

# A Species-level Taxonomic Treatment of the Phalse Prophets with Hypotheses on their Origin and Evolution

Jason C Bradford<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Post Carbon Institute, Corvallis, United States

E-mail: [jasonbradford@postcarbon.org](mailto:jasonbradford@postcarbon.org)

## Abstract

During periods of crisis people often cling to stories as a way to alleviate their anxieties. This taxonomic treatment of twelve species of Phalse Prophets describes the ideologies of *faux* saviors, so those wanting to face reality instead of avoiding it have the tools to detect when high IQ excrement is being flung in their direction. Preliminary cladistic analysis identifies the trait 'hubris' as a shared and defining feature of the twelve species, tending to manifest in proclamations of certainty and cultivation of us-vs-them dynamics. It is suggested that more realistic ideologies may be found among humble humans who express nuance and recognize the uncertainly inherent in complexity, and that fatalism and scapegoating are to be avoided.

Keywords: *Homo*, hubris, modernism, denialism, decoupling, singularity, techno-optimist, rocket men, Progress Myth, accelerationism, ecofascism near-term human extinction, fatalism, survivalists, anarcho-primitives, Cassandra, humility, complexity, uncertainty, peasant

## 1. Introduction

As cascading, interlocking, and reinforcing poly-meta-perma-crises unfurl, confused people are looking for answers as to why things are unraveling. Stepping up with compelling narratives are various species of Phalse Prophets. These species fill a variety of socio-ecological niches by fitting into existing cultural biases and quenching basic human psychological needs, such as security, agency, purpose, and tribal affiliation.

Unfortunately, while providing some comfort, none of these species adequately address the issues they claim to care about. Several may be considered dangerous by generating a faux sense of security that distracts from potentially helpful collective thought and agency.

This paper will help identify twelve known Phalse Prophet species—an important skill for filtering misleading and harmful information and diminishing the influence of those spreading it. To do so, this paper includes a dichotomous key followed by a brief description of each species, including a diagnosis of their ideas, distribution, typical habitats, and other identifying

features. The evolution of Phalse Prophets will be further explored in future publications using phylogenetic analyses, but the discussion here focuses on initial hypotheses of their origins and character evolution based on a matrix of ideological and behavioral traits (table in appendix). Intended users of this taxonomic treatment include members of the media, educators, scientists, political leaders, and concerned citizens who want to deal with reality instead of avoiding it.

## 2. Methods

The author performed field work and a review of literature and media (YouTube mostly) throughout North America, Europe, and most English-speaking parts of Earth. Standard pattern recognition and recursive hypothesis testing of species concepts were performed, specifically seeking clusters of traits that bind individuals into groups of affiliation by habitat, morphology, behavior, and modes of thought. The Cohesion Species Concept (Templeton 1989) is the framework for taxonomic delineation. In addition to standard Latin binomials, this treatment proposes official English common

names (*nom familiar*) in accordance with the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999). The dichotomous key uses the *noms familiar*. To generate evolutionary hypotheses, a character matrix was created and coded with simple presence/absence scores for eleven ideological traits.

**3. Dichotomous Key to the Species of Phalse Prophets**

- 1a. Trying to hold this shit together.....Go to number 2
- 1b. Wants to blow it all up, has given up, or knows it is going down.....Go to number 7
- 2a. Working hard to convince you everything is alright.....sp. *Man Shiller*
- 2b. Admits we do have problems, big ones even.....Go to number 3
- 3a. The solution is to become a new species fused with technology.....sp. *Cyborgian*
- 3b. We can keep our current biological form.....Go to number 4
- 4a. Problems we have created are solved by continuing to do what we have been doing, which is growth and innovation, but agnostic on details.....sp. *Double-downer*
- 4b. Proposes specific massive technology changes to cope with existential threats.....Go to number 5
- 5a. Knows we are running out of stuff here, but there shall be space colonization.....sp. *Rocket Man*
- 5b. Pretty much sticks to planet Earth.....Go to number 6
- 6a. Fetishizes material shrinkage, may even doubt matter is needed at all.....sp. *Industrial Breatharian*
- 6b. Focused on materials and infrastructure, especially a giant future electric grid.....sp. *Complexifixer*
- 7a. Fatalistic about near-term human extinction, so tries to have fun.....sp. *Hospice Hedonist*
- 7b. Not convinced we are all about to die.....Go to number 8
- 8a. Fixates on personal and family survival.....sp. *Bunker Builder*
- 8b. Aims to influence society in a big way....Go to number 9
- 9a. Expecting the apocalypse soon, may actively work to bring it on.....Go to number 10

9b. Seeking to head off the worst through raising awareness or changing minds.....Go to number 11

10a. Belief in alien overlords and other wackadoodlery.....sp. *Q-fluencer*

10b. Cozies up to authoritarians while fomenting rage in the masses.....sp. *Molotov Mixologist*

11a. Provides dates for disasters, while hoping to head them off with technocratic change.....sp. *Premature Casandralator*

11b. Not very clear on specific catastrophes, but the key to avoiding them is a shift in consciousness...sp. *Con-evolver*

**4. Species Descriptions**

**4.1 Homo excusatio J.C. Bradford. Nom familiar Man Shiller.**

A high-status professional, well-paid to gaslight you into believing the shit-cakes you see everywhere are actually made of chocolate. Very much into the status quo and will mostly shrug off existential threats, e.g., the severity of climate change. May spend a lot of time debating other Phalse Prophet species, often arguing cogently against one technological fetish only to make the case for their own.

Widely distributed in all major urban areas around the world. May wear formal clothing to confer status.

Includes a number of recognized subspecies that are easily distinguished by their profession.

Diagnostic quote: “I am going to try to persuade you of something that might seem impossible: that one of the best things you can do to make the world a better place is to fight for more fossil fuel use—more use of oil, coal, and natural gas.” (Epstein 2023)

Type specimens: Bjorn Lomborg (subspecies pseudoscientist), Jack Welch (subspecies businessman), Alex Epstein (subspecies philosopher)

**4.2 Homo machina-homo J.C. Bradford. Nom familiar Cyborgian.**

Any distinction between the biological and mechanical worlds will dissolve as we merge with nanobots, electronics, and “the cloud.” Immortality ensues. Really, really wants to stay alive in current poorly crafted meat suit long enough for upgrades to become available.

Breeds in Silicon Valley and broader environs. Has a greater-than-average likelihood of inhabiting loft condos with exposed brick and 7-figure price tags. Attire is casual yet expensive.

Diagnostic quote: “The law of accelerating returns will continue until nonbiological intelligence comes close to ‘saturating’ the matter and energy in our vicinity of the

universe with our human-machine intelligence.” (Kurzweil 2006)

Type specimens: Ray Kurzweil

#### 4.3 *Homo deorsum-duplici* J.C. Bradford. *Nom familiar* Double-downer.

A person who is keenly able to review all the evidence that we are on a completely unsustainable path, but doesn't see it that way and considers this the best of times, and so naturally decides the best and only action is to do more, much more, of the same (a double entendre as they bum you out with the diagnosis and then bum you out by having nothing useful to say about it). Essentially, reinforces existing norms by acknowledging existential threats, but downplays the role of current power structures and cultural belief systems in creating those threats, while calling on technology, industrial capitalism, aided by some form of good governance, to solve their own problems as they are created.

Habitat is widespread, including everywhere money lingers. Generally cleanly man-scaped.

Diagnostic quote: “It's not irrational to identify genuine threats to our well-being. It is irrational to interpret a number of crises occurring at the same time as signs that we're doomed. It's a statistical phenomenon that when events are randomly sprinkled in time they cluster. That sounds paradoxical, but unless you have a nonrandom process that spaced them apart — We're going to have a crisis every six months but we're never going to have two crises in a month — events cluster. That's what random events will always do.” (Marchese 2021)

Type specimen: Stephen Pinker

#### 4.4 *Homo phallus* J.C. Bradford. *Nom familiar* Rocket Man.

Not overly deterred by Earth's gravity well, wants to move the shipping industry upwards. A bizarre species that is both freaked out by the reality of limits to growth, but only because these limits exist on Earth. Hence the need to transcend our planetary realm. Astonishing combination of abilities to make oodles of dollars, run rocket companies, and willfully ignore the insanity of their plans.

Very rare, as not many have the hubris to pull this off. Must be a billionaire while still needing to compensate.

Diagnostic quote: “What happens when unlimited demand meets finite resources? The answer is incredibly simple: Rationing. The good news is that if we move out into the solar system, for all practical purposes, we'd have unlimited resources.” (Novak 2019)

Type specimen: Jeff Bezos

#### 4.5 *Homo spiritus-industriae* J.C. Bradford. *Nom familiar* Industrial Breatherian.

Worships the god of dematerialism through growth and innovation. Envisioning a richer, non-molecular American Airlines, Archer Daniel Midlands, Bed Bath and...Beyond! In a nutshell, this species has the talent of being able to put together spreadsheets and place bets on key technologies (e.g., nuclear fusion, vertical farming) to argue that if gains in efficiency are extrapolated far enough into the future, human needs can be decoupled from nature. The eventual outcome, which is the only way to maintain modernism, is that energy is abundant and nearly free, machines end up doing all the work, and nearly all people live in cities so the Earth can rewild for aesthetic reasons.

Widespread on college campuses in economics departments but could also be into engineering or design. Infects politicians and media with soothing banter. Owns many ties and is not averse to wearing them on regular days.

Diagnostic quote: “To the degree to which there are fixed physical boundaries to human consumption, they are so theoretical as to be functionally irrelevant. The amount of solar radiation that hits the Earth, for instance, is ultimately finite but represents no meaningful constraint upon human endeavors. Human civilization can flourish for centuries and millennia on energy delivered from a closed uranium or thorium fuel cycle, or from hydrogen-deuterium fusion. With proper management, humans are at no risk of lacking sufficient agricultural land for food. Given plentiful land and unlimited energy, substitutes for other material inputs to human well-being can easily be found if those inputs become scarce or expensive.” (Asafu-Adjaye et al. 2015)

Type specimen: Ted Nordhaus

#### 4.6 *Homo multiplicitate* J.C. Bradford. *Nom familiar* Complexifixer.

Usually an engineer who addresses global scale predicaments, most often climate change and the energy transition, with technologies that are fantastically difficult to manage and scale. Future taxonomists may want to delineate subspecies focused on energy sources (e.g., a globally connected all-electric energy system) or pollution sinks and geoengineering (e.g., sucking carbon dioxide out of the air). Never heard of Joseph Tainter.

Common on college campuses in engineering departments, and among many left-leaning environmental orgs. May have found venture capital to put kooky ideas into praxis. Thinks he is the smartest guy in any room, and while that may be true, is also a total dork.

Diagnostic quote: “The Jacobson plan – which, while only one potential approach, is currently the most detailed and well-known – would be met with 30.9% onshore wind, 19.1% offshore wind, 30.7% utility-scale photovoltaics (PV), 7.2% rooftop PV, 7.3% concentrated solar power (CSP) with storage, 1.25% geothermal power, .37% wave power, 0.14% tidal power, and 3.01% hydroelectric power.” (Shepherd 2019)









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## Appendix

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