

## An Interview with Altshuller

While preparing our translation of Genrikh Altshuller's *The Innovation Algorithm*, we approached Mr. Altshuller with a proposal that he submit a special introduction for inclusion in the book. This would give him the opportunity to personally address his many new readers in the Western world, and perhaps express to them his hopes - and concerns - for the future development of his brainchild, TRIZ.

Mr. Altshuller enthusiastically agreed. However, because of his ill health, he indicated that we should write the introduction for him. We were both dubious in this regard, until it was proposed that an interview with Mr. Altshuller be conducted, and an introduction composed from his responses. The tone would be humanistic and philosophical, rather than technical, in keeping with the direction of his later work.

So, about mid-summer 1998, we sent Mr. Altshuller three general questions. The plan was to propose broad topics for his consideration and response. Then, subsequent question and answer sessions would flesh-out his ideas.

Unfortunately, the universe had a different plan.

All that exists now is his initial response to our first broad-topic questions. Out of deep respect and affection for Mr. Altshuller, they are submitted here.

Lev Shulyak & Steve Rodman  
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What do you think the long-term effect of TRIZ might be on the welfare of humanity?

"Of course, I would like to answer this in an optimistic spirit. However, the history of science and technology does not give us a very consoling forecast. The social well-being, the social relationship between good and evil, has little to do with levels of science and technology - even if this may seem paradoxical."

What are some important future applications of TRIZ beyond technical systems?

"This is a very interesting question. Scientists and inventors hold-on to their illusions for a long time. Sometimes, a new search is only made in areas where conventional science and technology spin their wheels. The same happened awhile back with the Great Break-Through to the Poles. 'What can we gain from reaching the North Pole? It is just an empty place.' It is just an empty place with worthless ice. However, almost all technology - along with a significant amount of scientific research - is connected, in one way or another, to the Great Break-Through to the Poles. Later, many of these 'worthless' discoveries and inventions were used in general technology."

If the widespread application of TRIZ should lead to a technological explosion, would this be good or bad?

"This is neither good nor bad. It is inevitable. If people can create a strong theory that allows for understanding the 'technological explosion,' then they will live in a crazy, but exciting and interesting world. If the 'technological explosion' becomes uncontrollable - mankind will face a sad epoch."