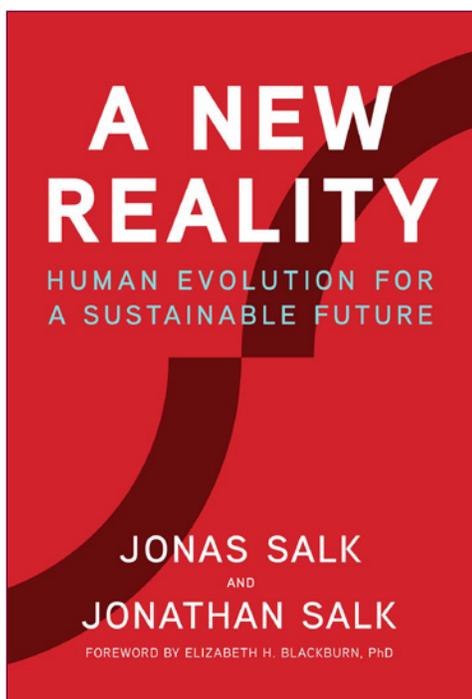


Jonathan Salk, MD, updates “A New Reality,” book he co-authored with his father, Jonas Salk

MARY KORR
RIMJ MANAGING EDITOR

In the mid- and latter stages of Dr. Jonas Salk’s (1914–1995) career, he cultivated a scientific and creative approach of inquiry across the biological sciences, nature, as well as the arts and humanities, and explored and advanced these ideas in several books and at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, CA., which opened in 1963.

According to the Institute’s website (www.salk.edu): “In 1957, Jonas Salk, developer of the first safe and effective polio vaccine, began his quest to fulfill his second dream: create a collaborative environment where researchers could explore the basic principles of life and contemplate the wider implications of their discoveries for the future of humanity.”



Website: anewrealitybook.com

A New Reality: Human Evolution for a Sustainable Future

By Jonas Salk and Jonathan Salk with David Dewane; foreword by Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, 2018

He articulated his vision of a world he saw in transition, and at an inflection point, in “A New Reality: Human Evolution for a Sustainable Future,” co-authored with his son, **JONATHAN SALK, MD**, which has been updated and re-released by the latter.

The beginning of the book states: “Jonas Salk’s wish was that his ideas would continue to be disseminated so that, like a vaccine, they might have the most positive effect on the greatest number of people...His wish was that these ideas would have the effect of giving people a scientific basis for hope and provide opportunities to enhance human wellbeing throughout the world.”

The first edition in 1981 was a prescient call to action, examining the world through the lens of over-population. Today, the COVID-19 “new reality,” as well as the effects of climate change, and political, social and economic upheavals, has exacerbated and reinforces the book’s initial call for action to ensure the planet will evolve into a just, humane, cooperative, interdependent and sustainable world.

Salk & Salk present the population data in Sigmoid or S curves in Part One. Part Two examines World Population Trends; Part Three: A New Epoch; Part Four: Paradox and Conflict and Part Five: Resolution and Integration. The text is complemented by an elegant graphic design, compelling photographs, and illustrative figures that frame the narrative.

The book presents a world in transition, a naturally evolving process, from what is termed Epoch A (accelerated population growth) to Epoch B (decelerated growth and possible plateau). It describes a region of inflection where the two overlap. (Figures 1 & 2)

In a Zoom talk recently, Dr. Jonathan Salk elaborated on these concepts. “The



Brief Bio: Jonathan Salk, MD

Stanford University, anthropology concentration

University of Southern California School of Medicine, MD, 1986

Post-graduate: Child, Adolescent, Adult Psychiatry, UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine

Current: In private practice, lectures, writes and teaches on the theory and practice of psychiatry

Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine.

Senior Fellow of the Design Futures Council

Member of the Advisory Board of the Population Media Center

Baby Boom generation was born in Epoch A. The sky was the limit,” he said. “But then in the 1960s and ‘70s, we entered Epoch B. My children were born in Epoch B, with recycling, renewable energy, but also with the values of getting along with all types of people.

“...Change from A to B is not going to happen without conflict. We have polarity and division in the world today. Some people wish to adapt to climate change and others want to go back to fossil fuels. That is what is being played out on the national and world stage. In the short term things may look awful every morning when we get up, but if we take a look at the curve we see it as part of a natural and evolutionary process.”

The book cautions it is up to us, individually and collectively, to fan these scientific and sustainable sparks for the

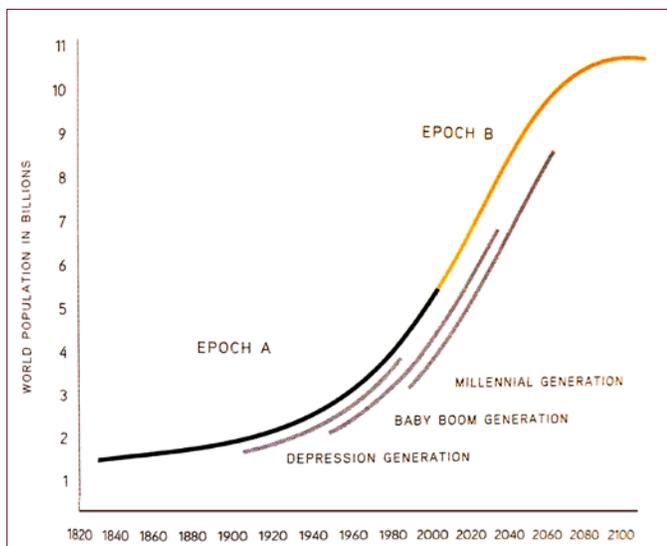


Figure 1 represents the time periods and generational labels of Epoch A and Epoch B, going from a period of accelerating population growth to a period of decelerating growth and possible plateau. The book describes the juncture of Epoch A and Epoch B as the point of inflection correlating to a shift in values and behaviors.

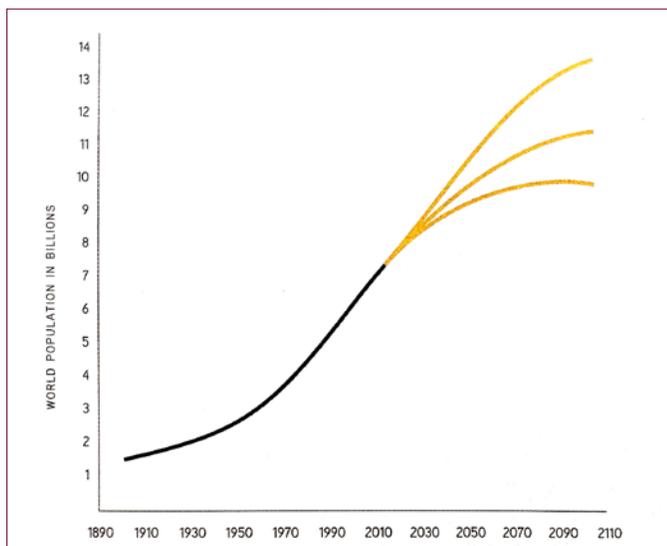


Figure 2. This curve shows the projected population growth from 2016–2100 as estimated by the Population Bureau of the UN; the lower estimate projects a plateau at a level of less than 10 billion people, whereas the higher one points to a 13.5 billion world population.

planet to survive in a world where its population, now 7.7 billion, could reach up to 13 billion or more by the end of this century. Actions taken now will have a great impact on what life will be like by 2100. Solutions and adaptations that are being undertaken are illustrated in the final chapter of the book. “The course of epochal change is not predetermined. It is subject to our influence,” the authors conclude.

It takes a spark to ignite a fire to fan the flames of discovery, as Jonas Salk did notably in Epoch A, with the development of an effective polio vaccine. “A New Reality” is part of that intellectual legacy – not a blueprint but a palette, or a toolbox. In the new COVID-19 reality we are in, reading “A New Reality” resonates. ❖

Epilogue from “A New Reality”

“The future is simultaneously brighter and darker than it was when the first edition of this book was published. Gains have been made. At the same time, as in so many times in history, we are faced with dark forces of conflict, war, mass killing, and terrorism. Our strongest weapon against these is the promotion of health, hope and fulfillment for all human beings. As difficult and as daunting a task as that may seem, it is one that, if undertaken successfully, will result in a better world for all.”