

Reforming the Environment, Not Behavior

Programmed to seek a weather-protected building site, a worker wasp will sometimes fly in through open windows of human habitats. Failing to find the programmed requirements for a site, the wasp flies as programmed, back toward the light. Very frequently it runs into invisible window glass whose atoms are far enough apart to permit light and radio waves to pass through, but not wasps. The wasp crashes against the glass but its soft landing gear readjusts its mechanisms whose arrested wingfoils, having lost their “lift,” stall and allow the wasp to be pulled by gravity to a second crash on the window sill. From here it takes off on a spiral climb back into the room for a second and many successive flights outward toward the light. Only the “probability” statistics governing the chances of success with a half-open window and x numbers of flights, initiated from below the glazed portion of the window opening, can hold any hope for the wasp’s avoiding ultimately lethal reencounters with the unprogrammed contingency – an invisible barrier.

Eddington said, “Science is the earnest and sustained intellectual attempt to set in order the facts of experience.” Humans’ intellects subjectively comprehend the wasp’s problem but the wasp’s sting is also a fact of human experience and despite a compassionate urge few humans are objective, energetic, and scientifically ingenious enough to invent safe ways of helping the wasp to escape. They think of the wasp instead of the window whose open half could be shifted from the top to the bottom – or whose glass portion could be covered opaquely with a newspaper, so that the wasp’s light-seeking mechanism would steer safely only for the brightly illuminated, free, outward passage into the open air.

In short, the humans spontaneously try to “shoo” the wasp, i.e., to reform the wasp’s behavioral pattern instead of spontaneously thinking of how to reform the environment so that the wasp would be spontaneously stimulated by the reformed environment to escape and thus terminate the interference episode between man and wasp.

The unprogrammed lethal frustration of wasps lends insights into many of humanity’s present-day frustrated behaviors. The human’s same fear-frozen, subconscious reflexes – usually mistakenly identified as apathy – plus their ineptitude in not “seeing” what to do about the wasps – is often redisplayed in their apathy and ineptitude in dealing with humanity’s own sensorially inexplicable dilemmas.

Better than 99% of humanity’s frustrations are occasioned by surprise encounters with the almost completely invisible evolutionary-transformation trendings of human ecology and the latter’s environmental transformings. Also invisible and inaudible are the universal evolution’s information-generating and distribution systems which if adequately tuned in and integrated could warn mankind of such trendings as may be negative or even lethal to future human existence on Earth.

- Buckminster Fuller
Utopia or Oblivion