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## **Challenges of Society at the Dawn of the 21st Century**

At the beginning of the 21st century we are in the midst of a rapid evolutionary process, correctly identified as a process of globalization. This process is highly nonlinear, full of sudden leaps and surprises, and on the whole it is irreversible. Its overall course corresponds to the dynamics of bifurcation, described by Ilya Prigogine as the indeterministic phase in the evolution of nonequilibrium systems.

Prigoginian dynamics applies to human society, since it can be considered an open system far from thermodynamic equilibrium. However, human society is made up of individually conscious agents. Thus, the social evolutionary process has two distinct but interrelated aspects or dimensions: an outer dimension, properly mapped by systemic evolutionary concepts; and an inner "mental" dimension which is ordinarily the subject of the history of ideas and, in a broader context, of the history of civilization. Both manifest sudden phase changes, corresponding to the above noted evolutionary dynamic. This presentation will discuss the basic dynamic of the evolutionary process applied to society, and the challenges it poses for thought and action in the practical context.