

## **Bettering Humanity: The Scimat Approach**

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Large scale tragedies in the world can roughly be divided into two types: natural or human caused. The former includes volcano eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis; the latter, unnatural famines, wars and genocides. Quantitatively speaking, human caused tragedies may be more damaging than the natural ones. And being human caused, they could be avoided or minimized through human efforts.

Efforts to bettering humanity through reduction of human tragedies in the past can also be divided into two types: religiously based or secular types. Important secular movements of historical significance that cut across country boundaries include, in the recent past, the Enlightenment (1688-1789) and the Vienna Circle movement (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), and presently, the Humanism movement in UK and the USA. Fair to say, in spite of some successes, we cannot claim that all these movements were successful by looking at the world around us.

The Scimat (Science Matters) program was started 10 years ago with the first international science matters conference in Portugal (see: [www.sjsu.edu/people/lui.lam/scimat](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/lui.lam/scimat)). Scimat focuses on the science of humans as a means of bettering humanity. In this talk, we will discuss what the scimat approach is and how it agrees and differs from the previous movements. The emphasis is on educating the policy makers, present and future. And since we don't know who would be the future policy makers we will have to work on the education of everybody, starting from grade schools and through the universities. Among other things, we will discuss why rational thinking is not enough in making humanity better.

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