

What Has Happened to Us?

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This piece has been written in response to a poem titled ‘What has happened to us?’ that my friend Rabi Dash wrote on the day that the Russians celebrated the end of the Second World War in Europe, attached as an Appendix.

To succinctly answer this question, what I see with Self-reflective Intelligence is that our True Nature as *Homo divinus* has been buried beneath thousands of years of collective and cultural conditioning, which our parents and teachers have passed on to us as children for many generations.

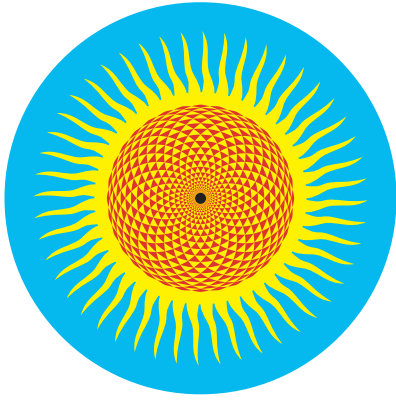
We can see the split between humanity and Divinity most clearly from the roots of these words. First *human* derives from Latin *humus* ‘ground, earth’, from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) base **dhghem-* ‘earth’. In contrast, *Divine* derives from Latin *divus* ‘of a god, inspired’, from the PIE base **dyeu* ‘to shine’. These etymologies show that our forebears some 5,500 years ago conceived of humans as earthlings in contrast to the divine residents of the heavens, as Calvert Watkins explains in *The American Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*.

Regarding the conception of our species, it is important to distinguish our beginning as a biological species from that as a noological one. The conception and birth of *Homo sapiens*, as a biological species, happened around two hundred thousand years ago, while we can say that *Homo noeticus*, as a noological species, was conceived when we acquired the great gift of Self-reflective Intelligence around 60,000 years ago. As I have realized from nearly sixty years studying the differences and similarities between humans and computers, Self-reflective Intelligence is the Divine quality that distinguishes humans from the other animals and machines with so-called artificial intelligence.

As Erich Fromm pointed out in *Man for Himself*, at our conception as a noetic species, evolution apparently left us to our own devices, to work out our behaviour patterns for ourselves, as the most adaptable of all the species. The innate instincts and automatic reflexes of babies to suck, grasp, cry, and respond to stimuli mostly disappear within the first few months of life. Our learning—corresponding to software and data in computers—mostly determines the way that we view the world and ourselves, and hence our behaviour, beyond our ‘hard-wiring’. Our minds, stimulated by the Divine Power of Life, determine how we think and act, far more than our brains.

Now, the key quality of our species as creative learning animals is that we make comparisons. For instance, in the forests of Scandinavia, it is essential to know the difference between mushrooms that are poisonous and those that are delicious to eat. As pattern-seeking creatures, our very survival is dependent on our categorizing abilities, organizing what we are learning in the relationships between sets and classes.

We apply the very same techniques in our relationships with our fellow human beings. But then our senses of identity come into play. Our categorizing minds lead us to see each other as separate beings, both cooperating and competing, leading to a host of emotional disturbances, such as jealousy and resentment. Such neuroses happen at all levels of human relationships, from the personal, through the national, to the ethnocentric. Extending such comparisons even further, many have conceived of humans as above nature, to be exploited for our own selfish needs. As such divisive attitudes threaten our very survival as a species, it is not surprising that Fromm said in *The Sane Society* that the normal behaviour of society is pathological.



But all is not lost. We can see our innate humane qualities from the root of *kind*, which is Old English *gecynde* ‘natural’, cognate with *nature*, from Latin *nāscī* ‘to be born’, and Greek *genesis* ‘birth’, indicating that none of us is ever separate from the Source of Life. So, if we could transcend the categories, in the manner that mystics have been teaching for thousands of years, we could let in the Divine Light of Consciousness, which we need for Self-reflective Intelligence, as the eyesight of Consciousness, to function in its full power. In this way, we can remind ourselves that humans are capable of much kindness and compassion, in contrast to cruelty and ruthlessness, which has characterized human affairs during much of the patriarchal epoch.

Such an awakened prospect lies at the heart of *lumenarchy*, a sustainable system of governance that the ecophilosopher Henryk Skolimowski introduced. As he pointed out in *Let There Be Light: The Mysterious Journey of Cosmic Creativity*, “Everything is Light,” and “Light is universal and all pervading. It provides the womb, sustenance, and nourishment for all there is. It is the Universal Mother.”

There are countless individuals and communities in both East and West saying much the same thing, as what an anonymous fourteenth-century English mystic called the ‘cloud of unknowing’ is dispersed. But the alternative movement is still much fragmented. So, if we were to address the global crisis that humanity faces socially, I feel that we could do no better than to follow Matthew Fox’s suggestion in the Foreword to Andrew Harvey and Carolyn Baker’s *Savage Grace: Living Resiliently in the Dark Night of the Globe*, “Ours is a time not only for scientists and inventors but also mystics and contemplatives to join hands so that our action flows from being and from a deep place of return to the Source.”



Here is Rabi’s poem, working as a consultant rheumatologist in both Sweden and India.

What has happened to us?

Awaiting another victory parade
where man machine
would show their killing spirits
while a shadow of prolonged war
and possibility
of an Armageddon
shadowing every form of life.

Victories have their songs
and their histories
of blood and pain
Victories make us
to fall into another trap
and stripped us
from what has been left within us as human.

Victories has failed to give us peace
It grows like a hairy caterpillar
within us
and awaiting
to make another strike
to prove a leader or a ruler is always right.