

## Our Toughest Enemy is Time

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Our perspective on life changes as we get older. At young age we concentrate on materialistic issues, such as education, dressing, socializing, love, while paying little attention to the passing time or the years to come. Approaching the age of 18 we start thinking about how do we continue, and what might be the preferred direction of a putative career. A few years later, after additional studies, service in the army, or wondering around, we strive to secure our future by fortifying a working position, while having sporadic thoughts about family life. Following marriage and during our mid-age (30-50), the main concerns are mostly devoted to our career and the future of our children, with intensification of feelings of responsibility and beginning of planning of our late future. Still, worries about aging are scarce and usually initiate when approaching ~60, often when facing health problems at our close surrounding. Interestingly, although we almost approach the problematic age (above 60-65 when many people experience various difficulties, like health complications of their parents), we still ignore our own forthcoming deterioration, even upon breaking signs of physical and cognitive decline. Although the suppression of an uncomfortable forthcoming future seems bizarre, it is most likely a built-in cognitive mechanism evolved to avoid pessimism, depression or even desperation. Another bothering issue may be depressing thoughts about past misses (e.g., in relations, love, career), that either dissipate later when turning into memories, or just vanish at the onset of *Dementia*, *Alzheimer* or *Parkinson*.

Such a cognitive pathway along life typifies humans, most likely due to their developed brain compared to other animals with shorter lifespan and less developed cognition, that probably are unable for abstractive thoughts or calculated depressing feelings (as far as we know). Their concern is likely on a daily basis concentrating on getting food, mating, comfort, and secured life, which in a second thought are also major concerns of humans at various life stages. Thus, despite the domination of our species on Earth, and pride on having the most developed brain in the animal kingdom, this putative advantage is accompanied by cognitive burden with cumulative worries, which often affect in retrospect (at old age) our cognition toward bitterness and disappointed mood due to awareness to the passing TIME ('how did it pass so quickly and almost unnoticed').

A fine example of such a change in mood and perception during life is provided by the extraordinary write-ups of King Solomon (ref. 1). When young, loaded with self-esteem, satisfaction and happiness he expressed his most gentle feelings in the book 'Song of Songs' (*Shir Hashirim* in Hebrew; part of the Jewish Bible devoted to the beauty of young age and true love, as well as importance of pleasure and positive thinking and hopes). In his mid-age he wrote the sophisticated book of 'Proverbs' (*Mishley* in Hebrew), that demonstrated his wisdom and accumulated experience. Notably, 'Proverbs' offers advice, teaches and reinforces morals,

and is being used through metaphors and symbols for spreading knowledge, improve speech and argumentation abilities, and aid in understanding as well as console and inspire others. Then, at old age he composed his depressing book 'Ecclesiastes' (*Kohelet* in Hebrew), reflecting his disappointment and despair of life, summarized in the words 'everything (materialistic issues) is just vanity of vanities' (just nonsense). Such a change in perception clearly indicates how achievements during our lifespan lose significance as we near our final stage, concomitant to the tragic comprehension that everything around just continues regularly. Since there is no indication that King Solomon's mental capabilities deteriorated at old age, he was most likely aware to his enormous achievements, and still, the decline in physical competence, a naturally intensifying process, led him to summarize 'everything is nonsense'. Amongst numerous putative allegories that can be derived of King Solomon's books one take-home message, that seems presently quite actual, is that humanity should be careful and better get rid of leaders nearing the end of their career (ref. 2), as their decisions might involve suppressing thoughts and distorted rationale such as: 'if everything is nonsense it won't differ if I take the entire world with when I die'.

## References

1. Hebrew Bible: book of 'Song of Songs'; book of 'Proverbs'; book of 'Ecclesiastes'.
2. Gurevitz, M. (2023) Leaders nearing the end of their career may endanger humanity. *Eur. J. Appl. Sci.*, 1(5), 366-368.