

# **Journal of Digital Art & Humanities**



**ISSN 2712-8148**

**Vol.2 Iss.1**

**June 2021**

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# Senior Optimist pursues a better Future Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic

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[https://doi.org/10.33847/2712-8148.2.1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.33847/2712-8148.2.1_5)

Received 10.04.2021/ Revised 10.05.2021/Accepted 14.06.2021/Published 26.06.2021

**Abstract.** The author claims that the COVID-19 Pandemic signalizes that time comes for making some changes. In short, he calls us to care more about people and their needs, about Earth and Nature and their potential unknown threats, rather than concentrating on the obsolete Capitalist call of "making money." Although nobody can assess the magnitude of these issues, the author estimates it as a very significant Issue. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly indicates how important and critical is the Public Sector in the fight against this enemy. Private funds were important but relatively less. The Author calls and offers a six steps strategy, for developing and inspiring people from all walks of life and all social classes. Finally, the Author believes that, it makes sense and justified to invest money and efforts in developing and empowering human-beings, as they are the keys and the leverage, the A and the Z, for every significant issue or project.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Nature, unknown universe, development, growth, empowerment, ambition, expertise and excellence.

"A winner is a dreamer who never give up"  
Nelson Mandela [1]

## 1. Introduction

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is still with us, the light of the vaccination efforts which shine at the end of the dark COVID-19 tunnel, encourages us to believe that 2022 will be a better year. This encouraging reality rises some questions. The first one is: Whether the foreseen future will be similar to the upsetting past? As many assume that the answer to this question may be negative, which means that the civilized world is going to face a new different reality. Thus, the second relevant question should be: What will be the type and the nature of the regime that best will meet people's hopes and desires. We relate to this situation and use it as an inspiring opportunity for offering a strategy and guidelines for reorganizing the Post-Coronavirus world of tomorrow. Although nobody is really certain about the future changes, many are certain that changes are necessary and therefore, will come. Since these changes will take place in many areas and will affect many people it is hard to exact describe them. However, one thing is certain - Life after the Coronavirus plague will differ from this beforehand. For better portraying the future we go back and learn something from the past. Viktor Frankl taught us that 'meaning of life' is among the most crucial urges required for surviving bad times.[2] Thus, if this is right in critical situations, it makes sense assuming that in orderly days and in normal situations, 'meaning of life' is a key factor for maintaining decent life. Frankl was also among the early psychologists who experienced and found out in reality, how significant and critical were people's characters in the fight for survival. Frankl's lesson could be concluded by saying - Those who have meaning to their life, survived better than those who were wealthier or better physically built.

Another interesting view is proposed by George Bernard Shaw, who claims: "Life is not about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself." [3]. And this exactly

what drives the Author of this work – assisting people to recreate, empower and develop themselves. It is yet too early today concluding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and public life. However, many agree that, for good or bad, this plague has a significant influence on many aspects of our life. It is, therefore, fair to assume that these influences force us to make many important and less-important changes in the ways we run our livelihood.

"Ever more people today have the means to live,  
but no meaning to live for."  
(Viktor Frankl)

## 2. "The meaning of life" - What is it?

The expressions: 'The Search for meaning', 'The need for defining a purpose' or 'the urge for finding a goal' for life - pronounce people's wish to understand and justifying their presence on earth. In addition, they wonder about the difference and similarity between human creatures and other living creatures. Plants, birds and animals need no reasons and do not look for any justification for being present on earth. However, developed and less-developed human beings look consistently for answers on these wonders. Even if some primitive tribes, somewhere at bizarre locations, are less-aware to this wish, it appears latter, with the civilizing process. Apparently, it seems that non-humane creatures' life is easier, simpler and without so many concerns. They just have to be born and live somewhere, feed themselves, breed and perished.

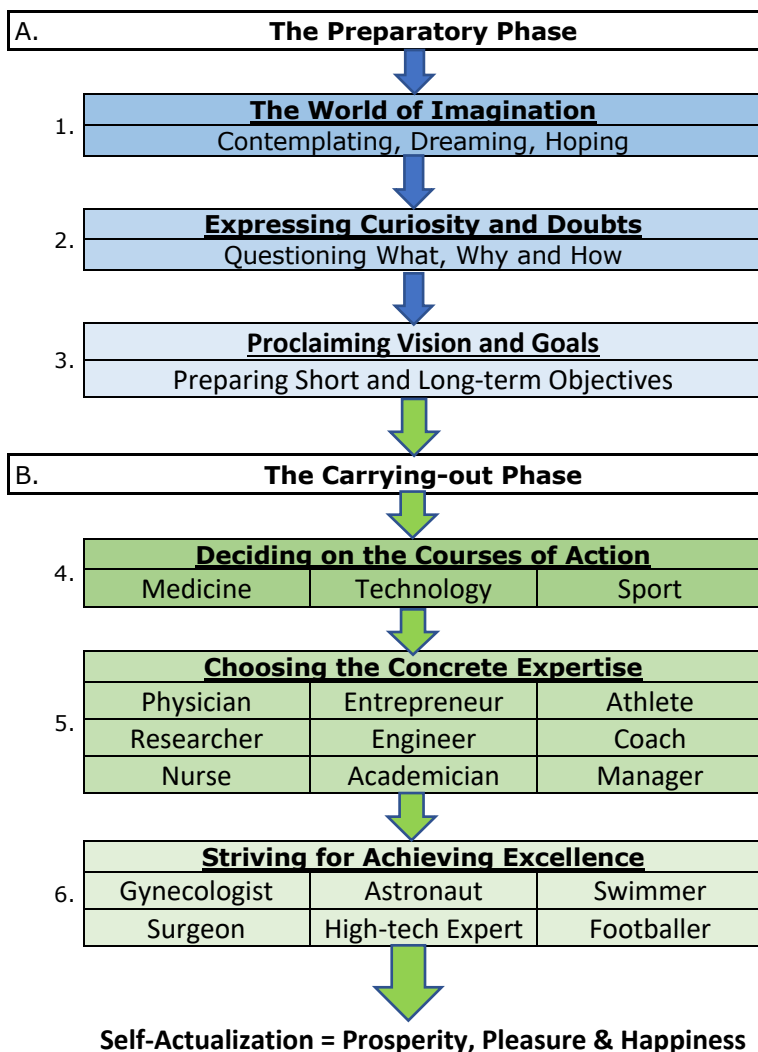
This story is different with people. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, or Paradise [4] well demonstrates the case. Although they have all they need, although they got all they wanted, they were consisting striving to fulfil their curiosity. They wished to be smarter, determined to attain this goal by eating from "the Tree of Knowledge." Attention should be given to the fact that since they lived in Paradise, where all their materialistic demands were fulfilled, they did not ask for any money-oriented or physical benefit. They did not look for selfish materialistic wealth. They just wished to fulfil their intellectual and spiritual aspirations. Or in our language, they were the first human-beings who look for meaning. This story demonstrates that from the early days of written history, some thousand years back, strong and compulsive lust has driven people to grow and be developed. Thus, one can see, that the search for meaning emerged and accompanies civilization from its early days.

Our contribution to this historical quest for meaning, is presented in the following pages. We add to this long endeavor, a strategy for Growth. A model of policy that assists making significant moves from abstract ideas to attaining Maslow's highest achievement - **Self-actualization**. Our revised paradigm proposes here is the **Post-modern Free Democracy** of the 21st Century. It rests on a **Dynamic Equilibrium**, between **the individual** and his/her **community** or the **State**. It is a **balanced set of responsibilities**, where the **State "preserves, protects and defends"** (a partial quote from the President Oath of Affirmation, US constitution, Article II, Section 1) **the individual's rights and obligations**, while the **individual**, is obliged to **"preserve, protect and defend" the civic society**.

## 3. A Two Phases Strategy of Growth

At the beginning we tend to argue that Imagining, doubting and thinking, at one hand and doing, destining and executing, on the other one, are among the major traits that distinguish human beings from other living creatures. We emphasize this point in order to encourage and drive passive individuals to deepening their involvement in the march to growth and better life. We concentrate on the significant

capacities of dreaming and working as the two very important milestones in our walk to achieve Self-actualization. A graphic scheme of this Strategy is presented in Fig.1.



**Fig. 2.** Two Phases and Six Steps of the Growth Strategy.

The proposed in Fig.1 Scheme shows that the Development or Growth Strategy is divided into two operational phases: (A)The Preparatory and (B) The Carrying-out phases. The first phase, contains three steps (1) Imagining, (2) doubting and (3) thinking, while the second one contains another three steps (4) destining, (5) doing and (6) executing. All these six actions distinguish human beings from other living creatures. This point must be emphasized in order to encourage and drive passive human individuals to deepening their involvement in the march to growth and better life. The two capacities of dreaming and working are underscored since they are the two more important milestones in the walk for achieving Self-actualization.

This general division is relevant to many human endeavors, like, thinking and learning, working and undertaking. Therefore, it is appropriate for using it here also.

Minor changes or adjustments may be required for specific cases, but mostly it will fit our purpose.

## A. The Preparatory Phase

### **3.1. Setting up the World of Imagination**

Aspiration is an expression that consists of Imaginations, Dreams and Hopes. It is right, therefore saying that these capacities are among those that distinguish and characterize human-beings. Imaginations, dreams and hopes, are therefore, intangible expressions of human desires and urges. Albert Einstein granted much value to imagination when stating: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircled the world." [5]. These expressions may contain everything but hardly can be specific. Be Well, be Happy or be Healthy, are just few examples of these general phrases. Even more concrete greetings like, be Smart, be Wealthy or be Prosperous, practically say little, but express a general desire. Since 'Imagination encircled the world' it has neither limit, no boundaries. Thus, everyone can almost every time include everything in imagination. In many respects, it can be meaningless, or in a less-decisive language, very general, vague formless and fuzzy. However, it seems that because of this immaturity and rawness, Albert Einstein valued it so much. In any case, imagination is the story of young, naive, less-experienced and beginners. They have nothing to lose, but their dreams. And this state is what gives them so much power and promising future. On the other hand, imagination is also among the powerful engines, boosters or motivators that drove brave and strong dreamers, "unreasonable men" and entrepreneurs to carry-out their dreams and attain their goals. Usually these people fit George Bernard Shaw' description: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." [3]

"Doubt is the origin of wisdom"  
Rene' Descartes [6]

### **3.2. Expressing Curiosity and Doubts**

Curiosity is almost the first gesture newborns made when they come to the world. They are wondering about things appear after the nine months of pregnancy's darkness. Later on, curiosity guides youngsters of all ages, during their march to adulthood. Following Rene' Descartes' above statement, one may truly claim that 'greater curiosity indicates on greater wisdom. Moreover, the three elementary words, What, Why, and How, form the genuine basis for all human research. Thomas Hobbs referred also to this point when he wrote, some four hundred years ago: "Curiosity is the lust of the mind." [7] Albert Einstein said on this issue: "the important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." [5]

Whereas curiosity is a gesture related to the inner-self of observing individual, doubts refer to the external surroundings. The doubting individual must be strong enough, brave and self-assured for posing embarrassing questions and suspicious about manipulative answers.

"Our problems are man-made; therefore, they may be solved by man.  
No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings"  
John F. Kennedy [8]

### **3.3. Thinking - Proclaiming Vision and Goals**

The quest for posing goals is a rational demand and a logical search for justifying behavior. Why are we doing this and what are the reasons for doing that, are human

contemplations that do not bother animals. Experience tells us that when people know what they are doing and why, the results are better and greater. Many types of Goals, Aims and Ends participate in building person's aspirations. It is not easy to classify or rank them, while many had tried to do it. Viktor Frankl, argues that his observations during the horrible surroundings of the concentration camps, clearly indicate that a person should have meaning to his/her life. [2] Viktor E. Frankl (1946) Man's search for Meaning. Those who have a defined, concrete purpose, for every day in the camp, lived longer and survived better. This is a pertinent example where a transcendental spiritual intangible value assists and affects real concrete course of action. Winston Churchill, in his "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat" speech, put it quite bluntly: "You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is Victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however, long and hard the road may be." [9]. The first point here, is that a goal must be simple, clear and concrete. The second point argues that every human-being, even the most developed ones, must realize that posing a goal or a purpose for their life, is an inevitable and unavoidable undertaking.

**Vision** is defined in Wikipedia by two versions:

- a. "an Idea or mental image of something,
- b. An experience in which you see things that do not exist physically."

We offer a third version, a one that suits better our 'meaning of life model':

**Vision is a general interpretation of things that were envisaged by imagination or dreams, and are becoming a real-world mission.**

**Goals** and **Ambitions** come to meet the visionary requirements. In essence, every normal human being should have a goal that would direct and steer his or her life. Even 'doing nothing' or 'spending time on the ocean beach' are legitimized goals, provided they were chosen by the user. However, spending aimless time, mingling around like an ownerless dog seems more to an animal behavior. Goals should be more specific and more concrete than dreams and hopes. But they should be general enough for allowing selecting a wide range of options or alternatives. **Goals** are the concrete aims of future actions and undertakings. Toward attaining these targets, all operations and initiatives should be steered. Wishing to be a Medical Doctor, a Priest, a Pilot, an Executive, a Teacher, a Ballet dancer or a Football star, all are legitimized goals. It is also OK to wait some years for selecting goals for life. However, these expressions, in essence, as paraphrased by Albert Einstein: "are branches of the same tree." This also the place for clarifying that Ambition should not automatically, be regarded as Competition. These are two human drives that are fueled from different sources and aimed to different directions.

**Competition**, is an older term that was given to many modern situations. It is defined as: "a situation in which someone is trying to win something or be more successful than someone else." (Cambridge Dictionary) [10]. Within the agrarian societies of the past, competition was turned mainly to sport activities. The current Olympic Games symbolize the present continuation of the ancient Greek and Roman's public games. The first industrial revolution had incorporated this human inclination into a major element of the manufacturing and trading world. Henry Ford, the famous American industrialist, puts it quite clear: "Competition is the keen cutting edge of business, always shaving away at costs." [11] Half a century later, a Retired 4-star general, Collin Powell, gave it a more considering meaning, by distinguishing between inhumane and humane one: "The healthiest competition occurs when average people win by putting above average effort." [12] However, even in the late 1930s competition began showing its weaknesses and failures, while many started looking for other strategies. Franklin D. Roosevelt, US 32nd President claimed: "Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off [13]. An interesting view on the downsides of competition and their impact on the

participant in this race is provided by Katie Couric – an American journalist and an author, who noted: "Competition is one aspect of the job, but I think if you're too busy worrying about the competition, you don't focus enough on what you're doing." [14] We, from our side, see only few positive effects caused by competition. It should of course, be a "healthy competition" as called by Collin Powell, and aimed to assist, in his wording to "average people." The non-average ones will negotiate and collaborate if they belong to classes higher than the average. They will quarrel and fight if they belong to the lower classes. At present, few positive reasons exist for encouraging competition. let it "leaves off" in Roosevelt's words. This approach makes sense as most real great and important challenges are met and solved today by groups of competent people working as teams together. **Team-work is becoming currently the major mode of operation.**

**Ambition.** It can be said that ambition is the positive sibling of competition. Helen Keller is among the few who knew how difficulty is it to develop and nurture healthy ambition. Her words, therefore, are so convincing: "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." (Helen Keller) [15] But, ambition is also the hidden engine that motivates and drive successful individual to go further, to climb higher and to act better. Buddha compares it to love: "Ambition is like love, impatient both of delay and rivals" [16]. A more comprehensive view provides Herbert Armstrong, who wrote: Ambition is more than mere desire. It is desire plus incentive – determination – will to achieve the desire." [17] It is interesting to see that most traditional urges, desires and begs, concentrate on intellectual and spiritual requests, rather than money or assets-oriented wishes. This deduction indicates also how important are spiritual and intelligence aspects for all classes of society, poor and rich, little educated and well-educated ones.

The outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic's support also this impression. The results indicate on how important is supporting and endorsing emotional and spiritual concerns of people of all classes. Governments that wish to restore after their civic societies after the plague ending, must, therefore, restore and uphold their transcendental cultural platform. They must turn to their roots for reconstructing their genuine spiritual and emotional set of morals.

\* \* \*

Ending this preparatory phase means completing the first three general steps of the endeavor. This preparatory phase sets up, lays the ground and makes all the necessary actions, which are relevant for almost all types of development. It is pertinent for learning and for working, for training and for executing, for Science and for Arts. It can last years or even decades and it demands ambition, which rests on patience, devotion, consistency and hard work. One may even compare these three steps period to a long and demanding booth-camp, which is precedes a longer military service. It is not so easy; it is full with demanding experiences, but it is necessary and indispensable. With concluding this stage, we see it advisable offering some prudent advises to those who reach this point:

- Be yourself, not a copy, nor a replica, just the ingenious you
- Be a Mensch, not an egotist nor a narcissist
- Listen to your inner-self, it is your confident most important adviser.
- Be a caring person, a reliable, supportive and encouraging member of your and Community
- Family is your most precious asset, do not stop nurturing, caring and supporting it.
- Do not stop imagining, dreaming and hoping
- Inspire your curiosity, do not stop asking questions
- Dare to have a vision and be brave posing goals
- Respect your fellows, See them as colleagues not as competitors



- Strive to be part of a team since grand projects are executed by team works
- If you tend to perform as a soloist, encircle yourself with associates
- Fly high but keep your legs on the ground
- Although the sky is the limit, the ground is the safe haven.

In sum, it is recommended not to proceed forward without spending some time - days or weeks, months or years, undergoing the preparatory first three steps. After completing this phase, individuals are ready for the main course of their life - choosing and building their career. This is, maybe, the right place to note that some people, of all ages and of all walks of life, wish or prefer, to stay in this phase. From their own reasons, from a variety of motives some prefer to take a break from doing something. They want just, to enjoy life by doing nothing. It is, of course, their privilege and they can do it, as long as their social status and financial resources allow it.

### B. The Carrying-out Phase

"Always recognize that human individuals are ends,  
and do not use them as means to your end."  
Emmanuel Kant [18]

### **3.4. Deciding on the Course of Action**

After deliberating with imagination and dreams, after following natural and acquired curiosity and doubts, and after developing vision and posing goals, time comes for being specific and deciding on a concrete course of action. This may be one of a person's most important decision. It may direct person's life for years or decades, it may affect his/her vocation and lead their future career. Some will make this decision by themselves; some will follow their family advice while others will be affected by social networks and current trends. As a rule of thumb, it seems logically assuming that about 25-30% of the participants will fail in their decision. 50-60% will accept and follow their decision, with little remarks about its affects. Thus, the rest, some 25-30% of the decision-making population, eventually will really accept, be intertwined and integrated in the proposed course of action. This phase may be the opening of a long, tiresome, demanding and inspiring march of able, talented and decisive group of people toward a promising and rewarding top. Although this walk is opened to all, although many will join at the beginning, however, only little will eventually attain their goals.

Another important point. that refers to this phase is the change of the form and the nature of the decisions. Whereas the first three contemplation phases allowed use of soft language, manipulative opinions and vague uplifted jargon, the language along the coming three phases must be different. As most missions from here on are dealing with concrete undertakings, specific executions and goal-oriented initiatives, the tone of the wording and the spirit of the conversations should reflect this atmosphere. Whereas the first three phases allow and even encouraged, doubts, hesitation, uncertainty and similar considerations, the coming three phases demand almost the opposite. As these phases deal with execution the jargon must be simpler, concrete, doing-oriented and focused on the goals. **Certainty, decisiveness, consistency and encouraging** should characterize the spirit of the new language used from now on. Quite at the beginning rises the issue of means and end. The questions at hand are the famous ones, - what preceded the egg or the chicken, the seed of the tree? Another type of wondering is the relations between the means and the end, does the end justified all means, etc.? Martin Luther King offers a good guideline: "In the final analysis, means and ends must cohere because the end is preexistent in the means, and, ultimately, destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends (Martin Luther King Jr.) [19] The philosopher Emmanuel Kant

emphasizes the humanity point of view and call to make it the ultimate end. Based on our experience, We, put much weight on integrity, as a leading component of human character. It was well described by John MacDonald who wrote: "Integrity is not a conditional word. It doesn't blow in the wind or change with weather. it is your inner image of yourself, and if you look in there and see a man who won't cheat, then you know he never will." [20] (Quotes on Integrity, Wikipedia).

Thus, assisted by the powerful engine of integrity and following the hidden and discreet real inspiration, the stage is ready and time is ripe for defining future course of action. Although the schematic model offers just three options, in reality, numerous alternatives are available, waiting to be picked by the wondering individuals. Every pick is legitimated, provided it is done heartily, fits real desires and hidden emotions and concurs with the previous decisions. Mistakes here are allowed, since the seekers are human beings, not angels. Naturally, living people make sometimes mistakes.

"The professional has learned that success, like happiness, comes as a by-product of work. The professional concentrates on the work and allows rewards to come or not to come, whatever they like."  
Steven Pressfield [21]

### **3.5. Doing-Choosing the Concrete Expertise**

This is the phase for choosing the main road to proficiency. Most working people wish to acquire tools and techniques that will help them advancing and becoming experts in their field of expertise. This where they will achieve the highest possible status as professionals. Additionally, they will be required to decide what should they give up, because proficiency demands concentration and devotion. All energies and abilities should be focused on maximizing the effort for acquiring knowledge and capacity, needed for becoming an expert. Toil, sweat and sometimes even tears, are the currency usually paid for achieving professional reputation. But happiness is the valued reward for this effort, as John Dewey had written about it: "To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness."(John Dewey) [22] However, Martin Luther King teaches us that professionalism and excellence should be sought and maintained in projects of all size, since they represent a general degree of performance: "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."(Martin Luther King Jr.) [23]

"Excellence is an art won by training and habitation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then is not an act but a habit."  
Aristotle [24]

### **3.6. Striving for Achieving Excellence**

This is the final phase, the last step in a long and demanding search for meaning in life. It is nice comparing it to the well-known hundred years old song known as: "It is a long way to Tipperary ("It is a Long way to Tipperary" by Judge & Harry Williams, it was a British very popular marching song, being remembered as the song of World War I), it is a long way to go." The main difference between those two marches is, that our march is a peaceful, decisive advancement one, while the other is a soldier' song, who go to war. The second difference is that while the first refers to grown-up men, we turn to all parts of society. Everybody, females and men, young and old, everyone is required to join the self-inspiring struggle for evolution and progress. However, this phase confronts us again with means and end issue. For reflecting the Author's opinion, it is helpful citing Emmanuel Kant: "always recognize

that human individuals are the ends, and do not use them as means to your end. " [17] This Kant' loud and clear statement, that was written years before the blooming of Capitalism, reminds us all today, what is the real goal. It also helps us to better choose the meaning of life. We should learn and teach, coach and lead, and remember, that mostly and usually, human individuals and common people are eventually the ultimate goal and fundamental reason for most scientific, economic, social and political endeavors. All the other goals, such as accumulating Capital, Assets, Wealth, Machinery, Buildings or Monuments etc. come to serve human beings. They are destined to "preserve, protect and defend" people and their needs. The above Kant's Ethical Proclamation, is very important by itself, but it is even more significant and meaningful, as a mile-stone, a lighthouse or a compass for guiding directing and facing future challenges. The Author's interpretes also that the well-known opening of the US Constitution – "We the people of the United State" originally was designed and aimed to the Fellow Americans and the Common Citizens, and not only to the privileged Land-lords, Capital-owners and Wealthy traders.

The distinction between those who have and those who have almost nothing, occurred mainly because of the consisting growing uncontrolled disparity, caused by the brutal Capitalism aggressive and greedy policy.

However, the urge for excellence, as this final phase is named, starts, maintained and is carried out by able and fortunate individuals, who consistently continue investing time and money in the march to success. It should be emphasized again and again, that the creative restless entrepreneurs are those who are the core and the boosting engine of this move. Governments can help or halt, Capital is required and can be useful, but talented brave and daring human beings, are always the key factor in the march to eternity. For meeting the above requirements individuals must learn, be trained and acquire experience. Since little can be achieved without investing time and energy, the candidates should be:

- Human-beings with stout inner-self and strong personality
- Talented persons with open eyes and common sense
- Brave individuals consistent and devoted to the mission
- Shiny stars who collaborate with colleagues and teams
- Individuals who endorse themselves but care for others
- Reliable Community members who meet its relevant responsibilities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Coronavirus pandemic indicates again how important and crucial are human-beings in the struggle for survival. People from all walks of life and of different skills and abilities, were requested to work together in order to fight and win this terrible plague. The most talented people in the pharmaceutical industry, the best Medical Doctors, Nurses and support personnel, and all the auxiliary services, all cooperate in order to provide the best possible treatment and the best way for recovering. The first lesson learnt from this affair is, the crucial role of people in the fights against the threat of Nature. The second lesson refers to strengthening and empowering people inner-self and ability to face dangers and catastrophes. The third point relates to the unmeasurable size and mysterious of the unknown world.

Despite the grand technological advancement and in spite all the scientific achievements, the unknown, unclear and threatening universe still is humongous and comprehended. The fourth lesson teaches us to extent, improve and hastening development of all people. More budgets for educating people will harvest more benefits for the common good. The fifth point refers to mama Earth. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly hints on the potential dangers expected from permanent denial or dis regarding the big issues of saving the land, securing the climate and preserving

the environment. This are gigantic challenges and the coronavirus just indicated how short is our waiting time.

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Published online by Institute of Certified Specialists twice a year, **Journal of Digital Art & Humanities (JDAH)** is an international peer-reviewed journal which **aims** at the latest ideas, innovations, trends, experiences and concerns in the field of the digital arts & humanities. JDAH bridges humanitarian, artistic, and scientific disciplines, allowing author(s) to express the views on the subjects studied using modern digital/information technology. It is a nexus for information exchange among academia and industry addressing theory, criticism, and practice. The effective dissemination of original ideas/results generated by the human brain and presented/reflected in articles created using modern information/digital technology is **the main objective of JDAH**.

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### **Publisher**

Institute of Certified Specialists (ICS)

95a Lunacharskogo str., Perm, Russian Federation

**Journal URL:** <https://ics.events/journal-of-digital-art-humanities/>

**Email:** [conf@ics.events](mailto:conf@ics.events)

The picture on JDAH cover was painted by Antonio Donizeti da Cruz.