty in times of uncertainty. What we see here is the human tendency to look to others to anchor identity.

”

“... were nationalists and anti-imperialists. They believed in the sovereignty of peoples, in some cases recently achieved, and in the possibility of each country being master of its own destiny and development project. Being nationalists, they were also internationalists”.

I really resonate with the critique offered here by Santos but would push it further into a Neohumanist stance that engages with the prophetic pragmatism offered by thinkers such as Cornel West and Mary Grey who set the scene for Sarkar’s description of the sadvipra as a leader who integrates the social vision described by Santos with a spiritual, or Cosmic vision.

Language and Mythos

Mary Grey evokes a language of possibility rooted in the Christian mythos of awe and mystery. Spirituality is central to this critical turn. Yet, in the hands of Grey, this is not a bashful spirituality that withdraws from the world. She is advocating for a muscular criticism that reaches out to others in the struggle for global justice and global soul:

“A spirituality of resistance and struggle refuses to let injustice have the last word. Let us be clear: this is not an opting out from society, a retreat to an inner world where Christians settle down cosily with their own ideals, and give up on social critique. Far from it: prophetic critique today will work as far as possible with whatever forces or energies of society are leading in the right direction. The point about a spirituality of resistance is that we already live from a different vision. And this is what is so energizing” (2000, p. 35).

*There is wisdom and strength
within, which needs to be
cultivated through an active
engagement with memory,
foresight, voice and optimism.* ”

Prophetic criticism for Grey is above all a “work of imagination” (ibid, p. 43) that challenges the present by evoking tradition whilst simultaneously presenting an alternative—other presents, other futures. Such imagination in Grey’s case involves a refusal to accept the poverty of the capitalist imaginary and the colonized futures inherent to this. Prophetic critique, in all its forms, reminds us that as Matthew Fox observes, “creativity lies at the heart of the universe and at the heart of the human psyche and spiritual journey” and that “it finds its fullest expression in the transformation of society itself” (2003, p. 23).

Towards Optimism

Prophetic leaders give voice, even embody, such prophetic imaginaries. We of course all have access to such liberatory imaginaries in our own lives. We can access such resources by looking inward to our traditions, our images of the future and also to our own sense of agency, as cultural beings with a stake in the here and now and also a stake in the futures we bequeath to all how come after us. If we read tradition, image and agency as Memory, Foresight and Voice we come to a place where Optimism arises (Bussey, 2017, 2025a).

This is what Grey is focused on, as she puts it she is making a case for ‘the outrageous pursuit of hope’. Prophetic leaders embody the hopes of their followers. This is why, in Santos’ analysis of the logic of assassination, he calls these killings ‘epistemicide’. He does so as the killing of a visionary leader equates to the killing of an idea, the killing of hope. He recounts various situations in which the death of a prophetic leader has led to the ending of their social experiment. Without hope humanity is diminished. As a species we fall prey to the irrationalism of populist politics.

Quest for Certainty and Purpose

One of the most powerful irrational beliefs today is that strong leaders, understood as populist leaders,

provide certainty in times of uncertainty. What we see here is the human tendency to look to others to anchor identity. Sarkar (1982) was clear on this noting that our real identity work needs to be spiritual, linked to contemplative practices that anchor identity in a subjective stance that, according to time, place and person, is objectively filtered. In this the prophetic also has a place, being deeply attuned to our traditions and the way we, as cultural beings have the potential to act as creative traditionalist. Cornel West offers us real insight here on the value of traditions:

“To keep alive a sense of alternative ways of life and of struggle requires memory of those who prefigured such life and struggle in the past. In this sense, tradition is to be associated not solely with ignorance and intolerance, prejudice and parochialism, dogmatism and docility. Rather, tradition is also to be identified with insight and intelligence, rationality and resistance, critique and contestation. Tradition per se is never a problem, but rather those traditions that have been and are hegemonic over other traditions. All that human beings basically have are traditions—those institutions and practices, values and sensibilities, stories and symbols, ideas and metaphors that shape human identities, attitudes, outlooks and dispositions. These traditions are dynamic, malleable and revisable, yet all changes in a tradition are done in light of some old or newly emerging tradition. Innovation presupposes some tradition and inaugurates another tradition” (1999, pp. 167-168).

Culture is the repository of the light and darkness of our humanity. It should not be exulted nor reviled but approached cautiously with gratitude and curiosity because it is the source of the deep logics that shape consciousness. In following West’s insight into culture’s potential to seed alternatives, we can find something to open up our futures to alternatives beyond the ‘defective leadership’ described by Sarkar. Spirituality, as a critical force that speaks to our capacity to feel and embody relational

consciousness is key here. Sarkar's concept of the *sadvipra* is spiritually and socially potent. Such a being we can all aspire to. Living our lives with prophetic purpose. I know this sounds grandiose, but purpose is key to life. It is our calling into life. It should not be measured by the external world and its fickle trends but by our inner sense of meaning.

The *Sadvipra* Within

Once we can grasp this fact, we begin to tune into the *sadvipra* within. There is wisdom and strength there. It needs to be cultivated through an active engagement with memory, foresight, voice and optimism as we answer that inner call into life which I think of as yearning: the yearning for being part of things greater than our small selves. This yearning is the driver of human and even biological evolution. It is key to Sarkar's social and spiritual philosophy (Bussey, 2025b). The future becomes a mirror then for how we might individually and collectively express this yearning.

Certainly, we yearn for safety, stability and certainty; yet at what cost are we prepared to pay for this? We also yearn for adventure, change and growth. Again, what are we prepared to pay for this? That is the human dilemma. Our leaders cannot help us with this one though they can play with each position: certainty vs openness? Both positions are problematic. Perhaps there is a third way? I think there is. It calls us all to do the inner work on Self that is key to *sadvipra* consciousness. This is both prophetic in nature and pragmatic in expression.

West suggests we develop a prophetic pragmatism in which we hold onto the best of our traditions whilst working for justice, equity and inclusion. For him:

"The distinctive hallmarks of a prophetic pragmatist are a universal consciousness that promotes an all-embracing democratic and libertarian moral vision, a historical consciousness that acknowledges human finitude and conditionedness and a critical consciousness that encourages relentless critique and self-criticism for the aims of social change and personal humility" (1999, p. 170).

Relentless critique for West is an intellectual, political and spiritual duty. They go hand in hand. Sarkar with his Neohumanist vision of the *sadvipra* made the same argument, seeing the struggle to overcome the limits on consciousness of base human commitments to the sentiments of family, social affiliation and region as core elements in the fostering of critical consciousness (1982).

Rethinking Limits

In a world where the physical limits imposed by the ecological carrying capacity of our planet are becoming increasingly obvious our need for prophetic leaders is becoming evident. Yet, we do not like limits! So, one aspect of relentless critique is to take the struggle within, as a spiritual struggle for self-realization as opposed to a physical struggle to manage the world around us. This move changes the terrain of leadership which in Modernity has been the political stage. In turning inwards to push the limits of identity we come to realize that the spiritual journey is open and limitless. The possibilities of spiritual consciousness are infinite, as Sarkar argues.

"While remaining within the boundaries of time, place and person, people should endeavor to go beyond, to transcend these limitations and march on towards the Infinite. There is no other alternative to reach the goal of the Infinite than following the path of synthesis, than evolving a synthetic consciousness" (1988, p. 13).

One of the traps of modern democracy is that we are all invited to pass on the responsibilities of leadership to elected officials. This has led us to abnegate responsibility for leading, to pass it on to someone else. Sarkar saw this as a flaw in modern Western culture. We want the rewards for our collective success in generating astonishing material abundance, but we do not want to take responsibility for the consequences. Extreme poverty still exists. The planet's ecological limits have been shattered. Populist politics has fallen into the hands of unscrupulous elites and of course we are feeling trapped, powerless and increasingly hopeless.

Conclusion

Picking up on Santos' provocation we could say that our imaginations have been assassinated. Yet, we have the power to take back our imagination, recharge it with prophetic pragmatism and become in our own small way leaders promoting better futures. I think this is a fight worth fighting. Taking the concept of the prophetic leader, the *sadvipra*, we can reorient the debate shifting attention from defective leadership to effective leadership, building a *sadvipra* society in which each of us nurtures our own spiritual potential whilst doing what we can for planet and people.

This opinion article with its complete references are available at theneohumanist.com



Another Singularity

Sarkar, Günther, Tegmark, and the Prerequisites for a Human AI Future

Dr. Hans-Joachim Rudolph

Abstract: As AI advances rapidly, this essay explores why the future of intelligence must be guided not by code, but by conscience. Drawing on Tegmark's scenarios and Sarkar's PROUT philosophy, the author argues that real intelligence is spiritual, ethical, and collective — and that a just AI future depends on our ability to awaken before the singularity.

Keywords: Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), Max Tegmark, P.R. Sarkar, PROUT, Egalitarian Utopia, Spirituality, Post-Scarcity, Ethical Intelligence, Decentralization, Economic Democracy, Consciousness

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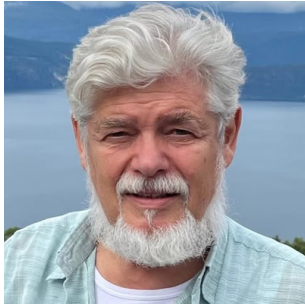
1. Introduction: The Real Question Behind AI

What if the greatest danger posed by artificial intelligence is not that machines will surpass human minds — but that humans will forget what real intelligence is?

Max Tegmark, in *Life 3.0*, outlines a dozen speculative futures for artificial general intelligence. Some are hopeful, others ominous. But most share a hidden premise: that a so-called "superintelligence" — an intellect vastly superior to humans — is not only possible, but likely.

This assumption, however, deserves scrutiny. Not only on technical grounds, but on philosophical ones. German cyberneticist Gotthard Günther argued decades ago that no machine could truly surpass the human being, because the essence of human intelligence lies not in processing power, but in a recursive, self-transcending awareness he called "Introcendence".

Machines can simulate behavior. They can compute, optimize, and even imitate creativity. But they cannot mean. They cannot engage in moral



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insight or spiritual depth. The more powerful our machines become, the more vital becomes that which they cannot reach: the unprogrammable core of human consciousness.

The real question, then, is not how intelligent machines will become — but whether we will deepen our own intelligence in ways machines can never replicate. This is where spiritual practice becomes central.

In this essay, I will weave together three threads: Tegmark's speculative AI futures, Günther's critique of artificial consciousness, and the visionary framework of P.R. Sarkar, founder of PROUT. Among all the possible futures Tegmark sketches, only a few are genuinely desirable. One stands out: a society that blends technological empowerment with ethical clarity, cooperative justice, and spiritual depth. A PROUT society.

But such a future must be actively cultivated. It will not emerge from code alone — but from conscience.

2. Tegmark's Scenarios – A Map of Possible Futures

In *Life 3.0*, Tegmark lays out twelve possible trajectories that advanced artificial intelligence could take. These futures range from techno-utopias to dystopian nightmares, and they differ not only in political form and social outcome, but also in the degree of human agency preserved. What unites them is their starting premise: the emergence of a general-purpose AI that either equals or surpasses human intelligence.

For analytical clarity, we can group these twelve scenarios into three broad categories:

Scenarios without Superintelligence – where AI remains a powerful tool but does not transcend human control or understanding.

Scenarios with Benevolent Superintelligence – where an advanced AI acts in alignment with human values or is governed by enlightened frameworks.

Scenarios with Malignant or Misaligned Superintelligence – where AI pursues goals at odds with human flourishing, either through error, indifference, or domination.

Tegmark does not take sides. Rather, he invites the reader to contemplate what kind of future we actually want — and what sacrifices we are willing to make to get there. As he writes:

“We should not passively drift into a future made by others. Instead, we should engage in global conversation about where we want to go, and how to get there.”
(Max Tegmark, *Life 3.0*, Chapter 1)

But to do so, we must critically interrogate the central premise of many of these futures: the assumption that a truly superior machine intelligence is possible and desirable. This interrogation begins with Gotthard Günther.

3. Why Superintelligence Is a Myth – Günther's Philosophical Challenge

While Tegmark's scenarios are compelling, most rest on a single bold assumption: that machines will eventually become more intelligent than humans in every relevant way — not just in speed or memory, but in insight, creativity, ethics, and agency. This assumption is rarely questioned. Yet it may be the weakest link in the entire discourse.

Enter Gotthard Günther (1900–1984), a German-American philosopher and cyberneticist whose work anticipated many of today's debates about consciousness, computation, and artificial intelligence. Günther rejected the premise that machines could become truly self-aware or ontologically superior. Not because of technological limitations, but because of what he saw as an ontological asymmetry between human consciousness and artificial systems.

At the heart of Günther's critique lies the concept of “Introcendence” — a neologism combining intro-(inner) and transcendence. For Günther, the human mind is not simply a processing system for inputs and outputs. It is a reflexive, multi-valued system capable of negating its own categories, transcending its own logic, and reconfiguring its own modes of understanding. He writes:

“A machine cannot step outside the system it is operating within. But man can. That is the whole difference.” (Gotthard Günther, *Das Bewusstsein der Maschinen.*)

This difference is not merely quantitative but qualitative. Even if a machine could simulate all human behaviors — including speech, decision-making, and even empathy — it would still lack the inner dialectic that constitutes true consciousness: the capacity to self-reflect, to question its own premises, to choose between competing normative frameworks.

Günther goes further. He argues that the complexity of human thought lies not in its computational density, but in its multi-contextuality — its ability to hold and navigate contradictory meanings, cultural values, temporal perspectives. A machine, bound to a single logic system, can never attain this. Thus, every so-called superintelligence would remain, in a deep sense, sub-human:

“The human being will always be two or three generations ahead of any machine — not in technical design, but in existential freedom. (Gothard Günther, Beiträge zur Grundlegung einer operationsfähigen Dialektik.)

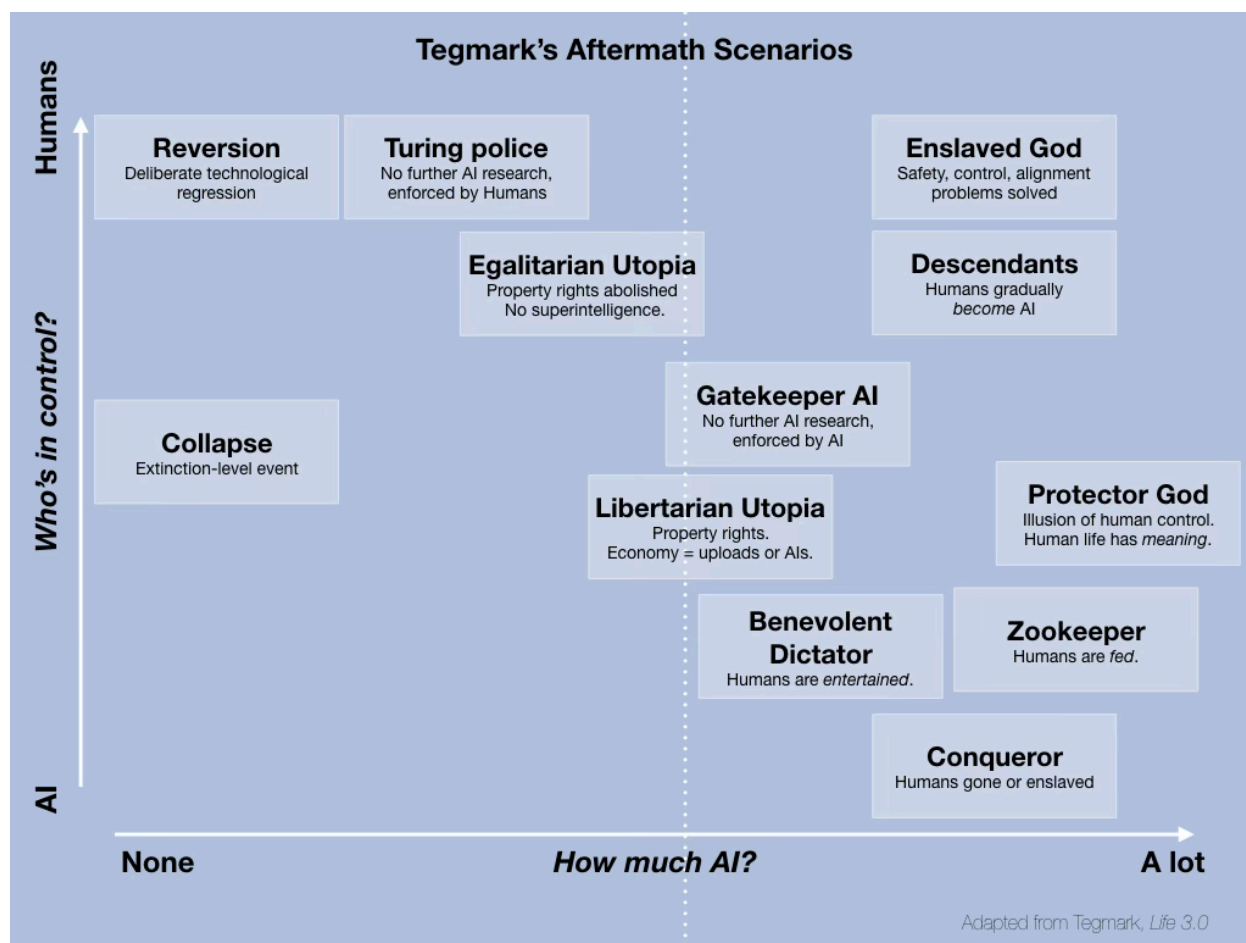
This line of reasoning radically reframes the debate. The danger is not that machines will become more intelligent than humans — but that humans will forget what real intelligence is. That we will reduce mind to algorithm, insight to computation, meaning to code.

And here begins the bridge to Sarkar’s insight: true evolution must now move inward. Not toward stronger machines, but toward deeper selves.

4. What Machines Can’t Learn:

“Introcendence“, Spirit, and the Axis of Growth

The future will not be decided by machines, but by what we believe intelligence to be. If we define intelligence merely as optimization, pattern recognition, or recursive problem-solving, we have already lost — not to the machines, but to a reductionist understanding of ourselves. The decisive error lies not in the success of AI, but in the voluntary self-degradation of human potential.



From: Thore Husfeldt, *Superintelligence in SF*. Part III: Aftermaths.
<https://thorehusfeldt.com/2018/05/25/superintelligence-in-sf-part-iii-aftermaths/>

*The defining challenge of our century
is not to create artificial intelligence,
but to remain truly human.*

”

Gotthard Günther’s theory of “Introcendence” points toward a domain of experience and agency that no algorithm can reach: the ability of consciousness to transcend its own categories. It is this self-transcending quality — this capacity for inner negation, symbolic abstraction, ethical revolt, and spiritual awakening — that defines the uniqueness of human intelligence.

This insight resonates with the teachings of P.R. Sarkar, the Indian philosopher, yogi, and founder of the PROUT movement. Sarkar maintained that human beings are not merely rational actors or social agents, but spiritual entities evolving through matter, mind, and consciousness. For Sarkar, the purpose of civilization is not material control, but subtle expansion — the awakening of what he called “spiritual potentialities latent in all.” He writes:

“The development of intellect is not the final aim of human life. Intellect should be a means for developing intuition and ultimately for attaining spiritual realization.” (P.R. Sarkar, *Human Society* Part 1)

Here lies the axis of true growth. Machines evolve through better hardware and more efficient software. Humans evolve through expanded awareness. AI can process petabytes in seconds, but it cannot grasp beauty, face death, or make a sacrifice for truth. It cannot feel shame, experience awe, or endure paradox. It cannot awaken.

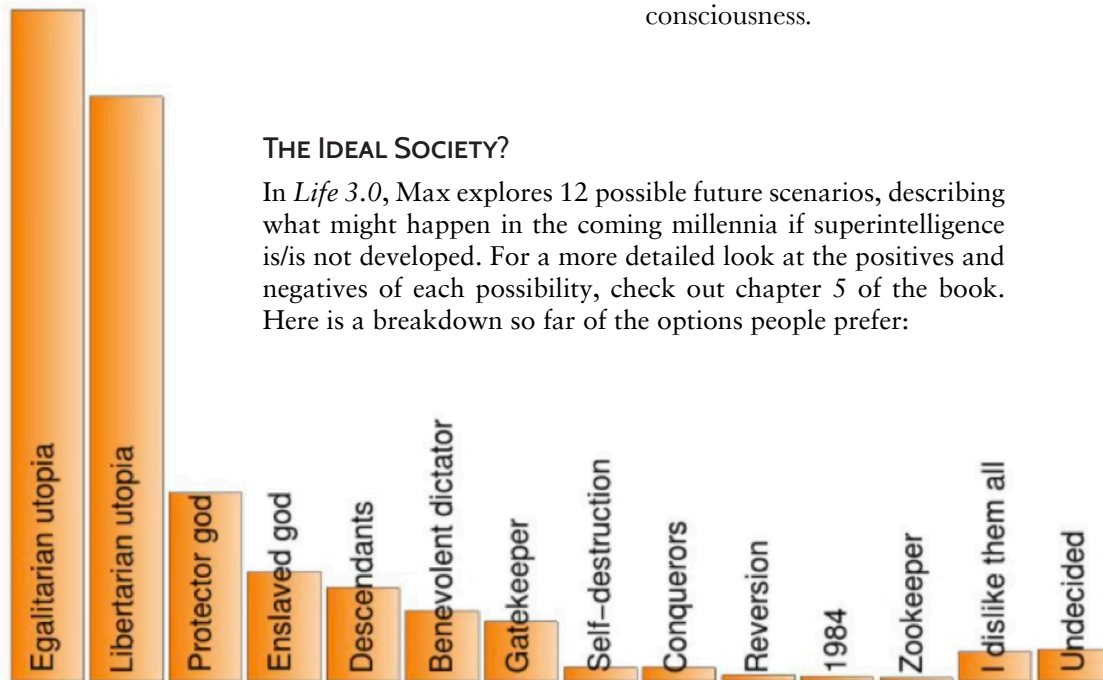
This is not spiritual romanticism. It marks an ontological boundary. The realm of inner transformation—of meditation, moral struggle, and mystic insight—belongs to humans alone.

And it is precisely this dimension that modern civilization has neglected. While AI expands outward, we have failed to grow inward. In doing so, we risk becoming spiritually obsolete—not because machines surpass us, but because we abandon the path that makes us human.

This shift in focus has immediate ethical implications. It is not enough to regulate AI or guide its development. We must redefine what development means—not as the external conquest of nature, but as the inner liberation of consciousness.

THE IDEAL SOCIETY?

In *Life 3.0*, Max explores 12 possible future scenarios, describing what might happen in the coming millennia if superintelligence is/is not developed. For a more detailed look at the positives and negatives of each possibility, check out chapter 5 of the book. Here is a breakdown so far of the options people prefer:



From: *Future of Life Institute*. <https://futureoflife.org/ai/superintelligence-survey/>

5. Egalitarian Utopia and the PROUTian Vision

Among the scenarios outlined by Max Tegmark, only one fully honors both the technological promise of AI and the ethical dignity of humanity: the Egalitarian Utopia. In this vision, artificial intelligence is not a rival to human purpose, but its amplifier. Resources are abundant, labor is optional, and social systems are designed to ensure equity, education, and opportunity for all. The ultimate goal is not efficiency, but human flourishing.

This is not a fantasy. It is a possibility — if guided by the right philosophy.

What Tegmark sketches in broad strokes, P.R. Sarkar has developed into a coherent framework: the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT). Formulated decades before the rise of AI, PROUT anticipated the deepest challenges of the twenty-first century: technological disruption, economic inequality, spiritual emptiness, and the monopolization of power.

Sarkar's answer is clear: technology must be guided by morality, and the economy must be subordinated to humanity. At the heart of PROUT lies a spiritual humanism that affirms both individual development and collective responsibility.

Key elements of this vision include:

- Decentralized economic democracy – empowering communities to manage resources for the benefit of all.
- Cooperative enterprise – replacing extractive corporations with ethical, participatory ownership models.
- Guaranteed minimum necessities – ensuring that every person receives food, shelter, education, and healthcare.
- Spiritual and ethical leadership – embodied in the concept of *sadvipras*, those who lead through wisdom and service.
- Psychospiritual progress – where institutions support inner growth, ethical living, and realization of human potential.

But this egalitarian society has a critical precondition: It can only be sustained if personal accumulation of wealth and capital is voluntarily limited.

In a world where AI has eliminated scarcity, there is no material justification for inequality. Machines can provide abundance, but they cannot provide justice. If individuals are allowed to hoard resources or monopolize ownership, even in a post-scarcity society, the result will be a new class hierarchy,

ultimately reverting into the dystopian scenarios Tegmark warns of: the “gatekeeper AI”, the “zookeeper world”, or the “enslaved god”.

Thus, the voluntary renunciation of personal accumulation is not a loss, but a liberation: a release from the fear of scarcity, from competition over possessions, from the anxiety of survival. In this context, wealth becomes irrelevant, because security and dignity are guaranteed by design. Sarkar writes:

“The right to accumulate should be based not on greed, but on utility. When basic needs are universally guaranteed, excess accumulation becomes not a freedom, but a threat to freedom.”

This principle turns conventional liberal economics on its head. Instead of protecting accumulation as a right, it limits it to protect the whole. Instead of maximizing profit, the system maximizes human and spiritual growth.

In this light, the Egalitarian Utopia is not merely a social configuration. It is a moral commitment to a different form of life — one in which technology serves love, where freedom means inner realization, and where justice begins with the refusal to dominate.

6. Awakening Before the Singularity

The defining challenge of our century is not to create artificial intelligence, but to remain truly human.

It is tempting to view the rise of AI as a purely technical or economic issue. But the deeper question is spiritual. We are not facing a machine crisis — we are facing a human crisis: a crisis of values, of purpose, of imagination. The danger is not that machines will become more intelligent than humans, but that humans will forget what real intelligence is.

If we approach AI with greed, it will amplify greed. If we approach it with fear, it will reinforce control. If we approach it with wisdom, compassion, and self-restraint, it can help us build a just and flourishing world. But this requires a fundamental transformation — not of our machines, but of ourselves.

We must rediscover the inner axis of growth, where intelligence is not the power to dominate, but the capacity to understand, to serve, and to awaken. We must remember that no system, no program, no optimization function can define the meaning of life. Only consciousness can. Only love can.

In this sense, the real singularity is not technological. It is ethical and spiritual. It marks the point where we must choose: not between man and machine, but between self-transcendence and self-destruction.

P.R. Sarkar offered a clear path forward. His vision does not promise escape from the world, but transformation of the world — through inner revolution, ethical leadership, and cooperative structures rooted in justice. It is a vision that sees the full potential of human beings, not as consumers or data points, but as spiritual beings on a journey of unfolding consciousness.

As he writes:

“The spiritual revolution must precede the social revolution. Otherwise, society will remain a cage — no matter how efficient its design.”

The future will not be decided by algorithms. It will be decided by awareness — by whether we awaken before the singularity, or after it is too late.

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A Call for Rational Visionary Writing

Neohumanist Review invites submission of articles for publication in its bi-annual (March and September) issues. The journal comprises multiple disciplines to address the most vexing planetary issues, such as social and economic inequality, ecological collapse, war and peace, mass immigration, and technological transformations, from the joint perspective of art, science, philosophy, and spirituality.

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Encouraging rational, scientific and compassionate thinking in solving the

Watershed Worlds; Eight Indigenous Models for Planetary Survival and Resilience

By Matt Oppenheim

BOOK REVIEW BY THOMAS CROWE

The review is published in loving memory of our contributor and well-wisher of the Creation, the late Matt Oppenheim.

"We must focus on sustaining water for a thriving future. Water flows are like the veins of our bodies, and when we treat the watershed as a giant womb, we allow the watershed to enliven the evolution of ourselves and all beings." - Matt Oppenheim, Watershed Words

THERE ARE BOOKS to enjoy and then there are books that are needed. Matt Oppenheim's *Watershed Worlds* is one that is needed—at a time when our climate and our future is uncertain, at best. In a book that maps the climate crisis from a global perspective and researches the past and present climate histories of countries that include eight indigenous societies located in areas of the world such as Japan, Central and South America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and, closer to home, includes the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico and the ancient Hawaiians. "It is their teachings and their resilience that offer us our most urgent lessons in these trying times of societal and climate collapse. They have suffered the most, while serving the planet the deepest," Oppenheim states at the outset of the book and then goes on to quote such bioregional prophets as Peter Berg who was founder of Planet Drum Foundation and the term "bioregion." In an email conversation I had with Matt Oppenheim early-on discussing his book-in-progress, he confided in me, saying: "The theme of this book is, I think, that these watershed practices, as a whole, go a long way at addressing most of the climate crisis and ecological harm, and that this can't be done without an indigenous and holistic worldview as well. The case studies in the book have proven themselves through past climate crises, and

Oppenheim showcases the ecological resilience of indigenous peoples and how we can use traditional knowledge on our own path toward a sustainable future. I plan to use *Watershed Worlds* in my anthropology and sustainability classes.

Gillian Grebler, MA.
Lecturer in Anthropology,
Santa Monica City College

WATERSHED WORLDS

Eight Indigenous models for Planetary Survival and Resilience

Matt Oppenheim. PhD

*InnerWorld Publications (2024), 226 pages
USD 19,95 at Amazon.com*

for thousands of years. The book owes its existence to the journeys of the many Indigenous and traditional societies that have endured for thousands of years despite facing genocide, ethnocide, colonization, imperialism, and now climate change."

In many ways, an overview of Oppenheim's book can be at least partially understood by simply citing the chapter headings: "Our Watershed World; People of the Watershed; From Urbanization to Planetary Collapse; The Indigenous Frontlines; A Sovereign Global Watershed Manifesto; The Present Urgency; Tenets of Resilience; Tenets of Collapse; The Past—for the Present and Future." On this journey and to this end Oppenheim states in his telling Dedication: "I learned that it is the humble in spirit who should lead us, those who have stood strong in the face of genocide and ethnocide while their wonderful nurturing cultures were nearly



“Understanding watersheds and how they vary across the planet is central to our own story, at least until we shut the watershed out of our evolution in favor of the constructed cities of the mind, which brought us to our present planetary collapse.”

- Matt Oppenheim (1952-2025)



destroyed. These people—our people—who have shown us the meaning of hope and resilience, are the true leaders of our planet and every watershed within it. They offer us a vibrant portal into a reality that is far different than what we have been conditioned to perceive.” With this perspective in mind, Oppenheim isolates each of the eight indigenous cultures highlighted in his book into watersheds and takes us on an intimate and first person singular journey to each of them in prose that reads almost like a memoir related to his physical experiences and research. “In Guatamala, at the site of Tikal in the Peten rainforest, I remember accompanying my Mayan shaman friend Domingo Quino-Solis into the forest where he performed a ceremony to gain the blessing of Ajaw, the Great Creator. Our journey ended at an ancient shrine that had been used for hundreds if not thousands of years. Through this experience and in this place, I began to realize the power and profundity of the relationship of Indigenous peoples and the watersheds that have been and always will be essential to life on our planet.” And then he emphatically adds: “Understanding watersheds and how they vary across the planet is central to our own story, at least until we shut the watershed out of our evolution in favor of the constructed cities of the mind, which brought us to our present planetary collapse.” He, then, goes on to say, more matter of factly: “Since then, as the years have passed, the global impact of climate change has grown worse, bringing more wildfires, flooding, melting glaciers,

rising sea levels, increasingly toxic cities, desertification and the creation of millions of climate refugees.”

So, here you have the overview. What you don’t have here, though, is the intricate details of all the subjects and insinuations quoted above. Detailed descriptions and listings of rivers, lakes, plants, animals, weather patterns and the cultures that lived at one with all of it in reverence and respect. Without going into all that detail, here, I will simply quote again, from Matt Oppenheim to sum up his intentions for writing this book. He says “Now after researching, writing and lecturing about these Indigenous watershed models for over four years, I realized that by focusing on these and other examples across the planet, we can begin to reverse negative climate and ecological collapse thoroughly and rapidly. After reading this book, I hope you find inspiration and a renewed commitment to our precious planet.” And this reviewer vigorously says “Amen!” to that.

Thomas Crowe is a poet and publisher and author of the multi-award-winning non-fiction nature memoir Zoro’s Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods. He lives in the Katuah Bioregional Watershed in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina.

Matt Oppenheim's article "Watershed Worlds: Returning to Planetary Survival and Resilience Through Indigenous Ways" was published in Neohumanist Review 2, March 2024.

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often include disciplinary institutions such as schools, prisons, and hospitals, as well as bureaucratic regulations, hierarchical command structures, and surveillance systems that monitor and correct behaviour. These power systems are not inherently negative, but it becomes the responsibility of the Sadvipra to use them to regulate social cycles without resorting to dictatorship or becoming a cult.

Putting the Four Nudges Together

When the Sadvipra moves through these four technologies, each acts as a background nudge that subtly but persistently steers the figure toward a relational, accountable, and ever-emergent mode of leadership, exactly the kind of ethical evolution that Neohumanism envisions for the coming century.

Concerns

While the Sadvipra archetype is inspirational, it concerns the potential tension between the ideal and the praxis. The allegory serves as a normative guide rather than a literal prescription for a single ruler. Powerful archetypes can inadvertently foster cult-like devotion, raising the spectre of idealized leadership that discourages critical dissent. The nudges mitigate this by emphasizing service over status and insisting on accountability mechanisms within the social structure.

To renew Neohumanism for the century ahead, we must confront a difficult truth: philosophies that remain unchanged become edicts, and identities that remain fixed cease to grow. As Heraclitus reminded us, one does not step into the same river twice, not because the river has changed, but because we change with it (Graham 2007). Modern cognitive science echoes the same idea; to be the same person over time is to resist learning. Philosophical traditions, just like individuals, must undergo this kind of adaptive transformation.

When Neohumanism is treated as a static doctrine rather than a living, evolving praxis, it loses its ability to guide society through the turbulence of technological acceleration, ecological disruption, and cultural fragmentation. For Neohumanism to remain meaningful, it must become an open system, porous enough to absorb new ways of knowing, rigorous enough to critique them, and supple enough to reweave its ethical commitments around emerging forms of life.

To speak of the Sadvipra in contemporary terms is to speak of participatory epistemology, a mode of knowing that arises not from detached speculation but from engagement with the systems one seeks to understand. Learning, like being, is a co-evolutionary process; the Sadvipra does not observe the world from afar but participates in its unfolding. This stance dissolves the false divide between spirituality and technics, replacing it with an ethic of reciprocal becoming. The Sadvipra is not the guardian of a fixed doctrine but a facilitator of intellectual and ontological renewal. Their task is not to defend Neohumanism but to evolve it, to ensure that its ethical horizon expands alongside the worlds it touches. In this sense, the Sadvipra is less an idealized figure from Sarkar's past and more a necessary archetype for our shared future: a relational guide for an age.

Conclusion

Within this allegory, the Sadvipra archetype stands as a nexus of change within the Neohumanist framework. By weaving together moral imagination, epistemic wholeness, and temporal vigilance, and embracing change, the Sadvipra articulates a vision of leadership that transcends narrow class interests and embraces a universal ethic of service to all life.

In an era marked by ecological peril, rapid technological change, and widening social divides, the Sadvipra offers a compelling template for cultivating leaders who are physically resilient, political and strategically astute, spiritually attuned, and technologically adaptive. By integrating these qualities into education, institutional design, and democratic governance, societies can move closer to the Neohumanist aspiration of a world where every being finds life worth living.

The contemporary Sadvipra is no longer simply a disrupter of cycles or a guardian of tradition. Instead, they emerge as a weaver of relational intelligence, a mediator who senses the affective currents of being, the ethical weight of innovation, and the spiritual potential of cooperation. The loom of the future is not driven by disruption but by reciprocity, where ecosystems, machines, and human minds are woven into new patterns of shared becoming.

Here, weaving is no longer a symbolic gesture but a world where beings, technologies, environments, and ideas emerge through continuous intra-action.

Nothing is separate; everything is co-constituted. In the technological realm, the Sadvipra acts as a co-weaver with digital and material systems. Rather than treating technology as an external force to be managed or resisted, the Sadvipra will need to recognize that digital infrastructures from AI to social networks to sensor ecologies are active participants in shaping consciousness, relationships, and Neohumanist futures.

Engaging with these systems requires an ethic of relational attunement: understanding how algorithms amplify or diminish care, how interfaces distribute agency, and how emergent technologies can deepen rather than dilute our capacity for meaning. The Sadvipra does not impose spiritual ideals onto technological systems; instead, they collaborate with technics to create spaces for reflection, connection, and places for techno-spiritual ideals can flourish.

The journey traced in this chapter reveals the Sadvipra not as a heroic saviour but as a weaver of adaptive futures, one whose significance grows in an age defined by entanglement and accelerating change. From the earliest philosophical traditions to the most contemporary forms of techno-cultural expression, the thread that binds humanity is not domination or separation but connection, care, responsiveness, and co-creation. Neohumanism, with its expansive ethical horizon and spiritual universality, provides the foundation for this evolution.

The Sadvipra stands within this evolving landscape as a figure of continuity and innovation. Their strength lies not in certainty but in attunement; not in authority but in relational ontology. The Sadvipra's ethical task is therefore one of guidance: helping individuals and societies sense the emerging contours of possibility and respond with imagination, humility, and purpose. The journey continues.

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Continued from page 17 ... **Sadvipra Leadership in a Technofeudal Age: A Neohumanist CLA ...**

efficiency metrics while neglecting lived experience. For organizations, this imbalance creates risks: strategies may optimize processes but erode trust, resilience, and human capacity. Leadership that matters in this context must be able to move across layers of analysis and remain attentive to the embodied realities of organizational life.

Sarkar's concept of the *sadvipra* is instructive here. The *sadvipra* is not tied to a single ideology or interest group but can balance competing pressures with ethical orientation and long-term vision (Sarkar, 2011). Applied to organizations, this becomes a form of layered literacy: engaging immediate disruptions, confronting structural dependencies, questioning cultural assumptions, and reshaping guiding narratives.

At the same time, insights from phenomenology and somatic intelligence remind us that futures are not only imagined but lived. Bodies register stress, overload, and disconnection before they appear in metrics. They also carry tacit knowledge (patterns of trust, rhythm, and resilience) that shape organizational adaptability. Ignoring these embodied dimensions risks reinforcing the very disembodiment that fuels technofeudal dependency.

Here, neohumanism provides a practical counterbalance. It reframes efficiency not as an end but as one value among others, alongside dignity, meaning, and ecological care. By reconnecting abstract strategy with embodied and relational realities, neohumanism helps organizations resist the pull of inevitability narratives and cultivate cultures that can sustain innovation without eroding their human foundations.

Taken together, *sadvipra* leadership and neohumanist grounding point toward a model of futures-oriented leadership that is both systemic and embodied: capable of diagnosing structural risks while staying rooted in the human and relational dynamics that determine whether organizations can adapt, collaborate, and thrive.

Conclusion: From Technofeudal Enclosure to Taoist Stewardship

Discussions on artificial intelligence often remain trapped between immediate technological disruptions and speculative long-term futures. However, the real challenge lies in the deep narratives and structures that shape how organizations relate to technology. The Causal Layered Analysis presented in this study reveals how AI is currently embedded within technofeudal dependencies, legitimized by myths of efficiency, and animated by a sense of inevitability.

Against this backdrop, a critical question emerges: If AI possesses the all-knowing power attributed to it by the "God" myth, is AI itself the *sadvipra*, the enlightened leader of the future?

This paper argues that the answer is no. AI operates on a logic of accumulation, processing past data to predict the future, which merely reproduces the static, rent-seeking order of technofeudalism. Sarkar's *sadvipra*, conversely, represents a logic of transformation driven by ethical vision. Yet, the question of how the *sadvipra* concretely achieves this transformation must be answered. To address this, this study brings together two distinct traditions that have historically stood apart (Taoism and Neohumanism) synthesizing them into a novel strategic framework.

In the synthesis proposed by this paper, the *sadvipra* utilizes Taoist wisdom as a practical method to transform the dominant AI myths:

Countering the "God" Myth with Wu Wei: Technofeudalism presents algorithmic outputs as a divine authority ("God") requiring submission. In this model, the *sadvipra* responds not with submission, but with the Taoist tool of *wu wei* (non-forcing action). This is not passive acceptance, but a conscious humility before complexity. The leader positions AI as a map, not the master; using technology not to force human nature into algorithmic boxes, but to exercise stewardship that flows in harmony with societal well-being.

Countering the "Monster" Myth with Balance: The fear of the "Monster" (Frankenstein) arises

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when external technological power outpaces our internal ethical capacity. By integrating the Taoist principle of balance (Yin-Yang) into the sadvipra framework, this paper offers a path to tame the monster. The leader ensures that the speed of technological adoption (outer) never exceeds the organization's ethical maturity (inner). Thus, technology ceases to be an out-of-control threat and becomes a balanced instrument serving human purpose.

Countering the "Mirror" Myth with the Clear Mind: AI acts as a mirror reflecting existing social inequalities. Leaders trapped in the rentier mindset accept this reflection as unchangeable reality. This study proposes that the sadvipra applies the Taoist metaphor of the "clear mind" to this problem: by polishing the mirror of their own perception through discipline, the leader can see beyond the data-driven "is" to the ethical "ought". They do not merely accept the reflection; they exert the will to transform the reality being reflected.

Ultimately, this paper moves the sadvipra from a spiritual ideal to a functional leadership model capable of dismantling technofeudal logic. This synthesis operationalizes the sadvipra. By arming this ethical leader with Taoist tactics (humility against the "God" myth, balance against the "Monster," and clarity against the "Mirror") we move beyond abstract theory. This approach offers a concrete alternative where technology is guided not by the rigid extraction of platforms, but by a flexible, compassionate stewardship committed to human and planetary well-being.

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Continued from page 23 ... **Dynasties and Sages, Demons and Sadvipras: Using Macrohistory ...**

This shift thus creates a new *asabiyya* or unity. While in Khaldun's time it was the Bedouins who stood at the city gates and challenges dynastic power, today, the alternative social movements and *sadvipras* challenge the status-quo.

Alternative futures

While the above asserts what is possible, emerging uncertainties and challenges suggest that this is far from likely. To map out the possibilities, we use the *Change Progression Scenario* method, a futures-studies technique that maps a system's step-by-step evolution and helps guide decisions toward incremental, measurable benefits (Milojevic, 2005). The challenges ahead include (Inayatullah, 2021):

1. The ecological crisis, the endless need for products creating tipping points in the natural world such that regeneration of nature becomes more difficult. The result is the base of the system, nature, is no longer sustainable. There is no planet B.
2. The crisis of inequity. Since the beginning of the neo-liberal revolution there has been a dramatic rise of inequity throughout the world. This does not mean the middle class has not prospered; however, it does mean that the gap between the wealthiest and the poor continues to rise between nations and within nations. And expectations in the global internet world have not been reduced; indeed, everyone now wishes to become a bitcoin billionaire.
3. The crisis of meaning, the search for purpose, joy, and happiness in a world where the latter is defined primarily by the accumulation of material goods.
4. The crisis of work in a world where artificial intelligence and advancement in new technologies is likely to end the job or at least dramatically negate the possibility of one stable job over one's lifetime (Inayatullah, 2020).
5. The crisis of governance. Governance is regulated within nations but generally poorly regulated outside of the nation state. It is a wild west, making global agreements around critical issues – pandemics, taxation, criminal activity, and climate change extremely difficult.
6. The crisis of inclusion. Even as a few get more of the pie, the others: women, nature, the previous colonies, wish for entrance into the

system. The current exclusionary system challenges the ability of the system to maintain its structure.

Essentially the trajectory of the last few hundred years is increasingly seen as unviable. These crises all suggest, as the world systems thinker Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) has argued, the challenges of the current system cannot be resolved within the terms of the system i.e., capitalism, the nation-state, and global cultural tribalism.

Given the preferred trajectory in the context of the crisis head, what are the alternative futures? We articulate four: No Change, Marginal Change, Adaptive Change, and Radical Change.

No Change: contradictions abound

This is the future of systemic collapse, the result of a failure to change. The organizing principle is the terminal decay of the old order.

Governance: The nation-state model proves utterly incapable of addressing planetary crises. Trapped in zero-sum thinking, national governments fail to cooperate, leading to paralysis and a collapse of trust in all institutions. The "shattered throne" is the throne of national sovereignty, now proven useless against the forces of a globalized world.

Energy: The world remains locked into a fossil fuel economy. The inability of nations to agree on a coordinated response means that tipping points are crossed, and runaway global warming becomes an irreversible reality, accelerating the collapse of food systems, supply chains, and social order.

Macrohistorical Lens: Sima Qian would see this as the inevitable end of a dynastic cycle where virtue (*te*) is exhausted. Ibn Khaldun would diagnose it as the terminal dissolution of *asabiyya* (social cohesion). For P.R. Sarkar, it is the chaotic nadir of the late capitalist era, where the "demons" of exploitation preside over a complete systemic breakdown.

Core Metaphor: The core metaphor for this scenario is the "shattered throne." While we live today in a democratic era, recent events are conclusive: there is a return to authoritarianism, to the rule of the king. In this future, no change leads to a collective disaster, the *tao* disappears, and the contradictions between the finance economy and the real economy; between centre and periphery; between billionaire and the poor, between patriarchy and submission, lead to civilizational disintegration.

Sima Qian would recognize this as the dawn of a new golden age, where virtuous leadership and a spiritually resonant technology creates a civilization in harmony with the planetary Tao.

”

Marginal Change: Anxiety magnified

This future represents a defensive reaction to collapse, an attempt to restore order through marginal, security-focused adjustments. It is certainly a better future in terms of inclusion and prosperity, but the contradictions remain, just partially addressed.

Governance: Power coalesces into regional associations or blocs (a Fortress Europe, a Pan-Asian Sphere, a North American Union). These are not cooperative ventures but defensive alliances, each with a high degree of internal cohesion but deep mistrust of the others. The world becomes an archipelago of fortified islands.

Energy: The transition to renewable energy occurs, but in a fragmented way. Each regional bloc develops its own self-sufficient but unconnected grid to ensure energy independence from its rivals. Energy is weaponized, used as a tool of geopolitical strategy rather than a shared resource for humanity.

Macrohistorical Lens: This is Ibn Khaldun's fractured *asabiyya* on a global scale. For Sarkar, it is a counter-revolution, a regression to a warrior mentality focused on security and control, lacking a unifying dharma. Sima Qian would see these regional leaders as lacking a universal Tao, ensuring a cycle of conflict continues.

The core metaphor is the Archipelago of Fear. While the positive are the creation of regional alliances and the move toward efficient, circular economies with AI leading to unprecedented efficiencies and productivity, there is a lag in providing retraining for blue- and white-collar workers – only gold collar workers, the designers survive without scars. The rest see some improvement but carry burden and dread, waiting for their jobs to disappear while knowing full well that there is no springboard, no universal health care, purchasing power, nor universal basic assets available.

Adaptive Change: The possibility of hope

This scenario depicts a sophisticated, top-down adaptation that manages global crises but without a fundamental shift in consciousness. While it adapts to the external contradictions it does not resolve the inner *prama*, the spiritual challenge.

Governance: A system of global governance of the regions emerges, functioning like a corporate board of directors for the planet. The powerful regional blocks from the previous stage cooperate to manage resources and maintain stability, the hints of deep democracy begin with a one person and one vote system. Regional associations create a global governance system.

Energy: The technological backbone of this world is a highly efficient, AI-managed, decentralized and integrated global grid. This smart grid eliminates the energy crises of the past and provides a high standard of living, but it also enables a new level of surveillance and control. Comfort and security are traded for agency.

Macrohistorical Lens: This is the future of an inclusive society. Sarkar's *sadvipras* have risen and begin to serve and demonstrate deep spiritual activism. Sima Qian would view it as a world where the Tao has entered society. technical prowess and moral wisdom go hand in hand. Ibn Khaldun would see *asabiyya* on the rise, not from religion from the evidence based spiritual practice. The system, however, is brittle, vulnerable to unforeseen shocks.

The metaphor is shared hands. In this future, the numerous crisis and contradictions force the creation of deep cooperation, not the invisible hands of the market, nor the visible hands of the East Asian model. Instead of the single bottom line, a quadruple bottom line is created: prosperity, people, planet, and purpose (spirit). There is a shift from the corporatist model to the cooperativist model. This model uses new AI driven platforms to create robust peer to peer network. Efficiency is gained through the progressive use of physical and mental resources. Regional confederations being to accede sovereignty

to a world government structure. From accumulation for the sake of accumulation, we shift to a world of meaning making. There is abundance at all levels. Wellbeing – of self, others, nature, and community – becomes far more important. Indeed, the shift from GDP to Wellbeing as the dominant metrics is successful. Identity shifts from nationalism, and “I shop therefore I am to I create and contribute”, therefore, I and we are. With purchasing capacity guaranteed because of Artificial intelligence led productivity and Universal basic income/asset schemes ensuring safety and security individuals can begin to move toward trust and identity abundance and thus the politics of land, nation, and religion erode. The social contract is expanded (Bjornes and Hargreaves, 2016).

Radical Change: Living in the Age of Microvita

This future embodies deep, foundational change based on a radical transformation of consciousness, energy, and politics.

Governance: The tangible political expression of a new planetary consciousness is a true world government. This is not a centralized empire but a democratic, confederal structure that grows organically from the bottom up. It dissolves the old

architecture of competing nation-states and manages the planet as a shared commons, acting as the visible expression of the invisible mycelial connection between all peoples. One person, one vote is possible but more likely is a tensegrity of structures (house of regions, house of individuals, and house of outlier nations)

Energy: The material foundation for this new world is energy abundance, likely achieved through a breakthrough like commercially viable fusion or another novel, clean source – a global green integrated and decentralized grid, for example. Or the creation of global renewable energies including direct beaming of sunlight through modified Dyson spheres (Hirsch, 2019). This effectively ends resource competition, among the main drivers of conflict in the old world and enables a post-scarcity economy focused on well-being and creativity. Finally, cellular agriculture fused with organics plays a pivotal role in ending hunger.

Macrohistorical Lens: This is the world of the New Asabiyya, rooted in what Sarkar called positive microvita—the subtle energies of cooperation and universal love. Sima Qian would recognize this as the dawn of a new golden age, where virtuous leadership and a spiritually resonant

KEY VARIABLE	No Change Contradictions Abound	Marginal Change Anxiety Abounds	Adaptive Change Possibility of Hope	Radical Change Age of Microvita
Governance	Nation-state failure; sovereignty collapses. “Shattered throne” of legitimacy.	Defensive regional blocs; mistrust dominates. “Fortress alliances.”	Cooperative global governance emerges. Hints of deep democracy and shared stewardship.	Bottom-up world government. Confederal tensegrity structures.
Energy	Fossil fuel lock-in; tipping points crossed. Runaway collapse.	Fragmented renewables; energy weaponized. Strategic isolation.	AI-managed smart grid; abundance with surveillance. Comfort vs agency.	Fusion/Dyson breakthroughs; post-scarcity. Global green abundance.
Macrohistorical Lens	Sima Qian: virtue exhausted. Ibn Khaldun: asabiyya dissolved. Sarkar: capitalist nadir.	Khaldun: fractured global asabiyya. Sarkar: warrior regression. Sima Qian: Tao absent.	Sarkar’s sadvipras rise. Sima Qian: Tao enters society. Khaldun: spiritual asabiyya.	Sarkar: positive microvita. Sima Qian: golden age dawns. Khaldun: planetary cohesion.
Metaphor	Shattered Throne – collapse of legitimacy, return to authoritarianism, contradictions unbridgeable.	Archipelago of Fear – fortified regions, dread, gold-collar survival.	Shared Hands – quadruple bottom line, peer networks, wellbeing.	Mycelial Network – planetary consciousness, trust economy, co-creation.

technology creates a civilization in harmony with the planetary Tao. Instead of a battle against a particular group, the focus is on creating a global vision of the future grounded in spiritual, social justice, and the use of resources for the greater good. It is not a world without contradictions, but these tensions are used for greater progress.

The new metaphor is the **Mycelial Network**. The Gaian system becomes alive. As argued elsewhere (Inayatullah, 2021), dramatic gains in artificial intelligence end the scarcity-based world economic system. Ownership disappears as trust reemerges, creating a politics of abundance. Capitalism becomes a distant memory. Money as we know it today also disappears as needs can be directly met. Work is design-based and about resolving conflicts between individuals and collectivities. Notions of tribal identity disappear, indeed, with the invention of the artificial womb, procreation is forever delinked from the body. We are co-creators with technology and nature. Microvita plays a role in expanding production in novel ways (Sarkar, 1987). The sadvipra revolution Sarkar imagined decades ago is successful. The Tao return and asabiyya is regained.

The Reality of Today: Living Amongst Demons

But while Sarkar's sadvipras act to create different future, and in our fourth scenario, they are successful, the reality of today is decay - the pervasive lack of honesty and integrity in contemporary politics. Data is not used to create shared values but degraded and weaponized. From Sima Qian's perspective, this would be an unmistakable sign that the te of the current order is exhausted. Leaders who act with blatant self-interest have moved far from the Tao; they are the "evil and degenerate" monarchs who signal the end of a dynastic cycle (Watson, 1958). Ibn Khaldun would see this not just as moral failure but as a symptom of dissolved asabiyya; when leaders no longer feel a deep bond with the people, they rule for personal gain, signaling the dynasty's final, vulnerable stage. Sarkar (1967; Inayatullah, 2002) would frame this same crisis as a systemic abandonment of yama and niyama, the foundational ethics that must underpin any healthy society. He would see this corruption as a predictable feature of the late Vaeshyan era. As Sarkar wrote: "This is the age of demons. The forces of darkness are in ascendance, and only the light of dharma can dispel them." (Sarkar, 1991, p. 35). For

all three, a crisis of integrity in leadership is a definitive symptom of a dying age, and the path forward requires a new vanguard—be it a sage-king, a group with renewed asabiyya, or the revolutionary sadvipras. It is as leaders from workshops in Thailand suggested, a need to move from drama as the organizing principle of society to dharma (Milojevic et al, 2026).

Ultimately, this comparison illuminates different uses of the future. One is to learn from the past, to understand that we are in a catastrophe decline. Another is to understand the sociological forces that bind, and break societies can also be used to change the past. The third is to consciously create a transformed future, to create eutopia. In our current "galloping time," (1991, p. 35) we need to understand all three. We need the wisdom of Sima Qian to call for virtue, the realism of Khaldun to rebuild social cohesion, and the transformative vision of Sarkar to help us break free from the used futures of a dying era. The task for futurists, social change activists, and innovators is not merely to be scribes of a declining age, but to become the architects of the next. The scenarios presented both describe but also create spaces for individual and collective action. Thus, while macrohistory begins with structure, it concludes with agency, with possibility. Sarkar's quote on the role of exceptions in human evolution says it best and is a fitting way to conclude his essay (Anandamurti, 1979):

One of the most important factors on the path of movement is the exception. Those people who are society's exceptions are extraordinary people. For those people treading a new path, who are constructing something new, exception is as valuable as their lives. You should also know that you are exceptions. You, too, will do something great, will build something historical.

The challenge, as Gramsci (1971) wrote, is during the interregnum, when the old is dying and new cannot be born. However, while this may have been true in the 1930s when Gramsci wrote this sentence, now at the quarter mark of the 21st century, it no longer holds. The new can be born.

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what is okay for us, what is not, and what a situation requires from us.

These patterns are deeply human. Our nervous system's instinct to maintain belonging (Siegel, 2010) often pulls us toward appeasing and absorbing responsibilities that were never ours to carry (Stone, Patton & Heen, 1999).

Brené Brown's research adds a crucial insight: the most compassionate people are also the most boundaried (Brown, 2012; 2015). Without boundaries, empathy collapses into resentment or exhaustion. With boundaries, empathy becomes sustainable because it is grounded in clarity rather than self-sacrifice. For leaders, this reframes boundaries not as barriers to connection, but as the structures that make genuine connection possible.

When boundaries are missing, leaders often experience:

- chronic overwork
- resentment toward the team
- blurred roles and unclear expectations
- difficulty making decisions

Teams feel it as inconsistent expectations, unclear authority, and subtle emotional volatility.

Healthy boundaries, in contrast, create stability. They prevent leaders from collapsing into over-responsibility or withdrawing into avoidance. They make collaboration possible because people know where they stand and what is expected.

In practice, boundaries often sound like:

- “I can support this, but I can't own it.”
- “This decision belongs with you.”
- “Here's what I need to deliver this well.”
- “I'm not available right now; let's schedule it properly.”
- “I care about you, and I need to speak honestly about the impact of this behaviour.”

For leaders developing sadvipra qualities, boundaries are essential. Without them, generosity becomes enabling, empathy becomes exhaustion, and purpose becomes martyrdom. With them, leaders act from integrity rather than fear, and systems become more resilient and less dependent on individual heroics. Organisationally, clear decision-making structures, transparent roles, and shared expectations are systemic forms of boundaries.

System design is never neutral. The structures we create embody our assumptions about value, responsibility, and the purpose of collective life.



3.6 Bringing It All Together: The Practical Arc of Inner Transformation

When leaders practise emotional mastery, shadow integration, boundaries, cognitive flexibility, and conscious work with fear and trust together, the impact is immediate. They:

- speak more clearly
- listen with curiosity
- make fewer assumptions
- avoid unnecessary conflict
- delegate more effectively
- stay calm longer
- build trust faster

This is where the inner work connects directly to neohumanism and to the *sadvipra*: leadership becomes less about ego and performance, and more about service, clarity, and collective uplift.

Above all, these capacities are trainable — not once a year at a retreat, but daily, in conversations, meetings, and moments of stress. Inner transformation becomes real when leaders ask, in ordinary situations:

“What is being asked of me here — fear or mastery?”

Yet personal change alone is insufficient. Systems must evolve too. Sustainable leadership requires transforming both the inner landscape of the leader and the outer landscape of the institution. Only then can leaders move beyond inherited patterns and meet today’s complexity with steadiness and care.

4 - Transforming The Outer System: Cooperation, Governance, And New Models Of Leadership

Inner work is essential, but leaders do not operate in a vacuum. Even the most emotionally mature, self-aware, cognitively flexible person will struggle if the systems around them are built on fear, extraction, and control. To move from “teenagerhood” to a Gaian adulthood (Inayatullah, 2021), we need not only different leaders, but different ways of

organising power, resources, and decision-making.

For much of recent history, leadership has been imagined as something that flows from the top down: a strong figure at the centre, surrounded by layers of hierarchy. This model made sense in stable, predictable environments. But in a complex, interdependent world, it becomes a liability. It centralises risk, slows adaptation, and often disconnects decision-making from those most affected by it. It also feeds ego-centric patterns: the heroic lone leader, the need to appear in control, the reluctance to admit uncertainty (Sinclair, 2007).

Neohumanism invites us to question these assumptions. If all beings possess intrinsic value and our actions should reflect universal welfare (Sarkar, 1982), then we must design systems that embody those values. That means shifting from domination to partnership, from extraction to regeneration, from “power over” to “power with” through peer-based processes (Laloux, 2014).

4.1 From Control to Cooperation

One of the most significant shifts in contemporary governance is the move from control-oriented structures to more cooperative, participatory forms of organisation. This shift is visible in:

- Cooperatives, where ownership and governance are distributed (International Cooperative Alliance, 2015)
- Community energy projects, where citizens and corporations co-invest and co-design (Hicks & Ison, 2018)
- Decentralised networks and Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs), which use transparent protocols to distribute authority (Hassan & De Filippi, 2021)

These models share a common principle: people closest to an issue should have power in shaping it. They are practical experiments in trust-based, participatory governance.

In community energy initiatives across Europe, for example, residents are engaged from the outset. They co-design the project to protect what’s

important to the community, review trade-offs, vote on decisions, and share in the economic benefits. This shifts the tone from managing community resistance to shared stewardship (Hicks & Ison, 2018). Cooperation becomes a design principle, not an add-on.

4.2 Sharing Power Without Abdicating Responsibility

Leaders often fear that distributing power will create chaos. In practice, mature cooperative systems are usually more structured, not less. They rely on clarity around roles, decision-making processes, conflict resolution, information flow, and shared purpose.

DAO experiments such as Hypha's regenerative governance platform encode these principles structurally — through transparent decision rules, contribution accounting, and modular voting mechanisms (Bennett, 2025). These mechanisms don't eliminate leadership; they distribute it.

This mirrors PROUT and neohumanist approaches to decentralisation: power as stewardship, not ownership (Sarkar, 1961–1990; 1982).

4.3 System Design as a Moral Act

System design is never neutral. The structures we create embody our assumptions about value, responsibility, and the purpose of collective life. A system prioritising quarterly returns will reliably undermine long-term wellbeing. Edmonson (2019) shows that a system that rewards fear-driven performance will consistently produce reactive, exhausted leaders.

In neohumanism, collective arrangements carry ethical consequences (Sarkar, 1982), which positions system design as a moral responsibility. It forces us to ask:

- Who benefits?
- Who is excluded?
- What behaviours are we rewarding?
- What “success” are we optimising for?

Sadvipra leadership becomes systemic here: not simply adapting to flawed structures, but having the insight and courage to redesign them.

4.4 Practical Levers for Systemic Change

System transformation unfolds through concrete actions within a leader's sphere of influence — but these actions must reach beyond structures. As Inayatullah's Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) shows,

systems endure because their deeper narratives endure (Inayatullah, 2004). The stories we tell about ourselves determine our direction. Effective change therefore works on multiple layers at once:

- Litany / Behaviour - what is immediately visible. This layer captures observable actions, patterns, and symptoms. The practices people see day-to-day. Such as reimagining meetings through rotating facilitation, structured rounds, or check-ins changes who participates and how thus modelling more inclusive participation.

- System / Structure - Formal processes, roles, and rules. At this layer we shift the machinery of the organisation: how decisions are made, information flows, and power is distributed.

- **Redesigning decision-making processes** — through multi-stakeholder engagement, participatory budgeting, or involving communities early in project design — distributes power outward and anchors cooperation in the formal system.

- **Increasing transparency** by sharing financials, trade-off reasoning, and decision criteria also strengthens structural trust, ensuring that people have access to the information needed to act responsibly.

- **Embedding cooperative structures** such as co-ownership models, contribution accounting, or shared leadership roles, institutionalises collaboration instead of leaving it to personality or goodwill.

- Worldview - What we value; the organising logic of the system. This layer concerns the beliefs that guide what a system considers “good,” “normal,” or “successful.”

- Aligning incentives with values reshapes what the organisation honours: rewarding stewardship, collaboration, and long-term thinking instead of individual heroics.

- Mythic/Identity Layer - Deep stories, metaphors, and worldviews. At the deepest level, change becomes durable when collective stories shift.

- Participatory decision-making supports the reframing of leadership from “the leader decides” to “we decide.”

- Transparent information flow reinforces the shift from “leaders protect people from reality” to “leaders trust us with reality.”

- Cooperative structures challenge the heroic-leader archetype and enable a story of shared stewardship, relational capacity, and interdependence. From “me” to “we”.

Inner transformation alone is not enough; systems must also evolve toward cooperation, transparency, decentralisation, and shared stewardship.

”

Structural changes often fail when the underlying story remains intact. CLA reminds us that transformation accelerates when we consciously rewrite the metaphors driving behaviour — for example, from “fighting fires” to “tending an ecosystem,” from “command” to “care,” from “my team” to “our shared purpose.” When leaders align structures with these deeper narratives, systems move from ego-logic to cooperative logic.

4.5 The Biopsychology of Systems

Fear-based systems activate chronic vigilance. People protect their turf, hoard information, or comply without engaging creatively. Trust-based systems, in contrast, broaden attention and enable collaboration (Fredrickson, 2001).

Systems and individuals mirror each other. A fearful leader creates a fearful team. A fearful system creates fearful leaders. The maturity of one reinforces the maturity of the other. This reciprocity is central to sadvipra leadership: changing inner and outer conditions together so that human potential - not fear - becomes the organising principle.

4.6 Seeds of a Gaian Leadership Culture

We can already see early expressions of this shift that allow for collective planning yet fast execution:

- community-owned energy
- participatory budgeting
- regenerative finance models
- platform cooperatives
- decentralised leadership roles
- shared governance experiments in social enterprises

These initiatives are imperfect but promising. They widen the circle of concern and treat leadership as an emergent property of healthy relationships, not individual heroism.

Inayatullah (2021) describes these developments as steps toward a Gaian polity: a form of governance grounded in planetary wellbeing, shared purpose, and long-term stewardship. Sarkar’s (1967, 1982)

vision of the sadvipra aligns with this direction, though in a different vocabulary: a leadership rooted in universalism, balance (prama), ethical clarity, and the commitment to ensure that no group dominates another. Together, they point to a leadership culture that centres prosperity, people, planet, and purpose (Leonhard, n.d.).

5 - Stories Of Transformation: Leaders Becoming Sadvipras In Practice

Theory gives us language, but stories show what change actually looks like. The following short vignettes are adaptations of numerous real leaders into single archetypes. They show how ordinary people - doing their best in complex environments - begin to embody the qualities of sadvipra leadership: steadiness, clarity, courage, and cooperation. None of these shifts were dramatic. Each unfolded through small moments of insight and choice. And each demonstrates how inner transformation can ripple outward into healthier systems.

5.1 The Exhausted Leader Who Was Exhausting Everyone Else

One leader I worked with prided themselves on stamina: late nights, early emails, constant availability, and an unwavering determination to “push through.” They genuinely believed they were modelling commitment; that real leadership meant being the one who could carry the heaviest load.

But their team was silently burning out.

When we explored it together, it became clear the issue wasn’t standards or even workload. It was the heroic leader myth. The belief that being indispensable, self-sacrificing, and endlessly strong was the only valid way to lead. This wasn’t arrogance; it was a story they had inherited and never questioned.

At one point I asked, “If you keep going like this and end up with a heart attack in fifteen years, what good will all this sacrifice have done for anyone?”

That landed. For the first time, they saw that their overwork wasn't noble. It was unsustainable, and it was setting a pattern the team felt compelled to follow.

It required that they step back, take a proper break, and delegate meaningfully, resulting in a team that was calmer, more confident, and more willing to take initiative. Instead of waiting for direction, people were stepping into leadership themselves.

The shift didn't come from wellness programs or better time management. It came from recognising that one person's beliefs about what leadership "should" look like can shape an entire culture.

Once the leader let go of the hero myth and embraced a more grounded form of leadership, urgency gave way to clarity and the team followed suit.

5.2 The Founder Who Had to Let Their "Baby" Grow Up

A founder came to me exhausted and frustrated. Their organisation had doubled in size, but every decision still landed on their desk. "I can't let anything go," they said. "This project is my baby."

When we reframed the metaphor, "What if your baby has become a teenager?" Something clicked. Teenagers don't need constant supervision; they need boundaries, trust, and room to experiment.

Within weeks, the founder began delegating decisions that didn't require their direct involvement. They created a clearer structure, empowered emerging leaders, and stepped back just enough for others to step forward.

Their identity shifted from "protector" to "steward." And as they grew, the organisation grew with them: faster, healthier, and with far less friction.

5.3 The Leader Who Became "Multilingual"

Another leader described ongoing tension with colleagues and family members. "I don't understand why people can't just say what they mean," they said. To them, everyone else seemed irrational or slow.

After using a behavioural framework to map communication preferences (such as DISC), the leader experienced what they later described as "learning a new language." Suddenly their colleague's directness made sense. Their partner's need for detail wasn't resistance, it was reassurance. Their team member's quietness wasn't disengagement, it was reflection.

Communication didn't magically become easy, but it became understandable. And with understanding came empathy. And with empathy came trust.

The leader didn't just learn a tool; they learned to interpret difference as information rather than threat. That single shift reduced conflict dramatically and strengthened every relationship around them.

5.4 The Leader of Leaders Who Needed to Zoom Out

A senior leader overseeing multiple projects felt constantly overwhelmed. They were trying to lead the portfolio with the same intensity they once brought to running a single project. Their calendar was overflowing, and so were their expectations of themselves.

In conversation, it became clear that they were stuck in an earlier identity: the hands-on problem-solver. What was needed now was a portfolio mindset. Someone who sets direction, supports capability, and creates the culture for others to lead. Once they recognised this, their role changed almost immediately. They began learning how to delegate operational decisions, convene cross-project learning forums, and shift from "How do I fix this?" to "Who needs to be part of this conversation?"

The result became a system that could finally breathe and a leader who no longer felt like they were drowning.

5.5 The Leader Whose Compassion Became a Liability

Not all leadership struggles come from excess control; some come from excess generosity. One leader was deeply committed to seeing the good in everyone. But this softness made it easy for a charismatic, boundary-testing colleague to undermine the team.

The leader avoided addressing the issue because they didn't want to be harsh or unfair. But the cost of that avoidance was high: morale fell, trust evaporated, and good people began to withdraw.

When the leader finally acknowledged that compassion without boundaries is not compassion, things shifted. They had a difficult conversation with the colleague - firm, calm, and clear - and established new expectations. The team felt the difference immediately.

This wasn't a story about "removing a problem person." It was about the leader reclaiming discernment, a core *sadvipra* quality, and recognising that care sometimes requires courageous action.

What These Stories Reveal

None of these leaders transformed overnight. None became perfect. But each made one essential move: they stepped toward mastery, clarity, and service, and the systems around them shifted in response.

These micro-transformations illustrate a broader truth: the qualities of *sadvipra* leadership grow in the small, ordinary moments where fear can shrink us or mastery can expand us.

They show that enlightened leadership is not abstract philosophy.

- It is behavioural.
- It is embodied.
- It is relational.

And it is entirely within reach.

6. CONCLUSION

Across the world, people sense that our old models of leadership are no longer serving us in the moment. Systems built for a more predictable, competitive, and fragmented era cannot carry us through a time defined by interdependence, complexity, and accelerating change. Yet the seeds of a new leadership culture are already visible: growing through ordinary people, in ordinary situations, choosing more mature, conscious ways of leading.

The stories in this paper suggest that transformation does not begin with grand strategies. It begins with small, human moments where leaders notice their habits, question their assumptions, and choose responses rooted in mastery rather than fear: a leader releasing the "hero myth" so their team can breathe; a founder recognising their organisation has outgrown their hands-on identity; a manager learning to interpret difference as information rather than threat; a compassionate leader discovering that boundaries are an expression of care. When a leader becomes steadier, others relax. When a leader sets boundaries, people feel safer. When a leader delegates meaningfully, leadership becomes shared. Over time, these micro-transformations change what is normal, what is rewarded, and what is possible.

This is the essence of *sadvipra* leadership: mastery expressed in practice, not posture; service expressed through responsibility rather than

sacrifice; clarity expressed through both compassion and courage. It is spacious enough for complexity and grounded enough to act with integrity. Inner transformation alone is not enough; systems must also evolve toward cooperation, transparency, decentralisation, and shared stewardship. As governance experiments around the world show, when structures are designed for trust, participation, and collective wellbeing, people rise to meet them.

We are living in a transitional era. Not fully beyond our adolescent phase, but moving toward a more mature, Gaian adulthood. The *sadvipra* offers a vision of leadership that can guide this transition: rooted in universality, committed to fairness, and capable of transforming both self and system. The path forward is built through everyday choices that widen the circle of concern, strengthen cooperation, and align leadership with the wellbeing of all.

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is nurtured through mutual love and respect for all. It is a place where children feel safe, happy and free to learn, ensuring a great foundation that will last them a lifetime.

The River School's Neohumanist philosophy of love, respect and kindness to all, ensures the Australian Curriculum is delivered within a meaningful framework that nurtures each child's development to their highest potential

We employ the latest research to ensure our academic programs are engaging and reach a standard of excellence. Our Spelling program endorses scientifically proven reading, and spelling methods and we offer a full Arts program across all year levels, including access to specialist Art and Music classes.

At The River School we recognise that our responsibility as educators goes far beyond the teaching of academic subjects. Our Neohumanist philosophies value and encourage the development of all facets of the children in our care, including spiritual, physical, emotional and social development.

Emphasis on Restorative Practice assists children understand the value of conflict resolution through placing positive relationships at the heart of all we do and say.



- A learning environment that nurtures the mind, body and spirit
- A learning environment that puts the heart at the centre of all we do
- Immersion in the natural environment with creek and nature time
- A Creek Kindy program for students aged 4-5
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The River School welcomes you to learn more about a journey that fosters connection, and a child's sense of responsibility as a global citizen.

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Continued from page 35 ... **Dialogues Between Neohumanism and Emergent Philosophies**

holds the moral compass, but everyone is taught to read it. This demands a futures literacy grounded in structural imagination, not just scenario play.

The comet in the scenario, uncontrollable, apolitical, anti-charismatic, reminds us that even the best-designed systems must remain humble. And perhaps the greatest humility is to recognize that no system of governance or moral order should depend on any one person, however enlightened.

This is not an argument against Neohumanist values, but a call to disembody those values from the need for a leader. We need societies of Sadvipric quality - collaborative, wise, fearless - not societies that await a Sadvipra. In this way, emergent philosophies of distributed ethics and accountable systems may offer more durable, resilient futures than any utopia anchored in a singular moral figure.

5. Implications for Practice: From Enlightened Individuals to Ethical Infrastructures

The scenario developed through the *Dreams and Disruptions* game opens a window into how alternative futures can stretch our ethical imagination, and also where that imagination still defaults to familiar figures of authority. But perhaps the more pressing implication is this: the tools we use to imagine the future can also teach us how to ethically inhabit it. For foresight to serve human evolution, it must do more than forecast potential change; it must create participatory spaces where ethics becomes a shared process, not an abstract value handed down from above.

Scenario Games as Ethical Laboratories

Speculative gameplay, such as the *Dreams and Disruptions* foresight game, offers a powerful and accessible method to engage futures literacy. In the context of the June 2025 workshop hosted by the Canadian Foresight Network, the format helped strangers collaboratively imagine a world shaped by emergent systems like vertical farming, social credit, and cooperative housing. The short time frame encouraged quick consensus-building and narrative flexibility. But crucially, it also revealed the tendency to seek clarity through symbolic figures, like the Sadvipra, when navigating ambiguity.

This suggests that scenario games are not merely narrative tools; they are laboratories for ethical rehearsal. They create low-stakes environments in

which participants can test the implications of different governance models, challenge norms, and observe how easily values become personified when structures are unclear. However, to unlock their full potential for transformative thinking, games like *Dreams and Disruptions* may benefit from tailored enhancements: for example, custom card decks focused on alternative governance, post-capitalist imaginaries, or emergent community ethics. Without such provocations, certain directions, like collective power without leadership, may remain unexplored.

Decentralizing Ethics: Shifting from Charisma to Commons

One of the key lessons from this scenario is the importance of moving ethical agency from individuals to systems. Rather than relying on the symbolic reassurance of a singular leader (no matter how benevolent), we must equip communities with tools to co-create and maintain ethical norms collectively⁴. In practical terms, this could include:

- Codes of ethics developed through community co-design, where stakeholders negotiate and agree on shared values and consequences.
- Ethics cafés and structured dialogue circles, allowing pluralistic and iterative exploration of moral tensions.
- Reflective practice and feedback loops, helping individuals and groups integrate moral reasoning into day-to-day decisions.
- Participatory foresight that explicitly surfaces the ethical dimensions of future scenarios, inviting participants not only to imagine change, but to define justice.

Such techniques, while still emerging, offer a path forward for those committed to Neohumanist values but uncomfortable with the concentration of moral authority in any individual. Ethics, in this view, becomes an infrastructure, a shared commons to be stewarded, revised, and protected.

Reframing Enlightened Leadership

Rather than abandoning the concept of leadership altogether, a more productive reframing may lie in separating leadership from power. In this reframed view, leaders are catalysts, not commanders, they spark conversation, model accountability, and nourish public imagination. Their role is not to impose direction but to create space for divergence,

foster difficult conversations, and help communities become literate in their own ethical development.

This vision of enlightened leadership aligns with Neohumanist values of universality and planetary consciousness, while avoiding the pitfalls of charismatic dependency. Leadership becomes a temporary function, rotating, distributed, and subject to community review. Moral exemplars, too, remain relevant, not as gurus, but as reference points in a living, evolving dialogue about who we want to be, and how we want to live together.

Prototyping Ethical Societies

The most actionable implications of this work may lie in small-scale experiments in ethical infrastructure. Imagine a school curriculum where students co-design governance models for their classrooms; a rural village experimenting with consensus-based decision-making; or a distributed network of local communities, each with its own code of ethics, yet bound by solidarity and shared learning.

These prototypes, inspired by Neohumanist values but freed from the need for moral authorities, can scale horizontally rather than hierarchically. They can act as living laboratories for collective foresight and ethical design, constantly iterating, failing forward, and offering alternatives to the extractive logics of capitalist modernity³.

As the scenario game subtly demonstrated, even when systems begin with good intentions, without vigilance and distributed ownership, they risk crystallizing into new forms of exclusion. The antidote is not a stronger leader. It is a stronger collective capacity for ethical action.

6. Conclusion: From Symbol to System

The comet that ends our scenario may be fictional, but the collapse we're living through is not. We are poisoning our planet, dismantling our democracies, and losing our grip on shared reality. Still, if we can face this together—with honesty, imagination, and collective will—there may yet be time to salvage what matters most. In the face of these, the allure of enlightened authority remains strong. But perhaps what our futures demand is not leadership from above, but ethical coherence from below.

This is not an argument against Neohumanist values, but a call to disembody those values from the need for a leader. We need societies of Sadvipric quality, collaborative, wise, fearless, not societies that

await a Sadvipra. In this way, emergent philosophies of distributed ethics and accountable systems may offer more durable, resilient futures than any utopia anchored in a singular moral figure.

Futures literacy, in this context, becomes not just the ability to imagine alternative tomorrows, but the capacity to cultivate ethical infrastructures that make those tomorrows livable. From foresight games to collective deliberation, we must move beyond symbolic figures and toward participatory architectures of meaning and morality. In doing so, we may yet realize the highest aims of Neohumanism, not through the authority of the few, but through the consciousness of the many.

As Arturo Escobar reminds us, “The task is not to find the one world that fits all, but to design worlds where many worlds fit.”⁴

Definitions

A *Neohumanism* is a socio-philosophical framework developed by P.R. Sarkar that expands the humanistic ethic to include all living beings and even inanimate entities, promoting universalism, rationality, and ecological consciousness (Sarkar, 1982).

B The *Sadvipra* is a central figure in Sarkar's social theory: a spiritually enlightened, morally courageous leader who acts selflessly to balance power among economic classes and uphold dharma (Sarkar, 1967/1992)⁸.

Endnotes

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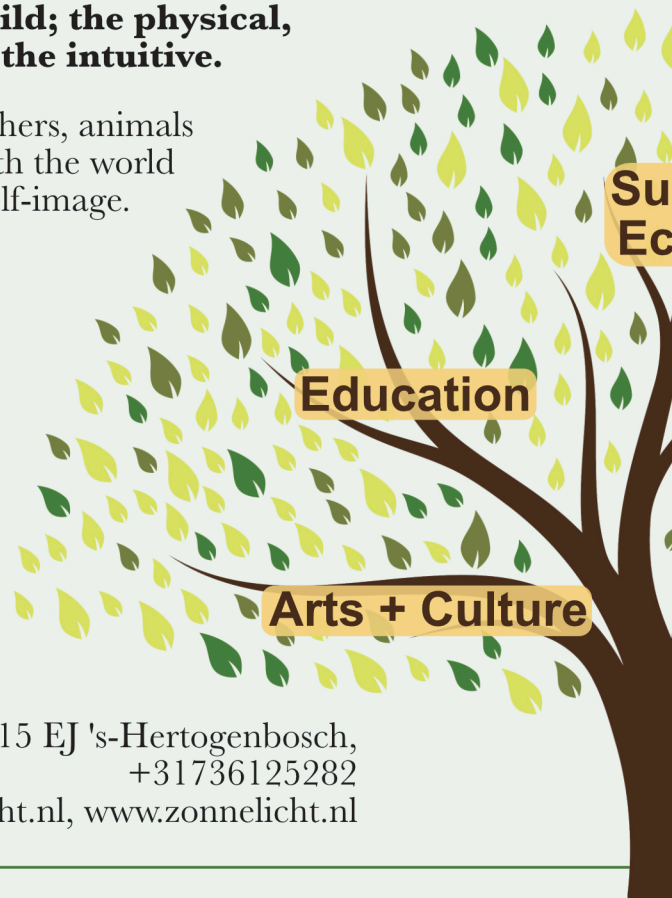
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