



## Transcendental Musings: A Bugle Horn Sounds for Solidarity of Purpose

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### Unbuttoning the Prelude to a Fugue

Colossal quandaries confront humankind in the world today. Economic turbulence, the global pandemic and fiscally risky levels of public debt are combining with growing extremes of inequality and intense strife between a multitude of competing interests. This is creating a distinctly dangerous tinderbox of dissatisfaction and civil unrest in many countries. Uncompromising reactionary conservatism in the U.S. is being given more power by ruses that exploit hostilities toward immigrants and refugees, and by reactions against the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality and threats of domestic extremists and terrorist violence. Undesirably polarized partisanship and religious fundamentalism are magnifying these woes. Severe social and political problems are resulting. The stability and sustainability of economic activities are being threatened by this state of affairs, as are the hopes for peaceful coexistence of people around the globe. Mounting demands on natural resources and increasing harm to the environmental commons are making these risks ever more pronounced.

"What we are before is like a strait, a tricky road, a passage where we need courage and reason. The courage to go on, not to try to turn back; and the reason to use reason; not fear, not jealousy, not envy, but reason. We must steer by reason, and jettison -- because much must go -- by reason."

--- John Fowles, *The Aristos* (1970)

An enlightened understanding of both individual freedoms and social responsibility is becoming crucial to the well-being of our societies. The need is growing for us to gain a clearer comprehension of the moral philosophy known as "consequentialism", so that we will gain better perspective and thus be able to more sensibly solve the overarching challenges facing us. These concepts and issues are evaluated from a series of surprising angles here in this essay.

To more fully understand the complex nature of these quandaries, a wide variety of related ideas are explored in this essay. An evocative introspection is made into many imaginative myths of ancient and modern cultures, and a provocative exploration is directed at human psychological drives, and at "complementary opposite" aspects of human nature. Heightened scrutiny is given to the relative roles of males and females in our cultures, and a meditation is made on human rights with special attention given to the specific prerogatives of the "fairer sex". An assessment is made of child development philosophies and two primary constellations of beliefs: conservative Strict Father worldviews and contrasting progressive Nurturant Parent worldviews. The genesis and character of intense political struggles that some observers characterize as a "war on women" is quizzically contemplated. And the impactful and sensational Population Connection between all these matters is carefully considered.

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung believed that the most important task in every individual's life is to discover and fulfill his or her own deep innate potentials. Jung called this developmental process "individuation". He felt that this journey of self-exploration and transformation is at the mystical heart of all religions. This essay delves into the nature of this journey, and a vital new concept of *collective individuation* is proposed. This is a kind of healthy assimilation process by which the diverse expression of people's motivations, experiences, personalities, activities and belief systems could be integrated into a more harmonious and smoothly functioning whole. The hallmarks of

this more holistic society would be a manner of organization and governance that is fairer and saner for everyone, eminently fairly including all people in future generations.

### Broad Themes Emerge from the Headwaters of a Stream of Consciousness

A confluence of conscious thoughts flows freely across the internal landscape of our minds like the waters of Old Man River at flood stage during a period long ago, back before Procrustean levees channelized the many marauding torrents of this stream into narrowly proscribed courses. One can almost imagine John McPhee sneezing "Atchafalaya" while he was writing his bestselling book *The Control of Nature*, and then hearing a chorus of well-wishers heartily ringing out "gesundheit".

The original inspiration for this concatenation of ideas was a series of developments and insights that arose in the Spring of 2012. In ancient Greece, the gods Apollo and Dionysus were considered to be the source of inspiration, or alternatively the nine divine Muses, daughters of fickle Mnemosyne, the Titan goddess of memory, and powerful Zeus, the Olympian ruler of the gods. The word inspiration literally means "breathed upon". In Christianity, inspiration is said to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. In Islam, the Prophet Muhammad said that his divine inspiration came from Allah in the form of dreams, and perhaps THERE, deep in the inner sanctum of our minds, would be the best place for us to look for a greater degree of enlightenment.

The Austrian "talking-cure" psychotherapist Sigmund Freud asserted that inspiration, both creative and artistic, comes from our inner psyches. Carl Jung expressed the opinion that inspiration springs forth from our "collective unconscious", as is intriguingly revealed in dreams, free associations, cogent imagery and symbolic connection. Jung formulated theories about archetypal "racial memories" within every person that are unique to human beings, and have been inherited as aspects of our genetic instincts, ancestral legacies, persona propensities, shadow self, and inner anima or animus. These "racial memories" are contained in the very structure and functioning of our brains, and are manifested and recognized by peoples across all cultures. These understandings are explored in detail below.

Inspiration by a muse can be richly rewarding. In many episodes in recorded history, inspiration by a muse has provided a remarkably prolific well of creativity for intellectuals and artists, especially including poets, writers, composers and musicians. As one instance, Clara Wieck Schumann was a great source of inspiration to both the classical music composers Robert Mendelssohn and Johannes Brahms, providing a wonderful testament to the passionate influence of a muse in inspiring others. Clara was a young piano virtuoso who came to be deeply loved by both men, and she herself was a child prodigy who faced numerous personal hardships, but managed to transmute them into virtuosic musical accomplishments.

I slice a large navel orange into two perfect demi-spheres, seeking both reason and rhyme. An admirable natural beauty can be seen in the orange's segmentation, and it inspires me to invite readers to visualize the light, symmetry and elegance of this image, and to honor it; and simultaneously to envision the interconnected and interdependent polar opposites of this vision, which are found in irregularity, contrariety, dissonance and darkness. Hold both these yin and yang aspects of nature -- "and never leave the middle." Let us for a moment emulate an old Chinese sage who dwells on a high spiritual plane, but is equally concerned with ethical fairness in worldly affairs. Let us unify in ourselves the two sides of human nature that are found in the complementary opposite poles of intuitive wisdom and practical knowledge, of calmly detached meditation and intense involvement, of feminine and masculine propensities, of quiet contemplation and courageous social action.

Wallace Stevens, the Pulitzer Prize winning "Dean of Western Writers", poetically expressed the speculation, "Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around a lake". Breathe deep, relax, and set forth with me on this mental circumambulation around a crucially vital body of water -- our inner selves. The mythological story of Psyche and Eros will be related below to provide illumination to this quest for meaning, truth, purpose and guidance.

### Metanoia-Sparked Transformations

Consider the fact that Carl Jung believed the discovery and fulfillment of our deep innate potential is our main task in life, and that such journeys of transformation are at the heart of all religions. When speaking of his

extraordinary work *The Red Book*, Jung later asserted: "My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me."

Jung was suffering during this period from a kind of psychotic psychological "metanoia" (literally, a radical "changing of one's mind"). This process is not a closing down, like a conversion to born-again beliefs in fixed dogmas. No! This is a spontaneous process of a psyche trying to heal itself and recover from unbearable conflict by embracing perspectives that lie beyond previous limitations and thought patterns. An intense metanoia episode can transform an existential crisis into a healthier and more adaptive way of seeing and acting in the world, thereby helping a person cope with a challenging crisis.

"This is no social crisis

Just another tricky day for you."

--- Lyrics from *Another Tricky Day*, The Who

Think about the concept of metanoia events, which are like mental breakdowns followed by a spontaneous healing process of the psyche. In this process, the mind tries to get itself together after a traumatic setback, and unbearable conflicts can thus be resolved by embracing feelings that lie beyond previous limitations and stultifying thought patterns. Those who suddenly convert to another religion often do so because they experience a kind of metanoia when some calamitous trauma or psychological travail befalls them, causing them to be "born again" with a sudden vision of God as a savior. Thereafter, they are often evangelical in wanting to share their religious beliefs with others, whether or not the others want to hear about it -- and regardless of whether or not others want to be affected by the zeal of newfound convictions of often fanatical believers.

A metanoia can turn out to be personally positive to the extent that it transforms an existential crisis into a healthier and more adaptive mindset of perspectives and agendas for action. A collective metanoia of our civilized order could, however, be socially catastrophic, because it could lead to serious survival problems for millions of people. A violent revolution is, in a sense, an instance of collective metanoia. History shows that during a revolution, wealth is often destroyed rather than being created. Traumatic events that accompany periods of revolutionary change can be severe for a populace when organizations and relationships break down. We would thus be sensible to commit our countries to preventing collective metanoia events by enacting fairer and more farsighted national policies.

On the other hand, a crisis is generally needed to upset established ways of living and behaving, so a collective period of reevaluation is often needed to bring significant changes. It seems clear that looming demographic and ecological crises are approaching, so we should use our foresight to find the will to champion farsighted changes in our habits, behaviors and politics. A new regime of smarter incentives is needed to motivate people to alter the aggregate trajectory of our activities. If we fail to implement these new incentives, we may be faced with a far worse outcome of a destabilizing collective metanoia.

Perhaps the largest such challenge will emanate from our growing impacts on the global climate. Back in March 2012, warm spells broke 15,000 hot temperature records in the U.S. The average temperature was almost nine degrees Fahrenheit above the twentieth century average for March. Most of the summers since then have proved to be hotter and drought-like in many locales. The years from 2013 through 2021 all rank among the ten-warmest years ever recorded. These developments should motivate us to come together to implement new policies that will mitigate the extent of global warming being caused by our aggregate activities.

Dramatically beautiful Glacier National Park is estimated to have had 150 glaciers in 1850. Today, there are only 25 glaciers, and they will likely all be gone within the next several decades. California and the Pacific Northwest have had their most destructive and costly wildfires ever in the past five years, with grave adversities for people affected. There is a strong correlation of these facts, and a thousand others, to a global warming trend that is accelerating as this century unfolds. This trend is being caused by two anthropogenic mega-activities: the rash cutting of forests and the profligate emissions of greenhouse gases resulting from the burning of fossil fuels.

Leaders in island nations like Kiribati and the Maldives are extremely concerned about rising sea levels associated with current long-term warming trends. In the Pacific island nation of Kiribati, leaders are giving consideration to

moving all of its more than 100,000 people to higher terrain in the Fiji Islands. Intruding seawater has already contaminated some of Kiribati's underground freshwater supplies and forced some villagers to move. The writing is figuratively on the wall.

Just 15,000 years ago, sensationally, the level of the world's oceans was 300 feet lower than it is today. This was due to a tremendous amount of water having been locked up in vast ice sheets during the last ice age. The average global temperature 15,000 years ago was about 10 degrees Celsius colder than today. The fact that an increase of 300 feet in sea level has been caused by such an increase in global temperatures should provoke us into more boldly striving to mitigate our impacts today.

"Conservatives" and corporate apologists and defenders of do-nothing politics have often denied that climate changes are being caused by the global-warming impacts of the burning of fossil fuels. It's as if they believe that spewing tens of billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere every year might have no impact, or may not be a problem at all. These folks generally oppose any measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, even including sensible support for precautionary actions.

Humankind is myopically treating planet Earth like a business in liquidation, instead of acting more intelligently and responsibly by treating it as a going concern. Where money can be made from indoctrinated ignorance and staunch denials of scientific facts, a long line has formed. Predictably, it extends far, far back, to the right.

Conservatives like Oklahoma Senator Jim Inhofe have ramped up anti-science propaganda to benefit their fossil fuel industry supporters and contributors. Inhofe published a tome titled *The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future*. I doubt that the book makes any objective sense, or that the Senator gives fair consideration to the many ways that high costs will result from denials of the impacts of our stubborn adherence to the status quo in our national energy policies. I wonder if Senator Inhofe has given any consideration to the long-term impacts of refusing to take precautionary steps to prevent ecological disasters. I doubt that he provides an accurate assessment of the risks associated with overarching threats like that of natural disasters and species extinctions related to climate disruptions and associated habitat damages.

In any case, the fact that Republicans like Senator Inhofe receive many millions of dollars from Big Oil interests makes their conflict-of-interest opinions seriously suspect, and their stances corrupt and retrograde. Inhofe was chairman of the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee from 2003 through 2007, and again under Trump from 2015 through 2017. This is a disturbing fact because Inhofe denies human exacerbated climate change. He actually once asserted that God is in complete control, having stated: "God's still up there. The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous." Such denial is preposterous to almost every person who thinks critically and objectively. Trump's top administrators in the EPA, both former industry shills and lobbyists, proved to be counterproductive and ruthless in their efforts to torpedo actions that would reduce emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels.

Truly moral behaviors are those that are consistent with the greater social good. They are not divine decrees. To the extent that the consequences of a behavior are more harmful to society as a whole than another behavior, the most harmful behavior is ethically and morally the worst one.

"Moral right action should not merely be a function of theological dogma, or of fear, or of political ideology. Instead, it should be a function of sociology: what is right for society depends on the well-being of the majority AND of future generations. What is right and proper is what is best in the long run. It is not right to neglect the interests of our heirs in future generations by pandering principally to greedy shortsighted interests today."

--- *Comprehensive Global Perspective: An Illuminating Worldview*

Our worldviews are crucial in understanding ourselves, and they are pivotal in affecting the course of our lives and our relationships with others. The way we see the world also strongly influences the health of the natural world's ecosystems upon which we depend, so it is valuable to cultivate the best understandings possible.

Harpsichords Reverberate in the Background: Let's Examine Our Minds

Scientists say that the unconscious mind occupies up to 97% of our brain functions. It is stunning to realize the implications of the fact that almost all our thinking operates at the level of the subconscious. Thank God that each one of us has an autonomic nervous system that works without our needing to consciously attend to its functions, for otherwise more of us would likely fail to keep our heart beating, our blood circulating, our lungs breathing, our immune systems functioning, our memories adequately well-organized, our digestion and waste disposal systems in good working order, and our saliva, perspiration and reproductive gametes (either eggs or sperm) issuing forth. If each of us had to pay attention to these functions at every moment, more people would likely fall into a stupor and forget, that's for sure. What was I saying, again?

"Here is my secret. It is very simple: one sees well only with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eyes."  
 --- Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince*

### Lightening Bolts, Thunderclaps, and Smoldering Trees

Two titanic struggles are taking place in our communities and civilizations today. The first has been a feature for thousands of generations, beginning way back in the days of small human clans of hunters and gatherers. This struggle is interpersonal, and involves the roles of females and males in their relationships with each other, and within their families and clans and communities. The relative roles of women and men have evolved over the ages, and a far-reaching power struggle has taken place between the genders and mates for dominance of influence. These relationships are provocative to ponder.

"It's still the same old story  
 A fight for love and glory ..."

--- *As Time Goes By*, famous lines from the film *Casablanca*, lyrics by Herman Hupfeld

The age-old strife between males and females can be better understood by exploring the fascinating origins of human behaviors back in evolutionary history. Dr. Leonard Shlain did exactly this in *Sex, Time and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*. Gender conflicts can also be examined through game theory, a modern scientific study of rational interactive decision-making that can provide startling insights into endeavors in which people compete or cooperate. A good comprehension of game theory is important because it has become an invaluable tool for economists. Game theory has, in fact, been the underpinning of the theories of at least five Nobel Prize winners in economics.

"Woman begins by resisting a man's advances, and ends by blocking his retreat."

--- Oscar Wilde

The yin and yang of relationships are quite profoundly influenced by the counterpoles of the other, so envy and victimhood are often juxtaposed against jealousy and contempt. Sometimes the "games people play" in their relationships erupt into unnecessarily brutal and unjust eventualities that can include disrespectful hostility, psychological torment, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, or various other forms of interpersonal injustices. So let's make no mistake about it: finding balance and mutually respectful harmony in any relationship is the essence of healthy and wholesome relating.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Find out what it means to me

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

-- Aretha Franklin lyrics in *Respect*, written by Otis Redding

The title of this essay as it evolved, until it exceeded about half its current length, was *Women of the World, Unite!* This title was chosen in response to the political battle that is taking place between the sexes today. Rush Limbaugh, the most popular "conservative" radio talk-show political commentator (until he died in February 2021) repeatedly called American women "sluts" and "prostitutes" and "feminazis". And social conservatives are working tirelessly to undermine women's healthcare options and their rights to use various forms of contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies, or to exercise fair degrees of self-determination in their lives by choosing to have an abortion in the early months of an unwanted pregnancy, even when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

"The battle for the individual rights of women is one of long standing, and none of us should countenance

anything which undermines it."

--- Eleanor Roosevelt, Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, in 1950

John Fowles points out in his Preface to philosophical exploration *The Aristos* that people are not born equal, and they never will be, but that when each of us is born, everyone should be accorded equal human rights. A group of female and male psychologists, relying on their professional experiences, noted that equal treatment under the law is crucial to women's physical and mental health. So they formed a fair-minded organization known as Psychiatrists for the Equal Rights Amendment. Recall that this proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution simply states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Despite the apparent basic decency and fairness of this proposal, it has languished in Congress every year since it was first introduced in 1923, without quite having been able to get the required ratification of three-fourths of the states. The most staunch opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment exists, revealingly, in religious fundamentalist traditionalist cultures of the Deep South.

Let us trust our intuitions in recognizing that improvements in the physical and mental health and personal security of mothers and daughters and wives and girlfriends would be good for almost everybody on earth, male and female alike. As Mark Twain wisely observed in his Notebook in 1895:

"We easily perceive that the peoples furthest from civilization are the ones where equality between man and woman are furthest apart -- and we consider this one of the signs of savagery. But we are so stupid that we can't see that we thus plainly admit that no civilization can be perfect until exact equality between man and woman is included."

A "polar view of life" reveals that individuals, groups and nations are far more dependent for strength and energy on their opposites or enemies or contrary poles than people generally expect. The same is true for ideas. In this embattled state of affairs, both healthy and unhealthy outcomes arise. "But if one word could sum up all that is wrong with our world, it is surely inequality," wrote John Fowles. Hazard always infects life with far-reaching degrees of inequality and inequities, so it seems quite crazy for humanity to make people's fates even more challenging by allowing authority-abusing factions in society to dramatically increase inequalities between the most fortunate and the vast majority of the populace. Since every person faces hazard, we should make more concerted efforts to mitigate the hardships that affect the unluckier ones among us. Who is to be unlucky next, no one can know, and *everyone* is a candidate in our "fickle finger of fate" world.

#### A Declaration of True Fair-Mindedness

"Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold" -- but "be not too bold".

--- English poet Edmund Spenser (16th century)

Olympe de Gouges was the author of a manifesto titled *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*. In this manifesto, she honorably echoed the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, which was the founding document formulated after the French Revolution in 1789. Olympe de Gouges sensibly declared:

"Women, wake up! The tocsin of reason resounds through the whole universe: *recognize your rights!*"

Olympe de Gouges was a French playwright and political activist who had become an outspoken advocate for improving the condition of slaves in the French colonies several years before the French Revolution. She "challenged the practice of male authority" and denounced the customary treatment of women as inferiors and objects who could be taken advantage of and easily abandoned. She asked the provocative question, in essence, "Men, why have you chosen to subjugate women as a lesser sex?" I guess the rationalization in the Garden of Eden for female subordination was beginning to run thin by 1791, when Olympe penned these reverberating words.

In the preamble to her Declaration, Olympe de Gouges mirrors the language of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, and explains that women, just as men, are guaranteed natural, inalienable, sacred rights -- and that political institutions are rightly instituted with the purpose of protecting these natural rights. She closes the preamble by declaring that "the sex that is superior in beauty as it is in courage during the pains of childbirth

recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen."

She then enumerated 17 specific rights in her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* to spell out these rights. And she added a scathing postscript, asking: "Oh, women! Women, when will you cease to be blind? ... Whatever the barriers set up against you, it is in your power to overcome them; you only have to want it." And she called on "wise legislators" to think about sanely providing for the fair-minded education of women. Let these ideas resound in homes worldwide in these modern times, and let them reverberate ceaselessly in the halls of power!

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, a French Constitution of 1793 was created. Olympe de Gouges was alarmed that this legal framework included a provision giving the right to vote to all men but didn't even consider giving the same right to women. The Constitution also failed to address key issues such as fair legal rights in marriage, or the right of a woman to divorce her spouse if he abused her, or a woman's property rights or natural rights to custody of her children. These omissions were a motivating spark for Olympe de Gouges to create her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*. The manuscript was written to provide missing parts of the proposed Constitution, and thus give women equal rights they deserve as legitimate human beings. Throughout the document, it is apparent that Ms. de Gouges had been influenced by philosophy of the Enlightenment Era, when thinkers used 'scientific reasoning' to critically examine traditional morals and institutions.

Interestingly, the French Constitution of 1793 was ratified by a public referendum, but was never put into force because political upheaval continued and radical Jacobins led by Maximilien de Robespierre were busy imposing a Reign of Terror on the populace, in a period of widespread injustices and executions. As history would have it, Olympe de Gouge "was executed by guillotine during the Reign of Terror" for her written criticisms of the regime of the Revolutionary government. Robespierre was a great figure in French history, known to supporters as "The Incorruptible", though his many adversaries understandably saw him more as a bloodthirsty dictator. He was, according to Wikipedia, "an eloquent spokesman for the poor and oppressed, an enemy of royalist intrigues, a vigilant adversary of dishonest and corrupt politicians, a guardian of the French Republic, an intrepid leader of the French Revolutionary government, and a prophet of a socially responsible state. In recent decades his reputation has suffered from his association with radical purification of politics by killing his enemies."

There are always two sides to every story, I suppose, and fair-minded balance in perspective is generally the best way to see clearly and act responsibly. Let us hear from Maximilien de Robespierre himself; he wrote these enigmatic words: "Our revolution has made me feel the full force of the axiom that history is fiction, and I am convinced that chance and intrigue have produced more heroes than genius and virtue."

### A Reverberating Gong Sounds to Summons Us to Attention

A second colossal struggle has been taking place around the world for centuries. This strife involves deep-seated conflicts between capitalists and workers. This struggle has been particularly intense since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, some 250 years ago. It is a profound and intractable conflict between people who work for a living and those who feel entitled to gain the preponderance of profits for themselves from business activities, the efforts of working people and the exploitation of Earth's resources.

"Justice cannot be for one side alone," declared Eleanor Roosevelt, "but must be for both."

This intense strife has a complex combination of economic, political and social causes. It has pitted a really ruthless Goliath -- Capital -- against a much less powerful David -- Labor. This conflict has been merciless because Capital is powerfully motivated to triumph over workers by continuously striving to increase its advantages. The scene is getting more ugly as Goliath flexes its muscle and abuses the power of its influence, and extends its dominion around the globe. Skirmishes between Goliath Capital and David Labor play out in the arena of labor relations that pit giant corporations against employees, as well as in corrupted politics.

Capital has usurped the upper hand in recent decades, resulting in declining real wages for workers (after the effects of inflation are taken into account). At the same time, total corporate profits are at record highs, and the proportion of the total tax bill paid by corporations has been declining for decades. Corporate entities have managed to get their total tax obligation reduced from just under 24% in 1960 to only 7% today. During the same

period, payroll taxes paid by employees have increased from 16% to 36% or so. These shifting tax numbers directly reflect shifting power dynamics facilitated by political corruption.

Think about the recall effort that took place in Wisconsin against Republican Governor Scott Walker in June 2012. Walker had stripped public employee unions of their collective bargaining rights the previous year, further undermining the power of workers in this long-running battle. He also endorsed a harm-engendering anti-environmental agenda to give big corporations an expanded ability to profit by foisting costs onto society as a whole. The stakes were high in this contest, because Goliath has powerful motivations to minimize the influence of labor unions and workers. They deviously and treacherously use "divide-to-conquer" tactics to gain ascendancy over working people and the Democratic Party. Thirteen billionaires from outside Wisconsin contributed money to convince the public to reject the recall effort against Walker, which they did by a vote of 53% to 47%. This outcome was bought. Walker raised \$30 million compared to \$4 million raised by his opponents. Of Walker's \$30 million haul, two-thirds of it came from outside the state, so it can clearly be seen that outside interference with the affairs of the state of Wisconsin were a big factor in this detrimental outcome for workers.

The specter of the *Citizen's United* decision by the Supreme Court can thus be seen to be having highly unfair impacts on our democratic process. This contest in Wisconsin featured record amounts of spending by rich people and corporations and unions, and clearly the contributions from deep-pocketed individuals and corporations heavily outweighed contributions from workers' organizations. The *Citizens United* ruling in January 2010 effectively invalidated a century-old ban on independent expenditures by wealthy people and corporations, and this development is having a negative impact on the people of Wisconsin and many other states in the USA. A measure of the vibrancy of our democracy will be revealed by how long it will take Congress, the Supreme Court and the people to root out this allowance for harm-engendering institutional bribery.

The Supreme Court made a possibly even worse break with precedent in April 2014 when it rendered a decision in the case *McCutcheon vs. Federal Election Commission*. This ruling struck down sensible aggregate limits on the amount any individual can contribute to federal election campaigns. The ruling, of course, was made by the five partisan "conservative" Justices against the four more liberal Justices, revealing the extreme politicization of the supposedly impartial and theoretically fair-minded Supreme Court. This illegitimacy must be rectified.

Corporations have already decimated labor unions in the private sector in the U.S. It is stunning to realize that worker participation in unions in the private arena reached a peak of 36% of all employees in the 1950s, and that Goliath has managed to crush it down to less than 7% today. Companies have even been increasingly successful in promoting their propaganda that serves to disempower worker unions in recent years, and they are unacceptably aggressive about resisting employee organizing drives and trying to eliminate collective bargaining rights.

In striking contrast, unions in the public sector remain strong, and the interests of taxpayers are inadequately represented in controlling liabilities related to long-term benefits for public employees. This has resulted in high costs for overly generous public employee retirement benefits, together with exceedingly large unfunded liabilities, so taxpayer opposition to unions in the public sector is strengthening across the country. We should find fair ways to deal with all these issues. Pension-spiking scams should be outlawed, retroactively for the past 10 years, and sensible reforms of public employee pension plans should be made.

Simultaneous with this conflict between corporations and unions, greedy Wall Street bankers and conservatives in Congress and the Federal Reserve and powerful interests in the military-industrial complex are driving our economy into risky straits. These interest groups are promoting growth-addicted bubble economic policies and helping facilitate a highly undesirable externalization of costs onto society. Extremely shortsighted and inter-generationally unfair amounts of borrowed money are being used to stimulate consumerism and increase corporate profits, and to give additional perks to the wealthiest people in our country and around the world.

An overarching perspective reveals that the fairest approach would be to make reasonable commitments in the form of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations to assure people in the future that we will not leave them a calamitous legacy. The odds are good that the best investments we could collectively make for the greater good would be those made in resource conservation and more sensible uses of non-renewable natural resources. This

would surely be a fairer way to treat our descendants than using up resources at the fastest possible rate to stoke growth of consumption and artificially increase short-term profits.

A proper assessment of these issues must include consequentialist judgments. Consequentialism is a theory in philosophy that judges the consequences of conduct as the proper determinative basis for the relative rightness or wrongness of that conduct. The moral good of any action, in other words, is directly correlated to the degree of positive or negative outcomes associated with it.

A contrasting theory of ethics is known as deontology. Deontological ethics simplistically assert that actions themselves are inherently good or evil, no matter what their consequences. After making an introspective assessment of the merits of consequentialism, it seems crystal clear that consequential ethical perspectives constitute a much more socially sensible and reality-based understanding of true morality than absolutist deontological ethics. After all, judgments about people who cause physical and financial harm to others have a much different quality to them than dogmatic judgments about someone else's private sex life or their personal choices or eccentricities or indulgences.

Visualize this, and feel these words. Be suspicious about deontological ethics, especially when you see they involve fervent moralizing judgments by those who demand orthodox conformity to rigid doctrines and traditionalism and antediluvian Holy Book commandments. True morality is not black and white, and it is not absolute. True morality is not a deontological set of rights and wrongs, but instead a relative, consequentialist set of rights and wrongs that evaluates a crime with numerous victims more harshly than an offense with no victims. True morality is not a categorical imperative, independent of context, but rather a kind of golden rule ethic measured by what is consistent with the greater good of a group.

It is far more immoral to slaughter a dozen strangers with an AR-15 than to kill one person by accident. It is more immoral to cheat a thousand people out of their life savings than to steal a dollar out of the collection plate in church. A true understanding of what is right and what is wrong, relative to one's community or nation or humanity as a whole, is valuable. Every assessment of ethical propriety, and resolution for action, should be made in proportion to its positive or negative effect on others.

Think about the concluding paragraph of *Existence, Economics, and Ecological Intelligence*, for it makes a clear consequential statement: "We would be wise to always measure public policy choices in the context of an awareness of the impact these actions will have on people today, as well as in the future -- to our children and theirs, and theirs, and theirs, and theirs, and theirs, not just to the fabled Seventh Generation, but indefinitely!" This perspective is one of honest social and ecological sanity. Malcolm Gladwell, who articulated the idea of a "stickiness factor" in *The Tipping Point*, might say that some of the ideas and social policies and actions advocated in this manifesto may well prove to be salubriously sticky. Let it be! -- for that would be salubriously consistent with the greater good.

### A Triumphant Trumpet Paradoxically Sounds a Clarion Call

These two titanic struggles -- one about gender politics and the other about money and power -- turn out to be skirmishes that distract our attention from the real battle developing in the world today. This is the contest for the domination of our economy and political systems and societies by wealthy people, and their abuse of the outsized influence of their money.

Every time I think about it, I am stunned to recall the surprising studies that found that people who earn more than \$75,000 per year do not profess to be any happier than people who earn annual incomes of \$50,000 to \$75,000. In review, people in the latter category definitely express greater satisfaction than people who earn less than \$50,000 in every category assessed, including employment, housing, nutrition, health, relationships, security, community involvements and spiritual life. The fact that the highest income earners are not happier is a powerful and convincing reason why our national system of income taxes should be made more steeply graduated, rather than more regressive during every Republican regime.

Instead of continuing to pander so exclusively to rich people by allowing them to corrupt our national tax policies and perpetrate public debt swindles, we should strive to maximize the happiness of the majority of Americans by

ensuring that our national policies share wealth more broadly. It is time for us to stop allowing the super-rich to implement national policies that concentrate wealth increasingly in the hands of the few.

"Man-up, rich people -- the gig is up." Marginal tax rates are near the lowest since the late 1920s for the highest income earners, and the national debt is rapidly growing, and conservatives are pushing "austerity economics". These are not sustainable states of affairs, from either an economic or social point of view. Professor Robert Reich points out that such policies "... are not sustainable economically because when most of the gains from productivity growth go to people at the top, the vast middle class doesn't have enough purchasing power to buy the goods and services an ever-more-productive economy can generate. It is not sustainable socially because high unemployment and widening inequality results in rising frustration over the inability of most people to get ahead."

Robert Reich continues: "Increasing productivity, widening inequality and high unemployment create tinderbox societies. History tells us that public anger and frustration can ignite in two very different ways. One is toward reforms that more broadly share the productivity gains. The other is toward demagogues who turn people against one another. Demagogues use fear and frustration to advance themselves and their own narrow political agendas by scapegoating immigrants, foreigners, refugees, ethnic minorities, labor unions, government workers, the poor, and 'enemies within' such as communists, terrorists or other conspirators."

Kindled polarization and partisan divisions prevent reforms and stalemated progress, undermining the common good. Stubborn refusals to compromise can lead to worsening conflicts, increasing alienation, social instability, violence and impulses toward revolution. A safer and more sensible course would be for our leaders to work together to create a fairer society, instead of an increasingly unfair society.

The outlandish increase in our national debt in the past 42 years from less than \$1 trillion in 1980 to more than \$31 trillion today has been coupled by an increase in the net worth of the top 1% of Americans from under \$3 trillion to over \$40 trillion. How could we have in effect mortgaged the prospects of all people in future years merely to enrich people who are already wealthy? How could we possibly have allowed such heavy debt obligations for all future taxpayers to be incurred? We must put a stop to this risk-laden swindle. When it turns out that these people *are no happier* for being the big beneficiaries of these absurdly misguided national priorities, it should give us pause for reflection -- and bold remedial action!

"Don't you miss the days when America was just MORALLY bankrupt?"

--- Political satirist Bill Maher

### A Tintinnabulation of Bells Chimes a Second Clarion Call

Dozens of pages of ideas are jostling for expression here that contain insights into formative understandings of the cosmology and religion of the people in ancient Greece at the intellectual height of their great civilization. These interesting insights are competing for primacy of attention with an important evaluation of initiatives that have frequently been characterized as the "Republican war on women". But Dionysus, the god of epiphany, insists that another topic should take precedence over these two, right here, right now.

Listen: The fact that the population of human beings alive on Earth just exceeded 8 billion, in November 2022, should give us pause for serious thought. Think about the fact that global human numbers increased by a net of more than 70 million people each and every year since 1965. This increase every year for more than 55 years is staggering when considered from the standpoint of the rapidly increasing aggregate demands we are making on natural ecosystems like rivers, wetlands, forests and oceans, and on resources like fisheries, wildlife, fertile topsoil, fossil fuels, minerals and fresh water.

The more people there are, the more damage we collectively cause to the vitality and health of the ecosystems that support us. We are thus diminishing the carrying capacity of our home planet for our species at the same time we are failing to take steps to reduce either the growth in human numbers or the per capita demands we are making on global resources. This uninterrupted trend of increasing numbers of both needy and greedy human beings does not bode well for women, men or children, and certainly not for anyone in future generations.

Meanwhile, the number of vehicles on Earth has been disturbingly increasing at an even faster rate than the number of people. There were 500 million vehicles in 1990 and one billion in 2010. Projections indicate there will

be more than 2 billion by 2030 or so, and most of them will still be powered by burning gasoline. This trend is ominous when considered from the standpoint of the insidiously increasing amounts of greenhouse gas accumulations in the atmosphere and the destabilizing impacts of global warming on weather patterns everywhere. And, *alors*, the increasing traffic and noise alone are warnings and adversity enough!

Let no one deny the implications of our failure to take effective steps to deal with these dilemmas. Polluted air, poisoned waterways, clear-cut forests, overfished seas, damaged ecosystems, disruptions of global weather patterns, an increasing acidification of the oceans, and an on-going reduction in biological diversity are environmental problems that must be addressed with greater concern and national commitments. Intensifying strife associated with the stimulated depletion of natural resources is dangerous. Ever-increasing crowds have negative impacts on the health of agricultural lands that are cultivated and never allowed to lie fallow, and on open spaces, public parks, wilderness areas, oceans, waterways and the atmosphere. And think of the direct and indirect adversities the growing human hordes are inflicting on almost every other form of life on Earth.

We clearly should give a higher priority to the quality of life for people alive at this moment, and at the same time, we should act to ensure a reasonable quality of life for people in the future. We need to recognize the threat posed by policies that encourage population growth to the health of natural ecosystems and hopes for achieving sustainable uses of natural resources. A mindfulness revolution needs to materialize that recognizes the quality of life as being much more important than the quantity of people we can cram onto the planet. All fair-minded folks should reject the gambits for ideological supremacy that are being made by social conservatives in our patriarchal societies. We cannot afford to let the basic healthcare options of women be harshly limited, or access to contraceptives be restricted, or the ability to choose to have an abortion in the first trimester of a pregnancy be denied.

A valid new CONSEQUENTIALIST perspective arises; and we can now pass judgment. It will not be possible for us to collectively prosper into the future by disregarding the individual and aggregate consequences of harmful activities. We simply cannot afford to artificially stimulate the number of people being born by limiting family planning options and restricting contraception, or by prohibiting abortions. Nobody should be allowed to force a woman to have a child when she doesn't want one. We should guarantee every woman the prerogative to terminate a pregnancy in its early stages if she will be unable to give the child a decent life. If a woman gets pregnant as a result of a rapist's vile actions, or as a victim of incest, there should be no question as to her right to terminate the pregnancy. And it's morally wrong to force a woman to continue a pregnancy when her doctors say she is likely to die because of specific risk circumstances of her pregnancy and health.

Every year, women in the world have something like 20 million unsafe abortions, resulting in almost 50,000 deaths, according to Population Connection, and over half a million women have died in the last decade alone. Millions more have been injured. Fairer and more sensible U.S. policies could reduce the terrible scope of this tragedy.

These are matters of fundamental human rights for women, and of decency and common sense fairness. Let's leave such decisions to women and their families and doctors! Let's shame Republican politicians to stop them from pandering so obsequiously to social conservatives who want federal and state governments to interfere in such personal decisions.

In 2021 alone, despite the good sense in these observations, states led by Republicans enacted at least 90 laws restricting access to an abortion. This was more than any other previous year to date. It included a law in Texas signed by Republican Governor Gregg Abbott that banned abortion as early as six weeks, before many women even realize they're pregnant. As a result, federal action becomes more urgently necessary. Congress should not have left it up to the courts to decide whether to defend the sensible *Roe vs. Wade* compromise. Our representatives should rightly pass the proposed *Women's Health Protection Act*, thereby taking the issue out of the courts and protecting the right to a safe and legal abortion once and for all.

#### Bass Bassoons Bellow as Cymbals Clash

"Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits."

--- Mark Twain

Right-wing radio personality Rush Limbaugh repeated slandered women who use contraceptives, calling them "sluts" and "prostitutes". This grotesquely sexist attitude is outrageously reprehensible. Limbaugh was a man who long indulged in spewing vitriol at women, and yet he continued until his death to be an opinion leader of the conservative movement and a prominent voice of the Republican Party. Back in 2012, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum said that if a woman is raped and becomes pregnant, she should "accept what God has given to you." Mitt Romney stated: "Planned Parenthood -- we're going to get rid of that." After Supreme Court conservatives took federally guaranteed rights away from women with their *Dobbs* case ruling, legislatures dominated by Republicans in many states ramped up efforts to eliminate women's basic reproductive rights and impose constraints on their basic healthcare options, and reduce public financing of preventative cancer screenings, and make abortions illegal.

The country really is in need of a good therapist. Fairer governance would feature women having much more influence over determining what rights and prerogatives females have with regard to family planning issues. And males would have less power to impose domineering restrictions on women's personal healthcare decisions and to shrewdly and sanctimoniously create "undue burdens" on women making reproductive choices.

Mark Twain once sardonically pointed out the obvious fact that familiarity may breed contempt, but it also breeds children. Sometimes females do not want to be sexually familiar with males, so it is epically unfair for conservatives to force their punishment-oriented dictates on women who become pregnant. THAT is a real onerous "undue burden"!

In a bit of what-is-good-for-the-goose-is-good-for-the-gander news, Ohio State Senator Nina Turner was so unhappy with laws that seek to control women's access to contraception and abortion that she joined a hopefully growing trend across the nation by introducing a bill that would require men seeking a prescription for erectile dysfunction drugs to "get a notarized affidavit signed by a sexual partner affirming impotency." The bill would also require men to see a sex therapist and receive a cardiac stress test. Sex therapists would be required to present the option to men of "celibacy as a viable lifestyle choice." Ha -- this would be marvelous poetic justice!

Billionaire Foster Friess was a born-again evangelical Christian and supporter of conservative Christian causes who gave many millions of dollars to support religious fundamentalist politicians like Rick Santorum in their efforts to gain the power of the presidency. Friess expressed the offensive and bone-headed opinion back in 2012 that this "contraception thing" should not be expensive: "... You know, back in my days, they used Bayer Aspirin for contraceptives. The gals put it between their knees and it wasn't that costly." Oh, did they now?

Archaic sexist attitudes like this are subversive of women's prerogatives. So is obstinate opposition to family planning programs. Such attitudes and policies evade the issue that many males in our society are fixated on having sex with females, with inadequate concern for the consequences. Besides, an aspirin between the knees is extremely ineffective against heinous violations of woman who are raped. If a rape victim gets pregnant? Many Republicans believe that our nation's laws should be changed to prohibit every abortion under any circumstances, even if a woman's life is endangered. With regard to rape victims, Rick Santorum once said: "I believe and I think the right approach is to accept this horribly created -- in the sense of rape -- but nevertheless a gift in a very broken way, the gift of human life, and accept what God has given to you." Huh? (Idiocy!)

God does not get women pregnant. Males do. No woman should vote for any politician who espouses such unfair, insensitive, hypocritical, and male-supremacist attitudes. "Sometimes when you shoot from the hip, you end up shooting yourself in the foot," a spokesperson for Mitt Romney snappily opined, referring to a clash with Rick Santorum over the nature of a government bailout of the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, which Romney had presided over as the head of its Organizing Committee.

Rick Santorum shot from the hip when he asserted that President Obama has "... some phony theology. Not a theology based on the Bible. A different theology." Is that so, Rick? He and his ideological brethren should try to remember that we live in a democracy, not a theocracy, and it is contrary to the common good for any political candidate to promote the intolerant, repressive and patriarchal Taliban wing of their religious faiths. Opposition to birth control choices for women and men? That position is a relic of an antiquated attitude that should have no chance for political dominance in our society.

These efforts and demeaning attitudes are one aspect of an on-going Republican opposition to women's rights and prerogatives. Most conservative partisans deny there is a "war on women". Of course, they say, there's the traditional status quo of male prerogative, but that's just a normal biblically-sanctioned aspect of the age-old struggle between the sexes. The cast from *Fiddler on the Roof* chimes in: "Tradition, tradition! Tradition! ... Who has the right, as master of the house, to have the final word at home? The Papa, the Papa! Tradition!"

Rick Santorum once declared that contraception is "not okay". Yet if a religious person is strongly opposed to abortions, they should enthusiastically support contraception. The state of Colorado implemented a Family Planning Initiative that gave free or reduced-price IUDs or birth control implants to more than 30,000 women, and during that social experiment, births to teen mothers dropped by 40 percent and abortions dropped by 35 percent. Colorado officials said the program saved taxpayers \$80 million in Medicaid costs that they would have otherwise paid to care for new mothers and their children. Many fewer abortions and saving money, to boot. How could conservatives have opposed this? Yet Republican lawmakers in Colorado obstruct efforts to provide a fraction of this amount of taxpayer dollars to keep this national award-winning program going.

Traditional family values put men in the lord-and-master position in their families. In patriarchal families, many males expect obedience to their authority and jealously defend their prerogatives. This tradition, however, has highly unfair consequences. The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the median weekly wage for full-time female workers is only about 80% as much as the wages for men who do the same jobs, in the most common occupations. Eighty percent! Yes, this is more than the three-fifths proportion that black slaves were accorded for purposes of representation in the U.S. Constitution, but this is a sadly small consolation for women here in the 21st century! Eighty percent is one result of a rancorous skirmish against fair treatment of women!

The status quo is even worse for minority women. This is the case when all other factors are equal, including work experience and education. Black women are even more poorly paid than white women -- 64 percent, on average, of what white men are paid. And Latino women? They get only 54 percent. Grotesque!

With women on average receiving such paltry proportions of what men are paid for comparable work, this means that a woman on average must work a full year and then all the way into April of the next year to earn as much as a man makes in a year for the same work. Equal Pay Day is generally commemorated sometime in early April every year. In 2016, President Obama laudably designated the historic Sewall-Belmont House in Washington, D.C. as America's newest national monument on Equal Pay Day. Understand the great symbolism of what this meant. This house is the place where women suffragists retreated to, in 1917, after they engaged in silent protests in front of the White House for the right of women to vote. They were met with spectators who yelled at them, kicked them, spit on them and ripped the banners from their hands. "Undaunted, these women brought those tattered banners back to a house across town. They cleaned them -- sometimes carefully re-stitching them -- and carried them back out the next day, and the next, and the next."

The designation of this historic abode as a national monument will preserve and display some of the original banners, along with an extensive collection of other artifacts that showcase the struggle and accomplishments of the movement for women's equality. And it will help highlight the extreme inequities that still remain.

As an aside, it is revealing that militaristic frames of reference are used frequently in our culture, and in the mass media, and in our national dialogue. We have a war on terror, a war on drugs, a war on poverty, a war on religion, and even "a war on Christmas". This martial rhetoric seems to have invaded our consciousness, and is often used today as a metaphor and even a cliché. The use of emotionally-charged buzz phrases is generally dishonest, and it does a disservice to civil discourse and more accurate understandings of issues. Let this insight serve as a disclaimer to my occasional use of the phrase "war on women" to characterize brazen initiatives designed to restrict women's rights and prerogatives and rigidly control their pay. The fight against equal compensation for women for equal work goes on, no matter what it is called, and the status quo is unacceptable to the extent that women are denied fair treatment and greater economic security and more dignity and expanded personal freedoms.

In a larger perspective, while the set of discriminatory attitudes and policies related to women in the U.S. is deep-seated, there is an even more serious global assault in the form of far-reaching repression of females in countries worldwide. In Saudi Arabia, women were not allowed to drive a car until late 2017, and girls were long banned from

gym classes. Women are prohibited from competing in sports because male Saudi rulers deem these activities to be "steps of the devil" toward immorality. These prohibitions are only one part of a broad pattern of systematic violations of the rights of girls and women in Saudi Arabia, and it is symptomatic of domineering male chauvinist attitudes in many other places.

Meanwhile, when Pope Benedict was head of the Catholic Church, he acted like "God's Rottweiler" in his staunch obstruction to allowing females to be Catholic priests, or letting priests get married, or allowing American nuns to express their deepest feelings. Confirmation of this contention was found in a newspaper headline in 2012: "Vatican intensifying crackdown on American nuns". Pope Francis -- the time for change in NOW.

It is stunning to realize that official Vatican doctrines oppose artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood, while also prohibiting contraception and abortion. Think what this means! The Catholic Church essentially forbids fertility to many women who WANT to bear children, but aren't able to; AND it makes motherhood mandatory for those who are able to conceive, but DON'T WANT to!

Bizarre!!! Read that paragraph again. This is ridiculous. Surely, if there really were a Supreme Being, such a God would not be so illogical and cold-hearted! This is a political control issue. Women should be given greater power in this stodgy old highly undemocratic church establishment. Mark Twain was astute when he sagely observed: "The church is always trying to get other people to reform; it might not be a bad idea to reform itself a little, by way of example." Let us pray that religious authorities more honorably do so!

A glimmer of hope salubriously surfaced in this regard in April 2016, one week before Good Friday, when Pope Francis released a 256-page proclamation on family life. The Pope called for the Roman Catholic Church to be more welcoming and less judgmental. Advocating greater acceptance of single parents, unmarried straight couples who are living together, and gay people, these open-minded sentiments came in a document known as an apostolic exhortation, titled "Amoris Laetitia," which is Latin for "The Joy of Love".

The Pope made it clear that no top-down rule changes or far-reaching edicts will be forthcoming in the near future in the Church, probably because of the dominating authority of conservatives in the Catholic Church, and the extent to which it embodies such a markedly fractious global network of bishops and priests. Francis did, however, clarify the vision he wants local bishops and priests to follow: "as a church that greets families with empathy and comfort rather than with unbending rules and rigid codes of conduct." Hallelujah!

Pope Francis called for governments to provide better support for families in the form of health care and education and employment, and he described families as under siege by the pressures of modern life. "In many cases, parents come home exhausted, not wanting to talk, and many families no longer even share a common meal," Francis wrote. He described "severe stress" on families "who often seem more caught up with securing their future than with enjoying the present."

Hey, if the leader of one of the biggest religious establishments in the world can be more flexible in attitudes towards people that it has previously condemned, maybe all religious folks can do the truly spiritual thing and act in a more civilized manner by both altering their judgmental biases against others and supporting changes to overturn church laws that discriminate against classes of people like women, unmarried males and females, and lesbian women and gay men.

Homosexuality is a hot-button wedge issue. Pope Francis' written exhortation says that "every person regardless of sexual orientation" should be treated with respect and consideration, and that "every sign of unjust discrimination is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence."

The Pope also dedicated several passages to the importance of women's rights, in a pronounced contrast to his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who was criticized for his rash disparagement of women who "seek power."

There is only one really fair idea with regard to religious beliefs. Hark back to the year 313 CE when the man known as Constantine the Great had just become the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. When he did so, he wisely collaborated with his "co-Emperor" Licinius to issue the Edict of Milan, which proclaimed there would be religious tolerance of all religions throughout the empire. A good move!!

In the grand scope of changing times, religious tolerance should be seen as a crucial aspect of fair governance everywhere. Imagine the context of those times. Constantinople was the largest and wealthiest European city of the Middle Ages. Constantine founded the city in 330 CE on the site of ancient Byzantium, and made the Christian city the new capital of the Roman Empire. After more than 1,000 years as a Christian city, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, and they made it their capital in 1453. Today it is known as Istanbul.

Nations and peoples struggle, and we sure don't need any additional goad of fervent religious conflicts over doctrinal righteousness and the question of whose God is the one and only true Supreme Being, or which set of holy book stories is the absolute right one. None of these stories are factually true, and above all, we have a transcendent need for religious tolerance of all religions!

"Dogmas thrive", said Lemuel K. Washburn, "in soil where the truth could not get root." Agnostics and atheists believe in one fewer god than 'true believers' in a monotheistic God. Notably, true believers themselves dismiss all other gods. Since evangelical believers tend to deny all gods other than their own, they should easily be able to understand why other people might dismiss their god. An atheist is not someone who believes that *God does not exist*, but someone who sensibly believes that it is improbable that any specific declared version of 'God' *does exist as conceived and claimed*.

Further, a fair modicum of doubt is a well-merited attitude when considering all the preachers in the world who tell us absolutely how God wants us to behave -- especially when these eminences rationalize biases against people like females or gays, or the faithful of other religions. In any case, "Religious tolerance of all religions" should include "pagans", too! Virgil, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, who lived centuries before Christ, were naturally seen as pagans in retroactive religious dogma, and retroactive condemnation of them is utterly absurd.

"The easy confidence with which I know another man's religion is folly," wrote Mark Twain, "teaches me to suspect that my own is also."

#### Just a Little Bit of Whistling Goin' on Here

Important principles are at stake in the arena of traditionalism and oppressive attitudes toward women. Every person should be assured the freedom to believe what they like, but when their beliefs infringe on the freedoms or have negative impacts of others, or harm other people in significant ways, then those who hold such beliefs should not be allowed to dominate national policy-making. The principle of a separation between church and state should override any argument against it. No religion or church should have the freedom to force its views on the entire populace. One of the most basic freedoms in any person's life is to be allowed to exert some control over events in their lives. For a woman, this means to be able to choose whether or not to have children (or often to have more children), and with whom, or how many. And it means that others should not be able to interfere in her personal health and family planning and reproductive decisions.

Hundreds of laws have been enacted to limit women's rights in the past decade in states across the nation that have Republican-dominated legislatures. Thanks, guys! You may be calculating that it is a winning stance to be so abjectly obedient to Tea Party fanatics and Freedom Caucus stalwarts and patriarchal male chauvinist ideologues. Women, and all fair-minded voters, I urge you to prove them resoundingly wrong!

What is the underlying cause of this mass male-driven psychosis? It's as if an Acorn Protection Society has decided to outlaw protections of oak woodlands, and to deceive its members about the motives for this ruthless assault, not realizing that these edicts are like carvings on the tender bark of a young oak that will enlarge as the tree grows, and thus inevitably reveal to posterity the indictment that these acts represent of a deficiency of fairness in law-making by "conservatives".

Hundreds of thousands of women are raped every year across the U.S. by acquaintances, dates, family members or strangers. Many women are traumatized by rape violence, and by threats on their lives for resisting this violation of their bodies, dignity, liberties and personal security. One might expect that Republican leaders would be committed to enacting new laws to deter and punish men who rape, but instead they continue to focus in Congress and state legislatures on effectively penalizing female victims of rape. This must stop!

It amazes me that such a coordinated and concerted effort to undermine women's rights and prerogatives could be taking place in the U.S. here as the third decade of the 21st century slides slowly past. These actions are blatantly unjust and insidious forms of oppression. Social conservatives and domineering male authorities are giving conservatism a bad name by showing reprehensibly extreme disrespect for women and their rights.

Many Republicans act as if they have received a revelation direct from God telling them that life begins at conception, and that an incipient clump of cells proliferating in the womb of a woman after sexual intercourse deserves more protection and respect than the woman herself. This doctrinaire presumption seems to rely on a supposition that God is so proud that a sperm has found its way up a fallopian tube to a single monthly-generated egg that 'He' is damning the entire female gender throughout all their years of fertility to make sure a triumphant sperm and tiny clumps of proliferating cells survive, no matter what the circumstances.

Republican politicians may in actuality merely be delivering on campaign promises they have made to conservatives as a crass electoral expediency. They have been pandering in recent years to religious fundamentalists and such folks who demand they get their way. Why else would these coldly-calculating politicians strive so righteously to slash funding for healthcare for women? Why would they put up roadblocks to affordable access to family planning options, and strive to outlaw abortion? Why would they so rudely choose to force pregnant women to have unnecessary and invasive vaginal probes, and require them to pay for these violations of their bodily autonomy, dignity and well-being?

A political cartoon made this issue particularly cogent in a newspaper in 2012: In the first frame, an elephant declares: "There is no war on women." In the second frame, the elephant continues: "Just the sluts who use contraception." The attitude summarized in this cartoon sets up a curious conundrum: are the elephants in our political system really the ones who have long memories, or will it prove to be female voters themselves, so disrespected, devalued, disparaged, demeaned and disenfranchised, who will have the longest memories at the polling booth? At the ballot box in November 2018, unprecedented numbers of women won their electoral contests, overcoming all the structural hurdles and the hegemony of male domination. And again in November 2022, MAGA Republicans did historically poorly in midterm elections.

What's next, one might wonder? Will Republicans try to turn back the clock to 1919, before the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment, and try to deprive women of the right to vote altogether? That would be thinking really big, and not just limiting themselves to weakly suppressing the votes of millions of poor people and students and blacks and Latinos, and staunchly opposing gerrymandering reforms, like Republicans have been doing for years in numerous states and congressional districts across the nation.

Passionate calls for far-reaching social action are made repeatedly in this manifesto. It is not enough to wait for salvation in the next life. Now is the time to take care of important business and effect positive changes, like all the proposals adduced in the *Common Sense Revival*. Confidence like that of the basketball wizard Steph Curry when he releases a long three-point shot after some adroit dribbling is needed. Let's not carp and cavil. Let's not resign ourselves to pathological aspects of the status quo. Let's not be paralyzed by worry. Let's Just Do It. Let's not allow Republicans to continue having such domineering and negative influence in governance.

Mark Twain once said, "*Worrying is like paying a debt you don't owe.*" There is not a lot of value in worry, but deep and insightful concern is another matter. The difference between worry and concern is that a worried person sees problems and frets about them, while a concerned person makes honorable efforts to mitigate or solve problems. A respectable concern for good ways to improve the prospects of humanity is a central feature of integrity-filled public service. Politicians, Stand and Deliver!

#### A Solitary Bugle Plays a Solemn, Lonely and Mournful Version of "Taps"

Another evaluation of whether a "war on women" is being waged in the U.S. can be found in the eye-opening 2012 investigative documentary film *The Invisible War*. This film reveals that numerous sexual assaults on women have been taking place in the military. This issue of assaults on women in the military has not been adequately addressed because of the inflexibly hierarchical chain of command and male-dominant culture in the armed forces.

Lax recruiting standards, a tendency to victimize female service members who are raped, and shameful cover-ups by superior officers of men who commit rapes are further facets of this disgusting state of affairs.

The U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard have caused severe traumas for tens of thousands of women in the past few decades by their permissive policies on sex crimes in the armed forces. *The Invisible War* turned a glaring spotlight on this issue, and on the inadequate sensitivity of the military establishment in dealing with it. The Defense Department should be required to act much more effectively to prevent sexual abuses in the military, and the Veterans Administration should treat victims with greater dignity and fairness.

Jennifer Siebel Newsom's *Miss Representation* is a great film that highlights the negative effects that the mass media in the U.S. is having on women in our culture. Check it out! Demeaning attitudes toward women, and portrayals of them in sexualized and trivialized contexts by advertisers and people in entertainment industries also contribute to this state of affairs. Men in leadership positions in politics, government, businesses, churches, the military, and the mass media also generally reinforce undesirable outcomes in gender issues. Change must come! See *A Desultory Assessment of Curious Conundrums* in Part One of this manifesto online for more detailed insights into the film *Miss Representation* and its compelling perspectives.

### An Electric Guitar Jangles Out In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida

We clearly need to find ways to work together better to achieve greater solidarity of purpose. Can we find any better example in the world of what the best course might be for us to chart? Can we find an instance of actions that dramatically improved a society? The answer is a resounding YES! We need look no further than the United States during the period from 1945 to 1980.

During this period after the end of World War II, Americans managed to pull together enough to help build a strong middle class, rescue war-ravaged Europe with the Marshall Plan, desegregate the military, fight communism, and give expanded civil rights to working people and women and racial minorities. They also enacted far-reaching protections of clean air, clean water, wilderness areas, the environment, wildlife and endangered species. Wealthy people allowed the tax system to be structured in a dramatically-graduated way, with the marginal tax rate on the highest income levels being 70% or higher every year from 1936 to 1980. This rate was actually more than 90% for the highest levels of income from 1944 to 1963. The funds from this national tax policy financed a hyper-expensive Cold War, and politicians resisted the temptation to add the costs of these bold initiatives to the national debt. These funds also helped build a top-notch national highway infrastructure, and developed a triumphant space program that eventually landed men on the Moon in 1969.

During this era of high marginal tax rates, mainstream churches sought common ground and greater good goals by helping to build schools, universities, orphanages and hospitals. Catholic and Protestant churches helped many generations of immigrants to assimilate, and black churches and white churches alike found common ground to help end desegregation and repeal discriminatory Jim Crow laws.

This solidarity of purpose began to be eroded after Ronald Reagan was elected in November 1980. Not only did Reagan slash marginal tax rates on the highest incomes from 70% to 28% by 1988, but he also increased federal spending on the military, thus ushering in an imprudent era of big increases in annual budget deficits. Reagan also worked to undermine the rights of workers, and to reduce the regulation of banks. He began to dismantle the New Deal social safety net, and to reduce environmental protections. The theological center gave way to staunchly orthodox religious zealotry, along with undesirable political polarization and hardcore extremism.

It is noteworthy that almost all established churches have members who span the entire continuum from liberal to conservative, and today the divisions between the two "can seem as distant from one another as Rush Limbaugh and Bill Maher." Unfortunately, the right wing of religious faiths always seems to dominate in the U.S., often in countersupporting opposition to the right wing in other religions and nations. Faith itself seems to have been hijacked by people for partisan purposes, and political intrigue has rendered many religious influences distinctly disadvantageous. The foremost goal of conservatives is to gain supremacy, using any means possible, so this is not a fair fight, and the outcome of this battle tends to be highly negative for humanity as a whole.

The states of the South reacted with racist animosity to federal mandates to desegregate schools, housing and public transportation. The angry response of white leaders to laws aimed at ending racial discrimination against African Americans essentially caused the South to switch political allegiances. Since the Civil War when Republican president Abraham Lincoln had freed black slaves, Southern whites had voted primarily Democratic for almost 100 years, but then they changed their tune and have supported Republican conservatives ever since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. They thus joined a coalition of wealthy people and energized white supremacists and the Religious Right to strengthen the hegemony of conservatives over the masses. This sadly has served to heighten inequality and create ever-more divisive partisan rancor.

Commentator David Sirota noted the surprising fact that religious people in Britain tend to be the opposite of those in the U.S. in their political leanings. Steeped in the propensities of religious folks here, it is amazing to us that religious people in Britain are more likely to be politically progressive than those who are non-religious, and they tend to put a greater value on equality and fairness. In contrast, religious establishments in the U.S. are generally dominated by conservatives who oppose progressive economic values and fair-minded initiatives that would reduce inequality and discrimination and injustices. Jesus would be profoundly perplexed at this paradox! And the American people should be deeply chagrined -- and strongly motivated to demand change.

American evangelicals often support conservatism and hard-line political positions. When we see that religious people in Britain are less hypocritical in their interpretation of holy book ideas than people in the U.S., it provides hope that churches in America may see the light and support more moderate and more liberal attitudes of caring about the common people and the general welfare.

A bugle horn has sounded, and the way forward is clear. We should champion solidarity of purpose and religious moderation, and make bold commitments to fair-minded policies and the greater good. We cannot continue to allow good governance to be derailed by domination-demanding social conservatives, wealthy people, right-wing politicians, male supremacists and selfishly greedy businesspersons and billionaires who oppose common sense protections of the environmental commons. Any ideologues who oppose fairer policies for women and people in racial minorities and those in the lower and middle classes should be rejected, not supported.

The Republican Party has become a political organization that is on the wrong side of history in these regards, so I strongly recommend that all women, Latinos, blacks, Millennials and forward-thinking people refrain from voting for any Republican candidates until these politicians choose to refute their misleading, devious, divisive, inequitable, discriminatory, dishonorable and anti-environmental doctrines.

#### [A YouTube Video Reveals Sexy Shania Twain Crooning "Man, I Feel Like a Woman"](#)

Jungian psychologists say that each of us has a shadow self, a part of our unconscious minds that contains dark motives, deep instinctual insecurities, feelings of shortcomings, and generally repressed suspicions of personal weaknesses. This shadow self is instinctive and irrational, so it is prone to a defense mechanism phenomenon known as *projection*. Think about this concept with regard to Rush Limbaugh's seemingly crazed "feminazi" diatribes against women. When people blame others for perceived moral deficiencies, it is often a projection of their own failings or feelings of insecurity or inferiority. These are reflections of personality disorders that tend to cripple people psychologically, and insulate individuals by forming a fog of delusion between their egos and the real world. Sigmund Freud said denial and projection are the two most primitive types of defense mechanisms.

Rush Limbaugh's bully pulpit on the airwaves earned big profits for many years because his ranting tirades were popular with social conservatives. The bonanza that his buffoonery earned allowed him to continue to propagate his distorted spin into the minds of susceptible people, even though his perspectives were often mentally sick and markedly unhealthy for informed dialogue.

*The Shadow* radio program in the 1930s: "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows." Parenthetically, these words introducing *The Shadow* were intoned by actor Frank Readisk, and were eerily accompanied by an ominous laugh and a piece of music by French composer Camille Saint-Saens titled *Omphale's Spinning Wheel*. At the end of each episode, *The Shadow* reminded listeners, "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. Crime does not pay. ... The Shadow knows!"

As I reflect on these ideas in the context of the main message communicated in *Transcendental Musings*, I want to clarify what Jung meant when he referred to racial memories. He meant a kind of genetically-inherited archetypal memory that is specific to the human race. I casually wonder whether any of the deep prejudices in our societies are somehow actually transmitted to us in genetic propensities, or alternatively, whether all deep biases are conditioned into us from our parents, peer groups, experiences, propagandists, mass media and culture.

Many prejudices exist among peoples in countries worldwide, and there are plenty of nationalistic biases and narrow ethnocentric prejudices. There are also entire subsets of racist and sexist biases that are directed against groups of people like Blacks, Latinos, Jews, Asians, immigrants, refugees, foreigners, poor people, lesbian women, gay men and the entire female gender.

Pride and prejudice can lead to many harsh judgments and emotional hijackings. They can also make people blind to more honest, clear-minded, civil, empathetic and equitable relationships. Elizabeth Bennet, the fictional main character in Jane Austin's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, discovered this, and people would be wise to heed this valuable understanding by cultivating healing attitudes and ignoring more ignoble, vain, piously sanctimonious or wounded aspects of selves that harbor prejudice and hate.

It does not really matter what the secret well-spring of people's discriminatory biases may be. Regardless, our national policies should be made fairer and less discriminatory. One of the primary goals of understandings in this manifesto is to help formulate and advance policies that are as fair and moral as possible -- to all people today AND in future generations. This is consistent with a Live and Let Live philosophy and fair-minded principles like the "ethic of reciprocity" embodied in the Golden Rule. It is easy to agree with this ethic because it is eminently sensible to treat others the way we ourselves would like to be treated. The Golden Rule has been a central concept in the prevention and resolution of many conflicts in various cultures throughout history, and its importance is increasing as the population of human beings on Earth increases and increases.

Love, compassion, empathy, acceptance and forgiveness may be hard to practice in our stress-afflicted world. It is challenging enough to maintain such wholesome attitudes toward oneself; and it can be even harder to love thy neighbor, and to practice loving-kindness toward strangers, or to forgive "enemies". But the ethic of reciprocity embodied in the Golden Rule is practical, and admirably responsible, socially sensible and intergenerationally wise.

I roll my eyes and sigh with perplexed disgust at the brazen double standard of males who chastise women for having sex for purposes other than reproduction. Hello! The most powerful biological drive of males in our mammalian species is to be titillated, to be given carnal permission, "to score", to find someone to satisfy their strong hormonal drives. To tell women to hold an aspirin between their knees and keep their legs closed is cartoonishly hypocritical advice, preposterous and simplistic, especially in light of the fact that tens of millions of American males are lusting after many of them with carnal intent and hormonal intensity at every moment.

To blame females for giving in to the wiles, compulsions and manipulative maneuvers of males is ridiculous. Come on! A new feminist revolution is needed to reject this discriminatory double standard. This new flow of feminism should be a broad-based cultural movement that is supported by fair-minded men. Access to contraceptives and family planning options are as basic to women's well-being and the overall health of a society as clean water, proper sanitation, public education, good governance and widely-shared economic opportunity.

Women have been exercising Original Choice ever since they figured out the correlation between the animal act of sexual intercourse and the time that presto! -- a newborn baby popped out of their wombs nine months later, a child that had an appearance or behavioral propensities that curiously resembled a male with whom they had had sex around the time of a full moon many months before.

Females make this Original Choice to select a desirable mate and a good provider, just as it has been throughout the evolutionary history of most mammals. Human females seek a trustworthy, honest and committed male who will provide credible assurances that he will sublimate his biological desire to spread his seed far and wide, and will instead devote his energies and resources to help nurture and support the children he fathers. This freedom for females to choose who they want to have a child with cannot now be taken away by power-abusing men like self-righteous conservatives who want to control and dominate members of the fairer sex. Men who believe in a

Supreme Being that *must be obeyed* should be regarded with skepticism, especially when this God is made in their own Strict Father image, insistent upon female surrender and obedience in the strife between the sexes.

It is ironic that many Republicans claim to want less intrusion by the government into people's lives, but when it comes to issues of contraception and sex education, they want the government to teach abstinence and legislate a puritan morality and force women to endure indignities. In 1964, Republican Barry Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights Act because, he stated, "You can't legislate morality." Now Republicans with right-wing leanings are striving, like persons possessed by a male chauvinist devil, to legislate their narrow vision of morality. They want to legislate a strict morality that is highly discriminatory against women. Hypocrisy knows no bounds!

If we are going to legislate morality, it should be an attempt to increase fairness, not to defend discriminatory biases that force females into being second-class citizens. The idea that prerogatives of women should be more restricted than they already are, in arenas of reproductive choice and access to healthcare, violates our nation's founding principles of support for personal freedoms, self-determination, the general welfare and reasonable opportunities in the pursuit of happiness. We should be able to agree to let churches have their ways in their sanctums, but require that churches stay out of the bedrooms of the American people -- and out of their doctor's offices, too. Tax exemptions for any churches that engage in political activities should be revoked!

There was once a very calm and isolated church, high in the mountains where celibate priests dedicated their lives to contemplation and study. One day, loud cries of angst began issuing from the rectory down below. Religious compatriots rushed to the cellar, and there, standing aghast over a tattered old manuscript, a religious devotee was exclaiming in chagrin, "Oh, my God, no! No! No! The Bible says GO CELEBRATE, not BE CELIBATE!"

I heartily encourage religious fundamentalists to put aside their Holy Scriptures for a moment, and to stop blaming women for having opened a Pandora's Box that revealed the Knowledge of Good and Evil in human interactions, and thereby supposedly released evils into the world. It is not God that wants women to be subservient to men, it is the religion-exploiting males who concocted manipulative patriarchal Biblical stories and have kept them alive for so many centuries. These dominion-demanding males have staunchly strived to suppress the divine feminine, apparently as a ploy to repress Dionysian impulses of the heart and emotions and sensations, and to simultaneously keep the roles and prerogatives of women inferior in our cultures.

A feminist perspective sees that socially-domineering male supremacists have thrust these issues into the forefront of the fray of our dysfunctional national political discourse for a reason that seems indisputable: to mold our country in conformity with their own narrow biases. The culprits in these efforts are shrewd prudish males who champion patriarchal privilege and push for "right-wing social engineering", and for uncivil re-engineering in which their will is mercilessly imposed on everyone.

Double standards run deep. Especially objectionable is when politicians make prostitution illegal and prosecute women who try to make a living selling sexual favors, but neglect to prosecute men who drive the activity. In this regard, France has a much more civilized approach than the U.S., for they make it legal to sell sex but illegal for males to buy it. It should be a goal of all countries to find fairer ways to treat disadvantaged women, and to crack down on pimping, sex trafficking and violence against women.

Dionysus, the god of epiphany, struggles to attention, his red robes a-flowing, with a characteristic look of disheveled nonchalance. He has an almost sublime and beatific smile, a smile that is slightly quizzical like Mona Lisa's, and yet inscrutably crooked, and there is a fire burning in his eyes, a flame of passion that gives imaginative observers the impression that this god deserves better understanding.

Later in this essay, an incisive introspection is made into socio-political observations concerning four specific arenas: (1) An assessment of how and why our political system has become so dysfunctional and corrupt that we are unable to put many fair-minded common sense national policies into effect; (2) An investigation into the relative merits of competing constellations of values associated with Strict Father worldviews and complementary opposites found in Nurturant Parent worldviews; (3) An examination of social attitudes toward the obnoxiously repetitive advertising of availability of erectile-dysfunction drugs and the distinctly contrasting attitudes toward contraceptives; and (4) An exposé of the five primary ways that the "Grand Old Party" is undermining democracy

itself by attempting to disenfranchise millions of people while expanding the perks and privileges of rich people and corporate entities, at the expense of the vast majority of Americans. But right here, now, it is time for this:

### A Musical Ode to the Power of Positive Thinking

"You've got to accentuate the positive  
Eliminate the negative  
And latch on to the affirmative ..."

--- Lyrics of a Johnny Mercer song

Among the most intriguing of complementary opposites is the tension between people who see the world with glass-half-full optimism and those who view the world with glass-half-empty pessimism. This contrast is largely a matter of innate disposition, and is surprisingly independent of circumstances. This is a tension between sunny, major-key Apollonian worldviews and darker and more dissonant minor-key Dionysian worldviews. An explanation of these concepts will follow in the course of these meandering reflections.

Optimism can be very valuable, though cynics say optimists simply don't fully comprehend the reality of the human predicament. Optimism can be both a blessing and a curse, so optimists should be happy with their temperamental propensities, while at the same time being sensibly wary. People who are endowed with an optimistic bias hardly need be told that they are lucky -- they feel fortunate almost as a matter of personal disposition. Daniel Kahneman points out in his excellent book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*: "An optimistic attitude is largely inherited, and it is part of a general disposition for well-being, which may also include a preference for seeing the bright side of everything. If you were allowed one wish for your child, seriously consider wishing him or her optimism. Optimists are normally cheerful and happy, and therefore popular; they are resilient in adapting to failures and hardships, their chances of clinical depression are reduced, their immune systems are stronger, they take better care of their health, they feel healthier than others, and are in fact likely to live longer." Have faith! "Of course, the blessings of optimism are offered only to individuals who are only mildly biased, and who are able to accentuate the positive without losing track of reality." When action is needed, optimism is often a good thing, even if it happens to be of a mildly delusional variety.

Researchers and scientists studying human brains and behaviors are finding that people who regularly cultivate gratitude in their lives generally experience measurable benefits in psychological and spiritual senses, and in physical and social well-being. Three fundamental traits of grateful persons are adduced. One of them is the maintenance of a sense of abundance in life. The second is a respectful appreciation of the good in life and in other people. The third is the enjoyment of simple pleasures. Mindful practice is required!

Superstitious thought and studied ignorance are often regarded as foolish. Fascinatingly, however, a kind of superstition known as "magical thinking" can actually sometimes be advantageous, even when it misrepresents reality. Positive psychological benefits can result, like a sense of control, a sense of meaning, or reduced feelings of anxiety. A belief in destiny, like the belief that everything takes place according to "God's plan", can provide people with a coherent narrative and infuse a person's goals with a sense of purpose -- and it can even help someone experiencing adversities to become more persistent in their efforts to overcome challenges.

The commendable filmmaker Tiffany Shlain gave a great Commencement Speech in Berkeley at a University of California graduation ceremony in May 2010. She provided students with some honorably wise observations and ideas. Ms. Shlain is the daughter of the late polymath Dr. Leonard Shlain, and a philosophical soul mate and champion of those who embrace bold social activism. She told her audience that, to make our lives and the world better, we should "invoke a little moxie". To accomplish important things, she insightfully indicated, a salubrious combination is needed of farsighted vision, courageous commitments, patient persistence, and a good sense of humor. She honors the writer Goethe's famous quote, "Whatever you think or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic to it."

Let's embrace this perspective with a moment of silence and gratitude.

### Cue the Cymbals and Trumpets and a Chorus of Angels

Carl Jung was famous for his concepts concerning the collective unconscious. He was the first person to articulate profound insights about the fascinating universally-recognized archetypes in the human mind. Jung hypothesized that all of mythology could be taken as a type of projection of these archetypes onto deities in our collective unconscious minds. All human beings share these archetypes as part of our genetic inheritance, and we all recognize archetypal patterns of prototypical human behaviors, roles, character types and symbols.

Prime examples of these archetypes are revealed in Greek mythology. Marvelous mythical stories like these contain provocatively revealing and juicy projections of human qualities onto the characters of gods and goddesses in the Greek pantheon of deities. These personifications of deities are much more appealing and enlightening than the dominating image of a Son of God crucified on a cross almost 2,000 years ago. This image carries with it a supposition that each and every one of us is guilty of 'Original Sin', and that we have no chance of being proven innocent. We are lucky in the United States that those who fervently believe such doctrines are not in authoritarian charge. Societies are much better off when they are fairer in their rendering of judgments. Cosmological conceptions that entail fewer guilt-engendering condemnations would be healthier ones!

The American people are fortunate to live in a democracy rather than a religious theocracy like the ones in Iran and Saudi Arabia. Let's all work together to keep it this way! I find it quite curious that, according to the Pew Research Center, America is among the most religious of the world's developed nations, and that evangelical people in America's religious establishments are much more conservative than in other nations of the developed world. In this regard, the U.S. is more similar to Iran and Saudi Arabia than to Britain, France, Germany or Scandinavian countries. And religious extremism seems to be getting pathologically worse in the USA.

Jean Shinoda Bolen has written a number of fascinating books, including *Goddesses in Everywoman*, and *Gods in Everyman*. In these books, she explores the complex feminine and masculine archetypes within each and every person. Her understandings go far beyond simple-minded dichotomies found in patriarchal societies in which women are regarded as virgins or whores, mothers or lovers, Madonnas or vixens. Greek myths contain a wide range of female roles, from women whose identities are fully established in the context of their relationships with men to those who place their primary emphasis on their own accomplishments, autonomy and independence. Jean Shinoda Bolen contends that a clearer understanding of these archetypes, as revealed in anthropomorphic projections upon Greek deities, can help each and every one of us understand and heal and grow.

One would be well-justified in wondering how insights into the nature of mythological deities from a "pagan" religion of the past could help us understand current realities that affect us all. Such insights are said to offer the potential to help us create a fairer and more egalitarian future, so we should sit up, lean forward, and look more closely. The potential for better understanding, both personal and interpersonal, and for win/win social betterment to boot, is a prospect that we should all seek, hail, celebrate and welcome!

Jean Shinoda Bolen dedicated *Goddesses in Everywoman* to her mother, "who was determined to help me grow up -- as she hadn't -- feeling that I was fortunate to be a girl, and could do whatever I aspired to as a woman." Hurrah for such sentiments! Actually being fortunate to be a female would be significantly more salubrious and likely if people were to choose more women as their legislative representatives and judges. Vote accordingly!

Women living in patriarchal societies are faced with the situation that men disproportionately decide what the roles and prerogatives of women will be. In patriarchal cultures, males exert excessively domineering influence in formulating what choices women have in their lives. Men tend to strive to limit women's choices and their rights. Tradition serves to put women's options subordinate to the prerogatives and whims of men, and to restrict women to roles of being mothers, housewives, social facilitators, mistresses in the bedroom and kitchen, and passive seekers in male-dominated churches.

Roles of both men and women in American society have evolved dramatically in the last sixty years since the invention of "the pill". This revolutionary birth control innovation energized the beginnings of the feminist movement of the 1960s, a movement that resulted in a relative empowerment of women. This trend provoked a powerful reaction against it. Today, religious fundamentalists are doubling down in their efforts to turn back the clock to a time when women were more complacent with, and accepting of, their subjugated roles.

Open-hearted and forward-thinking attitudes are needed to truly actualize the egalitarian ideals upon which our nation was founded. This means greater fairness should be accorded to girls and women. It also means a more enlightened embrace of the anima, that archetype of the feminine inner personality that resides within each man. The anima has been rudely repressed for millennia in human societies, and this has caused wide-ranging dysfunctional consequences for all.

### A Lovely Vocalist Sings an Aria, Accompanied by the Sounds of a Soaring Symphony

Some of the greatest stories ever told are contained in ancient Greek and Roman mythologies, with their extended family of deities. Greeks believed that, in the beginning, Gaea the feminine-gendered earth emerged from the primordial force Chaos, and gave birth to a son, Uranus, a primal god who personified the sky. Gaea then repeatedly mated with Uranus to create 12 first-generation Titans, who were gods and goddesses personifying primeval nature powers that had been worshipped and feared from time immemorial.

Uranus was the first patriarchal father figure in Greek mythology. He grew resentful of some of the children he had parented with Gaea, like the Cyclopes, so he hid them in the earth. This angered their mother Gaea, so she sought revenge. Cronus, the youngest Titan, was the only one brave enough to come to his mother's aid. Conspiring with her, Cronus lopped off his father's genitals with a sickle and threw them into the sea. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation, sprung from the foam. That's a spectacle!

Cronus thus became the most powerful god in the universe, at his father's expense. He and his Titan siblings then ruled the world as a dynasty of deities during a Golden Age. They in turn were the parents of second-generation Titans like the sun god Helios, the moon goddess Selene, the god Atlas who held up the celestial heavens, and his brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus. These Titans became the parents and grandparents of first-generation Olympians like Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods, and Poseidon, Hades, Hera, Hestia and Demeter who ruled, respectively, the sky, the sea, the underworld and the affairs of mankind.

Cronus had become wary when his parents warned him that one of his children would someday overthrow him. He, after all, had castrated his own father, so treachery may have run in the family. What to do? Cronus decided to swallow his children as they were born. He swallowed the first five of his offspring, but then his wife Rhea became angry about this, so she tricked Cronus when Zeus was born and gave him a stone wrapped in clothing to swallow. Cronus fell for the deception, and Rhea hid Zeus on the island of Crete until he was full grown. Then Zeus devised a plan with his mother to free his five siblings, and together they waged a ten-year war against Cronus in which the Olympians were finally triumphant, and sure enough Cronus was indeed overthrown by his son Zeus, as prophesied.

This is how Zeus became king of the gods and the father figure of the Olympians. In a prototypical male style, he turned out to be a real philanderer. He married his sister Hera after she had refused him for 300 years. Some episode of trickery was involved, as I recall. Hera was the supreme goddess of marriage and childbirth, and she was Zeus' devoted but extremely jealous wife.

These myths are "family stories" that cast light on our patriarchal genealogy, and on the considerable influence these archetypal stories have on our personal lives. Any student of mythology will discover that the myths of ancient Greece and Rome often included several versions of stories and genealogies. These stories were never severely pruned into a single dogmatic version. Many centuries later, Christianity was faced with a similar problem of having many conflicting gospels and creeds, so Christian bishops convened the First Council of Nicaea in the fourth century CE to judge which of the hundreds of existing gospels was deemed to be officially true, and then they suppressed all other testimonies and perspectives.

Imagine yourself alive some 2,500 years ago in Classical Greece. These myths of creation and early genealogies were the dominant spiritual, religious and cosmological explanations of existence at that time in the most advanced civilization in Europe. A rich, well-developed and variegated trove of stories surrounded these deities, enveloping Greeks in a mythical connection to their world. Sometimes the behavior demonstrated by supernatural deities was monstrous, personifying vices or evil or dangers that seemed to lurk everywhere. Note that this was long before Satan monotheistically arrived on the scene to be blamed for evil, and to influence humankind in their enthusiasms to commit thefts, adulteries and other "sins" of indulgence and pleasure and abuses of authority.

"History does not repeat itself," observed Mark Twain, " but it does rhyme."

### A Symphony Conductor Conducts a Sympathetic Survey

Think about the story of Prometheus, the Titan god whose Greek name means forethought. Prometheus was regarded as a champion of mankind, for he was said to have stolen fire from Zeus and given it to mortals. His brother Epimetheus, whose name means hindsight, was regarded as foolish. These Titan deities were thought to have been entrusted with the responsibility of giving traits to each of newly created animals. "Epimetheus was responsible for giving a positive trait to every animal, but when it was time to give man a positive trait, since he lacked foresight, he found that there was nothing left." That myth not only puts backward-looking Epimetheus in a deserved harsh light, but casts mankind in an oddly negative mold. No positive traits at all?!

Prometheus, in his turn, decided to give mankind the positive attribute of the civilizing arts, along with the gift of fire. The civilizing arts provide great depth and insight and hope for our kind. Since Prometheus had stolen fire from Zeus, this made the ruler of the gods colossally angry. Zeus punished Prometheus with terrible torment for his transgression by binding him to a rock and having an eagle feed on his liver every day. Zeus then set out to punish mankind. The punishment, oddly enough, was to have all the Olympian gods help fashion Pandora, the first mortal woman, to give to Epimetheus as a wife.

Pandora's name means "all gifts", and sure enough, she received a wonderful range of marvelous traits from the various Olympian gods and goddesses. She was also given some consequential character flaws that were not so fabulous. Aphrodite gave her beauty. Apollo gave her musical talent and an ability to heal others. Zeus gave her mischievousness. Hera gave her curiosity. Hermes, a god known for trickery, gave her cunning, boldness and charm -- and a mysterious box. The stage was set. Epimetheus foolishly made the mistake of letting his beautiful wife keep the box, though he forbid her from opening it. Since Pandora had been given exceptional curiosity, she of course eventually opened the box, and dang if it didn't contain all manner of physical and emotional curses and evils and mistrust, which were thereby released into the world.

This is how the first woman came to be blamed for having released horrors and illnesses into the world, and for being responsible for having condemned all of humanity to suffer the consequences forever thereafter. This was one early rationalization for the subjugation of women in patriarchal societies, and it is sure proving to be a stubbornly persistent trait in societies worldwide.

The Pandora cataclysm did contain a shard of good news, however. When Pandora had looked in the bottom of the emptied box, she found that there was one thing left: Hope. Curiously, we still have hope, so we see once again that all curses contain some measure of blessing. The visionary plagiarists who wrote the Bible found this story too good to pass up, so they incorporated it right up front on the third page of their holy book. Eve, the first woman, disobeyed the male LORD God in the Garden of Eden by consuming the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, which opened her eyes to knowing good and evil and allowed her to share it with Adam. So God reacted just as Zeus had, by condemning humankind to terrible troubles and unending grief. This is how the legendary Greek mythological story of Pandora was assimilated into the Bible.

Consider the story of Prometheus in the context of the vital importance of critical thinking and foresight to our existence. The nature of evolutionary change that has led to our extraordinary biological success is one of the most important understandings we have ever realized. The true dynamics of evolutionary adaptation is that we evolved as a social species, and not merely as the fittest surviving individuals, "red in tooth and claw". As Edward O. Wilson pointed out in *The Social Conquest of Earth*, our species has been subject to the selective survival of individuals and their closest kin, and also to the survival of the groups to which they belonged. Wilson writes: "Every human and every human society has to learn how to manage adroitly the perpetual ambiguity and conflict between individual needs and group needs." Many politicians today seem to be becoming boneheaded, and are less than adroit in negotiating this path, and in fact treacherously stand in the way..

In the conflict between individual motivations and community needs, I subscribe to the "Optimum Balance Theory". We need to find a much better balance than letting wealthy people maximize their great advantages while foisting austerity on all others. Cuts in food stamp funding reinforce this understandable conviction. Conservatives are

ostensibly worried that poor people may try to make too comfortable a hammock out of humanitarian social safety net programs, "the lazy bums". I myself am cynical about this self-serving and unempathetic attitude, and draconian Republican budget proposals reinforce my suspicions.

The biggest-picture story is one that emphasizes the natural selection of groups of individuals who have been able to cooperate together well enough to put the survival of the group ahead of the survival of ruthlessly competitive individuals. All our ancestors who survived were from the clans that natural selection had favored because cooperative commitments are truly the best for any group as a whole. The nature of the distinct human propensity to embrace religious beliefs is, in itself, a characteristic that has given significant survival advantages to clans and tribes who manifested more "altruistic" tendencies.

It is noteworthy that the entire civilizing process of the past 10,000 years has been one in which the size of the groups to which we belong has grown larger. While early human groups selectively survived by having individuals make ultimate commitments to their clans alone, it later became important for individuals to subsume some of their success and advantage-taking to the best interests of the tribe, the community, the town, the city, the region, the city-state, and then the nation. The reason these understandings are so important is that they point to the next necessary breakthrough required of us to ensure our survival and prosperity and flourishing: we must begin to regard our social group as larger, so that we see the need for our entire species to cooperate together enough to make sure we do not dangerously destabilize the global climate, destroy the ecological commons, exterminate a sizable proportion of the biological diversity of life on Earth, or engage in destructive wars around the planet. This holistic realization recognizes the precious truth that interrelationships and interdependencies of all life are deep and inextricable.

The better angels of our nature, along with the profound civilizing effects of modernity, help control dark human impulses toward sexual aggression and violence. These better angels are part of the civilizing process and humanitarian revolution assessed by Daniel Kahneman in his brilliant book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. These civilizing forces involve a keen ability to anticipate longer-term consequences of actions, and an increasing willingness to take other people's thoughts, feelings and perspectives into consideration. The worse angels of our instincts lurk in voracious greedy appetites, extreme ruthlessness in competition, poorly controlled drives, wanton sexuality, uncontrolled addictive behaviors, and powerful drives to assert dominance over others.

The exchange of pleasantries, and even of barbed witticisms, is ever so preferable to the exchange of blows, or of feathered poison arrows, just as the indulgence in a little flirtatious fun is much better than the unleashing of crudely presumptuous and unwanted sexual advances. Consequences of actions, and their proportional importance, should guide our actions, laws and priorities.

"In studying the history of the human mind, one is impressed again and again by the fact that the growth of the mind is the widening of the range of consciousness, and that each step forward has been a most painful and laborious achievement."

--- Carl Jung

### A Contrapuntal Flute Sounds a Cry from the Heart

Some of the most significant stories in Greek mythology are the ones concerning Apollo and Dionysus. These are real good stories. Apollo was the son of the goddess Leto and that inveterate philanderer Zeus. A visit to Leto's birthplace, the island of Kos in the beautiful archipelago of Greece, would be magical, for it lies just a few miles off the coast of Bodrum, Turkey in the southeastern Aegean Sea, and the clarity of the air there can be like a veritable vision of revelation.

Apollo, the god of light and the Sun, represents cool detached elegance, grace, symmetry, order, control, logic, balance, clarity, simplicity, moderation, emotional containment, and sunny refinement. Physically, as is reflected in art and sculpture, Apollo was depicted as the ideal of the *kouros* -- a handsome, beardless, well-proportioned athletic male, similar to Adonis, the god of beauty and desire, who was considered the veritable prototype of graceful and youthful male beauty.

Carl Jung's insights into complementary opposites give us forewarning, that there is much more to human nature than these noble characteristics of Apollo. And sure enough, the god Dionysus now arrives on the scene to embody this contrast. Dionysus was Apollo's half-brother, the son of Zeus and a mortal princess named Semele. Let's give an enthusiastic salute to Dionysus! As the next paragraph materializes into your consciousness, imagine the complementary opposite qualities of yin and yang, feminine and masculine, the moon and the sun, dark and light, the hidden and the manifest, the passive and the aggressive, cold and hot, water and fire.

Zeus was the powerful god of sky and thunder. With the power of his stature and influence, he had easy access to the females of the world. He famously took full advantage of this fortuitous circumstance! Though it was widely believed that his power as a supreme god made him difficult to resist, the wily sex maniac Zeus disguised himself nonetheless as a handsome mortal male in order to deceive Semele and get her to fall in love with him. He scored, and Semele became pregnant with Zeus' child.

The story of Dionysus' birth, related below, is interesting. But here's the important part. In real life, there is always a wide continuum of complementary opposites in human nature, and a healthy balance is generally the best. Since noble Apollonian characteristics simply do not typify all of life, and are inadequate to encompass its full expression, the positive aspects of Dionysian characteristics should be allowed fairer rein, rather than being harshly suppressed.

Dionysus was the god of wine and the grape harvest, and of ritual madness, ecstasy and wild abandon. Dionysus represents open-heartedness, passion, intensity, depth of emotion, improvisation, drama, tragedy and comedy, wildness, darkness, moonlight, extremes, dissonance, and general "too muchness". His story is juicy, and not at all fuddy duddy. Picture an androgynous youth, half naked, making a disheveled, dramatic and triumphant appearance in a somewhat disorderly manner.

Dionysus was brought up by nymphs and was surrounded by nature, so he grew up unrestrained. What good luck! His most symbolic role came to be his association with revelry, wild festivals, and wine, women and song. In Dionysian rituals, ancient Greeks and Romans danced, listened to music, and indulged in intoxicants to reduce inhibitions and social constraints. This was known to make them feel liberated and free to enjoy and express themselves. Many Romans abused these indulgences, which alarmed authorities at the time. Such large numbers of people participated in bacchanalia festivals that Roman authorities declared a national danger of crimes and political conspiracies being planned at these events, and they harshly repressed these activities, and officially banned all bacchanalia gatherings in 186 BCE.

There are lessons to be learned in the tension between the complementary opposites of Apollonian and Dionysian temperaments and propensities, and a better personal and society-wide balance would be a positive goal to pursue. A wise woman who is a professor of myth, music and philosophy, states that one good mark of maturity is the ability to hold joy in one hand and suffering in the other, and to balance the Apollonian virtues of clarity, lightness, order and moderation with the Dionysian virtues of emotion, depth of feeling and creative expression. In the parlance of Freud's ideas about our psyches, we should strive to find a fair balance between our id, our ego, and our superego. In doing so, hearty respect should be given to the fairness principles of the Golden Rule, in every situation where our actions affect others.

Complementary opposition can be seen to be a fabric woven through all of existence. Every current condition is a temporary balance point, a stasis that represents competing natural forces of mind and body, masculine and feminine, life and death, chaos and order, matter and energy, space and time, and many other forces of what can be regarded as complementary opposition.

"Yeah, no, it's generally a good idea to think proactively, and to sensibly control one's impulses. Long live the Golden Mean."

--- An Apollonian pronouncement of a modern incarnation of the Priestess Oracle of Delphi

The story of Dionysus' birth is fabulous. His mother Hera jealously wanted to exact revenge when she found out that her husband Zeus had had an affair with Semele, a daughter of King Cadmus and a princess of Thebes. So Hera disguised herself as a mortal girl. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, eh Zeus? Remember

that Semele was pregnant at that moment. Hera in disguise became a maidservant to Semele, and one can just anticipate the coming treachery.

The disguised goddess told Semele that her handsome lover was really the king of Gods in disguise, and she convinced Semele to ask Zeus to make an irrevocable promise to grant her a wish for anything she wanted, and she asked that he reveal his macho dude Master-of-the-Olympian-universe glory to her. Since he was bound to comply, having so agreed, he did so, even though he knew it would be disastrous to her mortal being. When he revealed himself, Semele was engulfed in the flames of his radiance.

What a story! It gets even better. As Semele was being burned to death in flames, Zeus ordered Hermes, the messenger god and trickster, to save her fetus. Hermes snapped to it, and creatively put the developing Dionysus into Zeus' own thigh. Three months later, Dionysus was born. The rest is history, as they say.

### The Lovely Goddess Artemis Appears

Dionysus had a divine stepsister named Artemis, who was Apollo's twin sister. She was the goddess of the hunt and wild animals, wilderness, the Moon, childbirth, virginity and young girls. Artemis is one of my favorite Greek goddesses. Homer referred to her as "Artemis of the Wild Land and Mistress of Animals." She was depicted as a huntress, confidently carrying a bow and arrows, as one might well imagine in trying to conjure up a fuller image of her from one of many Greek and Roman marble sculptures carved in her image.

Artemis was one of the most widely venerated of the ancient Greek deities. Her mother Leto was a daughter of two of the 12 first-generation Titans, as were Zeus and Hera, so she was actually a close relative of them both. The Bible talks about many generations after Adam and Eve, making all people blood relatives, so what the heck!

Hera was naturally furious at her husband Zeus when she found out that he'd had sex with Leto and gotten her pregnant. Hera cursed Leto so that she would be unable to find a solid ground where she could give birth to her children. Zeus cleverly caused a floating island, surrounded by swans, to emerge from the Aegean Sea, and Leto found refuge there and gave birth to Artemis. Artemis then helped deliver her twin brother Apollo. What a nifty goddess move that was, to achieve such an amazing feat so soon after having emerged from the womb herself! Artemis was said to have thereafter had an uncanny ability to help women in the pains of childbirth. She believed that the Fates, those white-robed incarnations of destiny, had chosen her to be a helpful midwife.

Ayla, the heroine character from *The Clan of the Cave Bear* would say "Yay for Artemis!", for she herself had been an early expert of a rock-and-sling hunting method in cave man days. If you haven't read *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, here's another thing to add to your list of interesting things to do. As described in *Recommended Reading for a Broader Understanding and Appreciation of the World*: "(15) *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, by Jean M. Auel --- The first in a series of richly imagined narratives about Ayla, a girl who lived 30,000 years ago in Ice Age Europe. Ayla's story is that of a heroine who dealt with great challenges in an epic saga of early humans and their relationships during prehistoric times."

*The Clan of the Cave Bear* provokes images in our imagination of a world long ago. It entertains us with a marvelous saga while simultaneously providing provocative insights into how different relationships and cultures of prehistoric peoples may have been. Imagine facing the primordial world that Ayla lived in, with its pre-literate social ties and communication hurdles and cave lions and saber-toothed tigers and huge cave bears. Try to place yourself in those times and those contexts, and imagine the worldviews that may have accompanied those human beings at the time. As descendants of such people, this flight of imagination provides us with a compelling way of looking at our selves and our early associations with the Earth and its denizens!

Powerful images are expressed in story-telling, myths, legends, rituals and holy books. Not only can the study of mythological stories provide us with enlightening insights, but these tales can be seen to resemble Rorschach revelations of our inner selves and the drives that affect us. We are all acted upon from within by the universal archetypes that reside in our collective unconscious, such as those richly embodied in the characteristics attributed to the gods and goddesses of Classical Greece. Zeus!

At the same time that archetypes strongly influence our behaviors, we are profoundly affected by forces from without, in the form of cultural stereotypes, expectations and acculturated opinions. A much better knowledge of

all the forces that influence us may give us more power to re-shape our lives in ways that will be more meaningful and fulfilling. Read Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen's intriguing book, *Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women* for a deeper, more personal framework of this topic, and important ramifications.

### Honoring the Greek Pantheon

To continue the story of the religious pantheon in ancient Greece, here's a quote from *Comprehensive Global Perspective - An Illuminating Worldview*

This Creation story of Uranus and Cronus has a bit of a patriarchal slant to it, eh? Wow -- lots of testosterone! The father's genitals were lopped off by his son!! It makes one yearn for the good old days when the Great Goddess ruled humankind's beliefs -- and when much greater appreciation was given to the health and beneficence of the natural world. In those times, more respect was likely accorded to Mother Earth, since people held a more personalized vision of the impersonal powers of cause and effect.

The Great Goddess Mother Earth had been revered in ancient Europe and the Near East for thousands of years before barbarian invasions led to the subjugation of these early civilizations by peoples whose deities were dominated by male warrior gods. These invasions fractured and suppressed the prior mother-based religions, and father-based theologies became dominant. Patriarchal religions not only consigned feminine deities to inferior positions in the pantheon, but they profoundly affected the cultures of the peoples in which they germinated and found expression. Women were increasingly oppressed in those societies, and harsh laws like the eye-for-an-eye Hammurabi's Code gained force. The new myths demoted the value of the female life force, with its deep connections to fertility and nature. And the men, like modern-day born-again Southern evangelicals, made sure to relegate women to a lower status than males. In states like Texas, they are going a step further and trying to mandate fertility by prohibiting access to abortions, and they are trying to justify aggressive, wasteful and damaging oil-well-pumping and fracking assaults on nature.

Our societies are still paying the price for the sometimes subtle, sometimes ruthless subjugation of the divine feminine. Patriarchal cultures tend to stunt the basic needs of both women and men, and to thereby inhibit personal growth and the fulfillment of our human potentials. Cultural constructs compel males to repress their inner anima selves and their emotions and vulnerabilities, contributing to a variety of morbid symptoms. And they repress females, and make sure women earn less pay for equal work, and they act to impose restrictions on their freedoms and prerogatives. Fie on the extreme conservatism of Opus Dei!

In larger ecological terms, domineering masculine god conceptions facilitate the rash exploitation of Mother Earth. We should instead give greater appreciation and respect to our home planet by being willing to boldly protect it with far-reaching commitments. Protections of wildlife habitats should be strengthened! We should recognize and honor the intrinsic values of Earth's ecosystems in a healthy condition, and we should stop pretending with mindless myopia that we will be able to continue exploiting them with impunity, into an increasingly uncertain future..

I highly recommend Dr. Leonard Shlain's book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: the Conflict between Word and Image* for its provocative perspective on the curious transition of early civilizations from Mother Goddess worship to the worship of male Gods. Leonard Shlain makes a compelling case for deeper causes for this rude transformation. His brilliant insights involve the neurological workings of our brains and the physical shift to a dominance of the left hemisphere that occurred when analytical literacy became widespread. Lenny asserted that there is a strong correlation between this change and a diminishing of the status and prerogatives of women in societies back then, and a reduction in levels of respect for them, and far-reaching restrictions on their freedoms and rights.

### Formulate a Better Mythology!

Myths and belief systems help us define ourselves. They create identity and a sense of meaning and belonging in our lives. Every culture throughout history has had its own unique creation myths in response to the strong human need for trying to explain existence and to feel more secure in believing that we are significant in the world. How

could it be otherwise that we are at the center of the universe? Could it be? Isn't it? Surely every child feels, in any case, "It's all about me!"

Since we seem to have a basic need for a creation myth, there could scarcely be a more solid, fact-supported, adaptive and unifying one than the narrative unfolding through understandings of deep ecology and related scientific disciplines. This reveals a grand saga of an eons-long physical evolution of the universe and our solar system and home planet. Within this backdrop, science presents a magnificent conception of the genetic evolution of all life on Earth, including every species of life in a billions-of-years-long epic of continuous change along a multifaceted branching of the tree of life. Our own species evolved from earlier predecessors some 150,000 to 200,000 years ago, and then a Big Bang of the Mind brought us to the threshold of being able to conceive of abstract ideas, like the ones expansively explored in this manifesto.

Philosophy and psychology have broadened these understandings. How can we make a rapid transformation of these greater understandings into a vital new overarching myth that will be awe-inspiring, moral, life affirming, purposeful, and emotionally satisfying? This question is important, for the need is great!

It would be salubrious for us all if a reconciling balance could be re-established between masculine and feminine cosmologies and theologies and worldviews and politics. By yielding a bit of the drive for domination, the masculine divine could allow the vital feminine divine and its correlated positive attributes to gain proper and healthier influence in our societies. Women could be empowered and accorded fairer treatment and greater equality of opportunity. By choosing more women to represent the best interests of families and communities, we would improve our societies. We should commit collectively to females that a universal healthcare system will be implemented that will include care for mothers and all females without meddlesome vaginal probes or purity pledges or sexist double standards!

With women accorded more respect, more of them will run for office and help reform our political and economic systems. We might discover that better cooperation would be cultivated in our national decision-making, and there would be a greater probability we would succeed in achieving common good goals. This would be preferable to rigidly sticking with the same old sad story of uncompromising competition, extreme partisanship, domineering political gamesmanship, and the squandering of resources on the military and wars.

#### A Trumpet Sounds, and a Haunting Flute Trills like a Nightingale

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

--- Dorothy Parker

Let's look in on Mark Twain. This great author was a real character! He gave strict instructions that his autobiography should not be published until 100 years after he died. That's planning ahead! This idea seems a bit presumptuous, but then again, he had wryly once noted that he was "born modest, but it didn't last", and he had bragged that he had become so famous that he was "the most conspicuous person on the planet". Sure enough, the first of a 3-volume set of *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* was published in 2010 by the University of California Press, 100 years after he died. Remember that when Twain died in 1910, the date almost exactly coincided with the time when Halley's Comet, in its highly elliptical 75-year-long orbit, made its closest approach to the Sun since the day he was born. Read about it in *A Quite Curious and Illuminating Biography of Mark Twain*.

Carl Jung would have had a field day delving into the psychological, cultural, sociological, psychic and personal ramifications of the ideas and thoughts expressed by the illustrious Mark Twain. Carl Jung, who died in 1961 actually did delve incredibly deeply into the inner psyche of one of the most well-known people in world history: Jung himself! It turns out that, 50 years after Jung died, a record was finally published of his provocatively intriguing original artworks, along with a fascinating accompaniment of his thoughts, emotions and introspections that had motivated their creation. This is *The Red Book*.

Mark Twain's *Autobiography* is middling interesting, but it is not overly enlightening. If, on the other hand, you have great curiosity and an extra lifetime or so, here's a much more compelling suggestion: Study *The Red Book*, for as Carl Jung observes: "He who looks outside dreams; he who looks within awakens."

Dionysus, being the Greek god of epiphany, suddenly snaps to an uncharacteristically attentive focus. He may appear to be hung-over, as if disheveled from some intoxicated late-night debauch. Readers are well-advised to be alert themselves in perusing these words. The swelling sound of an orchestra with 121 instruments should accompany this *Red Book* disclosure, with wind instruments intertwining harmoniously with stringed instruments, punctuated upon occasion by booming percussion and a wealth of suggestive dissonance.

Anyone who studies *The Red Book* will find it to be almost breathtaking in its depth and scope. In addition to Jung's extraordinary art, the book contains original calligraphy and inscriptions in German and Latin, along with translations and a synthesis of the profound meanings he intended to convey. It is a unique achievement in the history of human ideas, delving into the conscious and subconscious ideas of a man with a brilliant intellect and a fascinating compulsion to better understand the complex concatenations of thoughts, feelings, motivations, memories and influences that are stored deep in our brains.

"An opus is needed," wrote Carl Jung in *The Red Book*, "that one can squander decades on, and do it out of necessity. I must catch up with a piece of the Middle Ages within myself ... The touchstone is being alone with oneself. This is the way."

*The Red Book* is a revelation, a "numinous beginning". It was written and illustrated by Jung during an intense period of self-reflection between 1914 and 1930. This was a time that followed the disruption of his close friendship with Sigmund Freud, after an intense break in their relationship. It was during this period that Jung developed his enlightening theories of archetypes in the collective unconscious, and of the mysterious process of psychological integration known as individuation. He also explored twin concepts of introversion and extraversion in different personality types.

I look forward to reading Susan Cain's book *Quiet: the Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, because I want to find out more about her insights into the nature of introspective individuals, having myself been exceedingly shy in my younger years. In this book, Susan Cain talks about an interesting concept involving a "culture of character", which she compares to today's "culture of personality." As the year 2023 begins, the chaos-sowing Trump and his cult-of-personality followers are still roiling American politics, sacrificing the general well-being in divisive efforts to help power-abusing politicians cling to power and wield excessive influence.

### Good Vibrations and Excitations

I love trying to array in my mind the grand sweep of history and the overlap of epic events, famous people and evolving ideas and trends. Let us harken back to the dawn of psychoanalysis and "the talking cure", for example, and give consideration to the medical condition known as hysteria. Hysteria had been diagnosed for at least two thousand years as a medical condition peculiarly particular to women. Hysteria was said to be characterized by a state of unmanageable emotional turmoil. A book titled *Studies on Hysteria* was published in 1895, co-written by a then-prominent Austrian physician named Josef Breuer and a young Sigmund Freud. The two of them had been working with women to help them deal with nervous afflictions by using hydrotherapy, electro-therapy, massage, rest-cures and hypnosis.

*Studies on Hysteria* was the first book in history to contain psychoanalytic case studies. These two pioneers of the field of verbal psychotherapy essentially discovered for the first time that we all have an *unconscious* mind. (Duh! Fish discover water!) They found that women who had hysterical attacks sometimes manifested amnesia of their actions during these episodes, so Freud and Breuer used hypnosis as a tool to explore these neuroses and the deep influences of the unconscious mind.

*Studies on Hysteria* delved into the new field that became known as psychoanalysis. With this undertaking, Freud began to explore "free associations" and the analysis of dreams and psychological interpretations to gain insights into the inner workings of the mind. Breuer and Freud attributed nervous symptoms associated with "hysteria" to unconscious early traumatic experiences. They theorized that repressed memories associated with sexual feelings were primary causes of this condition.

Some men claimed that hysteria was caused by "disturbances of the uterus". Oh, sure! One treatment for hysteria in the 1890s was for a physician to massage a female patient's genitalia. The extraordinary film *Hysteria* provides

a rich visualization of this story. A challenge for the doctors engaging in this kind of sex therapy was that they often suffered from fatigued hands and wrists due to the prolonged efforts required. This fortuitously led to the invention of electric vibrators. These vibrators were used to erotically stimulate women and relieve them of the symptoms of their hysteria by means of a "hysterical paroxysm" -- an orgasm!

"In 1902, the American company Hamilton Beach patented the first electric vibrator available for retail sale, making the vibrator the fifth domestic appliance to be electrified, after the sewing machine, fan, tea kettle and toaster, and about a decade before the vacuum cleaner and electric iron." Home versions of vibrators reputedly soon proliferated, and during the sexual revolution of the 1960s, cordless electric vibrators for use on the human body became popular, according to bits of illumination in Wikipedia.

Conservative Christians tend to believe that the use of vibrators is immoral, and even that the Bible prohibits their use. It's almost as if Biblical prophecy was omniscient, anticipating the evolution of innovations that would provide women with pleasure, heightened fantasies and "relief", and that the devices would be judged to be contrary to puritanical beliefs. Does the Bible really preemptively prohibit such activities and devices, or is this just another way that prudish control-freak males are trying to restrict women's prerogatives? One puritanical preacher inveighed against such devices because "they are conducive to promiscuity, because they promote loose morals and because they entice improper and potentially deadly behaviors." Really?!

Other more liberal-minded people argue that vibrators are "marital substitutes" that provide a "social good" by playing "an important role in the emotional lives of millions of Americans." Ha! I recommend that people watch the highly entertaining 2011 film *Hysteria* for an enlightening look back at the Victorian Era when Mortimer Granville invented the first electric vibrator for medical science.

Hysteria, in any case, is now considered a catch-all "junk diagnosis". The terminology hasn't been used to denote a specific medical condition for decades. Curiously, women who were thought to be suffering from hysteria exhibited a wide array of symptoms that included insomnia, faintness, nervousness, irritability, heaviness in the abdomen, muscle spasms, shortness of breath, loss of appetite for food or sex, and even "a tendency to cause trouble." Oh, right! It seems like the men who diagnosed these conditions might themselves have been in distinct need of psychoanalysis!

Texas, often foremost in folly, passed an Obscene Device Law banning the sale of vibrators in 1973. Leave it to Texas! The law was finally overturned in a climaxing flurry of court cases in 2008, when it was at last deemed to be unconstitutional because it violated several Amendments to the Constitution that implied individuals have a right to privacy. The Surveillance State, and extensive profiling on the Internet, are sadly eroding these blessings of liberty.

One might wonder what really happened to the medical condition known as hysteria. I veritably swoon to contemplate it. As we have come to better understand how human brains work, and as scientists studying the human brain came to grips with effects of hormones on human behaviors, people have begun to realize that hysteria was often merely a convenient catch-all diagnosis for a wide range of puzzling behaviors, eccentricities, chemical malfunctions and related neuroses and psychoses -- and even of many normal behaviors that were being subjected to judgmental gender biases.

#### The Nemo Chimes in to Make Its Presence Known

Many women have long bridled at the deep-seated sexism of Sigmund Freud's seminal studies in psychoanalysis and his scintillatingly inventive theories on subjects like penis envy, oedipal complexes and dark inner sexual compulsions. The nature of Freud's theories on the battles within our unconscious minds is worth the price of admission alone. This struggle within each person pits the "gimme now" infantilism of the "id" against the "whoa, baby" internalized strict-father conscience of the "superego", and both of them in effect negotiate with the opportunistic "Let's make this work" pragmatism of the facilitating "ego".

Here is another way of understanding Sigmund Freud's profound insights into the human psyche. He had posited these three provinces of the psyche: the ego as the province of conscious desires, the id as the more obscure

province of the myriad motivations that reside in the subconscious, and the superego as governing the emotional intelligence that strives to balance, control or repress these two powerful mental forces.

Fugues are contrapuntal musical compositions that begin with an exposition then undergo a complex episode of development before returning to the original subject melody. A bell now chimes, signaling another developing theme and bringing forth an observation that there is a fourth dimension in the human psyche that happens to be a tangential counterpoint to narcissism. Philosopher John Fowles called this the *nemo*. The *nemo* is an aspect of the psyche that has developed more distinctly in modern times, compared to Freud's concepts of the id, the ego and the super-ego. The *nemo* is 'nobodiness', a vaguely (or acutely) desperate feeling of being a nobody, and a "supreme source of anguish". The lyrics of the Beatles' *Nowhere Man* drift into my consciousness.

He's a real nowhere man  
Sitting in his nowhere land  
Making all his nowhere plans for nobody.

Sigmund Freud neglected this *nemo* aspect of our minds in his tripartite analysis of the human psyche. Ponder this, from *Comprehensive Global Perspective*:

John Fowles insightfully realized that there is also a more subtle force that is growing deep in the modern soul. This is the '*nemo*', which represents the psychic force that motivates us to try to be somebody, to be remembered, and to thwart our profound fear of being an insignificant nobody. The *nemo* is strengthened by the knowledge that there are myriad inequalities in life, and by such haunting anxieties as feelings of psychological emptiness, ephemerality, futility and insignificance.

Why did Mark David Chapman, the man who murdered John Lennon, kill the man he so respected? The *nemo*! Chapman was presumably a pathetic nobody, tormented by inner demons; yet his name will be remembered forever in conjunction with the great Beatles' singer, songwriter, lyricist and champion of peace. (Imagine the irony --- "All we need is love"!).

Jorge Amado's novel *Home Is the Sailor* conjures up a classic tale of a man who shouldn't have had a care in the world, yet was troubled and unhappy in his life. The protagonist felt that he was a nobody, and that he sorely needed to get a title, like Doctor or Admiral, to feel better about himself. His friends conspired through a bit of nifty corruption to get him qualified for the title of a Captain in the Merchant Marine. The story's sublime joy, comic misadventures, braggadocio, jealousy, circumstantial downfall, mortifying embarrassment, and triumphant denouement are richly entertaining.

Two tales are told in *Home Is the Sailor*, "both taking place over a half-century before the narrator has taken up the case. It is a marvelous joke that the mutually exclusive lines are both presented by the narrator as objective fact." ... "Both of the tales are told by a dull-witted narrator who has trouble deciphering truths in the present tense, much less those which are fifty years in the past."

Jorge Amado succeeds in this book in "showing the humanity of unpleasant people, but saves the glory as always for the truth and the poor." Like John Steinbeck, Jorge Amado always tried "to give dignity to the people that society tries hardest to strip it from."

"Will my readers now," wrote Jorge Amado in *Home Is The Sailor*, "with their learning and their experience, tell me what is the truth, the whole truth? Does truth lie in the everyday events, the daily incidents, in the pettiness and vulgarity most people's lives are compounded of, or does the truth have its abode in the dream it is given us to dream to flee our sad human condition?"

I speculate in *Comprehensive Global Perspective* that the *nemo* impulses of extreme conservatives are driving humankind headlong toward calamity. Conservative convictions of God-appointed self-righteousness are rudely impelling us down an ignominious conflict-engendering path on which unfair special privilege is championed for the well heeled. Religious fanaticism is leading many people to support white supremacy, misogynistic domination by males, puritanical domestic policies, social repression, and a domineering hegemony by theocratic Christian religion that violates the Golden Rule. By allying themselves with right-wing politicians, folks in the Religious Right are strengthening impulses toward unfettered laissez-faire capitalistic rule by the wealthy and irresponsible

profiteering, and even military aggression and conspiratorial intrigue with authoritarians worldwide. I call once again for conservatives to help return America to sanity -- and the world to better hopes of fairness and peace!

The sound of Taiko drummers pounding in the distance brings my attention back to here and now. Where was I?

### An Auditory Kaleidoscope of Emotional Themes Resonates in Anima Voice

Here is an interesting story, and one of the most revealing in the mythologies of ancient Greece. A princess named Psyche lived in a kingdom in Greece more than 3,000 years ago, long before humankind came to embrace monotheistic convictions that there is only one true God (or Allah or Brahman or Jehovah). Psyche was beautiful, and this made Aphrodite, the goddess of love, just as jealous as one can divinely be, which is supremely jealous indeed. So Aphrodite asked her son Eros, the god of love (his Roman counterpart was Cupid), to put a spell on Psyche. Obediently, Eros flew down to Earth and sprinkled a potion on the sleeping beauty that would prevent any man from wanting to marry her. But Eros accidentally pricked Psyche with one of his arrows (which, as many people know, make someone fall in love instantly), and she startled awake to see him. Her beauty, in turn, so surprised Eros that he accidentally pricked himself with his arrow and he fell head over heels in love with her.

Later, Psyche, still being stricken by Eros' potion, found that despite her beauty, she felt alone and was tired of being sensationally attractive and capable of inspiring plenty of allure and flattery but unable to find a husband or true love. Her parents consulted the High Priestess Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, and received an answer: "The virgin is destined to be the bride of no mortal lover. Her future husband awaits her on the top of the mountain."

After much heartrending debate within her family, Psyche made an arduous journey to the top of a mountain. There, the gentle west wind Zephyr raised her from the earth and bore her into a flowery dale. She took a nap, and then discovered a nearby magnificent palace. She soon found herself feasting on delicious food and listening to harmonious lute music, accompanied by a full chorus of handsome and beautiful singers. Then her destined husband arrived in the night, invisible, and had his way with her, full of passion and love. She was quite happy for a while, but her sisters sowed the suspicion that her unseen husband was a monster, so one night she took an oil lamp and silently rose while he was sleeping to find out what he really looked like. She beheld a beautiful and charming god, not a monster; but a drop of hot oil from the lamp fell on the shoulder of Eros, startling him awake and angering him because of this outrageous breach of trust, so he abandoned her.

Psyche thought of killing herself in despair. Then she tried to find help in temples of divine goddesses, but finally realized she had to approach her antagonist Aphrodite, the goddess of love and mother of Eros, to locate her husband and be reunited with him. Eros, it turned out, had kept it a secret from his jealous mother that he had married Psyche. Aphrodite gave Psyche four daunting tasks, in sequence, that she was required to accomplish before she could be rejoined with Eros. Aphrodite made each task was more difficult than the previous one.

The myth of Psyche turns out to be a metaphor for the struggle for love and trust in every relationship. All four of the tasks forced Psyche to grow. Her first task was to sort out a large pile of sesame seeds, fenugreek seeds and pine nuts that were jumbled together. She was able to succeed in this task only with the help of supernatural intervention. The symbolic meaning of this task is that a woman who is faced with making a crucial decision must first sort out a jumble of conflicting feelings and competing loyalties. She must honestly sift through her values and motives and feelings, and make sure she is able to separate what is truly meaningful from what is relatively insignificant. In this task, a woman recognizes it is beneficial to trust her intuitions, while also striving to properly assess priorities between the many elements involved in making a good decision.

Aphrodite next ordered Psyche to acquire some golden fleece from the terrible rams of the sun. Though the task was dangerous, she received supernatural advice on how to accomplish it, told to wait until the gathering of rams retired for the night, and then pick some of the golden fleece from sharp brambles. The golden fleece represented power, and this task symbolizes the risks and undesirable aspects of trying to gain personal power that are found in associated tendencies to become hardened, cynical or uncompassionately merciless.

The third task was even more challenging. Aphrodite tells Psyche to fill a small crystal flask with water from a forbidding stream that cascades from a spring at the summit of the highest cliff to the lowest depth of the underworld. Dragons guarded this stream, so the task seemed impossible. But an eagle comes to her aid, and helps

fill the flask. The eagle symbolically stands for the ability to see the situation from a distant perspective and to swoop down to grasp what is needed. The lesson is to gain some emotional distance in relationships or decision-making, and to use this insight to best assess what is significant and what course of action to take.

For her fourth task, Aphrodite tells Psyche to descend into Hades, the underworld province of the dead, and to take a box with her to get some beauty cream from Persephone, the Queen of Hades. Persephone was a goddess of spring growth and natural cycles of birth, death and resurrection. Once again a supernatural advisor assists Psyche on this hazardous journey by telling her what she must do to get to Hades, and to find the beauty ointment and return safely from the underworld.

Psyche was very curious by nature, and after she returned from Hades with the box, she thought a little touch-up of her beauty using the fabled cream would be a good thing. So she opened the box of magic makeup, even though she had been warned not to do so. The box contained nothing but darkness, and it put her into a deep, deep sleep. The lesson in this development was that it is important for women to learn how to exercise sound judgment in their life choices, and to be able to achieve a good balance in resisting temptations.

These four tasks highlighted the need for women to be a bit more assertive, and to refuse to be exploited or treated in demeaning ways, or to allow others to divert their attention from doing important things for themselves. Having successfully completed the ordeal of the four tasks, Psyche still had to be rescued by Eros from the spell of the sleeping potion. Eros brought her to Zeus in the heavens and asked him to intervene. Zeus gave Psyche a cup of divine ambrosia, which is the pure beverage of the Titans and Olympians, and this made her immortal, so she was able to live happily ever after with her husband Eros in a blissful state of marriage.

The story of Psyche turns out to be a wonderful one of a woman who grows psychologically and evolves by developing capabilities and strengths through courage and determination. Despite all the challenges she had to endure, however, she remained true to her basic nature of valuing a love relationship and risking everything for it, and she eventually thereby achieved her desired goal.

Psyche and Eros later had a beautiful daughter named Voluptas, the goddess of sensual pleasure, also known as Hedone. She loved to hang out in the company of the Three Graces. In an ironic perversion of reputation and meaning, the word "hedonism" carries with it a modern implication of wanton pursuit of pleasure without regard for consequences. It's possible that religious conservative sensibilities are the ones mostly responsible for this denigration of potentially beautiful aspects of being alive.

The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341 BCE - 270 BCE) proclaimed that the proper purpose of life and philosophy was to attain happiness and equanimity, and to feel free from fear by living a self-sufficient life surrounded by friends. Epicurus regarded the quest for pleasure as a search for the simple things in life, like delicious food and leisurely meals shared with good friends. He taught that pleasure and pain are measures of what is good and bad, and he warned against worldly pleasures, overindulgence and lavish consumption because these things could lead to disappointment, pain, suffering or other negative outcomes. This is a commendable philosophy, so it's too bad that his understandings have been perverted by commercial promoters into a rousing cry for consumerism, and by hell-and-damnation preachers into a suspect and ostensibly immoral libidinous Epicureanism. Some people just seem to hate the pleasures and enjoyments of others, or to regard stoicism and puritan denial as primary virtues, and they seem to do so to justify callous impositions upon others.

Sensual pleasure can be a sublime source of satisfaction in the moment, and it is sad to taint such experiences with the critical judgments of an overly rigorous asceticism. On the other hand, there are plenty of instances in Dante's Second and Third Circles of Hell where an obsessively disordered love of pleasure can become a corrupt vice of lust and gluttony. Balance and moderation in all things! And let's give a greater modicum of acceptance and respect to others!

Epicurus was also known for having asserted that gods do not reward or punish humans. He believed that death is the definitive end of the body and the soul, and that dying therefore should not be feared. These seem like reasonable probabilities and healthy attitudes. On the day he died, Epicurus wrote a letter in which he said he was

suffering severe pain, "But the cheerfulness of my mind, which comes from the recollection of all my philosophical contemplation, counterbalances all these afflictions."

Bravo for Epicurus! In commemoration of healthy aspects of his spirit, check out *Tiffany Twain Entertains: A Philosophic Cookbook*, and *Twelve Delicious Recipes for Good Health and Gourmet Appreciation*. Readers will find some great recipes therein, along with an enthusiastic sense of appreciation for simple pleasures and an introspection into ideas on how we could better "cook our lives", improve our health, and even make our individual and common destinies a bit better. These reflections make me think of another good story in Greek mythology.

#### Catchy Rock-and-Roll Music Transitions into a Hard Rock Reprise

Narcissus was a hunter who was renowned for his handsome appearance. A beautiful mountain nymph named Echo fell in love with him. As much as anything, Echo loved to talk and hear her own voice. Since Zeus really enjoyed consorting with beautiful nymphs, he often came down from the heavens above to visit them on earth. His jealous wife Hera was outraged by his philandering, so she came down from the abode of the gods on Mt. Olympus to catch Zeus as he flirted with and seduced the nymphs. Echo amused and distracted Hera with long entertaining stories while Zeus took advantage of the subterfuge to ravish one after another of the other mountain nymphs. When Hera finally discovered this treachery, she was so angry at Echo that she punished her by taking away her voice completely, other than in fading repetitions of another's shouted words. As was the propensity of Narcissus, and as fate would have it, he spurned lovely Echo and she spent the rest of her days in lonely glens and canyons pining away for the lover she would never have.

Narcissus was an exceptionally proud youth, and he had the tragic foible of disdain all who loved him. This trait offended Nemesis, the goddess of poetic justice and remorseless spirit of divine retribution. Nemesis was known for wreaking vengeance on those who were filled with hubris. Nemesis fatefully made sure that Narcissus was attracted to a pool where he saw his own reflection in the waters. He instantly fell in love with his image, not realizing it was merely a reflection, and he was unable to leave the beauty of his own reflection, so consequently died. In some versions of the story, he stabbed himself in the heart in despair on realizing that his reflection would never give him the fulfillment of love in return. As his blood fell to the ground, the drops spurred the first growth of the daffodil or another kind of lovely narcissus flower in the *Amaryllis* family.

The entire human race is acting today with obtusely self-centered narcissistic habits and behaviors, which are contributing to a wholesale destruction of life-supporting habitats through forest clear-cutting, the depletion of fisheries, wasteful usages of polluting fossil fuels, and the degradation of the quality of water resources and agricultural lands and wild places.

Recall this date: April 15, 1912. Just over a century ago on this date, the huge passenger liner RMS *Titanic* sank on its maiden voyage across the North Atlantic. The Captain of the *Titanic* is reputed to have figuratively said, "Damn the icebergs, full speed ahead!" while steaming through treacherous waters, and the ship's passengers and crew suffered the terrible consequences. Some 1,500 people died and only 705 people survived. We would be well advised today to stop going full-speed-ahead in these "Years of Living Dangerously" by failing to take bold steps to limit emissions of climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

All populations of animals exist in a dynamic state of natural balance. These populations are in effect controlled by limiting factors such as predation, disease, competitive pressures and available food supplies. We humans are not exempt from these influences, especially because we are at the apex of the food chain, and are proliferating like a cancerous scourge on life on Earth. For this reason it is foolhardy for us to continue acting in ways that wipe out wildlife, damage ecosystems, waste resources and upset the healthy equilibrium of natural systems. These are myopic and misguided things to do. This is not merely a value judgment - it is a quintessential consequential conclusion.

Our actions today are creating a dangerous and unsettled situation that will probably be restored to balance only after our severe human equilibrium-disturbing impacts are ancient history, after our extinction, hundreds or thousands of years from now -- or tens of thousands of years, to those who are real optimists.

#### Beautiful Music Evokes Broader Associations

Much of the focus of these thoughts is centered on perspectives in Western civilization. Studies of mythology, however, are incomplete without looking into other cultures around the world. Consider the rich mythology of Hinduism. Recorded documents of the Hindu religion date from about 1700 BCE, during times of the Vedic civilization on the Indian subcontinent. This was roughly the period when the earliest alphabets were invented. One observer pointed out that there is a dramatic contrast between female archetypes in Western mythology and in the Hindu pantheon of deities. Almost all goddesses in western myths, and females in Judeo-Christian stories, have traits that are generally virginal, motherly, manipulative, gossipy, weak or evil. These stories feature damsels in distress, fairy godmothers, evil stepmothers, or women like those in the Bible who act obsequiously to male dominion, like Eve. Or they act with undisciplined character, like the wife of Lot.

In marvelous contrast, earlier Indian and Hindu mythology features many positive female characters and very powerful females like Kali, the creator and destroyer who is foremost among ten fierce goddesses of Tantric wisdom. The character of females in various mythologies reflects the roles that women have in the cultures in which the myths originated, so myths reveal the way women were perceived and treated in those times. It is a sad commentary that Western religions feature female goddesses and mortals that are less legitimate, heroic, noble or powerful than those in ancient cultures of India's subcontinent.

In the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, certain specific rights were granted to women that they didn't have in pre-Islamic Arabia, like rights to own property in their names or to inherit some of their husband's estate when he died. Laws that sprung from Prophet Muhammad's beliefs had some interesting effects on societies in which Islam became dominant in its early years. There were some salubrious effects for women, particularly mothers, in patriarchal Arabic cultures when the Qur'an enhanced the status of women a bit. Women had, after all, been previously considered to be merely chattel.

But the Qur'an did not establish equality of rights for men and women. Polygamy was accepted, with men being allowed to have one wife, two, three, whatever! Superior male prerogatives were left fundamentally intact. Cultural change is difficult to effect in broad-based ways, and it takes time for cultures to change because traditionalist forces are so hard to overcome. Adaptive changes come slowly in most societies, as can be seen in the slow pace of changing attitudes toward women's rights and those of lesbian women and gay men in most countries in the world today.

The ideals of the Muslim Qur'an, and the example set by Muhammad, were more favorable to women than has been practiced since then in Arab and Muslim societies. Women have, in this regard, seemingly slipped back in status and rights in Islamic nations since Muhammad's time in the 7th century CE. Male supremacism is ostensibly much too entrenched to easily alter. Breathe deep and let go, authoritarians. Relent!

Women's rights have a long way to go to achieve a fair semblance of parity. This is particularly true in repressive male-dominated societies like those in the Middle East. One chapter of the Qur'an specifically concerns women; it stipulates that they should be devout, obedient and submissive. It specifies that a male can beat a woman if she displeases him in any way. The veiling and seclusion of women are one consequence of this male-dominated religion and culture. Meanwhile, socially conservative Islam continues to cling tenaciously to patriarchal dogmas and traditions and excessively restrictive gender roles for females, especially in reactionarily conservative countries like Saudi Arabia and women repressing theocracies like Iran.

The Prophet Muhammad claimed that Allah had commanded him to publish his revelations after he had suffered three years of angst at the prospect. "When I make my message known to them, I will meet with great unpleasantness, so I have kept silent." The first converts to Muhammad's teachings, after his wife Khadija and a few friends, were poor men and members of weak clans, and rootless migrants, and younger generations -- "those people most dissatisfied with the changing moral and social climate of Mecca, for whom the Prophet's message proved a vital alternative."

Muhammad felt justified in his teachings against the status quo because he said "he was sent by God to rescue his people from ignorance and guide them on the path to righteousness." There was initial strong resistance to Muhammad's teachings, making it clear that people would not be moved by ideas alone. Commanding prestige was

needed to advance new religious precepts, and it turned out that this prestige was to be gained by the ruthless conquering force of the sword.

A power struggle played out in Muhammad's early years, and he denounced Jews and slaughtered Jewish clans. He began to win over people who had held more peaceable beliefs. "In the years that followed, Muhammad worked to create a community based on shared religious beliefs, ceremonies, ethics and laws -- a community that would transcend the traditional social structure based on families, clans and tribes, and would unite disparate groups into a new Arabian society."

By 624 CE, Muhammad began to achieve glorious prestige everywhere in Arabia through military victories. Such militant triumphs were seen as a sign of divine favor, so they led to more widespread support and a consolidation of power. In 630 CE, Muhammad triumphed over the people of Mecca. "By the end of his life, Muhammad had created, for the first time in centuries, a large-scale Arabian federation of oases and tribes, and had provided a solution to the destructive anarchy of Arabian life." As usual, a relativity of good and bad accompanies all far-reaching developments. Even blessings are inextricably accompanied by curses.

Societal bonds based on common religious beliefs became more important in those times than kinship in clans. Before Muhammad, clans were often feuding and there were no common laws or government in Arab societies. The highest authority until then was found in chiefs of individual clans, the ancestors of warlords. Wisdom and common sense would occasionally prevail over bloodshed, and conflicting clans would select someone to be their arbitrator, or *hakam*. This was a person reputed to have honorable religious vision and to be just, politic, tactful and impartial. Because such persons had no means of enforcing their decisions, it was common practice for them to interview disputants and strive to ensure that sensible compromises would be accepted.

Today, a violently destabilizing era is materializing that began as an "Arab Spring". The unfolding implications of this unrest reach far beyond the impetus for change that has manifested itself to date. This dangerous sectarian strife involves a revolution of youth against repression, and women in those societies are hoping for greater freedoms. Brutal strife is getting worse in places like Syria and Yemen, and tribal religious extremism is proliferating as I pen these words. Something like 500,000 people have been killed in Syria, and tragedy and hunger stalk the land. The conflict spilled over into Iraq and Turkey, and the U.S. has been bombing the ruthless and militant self-proclaimed Islamic State since September 2014. I appeal to any shred of humanity remaining in the heart of the President of Syria, Bashar Assad, to seek to deal more fairly and humanely with his people, and to strive to heal the turmoil in his land. Violence and brutal repression has exacerbated the conflict, giving reactionary power to the brutal Islamic State, and terrorist fervor returned with foreign fighters to Western nations. Revolutionarily fairer reforms and peace initiatives are needed NOW. Let the Syrian people create a process of moving forward toward greater security, fairer democratic governance, a more stable civil society, and greater independence from foreign interference in their affairs!

#### Guitars Strum, One Weeping, and A Member of the Audience Unaccountably Snores

We Americans love the idea of freedom, assured liberties and democratic representation. Think about ideas included in this excerpt from *Comprehensive Global Perspective: An Illuminating Worldview*:

The original great philosopher Plato spent twelve years traveling around the Mediterranean world, "imbibing wisdom from every source." He had embarked on his travels at a propitious time, because he had been affiliated with the Athenian aristocracy and was therefore considered a threat to the democratic establishment that had come to power in his native Greece. In that era, Athens was ruled alternately by either elite oligarchs or democratic majorities. Neither form of rule was ideal. The oligarchs had their own selfish interests in mind, so when they were in power they went to terrible lengths to defend the advantages of the few against the majority of ordinary people.

Democracy is no better, according to Plato, because the people sometimes killed wealthy elites in violent revolutions, and they were easily swayed by emotional and deceptive rhetoric propagated by ambitious politicians. Democratic societies back then were often socially unstable, and were often afflicted by disastrous wars, numerous atrocities and terrible injustices.

Democracy in America today is not all that different, despite revolutionary changes in cultures, technological innovation, communications, industrialization and demographics. This is because the basic nature of human drives does not change much, so we are all mired in politics that give us forms of governance that fall far short of ideal. Plato advocated letting 'philosopher kings' rule. It unfortunately seems to be quite hard to find any benevolent Philosopher Kings these days! Besides, any such individuals would probably never get elected to office; they would be lost in the feuding of electoral politics, fund-raising and hyper-partisanship.

While human nature essentially doesn't change, human behaviors are highly adaptable. This is true especially when there are powerful effective incentives and disincentives involved. As I pointed out in examining the perspectives of the British economist Arthur Cecil Pigou in *Existence, Economics, and Ecological Intelligence*, an intelligently prioritized system of "extraordinary encouragements" and "extraordinary restraints" helps to properly reflect both social goods and social costs not accounted for in private transactions. Such incentives are needed because deep interdependencies exist between people, and there are many "spillover effects" of one person's actions onto the well-being of others, and of business activities onto individuals and society as a whole.

The need for transformation in our societies is growing greater every year as our materialistic focus and myopic willingness to plunder and harm the natural world is causing biotic circumstances to deteriorate. I am sticking to my belief and hope that Thomas Jefferson was right when he said "*I believe that the people, when properly armed with the facts, will come to the right conclusion.*"

#### A Musical Measure of Harmonic Emphasis Arises in These Words

Freedom is magnetic true north for human beings. Americans tend to know little of the history of other nations, but there are good lessons to be learned from understanding the struggles of other peoples to achieve freedom. The true hero in the history of Corsica, for example, was Pasquale Paoli, who lived from 1725 to 1807. He was a patriot, freedom fighter, effective administrator and leader who helped throw off the hegemony of Genoese rule after the Italian city-state of Genoa had occupied the island of Corsica for 450 years. In the course of the long and bloody struggle, the Genovese had used intrigue to exploit the Corsican tradition of retributive "vendetta", a practice that divided clan against clan. The Genovese had taken advantage of internecine feuds to keep the Corsican people repressed under the heavy thumb of Genoese military dominance. The Corsican resistance finally strengthened and united under Pasquale Paoli, and the Genovese were at long last forced to leave Corsica. They secretly sold the island to the French in 1764. French military troops then occupied the coastal cities to restore order, and the English later played a significant role in Corsican struggles for independence.

Under Pasquale Paoli's moderate leadership, it was recognized that freedom could best be assured by creating a sound economic plan and by reforming corrupt governing institutions. Paoli made sure that a liberal Constitution was written, and fair rules of law were enacted. The vendetta was outlawed, and shame overcame pride in stopping vendetta murders. He also brought great transformative change to Corsica in the years just prior to the influence of Napoleon, another famous Corsican, whose glorious story is a much more notorious one.

Think of those words, "a sound economic plan". Pasquale Paoli had worked to stimulate production of a variety of commodities for export from Corsica, including chestnuts, cork, olives, cheeses, citrus fruit, grapes, and both granite and marble. Note that he did not create gambling casinos, speculative hedge funds or tax shelters, but instead worked to create a legitimate and fair-minded economic plan that balanced taxes with government spending on greater good goals. By the time the French Revolution took place in 1789, Pasquale Paoli had become regarded as a hero of liberty and democracy in Europe. His example should be remembered today for his far-sighted thinking and honorably patriotic actions.

#### Instrumental Arrangements of Popular Music Play in an Elevator Shaft

Here is a curious digression to investigate another colorful character in Corsican history. It was a man who Voltaire used as a model for the Baron in his famous short story, *Candide*. Theodor von Neuhoff was a real-life adventurer from the Westphalia region of Germany who had met some Corsican rebels and exiles in Genoa. Theodor persuaded them he could free their country from Genoese tyranny if they made him the king of the island, and it was thus that he landed a military expedition in Corsica in 1736 and had himself crowned "King

Theodore I of Corsica". He issued edicts and waged war on the powerful Genoese, but was actually somewhat of a bumbling personality who had to flee and was later arrested in Amsterdam for large debts.

In the beginning of *Candide*, the protagonist Candide was a simple young man, the illegitimate son of the sister of Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh. Candide was living in the Baron's castle in Westphalia, and was being taught by Dr. Pangloss, who declared that "all is for the best ... in this best of all worlds". At first, Candide accepted this philosophy as true, but then he experienced a long litany of horrors of treachery and poverty and the general maliciousness of mankind, and the hypocrisy of the church. This prompted him to begin to doubt the veracity of the good Doctor's philosophic proclamation.

I myself have my doubts. *Candide* was written during the Age of Enlightenment, which was basically a period of intellectual reaction against the stagnation of official approved thought in the late 17th century. This was at the twilight of rigid orthodoxy during the reign of Louis XIV in France. Farsighted folks during this great Age of Reason opposed the domineering influence of the Church, though it was not necessarily an anti-religious movement. It was anti-clerical, for the well-justified reason that throughout history, when the Church and the established social and political order have collaborated to support each other, it has often been drastically detrimental to the people.

Antonio Genovesi, an eighteenth century Italian writer on political economy and philosophy, passionately believed in the free play of the intellect. Benedetto Croce once called him "the evangelist of reason". Genovesi abhorred dogmas and fixed systems, sharing with all prominent men of the Age of Reason a robust belief in the virtues of common sense, and of the superior force of a rational and scientific approach to any problem. Let's think about this, and turn our attention back to the skirmishes against the prerogatives of females.

#### The Striking Sounds of an Aeolian Harp and Twelve Lutes Swell in the Antechamber

I've repeatedly expressed my astonishment about the seeming commitment of "conservatives" to constrain the options of women in their lives, and to limit their access to contraceptives, so now I turn my attention to giant drug companies that promote erectile dysfunction drugs with inordinately frequent and offensively repetitious advertising on television. Advertisements for drugs like Viagra, Cialis and Levitra present sex as romance, and challenge men: "come on, be a man, get it up!" And then conservatives demean women for giving in, or being seduced by cunning men, or being plied with alcohol and taken advantage of, or even for being raped.

The American Academy of Pediatricians came out with compelling reasons suggesting that erectile dysfunction drug ads should not be shown on television until after 10pm. Children are vulnerable to being influenced by TV ads because their brains have not yet developed the sophistication to understand the manipulative nature of advertising. Repeated viewing of these ads tends to make youngsters think everybody wants sex all the time, or that there is no risk to having sex, or that men should be ready for sex whenever possible. No mention is made in these ads about sexually-transmitted diseases, or about costs and risks of getting pregnant, or dangers of childbirth, or long-term costs of bearing unwanted children, and they certainly don't acknowledge the value of eminently sensible family planning options.

How can we even consider denying women good access to basic healthcare services like those provided by Planned Parenthood? The idea of denying millions of women access to health care needs -- as many Republican politicians try tenaciously to do with their plans to eliminate all federal funding of Planned Parenthood clinics -- is cynical, shortsighted and misguided. It is also a form of class oppression because Planned Parenthood primarily helps poor women.

Rick Santorum represented people on the Religious Right in 2012 who eagerly tried to deny reproductive choices to women because they think God wants women to get pregnant, no matter how happy or vile the circumstances may be that result in a woman's insemination. Santorum should not have had a chance in hell of being elected to lead our democratic republic, but conservatives and religious evangelicals nonetheless did a surprisingly effective job of promoting his candidacy for a while back then. Similarly, Republicans in subsequent elections have hijacked people's emotions with their zealous opposition to Planned Parenthood.

By opposing contraception, extreme religious conservatives in effect favor Unplanned Parenthood. Many of them seem to be opposed to people having sex unless it is for the purpose of making babies. In a classic case of hypocrisy, they oppose family planning and contraceptives at the same time they are pleased that recreational "lifestyle drugs" like Viagra are available to help men get erections. The fact that contraceptives help prevent unwanted pregnancies, while erectile dysfunction drugs contribute to more of them -- and to more need for abortions, or child support! -- makes this a bizarrely hypocritical and rather reprehensible position.

The organization Planned Parenthood provides many vitally important health services to women in the U.S., especially women in lower socioeconomic classes. A full 97% of Planned Parenthood's funding is dedicated to non-abortion-related services, which include contraception services, cancer screenings and the prevention and testing for and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. So, when Republicans oppose Planned Parenthood, they are indeed assaulting women's health prerogatives.

Mitt Romney egregiously declared a sexist plan to "get rid of Planned Parenthood" when he ran for president in 2012, and many Republicans in Congress have opposed required re-authorizations of the Violence Against Women Act over recent years. These facts are truly revealing facets of a real assault on the dignity, personal security and well-being of women. All Americans should support more enlightened attitudes and fairer public policies, and refuse to support any politicians who will not adopt more respectful and less discriminatory approaches.

The Republican Party has been increasingly championing the interests of giant corporations and the political far right, and of narrow-minded social conservatives and demagogues and religious fundamentalists. The highest goal of these groups is to gain power and dominion, and to have their swindles and narrow views forced on all others. In this regard, and many others, the Republican Party has become markedly more radical than it was during the years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. The Party is so determined to get more power that its top goal for eight years was to make President Obama fail, no matter how negative the consequences were for the American people. The GOP was obstinately uncompromising in obstruction during the Obama years, sabotaging sensible policies and harming millions of people. Once they gained domineering power on the coattails of a devious con man and manipulative demagogue, they really began to abuse this power. And after Joe Biden became president, the GOP returned to its cynical course of deceit, distraction, whataboutism, obstruction and coldly calculating efforts to rig future elections in their favor.

The Republican Party has gotten even more extreme over recent decades, choosing standard bearers who want to outlaw abortions and punish women who have such procedures, as well doctors who perform them. These are times that seriously try women's souls.

The Grand Old Party has made a pathetic Faustian bargain with the devil by pandering to the Religious Right. A national newspaper contained a story in March 2012 about Rick Santorum's visit to a Jelly Belly candy factory where this genial face of religious extremism evoked an affiliation with the icon of Republicanism, Ronald Reagan. Santorum made a speech to those assembled, lambasting President Obama for being "weak" and "unprincipled", and he verbally attacked Mitt Romney for lacking core convictions. He preached like a Crusading minister, and alleged that the most serious threat to America was the "evil regime" of radical Islam. In many ways, it can be seen that extremism begets extremism.

Recognize what this means. The power of Christian fanatics has been strengthened by the opposition of Islamic extremists, who they resemble in many ways. This phenomenon is called countersupporting. When we see Iranian ayatollahs and their brainwashed followers inveighing against "the Great Satan" -- that's us, folks! -- we should see the mirrored reflection of that mindless antagonism, intolerance, self-righteousness and stimulated fear right here in the Religious Right in America. Deep psychological and political motives are involved in this state of affairs. This is the dark underbelly of evangelists who are supposedly "spreading the Good News."

Attempts to deprive women of dignity and rights are unconscionable. This issue will eventually be a losing fight for conservatives. Too much aggression, boys! Many proposals and laws that have been enacted in states like Virginia, Arizona and Texas in recent years are too extreme to pass the muster of populist and fair-minded sensibilities. A well-justified backlash is arising to this male chauvinism. No one wants harshly prohibitive Shariah-like laws in the U.S., so it is wrong for conservatives to deem repressive legislation acceptable when it comes to women's rights.

Some of these laws are completely contrary to the ideals and spirit of fairness that are embodied in our Constitution. The #MeToo movement is challenging these perfidious aspects of the status quo.

The "optics" looked very bad when a group of Republican Congressmen refused to allow any woman to testify during a February 2012 hearing about women's access to contraceptives. In addition, many outright lies have been told about women and their bodies and their private health matters, and Plan B contraceptives. No matter what spin men use to justify the rigidity of their positions, when they are dishonest, their arguments ring hollow and undermine legitimacy of their positions. The refusal of retrogressive "leaders" to allow a woman to provide perspective on healthcare issues that affect them is jarring and offensive. Change course, Republicans!

The days are coming to an end when the public sphere of law-making, commerce and breadwinning are exclusively a domain of men, and when women are relegated to inferior roles. Women can no longer be kept in submissive roles and restricted to the private realm of domestic life, housekeeping, child-rearing and pleasing men. A Cult of Domesticity once held that true womanly virtues reside only in piety, purity, domesticity and submissive behaviors. Times have changed, and men should begin to honorably support fairer treatment for women.

Equal pay should be given for equal work. Fairer treatment should be accorded to women in nations worldwide with regard to parenting, property ownership, contracts and marriage. There should be fairer sexual attitudes and reproductive prerogatives and economic rights. Sexual harassment, domestic violence against women, and gender discrimination should not be tolerated. Women should no longer be treated as inferior beings. The personal IS political.

All the Republican presidential hopefuls in the 2012 and 2016 election campaigns blatantly pandered to extreme conservatives. In 2012, men like Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich staunchly disparaged options for birth control and family planning choices, and called piously for a reversal of the pragmatic 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court that allowed American women the right to make a choice to get a legal abortion in the first trimester of a pregnancy. The *Roe vs. Wade* decision fairly gave women the liberty to have some control over this important, far-reaching and impactful aspect of their lives. These men, and even the Libertarian Ron Paul engaged in "a tireless fight to see that American women have the same rights as Saudi Arabia women." This is completely contrary to any fair notion of a proverbial 'good fight'. American women value individual rights and freedom much more than Saudi Arabian women, who live in an Islamic theocracy that imposes very strict and repressive laws on them. In the Saudi kingdom, for instance, conversion by a Muslim to another religion can be punished by death. That is beyond outrageous, and antithetical to respectful freedom of choice, that's for sure!

The 2016 Republican primary competition proved to be even more uncivil and extreme than the one in 2012, with Donald "we have stupid people" Trump attracting support for his inflammatory characterizations of Mexicans.

In their internecine fight for power in the GOP, all candidates battle for the support of hard-core right wing factions of the Republican Party. Some of them declare their support for positions they probably don't honestly believe in. Flip-floppers! In this regard, they were emulating the evasions of John Roberts and Samuel Alito during their confirmation hearings in the Senate for lifelong appointments to the Supreme Court. It might be remembered that these two judicial eminences both claimed a profound respect for precedents in the law, but then after succeeding in getting their nominations confirmed, they have showed their true colors by acting to overturn decades of precedents established by the Supreme Court. They have consistently ruled in favor of corporations against the people, especially in the corruption enabling *Citizens United* decision that has had such god-awful effects on politics ever since. Anyone who is a billionaire, or has one supporting them, can now gain power without actually needing a large number of American citizens to provide financial and popular support for their ideas, positions and candidacies.

Once Mitt Romney finally got enough support to win the 2012 Republican nomination, he then began to face the need to fight for the presidency against incumbent Barack Obama. This forced him to reset his positions and lurch toward somewhat more moderate political stances. A top Romney advisor had made a revealing gaffe by telling this truth during the primaries, stating that Romney's positions on issues would be reset like an *Etch A Sketch* screen once he succeeded in getting the Republican nomination. Conservatives, especially those in the Tea Party, were already unhappy with the Republican field, thinking it was just not extremely conservative enough, so the

knowledge that Mitt Romney would repudiate positions they hold dear made them frustrated and angry. They were particularly concerned that Romney would support views that are more moderate during the general election campaign because they want representatives whose positions are *etched in stone*. Since many Tea Party types are angry white males, this reinforcement of anger is a potent force -- and a powerful impulse backwards!

Years before the Demagogue-in-Chief grabbed power through a pathological litany of illegitimate means, I wrote, "With so many Republican politicians asserting that they want *Roe vs. Wade* to be overturned, it would be a disastrous development for women to elect more of them in future elections. Such an outcome could send our society back to the days when tens of thousands of women tragically died every year while getting dangerous backroom coat-hanger abortions."

Once Trump Republicans managed to put three excessively partisan Justices on the high court, conservatives went against the desires of the majority of Americans and eviscerated the eminently fair *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

### Dissonant Droning Sounds of Monotonous Music Emanate from Within

The values of conservatives have been perverted, corrupted and hijacked by their overarching goal of prevailing over all others at any cost, almost without regard for the degree of negative impacts on others. The prominent linguist George Lakoff writes about the constellations of values associated with Strict Father worldviews and the complementary opposite worldviews found in Nurturant Parent paradigms. Neither worldview is absolutely right or wrong, but the extreme focus by Strict Father adherents on achieving supremacy, and their willingness to wreak harm on others to achieve this goal, make these male domineering attitudes distinctly short of fair-minded. Purity, in this pathetic regard, is distinctly dirty.

Here's a specific confirmation of this assertion. The Republican Party has been primarily pandering to narrowly self-interested rich people, social conservatives and religious fundamentalists in its zeal to gain more power. In making these appeals to people who oppose the Democratic Party, they are simultaneously opposing the fairness principles of democracy itself. Consider the five primary means by which conservatives are shamefully pursuing the nefarious end of winning at any cost:

(1) Republicans are trumping up reasons to disenfranchise millions of American voters by enacting new requirements that basically violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Republican legislators in many states are indulging in a variety of efforts designed to suppress voting by students, poor people and racial minorities that typically vote for Democrats. At the same time, Republicans are betraying the trust of the people in the legitimacy of our political system by refusing to support measures to rigorously ensure that the processes of counting votes are not rigged. And they oppose smart, fair and needed gerrymandering reform. In the aftermath of the 2020 elections they embarked on the most ferocious assault on voting rights since Jim Crow.

(2) The Republican Party opposes governance for the people, insisting instead on governance that mainly benefits rich people and giant corporations. It claims that organizational entities are actually people that deserve equal protections under the law. Such calls for equal rights for corporate entities inevitably mean less protection for the vast majority of real people. Corporations are run by executives who are undemocratic, serving their own interests and those of shareholders with a narrow focus on profits and the evasion of legal, social and environmental responsibilities.

(3) The Republican Party opposes egalitarian measures that involve more progressively graduated tax rates. Instead, they champion regressive changes in tax laws and fiscally irresponsible debt financing of their tax cut swindles, which happen to serve to even further concentrate the nation's wealth in the hands of the few.

(4) The Republican Party refuses to ensure the general welfare of the people or champion greater good goals. It does this by embracing short-term oriented policies that harm Earth's ecosystems in order to benefit the Few in a classic "social trap" of irresponsible governance. While they controlled the White House from 2001 to 2009, they enacted highly regressive tax cuts and significantly increased military spending, while ramping up spending on a new pharmaceutical drug entitlement program that was designed to give big drug companies maximized profits. These actions have contributed to huge budget deficits since then. While President Obama was in office, Republican politicians harshly decried these shortfalls, disingenuously and dishonestly blaming

Democrats for them. With One Party control of the U.S. government from January 2017 until January 2019, bizarre Republican hypocrisy prevailed, and debt financing became a growing risk.

(5) Republicans consistently oppose fairer rights for women, gay people, blacks, Latinos and working people.

These five categories of political ploys, dirty tricks and retrogressive initiatives are wrong-headed and mean-spirited. The winner-takes-all character of our political system is making wealthy people vastly richer at the expense of the well-being and security of the vast majority of Americans. The corrupting influence of Big Money in our political system has managed to structure the economy to give the lion's share of the wealth to rich people, and to shift costs to all other Americans and people in the future. Both political parties are culpable in allowing this to happen, but especially Republicans with their ruthless ends-justify-any-means pursuit of power.

According to the satiric Bill Maher, Democrats essentially say: "Elect us. We're lame, but the other guys are nuts." There are deep elements of truth in this amusing characterization.

#### George Harrison's Guitar Hauntingly Weeps a Sad Song

Before concluding these ideas, it is essential to evaluate the impact that Rush Limbaugh had on our country and people (RIP). In addition to his "highest-rated talk-radio program in the United States", Limbaugh hosted a half-hour syndicated talk show on television from 1992 to 1996. This program was produced by Roger Ailes, the Republican operative who later became the founding CEO of Fox News (and was eventually forced to resign after being accused of serial sexual harassment). Rush Limbaugh's TV show was so rudely outrageous that it inspired the then political satirist Al Franken to write a funny book titled *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*.

Al Franken pointed out in this book that those who listened to Rush Limbaugh, or who watched him on TV, thought they were the best-informed Americans. A study done at the time of the 1995 healthcare reform debate, however, revealed that Limbaugh's followers turned out to be the *least well-informed*. Franken satirically opined: "Social scientists call this phenomenon 'pseudo-certainty'. I call it being a fucking moron". LOL!

Since then, Rush Limbaugh had an audience of many millions of people who seemed to believe his every word. They absorbed all his toxic and misleading disinformation as if it were gospel truth. They did so with a kind of mindless absorption, and sometimes with rabid enthusiasm. As Al Franken wrote, these Limbaugh fans "voluntarily -- hell, gleefully -- call themselves 'dittoheads' in honor of their ability to blindly and uncritically agree with everything that comes out of Limbaugh's mouth". Cue up righteous exclamations and obnoxiously wild applause!

"The truth is rarely pure, and never simple."

--- *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde, 1895

Large amounts of money are being made by "conservative" talk radio personalities and radio stations that appeal to people who are angry, insecure, suspicious, paranoid or highly prejudiced. Many of these listeners harbor intolerant sexist, racist, anti-gay, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments, and are riled up to oppose liberals and government and environmental protections. So presto! -- Rush Limbaugh became a shadowy reflection of these darker sides of human nature. Rush "I'm proud to be an entertainer" Limbaugh mined the veins of narrow-mindedness like the owner of an insidiously destructive and toxic waste-generating mining operation.

In the biggest picture understanding, we see clearly that united, as a species, we can survive, prosper and flourish, while divided by ideology, economic fundamentalism, partisan advantage seeking, religious conflicts, fear, hatred and violence, we will be more susceptible to an ignominious and calamitous fall.

Expansive ideas and forward-thinking fair-mindedness are unfortunately forced to fight an intense rear-guard action against small-mindedness, retrogressive impulses, narrowly focused profit-making, exploitive forces, Super PAC-funded propaganda, and stoked Trumpian MAGA fervor. These forces are hindering our success in uniting to foster greater good goals, and in properly prioritizing them, and in making sure we take into account wisdom, common sense, fair-mindedness and precautionary principles.

#### A Crooning Vocalist Wails Provocative Lyrics

My shadow side slouches in a barely-glimpsed inner sanctum, hiding behind a carefully constructed and well-balanced natural cheerfulness. I apparently took a story my father used to tell to heart: "Cheer up, things could be worse". Or perhaps it's just that I've generally enjoyed a natural surplus of serotonin, the hormone that contributes to feelings of well-being. I have definitely enjoyed an unusual amount of good fortune, and have thus successfully managed to avoid traumatic "metanoia events" in my life.

My father's story about cheering up was always followed by the punch line, "So I cheered up, and sure enough, things got worse!" Ha! Life is, after all, a terminal condition. Nonetheless, we should in no uncertain terms strive to feel gratitude and appreciation at the potential joys of being alive and the beauty of the natural world. Sing a song of sixpence!

### The Sounds of Silence Echo with the Crooning of a Passionate Vocalist

The following observation appears in *Tall Tales, Provocative Parables, Luminous Clarity and Evocative Truths - A Modern Log from the Sea of Cortez*:

Picture this: There is a story in John Steinbeck's *Log from the Sea of Cortez* about a poor Indian boy in the Baja town of La Paz who found a large, valuable and nearly perfect pearl. This story is a great parable about greed and materialism and false salvation and evil -- AND about the woes that are attendant upon these traits. In 1945, Steinbeck amplified this Mexican legend into a more complex short story, a novella titled *The Pearl*, which was published in 1945 and made into a compelling film, *La Perla*, in 1947.

In this story, John Steinbeck uses the literary device of an evocative song heard in the minds of Kino, a Mexican Indian pearl diver, and his wife. Kino and his family are so poor that they live near La Paz in a small house made of brush. Kino's people, long ago, "had been great makers of songs so that everything they saw, or thought, or did, or heard, became a song." Kino had a personal song, one of warmth and security and well-being and hope. Had Kino been able to speak of it, he would have called it a Song of the Family. Not long after finding 'the greatest pearl in the world', Kino and his good wife Juana began to hear a Song of the Enemy, a song that grew as the sad story unfolds, a story of materialism, deception, cheating, disillusionment, racism, and fateful pursuit.

Curiously, songs upon occasion also spring fully formed into the head of yours truly, Tiffany Twain. It's like the elusive 'race memory' thing that young Ayla and elders of her tribe experienced in *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. The songs that come to me are at times subtle and indistinct. At other times they are as clear and bold as Beethoven's symphonies, some of which the great composer imagined into existence even after he had gone deaf. I recognize haunting passages in these songs from my dream states, and understand the music to be a Song of Everywoman. The tune begins with a soaring orchestral sound, and swells to a crescendo. A lovely flute trills happily, and a solo vocalist chants a Song of the Family. In the background, a rhythm beat includes a full range of bass notes, making me think of a Song of Everyman. Different segments of the song ring out with sounds of children, of communities, of all human beings, and of the ecological harmony of all life. It is a song for the ages, with a catchy beat of natural balance. A cyclical riff of alto sax comes and goes, emphasizing the song's inclusion of respect for our ancestors, while a tenor sax harmonically intertwines, honoring our descendants. Let it be!

### A Sliding-Horn Trombone Carries Us toward a Near-Term Conclusion

None of the ideas in this essay should be tied in with that dastardly Communist Manifesto. Though I heartily endorse its economic and political slogan, "Workers of the World, Unite!", that manifesto contained dangerous ideological proclamations that caused terrible grief in the world, and culminated in a real scary and costly Cold War of hyper-militarized nuclear-armed superpowers vying for supremacy. The economic, social and psychological costs of the Cold War were so high between 1945 and 1990 that they cannot be fully fathomed. The opportunity costs of this misguided military spending are even higher.

Our representatives are using the shortsighted and irresponsible expediency of borrowing from every future taxpayer to finance on-going high levels of military spending. The Federal Reserve and millions of speculators in our crony capitalist economic system are partly to blame for facilitating this misguided gambit. The costs of this

expedient course of action are unconscionably large. And the risk of destabilizing the world's economic system grow year after year as the Fed prints up trillions of dollars of new money to support this risky game.

Karl Marx advocated economic justice with the socialist credo, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Today, in capitalist USA, this credo has a jarring sound. A new and more responsible credo of a fairer capitalist system, according to Shann Turnbull, would be: "From each according to their interest, to each according to their contribution, provided the basic needs of all are fulfilled." Such a principle would be much better than the dominant dogmatic "conservative" credo in the U.S. today: "From all workers and citizens according to their abilities, to each according to the amount of influence they can wield using their position and money and power."

Karl Marx also once expressed the opinion that it is a simple sociological fact that "Social progress can be measured by the social position of the female sex." Considering this plausible assertion, it seems clear that American culture has in many ways been undergoing socially regressive changes in recent years. Domineering influence by males and conservatives in Congress and the military, and on the Supreme Court, and in male-dominated corporations in media and entertainment worlds, has created a backward-looking backlash against expanded women's rights that have been gained since the beginning of the Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s. The time has come today for a new feminist movement to take hold. Let's strongly support it!

As some of these thoughts materialized into my consciousness, I was lying in a grassy clearing on a vividly green hillside near a clear rushing stream in the springtime. The character Rodman Ward came to my mind from Wallace Stegner's novel *Angle of Repose*. Rodman Ward was a Berkeley radical of the Sixties who aspired to save-the-world by creating a manifesto that would contain forceful ideas and convincing arguments and even detailed blueprints that would help bring into being the social and political institutions and systems of ethics needed for a more auspicious future.

Sometimes life imitates art! Upon occasion I myself feel like a Berkeley radical from the late Sixties rather than an earnest and thoughtful gal from Hannibal, Missouri. This manifesto is, after all, a passionately lofty, calmly ambitious and rather quixotic endeavor designed to save the world, and to liberate our collective thinking from the blinders of illusion, delusion, materialism, vested interest propaganda, corporate apologists, self-serving politicians, right-wing commentators, and religious fundamentalist authorities who insist on obedience to the dictates of their all-too-often excessively rigid faiths.

When I think about the 97% of our brain functions that operate at a subconscious level, I try to imagine the complexity involved in the activities of the 100 billion cells in each of our minds. Hmmm ... and then I regard my gently persistent urge to express myself in these writings, and am pleased that I have been able to achieve both good fortune and a fair balance in my life, and to do so, so far, in treasured and well-appreciated anonymity. Once again I remember Leonard Shlain's observation that every great blessing contains a curse, just as every curse contains a kernel of blessing. I feel that these ideas are about to go viral, and that they will contribute to the greater good, when they do. These perspectives are too important to remain closeted, or to be vulnerable to suppression before they blossom into the greater consciousness.

Inspired by a quote from Mark Twain, I sail boldly on: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed with the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* tells the story of Odysseus, a heroic Greek warrior who had devised the stratagem of constructing a large wooden horse to get into the city of Troy after a long and fruitless siege. This is a tale of the most famous voyage in literature. After the Trojan War, Odysseus famously sailed for ten years on a perilous journey home. Nikos Kazantzakis wrote his own more modern version of Homer's epic, and reputedly rewrote it repeatedly to "broaden its scope, until it came to include all he had ever seen and heard and thought."

I myself love expansive understandings, so this concept resonates. Kazantzakis also wrote the great story of Zorba the Greek, a man with a voracious heart and appetite and enthusiasm for life. The narrator in that story struggles for understanding while writing a long and evolving manuscript about Buddha, rationally exploring matters

of the intellect, and of feeling, and of the many predicaments of life. The Dionysian and the Apollonian are again manifested in this novel in a viscerally sinuous dance.

I conclude these *Transcendental Musings* by expressing the feeling that I am like a twenty-first century Anais Nin, who observed in Volume One of her published diaries (1931 - 1934): "There were always in me, two women at least, one woman desperate and bewildered, who felt she was drowning, and another who only wanted to bring beauty, grace and aliveness to people and who would leap into a scene, as upon a stage, and conceal her true emotions because they were weaknesses, helplessness, despair, and instead present to the world only a smile, an eagerness, curiosity, enthusiasm, interest."

Well, I'll be. I am. Thanks for reading!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Hannibal, Missouri

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-----The End -----