

## **Lecture notes: Where have we come from and where are we going?**

We come from Africa, from the Rift Valley, the fossils show it. We know the evolutionary stages we have passed to get to where we are: we climbed a stepped upward pathway from language, to walking, to tool making, to cooking, to writing, to engines, and now, to the internet.

We have achieved the global consciousness that Fr. Teilhard de Chardin and E.O. Wilson write of. Our civilization is fumbling with the convergence of knowledge and potential, we are at the apex of human capacity.

What will we do with this new power? Will we feed the hungry, provide plumbing and housing to the poor, educate the children? Will we raise the level of contentment across the globe?

We will. We have made great strides: think about Malala, the Pope, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; think about Facebook and Khan Academy.

There are more cell phones than people in some Latin American countries, there are more cell phones in Africa than in Europe. Benefiting from distributed power and inexpensive phones the entire world is being interconnected. Benefiting from cheaper and more efficient renewable energy, we will see global decarbonization of energy sources and breathe clean air.

Yet there is a chasm ahead: How will we deal with climate change, with environmental refugees, with the global malaise of underemployment?

Earlier this year I flew across the Sahara Desert. I looked across a seared, lifeless landscape that people are leaving behind. Our brethren are migrating out of Africa and out of the Middle East as we have done many times before. People are fleeing drought, crowding, and despair, drawn towards the opportunities and sparkling lights of stable civilization. Struggling across these wastelands, people are leaving the refugee camps of Zaria in Jordan (70,000) and Daadaab in Kenya (300,000). They arrive at the Mediterranean coast and plunge north not looking back. Our kin have done this for hundreds of thousands of years, perhaps since we learned to walk. Today's migrations are amplified by an unprecedented global awareness of the magnitude of the opportunity-gap separating the dusty village overgrazed by goats from the high-speed internet and green meadows of Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Motivated by their indomitable human spirit, our kin are drawn northwards across the osmotic gradients of desire.

We must build tangible bridges to our prosperous future. We need to develop clean energy, clean water, and social networks that share knowledge, opportunities, and stuff. We need to build resiliency across sectors ranging from urbanization patterns to biodiversity so that sustainable pathways can be charted, then followed. Students need to sense that the future smells good and that they have the tools to make it so. The western world needs to share its assets and capacity across nations for we are hinged at the hip with all peoples. Disruption in Yemen can lead to unhappiness in Kansas. Rather than close borders and build walls, we should open ourselves to our global family and strive to make the world a better place for all its inhabitants. There is much to be done!