

Between war and wisdom
How philosophy, public health, and civic responsibility can help humanity
confront its greatest existential threats

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A fragile world stands between destruction and hope—war and peace divided by the guiding light of knowledge, philosophy, and human responsibility

- Many of the problems the world faces today are the eventual result of short-term measures taken last century.(Jay Wright Forrester)
- What we're doing is very simple. Peace. It's called the Board of Peace, and it's all about an easy word to say but a hard word to produce—peace, but we're going to produce it.(Donald Trump)

Much scientific work has been ignored including the world system's view of Jay Forrester, whose computer simulation predicted a time course of man's quality of life projected into the here and now when pollution would swamp man's way forward. Forrester argued that deep economic slumps are repetitive occurrences of capitalist economies and that steps should be taken to reduce the demands on the earth's carrying capacity to maintain the quality of life in the twenty-first century. Since then additional flood gates have been opened.

One additional flood gate now open is that of another war with an epic fury that batters Iran and raises the level of chaos in the region. While we have to express concern that our civilization is under threat it

also brings to mind the ruthless treatment, the unjustified condemnation and the cruel imprisonment of all those who have taken a contrary view to power such as Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali critically ill and in prison (Iran), Alexei Navalny removed by the state (Russia) and the leader of the opposition imprisoned by the state (Turkey). Again it should be noted that one mitigating measure for rising social dementia is the essentially untried philosophical prescription now abandoned by the international community but still offered by World Philosophical Forum, Athens which promotes classical philosophy on its platform of wisdom, reason, morality, justice and responsibility by means of civic education. Existential questions in the age of knowledge will not be solved, cannot be solved by Artificial Intelligence nor by limiting enquiry within a box of strict empiricism or constrained to scholasticism. In any war zone, a humanitarian crisis unfolds. Education and production are disrupted, and production is directed to defense; life's necessities become scarce and more expensive, and black markets and misinformation emerge. Once again, another humanitarian disaster unfolds, through which some of those killed will attain desired martyrdom, and many more will have achieved a better life in eternity than the one they led on earth, according to their mindset. No one knows whether the world will slowly sink or safely surface and survive.

No one can rule out a status of limbo between two such states as civilization continues to unfold, true to itself and in keeping with its timeline, with more than 90% taken up with wars. We are talking of 4500 years of war and conflict, and 50 years of peace. A new war is being waged with accumulating damage that our senses cannot grasp as we are submerged with our own set of problems. To empathize with the suffering of others, neighbors or elsewhere requires a refined mindset implicit in the phrase and can be enhanced by philosophy. National, regional, and global interests are important, and philosophy can help the balancing act. However, decisions that could lead to war must have legitimization, and life must always be safeguarded.

Over my life span, I have had the opportunity to take much of what was best from three interrelated but distinctively different cultures (UK, Greece, and America) and interrelate with others. I think that my most important takeaway is to keep healthy, keep interested, and read books. I know that the poets have probed the depths of speculation and have raised the alarm; the best-laid plans of mice and men have gone aft aglay...that was not mishap ahead what we spoke of...we were mistaken; ... Suddenly comes another disaster...different entirely from the one expected...while gushing rushing waters tells of endless disaster. In parallel, we speak of peace while covert enmity, under the smile of safety, wounds the world. Philosophy and science call our attention to the consequences of counterintuitive decisions and unannounced goals, that if something can go wrong, it will, and that rationality is circumscribed, but it's not over till it's over. But who heeds them? Still read!

When I first entered America, whooping cough was mostly unknown to American pediatricians. Such were the circumstances that my two-year-old daughters' childhood vaccination was delayed. As a result, she suffered from a serious case of a preventable disease. On my way to America, it was said that Europe was in the dark ages with respect to computer technology when compared with it. Until then my experience had been with the analog computer. What followed was the best scientific experience of my career. It was a new world of medicine, bionics, and bioengineering, skyscrapers, Mile Square, and the Democratic Convention in Chicago.

It was Circle Campus, the medical center, Cook County, and Rush with Benjamin and his insane son. It was the artificial neuron, talking to computers and algorithms. It was opera with The Magic Flute, Something's Afoot, and 1776. In the musical 1776, Thomas Jefferson feverishly penned the Declaration of Independence. I played Robert Livingston but returned home to New York to pop a cork and celebrate

a birth in the family. I danced myself out of history, singing to the right, ever to the right, never to the left, forever to the right with Franklin. Jefferson was worried; he was unsure of any listener and raised his voice to ask, "Is anybody there?"

In my simplified binary model of our world, I presented the future of humanity as the amalgamated outcome of a spinning coin, one side a fading and impressive civilization, on the other, mankind's infinite talent. As it continues to spin, the long-term chance of a silver lining side-up is far from zero, since no coin flipper after Nagasaki has been foolish enough to use an atomic bomb. On a few occasions when the world came close to demise, the voice of reason prevailed. Only philosophically imbued reason can move us to the revival of life on Earth and ensure acceptable equity through fairer, more efficient, and more just policies; a continuing and evolving civilization; and an expression of talent. Another coinage may see public health collapse and climate breakdown.

While in its current spin, the world must go on with a belief in the value of human community and the need of a common effort guided by the thought that philosophy can unite us. It is man's escape route from the set of existential problems faced, namely, the climate crisis, extensive global inequality and poverty, and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. In parallel, social dementia is a real negative force. All things are possible: failed democracy, more of the same, inequality, racism, war; the worst for most, ; a change of heart and mentality, life's improvement: fair sharing of benefits and deployment of philosophy with increasing societal trust. How can I philosophically bias my spinning coin towards social harmony for the common good and away from social dementia?

Cutting public health funding is wrong. Why not an Affordable Care Act? Reducing healthcare costs is a priority, but so is affordability for families. Repositioning of interdisciplinary public health as an instrument for socioeconomic development and a catalyst for peace would be the right geopolitical call. A philosophical dimension to such a mix might give the best blueprint for the future. In the meantime, the already given advice seems reasonable: don't give the nuclear code to artificial intelligence, and with respect to climate change, let science do its job. I hope that this proposal to strengthen and reposition public health and use philosophy as an aid to solving existential problems that engulf us is not a call in the wilderness. The President has sufficient latitude to do so.

The Skopje Declaration: Public Health, Peace, and Human Rights (2001) codifies the expression of the social conscience of public health. It proclaims a union between public health, peace, and human rights, in close keeping with the value system of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the Council of Europe, which can advise you. You can count on public health to fight against nuclear weapons and environmental catastrophe and to reduce inequality and build peace under the patronage of the goddess Hygiene. Should fanaticism have free range, disaster can follow; it can happen when politics and populism coalesce. The advice of Odysseus Elytis is eternally pertinent: when evil strikes, when your mind is clouded, when you are at a dead end or in the middle of the road and you do not know which way to turn, reach back for knowledge, for supplies of water and substance from Ancient Greek letters.

I read on the online WHWire that members of the newly formed "Board of Peace" have pledged more than \$5 billion in aid for humanitarian relief and reconstruction in Gaza. Accordingly, the funds were formally unveiled on 19/2/2026 at an inaugural meeting in Washington. Greece will be present. I also learned that the First Lady will make history by presiding over a United Nations Security Council session and focusing on such issues as education, technology, and peace. It has also been reported that the American Ambassador to Greece, Kimberly Guilfoyle, has urged the President to visit Greece.

The World Philosophical Forum is one place to express philosophical ideas. It is a unique organization based in Greece. In 2009, it reintroduced the ancient Greek dialectical symposium into Greece. Its ultimate goal is the eradication of social dementia with the revitalization of classical philosophy and the golden mean. It encourages the protection of the beauty and richness of nature, the earth, and the culture and history of humanity. It promotes increasing use of philosophy by society. It has appealed for a ceasefire where war rages, suggested a unique program based on neurophysiology and its history as a means of rapprochement between America and Russia, conducted an imaginary dialogue between Socrates and Nikola Tesla, and promoted east-west bridges for peace and universal peace studies. Without philosophy a new Golden Age will remain beyond grasp in spite of optimism.

The Board of Peace is taking shape as military might is amassed in the Middle East, which is a strange dichotomy that makes a peacemaking role on the Board seem incongruent with Iran having been attacked.

In Greece leaders have been invited to address the annual dialectical symposium of the World Philosophical Forum, Athens which on occasion it has run into difficulties finding accommodation for its transaction. Consequently, I have proposed that it be held in the National Gardens and its participants dress in philosophical robes complete with see-through headdresses and defense against the mosquito. What a potential media bonanza for homeless philosophy, or so I thought. Starting to understand the bureaucratic and security issues involved, I dropped my proposal.

Once again, the World Philosophical Forum, Athens, Greece, with its small voice, notes its grave concern that Homo sapiens are on a fast track to extinction. We do so in the belief that classical philosophy is a vital and unused universal instrument for solving the existential problems facing our world and that an investment in it is a step in the right direction to a more worthwhile way of living and a better route to reduced social dementia through improved civic education. It would be remiss of the World Philosophical Forum not to comment on Iran's endangered cultural heritage and its many UNESCO World Heritage sites that span two millennia.

"What, no eggs?" were the words of GBS in his theatrical piece Joan of Arc. I say, what, no place at the Peace Council for Philosophy, adding that its unheard voice is an impediment to peace. At 90, I know what Thomas Jefferson knew at 30, namely, that very few listen. It does need listeners! Cleverly, President Kennedy, in his address to Nobelists, said the White House had never gathered so much intelligence as when Jefferson dined alone, but when he did so, no one could hear him.

One year ago, I wrote it is hard to imagine that President Trump can propose a plan for world peace; I went on to say that to imagine anyone else who can is even harder. I also suggested that your warrior culture consider wearing the garments of philosophy and that you give more thought to public health; keeping Americans healthy is a most worthy cause. Extend it for the world, and global value will be added. More recently you have chilled the world with your remark. I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of peace. While made by the leader of the free world, I respectfully ask for a reversal of this wrongful decision. The World Philosophical Forum would like to think that you will reinforce a culture of peace, a society for all ages, a health-for-all strategy, and the principles of human security as well as the institutions that established them.

The going fee of a permanent seat on your new Board of Peace precludes any philosophical input to any such proceedings. With philosophy deployed, the tendency to dehumanize will be lessened and the

resort to logic strengthened. Surely the reconstruction of Gaza requires philosophical considerations, but not only that, it requires public health dimensions and much more. For the Board to evolve into an effective international peace-building body requires philosophies and its high representatives. Peace seems to be either an unlikely treasure or a figment of man's imagination. Given that efforts to block nuclear proliferation have failed, it seems to rule out the latter. Hopefully, I will be proved wrong.

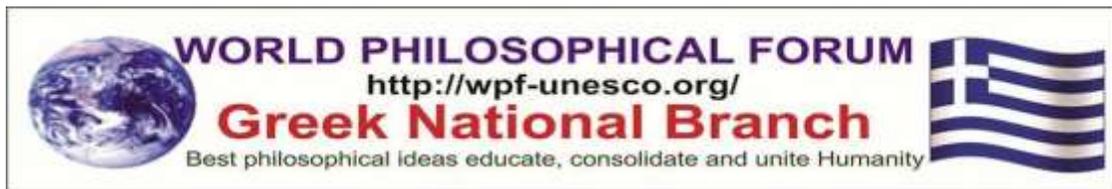
Sensible and philosophical citizens will always endorse the peacemakers and support the peacekeepers. In any upcoming Peace Forum (19/2/2026), there will be members, participants, and observers. A respectful eavesdropping population, public health (health of the public), and a philosophical perspective should also be present. Permit me to note that philosophy cannot be equated with failure nor represented as a failed institution. On the contrary, philosophy has been nullified by failing democracies. What, no eggs? Philosophy? Fortunately, philosophy lives.

Life, its purpose and material wellbeing must be seen through prisms of what in ancient Greece was the concept of a well fulfilled life and a philosophical repositioning for the health of the population as an interdisciplinary instrument for social advancement and a catalyst for peaceful coexistence as proposed through the ignored Skopje Declaration on Public Health, Peace, and Human Rights, 2001 a significant document that influenced the shaping of public health policies and practices in South Eastern Europe and was adopted by the World Federation of Public Health Associations. It emphasized the importance of integrating public health principles into social policy and the need for a health curriculum for peace.

The international community should ensure that philosophy is always represented in activities and discussions relating to Peace and that discussion on disarmament should be held under the umbrella of the United Nations;

Make sure that you and your children are appropriately vaccinated.

NB. 1. The ideas presented in this article have in part been previously forwarded to both Davos and the White House. 2. Worth noting is the Global Peace Offensive, a dialogue-driven peace building approach within civil society conducted within two influential academic networks, WAAS and EASA.



From the Desk of the Honorary President Jeffrey Levett