

Civilization Leap

Why the Conditions for an Ancient Ideal Now Exist for the First Time

A Public Introduction to the Ideas

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For thousands of years, humanity has longed for a better world.
It is not that humanity has failed to try hard enough. The conditions have never been sufficient.
Now, what has changed is not the aspiration, but the conditions.

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1 A Fact That Has Never Been Fully Stated

Almost every culture and every age has pictured the same ideal: people need not live in constant fear for their survival; they can live with dignity and meaning, and find a home in one another's goodwill. This ideal is ancient, almost as old as civilization itself.

Every civilization has given this ideal a name. In China it is called Datong, or Great Harmony. The Book of Rites says, "When the Great Way prevails, the world belongs to all," and describes a world where "the old are cared for to the end, the able have a useful role, the young can grow, and widowers, widows, orphans, the solitary, and people with disabilities or illness are all provided for." Tao Yuanming placed it in the Peach Blossom Spring that could never be found again. In his leaking thatched hut, Du Fu cried out: "If only there were countless spacious houses, sheltering all the world's poor scholars and bringing joy to every face." In the West, Plato wrote the Republic, and Thomas More coined "utopia." Yet that word originally means "no place": at the very moment the ideal was named, it was acknowledged to have nowhere to exist.

But it has never truly been realized. We too readily attribute this to human nature: people are too selfish, too greedy, too shortsighted, so the ideal must forever remain an ideal. This explanation has circulated for thousands of years, and sounds perfectly reasonable.

Look from another angle, however, and something more important comes into view. In every past age, even if enough people sincerely longed for this ideal, making it actually work was extraordinarily difficult. What was missing was not willingness, but capacity.

It was not that humanity did not long for it. The conditions were insufficient.

To record faithfully the contributions scattered across millions of people; to coordinate resources fairly over a broad area; to enable those who need help and those willing to offer it to actually find one another; to ensure that a person's efforts are seen and acknowledged: these sound ordinary, but accomplishing them requires enormous capacities for organization, recording, matching, and allocation. In no previous age did all these capacities reach the necessary threshold at the same time. Reality shattered the ideal again and again. Often the root problem was not that people's hearts were insufficiently good, but that their capacities were insufficient for the task.

The "Civilization Leap" discussed in this small book therefore begins with a question of conditions, rather than a utopian vision. It could not be achieved before because the key capacities were never all in place together. We return to it now because, for the first time, those capacities are beginning to approach a critical threshold.

2 Why This Time Is Different

Let us look more closely at why it could not be done before. Turning "people can live well and live meaningfully" into a reality that actually works requires at least five capacities to be adequate at the same time:

First, the capacity to coordinate resources on a large scale.

Second, the capacity to record scattered, small contributions faithfully.

Third, the capacity to match supply precisely with need across vast populations.

Fourth, the capacity to ensure that benefits and opportunities flow fairly to those who genuinely participate.

Fifth, the capacity to secure recognition for contributions and make "being needed" a tangible fact.

A clarification is needed here. Coordination and allocation do not mean forcibly depriving anyone of lawful rights and interests, or distributing everything equally. They mean connecting idle resources, genuine contributions, and genuine needs more effectively, on the conditions that existing lawful holdings are protected, participation is voluntary, participants can leave, and the process can be audited.

Looking back through history, almost every failure of an ideal can be traced to the absence of one of these capacities. In agrarian civilization, coordination was limited: even adequate food and clothing could not be guaranteed to everyone, let alone any higher ideal. Industrial civilization increased productive capacity, but recording, matching, and allocation could not keep pace. It could manufacture enormous quantities of goods, yet could not make every person's real contribution visible and treat it fairly. The greater the efficiency, the more people felt like replaceable cogs in a machine. In the nineteenth century, Robert Owen actually tried. He devoted much of his fortune to establishing the New Harmony community in America, hoping to put the ideal directly into practice. It failed in less than three years. The reason was not insincerity among the participants; the capacity to organize the contributions, needs, and allocations of hundreds or thousands of people simply did not exist in that age. Each time, the problem was not that people suddenly became bad. Some crucial capacity was still missing.

Most historical failures of "good intentions" were rooted in insufficient capacity, rather than insufficient willingness.

The real change in this age is that artificial intelligence, especially artificial general intelligence, has for the first time made it possible for all five capacities to reach the critical threshold together. Recording, matching, coordination, allocation, and responsive support: a puzzle that always lacked a piece may now, for the first time, be completed all at once. This does not mean every problem has been solved. It means that a window which had never opened before has appeared for the first time.

This answers the question, "Why has Civilization Leap become possible only now?" Humanity has not suddenly become more virtuous. Rather, the conditions absent for thousands of years now have, for the first time, the possibility of taking shape together.

3 Why It Is Necessary and Not Merely Possible

When the conditions are in place, the ideal becomes "possible" for the first time. But there is a more urgent question: why is it "necessary," rather than a welcome improvement that we can take our time over?

Because using the same powerful capacities in the old way would do more than waste an opportunity. It would create danger.

Humanity's age-old approach to competition can be summed up as follows: to make myself safer, I must make you weaker; to make myself more valuable, I must be stronger than you; I win, therefore I exist. In an age of limited capabilities, this logic generated countless conflicts, but there was always a ceiling on the destruction.

Once artificial intelligence multiplies the capabilities of every person and organization, the consequences of this old practice of "affirming oneself by overpowering the other" become entirely different. Destroying something expensive and vital may cost almost nothing. A misjudgment may escalate beyond repair within seconds. A local victory may trigger a chain reaction that becomes a loss shared by everyone. The old mode of competition has not changed, but its amplification gives it, for the first time, the ability to threaten the foundations on which everyone's survival depends.

The old way of living has not changed. But amplified by powerful capabilities, it can, for the first time, drag everyone down together.

This is where "necessity" comes from. It is not a moral appeal to "be a little kinder." It is a practical judgment: under these new capabilities, the old ways lead to a shared downfall. Change is therefore not optional. It is the only direction that has not yet been ruled out.

4 The Real Crisis Is Being Unneeded Rather Than Unemployment

Here we reach the hardest and most important question. Even if we know that "we must change," and that "the conditions for change exist for the first time," what will make change actually happen? People will not lower their guard merely because someone says "we should cooperate." Society will not move onto a new track merely because a vision is beautiful. Without a real force driving it, even the right direction remains an argument on paper.

That force comes precisely from the crisis generated by the old path itself.

When the old practice of "proving oneself by overpowering the other" is amplified enough to threaten everyone, the first impact falls not on institutions or order, but on people's hearts.

Industrial civilization tied people's sense of worth to labor, jobs, consumption, and efficiency: if you could produce, serve, purchase, and pay taxes, you were "recognized." AGI is dismantling this entire old bargain. When machines do everything more reliably, efficiently, and cheaply than people, the old coordinates fail, and large populations begin to doubt whether the world still needs them.

A person can endure poverty, but can scarcely endure the thought: "I am superfluous. Nobody needs me."

This is more than a problem of unemployment. Unemployment is a temporary loss of income; this is the permanent loss of a source of affirmation of one's worth. The issue is not having no income, but no longer being needed. Economic pressure is only the shallowest layer. The real crisis is the collapse of meaning. When large populations enter a state of "being unneeded," a shrinking space for meaning opens accelerating pathways for anxiety, mobilization through hostility, radicalization, revenge, and self-destruction.

But the deepest human need, "my existence has meaning; I have worth," does not disappear because its old outlet is blocked. It is too powerful: it will find an outlet. Directed downward, it becomes resentment, antagonism, and destruction used to prove "I am still here." Directed upward, it becomes creation, protection, connection, and genuine contributions to others. Downward and upward are two directions of the same energy.

The crucial point is this: people's need for a sense of worth and meaning is their deepest driving force, yet it is the one force that need not be satisfied by overpowering others.

This characteristic is essential. If the need could by its nature be satisfied only through competition, all our efforts would eventually return us to the old path of "overpowering others." But that is not necessarily the case. A person can derive a sense of worth from "having more than others," or from "being genuinely present in other people's lives." The latter is just as real and just as powerful. Earlier civilizations simply lacked the capacity to amplify it enough to rival the former.

Here lies the true driving force of Civilization Leap.

It does not require anyone to "become a better person." It simply opens a new direction for energy that has lost its old outlet: an outlet through which people can affirm their own worth without overpowering others.

5 What Changes Is the Source of Our Sense of Worth

In one sentence, Civilization Leap seeks to change the way humanity obtains a sense of worth and meaning.

A change from what to what? From "gaining a sense of worth through possession, comparison, and overpowering others" to "gaining a sense of worth through creation, protection, connection, being needed, and genuine contributions to a shared future."

The sentence looks simple. Yet it corresponds to a set of concrete, recognizable changes:

The coordinates of value are reconnected. Care, companionship, creation, protection, connection, witnessing, maintenance, education, transmission across generations, and genuine presence in relationships may not be fully captured by conventional GDP. Yet they determine whether civilization remains worth continuing. Civilization Leap seeks to give these activities visibility, reward, and recognition, just as labor and consumption receive them.

The sense of being needed gains institutional support. What is being displaced for people is not their work, but their sense of being needed. "This world does not need me" is the root of the crisis. New mechanisms draw on the recording, feedback, and matching capacities emerging in the AGI age to make being needed identifiable, cumulative, and capable of receiving a response. For the first time in history, being needed receives institutional support.

Such recording does not mean scoring people or having a central authority decide who is more virtuous. It means ensuring that acts of care, help, creation, protection, and connection that genuinely occurred no longer disappear silently. Civilization Leap seeks to support contributions, not judge character; to remember value that actually came into being, not create new hierarchies.

Human bonds gain institutional recognition. Family members, lovers, friends, strangers, and future generations: these real relationships are the concrete carriers of civilization's continuity. But human bonds can never be forced into existence by administrative order. Civilization Leap seeks public institutional recognition and shared-resource support for care, intergenerational transmission, and goodwill that previously belonged only to private life. In the new institutions, "spending time for others" is to carry as much weight as "accumulating capital for oneself."

The generation of meaning enters the framework of governance. Meaning is not a by-product; it is infrastructure for civilization's continued existence. Civilization Leap seeks to make "how meaning is generated, maintained, and taught" a subject of governance rather than leave it to arise spontaneously from the market. From the beginning of their education, the next generation should understand that

contribution, connection, and shared continued existence are more sustainable than overpowering, exclusion, and blockade.

But this is not control over people's hearts and minds. Civilization Leap has an inviolable boundary: create the institutional soil in which meaning can grow naturally, without prescribing the legitimate content of meaning. The former is an open structure; the latter is a direction explicitly excluded.

The point is not to demand that people become better or that self-interested people give way. It is to reconnect, at the institutional level, the sources from which a sense of worth and meaning arise. Make stable, long-term self-interest achievable only through putting others first. This is not moral persuasion. It is the alignment of incentive structures with shared continued existence.

6 Winning People's Hearts and Winning the World

A New Reading of Ancient Wisdom

An old saying has circulated for more than two thousand years: whoever wins people's hearts wins the world. It expresses experience repeatedly affirmed across many civilizational traditions. In the AGI age, this saying needs to be interpreted anew.

Under the old logic, winning hearts was the means and winning the world was the end. Winning hearts gave armies morale, production its motive force, and institutions legitimacy. People's hearts were organized and converted into a force capable of overpowering opponents. This logic was highly effective in industrial civilization, but it always treated people as a "pool of power," rather than as ends in themselves. As AGI begins to replace labor, autonomous systems replace human effort, and algorithms replace organization, the instrumental value of "winning hearts" under the old logic begins to depreciate sharply.

In the AGI age, "the world" in the old sense, land, resources, labor, and markets, can all be redefined by technology. The only things AGI cannot replace are the human need for meaning, the longing to be needed, and trust in the future. A system that loses people's trust will become internally unstable, however advanced its technology. A system that can continually support the meaning people seek will possess the greatest resilience and the longest span of continued existence, even while competition remains.

The old logic used people's hearts to win the world. The new logic discovers that people's hearts are themselves the world.

This does not reject pragmatism. It extends the same pragmatism under new conditions. Under the old logic, hearts were won in order to win. Under the new logic, winning hearts is itself the only thing worth winning, because nothing else can remain secure in the AGI age. This is true for those who govern and for every ordinary person: whether a world deserves your trust ultimately depends on whether it supports your sense of being needed and leaves a place for your future.

7 The Attraction of Higher Ground Without Waiting for Everyone to Awaken

The old logic persists not because it is right, but because it has formed a self-sustaining loop. Each subject feels that if it abandons the old logic first while others do not, it will suffer. Under the judgment "I cannot be the first to lose out," everyone remains locked into the old logic.

External pressure can scarcely break this loop. The old logic interprets pressure as a threat and reinforces the original behavior. Moral appeals are even less effective: goodwill without institutional support is easily exploited.

But consider a different direction. What if directly breaking the old logic were unnecessary?

Major civilizational transformations have often proceeded in one particular way: a more compelling practical alternative gradually renders the old logic ineffective. When a sufficiently attractive new possibility actually exists, subjects operating within the old logic begin to recalculate their gains and losses. They need not first become kinder or give up self-protection. They gradually recognize that moving in the new direction serves their long-term interests better than remaining trapped in the old logic.

This is the "higher-ground effect." Higher ground does not have to attack lower ground. It only has to exist in reality and be visible. People within the old logic will begin looking for paths upward themselves.

"Civilizational higher ground" does not mean a particular country or institutional system. It means that some part of civilization is the first to achieve a way of operating in which people no longer fear for their basic survival; their sense of worth comes from genuine contributions rather than overpowering others; resources no longer sit idle on a vast scale but effectively serve real needs; individuals find meaning through relationships, creation, protection, and intergenerational transmission; and AGI is used to support people's sense of being needed rather than replace people.

Higher ground is not a perfect utopia. It is a real-world testing ground that demonstrates in practice that another way of operating is both more sustainable than the old logic and better for ordinary people. Its attraction comes not from "persuasion" that asks people to believe, but from "results" that let them see.

Nor is higher ground a model for passing judgment on other places, still less a template for imposing one way of life on everyone. It simply demonstrates that a different operating logic can genuinely exist and gives those who wish to approach it a path to follow.

When enough people see for themselves that people on higher ground truly feel more secure, resources truly work more effectively, people truly are more needed, and relationships truly are more genuine, the old logic may refute theories, but it can scarcely refute reality. Subjects within the old logic will begin comparing, calculating, and looking for paths themselves.

Talent and resources will begin to flow toward higher ground, making the old logic increasingly difficult to sustain. Higher ground becomes a frame of reference, loosening the old logic's explanations that "competition must intensify, inequality must exist, and meaning must be scarce." Competition will not disappear, but its content will change: from "who can overpower whom" to "who can contribute more effectively to shared continued existence."

This path does not depend on the old logic's willing cooperation, or require everyone to awaken at once. It needs only a small group, in a real setting, to move the new logic from judgment into operation, from operation into verification, and from verification into visibility. Civilization Leap need not begin with a grand remaking of all humanity. It can begin by completing a closed-loop verification of the new logic within a manageable scope. Let it operate in reality, be recorded in reality, and receive real feedback. Let it be seen, experienced, and compared. Let its attraction emerge naturally.

The starting point of higher ground is neither complicated nor dependent on external conditions. Within your own sphere, see and acknowledge contributions that have long been overlooked. There is no need to wait for the system to change. Every additional contribution that becomes visible makes another way of operating more real.

8 Imagine What Happens When This Outlet Opens

Let us step away from the abstract argument for a moment and consider something more concrete.

Imagine someone whose daily work may be far from glamorous: caring for aging parents, keeping growing children company, helping neighbors with difficulties in the community, or using a craft to repair something for another person. By the old measures of value, these activities scarcely "count." They do not generate GDP, add competitive leverage, or appear in anyone's key performance indicators. The person doing them often feels, "It seems I have done nothing at all."

But suppose that one day these small, scattered, never truly visible contributions, care, companionship, creation, protection, education, and genuine presence in relationships, could be recorded, identified, and recognized. No one would need to evaluate and score them. New capacities would make "being needed" tangible, cumulative, and responsive for the first time. If someone helps another person today, that help does not vanish into thin air: it leaves a real trace. When that person needs help tomorrow, someone can see them and respond.

Someone displaced from a job by automation is no longer merely counted among "the unemployed," but is seen again through new connections. They can repair, care, offer companionship, and teach children. In the community and in other people's lives, they can once again become someone who is needed.

And this is not limited to care and companionship. Finding meaning by creating a work, solving a difficult problem, passing on a craft, or exploring an unknown field likewise need not depend on overpowering anyone.

In such a world, the way a person obtains a sense of worth quietly changes. They no longer need to affirm themselves through "having more than others," but experience their meaning through "being genuinely present in other people's lives." This does not turn everyone into a saint. It gives goodwill a circuit through which it can be supported. The willingness to spend time for others, to protect and to give, feelings once confined to private life, can for the first time receive support on a broader scale.

This picture is not far away. The five capacities that enable it, recording, matching, coordination, allocation, and responsive support, are reaching their thresholds one by one.

A society deserves trust not because it is perfect, but because, even in its imperfection, not one person is wholly excluded. Because even when people take different paths, no one feels superfluous.

9 This Does Not Ask Us to Give Something Up

Taken together, the underlying logic of Civilization Leap can be condensed into a very plain sentence: change the way people obtain a sense of worth and meaning.

The sentence looks simple, but its implications are profound. For thousands of years, every culture's ideals have contained an expectation that was never truly fulfilled: the real contributions that sustain civilization should no longer be forgotten. For the first time, this is more than a moral wish. The

conditions for making it real exist. Not because the world has suddenly become fair, but because we finally have the capacity to make value that has always existed, yet never been seen, visible, recorded, and answered.

The old way is dangerous because it ties a sense of worth to overpowering others. The crisis ultimately reaches people's hearts because, once people lose their sense of worth and meaning, they turn toward antagonism and destruction. This age offers hope for the first time because it brings together two things never previously present together: a reason why change is necessary, and a set of capacities approaching the threshold for the first time.

For thousands of years, humanity has longed for a better world. In the past, the conditions were insufficient. Now, for the first time, those conditions are approaching the critical threshold, while the old way of living can, for the first time, go no further. Change is no longer a distant option. It is a possibility that our generation genuinely holds in its hands for the first time.

This does not ask us to give anything up. It simply gives us a chance, a real chance for the first time, to reconnect energy that has long been misdirected to where it should have been all along.

Humanity's deepest need for worth need no longer be hijacked by the old logic of competition. It can become the driving force that carries civilization forward.

Ultimately, Civilization Leap seeks to make three things true together: survival no longer held hostage by fear, a life with happiness that can be counted on, and existence able to affirm its own meaning. None of the three is dispensable. For the first time, this age brings the conditions for all three close to their threshold together.

This small book does not ask you to believe any conclusion. It asks you only to verify three things for yourself. Notice the contributions around you that have never "counted," care, companionship, repair, and protection, and see whether they truly sustain the life you inhabit. Notice where your own sense of worth comes from: comparison, or being needed. Notice where the feeling of "being unneeded" is emerging and how it spreads. If you see all three, no one needs to confirm this book's judgment for you.

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Continue from This Text

The following entries follow the natural sequence of questions raised here, without repeating the account of the framework already given in the main text. They lead to the corresponding document pages at www.civitas.top.

This Document Online

<https://www.civitas.top/en/documents/p02-civ-001/>

01 The Underlying Principles of Civilization Leap

Explains in publicly accessible language why Civilization Leap is necessary, what it must safeguard, and where it aims to arrive.

<https://www.civitas.top/en/documents/p02-civ-002/>

02 Ten Questions on Civilization Leap

Helps readers encountering the framework for the first time see the real-world problems, core judgments, and directions for further reading.

<https://www.civitas.top/en/documents/p01-entry-001/>

03 Collected Research Manuscripts on Civilization Leap: First Reading Edition

Helps readers encountering the framework for the first time see the real-world problems, core judgments, and directions for further reading.

<https://www.civitas.top/en/documents/p01-entry-002/>

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